

BCO commends the North's stellar workplaces

2 years ago



The North's most outstanding workplaces have been announced, with prestigious British Council for Offices (BCO) Awards going to seven landmark office buildings across the region.

Held on Thursday 9 May at Manchester's Kimpton Clocktower, the BCO's annual Northern Awards recognised projects that demonstrate best practice in office design, fit-out, operation and sustainability, setting the standard for excellence across the diverse sector.

The BCO Regional Award winners in each category for the North were:

- Projects up to 2,500 sqm: Merseyway Innovation Centre, Stockport
- Refurbished/Recycled Workplace: Drapers Yard, Leeds
- Fit out of Workplace: x+why, 100 Embankment, Salford
- Corporate Workplace: One Spinningfields Square, Manchester
- Commercial Workplace: Globe Point, Leeds
- ESG: One Strawberry Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne
- Innovation: Boho X, Middlesbrough
- Highly Commended workplaces were:
 - Tileyard North, Wakefield (Refurbished/Recycled Workplace)
 - One Strawberry Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne (Corporate Workplace)
 - One City Park, Bradford (Commercial Workplace)

Commenting on each of the winners, the judges noted:

Stockport's Merseyway Innovation Centre has ambitiously transformed the old Merseyway Shopping

Centre into a high-quality, shared working space that re-purposes vacant retail floorspace to provide a centrally located business centre. It provides office space primarily for start-up businesses with flexible offices to suit varying budgets to support growth. This ambitious re-configuration of the shopping centre demonstrates how such structures can be re-purposed with minimal intervention to create a no-compromise, low carbon and low energy workspace fully enabled to support businesses of the future and helping the town centre regeneration, adding footfall and critical mass to Stockport's high street.

Drapers Yard, the winner of the Refurbished/Recycled Workplace category, has revitalised and repurposed the historic Kays Catalogue building into a high-quality work environment, supporting jobs and leading the way in biomedical science. Drapers Yards is the first development in the up-and-coming Temple District area to contribute towards improving connections to the wider city centre and surrounding communities. The team were commended for respecting the building's previous incarnations, producing an innovative, creative space comprising a clinic, rooftop engagement space, GMP Pharmacy, production suites and high-quality workspace in a previously derelict building. By repurposing and saving embodied carbon alongside successfully delivering a challenging brief and complex design, the project was delivered at a difficult time, during a global pandemic.

Winner of the Fit out of Workplace category, co-working operator, x+why, at 100 Embankment, Salford, delivers an inspiring and unique space. The fit out spans the reception area, ground, first and second floors, as well as the roof terrace, and reflects the company's ambition of creating community, collaboration and culture. Thanks to a true partnership approach to the project, combining a striking, outstanding design, quality finishes, social impact and sustainability, x+why has delivered a workplace with a difference at Embankment. Whether for start-ups in search of inspiration, growing teams seeking a supportive environment, or established businesses looking for a fresh start, x+why's offering at 100 Embankment offers an impressive space where Salford and Manchester businesses can thrive.

The judges awarded the Best Corporate Workplace award to NatWest Group's new Northern headquarters in One Spinningfields Square. The result of this extensive refurbishment has transformed the space into a dynamic hub for the banking group, providing its employees and clients with an exciting and unique workplace in the vibrant Deansgate area. The space celebrates Manchester's rich industrial heritage featuring subtle references to the iconic worker bee alongside artwork by local creators.

As part of its transition into the new space, NatWest Group revamped its Ways of Working, crafting a flexible office environment which incorporates a diverse range of work settings. Overall, the space was celebrated for fostering an inclusive atmosphere that prioritises staff well-being; achieved through the integration of brand-new wellness facilities, a multi-faith room, designated quiet and tech-free areas on office floors, and an external roof terrace.

Globe Point in Leeds, which won the Commercial Workplace award, is a Grade A innovative office development, providing more than 40,000 sq. ft. of space over seven storeys. The healthy, flexible, workspace maximises natural daylight and is recognised with a BREEAM Excellent rating, WiredScore Platinum and NABERS 4.5 Star, which showcases its in-use sustainability credentials. Drawing on its rich ties to the industrial revolution, the expressive flat iron building with intricate brick detailing creates a bold gateway to the wider Temple masterplan. Judges noted the sensitive design overcame a number of challenges on a narrow, irregular site, close to the immediate conservation area. Designed to deal with the demands of changing workplace strategies, Globe Point raises the bar in terms of workspace quality, amenities, occupant wellbeing and sustainability.

The ESG award was presented to One Strawberry Lane in Newcastle upon Tyne, the new headquarters for national housing association, social enterprise and charity, Home Group. Comprising 70,000 sq. ft. of accommodation over six storeys, the project captures Home Group's brief to create an office which truly represents the organisation and the people it supports. The building has revitalised the workplace experience following a switch to hybrid working, and the variety of collaboration spaces available are attracting both community and business, creating a flexible, sustainable, and inclusive workspace community that gives back to its city context. In all, the development provides more than 1,500 voluntary sector organisations with free workspace and event space. The judges noted that the project demonstrates how positive social impact can reach new heights; a workplace can make a positive impact, now and well into the future, if it is more than just an office.

Boho X in Middlesbrough – this year's recipient of the Innovation award – will be an integral part of the wider Boho masterplan, the digital, creative, and business quarter of the Tees Valley. With 60,000 sq. ft. of Grade A office space on offer, the development will provide a boldly designed environment within the area, supporting flexible and adaptable internal environments to suit new digital companies. The proposed building wraps around a central atrium providing a striking arrival into the building, with flexible floor plates allowing for the subdivision of the space for multiple tenants or a single user. A ground-floor shared café and workspace are positioned to spill out into a new urban orchard providing a high-quality contemporary landscape.

The new office building will also boast a gym, health studio, lecture theatre, rooftop bar and external terrace contributing to the positive health and well-being of the building occupants and distinguishing itself as the market leader in modern office space. Demonstrating how public-private partnerships can facilitate incredible transformation, Boho X aims to create a world-renowned, thriving digital and creative sector in Middlesbrough, its communities, and the wider region.

Commenting on behalf of the judging panel, Thomas Bone, Chair of the BCO Northern judges, said: "Each winner of this year's BCO Northern Awards showcases the very best of office design. These best-in-class workspaces highlight how innovative approaches to well-being, sustainability, and community engagement can produce truly stand-out commercial spaces that people are proud to work in.

"The North really is seeing some of the most exciting office development, driven by partnerships between ambitious organisations, local authorities and talented office design and build specialists. This was another stellar year, and the judges were extremely impressed by the high quality of entries. We congratulate the winners and those who were highly commended – and look forward to seeing the region's office landscape continue to thrive."

Jon Moister, Regional Committee Chair for the BCO, said: "The BCO's regional awards bring together the office industry to celebrate the latest innovations in workplace excellence. This year's winners for the North exemplify how workplaces can create a sustainable work culture, while placing employee wellbeing, social impact, and sustainability at their heart. Many congratulations to all the regional winners and best of luck for the upcoming National Awards."

The Northern region winners will now compete for the BCO National Awards in October 2024. More details will be announced soon.

The lead sponsor for this year's BCO Awards is ISG. Gold sponsors are AECOM and Troup Bywaters +

Anders. The BCO awards are in association with EG.