

## South West's best workplaces crowned at BCO Regional Awards

2 years ago



Winners showcase sustainable spaces with a focus on future-proofing and inclusive design, contributing to the wider regeneration of South of England and South Wales city centres

The South of England's and South Wales's most outstanding workplaces have been announced, with British Council for Offices Awards going to six office buildings across the region. Held at The Coal Exchange Hotel, the BCO's annual South of England and South Wales Awards Dinner celebrated the high-calibre of the region's offices in terms of design, fit-out operation and sustainability, setting the standard for excellence across the sector.

The winners of this year's competition in the South West region stand out for their occupier-centric design credentials, as well as their innovative implementation of inclusivity and sustainability measures. In its second year, the ESG Award continues to celebrate the achievements of offices which excel in responding to the sector's changing Environmental, Social and Governance needs. The winning projects for the region demonstrate the growing importance of ESG, evidenced by the winner of Best Corporate Workplace, Calon, also receiving the ESG award.

The BCO Regional Award winners for the South of England and South Wales are:

- Calon, Cardiff (Corporate Workplace)
- EQ, Bristol (Commercial Workplace)
- Halo, Bristol by Interaction (Fit out Workplace)
- Quad O2, Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, Didcot (Projects up to 2,500m2)
- Building 3000, Guilford (Refurbished/Recycled)

- Plus X Brighton (Innovation)
- Calon, Cardiff (ESG)

The Best Corporate Workplace award went to Calon. The project's framework for sustainability and innovation impressed the judges, particularly in terms of energy efficiency, for which the building achieved a NABERS 5-star rating. High-quality flexible spaces provide a new hybrid working area in the heart of Cardiff, adding to the wider mixed-use development scheme in Central Square. The office offers designated areas for collaboration, as well as formal and informal meeting spaces, providing occupiers with an environment that promotes productivity and interaction.

Receiving the Best Commercial Workplace award is EQ. With wellbeing initiatives becoming increasingly important in the office sector, this project provides ample opportunity for occupiers to de-stress. The building's facilities aid this through the available workout classes, wellness studio, roof terrace and cycle hire, all designed to improve occupier physical and mental health. The judges also made note of the project's sustainability credentials, with the design including low-carbon heat pumps and a unitised façade to optimise daylight and achieve a BREEAM Outstanding rating. The 200,000sqft building contributes to Bristol's economic development, providing a high percentage of amenity spaces.

Halo was crowned Best Fit out Workplace, with the judges praising the project's focus on inclusivity and biophilia throughout the building. Tailoring its approach to the client's needs, Halo provides breakout areas and flexible workspaces, as well as spaces for workers to exercise, relax, and eat. The interior is finished functionally in a neutral aesthetic, avoiding the need for future changes to fit-out in line with changing design trends. The consideration taken during the fit out was described by the judges' as a cradle-to-cradle approach, making use of durable materials, while providing a vibrant aesthetic. The project is on track for a WELL platinum rating showcasing the standard of its occupier-centric wellbeing initiatives and design.

Winning the award for Best Project up to 2,500m<sup>2</sup>, the Quad O2, Harwell Science and Innovation Campus is a small building with powerful solutions for sustainable, inclusive design. The judges were particularly impressed by the integration of technology, including wellbeing sensors and high-efficiency MEP systems. Despite its modest size, the project stood out to the judges for its significant reduction in energy demand and small carbon footprint, achieved through a 'fabric first' approach, due to the selection of materials which strengthen the building envelope. The project also incorporates elements of biophilic design and natural lighting to create an inclusive environment, catered to diversity and accessibility needs.

Building 3000 takes home the award for Best Refurbished/Recycled Workplace having impressed the judges by its proactive use of retrofit initiatives. The judges note that the visual aesthetics of the building's workspaces were not compromised during the refurbishment, but were carefully considered, with praise going to the striking, progressive design. Encompassing the needs of occupiers and commercial requirements, the project provides a combination of wellness space in the form of a rooftop terrace, end of journey facilities, and high-quality office space. A central atrium serves as a focal point, designed to facilitate communal gathering.

This year, Plus X Brighton was the recipient of the Innovation award. The project supports the broader regeneration of Brighton, contributing to the sense of community with a publicly accessible café. The building provides flexible workspaces for start-ups and entrepreneurs, offering a solution to the challenges of office space scarcity in the area. Incorporating specialist hire prototyping labs and digital studios, the office provides insight into the possible innovations of future workspaces. The building has achieved a

WELL Platinum rating.

Lastly, the ESG award was the second award to go to Calon. The judges' found environmental stewardship to be at the core of the project, which attained a BREEAM Outstanding certification. Additionally, the project was awarded WELL Platinum standard, with notable occupier-centric technological innovations brought in to monitor air quality, along with the implementation of natural lighting into the design. The Judges complimented the operational net-zero initiatives in place, with the building's solar panels and air source heat pumps providing 100% of the energy used onsite.

The South of England and South Wales winners will compete for the BCO National Awards on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

The lead sponsor for this year's BCO Awards is ISG. Category and Gold sponsors are AECOM and Troup Bywaters + Anders. The BCO awards are in association with EG.

Catherine Macpherson, Judging Chair for the BCO South of England and South Wales Region said: "The standard of these projects is admirable, providing us a beacon of innovation and great insight into the future of the built environment. With plenty of external factors facing the projects, the initiative and dedication to high standards did not falter. It is also evident that the move towards wellbeing is paramount, with all projects addressing an aspect of occupier welfare. The focus the winning projects put on inclusivity is a promising indicator of the future of this industry."

Richard Kauntze, Chief Executive of the BCO said: "The BCO's regional awards provide the industry with an excellent opportunity to foster collaboration and creativity. From Cardiff, to Guilford, the South West region has seen an outstanding array of high quality office space, designed to meet not only the needs of occupiers but also those of local communities. This year's winners show how office design can meld stunning visuals with thought-leading, practical spaces. Congratulations to all the winners of the region and best of luck for the upcoming National Awards."

John Wright, Chair of the BCO Committee for South of England and South Wales, said: "It is encouraging to see the high standard of office buildings being delivered across the South of England and South Wales. This region continues to impress with vibrant cities and ambitious sustainability targets. Offices have a vital role to play helping to revitalise town and city centres and the winning projects are shining examples of how strategic development and intelligent design can create spaces for communities to thrive for the years to come."