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Bournemouth Library wins Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award

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Bournemouth Library has won the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award, it was announced last night, Wednesday 22 October, at a ceremony in London, in front of 900 construction industry leaders.

The library, designed by Building Design Partnership, has replaced a library that, 60 years ago, was said to be the second worst in England. Described as a new 'public living room' for the residents of Bournemouth, the library, built on a former derelict site, has been a catalyst for the upgrading of the public realm in that area of the town.

The design has been particularly commended for its openness and informality. The glazed north side provides a window to the town, connecting the people in the building with their local surroundings.

Funded via the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), the library has seen a threefold increase in visitor numbers since it opened, with more than 3,500 people visiting during its first Saturday of operation.

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A panel of judges chaired by Martin Moore, Managing Director of Prudential Property Investment Managers, chose the winning project. They said:

'The bright new library is a superb example of a privately financed scheme that has delivered exactly what the local authority wanted. Its success is due to the commitment of the council, developer, contractor and design team to provide the best possible building. Sunscoops put light into the heart of the building; there are many naturally lit spaces and some delightful corners with views out over the town. This is not just a library but also a welcoming hub of the community with meeting rooms and exhibition space.'

The PM's Award is sponsored by CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) and the OGC (Office of Government Commerce) and is part of the British Construction Industry Awards.

It was presented by Lord Falconer of Thoroton, who said:

'This library is a triumph of excellent design, enthusiasm and urban renewal. I believe the library will prove to be a beacon of design excellence – just like past winners of this prestigious award. All those involved can take great pride in what they have achieved.'

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Present at the ceremony was Sir Stuart Lipton, CBE Chairman, he said of the winning design:

'It is a magnificent building and the library's rise in membership figures illustrates perfectly the social and economic values of good design.'

OGC Chief Executive, Peter Gershon said:

'Government is committed to ensuring that its construction programme, which is the largest for a generation, delivers a well-designed, high-quality environment for the 21st century. OGC's role in driving forward that commitment leads quite naturally to its co-sponsorship of the Prime Minister's Award. I am delighted that this year's winner embodies just the combination of innovative design and value for money that we are striving to promote.'

The Judges for the Award were:

- Martin Moore (Chairman), Managing Director, Prudential Property Investment Managers
- Professor Adrian Long (Deputy Chairman) President, Institution of Civil Engineers
- Ted Cullinan CBE, Principal, Edward Cullinan Architects
- Stuart Doughty, Chief Executive, Costain Group
- Paul Finch, Editorial Director, the Architects' Journal and CBE Deputy Chairman
- Professor Tony Hunt, Consultant, Anthony Hunt Associate
- Brian May, Chief Executive, HBG Construction
- Jane Priestman, Design Management Consultant, representing the Daily Telegraph
- Mike Winney, Editor Emeritus, New Civil Engineer

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