

Press release

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A Treasury Building for the 21st Century

Treasury staff will be united in a single building for the first time in more than 50 years following a complete reorganisation and refurbishment of the Treasury Building by Foster and Partners and the Exchequer Partnerships. The reorganisation was designed to make more economical use of the internal space, to improve circulation and access and to modernise the building's services in order to save energy.

The Government Offices on Great George Street has been home to the Treasury since 1940, housing approximately 700 staff and Ministers, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Designed in 1898 by the Scottish architect John McKean Brydon (1840-1901) and constructed between 1900 and 1917, the building occupies the entire block bounded by Parliament Street, Great George Street, Horse Guards Road and King Charles Street and forms the northern boundary of Parliament Square. It was listed Grade II in 1970.

By removing over 7 miles of internal walls and partitions the original cellular offices and corridors have been replaced with open plan work spaces. The building's many light-wells have also been reclaimed allowing the western half of the building to now accommodate the entire Treasury staff, which used to occupy both halves of building. It will also enable 300 staff presently working in Victoria to join their colleagues. All Treasury officials and Ministers will be housed in the new open-plan accommodation, allowing the Parliament Street end of the building to be refurbished and occupied by other government offices.

Additional accommodation has been created by capping the large light-wells that punctuate the building with transparent ETFE roofs, allowing the areas below to be employed. These five-storey high spaces now house a library, a cafe, training rooms and an entrance atrium. New lift shafts within the atrium improve vertical circulation through the building. The large rectangular courtyard at the centre of the western wing of the building, which was previously unused, has been landscaped with trees and water to create an internal garden. Access to the building for people with disabilities has been significantly improved through the installation of external ramps, designed to complement the architectural style of the building.

Removal of bomb-blast curtains from 1,750 office windows and rebuilding the window frames to minimise the danger of splintering during a bomb blast has increased the amount of natural daylight entering the office spaces. A considerable increase in reflected daylight from the light-wells and courtyards has been achieved simply by cleaning the masonry.

The light-wells help to ventilate the building naturally, forming thermal chimneys in which stale air from

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the office spaces rises, due to the stack effect, and is exhausted through vents at roof level. Fresh air is drawn into the building through windows at the office perimeters. Natural ventilation is assisted by fourteen 'windcatchers' mounted on the roof, which harness wind movement and supply fresh air to the fourth-storey offices. Provision for heating, lighting, IT and communications have been modernised and upgraded. The combination of these energy-saving features has resulted in the award of an 'Excellent' rating in the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM), which is a considerable achievement for a historical building.

The partner directing the Treasury project for Foster and Partners, Spencer de Grey, said:

"The design challenge was to transform the 100 year old building, with its deep plan punctuated with light-wells and courtyards, into a highly energy efficient and contemporary workplace. For old buildings it is a major step towards the sustainable city, having been rated environmentally 'excellent' by its BREEAM independent assessment."

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