

Business

Accountancy giants move into their monuments to green living

by Alex Spence, Rebecca O'Connor

They compete fiercely for audit clients and consulting projects, but now Britain's biggest bean-counters are battling for an unlikely prize: to be the occupier of London's greenest office building.

KPMG, Britain's third-largest accounting firm, began to move into its new £340 million flagship building at Canary Wharf this week. It claims that the 15-floor, 460,000 sq ft address at 15 Canada Square is the most environmentally friendly office to have been constructed in the Docklands and one of the greenest in London.

Not to be outdone by its Big Four rival, PricewaterhouseCoopers believes that its new City headquarters at 7 More London will be even greener.

KPMG was the first of the pair to move, relocating about 700 staff, mainly in its financial services group, to Canary Wharf on Monday. Over the next few months, more than 4,000 employees, including senior executives, will move in, reducing its premises in London from five to two.

John Griffith-Jones, KPMG's chairman, said: "It's a significant investment that demonstrates our confidence in the future of the firm. It will help to facilitate collaborative working and, at the same time, has created the sort of environment

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'PwC and KPMG have decided that a sustainable office building is a quality office building'

demand by our people." The firm acquired the site and the shell of the building from Canary Wharf Group, a subsidiary of Songbird Estates, for £260 million in 2006. Its partners spent a further £80 million fitting it out and work on the building was completed last month.

The building is bright and spacious, with colourful, futuristic furniture. Sunlight pours into roomy communal spaces, where floating staircases encourage staff to stop and mingle.

There are no offices, not even for senior partners, and many workstations will be shared. Desks can be booked at touchscreen kiosks that resemble the self-service check-ins at an airport. Other features include a staff canteen decorated with Paul Smith fabrics and a restaurant run by a former chef at Gordon Ramsay's Petrus.

The building's environmental credentials include a gas-fired generator that reduces its dependence on mains electricity and an energy-efficient cooling system. Water from basins and showers will be reused to flush the toilets. The basement has space for 200 bicycles and only 40 cars and almost 95 per cent of the waste produced during construction was recycled.

KPMG claims that the office will produce 50 per cent fewer carbon emissions than considered desirable under industry guidelines. The design was rated "excellent" under the Building Research Establishment's

Who's greener?

PwC
7 More London

More London Development
More London Development
Foster & Partners
undisclosed

Owner KPMG, on 999-lease
Developer Canary Wharf Group
Architect Swanke Hayden Connell
Cost £260m for building, £80m for fit-out

KPMG
15 Canada Square

500,000
sqft

10 Floors
5,500 people will occupy
Move in March 2011

15 Floors
4,000 people will occupy
Began moving in this month

460,000
sqft

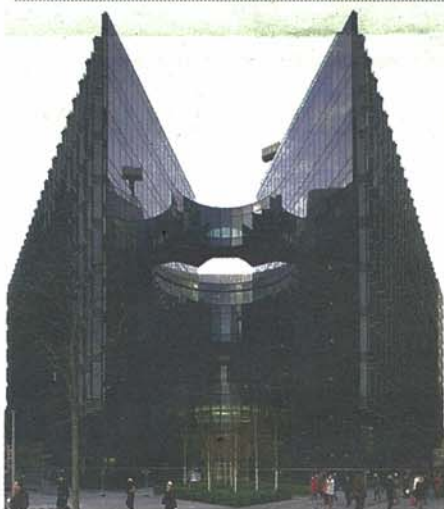
"Outstanding" BREEAM rating
60% fewer emissions than industry recommendations
25% of energy produced on site with renewable sources
80% of concrete used from recycled sources
Captures rain water to flush toilets
Onsite composting of food waste
Planted roof to provide habitat for local flora and fauna
Photovoltaic solar panels to provide heat and power
240 cycling spaces

Greenness

"Excellent" BREEAM rating under 2006 criteria
50% fewer emissions than industry recommendations
34% of carpets, furniture made from recycled material
95% of construction waste was recycled
Chilled beams provide energy-efficient cooling
Lighting control system reduces use of artificial light
Grass roof cools building and provides wildlife habitat
'Grey' water recycling system reuses water to flush toilets
200 cycling spaces



Interior



Being 'outstandingly' green

- Reduce estimated carbon emissions by more than 40 per cent over and above the level required by building regulations
- Significantly reduce water consumption by installing low-flush WCs and low-water-use fittings
- Install renewable energy technology such as solar panels or wind turbines
- Incorporate high levels of daylight in the design, to benefit occupants of the building and reduce energy consumption
- Reduce the amount of waste generated during construction
- Use responsibly sourced construction materials
- Provide adequate bicycle storage facilities and make best use of public transport links
- Reduce the ecological impact on the local area or, better still, enhance the ecological value of the site

Source: Breeam

(Breeam) environmental assessment method, a benchmark measure of sustainability.

The Big Four firm's move to Docklands is a boost for Canary Wharf, which has defied fears that financial and professional services firms would ditch it in favour of the City. In its latest annual results, Canary Wharf Group highlighted a number of new lettings, with Barclays and the Financial Services Authority among those taking more space.

Nevertheless, the biggest lettings in the past 12 months have been in the City. Four miles west at More London, next to City Hall and opposite the Tower of London, PwC is fitting out its new headquarters. It has gone a step further than KPMG by obtaining an "outstanding" Breeam rating — the first time a London office building has been awarded the classification since it was introduced in 2008.

Located within touching distance of another Big Four accountant Ernst & Young, PwC's ten-floor, 500,000 sq ft building, designed by Foster & Partners, is expected to be ready next

March. About 500 staff will relocate there, including PwC's management.

Among the building's carbon-reducing features will be a roof lined with plants and rubble to create a habitat for wildlife, and tanks to capture rainwater for use in toilets. A quarter of its energy will be supplied through renewable sources, such as solar panels and burning cooking oil. Food waste will be composted. PwC claims the building will produce 60 per cent less carbon than industry recommendations.

Regardless of whose building is greenest, John Alker, of the UK Green Building Council, applauded both firms for trying to raise the standard of corporate buildings. "You'll get debate between architects and engineers about the technical solutions used, but whatever your view, both these buildings are great examples of tenant demand helping to drive the sustainability of offices," he said.

"The key message here is that big names like PwC and KPMG have decided that a sustainable office building is a quality office building."