

The BRE Biophilic Office Project update

16 August 2018

At the beginning of July there was an update meeting at BRE Watford for all the partners and disseminating partners involved in their **Biophilic Office Project**. So one year down since the outset, this is to report on the progress so far and importantly, the next stages.



Facilitated and managed by BRE with Oliver Heath, the biophilic architect and designer, and working with a number of partners including two of plants@work's own members, Ambius and Biotecture, the project will research how a biophilic office could affect occupants and how they work. All of the partners have expertise in their fields to bring to this exciting project.

Based on the premise that we all need to connect with nature and that the connection helps us to perform better, feel better and more, BRE is using an old 1980s building on their site to transform.

bre

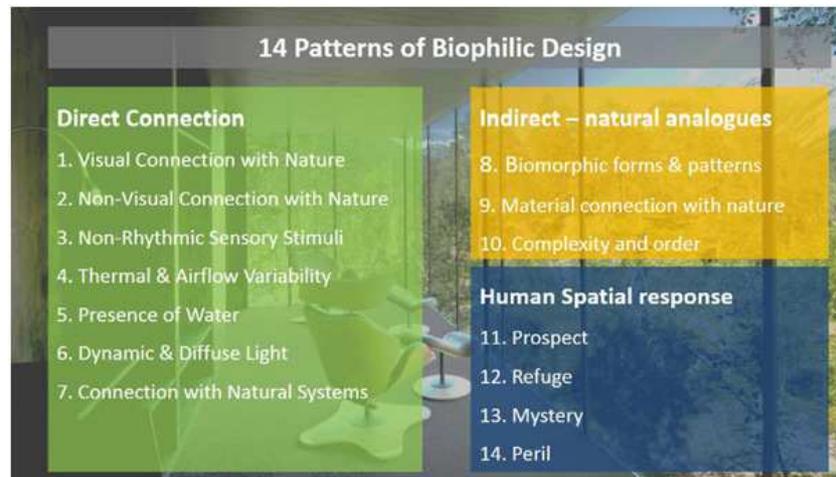
- 1980s concrete framed office
- Civil service cellular offices
- 'Standard' refurbishment heating, lighting and ventilation strategy and controls

The building

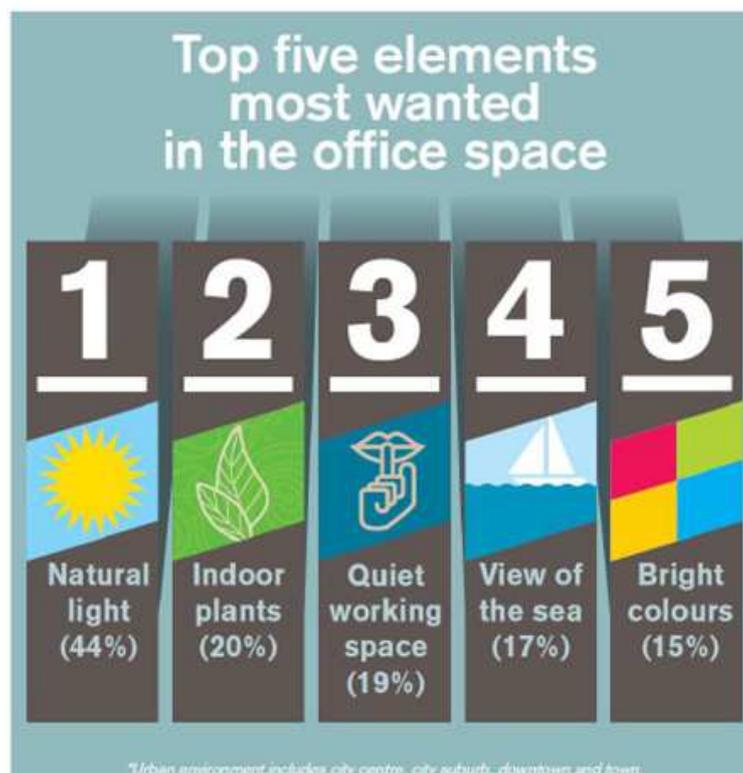


Some facts and figures

The project will progress using the principles of biophilic design under Oliver Heath's direction.



Given that 85% of us now work in urban environments, our contact with nature is often - or usually - impaired. Just under half of office workers have no natural daylight and only just over half have any greenery in their offices so the connection with nature is limited. As you can see from the [Global Impact of Biophilic Design](#) in the Workplace Design report, the following five elements are the most desired by those working in offices.



In previous research, the invention of some biophilic elements has resulted in better wellbeing, productivity and more creativity.



What's already begun?

Meanwhile a group of BRE workers who already occupy this 1980s building are already helping with this study by participating in an ongoing monitoring programme to assess how their working environment impacts on their health, wellbeing and performance.

Kirstie Lord, Director of HR at BRE commented, 'Technology more commonly used in the gym, such as fitness trackers, is being harnessed to provide anonymised data on occupants. Combined with other monitoring data, this will give insights into the health and wellbeing of staff at points in time, and provide a better understanding of the key impacts of a range of office design features and interventions.'

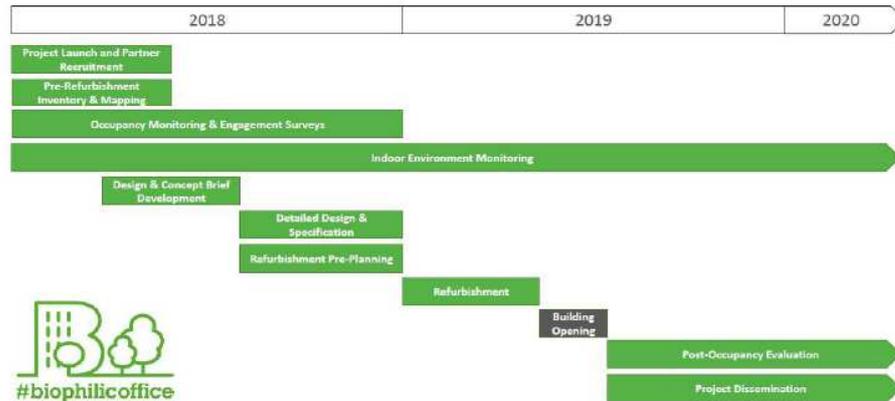
The collected data will form an evidence base for a range of workplace interventions that could make a difference to the occupants, confirmed Flavie Lowres who is the deputy project manager at BRE. This BRE developed methodology will be used in future in larger scale studies.

What's next?

Over the next 2.5 years the building will be refurbished to meet biophilic standards under the supervision of Oliver Heath. During the refurbishments, there will be ongoing monitoring of various factors from CO2 levels, temperature levels, noise, VOCs, to daylight. Some of these will be monitored continuously and some periodically.



The 2.5 year project is centred around the refurbishment of B18/B19



Alongside this data collection, the occupants of the building will continue to be monitored. This will take the form of psychological questionnaires, tools, cognitive tasks and interviews as well as biomarkers and wearable technology. Their productivity will also be measured.

The monitoring should show what if any difference the intervention of biophilia makes to the occupants. Obviously it is expected that it will offer an evidence base for health, wellbeing and productivity impacts of a restorative office refurbishment. BRE will use its connection with universities and research facilities to draw up a pattern which can be used by businesses to implement to provide biophilic spaces with these results.

