



REC Awards 2018: The winners revealed!

The organisations and deals voted last year's best can be announced at long last.

Publication Date: 1st March 2019 | By: **Daniel Cunningham**

It's what you've all been waiting for. Below, we reveal the winners of the *Real Estate Capital* awards, celebrating the best of the European real estate finance industry in 2018.

Last year was a competitive one in the real estate debt space, reflected by the fact several of our key awards have changed hands since 2017. We have new victors in our key bank and senior debt fund lender categories, for instance. That said, some stalwarts of the industry have retained their titles, demonstrating their staying power in an evolving marketplace.

Winners can rest assured they were voted for by their peers in the industry. Our awards are totally independent – with no sponsorship or panel of judges, the industry decides the winner in each category.

To the winners, congratulations. To those who missed out, better luck next year. Without further ado, we hope you enjoy discovering who were the leading lights of European real estate finance in 2018.

Debt advisor of the year in the UK and Ireland

Winner: Brookland Partners

Runner up: Eastdil Secured

The bulk of the £3.5 billion (€3.99 billion) of debt transactions Brookland advised on in 2018 were large, complicated financings and restructurings – the type of business that sets the firm apart from pure debt brokers. Its investment banking services range from arranging loans and capital markets deals to non-performing loan sales, restructuring and investment advisory.

“We add value and provide increased certainty of execution by taking a hands-on approach through the whole transaction process,” says managing partner Nassar Hussain.

A deal Brookland is particularly proud of is its £250 million financing of Pinewood Studios in December 2017, which required a deep understanding of real estate, operating businesses and capital markets to structure a high-yield bond and a £50 million super senior development facility. Its biggest deal of 2018 was the £2.5 billion restructuring of BMI hospitals, which Brookland undertook on behalf of a UK government agency. It also arranged acquisition financing against One Poultry in the City of London, let to WeWork.

“A lot of banks have reached their exposure limits to WeWork; we added value by finding new sources of capital that could provide debt,” Hussain says.

Having bought out hedge fund Omni Partners’ 40 percent stake in the business last summer, Brookland’s owners intend to expand by building a larger presence in Europe, with a focus on Germany, Spain, Holland and Ireland. It will also pursue ‘flow’ business and smaller, plain vanilla transactions, in addition to larger, complex deals.