

News

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Paralympics star David Weir CBE hails South Shields Vision

One of the world's top Paralympians has hailed plans for Muse Developments and South Tyneside Council's — South Shields 365 scheme — which aims to make it one of the most accessible in the UK for disabled people.

Wheelchair athlete David Weir CBE, who won four gold medals at the 2012 London games, wore a unique South Shields 365 vest in Sunday's Great North Run to highlight his support.

The £100m plan, aims to make South Shields an exciting destination every day of the year. The Council recently selected Muse to deliver the ambitious scheme – and the next stage will be to commission a specialist study to ensure the renewed town centre is as accessible as possible.

David, who has also won four Great North Run titles, said: "I've competed many times in South Tyneside, both at the Tyne Tunnel 2K sprint race and the longer Great North Run course. It's a great place to visit and I will wear the vest with pride this weekend.

"It's important that big schemes like this recognise the importance of accessibility and I'm delighted to see that the South Shields 365 team are considering access issues right at the start of the project.

"Almost exactly a year on from the 2012 Paralympics, this is a perfect way for South Tyneside to be part of its legacy. I'm looking forward to South Shields becoming an example for others to follow."

The Council and Muse will invite tenders for specialist technical support during the coming months, with the aim of making the town centre more accessible to all members of the community. The study will look at practical issues like transport, building materials and street furniture as well as consulting local people about the overall design of the town centre.

David Weir took some time out from his training schedule on Friday to meet with South Tyneside's Deputy Leader, Councillor Alan Kerr, and find out more about the plans.

Councillor Kerr said: "South Shields 365 is an ambitious plan for a town with huge potential, and we want everyone to be able to enjoy its attractions in the future. The Tyne Tunnel 2K race and the Great North Run do a huge amount to put South Tyneside on the map, so it's great to have another high-profile athlete like David helping to promote our vision for a more accessible area.

The South Shields 365 plan, unveiled in January this year, will see a radical redevelopment of the town centre, with a new retail quarter in the Fowler Street West area. The scheme will create a new library and community hub on the site of Wouldhave House in the market place, retail and leisure facilities at Barrington Street and Fowler Street West, and a new transport interchange at Keppel Street. The scheme will also improve the market place and St Hilda's area, as well as bringing a new cinema, shops, restaurants and additional car parking.

The scheme aims to bring together the town's three key assets – the seafront, town centre and Riverside – to make South Shields the North East's premier coastal resort, with year-round cultural, leisure and retail activity.