

News

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The Word opening marks South Shields 365 first phase completion

The first phase of South Tyneside Council's and development partner, Muse Developments', ambitious £100m 365 regeneration of South Shields has now culminated with the official opening by Councillor Alan Smith, Mayor of South Tyneside, of The Word, the National Centre for the Written Word.

Designed by Newcastle-based FaulknerBrowns Architects, with Bowmer & Kirkland as main contractor, the three storey, circular cultural centre overlooks the town's refurbished Market Place and incorporates a library and digital media space. It also boasts an impressive range of facilities including exhibition space, a computer gaming area, a FabLab with 3D printers and vinyl and laser cutters, digitised archives, meeting rooms, children's immersive storytelling area, OpenZone IT suite, café and a rooftop space and terrace providing stunning views over the river.

Designed, and on track, to achieve an Excellent accreditation from BREEAM, the terracotta panel clad building features three floors around a central atrium linked by a feature staircase and lifts. 33 weeks of the 70 week construction period were taken up with the 1,500 m³ concrete structure whilst over half a million man hours were worked on the whole project. 80% of all work was delivered by local contractors (based within 40miles of the site) with 99% of all construction waste generated was diverted from traditional landfill and recycled.

Costing £16m, The Word will offer an inspirational and exciting celebration of the written word through a rolling programme of high quality exhibitions, events and workshops in addition to fulfilling a traditional library service with some 72,000 books.

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside Council, said, "It's hard to believe that construction of The Word started just 18 months ago. This is a great and proud day for everyone involved in the concept, design and construction of this fantastic building. The Word opening heralds a new lease of life for South Shields and the start of an incredible journey. The whole of the town centre will be transformed over the next 10 to 15 years as part of our 365 masterplan, with The Word acting as a catalyst for private sector investment."

David Wells, Regional Director at Muse Developments, added, "The 'wow' reaction from everyone who has entered The Word so far sums up this stunning building. We're delighted to be part of this exciting regeneration programme and with the first phase now complete with The Word and refurbished Market Place now open for business, we're already busy with planning for Phase II, the Transport Interchange, and future phases that will deliver new leisure and retail facilities to the town centre."

"The overall redevelopment also makes The Word more accessible from the town centre, the Foreshore and the Riverside, which is a priority in the overall plan for the town. Collectively these three areas provide a broad and exciting offer of commercial, leisure, cultural and retail opportunities for residents, visitors and businesses. This mix gives South Shields a unique offer, unrivalled amongst other coastal towns of a similar size in the North East and the overall regeneration plans capitalise on that."

For more information about the regeneration of South Shields and the 365 Master Plan please go to: www.southshields365progress.com