

News

22.08.16

Partial completion for The Word



South Tyneside Council and development partner, Muse Developments, have taken possession of The Word, the National Centre for the Written Word, from contractors, Bowmer & Kirkland, as the first phase of the ambitious £100m 365 Regeneration of South Shields reaches partial completion.

Internal fitting and the installation of the first exhibition will now begin in time for the official public opening on Saturday 22 October.

The Word will offer an inspirational and exciting celebration of the written word through a rolling programme of high quality exhibitions, events and workshops.

The three storey, circular cultural centre, designed by Newcastle-based FaulknerBrowns Architects, overlooks the refurbished Market Place and incorporates a library and digital media space, boasting 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 restaurant 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.

David Wells, Regional Director at Muse Developments, commented, "The handover and partial completion is a huge landmark for the whole regeneration programme whilst this iconic building is a fantastic attraction in its own right. We submitted the planning application for this first phase, which has also included the refurbishment of the Market Place and the construction of a new car park, just two years ago in April 2014 so are very pleased with the progress made so far and especially the contribution of main contractors, Bowmer & Kirkland.

"The redevelopment also makes The Word more accessible to both 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.”

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside Council, said, “This is an exciting milestone in the transformation of South Shields. The Word epitomises our vision for the future of the town centre and is now just weeks away from opening, marking the end of Phase 1 of our regeneration masterplan.”

“Work is ongoing to bring forward the new transport interchange and improve our retail and leisure offer, all of which will create a vibrant, sustainable town centre which will give the private sector the confidence to invest.”

Martin Swales, Chief Executive of South Tyneside Council, added, “The Word is a truly iconic building. Incorporating good design quality is at the forefront of our ambitious regeneration schemes, ensuring they are aesthetically pleasing, sustainable and easy to maintain, whilst complementing and enhancing the surrounding area.”

“The Word will not only be a state-of-the-art community resource, but will offer a nationally significant visitor experience, putting South Shields firmly on the map as a year-round cultural destination.”

For more information about the regeneration of South Shields and the 365 master plan please visit: www.southshields365progress.com