

News

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The Word wins RIBA North East Building of the Year

The Word, National Centre for the Written Word, won the prestigious RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) North East Building of the Year 2017 Award.

Five buildings were chosen from a shortlist of nine for their architectural excellence with The Word winning the overall Building of the Year and going through to the highly-coveted RIBA National Awards which will be decided on 22 June.

The iconic building is the first phase of South Tyneside Council and developer Muse Developments' ambitious £100m South Shields 365 regeneration masterplan to transform the town centre and has already helped to transform an area of South Shields in addition to providing a vital community resource.

Opening to national acclaim in October and welcoming over 236,000 visitors in its first seven months, The Word was designed by FaulknerBrown Architects and constructed by lead contractor, Bowmer & Kirkland, as a library for the 21st century. The building incorporates a library, exhibition space, FabLab with 3D printers and vinyl and laser cutters, television and radio studio, children's immersive storytelling area, OpenZone IT suite, café, and a rooftop viewing terrace with views out over the River Tyne.

David Wells, Regional Director at Muse Developments, commented, "To win this award is a tremendous accolade for not only our excellent architects, but also to the whole team responsible for the 365 Vision. The regeneration of South Shields has begun with the construction of this iconic building which is already attracting additional private investment to the town to boost the whole economy."

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside Council, said, "The Word has become one of the Borough's greatest assets and is a superb public space. To win both RICS and RIBA awards is an acknowledgement that we now have a truly world class and iconic building. We knew we had to capture the public imagination with this phase of our South Shields 365 masterplan, and recognition by both the RICS and RIBA is certainly an acknowledgement by construction specialists that we have achieved that aim!"

Steve McIntyre, partner at FaulknerBrowns, added, "We are delighted that the Word has received this outstanding recognition from the RIBA. The vision of our client, South Tyneside Council, combined with the dedication and ingenuity of the project team, have combined to deliver a cultural asset of regional and national significance."

The RIBA judges' comments can be seen in full on the www.architecture.com web site but in short, "The building redefines people's understanding of 'the library' where exploration, interaction and socialisation are positively encouraged.

"The Word is a happy uplifting place and is the embodiment of inclusion for all ages - it caters for all with no compromises. It is a success on many levels and it is a testament to the building and all involved that library membership and visitors have increase dramatically including those from its larger neighbouring conurbations."