Press release
10 July 2018

Local residents invited to be first to step inside County Durham’s latest landmark

Members of the Bishop Auckland and Shildon community are being invited to be the first through the doors of the region’s newest landmark at a special event.

On Saturday, 21 July local residents will be welcomed inside Auckland Tower, in Bishop Auckland Market Place as part of a special Town Update event, ahead of the Tower’s official launch later in the year.

From 10am to 3pm, visitors can speak to staff and volunteers from The Auckland Project to find out more about the inspiration behind Auckland Tower’s unique design, the construction work in progress and how the building will ultimately be used.

And outside Auckland Tower, a pop-up museum will offer the opportunity to get hands on with history to learn more about the powerful Prince Bishops of Durham.

Those attending the community event can also step inside Auckland Castle, the Bishops’ former home, on a Behind the Scenes Tour to take a peek at the work under way to return the property to its Georgian Gothic splendour. The tours will be running on a drop-in basis from 10am to 3pm.

Past and Future Tours, a 45-minute guided walk around Bishop Auckland’s historic Market Place, will be taking place at 11am. Inside the nearby Mining Art Gallery a talk on The Bevin Boys – War’s Forgotten Workforce, a temporary exhibition commemorating 75 years since the wartime conscription scheme, will take place at 11.30am and 2.30pm. And tours of the scenic Deer Park will set off from The Clock Tower, Bishop Auckland Market Place at 11am and 2pm.

Liz Fisher, Engagement Director at The Auckland Project said: “Auckland Tower, with its contemporary design is a Marmite building, but it is a building that we are really proud of.”
“We are looking forward to welcoming members of the community on 21 July to see the Tower, learn more about the concept behind its design and hear at first-hand how the building will be used.”

Auckland Tower will serve as the welcome centre for the wider Auckland Project visitor destination. It is supported by Headley Trust with building work by Bishop Auckland building and engineering firm, VEST Construction.

The Tower has been designed by award-winning architects, Niall McLaughlin to resemble a huge wooden siege engine and the temporary wooden structures historically used in the Market Place for fairs and festivals. Its location against the walls of Auckland Castle is symbolic, opening up the former private palace of the Prince Bishops of Durham to the town.

Offering beautiful views across Auckland Castle, Bishop Auckland and the wider region from a 15m high viewing platform, Auckland Tower will be a starting point for visitors to Auckland Castle and all of The Auckland Project’s upcoming attractions.

The Auckland Tower Town Update is the first in a series of local events to mark the launch of Auckland Tower. It will be followed by a community event on Saturday, 29 September 2018, to coincide with Bishop Auckland Town Council’s Produce and Horticultural Show and Bishop Auckland Town Team’s Celebrating Together event. Full details will be announced soon.

The official launch of Auckland Tower will then take place on Saturday, 20 October 2018 with a day of activities still to be announced.

To find out more about Auckland Tower, visit aucklandproject.org/auckland-tower/. Mining Art Gallery is open daily 10am – 4pm, entry is £5, £4 for concessions and £1 for under 16s, for more information visit, aucklandproject.org/events/categories/mining-art-gallery.

For regular updates on The Auckland Project, sign up to The Auckland Project’s monthly newsletter or follow The Auckland Project on social media.

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Note to newsdesks:

For more information please contact Kathleen Moore, Communications Assistant at The Auckland Project on 01388 743799 or Kathleen.moore@aucklandproject.org

About The Auckland Project:

The Auckland Project, based in Bishop Auckland, is working with the community and other key partners to help raise aspirations and create opportunities through arts, heritage and a culture of learning.

As part of this long-term ambition, the charity* is developing a visitor destination of international significance, including Auckland Castle, once home to the Prince Bishops of Durham, a Spanish Art Gallery, Faith Museum, Walled Garden and Deer Park.

The latest of these new attractions, Auckland Tower, opened in Bishop Auckland on October, 20 2018, following the Mining Art Gallery which opened in October 2017. The other attractions will be launching in stages over the next three years.

The Auckland Project's dedicated Engagement Team is also working closely with schools and community groups to deliver a range of life changing programmes for all ages, designed to increase educational attainment, enhance employability, boost community spirit and improve health and wellbeing for current and future generations.

By 2020 the charity aims to create 8,000 opportunities for learning and skills development, including 60 apprenticeships.

To date, approaching £150m has been committed to the Project, including £12.4m thanks to National Lottery players via the Heritage Lottery Fund. A full list of supporters and funders can be found at visit aucklandproject.org/supporters

For more information please visit aucklandproject.org or search Auckland Project on Facebook and Twitter.

*From September 2017, Auckland Castle Trust is known as The Auckland Project.