



## **Press Release**

**22 November 2018**

### **Mining Art Gallery Tops Tourism Awards**

The Mining Art Gallery in Bishop Auckland has been crowned the region's best Small Visitor Attraction, just a year after opening.

Part of The Auckland Project, the gallery took the title at the North East England Tourism Awards 2018, held last night at Newcastle Civic Centre.

It saw off strong competition from three other shortlisted attractions to claim the prize, including South Tynedale Railway, which restores and preserves the former Haltwhistle to Alston Line, Amble wildlife watching spot, The Hauxley Wildlife Discovery Centre, and Wynyard Garden at Stockton's Wynyard Hall.

BBC Radio Newcastle breakfast show presenter, Alfie Joey hosted the awards ceremony. And as the son of a South Durham coal miner, he described his visit to the Mining Art Gallery as, "thrilling, moving and an incredible experience."

Kathy Wilson, Experience Team Officer at the Mining Art Gallery accepted the award for Small Visitor Attraction of the Year on behalf of the Gallery from Coun. Peter Jackson, leader of Northumberland County Council.

She said: "Working in the Gallery is an absolute privilege. The collection evokes a real sense of pride and belonging.

"My team of staff and volunteers are so proud to have been recognised in this way in the first year of opening. It is an amazing achievement and honour."

Since opening in October 2017, Mining Art Gallery has welcomed more than 17,000 people from across the region, the UK and the world.

With artworks on display by well-known artists such as Tom McGuinness, Norman Cornish and Bob Olley, visitors can experience what it was like for these men to work in the underground worlds of the nation's coalmines and see the tight knit communities they returned to at the end of each day.

Hannah Peaden, Head of Visitor Experience at The Auckland Project said: "I'm so proud to see the incredible hard work and effort of the Mining Art Gallery team and The Auckland Project recognised.

"Visitors have come from near and far to be part of this amazing experience and we are blown away by the response. It's great to know that others love the Gallery as much as we do."

Mining Art Gallery is open daily 10am -4pm , for more information visit [www.aucklandproject.org/mining-art-gallery](http://www.aucklandproject.org/mining-art-gallery) call 01388 743 750 or follow The Auckland Project on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

A full list of North East England Tourism Awards winners can be found here, [newcastle Gateshead.com/tourism-awards](http://newcastle Gateshead.com/tourism-awards)

## **ENDS**

**For more information please contact Kathleen Moore, Communications Assistant at The Auckland Project on 01388 600529 or [Kathleen.moore@aucklandproject.org](mailto:Kathleen.moore@aucklandproject.org)**

### **Caption information:**

**Image 1:** Kathy Wilson, Experience Team Officer at the Mining Art Gallery accepting the award for Small Visitor Attraction of the Year, with Coun. Peter Jackson, leader of Northumberland County Council (left) and BBC Radio Newcastle breakfast show presenter, Alfie Joey (right). Photo credit: Newcastle Gateshead Initiative.

**Image 2:** Mining Art Gallery, Bishop Auckland Market Place. Photo credit: The Auckland Project

### **About Mining Art Gallery:**

The gallery is housed in the Grade I listed former Old Bank Chambers, and was the first new attraction to open as part of The Auckland Project an arts, faith and heritage destination being developed in the town.

Mining Art Gallery also features a rolling programme of temporary exhibitions. Its latest exhibition, *Breaking Ground- Women of the Northern Coalfields*, brings to the surface the previously untold stories of women in mining communities in the north of England.

Tickets to Mining Art Gallery are £5 for adults, £4 for concessions and £1 for under-16s. *Breaking Ground - Women of the Northern Coalfields* is open at the gallery until Sunday, 24 March 2019.

### **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, Walled Garden, Deer Park and landmark Auckland Tower welcome centre.

The first of these new attractions, The Mining Art Gallery, opened in Bishop Auckland on 21 October, 2017, with the others 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](http://aucklandproject.org/supporters)

For more information please visit [aucklandproject.org](http://aucklandproject.org) or search Auckland Project on Facebook and Twitter.

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

**Funding raised by  
The National Lottery**  
and awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund

