



Building a better Bishop Auckland for everyone



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A busy market town bursting with opportunity.



Welcome to the November edition of the Bishop newsletter.

As partners continue to work together to invest in Bishop Auckland and realise the vision of a bustling market town, we are excited to say that several projects have now reached completion.

The transformation of the Grade II listed McIntyre's building on Newgate Street, which has been at the heart of the community for 150 years, is due to reopen next month as the McIntyre Centre – part of Bishop Auckland College. The new centre will support people in developing skills for employment and offer practical training opportunities in hospitality and digital skills, as well as providing job-matching services and a space for local retailers.

This edition of the newsletter also includes a feature on another set of properties, which have been empty and out of use for a long time but have now been transformed through the Property Reuse Fund. Once a tattoo shop, café and offices, the buildings on Adelaide Street have been brought back into use as stylish holiday accommodation to support the town's growing tourist sector.

On page 6 we bring you exciting updates on the Durham Dales Gateway – part of the Weardale Railway development – and the new look Kingsway Square, where approximately 3,000m² of disused land and buildings has been revitalised into an attractive recreation and pedestrian area.

And as the festive season draws closer, don't forget to check the What's On page for Christmas activities happening right across the town's venues and attractions – from buzzing markets to sparkling light trails and a chance to meet Santa Claus.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we look forward to bringing you more exciting updates in the new year!

www.bishopaucklandregeneration.com
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Our partners

Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone
The Auckland Project
Eleven Arches
The Zurbaran Trust
Bishop Auckland Town Council
Bishop Auckland College

Empty units become a home from home

Four empty properties that have struggled to sell have been snapped up by a developer keen to contribute to Bishop Auckland's visitor sector.

Steve Hare added numbers 2 to 4 on Adelaide Street – a former tattoo shop, café and offices – to his property portfolio, with a vision to create modern rental accommodation to support the town's growing visitor sector.

With the help of Durham County Council's **Property Reuse Fund**, Steve has been able to bring life to the empty units with a change in use that honours their original purpose.

"These were properties that had been on the market for a long time. They had been to auction twice and didn't sell," said Steve.

"I thought it was a good opportunity to turn them back into houses, which is what I believe they were originally, but for use as holiday accommodation."

The Property Reuse Fund is one of the projects being run by the council using money it secured from the Future High Streets Fund.

The fund was launched to help individuals and business owners bring vacant spaces in the town back into use.

"It was a long process, because of Covid and the rise in the cost of materials, so it became more of a job than we thought. The Property Reuse Fund has helped us continue with the project. We're making the final touches and expect to have the houses ready for their first guests soon," Steve said.

The new holiday accommodation will support Bishop Auckland's growing tourism offer, with new commercial and leisure facilities and significant cultural attractions helping to attract tens of thousands of people to the town each year.

Steve added: **"There are lots of events and attractions in Bishop Auckland now which bring in visitors to the area. There seemed to be a shortage of rental**



properties, so I thought I could do something with these properties that would meet that demand, and that would be a win/win for the town."

Cllr Elizabeth Scott, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for economy and partnerships, said: **"Bishop Auckland is realising its potential as an international tourism and heritage destination, with plenty of exciting visitor attractions, festivals and events bringing in more visitors from further afield each year.**

"Bringing empty properties back into use through the Property Reuse Fund not only makes the town a more attractive place to visit, but it also gives businesses and developers the opportunity to turn these buildings into new ventures that match the current demand for town centres – in leisure, hospitality, fun experiences and holiday lets. We're delighted to be supporting them as they invest their own time and money in breathing new life into forgotten properties."



McIntyre Centre opens doors to the future



Judith Layfield, Vice Principal of Bishop Auckland College (right), with Jennifer Phillips, Head of Community and Careers at the college.

“McIntyres, restored to its former glory, will once again be the jewel in the high street...”

Judith Layfield

A Grade-II listed building symbolic of Bishop Auckland's heritage is now set to support future generations, following a major transformation.

The three-storey McIntyre's building in Newgate Street is about to reopen as the McIntyre Centre, following an ambitious renovation led by Bishop Auckland College with funding from the Conservation Area Grant Scheme.

The iconic building has been at the heart of the community for more than 150 years, once being the home to the McIntyre family of shoemakers and leather merchants, who gave the building its name.

It will now help shape the tradespeople of the future with a new ethos based upon providing practical training to help young people and adults develop skills for fulfilling careers.

The McIntyre Centre will be the base for the town's Springboard to Employment scheme, run by the college and supported by the Stronger Towns Fund.

It will feature a restaurant and kitchen, providing training to those seeking careers in the hospitality and tourism sector. There will also be retail space for goods produced by small businesses.

Upstairs will be a digital and training suite offering courses to help local people develop skills, as well as a job matching service.

Judith Layfield, Vice Principal of Bishop Auckland College, said: **"We are delighted to be nearing the opening of The McIntyre Centre. Supported by the Stronger Towns Fund, the Springboard to Employment project has been designed to develop a fantastic training environment for local people.**

"It will offer an industry specification training kitchen and digital suites, housed in the stunning Grade II listed building. There has never been any question in our minds about the name of the centre. McIntyres, restored to its former glory, will once again be the jewel in the high street, but with a whole new purpose – to train local people for employment while offering a great dining experience."

With this new venture comes the creation of six exciting new job opportunities, with the college hiring for new roles including hospitality coordinator, chef trainer, sous chef, front of house assistant, training coordinator and skills trainer.



Developing skills has been at the heart of the whole project, even down to the furniture. The college's carpentry and joinery students have been busy creating the tables for the restaurant, whilst plumbing students have been making accessories.



Students will also be involved in cooking and serving food in the kitchen and restaurant while on work placement.

Jennifer Phillips, Head of Community and Careers at the college, added: **"The McIntyre Centre has undergone an amazing transformation, and we are absolutely delighted with the revival of this beautiful building.**

"We are looking forward to opening our doors and welcoming members of our local community into our fantastic new training facilities, to develop their skills for emerging employment opportunities in the area. The Bishop Auckland College Group is excited to join other new businesses in Newgate Street, supporting the vibrancy of the town centre."

The McIntyre Centre will be open to the public from December 2024.

The Conservation Area Grant Scheme is jointly funded by Historic England and Durham County Council.

Project updates

Bishop Auckland Bus Station

Work is progressing well on the town's new bus station and car park.

Esh Construction has completed preparatory works on the site, including site clearance, drainage works, and provision of electrical supplies for CCTV, electric vehicle charge points and street lighting.

Foundations and retaining walls for the bus station are currently being installed and, over the coming months, the main steel frame and external walls will be put in place.

The new bus station and parking facilities are being funded through £11.8 million from the Future High Streets Fund and £3.6 million from Durham County Council.

The bus station will offer modern and accessible facilities to passengers, with eight stands and improved passenger information. Alongside it will be a new 124-space car park, with street lighting, landscaping and cycle stands.



Durham Dales Gateway

Construction work to create new visitor parking facilities near Bishop Auckland West Railway Station are nearing completion. Intended to improve access to the Durham Dales and Bishop Auckland, via Weardale Railway, the Durham Dales Gateway project is set to further support Bishop Auckland's tourism industry.

The £1.1 million heritage railway development will include 88 car parking spaces, six electric vehicle charging points, five cycle racks and a new ticketing system. This infrastructure will enable Weardale Railway to accommodate increased visitor numbers and provide training, employment and learning opportunities.



The construction of the car park is now well underway, with work expected to be completed by early 2025.

The development has received £900,000 of funding from the

Stronger Towns Fund and is just one of a series of projects within Bishop Auckland that form part of the £53 million Levelling Up funding awarded to the town.

**You can keep up to date with progress
on all of the projects and more at
www.bishopaucklandregeneration.com**



Kingsway Square

The transformation of Kingsway Square from an area of derelict land to a vibrant new multipurpose space is almost complete.

The new look square has revitalised approximately 3,000m² of disused land and buildings, while preserving the surrounding architecture. It will be a space that the local community can enjoy, as well as providing car parking spaces, electric vehicle charging, cycle storage and direct access from retail units onto Newgate Street, the town's main shopping street.

Designed to encourage footfall into the town centre, Kingsway Square will feature 'urban garden'-style landscaped recreation and pedestrianised areas, with ambient lighting and outdoor seating, as well as spaces for children to play. It will be an attractive gateway to Bishop Auckland's existing retailers, businesses, and attractions.

The square, and its surrounding mixed-use private developments, is a £12 million joint initiative between The Auckland Project, Durham County Council and private sector developers. It has been funded by the Future High Streets Fund and Stronger Towns Fund.

Bishop What's On



Saturday 16 November to Tuesday 24 December Weardale Railway Santa Express

A truly spectacular, magical Christmas adventure beginning at Stanhope Station and travelling through Weardale. Follow a narrated Christmas story with live onboard performances from a Christmas cast and crew, including a conductor, Santa and Mrs Claus and a team of cheeky elves! The festive adventure begins with a cup of hot chocolate and sweet treat at the station before boarding the train. Don't forget your Christmas hat and jumper. Tickets from £10.

www.weardale-railway.org.uk/christmas

Friday 22 November to Tuesday 31 December, selected days

AGLOW at Auckland Palace

The dazzling AGLOW light trail will illuminate the skies of Bishop Auckland once again this Christmas. With 22 illuminations, including some of the largest light installations in the country, AGLOW is a must-see experience for all the family. Tickets from £13.25.

www.aucklandaglow.org

Friday 29 November to Sunday 8 December Christmas Town

See Bishop Auckland transformed into a winter wonderland with tipi bars, an ice rink, Santa's grotto, traditional Ferris wheel, and vibrant Christmas markets. Entering its fourth year, Christmas Town 2024 will be extended to a full ten days of holiday magic, promising the most enchanting year yet.

www.bishopaucklandschristmastown.co.uk

Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 December Cinderella

Fresh off the heels of Aladdin, Mendes Management returns to Bishop Auckland Town Hall to work their panto magic with Cinderella. Follow the downtrodden Cinders as she breaks free to discover new love in the form of a dashing Prince Charming and overcome the tomfoolery of her Ugly Sisters (who just love the boos too much!) – all with the help of her foolhardy friend Buttons, (YAY!) and her Fairy Godmother of course!

www.bishopaucklandtownhall.org.uk

What's next?

Investment is already happening in Bishop Auckland, with significant work taking place to develop initial plans, appoint contractors and prepare for work to begin on the ground.

Some projects, such as major road and junction improvements, will take several years to complete. The Bishop Gateway will take the longest time to deliver, with a timescale of three years from start to finish and a project end date of October 2026.

2024

2025

£1m Property re-use fund to help owners bring empty buildings back to life

Future High Streets Fund projects

£3.79m Food, drink and work units at 9-11 Newgate Street

£105k Spanish Gallery public space

£695k Enhancing junctions to improve traffic flow

£15.4m Bus station and additional parking

£2.3m Improved pedestrian access and public spaces around the town

£2.3m Kingsway car park and public square

Stronger Towns Fund projects

£7.5m South Church Workspace: 40,000sqft of units

£3m Improved walking and cycling routes

£1.3m Springboard to Employment: 1,500 additional qualifications delivered by Bishop Auckland College

£4.5m Improve infrastructure in and around the retail park at Tindale Crescent

£3.1m Property re-use fund

£900k Art Hub

£2.3m Improved pedestrian access and public spaces around the town

£20.7m Bishop Gateway improvements

Winter

Spring

Summer

Autumn

Winter

Spring

Summer

Autumn

Winter

to April 2026

to December 2026

to March 2026

to October 2026