

Kier hands over Shakespeare North Playhouse to Knowsley Council

3 years ago



Kier has completed the construction of the Shakespeare North Playhouse, a stunning new theatre in Prescot which combines local heritage with 21st century facilities.

The attraction, which is the first of its kind in the Liverpool city region, was handed over to Knowsley Council on Friday (27 May). It was procured through the North West Construction Hub framework, with work starting in early 2020.

The new building was designed and constructed to remain true to the authenticity of the Jacobean design while making it a modern, vibrant and accessible space for visitors. The Playhouse includes a flexible theatre with capacity for between 320 and 472 seats, based on the iconic 17th century 'cockpit-in-court' design, digital gallery, visitor centre, additional performance spaces including an outdoor performance garden, coffee shop and office space. The theatre is built from reclaimed hardwood, designed and crafted by hand; a traditional method of construction rarely used in the 21st century.

In 2020, Kier launched the [Building for a Sustainable World](#) framework which focuses on both environmental and social sustainability and this project was part of a UK-first trial of a technology to support our strategy to deliver net zero carbon emissions.

Through its work with procurement partner, Sunbelt Rentals, the project trialled the use of the PUNCH Flybrid flywheel technology to assess if the innovation could reduce the energy required to power a static crane.

The innovation is derived from a similar technology used in Formula 1 racing and is a flywheel energy

storage system which decreases fuel usage by reducing the generator size needed to power the crane on site, while still providing enough power for it to be used correctly.

The main objectives of the trial were carbon savings and a reduction in pollutants, as well as providing social value benefits to the surrounding community, including reduced air pollution and less traffic movements and congestion. The trial showed that the fuel consumption was reduced by 40%, which also resulted in 40% less carbon being produced.

Sean Fenner, regional director at Kier Construction North & Scotland, commented: “Shakespeare North Playhouse is a unique project that we know means so much to the people of Prescot and the wider community. Working alongside our local supply chain partners, Kier has utilised its technical skill as well as trialled sustainable innovations to deliver a modern, accessible and energy efficient building.

“Working collaboratively with Knowsley Council, Kier is proud to have played its part in delivering this project which will have such a strong cultural impact regionally and, indeed, nationally. Our aim has also been to leave a lasting legacy within the local community and over the past two years Kier have held 25 community engagement events, engaged with over 12,500 young people, created 23 jobs and provided 20 apprenticeships.”

“Shakespeare North Playhouse is an incredibly unique architectural project. Kier have been exemplary in their understanding of the specific nuances required and their collaborative nature was exactly what was needed on a project with this level of historical reference.” Melanie Lewis- Chief Executive- Shakespeare North Playhouse Trust

Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region, which invested £10.5m into Shakespeare North Playhouse said: “This is a really exciting day for our area, as we add yet another world class attraction. The Liverpool City Region is the UK’s cultural capital – home to a thriving arts and creative scene that has been entertaining the masses for decades, and where some of our country’s greatest performers perfected their trade.

“The Shakespeare Playhouse will be the jewel in that crown – a spectacular statement of the enormous cultural contribution that our region has gifted to the world. The theatre promises to be in incredible new asset – not only for Knowsley – but for the entire North West, attracting more jobs, more investment, and offering a brilliant resource for the local communities.

“It is fitting that it should open during Knowsley’s year as Borough of Culture and is a vitally important part of the wider renaissance we’re seeing in Prescot. I’m hopeful it will be a catalyst for even more regeneration.

“I can’t wait to see it filled with people. Whether it is going to be (or not to be) a massive success is not the question. We will ensure that all’s well that ends well!”

Cllr Graham Morgan, Leader of Knowsley Council commented: “It is a really special milestone today and one that will forever stay in my memory as a very proud and important moment for Knowsley.

“We have held a strong belief in our vision to create a world class venue in Knowsley and despite challenges such as the pandemic, Knowsley Council has remained 100% committed to this project and doing whatever we can to make this dream a reality for our communities. The impact the Playhouse is set

to have is remarkable and the 'promise' of Shakespeare North Playhouse has already attracted significant new funding and new businesses into Prescott. This day marks the end of the construction of Shakespeare North Playhouse and the final period of fit out before opening to the public, and it really does feel very special.

"I want to thank everyone who has made this happen, including of course Kier, the whole of the Design Team led by Austin-Smith: Lord and the other businesses and contractors who have helped to make Shakespeare North Playhouse so special. I also want to thank the many Council Officers who have supported this project from day one - giving their time and expertise, and Shakespeare North Trust, the new operators of Shakespeare North Playhouse, who have played a key role as we reached this day of handover. Now I cannot wait for the doors to open and for people to be able to enjoy the many opportunities at their Shakespeare North Playhouse."

This project builds on Kier's wealth of experience in delivering leisure facilities across the UK. It has recently completed the refurbishment of The Burrell Museum in Glasgow and The Storyhouse at Chester Theatre.