

VisitEngland recognised two Wakefield attractions for their outstanding visitor experience as they announced the latest winners of the Visitor Attraction Accolades.

Michael Graham smiling

Cllr Michael Graham

The Hepworth Wakefield and the National Coal Mining for England are amongst 76 attractions to be recognised for exceptional experiences they provide visitors based on the scores they gained in their annual Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme assessment by VisitEngland.

Cllr Michael Graham, Wakefield Council's Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Sport, said:

"We're extremely proud of the cultural attractions that our district boasts for residents and visitors, so I'm delighted that The Hepworth Wakefield and National Coal Mining Museum have received this recognition – they are fantastic places to visit."

The Hepworth Wakefield, whose current exhibition Barbara Hepworth: Art & Life runs until February 2022, was given a Gold Accolade, a distinction awarded to all-round top-scoring attractions.

Simon Wallis, Director of The Hepworth Wakefield, said: 'We are so delighted to have been awarded Visit England's highest accolade for the quality of our visitor experience. It is a very thorough and rigorous assessment that considers everything from pre-visit communications and onsite interpretation of the exhibits to the welcome received by our visitors. This award is a testament to the extra mile that the whole team at The Hepworth Wakefield goes to every day to provide an exceptional, world-class experience for our visitors. We hope our gold award encourages many more people to come and enjoy the warm and inspiring experience we offer in Wakefield.'

The National Coal Mining Museum, whose new Pony Discovery Centre opened in 2021, was awarded a Welcome Accolade, which recognises attractions that are the most welcoming.

Jenny Layfield, Director of The National Coal Mining Museum, said: "We are delighted to be recipients of VisitEngland's Welcome Accolade, following their visit earlier this year. At the heart of the Museum is the pride and enthusiasm our team have for the story of coal mining, and the greatest accolade is that this is recognised by the public. The museum has been making a considered effort to improve our visitor welcome for many years thanks to funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for our Coalfield Conversations Project. We have been able to upgrade the physical aspects of the welcome including branding, signage, wayfaring, a new reception and shop, as well recruit volunteers to help visitors make the most out of their day. Acknowledgement like this is wonderful motivation to keep developing and improving."

The VisitEngland Assessment Services Assessor, who nominated the Museum for the award, noted: "On arrival the visitor was immediately greeted by a cheerful miner; this really helped to create a positive impression and set the standard for interactions with all staff during this visit. From the fully informed welcome at the reception desk and fascinating conversation with the stable manager to interactions in the cafe and shop, all members of staff made the visitor feel genuinely welcome. Faultless service from start to finish."

The usual announcement in February 2021 had been postponed to October due to many attractions being closed during lockdown, highlighting the impact of the pandemic on the sector.

To find out more about The Hepworth Wakefield, The National Coal Mining Museum and many other attractions across the Wakefield district, visit www.experiencewakefield.co.uk

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