

Will Buxton win the Great Town 2014 Oscars?

An action packed day was provided on Wednesday 21st August for members of the Academy of Urbanism who were in town to judge whether Buxton should be awarded the accolade of Great Town 2014 against the other finalists Cork and Hastings. To even be in the finals is an honour as seventy four towns were nominated for the title.

The judges explored Buxton thoroughly: they visited Hindlow Quarry, went down Poole's cavern, were charmed with the Arts and Crafts architecture on Temple and College Roads, loved the Opera House and Pavilion Gardens, delighted in the Dome and were curious to see the inside of the Crescent. They loved the small things, too, the choice of riding on the Tram or an electric bike up to the Market Place, seeing Cote Heath allotments, meeting a Talking Signpost and watching Bev making chocolates.

Speaking to the BBC late morning, Richard Guise, lead assessor for the Academy, said "This is a very elegant town and has a lot going for it in terms of landscape setting. It's obviously well managed."

Some of the highlights of the day were meeting Buxton people: business leaders who joined the judges for lunch, hosted by the University of Derby; Michael Williams, who played the organ in St John's church for the judges, and Caroline Small both explained about the enormous variety of the Buxton music scene. In the evening a reception for representatives of voluntary organisations, public services and small businesses was hosted by High Peak Borough Council at the Pavilion Gardens Café to give the Academicians the chance to find out how Buxton works together.

Buxton Town Team's Roddie MacLean commented that "all that has been achieved in recent years has been in spite of our most significant building, right in the middle, being derelict and empty for 25 years - and probably not having contributed positively to the economic life of the town for many more. Imagine what we can achieve with it in use and making an active contribution."

"A big vote of thanks must go to all the people of Buxton who helped to make the day such a success," said Tina Heathcote of Buxton Town Team and member of the welcoming committee. "So many people pulled together to showcase Buxton at very short notice; we have already confirmed that this is a Great Town. but it would be lovely to win the Award."

Annabel Tiffin, presenting BBC North West Today on the day of the visit said "I lived for a short time in Hastings and Buxton definitely has my vote." Sadly, the vote will not be down to Annabel; the assessors will write a report for the Academy and all its Members will vote on which of the finalists is crowned Great Town 2014. The results will be announced on the 8th of November at a gala dinner at The Connaught Rooms, London. Watch this space!

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