



'Big Waters Recovery Project: Reimagining Addiction Rehabilitation' by Lauren Cunningham

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Success at Architects for Health Student Design Awards

Three Architecture students from Northumbria University received accolades at the prestigious Architects for Health Student Design Awards, for design concepts that were up against entries from across the globe.

Aaron Fitzakerly, Kayleigh Metcalf and Lauren Cunningham, who are all studying on the Master of Architecture Degree Apprenticeship pathway at Northumbria, were honoured for their work at an awards ceremony which took place at The King's Fund in London. The University's [Architect Degree](#)

[Apprenticeship](#) provides the opportunity for part-time study towards postgraduate qualifications while remaining in paid employment.

The [Architects for Health Student Design Awards](#) is an annual competition with international reach, aiming to encourage the next generation of designers to become passionate about quality design for health and social care settings. Students from across design disciplines including landscape, public art, interior design and architecture were invited to share submissions in this year's competition, which marks its 16th anniversary. A total of 67 submissions from across thirteen institutions, including student work from China, Japan, Sweden and the USA, was judged by a panel of leading practitioners and clinicians.

Aaron's project 'The Waters Edge Kidney Dialysis Centre' is a scheme designed to be built on the North East coastline, on the site of protected National Trust land among the dunes. The design is aimed at benefitting both the conservation of the area and the mental wellbeing of dialysis patients, who often spend hours of the day receiving treatment. He was one of two students who received the highly commended title in the MA Architecture category.



'The Waters Edge Kidney Dialysis Centre' by Aaron Fitzakerly.

Speaking about his project, Aaron explained: "The scheme proposes the integration of a high-quality dialysis facility, along with family leisure amenities and the provision of accommodation for patients and their families

to enjoy a beautiful holiday experience. The proposed site allows a unique opportunity for a development where patients are able to receive their treatment, whilst enjoying in an amazing family experience amongst the natural sanctuary of the site.”

Kayleigh, who was also highly commended in the MA Architecture category, was recognised for her project ‘Reinventing Rehabilitation: Integrating Design with Ecological Restoration’. With the aim of reinventing the standard of care for those with alcohol and drug issues in the UK, she designed a rehabilitation and detox centre based on the shore of the lake at Big Waters Country Park, situated just outside of Newcastle. Organised around landscaped courtyards, the accommodation adopts a flexible bedroom design, using a series of units containing fold away furniture, installed on a track in the floor. The design allows for these to be moved by patients, allowing those receiving treatment the opportunity to personalise their space.



‘Reinventing Rehabilitation: Integrating Design with Ecological Restoration’ by Kayleigh Metcalf.

Explaining her awards submission, Kayleigh said: “The scheme hopes to present a new, reimagined standard of rehabilitation care, with patient wellbeing and ecological enhancement at the heart of its design.”

Lauren was crowned overall winner of the Best Concept category. Her submission, ‘Big Waters Recovery Project: Reimagining Addiction Rehabilitation’ is also centred around the Big Waters Country Park. It takes

inspiration from ancient ideologies to create a design which emerges from the natural geographic and historical elements of the land.

Created for people who struggle with addictions and associated mental health issues, she incorporated elements such as a 12-step programme to recovery and materials and lighting aimed at wellbeing. Lauren's design also reflects the principles of her research into neuroarchitecture, and the way the brain responds to spaces. The priority was on providing a calm and safe space to encourage wellbeing.

Speaking on receiving the award, Lauren said: "It was a fantastic evening filled with so much talent from across the world. To have been presented with the award was a great feeling. This award has given me a big confidence boost as I enter into the next year of my Masters Degree Apprenticeship, whilst continuing my work in practice at Gagarin Studio in Halifax."



Lauren Cunningham is pictured receiving the Best Concept award for her submission 'Big Waters Recovery Project: Reimagining Addiction Rehabilitation'.

[Professor Paul Jones](#), Programme Leader of the Architect Degree Apprenticeship at Northumbria, said: "The achievements of Aaron, Kayleigh and Lauren in the 2024 Architecture for Health Student Design Awards continues several years of success for the architecture course at Northumbria University.

"Over the last five years, eleven students from our BA Architecture, Master of Architecture and Degree Apprenticeship pathways have achieved 'Winner', 'Highly Commended', 'Sue Francis Award for Art and Architecture', 'Best Presentation in Student Seminar', 'Best Concept' and 'Best Drawing' awards in this international competition. These achievements are a testament to our students' engagement with architecture as a social art, and their conceptualisation of imaginative healing spaces for a variety of communities."

Chair of Architects for Health, Jaime Bishop, said: "Northumbria University was once again very well represented in the awards categories and deserves congratulations as an institution. For me, Lauren Cunningham's project, Big Water, stood out, earning the award for Best Concept.

"Lauren's work demonstrated how a highly sensitive topic, such as addiction rehabilitation, can be approached with deep research and thoughtful conceptualization. Her project beautifully balanced the poetic with the practical, responding elegantly to the complex needs identified in the brief. It's a reminder to clients: the brief is often more important and complex than it may appear."

The [Department of Architecture and Built Environment](#) at Northumbria University offers professionally accredited degree programmes taught in state-of-the-art studios and workshops. Discover more about the range of study programmes available at Northumbria by visiting www.northumbria.ac.uk/architecture

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--- Please contact media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk

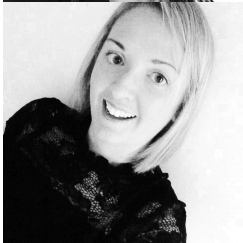


Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk