



A Public Art Plan For Dewsbury Town Centre



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Why Have A Public Art Plan?

_This Public Art Plan has been drawn up to consider how Dewsbury town centre could benefit from public art, and how local residents, businesses and community groups could get involved in the commissioning process. It highlights a range of possible public art interventions and potential sites in Dewsbury, as well as offering some practical tools and guidance in the commissioning process.

_This document has been produced for a range of stakeholders, to support the development of high-quality public art projects that can offer new opportunities for the residents of Dewsbury to experience arts and culture in the public realm.

Kirklees Council's 'Making Great Places: Making Places Great' Public Art Policy 2017¹ clearly outlines the Council's acknowledgement of the importance of Public Art, what it can do and the benefits of commissioning. The policy identifies how public art practice can contribute to the aspirations of the Council and is a useful advocacy document.

_The key messages from the policy are:

- an acknowledgement that public art can manifest in a variety of artforms
- that public art can involve local people in meaningful ways
- that public art can dovetail into existing regeneration schemes and other developments
- that artists can bring a range of versatile skills
- the clear aspirations of Kirklees.

Public art projects can reflect our heritage and histories, shared ambitions and values, aspirations and vision for the future, reflecting who we have been, and who we are now. Artists will always come up with ideas that we will never have considered, and can provide a way to include community voices and values in the processes of placemaking.

Involving local people in the commissioning process, in participatory activities and socially engaged practice, provides a range of opportunities and ways of engaging with our communities to create bespoke, unique artworks and experiences that can ensure meaningful engagement with businesses, residents and communities and transform places and their people.

We believe that all successful public art responds to local context and can reveal and celebrate heritage and stories of the place. Meaningful engagement with the public, and the communities of a place in the commissioning process, offers opportunities for active participation and to understand and take part in the creative process. Public art has an important role in helping a place tell its story, share its identity and look to the future.



Why Public Art For Dewsbury?

The **Dewsbury: Better Spaces** initiative seeks to develop a cohesive public realm through a series of spaces which link through the town, using existing spaces and creating new ones to deliver a distinct Dewsbury identity and legible environment. It presents an opportunity for public art commissions to be incorporated into public realm improvements and design briefs. At the same time, as new educational facilities, businesses and housing developments start to transform the town, there are opportunities for developers to commission new work to enhance their schemes with bespoke commissions that can engage their stakeholders and offer opportunities for learning and skills development. Integrating arts commissioning into new building developments and regeneration schemes has been adopted by many local authorities as good practice and as a means to create a dynamic and distinctive sense of place.

The key themes identified in the Better Spaces initiative offer specific opportunities for public art to have an impact in the town.

- **Young People:** with a diverse population younger than the national average, there is an opportunity to harness the ideas and ambitions of young people, through engaging with the many schools and community groups and in particular, students attending the new Dewsbury Learning Quarter.
- **Distinctive Economy:** The town centre has fewer chain shops than similar high streets and there are many independent shops in attractive and heritage buildings. This gives a rich landscape and heritage to explore when commissioning public art, and offer opportunities for shopkeepers to contribute in creating a distinct townscape for Dewsbury.
- **Reconnect:** Creating better physical connections across the ring road and through the town can attract more people to come into the town centre. Public art interventions such as gateway commissions, signage and routes through the town can make strong visual connections that help legibility and entice further exploration.

What Makes A Good Piece Of Public Art?

Local residents and business from Dewsbury came together in two workshops to find out more about the potential for public art in Dewsbury and to offer their thoughts about what does – and what doesn't – make a good piece of public art. 23 people in total came to the sessions, including local businesses and representatives from community groups, and eight local artists and designers.

- It offers a forward vision and shows a possible future for the town.
- It has a big impression and impact on the regeneration of an area.
- It changes expectations and making the area more cheerful.
- Art that you can discover or uncover, hidden artworks that can be found.
- You can interact with – for example through including light, noises, 'performing fountains'.
- It's sensitive to the community.
- Art that takes risks – uses technology, embracing new techniques.
- Responds to heritage and place, but looks to the future.
- Getting people involved at an early stage.
- Is respectful of the architecture present but doesn't have to copy it.

One participant summarised:

"It needs to be ambitious, have drive, include youth and have buy in from the public."

Some examples of 'good' public art included laser-cut poems in metal sheets, which was very moving when the viewer comes across it in the environment, and innovative street furniture bicycle racks and seats. One participant talked about an artwork that emerged on the pavement after rain, and another about an app that used augmented reality to change how the viewer sees the artwork with animations responding to the site. Anish Kapoor Bean sculpture in Chicago and Anthony Gormley's Another Place on Crosby Beach were both commended for being iconic for their locations, attracting tourism and offering great photo opportunities for Instagram.

Important Considerations:

- getting the balance right on selection panels and giving the public the chance to express radical ideas
- not making assumptions about what 'the public' want
- the quality of the work and how it responds to its environment
- getting young people involved and making public art that reflects their interests
- creating opportunities for local artists and supporting them – as well as commissions that bring fresh eyes from artists outside of the area.

"It's great when an artwork is totally associated with a place"

Potential Outcomes From Commissioning Public Art

Enhancing The Public Realm

Through artistic interventions, both temporary and permanent sculptural works and bringing artists in to liaise with planners and architects the public realm can be considerably improved. An artist's input will ensure a more bespoke, individual outcome for the development of the public realm.

A Strong Visual Identity For The Area

Some towns can become a little generic looking with similar off the shelf seating, standard paving and use of cost effective basic materials. Commissioning artwork will give an area a unique identity and through the research and consultation with communities artists can incorporate relevant local information or references within the outcomes.

Community Engagement

From the research phase of a commission, to taking part in artists selection and even participating in creating the work, communities are not just considered as end audiences in the public art process but more as collaborators, producers, and stakeholders in the artwork.

The Feel Good Factor – A Sense Of Pride & Renewed Confidence In The Area

As many commissions end with a physical artwork, the aesthetics of a place is improved and, through the engagement with the artists, a sense of ownership is developed. Sometimes the heritage of a place or hidden local meanings and stories can be highlighted giving people a greater understanding of their area and communities.

Learn New Skills

Often a commission will involve the artist running workshops locally to share their skills, raise awareness of the commission or invite participation. For example, an artist creating a bronze-cast series of artworks may invite local people to create a cast of an item associated with the town to be included in the work; an artist working in film may run a workshop in digital art for students to develop work that can be projected onto buildings.

Learning And Education Programmes

Creating education resources around a public art project can give schools and groups resources to explore the subject and the artistic practice and develop their understanding of the artist, medium or the heritage and history of the town.

Highlighting Of Local History

Many artists will take inspiration from the history of an area as a starting point to develop themes and ideas. Sometimes it is the hidden histories and personal stories that are of as much interest. These histories can be explored and acknowledged in a variety of ways through the outcome, from illustrations, written information, on plaques, through visual representation, or poetry performance.

Reduced Vandalism

Engagement activities can help to give an ownership of the work that helps it to be cared for and maintained, and less likely to be vandalised. Through engagement, people get to know the artist and what is involved in the creation of the works. It is also widely acknowledged that when an area is looked after and kept well maintained vandalism will be reduced. When artworks are repaired and cleaned immediately after damage the recurrence of repeated vandalism reduces.

Increased Tourism

Artworks can be a great pull for visitors, especially if there is a trail or temporary works and events that provide a one-off experience. People are generally looking for new and interesting experiences for their leisure and family time. Artworks can be incorporated into other tourism offers, such as on walking and cycling routes or part of an art and heritage trail or even providing great selfie opportunities for social media.

Increased Feeling Of Safety

Artworks can make a space feel more inviting and welcoming through introduction of bright colours and encouraging people to socialise and spend time in public spaces. Dark alleyways can be transformed into fun spaces and lighting commissions can brighten areas and provide clear routes.

Increased Investment

All of the above makes a place more attractive for inward investment. New business, relocation to an area and attracting higher visitor numbers is possible when an area has a strong identity, people enjoy visiting, living and working there and have a pride in their area. New strong visual identities can add to great marketing campaigns and change perceptions of a place.

Ability To Attract Further Funding

If a budget has been identified for a public art project this can also be used a lever to attract additional funds. This could be by applying to the Arts Council for a complimentary training programme or community engagement programme.



Community members getting involved in making wax moulds for casting



Students working with artist Aideen Barry to make an animated film

What Is Public Art?



There are a range of different types of public art, the appropriateness of which are dependent upon a number of factors – the commissioner, owner of the land/property and final work, funding sources and intended outcomes, the site, its use and the level of community involvement.

As all sites and places are different, and the people who interact with them are different, so it is important to tailor the artists brief to suit the specific site and intended audience. Practical considerations such as budget and long-term plans for an area will also influence the decisions around the right approach to take.

Permanent Sculptural and 3D Works

Permanent work can make a big impact on a town and space. Sculptural works are what comes to mind for most people when thinking about public art. These might include 3D representations of figures from the town's history, or representations of former industries from the town. It can contribute to giving a space a strong identity and act as visual markers and expressions of the heritage and personality of the town.

Considerations

Permanent works are expensive and there are cost implications for installation to consider. Ongoing maintenance and long-term maintenance and insurance is a big consideration. It is hard to select permanent work that everyone will like – they can often divide opinion sharply. Consultation processes within the selection and the artistic process therefore are very important. Good communication about the nature of the work, transparency about judging criteria and how work has been selected and how the work is funded are crucial.



Emmeline Pankhurst, Manchester,
artist Hazel Reeves



Water Wings, Bruce Williams,
Blackpool Promenade

Signage

There are often a myriad of opportunities to create signage within a town, street signs, directional signs 'to the market' or building names, entrance gateways, location markers, and maps all present opportunities.

Whilst there are regulations around much public signage there are ways to compliment this, or sometimes replace it with bespoke, unique signage, creatively designed and made in unusual attractive and durable materials. From handmade specially designed ceramic lettering or mosaic, to neon high impact signage, street signs, road names and building names can be animated and presented in a variety of ways to give places strong individual identities. Commissioning original signage can give a sense of real distinctiveness to a zone, building or neighbourhood.

Considerations

There are regulations around much public signage in the public realm, so consideration needs to be given to this as well as to ensure signage is legible and fulfils its principle purpose.



Tiled Street Sign, Northern Quarter, Manchester

Street Furniture & Lighting

Artists can develop street furniture that gives an area a unique look and feel as an alternative to off the shelf products. This can include seating arrangements, benches, picnic spaces, fencing, lighting, bollards, planters and also the soft landscaping such as planting arrangements. Practical necessities such as smoking or bus shelters, information stands and security barriers can all become artworks, and the engagement artists can have with the future users and surrounding communities can also add to the local ownership of the spaces and lead to reduced vandalism.

Considerations

- Long-term maintenance and vandalism.
- Can the works be easily repaired, cleaned, replacement or parts easily sourced?
- Durability.



'Seed' Lubna Chowdhary – Glazed brick benches, Orchard Park Estate, Photo: the artist

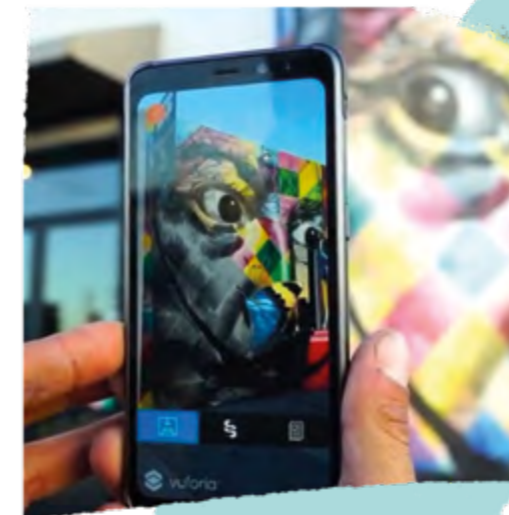


Walking/Transport Routes

Artworks can be developed for all kinds of transport routes, from permanent works within the paving, kerbs and road sides, to temporary interventions to animate and enliven walking and cycling routes. Interventions through QR codes or works that you listen to as you travel can also bring to life the communities and histories of a space and act as tourist attractions. Artworks can also provide sight lines and visual markers and indicators to highlight routes through a place, as well as interpretation of a site and its heritage.

Considerations

- As environments change and routes develop some works could become out of date and lose relevance over time.
- Technology glitches can be a problem.



Be Part: Augmented Reality App



Route Markers, Todmorden Canal Path

Temporary Loans

Some museums and collections may offer a facility to loan out artwork on a temporary basis. The recent Yorkshire Sculpture International saw work from the Yorkshire Sculpture Park collection shown on the shopping streets of Leeds city centre. The Fourth Plinth initiative in London curates work for the empty plinth on an annual basis.

Time-Limited Installations

Temporary works can be good for responding to changing spaces, spaces in flux or mid development, and for highlighting new initiatives under way or marking a key moment in the town's development or history. Spaces can be animated in dynamic ways through temporary interventions, which might include installations of interactive, sound based or light elements, video mapping or projection onto buildings, 'wrapping' of building or structures with banners, temporary pavilions or structures.

Considerations

As the artworks are not intended to last, physical works can be vulnerable to damage, intentional and unintentional. There needs to be excellent community engagement to ensure the value and process of the work is understood. Sometimes temporary works are loved so much there can be a demand on the council to make the work permanent, an example being the Gormley installation Another Place at Crosby Beach.



Damien Hirst, 'Hymn', Leeds, Yorkshire Sculpture International

Performance

Performance work in public space can be a highly engaging experience for communities, animating unexpected spaces and telling stories and reflecting our communities in sometimes fun, sometimes moving ways. From challenging performance art interventions, pop-up theatre in non-traditional arts spaces, or flash mob dance performances. These projects can bring an area to life and engage people in profound ways.

Considerations

Think about documentation and how the work can be experienced by people not able to attend, for example live streaming, filming or recording the work. It is important to ensure the safety of performers as well as audience members so risk assessments and enough support staff need to be in place.



The Performance Corporation 'Across the Lough' – a performance on a boat listened to via an iPod from the water's edge

Landmark Sculptural/ Architectural Features

Sometimes artists can be engaged to work on larger scale development in the public realm. This could involve working on a masterplan as part of a wider partnership to incorporate artistic interventions in, for example, a large plaza space or public square. An artist may work closely with an architect to design significant physical features within a town or landscape.

Some initiatives are able to attract work from renowned artists on a loan basis. For example, the Yorkshire Sculpture Park put works in Leeds city centre as part of the Yorkshire Sculpture International triennial.

_Considerations

These projects can be very time consuming and plans can change so contracts need to be very clear about what is expected of the artist and some flexibility drawn in for both sides. Often different specialists working on partnership projects don't always agree or have the same priorities so it is important the project manager is able to facilitate these discussions and appreciate the viewpoint of the artist.



Anthony Gormley, 'Another Place'

Working with existing buildings: Murals, Wall-scapes

There are a number of ways artists can work on existing buildings to highlight them, make use of blank gable ends, or to hide run down or vacant spaces. Methods used could include wrapping buildings using a variety of materials, or attaching material to scaffolding whilst work is ongoing. Murals, mosaic and relief sculptural works attached to buildings can be commissioned for both temporary and permanent outcomes.

_Considerations

These commissions can be expensive, as walls need preparing and often scaffolding and site security is needed whilst the work is produced.

Even if intended to be temporary, it can cost a lot to prepare surfaces, design and fabricate and install securely. It is important to have an idea of the future plan for the building so a realistic life span can be estimated for the work before preparing the brief.



'The Bird Towers', Phlegm, West Didsbury

Key Sites And Opportunities In Dewsbury

Dewsbury Railway Station

The railway station is an historic and distinctive building that creates a main entrance to the town. A new public realm to the frontage of the station has created a high quality environment at the entrance to the town. Along with paving and new street furniture, there is new tree planting.

_There is potential for a number of public art interventions:

- gateway or landmark sculpture
- decorative tree guards
- wall panels
- projections (the Platform 1 waiting room window has been specially treated to provide a screening facility).



Around Dewsbury Railway Station

The railway viaduct is a dramatic structure which would lend itself to lighting or projection projects. The views from the viaduct over the town for train travellers are fleeting but offer a high level viewing 'platform' for the tens of thousands of rail travellers passing along the route every day.

The Highgate Beds factory frontage towers over the ring road and it, along with its chimney, is a prominent site which currently bears a digital clock.

The typography used across the Machell Bros Mill offers a strong visual identify for this historic building. Using this font to create a typographic 'banner' around the town at different sites would be an interesting way to unite diverse locations that share a textiles heritage.

Sited underneath the viaduct is 'Flirting with the past' – two-figure sculpture created by Jason Thompson 2005 in celebration of Dewsbury history, funded by Bing executive homes and Kirklees Council. More commonly known as the 'Millworker and the Rugby player', the work would benefit from re-siting/ lighting, as it has become somewhat lost against the busy road.



Pioneer House & Northgate

Pioneer House – built as the Co-operative Central Stores for the town in 1880, is a Grade 2 listed building which will become the new town centre campus for Kirklees College in Autumn 2020. This landmark building is a prominent gateway into the town, visible from the ring road and form the railway lie, and will be draw thousands of students into the area every day.

_The area will be more pedestrian friendly, and as a result the landscaped entrances would lend themselves to sculptural seating or planters.

The flat roof and parapet of Pioneer House, which faces the railway station, offers a platform for temporary sited work that could be seen from passing trains.

The facade of Pioneer House offers an elevation with windows at three levels and rich architectural features. Commissions for video-mapping and light projections would animate the building, help tell its story of renewal and reveal its fascinating history.



Illuminos: Projection Mapping, Bournemouth

Croft Street Quarter

In the area between Croft and Bond Street, a number of small creative enterprises are establishing themselves - including the Creative Craft Centre and Bond Street Vintage, alongside traditional fabric shops.

This area could be 'branded' to celebrate the independent businesses as a 'creative quarter'.

Commissioning special street signs within the area would serve to reinforce this identity or special events and weekends, handmade bunting could be commissioned to be strung around this area.



Painted Street Frontages

Walls and Windows

The areas between Croft Street, Union Street and Daisy Hill are yet to be regenerated and include a number of empty shop units, some with shutters or hoardings erected, along with some large gable ends and walls.

Commissions for temporary wall artworks and murals would enhance the area and signify renewal and regeneration to come.

The area has many hidden spaces amongst the disused plots and temporary interventions, to create installations to interpret the heritage of the area, could provide an opportunity to explore the town as part of events such as Heritage Open days.



Mosaic, Mark Kennedy



Temporary Hoardings showing work underway and history of the site; Artist & Photo Len Grant

The Market

Dewsbury Market combines internal and external stalls and attracts large numbers of shoppers to the area on market days – Wednesdays and Saturdays. The colour, diversity and life of the market make this a rich source of material for an artist and many people regard it as the heart of the town.

Long and short term residencies, leading to the creation of works that could provide signage or interpretation for the market – for example, a guide to all the produce on sale and the countries they come from, a market map to get to know your market and store holders – would engage market traders and shoppers alike.

Empty market stalls can be used to provide a focus for on-going consultation, presentation or workshop activity. Interior space can be used to offer a pop-up gallery and space for activities or student exhibitions.

At the entrances to the market – on Whitehall Way, new signage could highlight the market area. The now disused railway arches and embankment wall offer large canvases for projection or wall artworks.

Depending on how the market is reconfigured, scope exists to create a new public space within the market, a site perhaps for events and entertainment.



Dissolve: Stockton High Street: Event arena, water fountains and dance commission: Ruth Jones/Dissolve Photo John Hamilton

Northgate New Public Realm

Currently the area immediately to the south of Pioneer House is semi derelict and unattractive. There is scope for a 'pocket park', as part of new public realm in this area. This would provide much needed green space and provide a social area for students.

The space could suit a permanent sculptural work, commemorating the heritage of the area, or sculptural seating, planters, tree guards; or features in the walk ways and pavements to create routes.



**Bronze Foot prints, Elaine Griffin,
part of the 'Landmarks' series**



Town Park, Longcauseway

The Memorial Gardens and Long Causeway offer opportunities for artists to work in collaboration with landscape designers to create a harmonious and distinct scheme, which could include, planting, furniture, play spaces and lighting.

The 'hidden' beck which runs below the site offers a source of inspiration and lends itself to interpretations on the site. If the site becomes well used as a new park, temporary interventions such as a temporary plinth – whereby local artists are offered the opportunity to create and show working on a rolling basis – could be considered. Temporary meeting or performance spaces, pavilions or structures, could be created to complement the band stand and to serve as a focus for community events.



**Installation (2018) Folded Cardboard
Polyhedra – Saba Rifat**

Town Hall

The Town Hall offers an impressive frontage to the only sizeable meeting and event space in town. Whilst the square itself is lacking in features, this is an asset when it is used for events – so any new public realm or commissions need to consider future usage.

Currently the Sculpture 'The Good Samaritans' by Ian Judd, occupies a prominent space at the foot of the town hall square. During local consultation, there were comments that the sentiment behind this work and the reference to the kindness of Dewsbury people was lost, as there is no interpretation of the work offered.

- The large end wall of Empire House offers a large scale canvas for a painted wall work.
- The Town Hall itself offers a façade that could be interpreted using video mapping and projected animations.
- Empty alcoves on the Wakefield Street entrance of the building could house sculptural commissions showing a hidden side of the Town Hall or people connected with it.



'The Good Samaritan' by Ian Judd

Market Place

Market Place a large expanse with a pergola, existing planters and street furniture. Like the Town Hall Square, it is used as a main space for events and the site links to the town hall square across the roadway. As an events space, there is a need to retain flexibility, and for any artworks here to create an environment with good sight lines.



Nautilus Seat, Southport
Artist: Kate Maddison, Chrysalis Arts



Spiral Time, Sowerby
Artist: Kate Maddison, Chrysalis Arts



Spiral Time, Sowerby
Artist: Kate Maddison, Chrysalis Arts

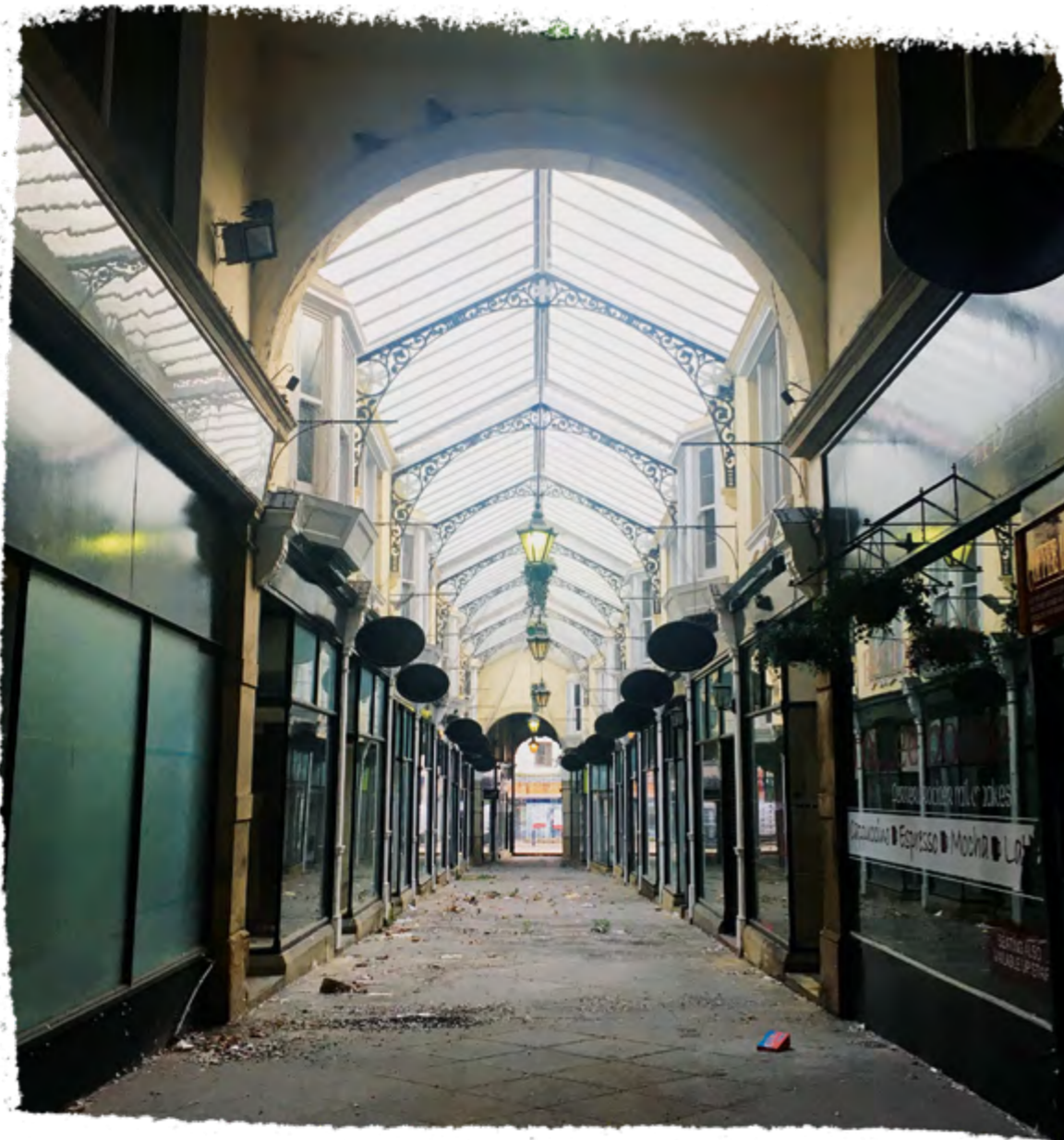


Spiral & Pergola, Sowerby
Artist: Kate Maddison, Chrysalis Arts

The Arcades

Dewsbury's arcades are much loved feature of the town – an unusual pair of parallel arcades, built between 1911 and 1916, running at an acute angle between two streets and opening onto the market area. Work that respects their heritage and artistic integrity whilst shining a spotlight on these heritage gems could include glass art, suspended installations and lighting. The flooring of the arcades offer opportunities for new tiled designs.

The Arcade on Market Place also offers opportunities for public art as part of the re-imagined use of this important building.



Bus Station

Future development of the bus station could incorporate public art in a number of ways to enhance the user experience. Seating and works incorporated into waiting areas, wall panels and lighting could all be considered.

- A current commission is underway to create mural panels for the bus station.
- A gateway feature would help to identify the bus station from a distance.
- A walking route between the bus station, town centre and railway station would create greater access into and across the town. This could be achieved with signage, artworks embedded into the pavement or walls, or by using augmented reality or QR codes that can be collected digitally.



'Athena Rising', Nomad Clan, Leeds

Financing

Costs

Considering the number of potential locations within the town centre, and range of types of public art that could be commissioned, it is estimated that a comprehensive five-year programme to make an impact in the town, could cost in the region of £500,000.

Funding

Although the council would need to provide the core funding for the programme, there would be opportunities to use this to lever match funding from funders such as Arts Council England, trusts and foundations. Of particular interest to these funders would be projects to engage local communities in commissioning and for audience development, education and learning programmes.

There is potential to seek developer contributions as well as support in kind from developers, land or building owners, and community groups.

This additional funding would ensure that the impact of the council's investment and value for money is maximised.

Recommendations

Plan For The Management Of Commissions

There is a lot involved in the successful management of any public art project or programme. It is advisable to have a dedicated role either within the council or via external expertise to oversee this and take a strategic approach to the overall programme, future funding and relation to the wider council context and ongoing developments.

Maintenance Plans

- No artwork will have a totally permanent life, even permanent sculptural works require maintenance and consideration of changing environments and scrutiny against future contemporary practice.
- Decommissioning plans, ownership and maintenance plans and budgets all need to be in place and considered from the outset of planning the commission.
- Working with new materials and new technologies may bring unexpected challenges or upkeep considerations. They can also bring unexpected opportunities to update and keep an artwork active and developing over time.
- Alternatively, an artwork assumed to be temporary could be reconsidered as a more permanent work or may be taken into ownership by a local group or organisation.
- Archiving, documentation and rights to own and re-share work (such as publication of a limited edition product, or showing of a film based outcome) need to be fairly negotiated and agreed with the artist for any future production, display or adaptation. Payment or royalties need to be considered, and copyright should remain with the artist and should be outlined in the contract.



Diversity Within The Process

All attempts should be made to ensure the entire process is open, transparent, accessible and inclusive. This can include:

- ensuring diversity within the planning of the projects and the selection panels
- including all relevant accessibility information within the brief
- making sure site visits are accessible and actively encouraging interested artists or local community to inform of any barriers to their involvement of accessibility needs
- identifying who are and are not being approached to work with artists
- engaging positively with all groups of the community as long term collaborators within individual projects and the wider programme, as decision makers, facilitators, producers, as well as end audience members
- ensuring all marketing is inclusive, is targeted to all, and includes all relevant accessibility information
- continuously evaluate and record all the above to identify gaps or trends that need to be addressed.

Local Artist Professional Development And Mentoring

Having an ongoing public art programme in place provides a god opportunity to develop a professional development plan for local artists to improve the skills of local artists, their chances of securing opportunities, makes the area an attractive place for artists to work and live. This could include:

- talks and skills sharing with commissioned artists
- networking events
- training sessions
- bursary opportunities for smaller scale projects running alongside the commissioning programme
- shadowing opportunities with selected artists.



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All photos N. Barrett/G. Seville
unless otherwise stated.