

Inspiring creative approaches for town centres

Benefits, advocacy and commissioning guidance

ART IN THE OPEN

Art in the Open: Inspiring creative approaches for town centres

Benefits, advocacy and commissioning guidance

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Preface

Towns and city centres provide a range of services and facilities and are the central hub for the local community. For both customer and trader it is essential that they are clean, safe and easily accessible. However, the desire to be working, using or living in a centre which offers its own distinctive environment, creating a willingness to engage and a sense of place, is equally significant.

In a global economy where we can research, view and order goods and services at the touch of a button we need to ensure that we are creating memorable spaces that people want to spend time in. We need to utilise our public spaces adding human creativity to deliver additional value and greater connectivity with the local community, which in turn brings economic well being and long term sustainability.

The addition of arts in town and city centres is key to this approach and this toolkit brings together a wealth of information and guidance for partnerships wishing to introduce art projects.

Jacquie Reilly

Partnership Development and BIDs Director
Association of Town Centre Management

Introduction

Inspiring Creative Approaches to Town Centres aims to support the development of arts for town centres. With the arts becoming more recognised as contributing to economic and business objectives for Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Town Centre Partnerships, this toolkit looks at what the benefits are and how projects can be realised.

Working with the arts is about creating a more distinctive and welcoming environment and many town centres already have experience of realising arts projects such as festivals and events. Working closely with artists on new commissions is also becoming more common-place and developers, local authorities and other regeneration agencies are commissioning artists to help make more meaningful places.

Inspiring Creative Approaches to Town Centres builds on these experiences, to help expand opportunities and ways of animating town centres. This is a toolkit for those interested in commissioning artists for temporary, permanent and ephemeral projects for town centres either as a one-off or part of a longer-term programme. Arts projects in town centres are initiated by a wide variety of people and bodies and are realised through collaboration and partnerships. The toolkit is aimed at all those involved in town centre management, including non-arts and arts professionals.

Artists can approach places in unexpected ways, animating and questioning our perceptions of our everyday environments. Sections 2 and 3 of the toolkit focus on the benefits of engaging with art and artists, the importance of advocacy to all those involved in town centres, and how this advocacy can be embedded as part of the commissioning process. Sections 4 and 5 give an overview to commissioning practice and more detailed guidance, including charts of 'key steps' that are designed to help highlight questions to ask and consider during the commissioning process. Both these sections are informed by principles of good practice to help realise successful projects. An understanding of quality and realising the full potential of commissioning underpins the document as the most important maxim to ensure long-term successful arts projects and their benefits.

Inspiring Creative Approaches to Town Centres has been researched and prepared by Art in the Open working with Arts Council England, London, the Association of Town Centre Management and Arts & Business. A workshop and feedback from Town Centre Managers in January 2008 has informed this document. Art in the Open is part of Open House, the architecture education organisation. It is an advocate for art in the public realm, promoting good practice, understanding and appreciation of its potential to affect the public realm.



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Introduction

Art and town centres

As places for gatherings, events, protests and festivals our town centres play an important role in our communal lives. They are spaces to mark, celebrate, engage and identify with, culturally and socially. Commissioning artists is part of articulating this meaning and activity in our town centres whether to celebrate a significant event or individual, help create a more beautiful space or brighten up a dull day.

A recent survey of 101 town centres found that performance events were judged to be the most successful in meeting local objectives, by 80% of respondents.¹ The lowest ratings were for public art and exhibitions at 47%, which were not seen to meet town centre objectives so easily. Performance and events are very much part of the character of our town centres. However, alongside these activities there are many other distinctive ways in which artists can work in the public realm.

Turin's *Luci d'Artista*, an annual series of winter lighting commissions by internationally recognised artists, was initiated by its local shop-keepers. To encourage footfall along one of Turin's main shopping streets the local businesses decided to commission an artist to create new Christmas lighting. The commission was reported in the local media and in response Turin's two main museums foresaw further potential to expand the programme longer-term with a focus on winter rather than Christmas lighting. The following year eight international artists were commissioned. As well as becoming a local attraction the programme has now brought in an international audience and was one of the factors in winning the bid for the 2004 Winter Olympic Games.

Turin's experience illustrates how the practice of public art has expanded over the last decade to include not only standalone sculptures but many other approaches to town centres. As well as winter lighting commissions these include sound commissions, newly designed elements of street furniture, artists as members of design teams, temporary hoardings, projections and artist-led projects which engage with diverse communities and situations.

Though not currently one of the main arts approaches by BIDs and other town centre initiatives, public art can help the 'cleaner, greener, safer' objectives if the right artist is selected and projects can be creatively developed. The guidance section in this toolkit focuses on working with artists to develop public art projects in their widest sense to help develop this area of opportunity for town centres.



Top Turin: **Piccoli Spiriti Bleu**, Rebecca Horn, 2000, Chiesa di Santa Maria al Monte dei Cappuccini for *Luci d'Artista*, Turin
Bottom Peckham: **Bellenden Road**, Zandra Rhodes, 2006, Peckham, London. Photo: Jon Walters

¹ Adding Value and a Competitive Edge: The Business Case For Using The Arts in Town Centres and Business Improvement Districts, Final Report August 2006, Creative Cultures, Cultural Capital Ltd, Perfect Moment, commissioned by Arts Council England, Arts and Business and the Association of Town Centre Management.

Introduction

Art and town centres



Top Ashford: **Universal Synchronicity – Stencilled Road Graphics**, Roadsworth, 2007, Ashford, Kent. Curated by Michael Pinsky, programme devised by RKL Consultants, commissioned by Kent County Council. Photo: courtesy PhotoGenic
Bottom Kingston: **K2**, Liz Rideal, 2006, Rose Theatre, Kingston, London. Photo courtesy: Liz Rideal



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Benefits: Overview

Inspiring Creative Approaches for Town Centres builds on an earlier report, *Adding Value and a Competitive Edge: The Business Case for Using the Arts in Town Centres and Business Improvement Districts*.² This looked at the factors which helped produce successful involvement of art and artists in town centres and how that good practice can be replicated elsewhere. The report outlined that the arts are perceived to impact on the following areas:

- Quality of life
- Renovation of industrial/heritage districts
- Safer streets
- Establishing a distinctive brand
- Helping to attract a highly skilled workforce
- Increasing diversity of populations and experiences

The report also looked at the role of arts in BIDs and town centres internationally and how the use of arts directly related to the positioning and marketing of urban centres within the globalised economy. The World Tourism Organisation reported that arts and wider cultural activity helps with differentiation and will become increasingly important to successful visitor attraction.

Coventry Phoenix Initiative, 1998-2004

Benefits

- **Increased safety (a new traffic-free route through the city)**
- **A catalyst for inward investment**
- **Changed perception and raised city profile nationally and internationally**
- **Achieved high quality result by engaging with artists from the start**

Project summary

The Phoenix Initiative was an ambitious plan by Coventry City Council to regenerate the area around the city centre, taken forward by the Council, Advantage West Midlands and the Millennium Commission. The Initiative has made the run-down city centre a more attractive place, creating a safe pedestrian route through the centre and renewing investor confidence. The scheme was shortlisted for the architectural Stirling Prize in 2004 and received the UN International Award for the most liveable city in 2005.

MJP Architects and landscape architects Rummey Design collaborated closely with seven visual artists and one poet, guided by a Public Art Strategy written by the Public Art Commissions Agency (PACA).

For more information see the longer case study in appendices pp 39–41 and the case study sections of the following websites: www.publicartonline.org.uk and www.cabe.org.uk

2 *Ibid.*

Benefits

The arts and 'cleaner, greener, safer'

Public Art can be a very valuable tool in creating local distinctiveness. Each piece of art is unique and can become an important local landmark that people remember and come to associate with a particular town or location. They can provide an important photo-opportunity for visitors or a subject that can be used to market or promote a location. In addition to being physical and visual landmarks public art can also become social landmarks where people meet and mini-cultures can develop. It is also useful to keep the definition of public art as broad as possible. Involving artists in the design of everyday objects such as seats, railings, tree grilles or bollards can create an overall environment which is distinctive, unique and memorable.

Christopher Pycroft

Development Manager
Douglas Development Partnership, Isle of Man

The objectives of BIDs and Town Centre Partnerships are often characterised as 'cleaner, greener and safer'. Though there is little explicit reference in these objectives to arts activities, analysis shows that arts activities are, in fact, being used to address these objectives by BIDs and Town Centre Partnerships. Many town centre initiatives already work on large-scale arts projects often as festivals and events.

A survey of 101 town centres³ asked about their use of the arts and found that 82% of UK BIDs and town centre initiatives have used arts activities with the following results:

- 40% reported positive impacts on visitor/customer satisfaction
- 36% reported an increase in footfall and sales
- 31% reported a positive impact on their profile and public relations

Arts projects can help to imaginatively meet the cleaner, greener, safer agenda, often in a variety of ways. With the current concerns over growing youth street crime, strategies for city/town animation which appropriately co-ordinate general arts, cultural and entertainment activities and targeted programmes for particular social groups can provide more imaginative responses. Investing and supporting the town centre's cultural offer helps its business aims, supporting issues such as the development of the knowledge-based economy, quality of life, and the differentiation of places.

Fundamentally, arts projects help create places that people wish to visit and spend time in. Including an artist's creative vision in a town centre's regeneration signals that place as unique and distinctive; or taking part in the annual visual arts festival The Big Draw signals activity and engagement around a town centre and increases footfall; or commissioning an artist to design winter lighting or light a key building can influence perceptions of safety and increase footfall.

It is also important to engage in commissioning art for its own appreciation and recognition, rather than undertaking a project which could be better realised through other means. Artists approach places and opportunities in many different ways and these projects can often produce benefits for a range of objectives across the cleaner, greener, safer agenda. Matching the right approach to the most appropriate opportunity is important to engage with artists creatively and ensure successful, high quality projects.

3 *Ibid.*

Benefits

Current arts approaches in town centres

Internal Arts Commitment: Bedford BID

Benefits

- A PR opportunity
- Increased footfall
- Gave a better image for the town centre helping towards making it cleaner and safer
- Increased trade
- Triggered a rise in property prices

Project summary

Bedford BID's four core projects ('Come Around to our Town', 'Be Safe, Be Smiling', 'Small Is Beautiful', 'Easy Come Easy Go') have included two cultural initiatives. The arts are not directly mentioned in the BID programme, but instead are embedded in the overall package. Rather than being seen as an 'optional add-on', they have been used as another mechanism for getting results in the four key target areas. *Happen* (developed in partnership with Arts & Business) used a number of artistic interventions to help improve Bedford's Lime Street in order to encourage footfall and trade. *Around The World In 80 Days* in summer 2007 included a variety of dance and music performances to enliven the thirteen-week programme, which sought to promote and draw people to the town centre. For more information see www.comearoundtobedford.t83.net or contact the Bedford BID office, on freephone 0800 013 0339.

Benefits

Current arts approaches in town centres

External Arts Partnership: Carlisle Town Centre

DemoGraphics, an event organised as part of The Big Draw annual event, 2007
Carlisle City Centre, pedestrian precinct, organised by West Walls Studios

Benefits

- Created an attractive focus in the town centre
- Temporarily increased footfall
- Engaged a large number of young people giving them a positive diversionary activity
- Engaged local people, bridging the gap between them and developers
- Created positive press coverage for Carlisle; and won a Big Draw Award

Project summary

DemoGraphics was a temporary event over two weekends for The Big Draw 2007, organised by the artist studios, West Walls. It coincided with local Democracy Week and, to reflect this, the artists focused on local political issues around redevelopment and cultural strategy in Carlisle, as a theme for the project. A marquee was set-up at the heart of the pedestrian precinct and a variety of drawing-based activities were offered. Two thirds of participants were young people, who promoted the event by 'texting their friends to encourage them to come over and join in'. The event also encouraged local people to air their views on local issues via a non-threatening and inclusive art-based project and led to follow-up work with local regeneration consultants, the 'Carlisle Renaissance'.

Carlisle TCM, Fred Walker, supported the 2007 event (as well as previous initiatives) and felt that, when done properly, such activities can help encourage people to the town centre. They offer a positive activity to occupy local young people, which can help to discourage anti-social behaviour. Aligning the aims of artists' organisations and those of town centres is important to help make a long-term contribution to the town.

For more information, see www.thebigdraw.org.uk or contact West Walls Studios Director, Paul Taylor, on west.walls@virgin.net.



Carlisle: **Demographics**, West Walls Studios, 2007, The Big Draw, Carlisle. Photo: Paul Taylor

Advocacy: Overview

Fundamentally, art is about challenging our expectations and preconceptions and this means that good art will always be the subject of debate and discussion. This section of the toolkit considers how to gather support from businesses, town centre users, local authorities and others for commissioning art and artists in town centres.

Inspiring businesses, promoting ownership, listening to concerns and advice are all important advocacy tools. Although the arts are being used, there are many challenges to using them effectively that are not just financial. The nature of art and the lack of its understanding by the business sector, poor communications, planning and a need to deal effectively with health and safety issues have all been indicated as concerns by those involved in town centre management. Making the case to initiate projects and then thinking about how to sustain them, as with any other project, is an important part of the commissioning process. Effective advocacy can make the difference as to whether funding is raised and a project realised.

Advocacy

Making the case

In making the case for working with art and artists, it is important to identify who needs to be influenced and the best ways to do this. Promoting what makes your project unique and how it can benefit the town centre, BIDs or other initiatives is key. The previous section outlines some of the benefits for working with the arts in town centres and how they can support the town centre objectives. Identifying examples of similar projects (see highlighted snapshots in 'Benefits', 'Commissioning practice: Good practice' sections and 'Case Studies' in the appendices) and their benefits can help support your case for commissioning, including talking to the project's organisers. It is very likely that there are already arts projects which have happened in your town centre, and finding out about these and what made them successful or not can help build your case.

Referring to policy documents can also help make the case for commissioning. Across the UK there is policy support within national and local government and other agencies such as Arts Council England for linking arts and cultural development with economic, social and environmental issues. The local or county council's cultural, sustainable community and environmental strategies can also include references (see appendices for information on relevant policies).

Some developers also support working with artists, sometimes having their own in-house public art policies or strategies. They recognise the role of artists in helping to make more meaningful and engaging places. For example, Argent worked with artist Paul de Monchaux on Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, and are continuing this commitment to working with artists with their new development at King's Cross, London.

Supporting the commissioning process

Getting the right messages out in the right ways by thinking holistically about opportunities for consultation, marketing and evaluation will support your commission. Consider who can champion the project and when and where support is needed from stakeholders. The following steps can help:

Embedding into town centre approach

Thinking about how other projects in the town centre are realised and embedding the commission into existing structures can help the commission be seen more holistically and help maximise opportunities. Influencing Local Development Frameworks and Development Briefs can help ensure that budgets are available and maximised in the long term. Clear objectives for the commission from the town centre perspective help artists judge the appropriateness of their work and proposals for this context.

Steering groups

Steering groups are an effective mechanism to develop ownership and support, and to gather an informed opinion on the opportunities and the viability of a potential commission. Having arts representation on a steering group can help ensure that well-informed decisions are taken and support quality. Formal feedback by members to their organisations helps maintain buy-in.

Champions, ownership and political will

You may find that there is a natural champion for a project. This could be a local councillor or senior local authority officer working in cultural services, public realm or regeneration. They may be useful spokespeople to spread understanding about the project. Linking them with other advocates such as Arts Council officers and with local gallery and museum curators can also help inform them and their approach.

Study opportunities

Fostering links with other groups and organisations to share information and advice – such as cultural groupings with Local Strategic Partnerships – can support projects and working methods. Encouraging study visits, exchanges and mentoring or ‘twinning’ where there has been successful use of the arts within town centre management/partnerships can also support learning.

Using consultation and evaluation

Consulting with local businesses, stakeholders and visitors can help pitch a project appropriately. Evaluating through feedback and outputs can build up information to promote subsequent projects.

Commissioning practice: Overview

This guidance part of the toolkit focuses on commissioning rather than other kinds of arts provision, although some information here will be applicable to these situations.

The term 'commission' in this context means:

- New artwork by artists whether temporary, permanent or a one-off event
- Responding to place, issue or site

For town centres this means commissioning artworks in places where they do not normally appear, often outside in public space rather than in a controlled internal environment. Performance and large-scale events are exceptional in terms of the unique size and shape the commission has and the range and size of the audience. There are particular legislative, licensing and health and safety hurdles involved in staging these events and other toolkits should be referred to for events and festivals (see appendices). There is also much understanding and shared knowledge of events within town centre management already.

Every commission is unique and working with artists requires commitment, trust and respect on both sides: apart from the amount of time it takes to manage a commissioning process, their involvement can require a significant amount of input. There is no single way to commission an artist and this guidance recognises that every opportunity is different. Commissioning artists is often challenging and, when good practice is followed on both sides, hopefully rewarding.

Commissioning practice

Good practice

The toolkit is based on the principles of good practice that were identified through the *Business Case* report⁴ and other research with Town Centre Managers. These principles are inspired by a holistic approach to the commissioning process.

Ensuring quality

Ensuring a high quality commission is an overriding principle of good practice. Quality means that a commission is more than a sum of its parts and in some way responds to a place/issue, whether permanently or temporarily. Criteria to be considered are its character/identity, appropriateness/site specificity, and if it is inspiring/innovative, integrated, accessible/legible and, if permanent, has longevity.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's major public work *Under Scan* was commissioned by the East Midlands Development Agency as an interactive installation that could be transferred to a number of different cities across the region. Lozano-Hemmer is an internationally recognised artist whose work questions our use of public space. A specialist consultancy was engaged to produce the commission and ensure that the commission fulfilled the artist's vision. As a participatory artwork which tracked movement, the commission has engaged local people at each site, allowing it to feel site-specific in each town centre.

For more information see: www.lozano-hemmer.com



Under Scan, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, 2006, Northampton, UK. Photo: Antimodular

4 *Ibid.*

Good practice

Sharing a vision

A town centre's cultural vision needs to be shared and owned by as many stakeholders as possible. Involving key stakeholders, businesses and visitors is key to the commission's reception and ownership. Artists' contributions can also be invited and can provide valuable insights for opportunities and approaches.

For the Stevenage Town Centre Gardens redevelopment, Stevenage Borough Council commissioned the Green Heart Partnership (GHP) to undertake and oversee community consultation and masterplanning. GHP in turn commissioned artists and worked closely with a consultancy to engage the community throughout the masterplanning process. For more information, see the project section of www.greenheartpartnership.org

Thinking and planning longer-term

Creating and building a cultural identity for a town centre is more than a one-off activity and needs to be thought and planned in the longer term. Audiences for cultural programmes are built up over time.

In Brentwood town centre, artists (also working with local schools) created a trail of art displayed in shop windows. The success of this and other similar schemes resulted in the Town Centre Manager working with Essex County Council to commission an extensive £5.4 million programme of upgrading the streetscape, presenting the opportunity for an artist to integrate artistic solutions into the refurbishment. For more information see *Adding Value and a Competitive Edge: The Business Case For Using The Arts in Town Centres and Business Improvement Districts*, Final Report August 2006, Creative Cultures, Cultural Capital Ltd, Perfect Moment, commissioned by Arts Council England, Arts & Business and the Association of Town Centre Management.

Good practice



Using a range of funding sources

Making commissions feasible will often mean creating budgets through a wide range of funding sources. This may mean accessing monies through planning agreements as well as attracting business support.

Richard Kindersley's work *Frost Fairs* in 1997 (five large slate panels for the Southwark Bridge underpass in south London) was achieved through a combination of public and private funding for example, from Southwark Council, Sainsbury's and The Financial Times.

For details see *Open Space: Art in the Public Realm in London 1995-2005*, Jemima Montagu (ed.), Arts Council England, London, 2007.

Southwark: **Frost Fairs**, Richard Kindersley, 1997, Southwark, London.
Photo courtesy: Southwark Council

Commissioning practice

Good practice



Ownership, consultation and maintenance

Consultation processes working with local communities can often help ensure ownership and minimise maintenance. Thinking about maintenance of projects upfront before realising them means that they can be looked after appropriately. Vandalism is one of the biggest fears and realities around commissioning and tackling this realistically can make or break a commission.

As part of the Castleford Project, which aims to create a more vibrant town centre, *Cratehouse* for Castleford (by artists Winter and Hörbelt) was commissioned by Arts Council England and curated by Yorkshire Sculpture Park. This sculptural structure was intended to increase footfall and a sense of destination for the area. Contact was made with a few active community groups who have helped develop the project. They managed to secure funding for an outreach officer to maximise the opportunities it has presented and the residents were successful in extending the original planning permission from six months to at least two years. For more information see www.castlefordheritagetrust.org.uk



Castleford: **Cratehouse**, Winter and Hörbelt, 2006 – 2008, Castleford.
Photo: courtesy Jonty Wilde and the artists

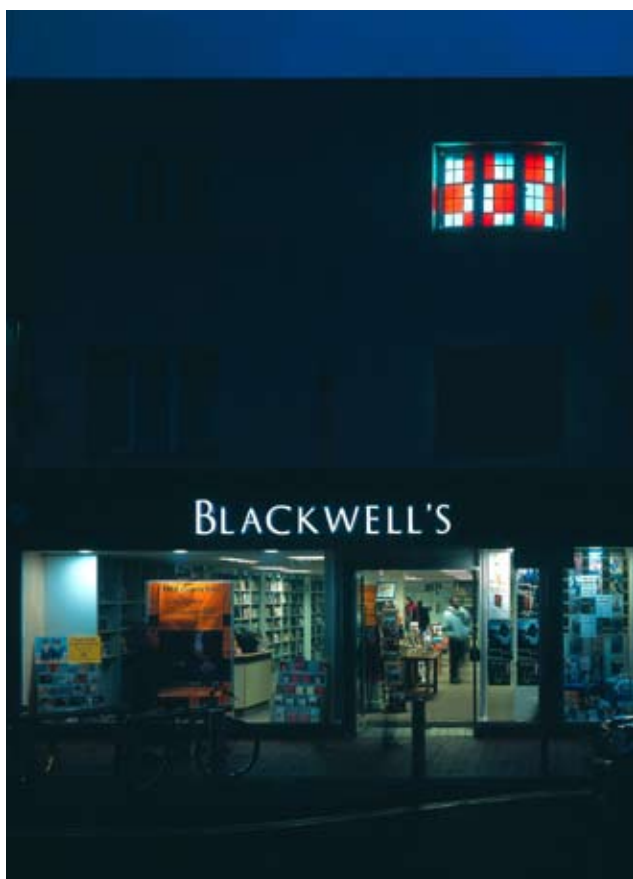
Commissioning practice

Good practice

Evaluating and demonstrating success

Thinking early on about how you will know whether a commission has been successful means that you can demonstrate success back to your stakeholders.

At Reading, the borough council's successful participation in Art at the Centre (one of three pilot schemes funded by Arts Council England South East) resulted in a four year programme of temporary and permanent commissions across the town centre. The programme in Reading has since been re-launched as Artists in the City and the pilot has expanded into a borough-wide public art strategy and programme. Across the South East region the pilot attracted £20 for every £1 of Arts Council funding resulting in a £5.9 million three-year programme. For more information, see www.artistsinthecity.org.uk or contact Tammy Bedford, Arts Manager, on 0118 939 0394 or tammy.bedford@reading.gov.uk.

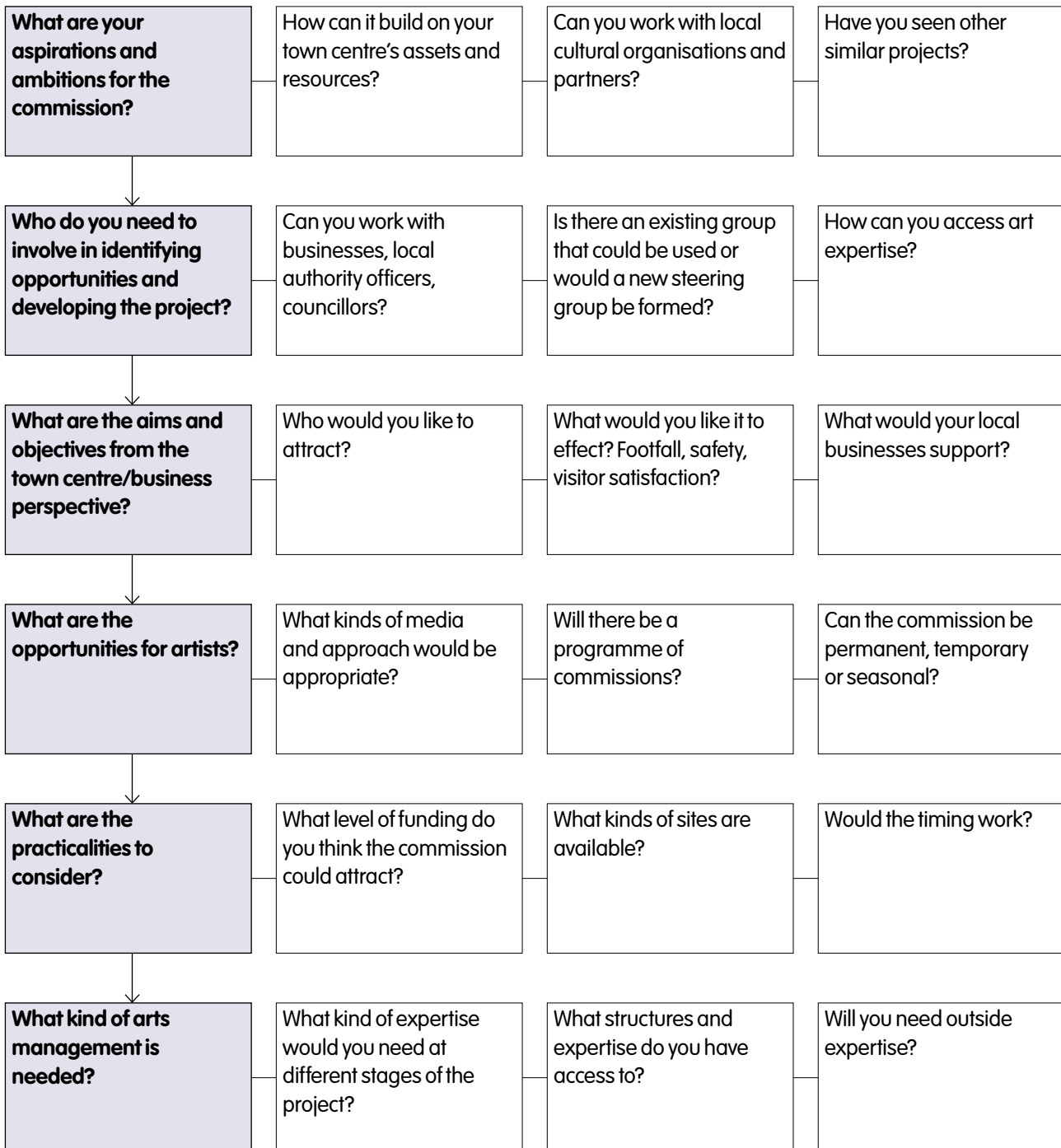


Reading: **Dwelling**, David Ward, inaugurated 2005, commissioned by Artists in the City, Reading.

Commissioning guidance: Scoping – Developing a vision

Key steps

This section is a practical guide to various stages in the commissioning process building on good practice. Each stage uses a chart of key steps with highlighted questions, followed by supporting background information for each of the main questions. The aim of this section is to help you think about the process in more detail to achieve a successful commission.



Scoping – Background

i. What are your aspirations and ambitions for the project?

Every art project is unique and responds to different circumstances and contexts. Working with artists is about embracing the unexpected. At the outset of developing a commission it is important to scope the aspirations and parameters. At the heart of conceiving an opportunity is how it can help animate a place – this can be both in terms of appearance and in attracting people. Thinking about how to create a high quality commission is crucial to the longevity of its effect.

There are a complex web of factors that create success and impact in one location which are not always directly transferable to other places. These can include combinations or confluences of: size, location, baseline starting point, heritage, tradition, presence of creative industries, influence of key players and political will. Working with the strengths of a town centre and highlighting the opportunities will ultimately help competitive differentiation.

For instance, there maybe local cultural organisations interested in working to support a project; empty shops with frontage that a project could use; particular traditions associated with the town. Other opportunities could be the permanent upgrading of the streetscape or other forms of environmental/building work where budgets could be maximised to create opportunities. A town's heritage, whether historic or recent, could be the beginnings of a commission.

ii. Who do you need to involve in identifying opportunities and developing the project?

It is good practice for a project to be overseen and supported by a steering or management group. This group will effectively own the project and can act as positive advocates. Members could include local authority officers, councillors, arts organisations, funders, businesses and town centre users.

This group can help identify who then needs to be involved at what stage and how this should happen. You may want to consider asking one of the members to act as a spokesperson for the project – speaking to the press and being present at any public consultation meetings. A workshop with relevant stakeholders could be a useful way to explore these questions and could involve a broader base of businesses and town centre users.

It is important to identify the most relevant representatives from the local authority and to bring them on board in the initial stages. For some arts projects working with local authority officers early on, such as highway engineers who have particular concerns, can prevent the development of proposals which are then compromised later in the process. Forming a panel of technical expertise to inform the main steering group can gather information to ensure that proposals are appropriate and help create ownership.

Scoping – Background

iii. What forms could the commission take?

An artist's creativity is the central premise for any commission in the public realm. The excitement of the commissioning process is that artists are invited to propose something which is unique and groundbreaking. There is no way to categorise the ways in which artists choose to work, as they often do not specialise in one particular medium. Most commissions also involve processes of collaboration, whether architectural interventions or site-specific installations. Approaches could include:

- Temporary projects and installations
- Permanent stand-alone commissions
- Permanent integrated commissions
- Streetscaping
- Lighting
- Artists as members of a design team
- Process-based projects
- Community projects

Commissions can be temporary – with durational spans from an hour to a couple of years – or permanent. Temporary and permanent projects have different profiles: for instance, temporary projects can be more challenging and innovative as there are fewer constraints. Events, walks and talks may be favoured as they have a recognisable effect on visitor numbers and are often immediately accessible to audiences. Streetscaping or environmental projects can have a longer term effect though are perceived as being more controversial. These are often realised as part of a larger strategy for an area.

iv. What are the aims and objectives from the town centre perspective?

It is important to scope the opportunity for a particular creative approach fully by considering what the aims and objectives are from the town centre's perspective and how working on an art project will help achieve them. For instance, if the aim is to animate the high street with the objective of increasing footfall on winter evenings, then a winter lighting installation could be considered. These aims and objectives may fall into the following four categories and there are particular creative approaches that can be used to support these issues:

- Safety/crime reduction: approaches could include lighting, street furniture, evening events or projects involving young people
- Increase in footfall: approaches could include events or temporary projects
- Enhancement of environment: approaches could include artists working with architects on the design of the public realm, lighting, temporary events
- Marketing and differentiation: approaches could include festivals or stand-alone sculpture

Temporary projects can deal well with very localised issues, and projects such as specially designed hoardings can help generate interest in developments. Permanent projects can have a longer lasting effect but also take longer to plan and realise.

Scoping – Background

v. What are the opportunities for artists?

Artists and art projects often achieve remarkable things. Opportunities need to be flexible to allow them the creative space to develop new things within a set of known parameters. Artists are looking for opportunities which relate to their existing work, but also allow them to expand their artistic practice and experience. They will be attracted to commissions that will allow the artwork to be recognised creatively rather than solely being perceived as means to deliver hard objectives.

vi. What are the practicalities to consider?

Parameters could include practicalities such as how much funding can be raised, or whether the project is a one-off or ongoing opportunity. Although you may not know as yet where all your funding will come from it is important to have some sense of the budget level you think is appropriate for your town centre. It is also sensible to have some budget line within your own resources, however small this may be. Much arts funding is based on there already being a small existing budget that is then augmented through fundraising. Getting financial and in-kind support from a range of partners is important. Permanent environmental projects will often be able to use existing budgets or monies allocated through section 106 agreements. Speaking to planners about up and coming environmental work or developments in a town centre can help earmark funding within planning obligations, particularly if this is supported via policy. Temporary work can also be funded in this way. The stewardship of artwork is also an important consideration and should always be factored in across its lifespan – a neglected commission is the worst case scenario for a town centre. Writing in a reasonable contingency at an early stage may help allay budget concerns later on; particularly as one of the reasons for commissioning art is its uniqueness and therefore there may be some change in costs as proposals are developed.

vii. What kind of arts management is needed?

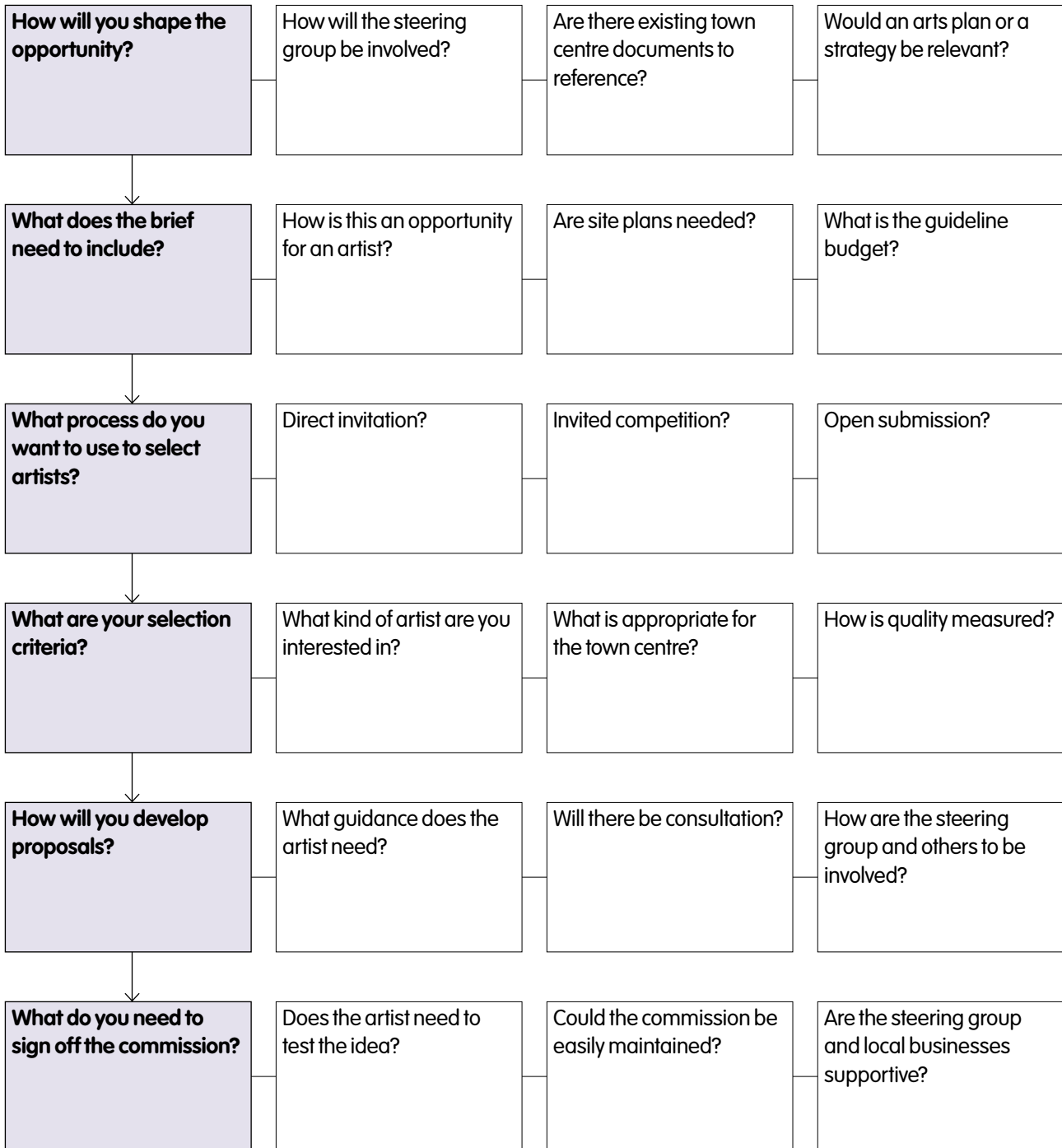
Different roles and expertise are needed throughout the project depending on the kind of approach. It can be useful to break the project down into specific stages to understand what skills and expertise are needed. You may then find that different individuals involved in town centre management can be allocated different tasks and that it may be beneficial to seek specialist support. The project management role is pivotal when working with artists, as it ensures good communication between all parties and ensures the project runs smoothly, to budget and on schedule.

As every commission is different and often innovative, it can be very useful to seek professional advice if the budget allows. It can also be very time-consuming working on commissions as they often break new ground in very public locations. There are various professional project managers, curators, art consultants, producers and, for performance based-events, promoters, who can be employed. A specialist can also be useful from an artist's perspective – some artists may not have much experience of the commissioning process. The kind of skills a professional can offer include:

- Developing a plan or an approach
- Researching the project's scope
- Writing artists' briefs
- Drafting contracts
- Identifying artists
- Working with the artists to develop ideas
- Organising the project's logistics

Shaping – Focusing the vision

Key steps



Shaping – Background

i. How will you shape the opportunity?

Once you have scoped the opportunities for an art project(s) and begun to consider how it will be supported, the next stage is to develop and focus the vision before approaching or appointing an artist(s). Preparing a policy, strategy or writing a brief is part of this process. The kind of document considered will depend on the kind of commission and how long-term the vision is. If there are a number of opportunities it may be beneficial to prepare a strategy to ensure consistency of approach. If, for instance, you are considering permanent projects, then it may be worthwhile to embed this into existing strategies rather than creating a stand-alone document. Taking on creative expertise or partnering with a cultural organisation at this early stage will help shape the opportunity appropriately and help ensure that it attracts and interests artists.

ii. How will you prepare the brief?

A commission will always need a brief as a document that outlines the client's aspirations and the commission's parameters to the artist. Developing a clear artist's brief is essential. This could include all or some of the following:

- Aims
- Background/site details
- Historical, social or contextual information
- Possible themes
- Description of artist's role
- Project management, roles and responsibilities
- Details of any community participation
- Timetable and phasing
- Budget and fees for all stages
- Constraints
- Planning permissions or licences required
- Maintenance arrangements
- Selection process
- Ownership of work
- Any review period planned
- Evaluation

iii. What process do you want to use to involve artists?

Making a successful project is about matching an artist's creativity with the expectations of the client and the public. Identifying the right artist is key to a project's success and artists are often visionary and pragmatic. It may be very useful to involve an arts expert or an arts organisation to help select an artist and/or to oversee the project with you.

It is worth considering the type of artist, craftsperson or performer you're interested in. Although it is difficult to generalise, craftspeople can be very good at working with particular materials to a very strict brief and to an applied area, whilst an artist may be better at responding to a more open brief. Keep an open mind – artists are versatile and usually prefer to be in a pro-active situation, where they can offer ideas on the site and perhaps move into an area of work that is new to their practice.

It is important to research locally and nationally (and internationally depending on the project's scale) to help ensure that a range of artists and approaches are considered. Remember that you'll be left with the art commission, not the artist. Being confident in the quality of the artist's existing work and asking an art expert for their view will usefully inform the decision. Employing a local artist does not necessarily ensure that their work is relevant to the site and a higher quality commission. Think carefully about the kinds of artists you want to work with, their experience and approach. Including local and international artists in competitions can create a more level playing field.

There are three main ways of selecting an artist, with associated pros and cons. Finding the appropriate way to select an artist will depend on the resourcing available and the kind of project. There are websites and magazines where commissions can be advertised. Some selection processes judge submissions through previous work and others allow you to judge through proposals responding to the opportunity.

Shaping – Background

1. Open Competition – inviting artists/craftspeople to submit applications

Pros/Cons

Suitable for commissions which are high profile, brings forward artists you would not otherwise have known about, provides opportunities to unknown or younger artists and is consistent with good equal opportunities practices. The disadvantages are that it can be a time-consuming, expensive and heavily administrative process and does not always attract a suitable artist.

Process

Artists would be invited to make contact and would then be sent the brief, including details of the site, context, proposed themes for consideration (if applicable), budget etc. They should be asked to submit a statement of interest with a CV, up to 10 images (slides, CD ROM) and an image list, by a defined closing date. Asking for design ideas at this stage is not appropriate.

2. Limited competition – compiling a selected short list from which a limited number of artists can be invited to work up proposals

Pros/Cons

Suitable if you would like more control over the process and if time is a factor. This option ensures the commission gets underway relatively quickly, less established artists can compete with more experienced ones, a range of solutions can be explored without entering into a full commitment. Disadvantages are that some artists are unwilling to be put into a competitive situation.

Process

Selected artists are asked to submit detailed proposals, including maquettes (a small scale model mock-up of the idea), and a budget, for an agreed fee, by a set date, or invited to attend an interview. The final decision is made on the strength of submissions. The artist should retain their original maquettes/drawings and all of the shortlisted artists receive a fee and expenses, irrespective of whether they are awarded the commission. It is good practice for copyright of the designs to rest with the artist.

3. Direct invitation – approaching one artist directly

Pros/Cons

The advantages are that established international artists generally prefer to operate in this way, there are none of the additional costs involved in open competition or shortlist fees and a closer relationship or 'matching' of artists to opportunity can be carried out. The disadvantages are the need to justify this approach in terms of equality of opportunity (and maybe against competitive tendering rules for local authorities); an opportunity is missed with regard to seeing a variety of work.

Process

Directly approach an artist after reviewing a longlist of potential artists' work with the steering group. Invite the artist to develop an initial proposal before reviewing the opportunity and finally appointing the artist to realise the commission.

Shaping – Background

iv. What are your selection criteria?

It may be useful to consider the selection criteria used in the brief such as the following:

- Character/identity
- Appropriateness/site specificity
- Inspiring/innovative
- Integrated
- Accessible/legible
- If permanent, has longevity

Ensuring quality will help to promote ownership and longevity.

v. How will you work with artists to develop and review proposals?

Whichever selection method you have used you will need to review an artist's proposal. This is best done with your steering group and professional expertise can be useful. It is important to respect an artist's proposal when giving comments. It is still possible though to ask them if they would consider reviewing a particular element within a proposal that does not compromise their idea and creative vision. It is advisable to review an artist's proposal at a number of different stages before it is realised. Providing a letter of appointment or short proposed commission agreement with an artist can set out the stages of review and how and when they will be paid. A further commission agreement can then be prepared if the proposals go ahead.

vi. What do you need to sign-off designs to develop the commission further?

Details such as an outline budget including a contingency, fabrication details and ascertaining support from businesses are all important.

Producing – Realising the vision

Key steps



Producing – Background

i. What are the risks?

It is important to think through all the different stages of realisation. Risks can be financial, time-based, artistic and health and safety based. Reviewing the risks and developing contingency plans to off-set financial, technical and other health and safety risks can help to mitigate concern. Commissions realised as part of environmental works need to be fully integrated into the building process. Referencing any similar projects can help the understanding of the risks. Vandalism is often a concern and it is important to review its likelihood and how this can be off-set, say, through consultative work with young people to help ownership and understanding.

ii. What are the technical issues?

Temporary projects will need planning permission if installed for more than 6 weeks (sometimes less than this depending on the local authority) and it is always worth checking with the planning department, whatever the project. Permanent installations will need planning permission too, which may be dealt with under reserve matters. Events and performances will need licences (see appendix 5).

iii. What are the fabrication issues?

As every arts commission is unique, researching and understanding fabrication issues by talking with specialists helps minimise risk and expense in the long term.

iv. What are the health and safety processes?

Always undertake a full risk assessment as outlined by your organisation and follow health and safety guidelines.

v. Where does liability lie?

Different kinds of commission entail different liabilities and insurances.

Working with artists: It is important to consult with artists to find out what kind of insurance they have and then to consider within the project where liability lies and how this risk can be insured. It is very rare for an artist to have professional indemnity insurance, public liability or personal accident insurance. Professional indemnity is very expensive to maintain and it is unlikely that most artists would want to take this on unless they are running a studio. For instance, on environmental projects where architects are involved, artists' designs can be overseen by the architects who will normally have professional indemnity insurance.

Insuring artworks: Check first of all if the commission is on public or private land as different conditions may apply. For ephemeral or some forms of temporary commission, it could be useful to consider them as you would festivals and events but it is important to think through any comparisons carefully and consult with insurers/local authority as appropriate. For more permanent artworks there are three levels of cover: the repair of damage to works of art caused by vandalism, accidental damage etc; public liability insurance; added value cover to protect pieces against loss of value that might occur as a consequence of being in a public space. Most insurers have an arts specialist in-house, who will make the valuation of the art work and supply appropriate cover. Some insurers may call upon specialist arts advisers to give expert valuations of the work to be covered under the businesses' overall policy. Getting cover for added value is most difficult and specialist insurers need to be contacted. As Government Departments are positively discouraged from taking out insurance policies, in local authorities claims or damage liability is usually recovered from the public purse and budgeted for accordingly. There are exceptions to the rule as some local authorities or public bodies choose to insure public art for loss of value through a commercial insurer.

Producing – Background

vi. Who needs contracts?

Contracts should always be clearly agreed and issued prior to any work taking place. It is essential that the client and artist have had an opportunity to discuss and agree a mutually acceptable contract. Contracts are often between the client and artist, and client and contractor/fabricator, where schedules tie them together. This approach works particularly well if the client is the budget holder and can ensure liabilities are appropriately apportioned. It is good practice and expected that an artist will retain copyright and moral rights to an artwork. A commissioner can be granted a licence to reproduce the work in print or photography etc. It is always best to get a contract checked by a legal advisor. A contract should also be fair to both parties and an artist may wish to have their own legal advisor.

Briefly, a contract between artist and commissioner should include the following:

- Definition of involved parties, names and addresses
- Details of the commission and the artist's brief as an appendix
- The responsibilities of the commissioner and the artist
- Production of work, installation and insurance requirements including professional indemnity
- Warranties and repairs
- Fees and methods of payment
- Ownership
- Maintenance agreement including health and safety surveys
- Review and decommissioning policy
- Copyright, reproduction rights, credits and moral rights
- Termination of agreement
- Disputes procedure
- Role of consultant (if applicable)
- Schedule of work
- Confirmation of budget (construction budget if applicable) and budget holder (if not the artist)

For more information on contracts see the practical advice section under 'resources' at Public Art Online (www.publicartonline.org.uk) and the artlaw section of Artquest (www.artquest.org.uk).

vii. Who will maintain the commission?

Maintaining a commission helps ensure longevity and positive response to the commission. Work out who has the expertise to properly maintain an artwork and previous experience of this specialist work. If the commission is vandalised it needs to be corrected as quickly as possible. Commissions which use lighting or new media will have to be actively maintained and overseen, and budgets made available to ensure this.

Consulting – Encouraging engagement

Key steps



Consulting – Background

i. Why do you want to consult?

Some form of consultation will always be necessary. A commission should not exist as an isolated process, which then suddenly appears on site. Consulting is about making links to businesses and communities, helping them to understand and respond to the project, creating pride and ownership. There are many different forms of consultation to suit projects. You may be able to use existing forums with your local businesses to inform them and ask for their support for a project. In fact, it may help make a case with local businesses if you have consulted with different town centre users.

ii. What do you want to consult about?

Arts projects often provoke debate and discussion and it is important that consultation isn't about creating a project through compromise and agreement. Asking members of the public to judge proposals doesn't necessarily ensure the best results for a commission, as it is often difficult to get a rounded view and representation. Instead, asking for comments will ensure that different voices can be heard by the steering group.

iii. Who do you want to consult with?

Consultation processes need to be adapted to different audiences. Young people may want to be much more actively consulted than businesses.

iv. How do you want to consult?

It may be possible to use existing networks and events. Consultation can be on a large or a small scale. It can take different forms such as presentations, exhibitions or questionnaires as well as separate projects working with particular groups such as young people.

v. When do you want to consult?

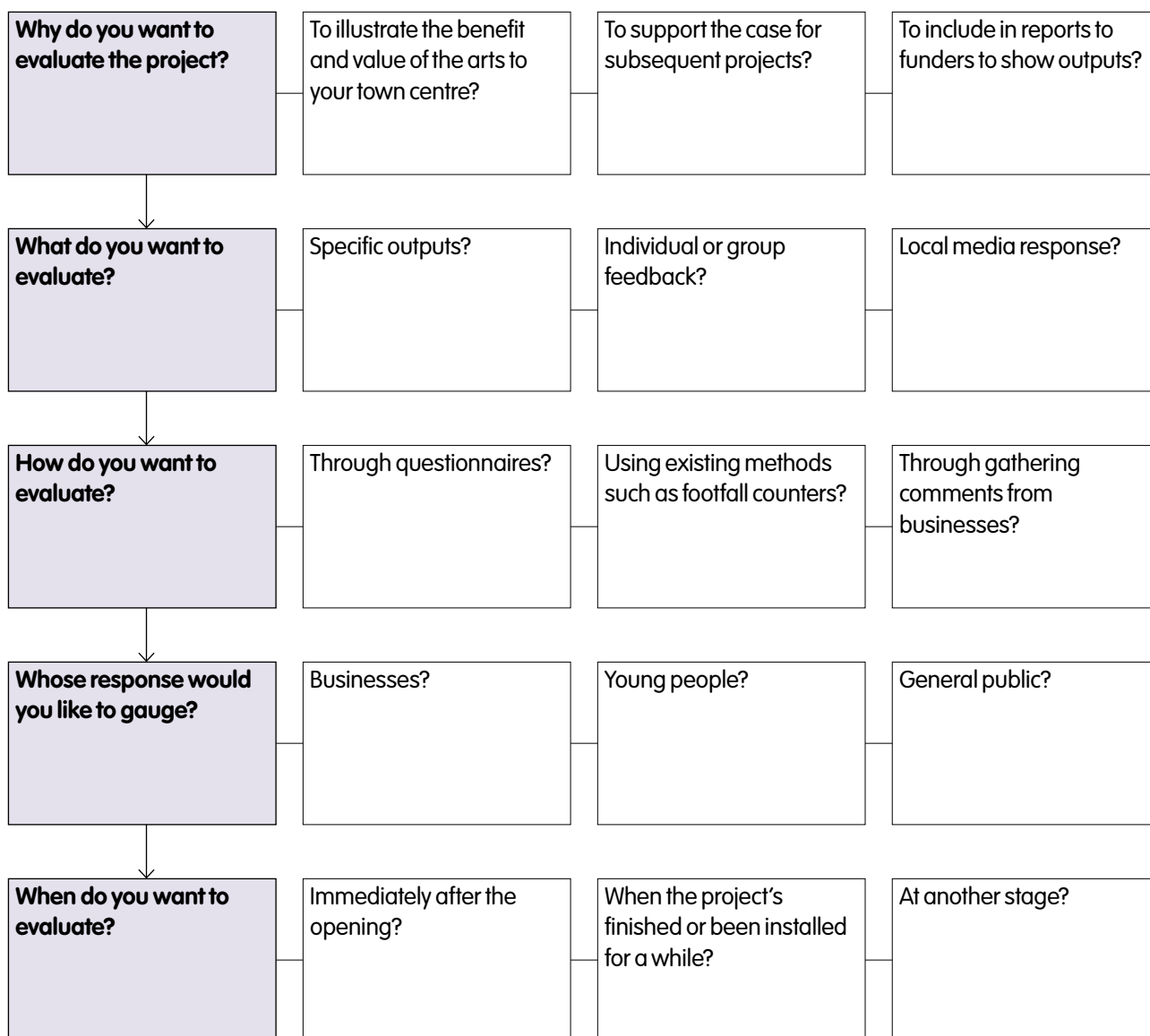
You may want consultation to happen throughout the process or at particular stages.

vi. Who will undertake the consultation?

Consultation can be time-intensive – think about who will manage and undertake this and whether there are existing initiatives or events you can use.

Evaluating – Showing success

Key steps



Evaluating – Background

i. Why do you want to evaluate the project?

Evaluating a project can often be forgotten about. Thinking early on about evaluation can help you collect useful data and feedback and integrate this into the commissioning process. Evaluation can demonstrate benefit and value and help generate support for subsequent projects.

ii. What do you want to evaluate?

Different forms of evaluation will lead to different conclusions and responses. Looking at outputs such as increased footfall, positive press coverage, and customer and visitor surveys can help with the business case and benefits to the cleaner, greener, safer agenda.

iii. How do you want to evaluate?

The impacts of arts activities are diverse – as are approaches for measuring them. Evaluation could happen through questionnaires and surveys, footfall counters and looking at other town centre indicators.

iv. Whose response would you like to gauge?

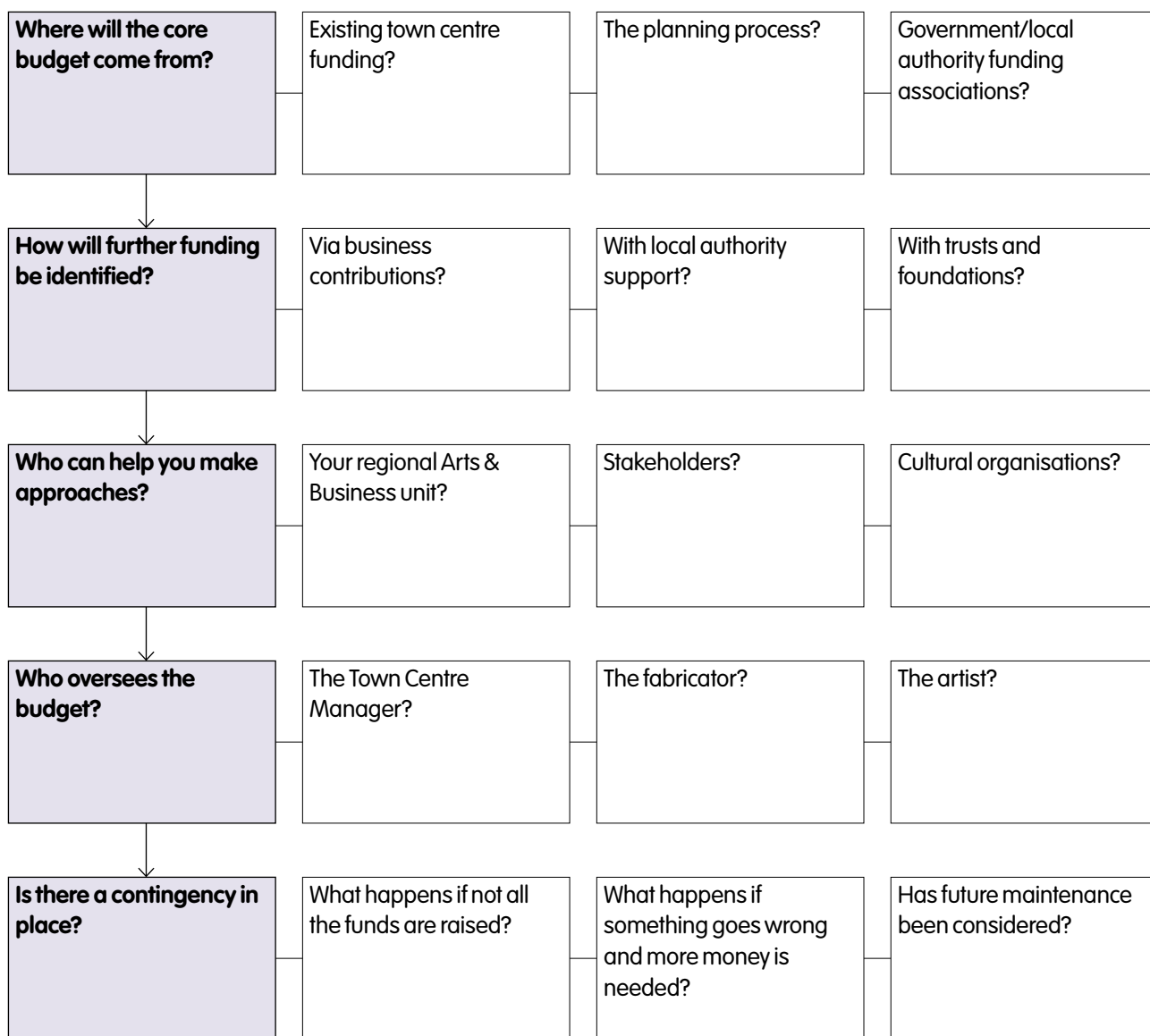
Referring back to your aims and objectives and the criteria of funders will help you focus on which particular groups you may wish to target for evaluation.

v. When do you want to evaluate?

Evaluation could happen throughout the project and be linked to the consultation process. It could be focused just on completion of the project or involve follow-up years later if the artwork is permanent. Evaluation could follow the life of an artwork which may be days, months or years.

Financing – Funding the project

Key steps



Financing – Background

i. How will the commission be funded?

Getting financial and in-kind support from a range of partners is important. Arts involvement must not be sought too cheaply. However, evidence also suggests that Town Centre Managers with smaller budgets do successfully produce arts projects. Public sector funding can lever in private funding. Planning obligations and allocations from Communities and Local Government through Neighbourhood Renewal Funds are potentially useful funding routes. It can be worth researching comparable commissions to understand how their funding was secured. Commissions will need some funding through existing budgets.

ii. How can you ask businesses to contribute?

Benefits to businesses from a commission may relate to how it can help meet the cleaner, greener, safer agenda. Their support can reflect on their cultural status and also help make the town centre more of a destination. It can be useful to involve a possible business supporter through the commissioning process and the selection of the artist to help their understanding of the project and its objectives so as to encourage involvement and 'buy-in'. Town centres have access to businesses through their partnership boards, and BIDs through their members, who may already have been consulted as part of the scoping process (such consultation can also give good intelligence as to likely sponsors).

A business cash contribution to a public art commission can be made as a donation or as part of a sponsorship agreement. A donation is a gift for which no return is asked or given, beyond an acknowledgement. Requests for donations are best suited to one-off projects where a wide range of suitable donors can be targeted.

Sponsorship is a reciprocal agreement between the business and the project to be sponsored, with the specific objective of promoting the business' name, its products, service or image. Sponsorship forms part of a business' promotional expenditure and the sponsor should receive benefits to the value of the amount sponsored. A sponsorship agreement can be appropriate for projects that want to build long-term partnerships or approach a limited number of businesses for contributions.

There are three steps to approaching a business for sponsorship:

- **Articulating the benefits:** what opportunities will the commission offer to businesses? Some businesses might be keen to associate themselves with the public benefits of the commission (e.g. ownership of public space); others might use the opportunity to increase their profile amongst the local community. Care should be taken to ensure that benefits offered do not conflict with the integrity of the artwork: for example, logos or plaques commemorating the business contribution should be sensitively sited.
- **Pricing the sponsorship:** it is important to remember that pricing should reflect the value to the business of the benefits offered, NOT the costs you are hoping to cover. There is no exact science to estimating the value of sponsorship benefits, but the value to the business will vary depending upon factors such as the prominence of the commission, the amount of press coverage it receives and the impact it has on the town centre. Always over ask when approaching businesses, as this will give you room for negotiation.
- **Approaching businesses:** identifying businesses to target will depend upon the particular circumstances in your area. There may be a major employer that is keen to invest in the local community, or an out of town supermarket looking to lessen its impact on the local town centre.

Research businesses carefully before approaching them. Information that will help you include their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives; current financial performance; level of marketing targeted at the local community; strategies to lessen the impact of any controversial aspects of their business. This information will help you to determine which of the benefits you've identified are most likely to be of value to the target business.

The most effective approach is a personal one: identifying who is the relevant person within the business and writing to them first, before following-up with a phone-call and, if possible, a meeting. In drafting the letter, keep the information clear and concise – for example, summarising the project and its objectives and then focusing on the benefits and values of being involved. If a meeting is secured, it is essential to know what you are asking for and to be well prepared, so that the opportunity is maximised, as a meeting can be difficult to achieve and you may only get one opportunity to present the project.

Financing – Background

iii. Who can help you make approaches?

Arts & Business (www.aandb.org.uk) is a not-for-profit organisation that helps to build relationships between businesses and the cultural sector. Arts & Business have offices across the country and your local office can be contacted by visiting their website.

You may also have expertise and/or access to funders through Town Centre Boards (such as local developers) which could be worth exploring.

iv. How can you identify other funding?

- **Public Sector:** grants may be available from your local authority. Planning, Regeneration, Leisure, Parks and Tourism are all departments which may be willing to invest in public art. Arts Council England's Grants for the Arts programme is also a key source of public funding. See appendix 4 for more details.
- **Trusts and Foundations:** these generally only fund charities and not-for-profit organisations, but are relevant if working with a local community group or organisation that needs to find funding for an arts project. See appendix 4.
- **The Big Lottery Fund:** distributes money raised from the National Lottery to community projects of all sizes across the UK. (www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)
- **Individuals:** individual patrons often have connections with the place where a commission is located or may have located their business in the area.

v. Who oversees the budget?

Who the budget holder is needs to be aligned with risks and liabilities and the schedule of work. It can be better, given liabilities and contracts, for the commissioner to hold the budget and the artist be paid their fee and the fabricator the production costs.

vi. What needs to be included in the budget?

- Advertising and selection costs
- Artist's design fees (set at an equitable level with other professionals)
- Exhibition costs (if a client wishes to exhibit designs and maquettes for comment or information)
- Artist's commission fee – this should be equivalent to that of other design professionals involved

- Materials and fabrication costs – the artist's fee and materials budget does not necessarily have to be specified by the client; if an overall budget is given for the commission, the artist can identify their allocation of production and fee; however, separate fee and production budgets can be identified
- Travelling and workshop expenses
- Insurance/Public Liability costs
- Installation (site preparation, running electricity, water to site, landscaping, extra labour etc.)
- Transport and security costs
- Professional fees and legal costs
- Consultation costs
- Publicity, documentation and inauguration costs
- Maintenance costs
- VAT
- Contingency
- Evaluation costs
- Documentation

vii. What level of contingency is appropriate?

A contingency is key – remember you will probably be working outside in situations where art may never have been installed before. There are many variables in public spaces and a risk assessment will help respond to this, but in budget terms there may be some unforeseen circumstances.

viii. Have running costs and maintenance been considered?

Whether a commission is for the short, medium or long term, running costs, maintenance and overall stewardship need to be considered and planned for. What will happen if the commission is damaged? Who will take responsibility for covering the costs of repairs and maintenance, with due care to the art work? A commission is only successful if its high quality remains intact for the life of the work, otherwise the values and benefits that it can create will be lessened. It is therefore important to make sure that the project outline includes funding (and designation of responsibility) for stewardship.

Marketing – Profiling the project

Key steps



Marketing – Background

i. How would you like to promote the commission?

Promoting a commission could be about drawing people to a specific event, giving information, letting a wider audience know of its realisation. Think about what kinds of material would be appropriate and how they can be distributed. You could ask to use existing local networks such as the school magazine or mailouts by cultural organisations. Think carefully also about the relationship with the local media and how to approach and involve them. Arts project often provoke some kind of media reaction and thinking what this could be and how to robustly counter it will be key.

ii. Who would you like to promote the commission to?

There may be very specific audiences you would like to attract and particular methods of marketing which can be effective. Young people could be targeted through youth groups whereas direct mailings would be more suitable for adults.

iii. What aspects of the commission will attract an audience?

Think about the main selling points and how these relate to your audiences. Temporary projects can often generate a lot more of a buzz and permanent projects can sometimes gradually come to recognition. You may want to market the commission through recognition of the artist or through how it responds to the town's history or identity.

iv. When would you like to market the commission?

Think about the timescale in producing and issuing marketing material. You may need to initiate a number of targeted marketing approaches over the commissioning process. Also, consider the lead-in time needed for any press approaches as magazines often take longer to place articles than daily newspapers.

Appendix 1: Case studies

i. Permanent artists' commissions as part of a regeneration masterplan for the city centre



Coventry:
Waterwindow,
Susanna Heron,
1998-2003, Coventry
Photo: Susanna Heron

Phoenix Initiative, various artists, Coventry, 1998-2004, project by Coventry City Council, Advantage West Midlands and the Millennium Commission, masterplan developed by MJP Architects working with PACA and Rummey Design.

Best practice in embedding artists' commissions into a regeneration scheme from the start in order to ensure the time and budget for high quality commissions that properly respond to the locality and create a renewed sense of place.

Context

Permanent art commissions can make a lasting impact and create meaningful, unique public spaces, helping to regenerate local areas, particularly when embedded into development schemes and strategies from the start. It is important that they are sensitive to the locality and are not just seen as a last minute 'add on' – thorough consultation will help ensure local communities feel a sense of ownership and site specificity will help give a sense of uniqueness and individuality to the area.

Key benefits

- Regenerated a run-down area of the city centre, creating a catalyst for inward investment
- Increased safety (a new traffic-free route through the city)
- Changed perception and raised city profile nationally and internationally
- Created added value and high quality commissions by engaging with artists from the start

Appendix 1: Case studies

Outline

The Phoenix Initiative transformed three hectares of Coventry city centre – an area blitzed during the war and subsequently scarred by 1960s concrete car parks and traffic intersections. The area had become run-down and felt unsafe and Coventry City Council’s aim was to regenerate the area, helping to change the city’s image from that of an economically depressed area (which it had become in the 1970s and 1980s) to an area attractive for investment.⁵ MJP Architects won the masterplan competition and were engaged by the Council, with help from Advantage West Midlands and the Millennium Commission.

MJP worked with Vivien Lovell of the Public Art Commissioning Agency (PACA) to develop a Public Art Strategy for the site, as well as with landscape architects Rummey Design, seven visual artists (Chris Browne, Françoise Schein, Alexander Beleschenko, Kate Whiteford, David Ward, Jochen Gerz, Susanna Heron) and poet David Morley, on the overall redevelopment, completed in 2004.

Works range from Susanna Heron’s *Waterwindow*, which makes use of the fall in the land between Priory Gardens and Priory Place for a sculptural piece using water, copper and light, to David Ward’s atmospheric work in Priory Cloister (near a new visitor centre) where whispering voices tell tales of Coventry’s past and present and a blue light bathes the area at nightfall.

Scoping

The aspirations and ambitions for the artist commissions were for them to be an integral part of the overall masterplan for the site. The aim was to create permanent commissions that would stand the test of time, helping to make the area feel more attractive, welcoming and safe for local people, and to lift Coventry’s image nationally and internationally by commissioning high-quality work from both local and internationally recognised artists.

Shaping

MJP’s decision to involve artists early on and engage PACA to write a Public Art Strategy meant that there was a clear structure to the commissioning process. This could then be followed as the urban design scheme evolved. Making these decisions at the start of the project meant there was more time for the artist selection process. This in turn helped ensure high-quality work and also gave better value for money, as the artists’ ideas could be factored into building costs, rather than being ‘added on’ later.

The Strategy also shaped the selection process itself and a variety of different approaches were used: an open call for regional artists, an invited competition for Priory Cloister, competitive interviews and an open brief to specific invited artists. The process was managed by art experts PACA.

Producing

As masterplanner, MJP Architects led the project, but it was a close collaboration between the architects, art consultant, transport planners, the landscape architects (Rummey Design), and the client, Coventry City Council. It required a shared belief in the plan, as well as, importantly, a high level of professional trust.

Consulting

A Public Art Selection Panel was developed by PACA, which allowed full consultation with a range of Coventry’s residents. Representatives from both universities (Coventry and Warwick), the Cathedral, the City Council’s Archaeology Department, West Midlands Arts, Arts Council England and a local artist were invited to be on the panel. The Panel then made recommendations to the Coventry Millennium Forum. Both bodies were chaired by Councillor John Fletcher.⁶

5 Phoenix: Architecture/Art/Regeneration, Black Dog Publishing 2004, p12

6 *Ibid.*, p14

Appendix 1: Case studies



Coventry:
Priory Cloister,
David Ward,
MJP and RD,
1998-2000, Coventry
Photo: Marc Goodwin

Evaluating

The scheme created 360 jobs and has proved to be a catalyst for regeneration across the city with some £6.5 billion in further investment expected over the next decade. This success has been recognised in a number of awards: the Initiative was shortlisted for the Prime Minister's Better Public Building Award and the architectural Stirling Prize in 2004 (the first time that a public art scheme had been shortlisted), and received the RIBA Award, the Civic Trust Commendation and the Structural Steel Award Commendation for bridge and arch in 2004; the UN International Award for the most liveable city in 2005; and the BURA Best Practice Award and EP Partnership in Regeneration Award in 2006.

Financing

The project received financial support and/or land from a wide variety of stakeholders: The Millennium Commission, The Heritage Lottery Fund, Advantage West Midlands, Holy Trinity Church, Coventry Cathedral, ERDF, The Henry Moore Foundation, PRISM, DCF (Design Challenge Fund). Investment of £18,584,000 from the public sector successfully levered in a further £26,250,000 from the private sector.

Marketing

A substantial publication was produced on completion of the project, which outlines the vision, process and range of works in the project. This serves as a lasting tool to market Coventry and its transformation.

For further information, please see:

Phoenix: Architecture/Art/Regeneration,
Black Dog Publishing, 2004

The urbanism section under 'projects' at
www.mjparchitects.co.uk

The case studies section at www.publicartonline.org.uk

Or contact: Richard Robinson, PR/Marketing Manager,
MJP Architects at richard.robinson@mjparchitects.co.uk

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London E1 5LJ

Appendix 1: Case studies

ii. Annual temporary event



Leeds: **Light Night 2007**,
Leeds. Photo: courtesy
of Leeds Metropolitan
University

Light Night, various artists
Annual Autumn event 2005 onwards, Leeds City Centre
Organised by Leeds City Council

Context

An annual temporary art event can be a useful way of helping to change the user demographic in a town centre – increasing a sense of ownership and engagement and signalling positive change. Night-time events that liven up the winter months are becoming particularly popular for these reasons. They include events in which artists are commissioned to produce high quality winter lighting such as *Luci d'Artista* in Turin (mentioned in the introductory section on p4) or *Radiance* in Glasgow – both of which have complemented or been part of wider regeneration schemes. Other examples of annual winter events include the French model *Nuit Blanche*, an all-night cultural festival where galleries and museums open into the night and the public realm is enlivened with specially commissioned artwork. Here, again, high quality art is seen as an essential component to showcase the city.

John Ebo, the Deputy City Centre Manager for Leeds, states that: *Light Night delivers a unique opportunity to extend the 'operational hours' of Leeds city centre beyond the traditional evening. It enables the streets to be enlivened with creative activities from dusk till dawn, with venues opening until 6am in some cases. It manages to reinforce the message that the city centre is a safe place to be, changes the dynamic of the more negative aspects of night time on a Friday night in Leeds, and delivers significant footfall for the city centre, at a time when the city would otherwise have been less occupied.*

Best practice in working with a range of local organisations and cultural institutions to maximise resources and expertise in realising a creative annual event for the city centre.

Key benefits

- Expands the evening economy
- Increases footfall and diversity of footfall
- Increases safety (and perception of safety) in the city centre
- Provides marketing opportunities for local businesses
- Raises the city's profile locally and nationally

Appendix 1: Case studies

Outline

Since 2005, Leeds has held an annual event, *Light Night*, to celebrate and showcase the city. The event is based on the French model of *Nuit Blanche* and N8⁷ in Amsterdam and began as a way to launch the year-long *Leeds Illuminate Festival*. Several venues stayed open until late, a specially commissioned light sculpture by Gemma Rickwood of Imprint Theatre Co and Heather Jones was created in Holy Trinity Church and the public were given access to hidden spaces in the Town Hall, such as the Clocktower and the Victorian Prison Cells.

Scoping

The aspiration for the first Leeds event was to enliven the centre in order to motivate a wide range of people to come into town and to create a spectacular launch for the *Illuminate Festival*. Through the success of the first event, the Council was able to see the potential for attracting huge numbers of people to the city centre, increasing safety and the perception of safety (because of the numbers and the diversity of visitors) and expanding the night-time economy.

Shaping

There are basic principles for involvement in the event: that the venue must open later than it normally would/or the activity must take place in the evening; and that the activity is something different from what people might expect.

Producing

Leeds City Council's Arts and Regeneration Unit oversee the event marketing and security and provide Public Liability Insurance for outdoor activities. They also meet with the local police, the licensing team and others to go through plans for outdoor events so as to secure licensing. However, each participating organisation or organiser does their own risk assessment and part of their funding agreement with the Council states that the venue/organiser takes full liability for their activity.

Consulting

A de-brief and evaluation conference is held every February for all participating organisations. This is an opportunity to find out what worked, what didn't, and to start plans for next year's event.

Evaluating

After the success of the first *Light Night*, the second event attracted an estimated 6,000 visits to all the venues across the city. Each year *Light Night* has expanded and local buy-in has increased.

In addition to the conference mentioned above, other methods of evaluation are beginning to take place. For the 2008 *Light Night*, the city installed cameras, so as to get a more accurate measure of footfall, and the fifty participating venues themselves recorded 47,000 visits across the city in the course of the night.

John Ebo, the Deputy City Centre Manager, has commented that there can be no doubt of the impact that the event has: without it, the city centre is virtually deserted for that part of the evening, except for some activity from bars and pubs. *Light Night* attracts thousands of people of all ages to the city centre. Businesses are able to use the night as a marketing opportunity for new products or launches and are extremely positive about the event. Such is the buzz behind the event that Marketing Leeds, the first destination marketing agency for the city of Leeds, came forward to offer funding for a new *Light Night* website for 2008.

The success in Leeds has led to the ATCM encouraging cities nationwide to hold their own version of the event (Leeds, Nottingham, Sheffield, Birmingham, Belfast and Liverpool will all hold a *Light Night* in 2008/9).

7 N8 or 'Museum Night' is an annual event where museums and institutions open their doors in the evening and organise special events.

Appendix 1: Case studies



Leeds: **Light Night 2007**,
Leeds. Photo: courtesy
of Leeds Metropolitan
University

Financing

The *Illuminate Festival* initially provided the opportunity and money for the event, via a grant from the National Lottery's Urban Cultural Programme. A small portion of this was allotted to *Light Night*. Since then, the Council has provided funding for core activity such as marketing and security, a small amount to participating organisations, and some money for grass roots artists. Encouragingly, the Council's budget has not had to dramatically increase with the size of the event. This is because it is largely the participating organisations that have grown in number and each of these predominantly funds their own activities, seeing real value in attracting new audiences.

Marketing

The first *Light Nights* were marketed via a programme that was released a month before the event. As the event has expanded and people have come to expect it, this has shifted to a programme released on the night and distributed via participating venues and through Audiences Yorkshire, for example at local bookshops. Local press are also supportive.

For further information, please see
www.lightnightleeds.co.uk
www.lightnight.co.uk

Or contact:
Cath Follin, Leeds City Centre Manager, at:
cath.follin@leeds.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Case studies

iii. One-off temporary installation/event



Bristol: **I lost her near Fantasy Island. Life has not been the same**, Heather and Ivan Morison, 2006. Courtesy Situations, University of the West of England
Photo: courtesy Kevin Clifford and Arts Council England

Heather and Ivan Morison, **I lost her near Fantasy Island. Life has not been the same**, Friday 14 July 2006, Centre Promenade, Bristol City Centre

Commissioned by Situations, a research and commissioning programme based within the University of the West of England, Bristol, for the British Art Show 6, England

Context

A temporary, one-off event can be an opportunity to commission an innovative and unexpected work. It can also be useful as a way of capitalising on another larger activity, in this instance a national touring exhibition, in order to draw attention to the locality in which it is taking place.

Aldo Rinaldi, Senior Public Art Officer at Bristol City Council, comments: *The project certainly had a strong reaction and lasting effect... The Centre Promenade is a large civic space and a busy thoroughfare. The project animated the space with an unexpected intervention, and was also quite dramatic, both of which enhanced the space...*

Bristol has a strong track record for public art commissioning and for the quality of its events – in many ways this project blurred that boundary and provided the public with an artwork that challenged their conceptions about public art.

Best practice in using the specialist skills of a local commissioning organisation to commission internationally recognised artists and in a local council being open to facilitating an innovative and unusual event.

Key benefits

- Drew both local and national attention, helping to raise Bristol city centre's profile as an artistic hub and attractive visitor destination
- Hit greener and cleaner targets: helped Bristol win Gold in the Southwest in Bloom awards, 2006 (part of Britain in Bloom)
- Increased Bristol City Council's enthusiasm for, and confidence in, staging temporary art events
- Engaged local residents with the launch of a key national exhibition, giving a sense of ownership rather than alienation

Appendix 1: Case studies

Outline

This commission was created to coincide with the British Art Show⁸ opening day and was staged on Bristol City Council land at the Centre Promenade in Bristol City Centre. Bristol Visual Arts Consortium (BVAC)⁹ wanted to re-enliven the touring exhibition for the last stage of its tour in Bristol and decided to do so through a series of temporary works commissioned by different Bristol arts organisations. One of these, Situations,¹⁰ commissioned artists Heather and Ivan Morison to develop a work lasting just one day. A jack-knifed lorry was positioned so that its load of 25,000 flowers spilled out onto the pedestrianised area. It was both a visual spectacle and – as it turned out – a participatory event, as from 6pm hundreds of passers-by were allowed to take the flowers, so that they were gradually dispersed throughout the city.¹¹

Scoping

Situations chose to work with the Morisons out of the group of artists selected by the British Art Show curators, feeling that they could rise to the challenge of a temporary event that would still be part of the fabric of the city.

Shaping

The project was shaped through a series of conversations between the artists and the Situations curators, rather than by a standalone brief.

Producing

Situations worked closely with Bristol City Council's public spaces officer (the Council did not have a public art officer at the time) and the project was achieved through an event licensing agreement. This greatly helped facilitate the piece as it allowed the Council to apply the same health, safety, licensing regulations, and other requirements to it as they would have for any event.

As part of the University of the West of England (UWE), Situations were covered by public liability insurance. In addition, they worked closely with the Council to overcome any of their concerns, for example, making sure the event was timed so that it would not coincide with Friday night revellers, and hiring a stunt team to install the lorry so that the operation was subject to this team's stringent standards. The Council provided staffing support on the day to help oversee set-up.

Consulting

As well as working closely with Bristol City Council, Situations also consulted Arts Council England, who were keen to ensure that the event had a participatory angle. Because the work was designed to be a temporary, surprise event for local people, a public consultation was not appropriate.

Evaluating

Situations and the artists took the decision not to use formal questionnaires as they felt it would impact on the effect of the work, but instead took informal recordings from people during the day. These, along with images and two commissioned written responses, were made into an evaluation paper. The audience was around 5,000 and was predominantly local people (as well as visitors to the British Art Show launch from across the country, other tourists, and commuters from outside of Bristol). The piece not only made the centre temporarily more attractive for everyone, but engaged Bristol residents in a unique and special event.

The work coincided with the judging for Southwest in Bloom and the Council took the judges to see the display. Bristol won a Gold award that year, narrowly missing out on the regional cup for best city, demonstrating that imaginative artwork can directly hit key targets, such as 'greener' and 'cleaner'.

The piece continues to have widespread attention, which is significant for Bristol and city-centre activity as it enhances the Council's reputation for supporting innovative, high-quality work, and the centre's reputation as an artistic hub and exciting destination.

8 The British Art Show is a survey exhibition of UK contemporary art, organised by Hayward Gallery Touring every five years.

9 BVAC is made up of a number of key cultural organisations in the city, including Arnolfini, Situations, Spike Island, City Gallery and Museum.

10 Situations is a research and commissioning programme based within the University of the West of England, part of BVAC.

11 www.situations.org.uk

Appendix 1: Case studies



Bristol: **I lost her near Fantasy Island. Life has not been the same**, Heather and Ivan Morison, 2006.
Courtesy Situations, University of the West of England
Photos: courtesy Matthew Worland

Financing

Arts Council England provided funding via their Grants for the Arts scheme, after an application from BVAC. BVAC then apportioned amounts to the various commissioners and UWE also contributed around £5,000 from their own resources. The Situations budget was £12,000 and was managed by them.

Marketing

The artists were very keen that the event have an element of mystery and surprise. Situations therefore placed an embargo on press releases until the morning of the event. However, rumour proved powerful. The spectacle of the event drew thousands of people and hundreds came at the end of the day to collect armfuls of flowers, after word spread that they would be given away (even though the artists had not originally planned this). The flowers cleared in under an hour and local people sent images to Situations, showing the flowers displayed in their homes.

For further information, please see www.situations.org.uk

Or contact: director@situations.org.uk

Appendix 2

Relevant contacts and organisations

Art in the Open

Advocacy body for art in the public realm for London, as part of Open House, the architecture education organisation.

For general information, see:

www.openhouse.org.uk

For further information on commissioning guidance, see (from April 2009):

www.artintheopen.org.uk

Public Art Online

Detailed information on the legal and practical issues involved in the successful management of public art commissions. Also an archive of case studies.

www.publicartonline.org.uk

Groundwork

The environmental charity has been involved in commissioning throughout the UK. Groundwork East Midlands have produced an online toolkit.

www.creativeregeneration.com

The Big Draw

An annual UK-wide festival celebrating drawing through locally arranged projects often manifesting in public space.

www.thebigdraw.co.uk

Regional Public Art Agencies

There are a number of Arts Council-funded regional agencies involved in managing the commissioning process.

Eastern Region: www.commissionseast.org.uk

South East: www.artpoint-trust.org.uk

North East: www.commissionsnorth.org.uk

South West: www.publicartonline.org.uk/pasw

National Public Art Agencies

ixia: www.ixia-info.com

Appendix 3

Policy references

National Policy

References include: Department of Culture, Media and Sport: Culture at the Heart of Regeneration (case 91090) www.culture.gov.uk

Regional Policy

A number of regional development agencies actively support the commissioning process such as Northwest Regional Development Agency (www.nwda.co.uk), Yorkshire Forward (www.yorkshire-forward.com) and South East England Development Agency (www.seeda.co.uk).

Appendix 4

Funding references – relevant contacts and organisations

Sponsorship & business partnerships guidance:

Arts & Business

Arts & Business have offices in the East, London, Midlands, North East, North West, South East, South West and Yorkshire

www.aandb.org.uk

Telephone: 0207 378 8143

Fax: 0207 7407 7527

Email: head.office@aandb.org.uk

Selected public funding bodies and guidance:

Department of Culture, Media and Sport

www.culture.gov.uk

Arts Council England

www.artscouncil.org.uk

Telephone: 0845 300 6200

Textphone: 020 7973 6564

National Lottery Funding

www.lotteryfunding.org.uk

Telephone 0845 275 0000

Textphone 0845 275 0022

Guidance on Trusts and Foundations:

The Directory of Social Change is a good source of information on trusts and foundations.

www.dsc.org.uk

Appendix 5

Performances and events

For further information on events and performances including on licences and health and safety information please contact ISAN (Independent Street Arts Network).

www.streetartsnetwork.org.uk

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For general information, see:
www.openhouse.org.uk

For further information on commissioning guidance, see (from April 2009):
www.artintheopen.org.uk



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