

# Light London: Cultural, Social & Environmental/Temporary & Permanent

## Light London Principles

Light has many cultural, social and environmental meanings. Artists have historically used light as a concept, subject, material and form. Thinking laterally about light is critical for our individual and communal experiences of the city – *we need to use light to enhance the character and meaning of our places.*

Sustainable lighting approaches are long term - the temporary can be part of wider environmental changes, rather than stand-alone. Permanent responses can be as creative as temporary, where longevity increases ownership by communities and clients. *Creating sustainable places means thinking long term about light for London.*

## Background: International

Lighting projects are almost always viewed as 'celebratory' with individual cities choosing to commission from a variety of starting points. Cities often treat the temporary as part of a wider policy/strategy. Some approaches are more integrated with regeneration and development projects whilst others are more directed towards tourism and the city's profile, depending on the city's aims. A city such as Turin, with the 'Luci d'Artista' programme, focuses on 'creating a point where art meets the general public'. It has chosen to commission high profile international artists to attract visitors to the city.

There are various cities internationally (see case studies) that use permanent, temporary and ephemeral lighting programmes and projects to enhance both their cultural profile and the city's urban experience. Temporary events with artists and lighting designers are often profiled as opportunities for experimentation and innovation, whilst longer term programmes can change perceptions of areas, with benefits such as increased footfall and perceptions of safety, comfort and accessibility.

## Background: UK

In the UK a number of cities and towns are engaged in lighting projects to enhance their profile, celebrate their architectural heritage and open up forgotten areas of the city. There are a number of marketed Winter Lighting festivals to brighten up the dark evenings such as the Northumberland Lights with three major projects for Berwick, Kielder Water and Blyth (during November). NewcastleGateshead's Winter Festival 08 included 'Glow' which highlighted the medieval remains of Newcastle using large-scale architectural projections to reveal spaces lost to the public since the area's regeneration.

These kinds of festivals often have a connection to visual arts organisations and in Gateshead the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art commissioned Yoko Ono to realise a series of outdoor artworks.

However a city such as Glasgow has developed a long-term lighting strategy, including a focus on 'light art', with a curated lighting festival 'Radiance' and is now developing community-based projects for outer city sites which are part of regeneration programmes. Other examples include Liverpool, with two recent initiatives with different purposes. Firstly, the lighting strategy for the new shopping centre Liverpool One, which has helped attract footfall in the evening and created links to other parts of the city. At the same time, the visual arts organization, the Liverpool Biennial, has commissioned artists to create neon 'Winter Lighting' for various places outside of the city centre. Some of the commissions are permanent and some are temporary depending on their location and all have been developed through connections with local communities.

## Creative Approaches for London

There are various major regeneration projects underway in London and there is currently a desire to further transform the capital's public realm. Given this, the Light London Working Group, and other forums, have identified that London has some very particular opportunities. Firstly, that to consider the experience of neighbourhoods, including street lighting/functional lighting, and the places where we live and work is key; looking at how communities can benefit more from small scale initiatives which change the everyday perceptions of areas. Secondly, that within this there is the opportunity to include artistic opportunities and to integrate these approaches to the benefit of places.

London therefore has the opportunity to concentrate on the permanent – making streets feel safer, making a more vibrant and imaginative city – alongside temporary projects signaling areas of change as part of wider thinking. Thinking about communities/users and the places to benefit from more creative lighting is an important part of this conversation, rather than a focus on providing a one-off event.