

**Brief for the Evaluation of Inspire
The South East Northumberland Public Art Initiative**



Inspire Evaluation

Summary

Proposals are invited for an evaluation to assess the contribution to the regeneration of South East Northumberland by the Inspire project. An important aim is to assess the impacts in terms of socio-economic development.

Background

Inspire is a partnership of South East Northumberland North Tyneside Regeneration Initiative (SENNTRI), Wansbeck District Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council, Northumberland County Council, Greening for Growth, Arts Council England, North East and Northern Architecture. The central objective of the project is to improve the built and natural environment of South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and better design. The aims are to modernise the environment and increase its distinctiveness and attractiveness to both local communities and to visitors including businesses and organisations. Key to the operation of the project is the deployment of a Public Art and Design Officer. The role of this specialist is to advocate the benefits of art and design and provide the expertise which will ensure their effective integration into existing and new schemes. The project is funded by the Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP) through the Single Programme from ONE North East and by the three local authorities. This funding lasts until March 2006.

Scope

The evaluation overall will seek to explore the project's contribution to the social and economic regeneration agenda in the North East, to identify key strengths and weaknesses and lessons learned, and to make recommendations for future practice.

The evaluation should

- comprehend the initial conditions in which the project has started
- identify its achievements against its objectives, and to review the objectives themselves
- identify and assess any unanticipated outcomes
- recognise any constraints which the project has encountered, and assess the ways in which these have been managed
- capture the perception of beneficiaries which include communities and partnership organisations.
- assess the role of partnership working in the project
- explore future sustainability options
- sift out lessons learned and recommendations for future practice

Key thematic areas for the assessment of impact are:

- the built and natural environment, community, identity and distinctiveness, investment and modernisation.

Method

Given anticipated changes in the targetry framework for regeneration investment and the developing debate about evaluation of regeneration initiatives, this review provides an opportunity to demonstrate the linkage of cultural initiatives with economic gains. Therefore, this evaluation will seek to marry the traditionally 'soft' outcomes of cultural

initiatives with the generally harder economic outputs framework currently used by regeneration agencies.

Proposals should make clear what methodology will be used to generate this blend of indicators. The project design contained indicative measures of success such as

- positive expressions by the community about neighbourhoods and environments;
- the number of new art works installed; and the number of new opportunities realised;
- additional funds invested in South East Northumberland;
- raised and positive media and image profile of South East Northumberland; impact on strategy in South East Northumberland;
- the capacity and confidence of communities to commission artwork and better design themselves, using mainstream resources;
- growth of cultural tourism in the area.

The process of evaluation should also contribute to local capacity-building and partnership processes. Proposals should demonstrate how this will take place.

The evaluation process should begin as soon as possible and last throughout the project. It is not purely retrospective. Success and good practice should be highlighted to enable the partners and others to carry forward what is learnt.

Outputs

The evaluation should be provided as a written report which includes an executive summary. Two hard copies and an electronic version should be provided. Findings will be required by July 2005 and a final report by December 2005.

It may be necessary to present the key findings to the project partners and to project sponsors

Resources

All appropriate documentation will be made available and all partners will be available for interview. Individual interviews or surveys may be undertaken directly following agreement on methodology. The Public Art and Design Officer will be able to provide access to project files and documentation. An administrative assistant is employed on the project and both project staff will be able to undertake agreed monitoring as part of the evaluation.

Management Arrangements

Consultants will report in the first instance to Nicholas Baumfield, Cultural Services Manager at Wansbeck District Council, who will liaise as appropriate with other partners.

Selection process and deadlines

Consultants are invited to submit an outline of their proposed approach to this brief including a clear statement of the methodology to be used to achieve the desired outcomes. The outline should include a timetable. Please also provide CVs of the personnel who will undertake the evaluation; an all-inclusive quotation; and a breakdown of the costs. It would be appreciated if submissions can be in electronic form.

The deadline for submissions will be **12.00 noon 27 August 2004**. They should be sent to Nicholas Baumfield n.baumfield@wansbeck.gov.uk or Council Offices, Front Street, Bedlington NE22 5TU.

Submissions will be examined by partners in the Inspire project. At this stage it is not anticipated that presentations will be asked for but that remains an option. It is intended that a decision will be made by the end of September.

Guide to costs

Proposals in the range £8,000 - £10,000 are invited. The quality of the proposed approach will be the key determinant of overall value for money.

Executive Summary

In September 2003 a partnership of South East Northumberland & North Tyneside Regeneration Initiative (SENNTRI), Wansbeck District Council (WDC), Blyth Valley Borough Council (BVBC), Northumberland County Council (NCC), Greening for Growth, Arts Council England North East and Northern Architecture secured funding for a public art project – *Inspire* - covering the Wansbeck and Blyth Valley Council areas. The initial funding agreement was for the period September 2003 to March 2006, and additional funding has been secured to extend the project into 2007.

Inspire's central aim was to improve the built and natural environment of South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and by encouraging better design across the public realm, so that the area's distinctiveness and attractiveness to both local communities and visitors is enhanced.

Key to the operation of the project has been the appointment of a Public Art and Design Officer (PADO), supported by a Project Assistant. The role of the PADO has been to advocate the benefits of art and design across the sub-region, and to provide the expertise that will ensure their effective integration into new and existing schemes.

An assessment of the project's economic and employment impacts reveals that to date *Inspire* has secured some £660,000 for public art across South East Northumberland, sufficient to create or support some 20 FTE jobs. Included in this financial figure is more than £80,000 leveraged from other public sector organisations to augment the Single Programme funds committed by the Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP).

In terms of the quantitative objectives identified for the project in the original NSP funding agreement, *Inspire* has excelled in both counts, exceeding both the target for FTE employment and also the number of people involved in learning activities of under 30 hours.

An evaluation exercise carried out during 2005 assessed *Inspire's* performance against a number of indicators designed to measure progress against the project's four main objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Improve the built and natural environment of South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and better design
- **Objective 2:** Increase the attractiveness of the environment to:
 - Local communities
 - Stakeholder organisations
 - Visitors
 - Businesses
- **Objective 3:** Contribute to the modernisation of the environment and increase its distinctiveness
- **Objective 4:** Ensure that communities and stakeholders are properly engaged in public art and design development

The evaluation study confirms that *Inspire* is emerging as an effective enabling mechanism for public art in South East Northumberland, providing through the PADO post, an intermediary who knows the sector and who has been able to make progress quickly, picking up projects that had been left floundering as well as delivering new initiatives relatively quickly and to the highest professional and curatorial standards. The PADO has also been able to provide access and advice on funding for public art to a range of organisations across the area, delivering benefit beyond the public sector partners.

Inspire has been very successful in raising the profile of public art within the public sector across South East Northumberland, and in encouraging planners, regeneration officers and others to consider it as an integral part of many of the initiatives that they are working on.

Discussions with local authority officers who have engaged with *Inspire* reveal that it is functioning as a catalyst, stimulating the use of public art in a broad range of environmental improvement and public realm projects, and encouraging almost every department within the three local authorities to consider it as integral to any project on which they are working.

By providing a dedicated public art post outside the normal departmental structures, *Inspire* is addressing capacity issues within local authority departments and other organisations, freeing up officers to work within their own area of expertise and bringing in the relevant skills when necessary. It is also important to note that most people would not like to see the PADO post 'mainstreamed', because it is perceived to work most effectively outside the confines of normal local authority operating procedures.

There is no doubt that *Inspire* is a community-involving project. Already there have been notable successes in the community-based projects that have been delivered to date. Where the PADO has been working with members of the public, the evaluation reveals that there has been a positive impact in terms of increasing their awareness and understanding of public art, and in helping achieve outcomes such as increased social cohesion, individual learning and civic and community pride. It is anticipated that as more communities become involved with *Inspire* then local residents' engagement with, and appreciation of, public art will continue to increase.

The evaluation exercise has raised a number of key issues that need to be resolved by the project partners. One important area of consideration is how far the *Inspire* project should move into encouraging awareness of the need for, and benefits of, good quality design. For instance, how can the project best contribute to the work of the new SENNTRI design panel, and how can the project partners insert more creative thinking into the whole urban design and planning process? Another opportunity is to build on existing 'Percent for Art' policies and to create a new, single account into which all Percent for Art funds are paid, allowing the local authorities to commission fewer, larger pieces. These and other issues will be tackled by the *Inspire* team in the coming year.

PLB Consulting Ltd
January 2006

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Introduction

Purpose of this Document

This evaluation report was commissioned by the INSPIRE partnership and the Northumberland Strategic Partnership to establish the early impacts and outcomes of the *Inspire* Project, an initiative that aims to improve the built and natural environment of South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and better design. The project is introduced in more detail in Section 2.1 of this report.

The evaluation was undertaken in order to advise the partners behind *Inspire* (South East Northumberland and North Tyneside Regeneration Initiative, Wansbeck District Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council, Northumberland County Council, Greening for Growth, Arts Council England North East and Northern Architecture) on how successful the project has been at meeting its own objectives in the early years of its existence and to make recommendations for future practice. A copy of the Study Brief is presented in Appendix One.

Report Structure

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 introduces *Inspire* and sets out in more detail the objectives of the project. The methodology used in the evaluation process is also described
- The performance to date of the project against the agreed evaluation measures is reviewed in Section 3
- Section 4 summarises *Inspire's* progress to date, summarises the main benefits and provides guidance on how future practice might be developed in order to strengthen still further its role in improving the built and natural environment of South East Northumberland

***Inspire* – What is it, and What are we Evaluating?**

***Inspire* – an Introduction**

Inspire is a partnership of South East Northumberland and North Tyneside Regeneration Initiative (SENNTRI), Wansbeck District Council (WDC), Blyth Valley Borough Council (BVBC), Northumberland County Council (NCC), Greening for Growth, Arts Council England North East and Northern Architecture. The central objective of the project is to improve the built and natural environment of South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and better design, so that the area's distinctiveness and attractiveness to both local communities and visitors is enhanced.

The project is funded by the Northumberland Strategic Partnership (NSP) through the Single Programme from ONE North East, and by the three local authorities (BVBC, NCC, WDC). The initial funding agreement lasted from September 2003 until March 2006, and additional funding has recently been secured to extend the project into at least 2007.

Key to the operation of the project has been the deployment of a 1.0 FTE Public Art & Design Officer (PADO), based between Wansbeck District Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council and Northumberland County Council and supported by a 0.5 FTE Project Assistant. The role of the PADO has been to advocate the benefits of art and design across the sub-region, and to provide the expertise that will ensure their effective integration into existing and new schemes.

Activities Undertaken during *Inspire*

The PADO postholder and his assistant have undertaken a wide range of activities during the course of the project, including:

- Acting as advocates for public art during discussions with colleagues in planning and economic development teams, community development teams and with elected members and other officers within the relevant local authorities
- Preparing public art strategies for Blyth Valley and for Wansbeck
- Working with local community groups to commission public artwork for their localities
- Providing guidance to other bodies, including public and private sector organisations, on how public art could enhance the quality of environment they are creating
- Helping private developers and public sector development agencies to commission and deliver public art as part of local regeneration initiatives, including business park developments
- Assisting other public art officers across the region to promote the opportunities associated with the sector
- Reporting progress to a steering group

Objectives of the Evaluation Exercise

The study brief (Appendix One) required the evaluation exercise to explore, where possible, the project's contribution to the social and economic regeneration agenda in the North East, to identify key strengths and weaknesses and lessons learned, and to make recommendations for future practice. The evaluation has been designed to, where possible:

- Identify the initial conditions in which the project started

- Identify *Inspire's* achievements against its objectives, and to review the objectives themselves
- Identify and assess any unanticipated outcomes
- Recognise any constraints which the project has encountered and assess the ways in which these have been managed
- Capture the perceptions of beneficiaries, including communities and partnership organisations
- Assess the role of partnership working in the project
- Explore future sustainability options
- Sift out lessons learned and present recommendations for future practice

During the early stages of the evaluation exercise there was much debate as to the success measures against which *Inspire's* progress should be matched. Some of the desired outputs and outcomes identified in the original SRB submission (e.g. an increase in the number of cultural tourists in SE Northumberland, SE Northumberland being cited by regional and national agencies as an exemplar in arts, architecture, design, environment and regeneration) were discarded as they were not relevant to the early stages of the project and can only be evaluated once the project has been in place for a longer period.

Eventually, a list of 12 indicators or measures was agreed with the study steering group (comprising representatives of *Inspire*, NSP and WDC). These covered the four main objectives established for *Inspire*, namely:

- **Objective 1:** Improve the built and natural environment of South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and better design
- **Objective 2:** Increase the attractiveness of the environment to:
 - Local communities
 - Stakeholder organisations
 - Visitors
 - Businesses
- **Objective 3:** Contribute to the modernisation of the environment and increase its distinctiveness
- **Objective 4:** Ensure that communities and stakeholders are properly engaged in public art and design development

For each objective, three measures were identified and appropriate data gathering procedures agreed. In every case, there was no suitable baseline data against which to measure *Inspire's* impact to date, and thus the information presented later in this report provides the first set of baseline information against which the longer-term impacts of *Inspire* can be measured in years to come. The indicators for each objective, and the relevant data gathering procedure, are presented in Figure 1.

Detailed economic impact outcomes were not considered to be appropriate indicators for investigation at this stage of *Inspire's* lifetime. However, as more artworks are delivered on the ground, thus transforming internal and external perceptions of the area, and as the project continues to involve more organisations in commissioning and enjoying public art, then it will be possible to derive more sophisticated quantitative indicators on, for example, additional levels of tourist activity in an area and associated increases in visitor spending and job creation.

Nonetheless, an initial assessment of the performance of the project indicates that:

- To date, funding to the amount of £660,000 has been committed to public art across South East Northumberland, sufficient to create/ support around 20 FTE jobs assuming a cost per job of £33,000¹
- NSP figures reveal that 2.7 FTE jobs created by *Inspire* are directly attributable to the project
- At the end of 2005, *Inspire* had secured £80,000 leverage from other public sector organisations

Figure 1: Agreed Measures and Procedures for Evaluating *Inspire*

Objective	Indicator/ Evidence	Data gathering procedure
Objective 1: Improve the built & natural environment of South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and better design	1. Number of awards (e.g. Civic Trust, RIBA, CABA) received by local projects in which <i>Inspire</i> has been involved	PADO to monitor local results awards schemes
	2. Evidence of contribution by <i>Inspire</i> team to developing local authority public art policies and similar documents	PADO to retain copies of all public art policies prepared during <i>Inspire</i>
	3. Awareness of, and interest in, public art by public sector agencies involved in regeneration	Literature review of relevant document to ascertain level of attention shown to public art Interviews with key officers in relevant agencies and organisations
Objective 2: Increase the attractiveness of the environment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local communities • Stakeholder organisations • Visitors • Businesses 	4. Level of support for public art within local communities and stakeholder organisations	Focus groups held with representatives of different residential communities within SE Northumberland, to gauge each group's reactions to public art in the area
	5. Additional investment by private sector in artworks in South East Northumberland	PADO to monitor new installations through discussions with developers, planners, regeneration agencies etc.
	6. Perceptions of the area as a possible investment location, as held by business representatives from outside the area	Consultations with possible investors from outside the region (<i>if additional resources become available</i>)
Objective 3: Contribute to the modernisation of the environment and increase its distinctiveness	7. Perceptions of the local environment by young adults (16-24) living in the area	Focus groups held with groups of young adults living across the area, to gauge their perceptions of SE Northumberland as a forward-looking area
	8. Number of industrial site and retail site development projects using public art	PADO to write 'case study' narrative of assessment of <i>Inspire's</i> impact on this process
	9. Media mentions of the <i>Inspire</i> project	PADO to monitor media coverage

¹ This cost per FTE job is taken from a recent study of the value of the heritage sector in the North East of England, undertaken by Arup on behalf of the North East Historic Environment Forum

<i>Objective</i>	<i>Indicator/ Evidence</i>	<i>Data gathering procedure</i>
Objective 4: Ensure that communities and stakeholders are properly engaged in public art and design development	10. Approach to engagement employed by PADO	Series of case studies, using Participatory Evaluation, to demonstrate benefits of different approaches to facilitating public involvement in planning for public art and design
	11. Capability and confidence of community participants involved in public art and design development projects	Semi-structured interviews with participants at the beginning of the engagement process and at the conclusion of the process
	12. Learning experiences associated with involvement in the process as experienced by different participants (members of the public and local authority officers and members)	<u>If resources and time permit</u> , employment of the MLA ' <i>Inspiring Learning for All</i> ' model to identify personal learning benefits of engagement by individuals, using anecdotal information gathered during two waves of interviews

Methodology

A literature review revealed little previous work on evaluating public art programmes in the UK, and led the consultancy team to the conclusion that the measures used to ascertain the impact of public art need to be responsive to individual cases rather than merely replicated from previous exercises^{2,3}. This approach was adopted despite the call by the ODPM and others for more consistency in evaluating the impacts of regeneration programmes through the use of common measures of outputs and outcomes, such as local quality of life indicators, Design Quality Indicators etc⁴. The data required to undertake this evaluation exercise was derived from a number of sources including:

- Several interviews with the *Inspire* PADO
- A programme of telephone and face-to-face interviews with representatives of a wide range of stakeholder organisations (see Appendix Two)
- A review of information collected by the PADO following agreement of the measures and procedures for data gathering (see Figure 1, above)
- A review of published and 'grey' literature relating to public art in the UK, and to evaluation procedures for cultural and environmental projects (Appendix Three contains a bibliography)

Supporting the research carried out by PLB Consulting Ltd was a Participatory Evaluation (PE) of four case study public art projects across the sub-region⁵. This work, commissioned by NSP from Barefoot Research & Evaluation, has been published separately. Key findings from that work feeds through into several parts of this evaluation report and the Barefoot study is acknowledged where appropriate.

² Ixia (2004) *Research on Public Art: Assessing Impact and Quality. Draft Report* [Edinburgh College of Art & Heriot-Watt University](#)

³ Reeves, M (2002) *Measuring the economic and social impact of the arts: a review*. [Arts Council of England](#)

⁴ see for example: Evans, G & Shaw, P (2004) *The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK. A Review of Evidence. Report to DCMS*. [London Metropolitan University](#)

⁵ Barefoot Research and Evaluation (2005) *Participatory Evaluation of the Inspire Public Art Project. Four Case Studies: Newbiggin Sailing Club, Second Avenue Home Zone, Wildspace Network, Young People's Perception of the Project*.

In the end, resources were not available to collect any information against which to measure Indicator 6 (external perceptions of the area as a possible investment location). Also, insufficient time was available to conduct a second wave of interviews with consultees and thus the application of the MLA's *Inspiring Learning for All* model for identifying learning outcomes has not been possible. However, it has been possible to comment on the learning experiences of many of the people participating in, or engaging with, INSPIRE.

Concluding Remarks

The literature review confirmed that there has been very little evaluation of the economic, regeneration and community impacts of public art programmes in the UK. The desire by the *Inspire* partners to engage in this research is to be commended, as it provides valuable guidance not only on the performance of the early stages of that particular project but also has wider validity in terms of highlighting some of the process-related outcomes that can be hard to measure (e.g. impact on changing attitudes) but which are often as of as much relevance as the key outputs of a project such as this (e.g. number of artworks installed, number of people participating in the commissioning or creative process).

Inspire's Performance against Agreed Measures

Objective 1: Improve the built and natural environment of SE Northumberland through the involvement of artists and better design

Number of awards received by projects in which Inspire has been involved

At the time of writing (late December 2005) none of the installations or capital projects with which the PADO and *Inspire* have been involved has received an award. Organisations such as the Civic Trust, CABE and RIBA will be advised of every major initiative that might be eligible for an award in the future, and the situation monitored.

Evidence of contribution by INSPIRE team to developing local authority public art policies and similar documents

Both Wansbeck DC and Blyth Valley BC prepared Public Art Policies during 2004, with the support of the *Inspire* PADO. The two policies were both approved by the relevant Cabinets in the autumn of 2004.

Northumberland as a whole is covered by the Northumberland Public Art Action Plan⁶. This was prepared by Commissions North on behalf of NSP prior to the appointment of the *Inspire* PADO.

A final point to note is the forthcoming creation of a Design Panel for the SENNTRI area, which is partly due to pressures from the PADO and others involved in *Inspire* for such a body to promote good design across the sub-region. Given the importance placed by the recent Urban Task Force report⁷ on delivering design excellence in regeneration and renaissance initiatives, this outcome of the PADO's lobbying activities is welcome and should help to deliver longer-term benefits across the whole of the sub-region.

Awareness of, and interest in, public art by public sector agencies involved in regeneration

A wide range of regional and sub-regional strategy documents was reviewed in order to assess the level of attention shown to public art within them. Given that almost all of the documents were prepared prior to the start of *Inspire*, the level of detail afforded to public art within provides a useful baseline position from which to establish the impact of *Inspire* as these documents are revised in the future. It is important to note that the majority of documents reviewed were broader economic and regeneration strategies rather than cultural publications, on the basis that the overall objective of *Inspire* is to use public art and good design to support the regeneration of the sub-region.

In addition to presenting policies for public art and good design (see Figure 2), many documents are also illustrated with images of public art. The most recent Regional Economic Strategy prepared by ONE North East, for instance, uses the iconic shot of *The Angel of the North* very early on, whilst *The Spirit of the Staithes* sculpture features in Blyth Valley Borough Council's Community Strategy document.

⁶ Commissions North (2004) *Northumberland Public Art Action Plan 2004-2008*

⁷ Urban Task Force (2005) *Towards a Strong Urban Renaissance*

Figure 2: Inclusion of public art and good design in strategy documents

Document	Mention of public art & good design
Blyth Valley Strategy Partnership (2003) <i>The People's Plan: A Community Strategy for Blyth Valley, 2003-8</i>	No reference to public art or design, although contains the aspiration to improve the quality of the environment
Blyth Valley Borough Council (2004) <i>Transforming Tomorrow: Corporate Plan 2004 - 2008</i>	Vision is to create a "high-quality" town and country environment that everyone enjoys and takes pride in. Ambition is for a much more attractive environment. The implication is that public art and good design will contribute to this although this is not explicitly stated.
Blyth Valley Borough Council (2005) <i>Cultural Services, Service Plan 2005 – 06 (1st Draft, 02/05)</i>	Development of a Public Arts Trail, incorporating the public art in Cramlington Town Square, identified as a priority for action during 2005-06 Also identifies a desire to meet the Arts Council England strategic aspiration to promote the arts, prioritise young people and creative partnerships, and to address the Arts Council England North East strategy of positioning the arts at the heart of social and economic revival.
Northumberland County Council (2004) <i>Best Value Performance Plan</i>	No reference to public art
Northumberland Strategic Partnership (2004) <i>Catch the Northumberland VIBE: A Framework for Economic Activity to 2010 (Draft July 04)</i>	No reference to public art
Northumberland Strategic Partnership (2004) <i>Strategic Investment Plan for Northumberland 2005/08 (Draft)</i>	Culture and Tourism Programme (p12) mentions improvements to the infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience and meet needs of key groups – the examples of such improvements given are 'signage, interpretation, public art, visitor facilities, cycleways, footpaths etc. The aim of the improvements is to encourage environmental tourism in the sub-regions 'magnet' attractions. The Strategic Added Value subsection of this programme calls for the strengthening of Northumberland's images and identities via events and public art. Public art appears to be seen mainly as providing a source of identity and being used to provide striking images for publicity materials.
Northumberland Strategic Partnership (undated) <i>Northumberland Community Strategy</i>	No direct mention. Reference to 'good environmental design' aiding in reduction of vandalism & crime, but closer reading shows this to be based on the built environment. (p13 – 16)

Document	Mention of public art & good design
ONE North East (2002) <i>Regional Economic Strategy</i>	No direct reference to public art, but culture in its widest sense appears as a linking theme across the whole of the strategy where it has three roles to play: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an economic driver • As a tool for the growth of individuals and communities • Creating, enhancing and promoting a vibrant cultural environment
ONE North East (2003) <i>Corporate Plan Summary, 2003-6</i>	No reference to public art
One North East (2005) <i>Leading the Way. Regional Economic Strategy 2006</i>	This builds on similar themes contained in the previous (2002) Regional Economic Strategy. Specifically mentions the region's "growing profile of world class public art, both permanent and temporary", and its "distinctive architecture".
SENTTRI (2002) <i>Strategy & Action Plan. Summary Prospectus</i>	Identifies need to change property perceptions of the area (p12, also p19) although does not relate this specifically to improving design Sees the need to increase community participation in art, to help people secure a stake in their communities (p19) Under Objective C3 (Greening for Growth), 'Sculpture' and lighting seen as important in improving A189 corridor (p26)
SENNTRI (2004) <i>Delivery Plan 2004 – 2007</i>	Objective A3 – Culture [10] – Priority (a) is to develop strategic cultural activity. This includes the following: Promotion: Promote public art and high quality building design as an integral part of major developments Co-ordination: Use the SE Northumberland public art project to develop a consistent and marketable approach across the sub region Delivery: Woodhorn (due end 2005), develop new public art features to complement environmental change on A189, cultural provision in Blyth and Ashington (both due 2004) Objective B5 – Sites and Premises (p18) – Priority (c) is to upgrade existing employment sites, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion: Promote a sub regional quality standard for employment sites including unit design, landscape, fencing, security, signage and public art • Public art here is linked to general environmental improvements and good design, especially environmentally sustainable projects.

Document	Mention of public art & good design
Wansbeck District Council (2005) <i>Strategic Plan 2005/6 – 2007/8</i>	Sees the development of high quality public space and major tree planting schemes as integral to new housing developments (p11) Under the priority 'improve the cleanliness of streets and public areas', the council pledges that in 2005/6 they will 'investigate use of art and design initiatives to create public ownership of local areas' (p15)

What is evident from the above is that ONE North East, SENNTRI, NSP and Wansbeck District Council have all prepared strategy documents that include direct reference to the role of public art in supporting regeneration across their area. Blyth Valley BC has identified implementing a particular public art project as a priority within its current service plan for its Cultural Services team and one would expect, following discussions with senior officers within BVBC, that future local strategy documents will place greater emphasis on the subject than has been made in the past. This is a welcome development and demonstrates the positive impact that *Inspire* has had – a relatively recent major review of English District Council local plans⁸ revealed that very few place any emphasis at all on public art, particularly when compared to urban/metropolitan counterparts.

The absence of any reference to public art in the County Council documentation reviewed may be because a specific action plan for public art across the County already exists⁹. Nonetheless, it is recommended that authors of future versions of all community plans and strategies and similar documents are encouraged to cross-reference such documents to the policy recommendations and actions presented in the various public art strategies covering Northumberland.

As well as reviewing how the key public regeneration agencies treat public art in their current strategy documents, representatives of all of the main organisations were interviewed about, amongst other issues, their awareness of and interest in, public art.

Both those individuals who were very familiar with public art, and those who were less familiar, indicated confusion as to what public art was. Is it:

- Large, monumental art which just happens to be public, i.e. open to all, in the open-air, making a visual statement to enhance the surroundings? *The Angel of the North* and *Spirit of the Staithes* were both mentioned in this context
- Smaller projects with pieces linked to surrounding community, and that may also be produced by an artist working in or with the community? Often these were tied to local heritage. For instance, coal tubs planted with flowers were mentioned more than once, and usually with disdain
- Part of the new urban landscape whose presence is largely due to the work of the planning system, e.g. on business estates, gateways into towns, roundabout ornamentation?

Performance art was not mentioned in this context, and street furniture and functional items were mentioned but only by those who were familiar with public art and who therefore instinctively sought opportunities for environmental and public realm improvements. Digital media and temporary installations were not mentioned either.

⁸ Hargraves, C (2001) *Public Art and Market Town Regeneration. MA Dissertation. University of Westminster*

⁹ Commissions North (2004) *Northumberland Public Art Action Plan 2004-2008*

Whether it is necessary for there to be a single, concise definition of public art that is understood by every community member in South East Northumberland is questionable. The key to increasing public awareness and understanding of public art will surely be for the *Inspire* project to deliver a range of pieces using different media and in different situations, so that the community begins to assimilate an understanding of what public art can be, rather than having a single definition presented to it in a didactic fashion.

By involving a wide range of public sector officers, elected members and community representatives in the commissioning process in the coming years (see also Section 3.4.3), a broader understanding of the whole spectrum of public art opportunities should be achieved.

An observation made by some consultees working in regeneration was that they were just as interested in the **process** (i.e. working with the community) as a mechanism for regeneration than with the **end result**. However, it was also pointed out that a disappointing end result sells the community short and should be discouraged. There must be quality art produced in either case and some consultees expressed a concern that community-produced art is sometimes of a lower quality than a piece that has been produced by a professional artist responding to the environment. This is certainly one of the reasons why the *Inspire* PADO has adopted a curatorial approach that has limited community involvement in physically creating the artwork and focussed more on a capacity-building approach that involves community representatives in the earlier, commissioning process. Only professional artists are commissioned to produce *Inspire* artworks although the artists themselves may work with local people to help produce the commissioned piece.

All consultees agreed that public art could and should contribute to regeneration by:

- Improving surroundings (especially by making good design part of every planning process, e.g. street furniture as art)
- Encouraging ownership, pride and sense of place
- Beautifying routes through and around an area to show to the outside world that this is being done

As such, public art is seen to have a key role underpinning broader economic development and environmental improvement projects. However, there seemed little support for the view that *Inspire*, and initiatives like it, can drive renaissance on its own. Public art and improving design has a facilitating, supportive role that adds value to the regeneration process, particularly by creating and enhancing local distinctiveness.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

From the evidence collected to date, it would appear that the *Inspire* project, through the interventions of the PADO in particular, has helped to raise awareness of the potential to use public art as a supporting tool for regeneration amongst all of the key public sector agencies responsible for delivering regeneration. The creation of Public Art Policies for the two local authorities should ensure that when relevant regeneration and community strategies are revised in years to come, the potential of public art and good design should appear in every document.

In terms of recommendations for future work that can help deliver against some of the relevant indicators:

- The PADO should submit appropriate installations for consideration for Civic Trust, RIBA or CABA awards, as they are delivered on the ground
- The PADO and the *Inspire* steering group should ensure that all future regional and sub-regional strategies and community plans cross-reference, where appropriate, the County and/ or District Council public art strategies

Objective 2: Increase the attractiveness of the environment to local communities, stakeholder organisations, visitors and businesses

Level of support for public art within local communities and stakeholder organisations

An indication of the current level of support for public art within local communities has been garnered from the Barefoot PE study of a number of public art initiatives already delivered by *Inspire*. The outcome of the relevant part of that exercise was that:

"we can conclude that there has been support from local communities and stakeholder organisations and the programme (Inspire) has increased the attractiveness of the environment to local communities, stakeholder organisations and visitors (no businesses were consulted). The research indicates that the programme has made every effort to consult with, and include stakeholders, within its remit for the development of public art. This has led to satisfactory outcomes. It can be concluded that the consultation process i.e. allowing stakeholders to input their opinions, hold discussions and meet artists, is key to local ownership of public art". (Barefoot Research & Evaluation, 2005, p2)

The Barefoot study also concluded that although many stakeholders and community members felt that art was relatively low down in the 'pecking order' of socio-economic and environmental improvements, its very presence was perceived as lending added value to those improvements. Stakeholders were:

"surprised about the positive impact of the art in the context of an existing development, and how it beautified an area and produced discussion". (Barefoot Research & Evaluation, 2005, p3)

In some instances, such as the three paintings installed on the exterior wall at Newbiggin Sailing Club, public art has in fact become symbolic of the whole regeneration process in a community. Initially the public art was considered to be a small and perhaps insignificant element of the renovation of the club but public reaction has ensured that its presence in the community has become emblematic of wider change.

Turning to the level of support for public art within stakeholder organisations, the consultation programme carried out by PLB Consulting Ltd revealed widespread support both for the project and for the PADO himself.

There was widespread support for the project from all quarters, including:

- Regeneration agencies
- Local authority officers
- Representatives of the arts community

Consultees have suggested that the benefits of the *Inspire* project include:

- Its role as an advocate and catalyst for action, bringing the necessary professional experience into the heart of the local authority's work
- The brokerage facility that it provides, acting as intermediary between artists and those who wish to commission work, both within and outside the public sector
- Its semi-autonomous nature, which means that it is able to work across the three authority areas with relative ease and its independence from the most extreme aspects of lobbying that can arise when elected members are striving to secure investment for their ward
- The high professional and curatorial standards employed by the PADO, and the project's focus on using professional artists capable of delivering high quality pieces of art

This acceptance of public art as a key contributor to the work of many other disciplines within regeneration and planning teams demonstrates the contribution that *Inspire* has made to raising the public art agenda. All of these attributes are important to retain as the *Inspire* project moves into a new phase during 2006.

One concern raised by a local authority representative was that the project had the potential to divert funds from other projects that might also create public benefit – the crude equation of “*one stone carving = 20 hectares of new woodland*” was made. This supports an observation made at the outset of the evaluation study by Wansbeck DC's Cultural Services Manager, that the impacts of culture in general, and of public art in particular, need to be fully evaluated and circulated if *Inspire* is to present an eloquent and robust case for investment in public art and high quality design, as opposed to yet more new workspaces on industrial estates and small business parks.

It is hoped that the findings of this study have provided some useful baseline information here, and that future evaluation work can deliver the quantitative comparisons (FTE jobs created, level of private investment leveraged by public spend on art) that will allow like for like comparisons with competing areas. Such indicators were not specifically identified as being relevant at this early stage of the *Inspire* project as it takes time for any area-based programme to have an impact. However, once a substantial body of public art has been delivered on the ground it will be possible to prepare a full appraisal of the economic impacts delivered by the project's tangible outputs (i.e. the art pieces themselves).

A second observation that has a bearing on the future direction of *Inspire* was the suggestion that many people across South East Northumberland have traditionally had a ‘comfort zone’ for public art that is relatively low in its aspiration. However, the suggestion is that *Inspire* has begun to ‘raise the bar’, still delivering outputs that are acceptable to the community within which they are located yet also introducing new, more challenging art forms and concepts. Sustaining this work will require a high level of overt support from leading local authority officers and community representatives (including elected members), particularly when seeking to deliver larger, iconic pieces. The case of the *Klondyke* bridge was quoted as one project where an exceptional and innovative piece could have been delivered had there been greater support across the board from the outset.

Additional investment by private sector in artworks in SE Northumberland

An analysis of project budgets at the time of writing (early January 2006) reveals that almost all funding is still coming from the public sector in one form or another. To date, some 93% of the funding for public art installations has come from the public sector, with 7% from private and voluntary sector sources. In this respect, *Inspire* shares a similar experience to the broader public art community across the UK where the initial investment of Lottery funds channelled into public art through the Arts Council has been extended by resources from a whole variety of public bodies

including local authorities, regeneration companies, hospital trusts etc¹⁰. Although the investment by Age Concern is not strictly private sector investment, it does represent a welcome voluntary sector contribution to public art in the sub-region.

Figure 3: Breakdown of known project funding to March 2006

Source	£,000	%
Arts Council England	27.00	4%
Commissions North	13.00	2%
% for Art	156.00	24%
New Opportunities Fund	71.25	11%
Inspire Single Programme	123.25	19%
Other NSP	146.00	22%
Other (including Neighbourhood Renewal Fund)	78.25	12%
Age Concern	10.00	2%
Developer (Wansbeck Business Park) ¹¹	35.00	5%
Total committed funds	659.75	100%

Source: *Inspire PADO*, additional analysis by PLB Consulting Ltd

A financial lifetime variance analysis of the *Inspire* project prepared on 6th January 2006 by NSP does not identify any private sector leverage to date by the project.

Thus although *Inspire* appears to have stimulated very little private investment in public art to date, the above information provides valuable baseline data against which to re-evaluate the project's funding experience in years to come. This is particularly important given recent comments by Commissions North that the business sector is becoming increasingly important as a source of funding for public art¹².

Perceptions of the area as a possible investment location, as held by business representatives from outside the area

This particular measure has not been evaluated to date, owing to an absence of resources to carry out interviews with business representatives from outside the sub-region.

However, one factor that does demonstrate how public art contributes towards the regeneration agenda by changing the climate for investment is the fact that the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is illustrated with pictures of public art. Similarly, the *Spirit of the Staithes*, a public art piece in Blyth, is regularly used as a backdrop for photographs of business leaders meeting regeneration agency and local authority representatives. In both instances, contemporary public art becomes a *de facto* icon of the area's willingness to embrace change.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

In this early stage of the *Inspire* project few pieces have been delivered on the ground, and thus it is relatively early to expect it to have made a major contribution to the attractiveness of the environment to different stakeholder groups. What is evident, however, is that the project has certainly had an impact on those communities and individuals who have had some level of engagement with it. This is particularly the case with the wide range of local government officers in Wansbeck DC, Blyth Valley BC and NCC who have been able to work alongside the PADO.

¹⁰ Appleton, J (2005) *Losing Street Cred*. The Spectator, 5 February 2005

¹¹ NB This project was still under development at the time of writing

¹² Commissions North comment quoted in Appleton (2005)

Encouraging the two local authorities to commission the IPF 'Community Plus' survey methodology to establish how local residents feel that *Inspire* and other cultural investment is improving (or how it could improve) their quality of life would be of value in assessing public support for public art and help provide additional data for the first measure identified (section 3.2.1).

In terms of increasing private sector investment in public art in the future, it is recommended that the PADO works with colleagues in inward investment and planning teams across the three authorities and other agencies, to ensure that initiatives such as '*Percent for Art*' are pushed hard not only in public-sector driven new-build projects but also in private-sector led office and workspace refurbishment programmes and other capital works. One opportunity might be to create a ring-fenced funding pot for public art under the aegis of the PADO and the *Inspire* project, into which developers deposit their "1%", so that larger pieces can be installed across the whole of South East Northumberland and not just in business parks and town centres.

In order to monitor perceptions of the area as a possible investment location, it is recommended that NSP and SENTTRI, together with ONE North East, commission research on the broader issue of the sub-region's appeal as an inward investment location and that during this research the importance of public art as a factor affecting investment decisions is explored.

Objective 3: Contribute to the modernisation of the environment and increase its distinctiveness

Perceptions of the local environment by young adults (16-24) living in the area

Again, the Barefoot PE exercise provides a valuable insight into this area. The research confirmed that:

"the type of art developed by the Inspire art programme would unequivocally lead to a modernisation of the local environment and improve its distinctiveness. The young people were very enthusiastic about the Inspire art and expressed considerable support for the modernity of the art. However, the young people recognised the importance of remembering local history and heritage, although in their words "not to live it". Young people and others consulted during the research felt that public art gave an area a sense of identity and encouraged other people to visit, and had an influence on whether residents chose to leave an area". (Barefoot Research & Evaluation, 2005, p2)

Number of industrial site and retail site development projects using public art

Inspire has been active in seeking to deliver public art on both industrial estates and business parks. To date, eight projects have been delivered or are at an advanced stage of planning (Figure 4). These projects represent around one-fifth of all of the initiatives with which *Inspire* has been involved to date. Total spend is estimated at around £230,000 with £18,000 being the *Inspire* contribution, a leverage of around 1:13. Advice from the PADO is that the volume of local authority regeneration projects across South East Northumberland is such that current demand cannot be met from the existing *Inspire* resources and this is leading to some potential public sector opportunities being lost, in addition to possible private sector art projects.

Figure 4: Breakdown of industrial and business park public art projects

<i>Project</i>	<i>Industrial estate</i>	<i>Business Park/ Office</i>
Age Concern, Ashington		1
Centre for Enterprise		1
Cramlington One Stop Shop		1
Jubilee Industrial Estate	1	
North Seaton Business Park		1
North Seaton Industrial Estate	1	
Northumberland Business Park		1
Wansbeck Business Park		1
Total	2	6

Source: *Inspire PADO*

Many of the other art works already delivered or in planning are located on public rights of way (e.g. as part of the Wildspace Network), as part of neighbourhood development schemes (e.g. the 2nd Avenue Home Zone work), in public parks (e.g. Central Park and Memorial Park, Newbiggin) or at cultural facilities (the four pieces being commissioned for the Experience Northumberland at Woodhorn project).

This particular measure – the number of projects delivered on the ground - can be monitored on a regular basis, with the findings being used to inform what particular environments within South East Northumberland are being over- or under-represented in future public art investment initiatives.

Media mentions of the Inspire Project

The *Inspire* PADO monitors press coverage and has identified nearly 60 separate articles in the region's press since the project commenced, or around one article every other week. The breakdown between the main outlets is as follows:

Figure 5: Level of media coverage of *Inspire*

<i>Media outlet</i>	<i>Articles printed</i>	<i>%</i>
News Post Leader	26	46%
Northumberland Herald & Post	17	30%
The Journal	6	11%
In Touch	2	4%
Evening Chronicle	2	4%
Valley Voice	1	2%
www.n-e-life.co.uk	1	2%
The Journal, Culture Magazine	1	2%
Coastal View	1	2%
Total	57	100%

Source: *Inspire*, additional analysis by PLB Consulting Ltd

This level of media coverage should certainly be helping to raise the project's profile across South East Northumberland. In terms of content, the vast majority of articles have been positive about the project in general or about a particular artwork or event, with some adopting a neutral stance and one or two reporting concerns about particular proposals from members of the public or other stakeholders.

A textual analysis of the articles, although possible, would not provide any useful additional data into the feelings of the various journalists and media outlets towards *Inspire*, as many appear to be based largely on press releases circulated by *Inspire*

and others, and thus reflect the wording used by the project's representatives themselves.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

All the evidence gathered to date suggests that the *Inspire* project is raising awareness of the potential for using public art as a tool for regeneration, and that certain groups such as young adults and employees working in the area's business parks and industrial estates will be exposed to much more of it in the future. An opportunity to explore in more detail young adult's perceptions of their local environment might be to develop at least one public art project with this specific audience in each of the two districts, and to use the commissioning process as a vehicle for exploring in more detail their views on public art as a tool for transforming their surroundings.

In terms of media coverage, a useful analysis to be undertaken in the future would be to measure the total column inches covered by these articles and translate this into a financial value that represents that marketing spend that would have been required to deliver the same coverage. This monetary value could then be presented as an additional financial benefit leveraged as a result of the *Inspire* project.

A separate and similarly helpful analysis for future evaluation projects would be to examine the circulation figures and distribution areas for each media outlet, in order to gauge the number of people across the region who will have had their awareness of *Inspire* raised as a result of this press coverage.

Objective 4: Ensure that communities and stakeholders are properly engaged in public art and design development

Approach to engagement employed by Inspire PADO

The Barefoot study found that:

"the research evidence shows that, in the three case studies, the Inspire Officer has made every effort to involve stakeholders in the development of the Inspire public art, often going beyond expected efforts. The research indicates that communities and stakeholders have been properly engaged in the public art and design development in the three case studies". (Barefoot Research & Evaluation, 2005, p2)

This finding is to be welcomed, and demonstrates how far *Inspire* has taken public art in South East Northumberland compared to the situation that most local authorities found themselves in during the early and mid 1990s, when communities were "*informed, rather than consulted or involved*"¹³ about public art.

Consultations with local authority officers revealed widespread support for the contribution that the PADO has been able to make to specific projects, with common observations including:

- The ease with which the PADO was able to communicate artistic concepts to non-art professionals
- The benefits of having access to a professional with commissioning experience
- The success of *Inspire* in acting as a catalyst, stimulating the use of public art and encouraging every department to consider it as integral to any project and breaking down barriers between departments

¹³ Selwood, S (1995) *The Benefits of Public Art. The polemics of permanent art in public places* Policy Studies Institute

- The role of the PADO in addressing capacity issues within each department, providing either the skills and/ or the manpower needed to deliver a better project

Crucially, *Inspire* is not seen within the public sector as a community-focused project but as a delivery mechanism for public art. This has been particularly beneficial when seeking to promote the integration of public art into more environmental improvement and workspace provision projects – evidence from our consultations suggests that *Inspire* has been particularly successful in introducing public art to local authority officers in disciplines where it has traditionally been given little, if any, attention.

One final observation is the fact that consultees who had previous experience of public art through larger regeneration programmes were more likely to refer to *Inspire* as a project, whilst newcomers to public art were much more likely to identify the initiative with the PADO himself. This second group also admitted that in the past they would not normally have considered using public art in their projects, but that others had pointed them in the direction of the PADO as the ‘champion’ for *Inspire*. This suggests that the low key approach used by the PADO has had a key impact on personalising the initiative, giving local authority colleagues the feeling that he is there to support them as they embrace a discipline that may be relatively new to them.

Capability and confidence of community participants involved in public art and design development projects

This was another area considered by Barefoot in the PE exercise, with their finding being that:

“the attention to the consultation process is key to the capability and confidence of community participants involved in public art development”.
(Barefoot Research & Evaluation, 2005, p3)

Previous research into the social impacts associated with participative arts programmes¹⁴ identified around 50 types of benefit, many of which appear from the Barefoot research to have been evident in the early stages of the *Inspire* project. These include:

- Increase personal confidence and self worth
- Extended involvement in social activity
- The encouragement to adults to take up education and training opportunities
- Helping people to build new skills and work experience
- Building support for community projects

It is recommended that future evaluations of *Inspire’s* work with local communities seeks to record the extent to which different types of social impacts are being met. The breakdown of the main areas where the arts can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and regeneration identified by Shaw¹⁵ provides a useful template for assessing *Inspire’s* impact on local community participants. These were:

- Personal development
- Building stronger communities
- Employment & skills
- Tackling crime

¹⁴ Matarasso, F (1997) *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*. [Comedia](#)

¹⁵ Shaw, P (2003) *What’s art got to do with it? Briefing paper on the role of the arts in neighbourhood renewal* [Arts Council of England](#)

- Promoting better health

Many of the above outcomes are perhaps more likely to be delivered across a wider, neighbourhood scale through active engagement in the performing arts, or in producing visual art, rather than through short-term involvement in the commissioning process for one piece, and thus may not be relevant to future *Inspire* activity.

Where possible, it would help to adopt an approach to evaluation that goes beyond using case studies and anecdotes and that provides more robust evidence of these impacts. The sector's continued reliance on such qualitative approaches is likely to create problems in the future as scepticism about the value of such 'soft' information increases amongst funding organisations and policy makers under pressure to allocate resources as effectively as possible¹⁶. Quantitative measures such as the level of vandalism in an area that has seen public realm improvements including art installations, or the development of new SMEs in the creative industries sector in an area that has seen such investment, might be two such indicators of impact.

Community surveys of cultural participation, such as the IPF '*Community Plus*' survey, could also provide a useful tool for establishing how residents of South East Northumberland feel that *Inspire* and other cultural investment is improving their quality of life.

Learning experiences associated with involvement in the process as experienced by different participants

One of the initial outputs identified in the SRB Funding Application was the delivery of learning opportunities of less than 30 hours to at least 45 people. This has been achieved through the direct involvement of community members in two projects (*The Big Draw* and *Sounding Out Bedlington*). In addition to this formalised learning experience, each individual art commission involves community representatives and/or local authority officers and elected members during the commissioning process. For example, evidence provided by the PADO and gleaned from the Barefoot Evaluation report indicates the following:

- Some 20 members of Newbiggin Sailing Club attended a presentation in early 2005 by the PADO to shortlist artists for the clubhouse public art project. This meeting stimulated considerable debate about the issues surrounding the art and what factors should be considered when commissioning the artwork, thus giving all participants an insight into, and direct involvement in, a process that they were previously unfamiliar with. Many of the same participants subsequently met with the selected artist to review the selection of images she brought along, and to chose the three that were then installed
- As part of the Second Avenue Home Zone programme in Ashington a Residents' Committee (8 members) was convened to work alongside the public sector steering group. A questionnaire survey of 1,200 homes in the area achieved a very high response rate, with 17% of respondents directly requesting that public art be installed in the area (equivalent to around 200 homes). Some 15 people attended a steering group meeting to discuss the various public art proposals identified by the PADO as being suitable for the Home Zone, and this group continued to be involved as an artist was selected and the work produced and then installed
- Some 16 residents living along the route of the Wildspace Network attended presentations in December 2004 at Seghill Institute Community Centre and

¹⁶ see Selwood (2002) for an insightful critique of the qualitative approach to impact assessment

Concordia Leisure Centre on the proposals for public art across the network. Subsequent meetings in January 2005 at the Cramlington Area Assembly and the Seaton Valley Assembly attracted some 80 people between them and at each of these sessions there was considerable debate as to the purpose of the artworks, the issues to consider in commissioning, and the benefits that public art can bring

In total, well over 230 people have already had the chance to take part in all or part of a public art commissioning process, with their involvement almost always giving them a greater level of understanding and insight than they previously had into public art. In effect, they are benefiting from the learning opportunities offered by *Inspire*. A further 850 people have participated in presentations by artists or the PADO about public art.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

The clear steer from the steering group at the commencement of this assignment was that there was a need to focus particularly on the impacts of the project on socio-economic development. In other words, this is the third of the types of impact identified by the Arts Council of England¹⁷ as being open for review:

- Environmental (physical) impacts e.g. land values, occupancy levels, design quality, noise levels etc
- Economic – jobs, income, expenditure etc
- Social – cohesion, inclusion, capacity, health and well-being, identity

This final suite of evaluation measures has confirmed the success to date of *Inspire* in engaging with a broad range of community representatives and other stakeholders across the sub-region in a way that has:

- Increased their understanding of the potential of public art, and their knowledge and experience of commissioning such works. This applies both to local authority officers and to members of local communities involved in one of the *Inspire* projects
- Helped groups of stakeholders to work together, thus strengthening social cohesiveness and helping these groups develop or refine a new identity for their community that is based at least partly on one or more pieces of public art
- Introduced new audiences to public art, and indeed to artists, thus providing an insight into a cultural form not previously experienced.

In terms of the specific outputs required of the *Inspire* project:

- More than 230 people have already benefited from some form of learning experience through their involvement with *Inspire* (original target was 45)
- The project has supported 1.5 FTE jobs (original target was 1.4 FTE)

As the *Inspire* project continues to develop, it will be useful to monitor the profile of individuals who participate in the commissioning process and to ascertain whether all sections of the community are getting the opportunity to become involved. It is particularly important to undertake regular monitoring of this particular measure, since of all of the outputs identified for the *Inspire* project in the original SRB funding application, this is the only one that is specifically identified in the NSP Single Programme Monitoring Guidance Manual.

¹⁷ Reeves, M (2002) *Measuring the Economic and Social Impact of the Arts: A Review* London, Arts Council of England

An initial aspiration was to employ the MLA *Inspiring Learning for All* model for identifying personal learning benefits of engagement with *Inspire* by individuals. Resources and time did not permit the implementation of a second wave of interviews with the consultees in sufficient time to advise this evaluation report, and it is recommended that this work is carried out in the future with a representative sample of local authority officers, community members and others who engage with *Inspire* in some way.

Summary and Recommendations

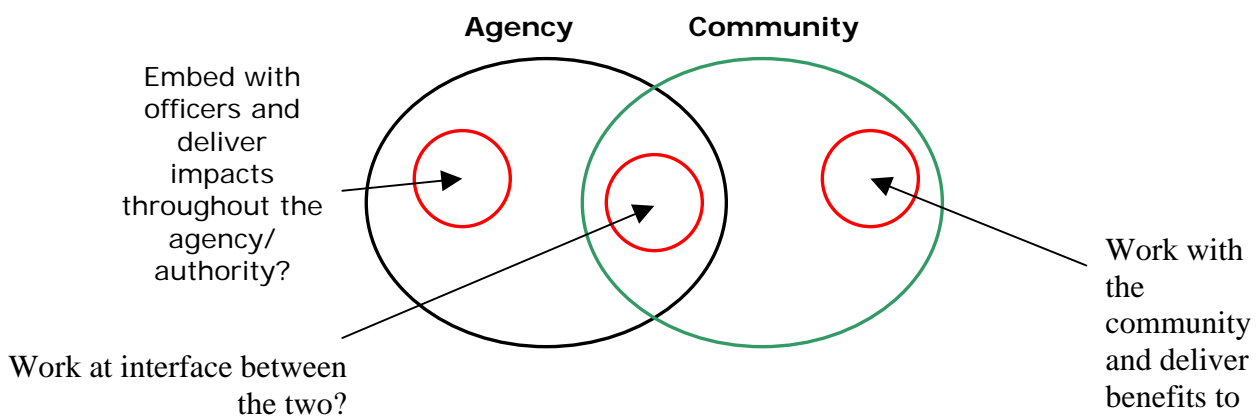
Summary of key findings

The findings of this evaluation study are summarised below:

- *Inspire* is emerging as an effective enabling mechanism for public art in South East Northumberland, providing, through the PADO post:
 - An intermediary who knows the sector and thus can make progress quickly, picking up projects that have been left floundering as well as delivering new initiatives relatively quickly and to the highest professional and curatorial standards
 - Access and advice on funding for public art to a range of organisations
 - An outside party and 'independent' professional for bouncing ideas off
 - The ability to deliver, rather than just support in the way that, for instance, Commissions North is able to do
- *Inspire* is a catalyst, stimulating the use of public art, and encouraging every department to consider it as integral to any project on which they are working
- *Inspire* is addressing capacity issues within local authority departments and other organisations, freeing up officers to work within their own area of expertise and bringing in the relevant skills when necessary. However, most people would not like to see it 'mainstreamed', because it works most effectively outside the confines of normal local authority operating procedures
- *Inspire* works across sectors, breaking down barriers to public art, and encouraging different interests to work together
- *Inspire* is a community-involving project. Its effects can largely be felt internally in the local authorities with which it interacts although there have been notable successes in the few community-based projects that have been delivered
- Where it has been working with members of the public, it has had a positive impact in terms of increasing their awareness and understanding of public art, and in helping achieve outcomes such as increased social cohesion, individual learning and civic and community pride
- *Inspire* has been very successful in raising the profile of public art within the public sector across South East Northumberland, and in encouraging planners, regeneration officers and others to consider it as an integral part of many of the initiatives that they are working on
- The PADO postholder himself has been fundamental to the successes of this project – he is seen as enthusiastic, knowledgeable and approachable
- In terms of the quantitative objectives identified for the project in the original NSP funding agreement, *Inspire* has excelled in both counts, exceeding both the target for FTE employment and also the number of people to be involved in learning activities of under 30 hours.

In short, the project has been particularly successful and assuming that resources continue to be allocated, then the impacts anticipated in the original Single Programme Funding application that have not yet been delivered (e.g. increased interest in SE Northumberland by external investors, increased tourism) should be achieved in the future. There do remain some questions to be answered in the future, however. For instance:

- How much public art can a place take? Is there danger of saturation? Should the focus for the coming years be less on public art and more on encouraging better design across the whole area (this is part of the original objectives for Inspire, after all)
- The long-term maintenance of pieces was mentioned as a concern by some consultees, as was the potential for public dissatisfaction as pieces become vandalised, eroded or otherwise damaged
- What will be the future relationship of the PADO with the County Council, now that additional public art expertise has been brought in by the NSP and ACE officer to cover those districts within Northumberland not covered by Inspire?
- Is there a role for public art professionals in the county's "Putting the Learner First" programme?
- Crucially: what is best role for the PADO in the future?



Guidance for the future direction of *Inspire*

The PADO post and its organisation

The study brief required the evaluation report to provide guidance on how *Inspire* should evolve in the future. The following observations are made for consideration by the PADO and his steering group:

- Should the post be 'mainstreamed' or should the current approach be maintained? At present the PADO post is considered by many to be effective particularly because it is perceived to be outside the local authority structure (even though in reality the postholder is a local authority employee and has to work to local authority procedures). We would contend that the current arms-length approach is valuable as it allows the PADO maximum flexibility in responding to opportunity. It also gives him the chance to work across boundaries, helping to create an environment more conducive to delivering creative and innovative artworks. What is important of course is that the concept of public art and good design should be mainstreamed into regeneration thinking across the work of the participating authorities
- The PADO post works best as broker and advocate, providing inspiration, guidance and technical inputs across the whole of the public art planning and commissioning process. For the foreseeable future the most appropriate position would be at the interface of the three local authorities and partner public sector agencies on the one hand, and the community on the other. Embedding the post within local authority planning and economic development teams allows the transfer of ideas

and skills and builds capacity within delivery organisations, whilst retaining some element of community contact will raise awareness and appreciation of public art amongst the public themselves

- The cross-authority steering group that includes all of the partner agencies is seen as a valuable source of guidance and support, and should continue to operate as at present
- The problem of ‘hot-desking’ between three local authority offices and being spread too thinly was raised by many consultees. The most desirable solution would be a second post but in the absence of suitable funds, it is essential that the *Inspire* Administration Assistant has the skills to support the PADO in a number of areas, and particularly in facilitating public engagement (e.g. through organising more consultation and participatory sessions during the commissioning stage as well as arranging high profile launch events for every completed piece). Additional support could be brought in on a project-by-project basis to cover the commissioning and management of the installation process, releasing the PADO to make more of a contribution to the work of the three authorities as they tackle design issues (see below)

Delivering high quality public art and design across South East Northumberland

- Within three or four years it is possible that South East Northumberland will be running out of places in which public art can be installed. It is suggested that the PADO begins to undertake more work on improving awareness of good quality design in general, for instance by encouraging both local authorities to work with CABE¹⁸ and CIC¹⁹ on design quality indicators. The role of the new SENTTRI design panel will be crucial here and is essential that *Inspire* is represented on that panel
- The *Inspire* team (i.e. PADO and steering group members) should work together to lobby for a greater use of artists across the whole urban design & planning process across the region, to promote more creative thinking into the process (an approach advocated by for example Minton²⁰). This actually reflects current Government thinking on the role of culture in regeneration and again would place *Inspire* at the forefront of thinking across the region, as it addresses the Urban Task Force’s desire for higher quality design in all aspects of public and private sector investment in the urban fabric of South East Northumberland
- Another opportunity is for *Inspire* to work closely with each local authority as they plan and deliver their contribution to the Government’s ‘Sustainable Communities – People, Places & Prosperity’ initiative, as well as with the County’s “Building Schools for the Future” programme.
- *Inspire* should also make sure that each local authority maximises the potential of participation in the annual ‘Architecture Week’ championed by RIBA and other sector organisations
- *Inspire* should lobby appropriate officers and members so that there is more support from each local authority in enforcing the *Percent for Art* concept. One strategy might be to create a single account for each local authority into which all Percent for Art funds are paid, to allow the commissioning of fewer but larger pieces. This idea of a pooled Percent for Art budget has been explored in the past

¹⁸ CABE (2002) *Design Review: Guidance on how CABE evaluates quality in architecture and urban design*. [CABE, London](#)

¹⁹ Construction Industry Council (2004) *Design Quality Indicator Online* [CIC, London](#)

²⁰ Minton, A (2004) *Regeneration Art Green Places Issue 9, October 2004*.p16

by a number of local authorities²¹ and merits consideration within South East Northumberland. A key benefit of a pooled fund that reduced the overall number of projects would be that it would help to reduce the capacity pressures faced by the *Inspire* team at present

- The link to other county and regional public art initiatives should be maintained and where possible strengthened to ensure that South East Northumberland remains at the forefront of public art policy and practice in the region. The *Inspire* approach represents good practice in terms of delivering high quality art and potentially design across an area, and deserves this recognition

²¹ see Selwood, S (1995)

Appendix One: Study Brief

Appendix Two: *Inspire* evaluation project - consultees

Name		Organisation
Neil	Armstrong	Discover Northumbria at Woodhorn
Declan	Baharini	Wansbeck Initiative
Allan	Bell	SENET
Jane	Blackburn	NSP
Dave	Bonser	NCC
Ray	Browning	WDC
Nick	Burden	WDC
Rebecca	Farley	Commissions North
Terry	Garnick	WDC
Terry	Gurr	BVDC
Trevor	Higgs	ONE North East
Richard	Hollinshead	<i>Inspire</i>
Martin	Hulse	ONE North East
Matthew	Jarratt	Commissions North
Colin	Mitchell	WDC
David	Nicolson	Wansbeck Initiative
Garry	Owens	BVDC
Kym	Pears	ONE North East
Christine	Rea	NCC
Chris	Simpson	BVDC
Bill	Tarbit	BVDC
Nigel	Walsh	BVDC
Alan	Wann	NCC

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