

North Somerset Council
Connecting Spaces, Places and People
A MAJOR NEW ART COMMISSION
AT
BIG LAMP CORNER

Artist's Brief

1. INTRODUCTION

North Somerset Council (NSC), in collaboration with South West of England Development Agency (SWERDA) wish to commission an artist/design team to design and implement a major new Free Standing Sculptural Canopy for the Space described as Big Lamp Corner in the centre of Weston super Mare. The commission will entail developing a concept proposal, designing its setting, and then working up the detailed design and, subject to Client agreement and Planning Consent, implementing or overseeing implementation of the work on site.

2. BACKGROUND

This project is one of the key priorities that emerged from a Public Art Strategy commissioned by NSC and carried out by consultants 'pArts' in early 2003.

The Public Art Strategy was one of a series of six simultaneous studies commissioned by NSC to inform the 'Connecting Spaces, Places and People' initiative. The issue areas addressed by the other five consultancies were:

- Economic Impact Analysis
- Public Realm Management and Maintenance Strategy
- Pedestrian Signage and Information
- Public Realm Lighting Strategy
- Public Realm Materials Strategy

Simultaneous commissioning of the studies helped to facilitate synchronisation of the findings and recommendations.

The following extract was common to all the consultancy briefs and helps to contextualise this project.

'NSC and SWERDA are developing an implementation strategy and set of design standards in order to progress public realm improvements within Weston super Mare town centre and waterfront. This project, titled 'Connecting Spaces, Places and People' has already established an outline urban design framework based on priority streets and distinct and identifiable character areas. This work sits within a broader framework that is being developed for the town as part of a much wider 'visioning exercise that aims to give direction to the economic regeneration of Weston over the next Twenty years.'

In its funding bid to SWERDA, NSC described what the program sets out to achieve:

- *A significant improvement in the overall standard of public realm across the town*
- *A new themed distinctiveness to the town centre, seafront area and key pedestrian routes*
- *Stronger linkages between public transport nodes (particularly rail) and the town centre and seafront*
- *A pedestrian focused environment, providing significantly enhanced links between town centre, seafront, 'retail hubs' and proposed new developments at Knightstone Island, Tropicana and Birnbeck Pier*
- *New linked public open spaces*
- *Use of distinctive, locally sourced materials where feasible*
- *A strategy to sustain the environmental quality, including an ongoing maintenance strategy for public realm across the town centre and seafront areas*

This commission will be one of the first projects in a long-term program aimed at transforming the experience and image of Weston super Mare to visitors and residents alike.

The program is being funded by a major grant from SWERDA under their Civic Pride Initiative.

The Core Concepts of the Public Art Strategy

The strategy sets out an approach which stresses the following :

- *The future of Weston super Mare rests on recognising the retained and intrinsic qualities of the town and revitalising them for a broader market of business development and tourism.*
- *There needs to be recognition that attracting and retaining new visitors to WsM requires the projection of a new and vital personality which can be portrayed excitingly and truthfully in the press and media.*
- *That this new personality must be clearly evident in the town's 'content ' and 'offer'. Images must relate to real experiences and real places and must challenge people's existing perceptions of what WsM delivers. In its heydays, Weston offered an element of fantasy and escapism. A contemporary interpretation of this fantasy and escapism needs to be restored in order to attract higher spending short break visitors, to make people feel proud to live here, and to make WsM a fun and exciting place to work and do business. It should be cool to be in WsM.*

A full copy of the Strategy document will be made available to the appointed artist.

3. THE COMMISSION

Context

Big Lamp Corner is a small but significant public space at the conjunction of Regent Street, High Street and Meadow Street.

Regent Street is one of the main links to the Promenade and there is a potentially strong visual link to the Grand Pier Entrance.

The space is already becoming a meeting place, and the Council wants to encourage its development as one of the key spaces in the town.

The space is triangular and measures some 48 metres long, 32 metres at its widest point and 18 metres at the mid point.

The site for the Commission is the long side opposite Knightingales, Shoe Fayre and the Toy Shop.

The space available for the work suggests that the structure should not exceed 16 metres long.

There is a bus stopping point with shelters on the Regent Street side of the Space and it is intended that this Commission replace them, both in location and function.

All the surrounding buildings are two storey and the upper storeys are in a variety of styles.

Big Lamp Corner has been the subject of a design exercise by consultants to the Council and the layout of the space is being finalised by the council's urban designers at the time of writing.

Location

A site plan is attached showing the area for the Commission and its immediate surroundings.

The Site and site based considerations

The site is towards the East of the junction between High St and Regent St.

A schedule of materials in the space is available to shortlisted artists/teams and this will apply to all areas except the Sculptural Canopy.

The footprint for the Sculpture should not exceed 16 metres long and must provide adequate shelter for people waiting for busses whilst not impeding the stopping of single or double decker buses in Regent Street.

This route is open to service and emergency vehicles and the Commission must not inhibit their safe passage and clearance through the street.

Issues to be considered will include:

- The views from the Prom and from both ends of Regent street..
- The height of the surrounding buildings and creating a dynamic but not incongruous relationship with the context.
- Safety of the public around the Artwork/Commission.
- Robustness and suitability for use and for these salt laden and windswept conditions.
- Reliability of components and any mobile elements
- The quality of the experience for viewers.
- Integration with the signage system and the provision of transport/movement information.
- Capacity to incorporate a large-scale outdoor screen for information, video and broadcast.
- This must be a striking and memorable piece of the Street scene in Weston. whether regarded as a small building or a large sculpture.

Collaboration

This commission will be realised through a collaboration and will require the input of an artist, a structural engineer, an architect and /or landscape architect and a lighting specialist. We would expect the team to be fully configured at the time of appointment since the synergy between individuals will influence the choice of winning team.

All fees must to be found from within the overall budget.

The Artist/Design Team's Brief

This space does not appear to live up to its image or potential. It could form a key transitional and linking space between the seafront and the shopping core.

The link between the sea front and the Big Lamp Corner needs some visual adjustment to secure the connection down to the Pier façade and Pier Square – This should be one of the most important visual links in the town but needs an Iconic structure in Big Lamp Corner to make it work.

The artist/design team is required to produce a design proposal for a major artwork to be sited at the Big Lamp Corner. The piece should define that whole space and may well lead to it being renamed.

It should have sufficient visual presence and scale to be the most prominent feature of the square when viewed from the Pier Square end of Regent Street.

The structure should incorporate or house the information access point within the Signage Strategy and information about the specification for this should be incorporated in the brief.

This structure should also be one of the places to access the planned Online Adventure proposed in the Public Art Strategy.

The information above informs the Commission suggests the roles it takes on:

As an Icon of the Town

It will set the tone for what WsM offers

It will encourage people to walk into town from the promenade

It will add to the legibility of WsM

It will become a meeting place, a place of stimulation and information

It will symbolise the reinvigoration of WsM.

The Setting

The lighting for the piece is included in the brief. The Artist should work with their design team to create a 'Place', a setting that enables people to enjoy the experience, perhaps sit and contemplate

Artistic Context

Copies of the planned Public Art Strategy will be available to shortlisted artists/design teams so they can contextualise their submissions. Any design proposals for other sites already commissioned will be revealed.

Consultation

It is proposed that consultation for this project will utilise existing networks and be threaded into the ongoing program. The main issues are likely to be the fears of vandalism and issues of security; perception amongst some of the Public Art Program as a waste of public funds.

The Client will take a very robust view of the importance of Public Art to the regeneration of Weston super Mare and will develop an advocacy campaign to engender enthusiasm amongst local residents, the business community and partner organisations within the public and private sector.

The appointed artist and their team will be expected to collaborate with the Client Team in building the case to combat any negative response to the art program.

Performance Verification, Professional Indemnity Insurance, Public Liability Insurance.

The artist/design team should ensure that they have within their final team, the expertise to warranty the performance of the proposal and the finished work/structure and that they are not reliant on the Client to assess whether proposals are practical or not.

The team should have at least one member carrying Professional Liability Insurance Cover to the value of £1M on behalf of the project.

Accessible Design Issues

Designs should not create a hostile environment for disabled people. Consideration should be given to including different types of interactive designs which work with other senses – hearing, touch, even smell as well as visual.

Particular design principles to be observed include:

Visual impairments

The layout of any pedestrian-used areas should be logical and simple. Contrasting colours should be used to emphasise certain key features e.g. bordering footways. Lighting should be free of glare and abrupt changes in intensity. Any features which could cause a trip hazard should be placed in areas of least risk.

Hearing impairments

Designs that encourage or exacerbate existing noise levels should be avoided.

Restricted mobility

The design should not generate changes in footway levels. Handrails are required on steps and ramps.

Design life, maintenance and management of the work

The Artwork should have an anticipated Design Life of not less than 50 years subject to acceptable maintenance.

Maintenance should be possible without complex equipment or expensive and rare skills. The work should need no more than quarterly condition inspection under normal circumstances. In practice the work will be inspected weekly but this should not be necessitated by the form or materials being particularly vulnerable.

The artist/design team should provide a manual including a schedule of components and their source, methods of cleaning and servicing and details of service intervals and contact details for specialist suppliers and experts.

Sustainability

The client is endeavouring to develop a sustainable approach to the public realm and the artist should where possible create works that have minimum environmental impact. Issues such as renewable resources, local availability, reduction in airmiles, energy consumption etc.

4. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS**The Client Lead**

The lead officer for the Council is ... and he/she, along with colleagues, will be advising 's role is as the Client's overall lead officer on the project and as such he/she will take the primary role in political advocacy for the project and determining any critical procedures necessary.

Project Management

..... will be the Client's commissioning agent/Curator and will undertake the day to day project management and the artists first point of contact. The artist and their team will maintain a regular reporting and discussion arrangement with, who will advise at all critical reporting points and be present at all formal design discussion meetings with the Client.

The artist will on occasion be asked to attend project management meetings with the other Client Team members from North Somerset Council, and possibly Arts Council South West.

Engineering evaluation

The Engineering Dept of the Council will take the lead in commenting on technical and engineering issues during the design process. Where necessary independent expertise will be introduced to evaluate proposals.

Artistic advice to the Council and Curatorial Lead.

The lead personnel on Curatorial and issues of Public Art Strategy will be ... who will also sit on the overall project management team for this scheme.

NSC Lighting Engineers

Advice and support to the client on logistical issues, future revenue and maintenance implications and highway lighting regulation compliance will be provided by the lighting engineers of the Council. This opinion will of course also be available to the artist, but the artist's must be responsible for the design, specification and procurement of the lighting..

Access Officer

The Council's Access Officer will advise and comment on access issues during the design and consultation process.

Community Development Officer

The Community Development Officer with responsibility for the area in which the project sits is (to be named by the Council)

Publicity

A nominated individual from North Somerset Council

The individuals noted above form the core client team for the project.

5. THE METHOD OF ARTIST/DESIGN TEAM APPOINTMENT

The work will be procured via an International Competition aimed at attracting some of the most interesting and challenging artists and designers currently working in 3 Dimensions.

Option 1

Initially an Open Submission Phase of the Competition where artists and designers worldwide will be invited to submit examples of previous work and CV's.

Artists will then be short listed and invited to participate in a Competition.

We envisage the final shortlist being 6

Option 2

An entirely open first Phase where a slightly fuller brief is issued and artists/design teams are invited to submit an outline sketch proposal. This would be judged blind, (identity of proposers kept secret from selection panel)

At this stage the panel would select a small number, three or four for further development (supported by an honorarium) and then final selection.

Stages In The Process, Outputs And The Design Agreement Process

(designed for Option 1. Option 2 would differ at stage 1 of Phase 3)

PHASE 1 Open Submission and shortlisting

Submission materials to include CV, summary of relevant experience and past work. 10 images of relevant works in 35mm, digital or 2D format.

PHASE 2 Limited Invitation shortlist**PHASE 3 Design Competition including both the above.**

The outputs for this phase are in 2 stages within a flexible timetable.

PHASE 3 - Stage 1 – first concepts

The artists will each be asked to present their initial thoughts and work in progress to the client at an individual **interim presentation meeting**. This should take place when the concept design is perhaps **70%** developed.

This interim meeting will involve discussions of:

- the broad concept
- materials proposed
- the scale of the designs
- power supplies etc
- the likely technical implications

The interim meeting is for evaluation by the project consultants, the project management team and the commissioning agent *Working parts??*. This process is intended to assess the initial practicality, workability and affordability of all the proposals at an early stage in the process and enable each artist to present a viable scheme. Although we try to be as comprehensive as possible in briefing artists, there is always a possibility that new design ideas which grow out of the process may throw up difficulties that were not foreseen prior to the project commencing. At the end of this meeting the artist will be given the go ahead to complete the concept stage.

PHASE 3 - Stage 2 – Completion of concept

The artist will then be required to work up and refine the concept for the work.

This should be completed and submitted to the client by (date).

PHASE 3 - Stage 3 - Assessment and Competition.

A Selection Panel will be assembled by the Client and will include Membership of the Weston super Mare Public Realm Forum, the Council's Curatorial Advisor, a representative of Arts Council England (South West), a representative of SWERDA.

All shortlisted submissions will be reviewed and a final recommendation made. This will be ratified by the Council and the winner(s) announced.

PHASE 4 – Detailed Design

Following selection by the Council of the Winning concept design(s), the artist/design team will be required to produce detailed designs from which accurate costings for the finished scheme can be made. (It is envisaged that the appointed artist/design team will have on board the expertise to create engineering drawings and specify other materials for tender documentation and any planning permissions that may be required. The detailed designs will include:

- scale plans.
- scale drawings of all elevations.
- drawings to illustrate the scheme, fully annotated with materials and finishes, colour, articulation points, fixing methods, light sources and any other relevant information.
- axonometrics.
- A model or maquette, to a prescribed scale in materials and to a standard appropriate for public exhibition.
- detail of how the information point, on line adventure access point and large screen are to be integrated.
- a detailed written description, with a clear rationale behind the overall concept and explanation of each component.

The detailed design should be produced by **(date)**

6. BUDGET AND FEES

The fee for the Concept Design is £

Fees for detailed design can be negotiated subject to the complexity of the concept proposal

The budget for the Project inclusive of all fees to the artist/team is £350,000.

7. TIMESCALE AND MEETINGS SCHEDULE

As noted above, the timetable for the project is:

Commencement	- date
Open Submission start	- date
Open Submission end	- date
Competition start	- date
Competition end	- date
Final selection of winning Concept	- date
Detail Design Start	- date
Detail Design end	- date
Tender documentation where required	- date
Construction Contracts awarded	- date
Completion	- date

We suggest that after the initial competitive appointments process the artists' team meets with the client's project manager at least **monthly** to discuss progress during the detail design stage.

There should be one interim Steering Group meeting and a final presentation/discussion meeting at which the concept is put forward for final approval.

8. CONTRACTS

The artists/design teams will be issued with commissioned design contracts from North Somerset Council, of which this brief forms an important part. The winning artist will be issued with a Commission Contract, samples of which are available for inspection.

9. EXHIBITION AND PROJECT UPDATES

The Client issues regular press releases and updates and also hosts exhibitions and previews of projects within the scheme. These may include artists' and other design professionals' designs, drawings and models made for the various commissions within the scheme. The artist/design team and their technical collaborators will be expected to produce designs and illustrations of their commission which could be exhibited publicly.

10. ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON VISITOR NUMBERS AND THE ECONOMY OF WESTON SUPER MARE

The profile of visitors to WsM is of an aging group returning to repeat the same experience. The income of this group is either static or declining and the numbers who visit WsM reduce year by year.

Total visitor days have dropped by over 10% in the last five years. Total visitor day numbers have dropped by 20% during the summer season (May-August) since 1994. Closure of Birnbeck Pier, Tropicana and attractions at Knightstone Island has left Weston-super-Mare with only two significant seafront attractions in the Grand Pier and Sea Life Aquarium.

Families with young children still visit but there are fewer and fewer overnight stays being booked. There has been a 30% drop over the last five years in staying visitors. Tourism's annual contribution to the economy has dropped by 37% from £226m in 1994 to a current figure of £142m. Nationally the drop in tourism spend at coastal resorts has only been 3%.

Annual visitor spend in Weston-super-Mare has dropped by over £21m between 1994 and 1998. Much of this has been due to increased competition due to the opening of the regional shopping centre at Cribbs Causeway.

There has been 25% decline in pedestrian flows in central area over the last 10 years