

CALL FOR INTEREST EVALUATION SPECIALISTS

BERT WILLIAMS LEISURE CENTRE
PUBLIC ART PROJECT

**BILSTON
CRAFT GALLERY**

SPECIAL PLACES.
GREAT IDEAS.

BERT WILLIAMS LEISURE CENTRE PUBLIC ART PROJECT

CALL FOR EVALUATION SPECIALISTS

WAVE (Wolverhampton Arts, Venues and Experiences) invites proposals from professionals with experience of evaluating creative engagement projects to research and report on the recent public art project at the Bert Williams Leisure Centre in Bilston, Wolverhampton. A fee of £3,000 is available for this opportunity.

The new Bert Williams Leisure Centre was opened in December 2011 and in September 2012 the associated public art project completed with the launch of three site-specific works of art at the Centre. The aim of the project was to create inspiring art relevant to a leisure centre that would engage the local community, celebrate Bilston's heritage and its future, and encourage a sense of pride in the town.

The project was directed by a community steering group and managed by WAVE in partnership with the commissioners: Leisure, and build managers: Property Services. Local consultation and engagement was integral to the commissioning process. Over 1200 people and more than 20 local groups worked with the three artists to share their knowledge and experiences of Bilston, informing the development and content of the artworks. These participants were drawn from a wide range of ages, backgrounds and interests.

WAVE now wishes to commission an independent evaluation of the public art project to assess its delivery against the initial aims. This review should cover the management, artwork commissioning and delivery, and community engagement elements of the project. It must encompass the perspectives of the varied stakeholders involved on all these aspects as well as their experiences of partnership working during the project. Contacts and liaison with project participants will be provided to the successful candidate. The evaluation report should provide a basis for assessing the long term success of the public art project and for improved planning and delivery of future collaborative projects with community involvement.

To apply for this opportunity please submit the following by 9am on **Friday 23rd November** to Carol.Thompson@wolverhampton.gov.uk. A selection will be made by mid December. The report should be submitted by **1st March 2013**.

1) Short statement of interest in the project (maximum two A4 pages) covering your experience of evaluation projects with diverse stakeholders and proposed methodology.

2) CV

3) A recent example of your writing in report style, details may be made anonymous if required (maximum 800 words).

If you have any questions regarding the project please contact Carol Thompson on 01902 552506 or lisa.fazackerley@wolverhampton.gov.uk , Bilston Craft Gallery, Mount Pleasant, Bilston, WV14 7LU.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/SUPPORTING MATERIAL

The artworks can be viewed at the Bert Williams Leisure Centre, Nettlefolds Way off the Black Country route, Bilston WV14 0LF. The opening hours of the Centre are 7am to 10pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 8pm Saturday and Sunday. Please note some parts of the artworks are only visible beyond the pay barrier and/or are in restricted areas.

- i) artists' brief
- ii) list of groups/organisations involved in the project
- iii) press release re completed artworks
- iv) selection of images of artworks

i) BRIEF FOR ARTISTS AND MAKERS

BRIEF ONE: INSTALLATION FOR PEDESTRIAN AREA OUTSIDE LEISURE CENTRE ENTRANCE
BUDGET: £30 000

MEDIUM: any, interactive installation possibly including street furniture/landscaping

DETAILS: See BLC Site Plan for area outlined in red where commission may be located; paved area in front of BLC entrance greatest dimensions: c. 45m wide by 14m deep, paving blocks Marshalls 'La Linea' in 'verde' and 'light granite' in 300 x 200 mm. and 300 x 300 mm. sizes; distance from centre of entry door to Black Country Route pavement c.71m

The Bilston Leisure Centre will be a focal building in the Bilston Urban Village development and will be highly visible from the busy Black Country Route. It will be sited in a paved and landscaped setting alongside a pedestrian boulevard that forms a key access route and sightline into the town centre. We wish to commission an interactive installation sited in front of the Leisure Centre entrance that will invite playful and social engagement in this public space.

It should be on a human scale and encourage close encounters but be visually striking enough to command attention from passers-by, both on-foot and by car. This commission in particular will be viewed by many people who might never use the Leisure Centre facilities and has the potential to redefine people's impressions of Bilston. It is important that this work contributes to a distinct townscape and links this new development to Bilston's unique identity. A lighting element that stands out at night would be welcomed.

A wide range of media and interactive concepts will be considered such as sound, touch, etc, but the installation should be visually attractive and resilient enough to withstand the elements and public interaction. We are looking for an inspiring and surprising commission that will also connect to the people of Bilston.

We particularly wish to engage local young people (14-21 years) in this public art project through hands-on experience of an aspect related to the commission, for example sound or lighting production, furniture design, etc. This may be facilitated by the successful commissioned artist or through another provider as appropriate but applicants should outline how their proposal/approach could engage this audience.

BRIEF TWO: INSTALLATION IN MAIN ENTRANCE/GROUND FLOOR CIRCULATION AREAS INSIDE LEISURE CENTRE

BUDGET: £20 000

MEDIUM: any, suspended and wall-based works preferred

DETAILS: See BLC Internal Floor Plan Ground Floor for area outlined in red; foyer total floor area is 232 m², from centre of entrance to main stair is c 20m and to lefthand wall is c 7.4m; full height of atrium is 16.1m, height to mezzanine level is 4.4m; corridor to carpark is 4.4m wide at widest point, 3.0m high to suspended ceiling; walls painted plaster (white or similar), floor Ecotech unglazed porcelain floor tiles DCO 01; main staircase will **NOT BE GREEN** as in artist's impression but pierced steel panels, stainless steel finish with stainless steel handrail

Visitors to the Bilston Leisure Centre will walk into a three-storey height reception atrium with a glazed roof. The atrium space will also be viewed at different heights by Leisure Centre users from both the first-floor mezzanine level and one of the fitness areas on the second floor. There is also a long corridor on the ground floor leading from the carpark into this space where artwork could be sited. We wish to commission a large-scale creative work that will take full advantage of this bright and dramatic space and have immediate visual and emotional impact on visitors. The work should be physically dynamic or capture a sense of movement reflecting the building's purpose as a leisure and recreation centre.

It should assist in making the Leisure Centre appealing and welcoming at first sight. We would welcome proposals with interactive and sensory elements that encourage participation, movement and discovery. The commission should be rewarding for family audiences. We are also looking for a strong contemporary installation that will make a statement about Bilston's appetite for innovation and the future while capturing the imagination of the general public. Any proposal should be able to withstand high light levels. Commissions with dynamic elements must consider ease of maintenance and economical running costs and cover this in the proposal.

BRIEF THREE: ARTWORK IN PUBLIC AREAS OF LEISURE CENTRE WITH SOCIAL AND OR WELLBEING THEME

BUDGET: £14 000

MEDIUM: any, this work should be grounded in grassroots community consultation

DETAILS: See BLC Internal Floor Plans Ground, Mezzanine and Second Floor for circulation areas; please use notes in brief 2 for indication of area; walls painted plaster and fair faced cement blockwork at higher levels; floors Norament studded rubber flooring Freudenberg tiles 600 x 600 mm (possibly dark green, colour to be finalised).

Bilston Leisure Centre is intended to provide local residents with increased and improved access to fitness and recreation facilities. The area suffers with below average levels of health and happiness. This public art project should indirectly support health and wellbeing through creating a positive and stimulating environment. Importantly it should draw on local people's own experiences and priorities through consultation and involvement of grassroots community groups. We particularly wish this commission to have an intergenerational character. Interactive/sensory proposals are welcomed.

Also relevant is the history of the site of the Leisure Centre which was part of the industrial giant GKN Sankey, established in Bilston by Joseph Sankey in the 1860s. Sankey's initially produced art metalwork and then pressings and laminations for industry and was a major employer in the town. In common with many big firms of the time they had a social club, a sports ground (opened 1936) and several sporting teams which played in competition with local rivals. Therefore the aims of the

Bilston Urban Village regeneration project in many ways are to recreate the infrastructure and sense of community that was supported by the industry of the past. This rich heritage could provide a reference point/dialogue for the new work.

This commission could take many forms. It may be sited in more intimate spaces in the building or in main public areas as perceived appropriate. All proposals should be resilient in high light levels. The work should make some connection with Bilston and/or its people whether through medium, technique or subject. The successful candidate will have the opportunity to access archival records and collections if they wish, as well as supported meetings/sessions with local residents.

CONTEXT AND GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

Bilston is an historic regional centre within the Black Country with a history in mining and metalworking going back to the 17th century. After 1700 the town's industries developed rapidly; in 1767 John 'Ironmad' Wilkinson established an ironworks in Bilston and by 1790 there were 15 blast furnaces in the town. In the 18th and 19th centuries Bilston was known for enamelling, japanning, and decorative metalworking as well as utilitarian and industrial manufacture. These trades capitalised on local natural resources and transport links but also responded to emerging markets and fashions across Britain and overseas. Into the 1970s Bilston was a prosperous town in full employment with many thriving businesses.

In common with much of the Black Country, Bilston's manufacturing industries have declined in the later 20th century presenting a major challenge to its close-knit and proud community. Today the area is grappling with high unemployment and many associated issues of social and economic disadvantage including poor health, low educational attainment, and low social mobility. However Bilston remains a locale with a strong and independent identity and extensive grassroots community networks throughout its ethnically diverse population. Bilston continues to support a well-frequented local business and retail quarter with many independent traders and a busy market. It enjoys excellent travel and transport links with a Midlands Metro stop putting the town within easy reach of both Wolverhampton and Birmingham centres and their respective rail connections. Bilston has its own local bus station, and fast road links to regional routes and the motorway network.

The Bilston Urban Village is an important redevelopment project for a central area of post-industrial land in Bilston. It will comprise not only excellent new community facilities including the Leisure Centre and the new South Wolverhampton and Bilston Academy premises but also commercial, residential, and greenspace development. This physical renewal must engage with community aspirations and needs if it is to support Bilston's long-term future. The public art project should represent Bilston's appetite for innovation throughout its history and its aspirations to be a place recognised for its present as well as its past. The creative commissions should also draw on and enable the rich community and social networks that bind the town together, supporting social opportunities and interaction in and around the Leisure Centre.

Bilston Craft Gallery (BCG) is part of Wolverhampton Arts and Heritage Service and is sited in historic premises near the centre of Bilston that have housed a municipal museum and art gallery since 1937. BCG is the largest dedicated contemporary craft venue in the West Midlands with a varied temporary exhibition programme showcasing the best of current craft practice. The venue also represents significant historic collections for the area, such as the renowned Bilston enamels, with an emphasis on the industrial skills and design involved in their manufacture. BCG is facilitating the creative commissioning for the Bilston Leisure Centre as a venue located within the town delivering a wide range of engagement with different local groups.

The goals of the creative commissioning at the Bilston Leisure Centre are to achieve maximum benefit for local residents both in the short term through engagement with the process and artists, and in the long term through high quality commissions that give a striking national profile to the project AND reward daily encounters by local users.

A community consultation on the public art project for the Leisure Centre has been carried out. This process generated three project objectives that will guide the selection and commissioning process. All proposals should address at least two of these goals in the context of the specific guidance given for the individual briefs. Applications that address all three objectives will not be weighted above those that engage two with a quality and imaginative proposal.

- 1)Embody dynamism and participation and encourage physical activity and social interaction
- 2)Inspire and involve people, especially including young people, and reflect local achievements and aspiration
- 3)Acknowledge the heritage of Bilston, and support pride in and understanding of local history and identity

A fundamental aspect of this public art commissioning project at the Bilston Leisure Centre is community engagement, education and participation in the process. We expect this to include direct encounters with the commissioned artists for groups of residents and involvement in the process of developing the initial proposal to the final installation. Successful applicants will be required to participate in the community engagement programme. This may include presentation and discussions of work-in-progress, leading hands-on workshops, participating in community presentations of significant history, context and local experiences to inform the commissioning, or other types of engagement as judged appropriate. This does not need to be budgeted for in the proposal as costs will be covered extra to the commission amount. **Applicants should specifically cover their experience of, and enthusiasm for public engagement/educational creative practice in both their CV and proposal.**

All proposals will be judged against the specific criteria in these guidance notes and the following briefs. Each application should be for one brief only, although applicants may submit separate proposals for two or more briefs if they wish. Proposals will be shortlisted and a final selection made at interview. A contract will be agreed with successful candidates which will include participation in community engagement, provision of a maintenance manual for the commission and resolution of any issues that arise in the first year after installation.

ii) **SELECTED LIST OF GROUPS/ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT**

- Bantock House
- Bilston Craft Gallery
- Local families (family fun days)
- South Wolverhampton & Bilston Academy
- Deansfield High School
- Baptist Church Boys and Girls Brigades
- Black Country memories club
- Deansfield Primary School
- Bradley Senior Citizens Luncheon Club
- Portobello Youth Group
- City Archives
- Daisybank Youth Club
- Lunt Community Centre
- Loxdale Primary School
- St Martin's Youth Club
- Bilston Market (public consultation session)
- Wilkinson Primary School
- Oasis group
- Platform 51 (previously YWCA)
- Bilston Swimming Club
- Hindu Association
- Holy Trinity Catholic Primary School
- Scribblers Writing Group
- Wolverhampton & Bilston AC
- Loxdale Primary School
- Noah's Ark Toddlers Group
- Art for Health
- Bilston ICT club
- Moseley Park School
- Bilston C of E Primary School
- Villiers Primary School
- British Waterways

iii) MEDIA RELEASE

Striking community art unveiled at leisure centre

Stunning pieces of art that feature at a multi-million pound Wolverhampton leisure centre will be officially launched this week. Three pieces of public art, made in collaboration with schools and community groups, will be unveiled at the Bert Williams Leisure Centre in Bilston, on Friday (September 28). The works – Fire and Water light wands by artist Tim Ward, a photography-based installation by Kiran Chahal and suspended artwork in the atrium by Stella Corral – now take pride of place in the centre, which opened last December.

The launch, which takes place from 5pm on Friday, will give people the chance to talk to the artists about their work. A commitment was made to feature public artworks as part of the overall construction of the leisure centre. But the aim of the project was to create inspiring artwork that would engage the local Bilston community, celebrate the area's heritage and its future and encourage a sense of pride in the town.

More than 1,200 people, made up of residents, local school children, ward councillors and Wolverhampton Arts and Leisure services, worked with the artists to create the pieces. Sophie Heath, Curator of Bilston Craft Gallery, said: "This was a unique and exciting project that saw a real collaborative effort to produce such stunning pieces of art. It was wonderful to see so many people from Bilston working alongside the artists to create works that they can all be justifiably proud of."

Councillor Elias Mattu, Wolverhampton City Council's Cabinet Member for Leisure and Communities, said: "The Bert Williams Leisure Centre is a landmark building in Bilston and these artworks enhance this as well as benefiting from the great facilities."

ABOUT THE ARTWORKS:

Fire and Water light wands by Tim Ward (of Circling the Square). This is a meeting point structure outside the entrance to the leisure centre. It consists of a series of steel 'wands', the tips of which light up automatically in the evening and early morning. The artwork is inspired by the local steel industry and the canal network (hence the name fire and water), and particularly GKN Sankey's, which had a factory on the site of the new Leisure Centre. At the base of the wands is a circle of steel benches, backed by historic and contemporary images of life, sport and leisure in the local area.

Kiran Chahal's photography-based installation. This can be found in the entrance and the pool area. With the help of local residents, Kiran photographed industrial sites around Bilston and created a collage of stunning close-up images, printed onto acrylic. These are interspersed with words and comments from local people about how exercise makes them feel and memories and stories of Bilston.

Stella Corral's suspended artwork in the atrium is inspired by the colour schemes of 18th century Bilston enamels and brighter colours chosen by participants in creative workshops. It is made up of over 1200 plastic elements handmade by Stella who mixes the colours and cuts the shapes in her workshop. The work includes words and phrases from local people talking about the heritage of Bilston and what they enjoy about exercise and leisure and is designed to be discovered from many different angles as people move through the building.

iv) SELECTED OF IMAGES OF THE ARTWORKS

Fire and Water light wands by Tim Ward (of Circling the Square)



Kiran Chahal's photography-based installation



Stella Corral's suspended artwork

