



Column: Arts Council England statement

13 November 2012

Arts Council England has carried out a thorough review of the delayed Artists taking the lead project, Column. Even though Column hasn't yet been achieved in the way we had hoped, we do still think it is possible. Although we will not invest more money in the project, we will continue to support the production team to make it happen. We have extended the project's delivery time into 2013 – to give the team the extra time they require and to pre-empt any further delays that adverse winter weather conditions might cause.

The production team has been committed to making the project work and remains so. They have accounted for the technical problems they have faced. It is a groundbreaking structure, and these are uncharted technical waters, but the theory and science behind it has a sound foundation. Major projects on this scale are frequently beset by teething problems which can typically be ironed out. Anthony McCall and his team are confident that Column can be made to work and that it will be as impressive as originally indicated, in due course.

We realise how disappointing these delays are for people who have been looking forward to seeing Column, and we hope they will still get the chance next year to witness this world first spectacular artwork on Merseyside.

Moirá Sinclair, Executive Director London, Arts Council England, said: "We have closely monitored Column's progress since its inception. Although the delays to its delivery are disappointing, the Arts Council is absolutely committed to enabling artists to take risks because that's when great art often happens. The Column team has made a lot of progress during this final testing phase. By allowing them the extra time they need we hope to see Column realised in 2013, as a world-first, and for the people of Merseyside and beyond to experience and enjoy."

Artist Anthony McCall said: "I am grateful to Arts Council England for their continuing trust and support, especially during the unexpectedly attenuated process of winning the approval of numerous regulatory agencies. Fortunately, since passing those tests, my colleagues and I have been able to focus exclusively on refining the piece itself. Our aim, as before, is to produce a slim, vertical column of cloud that will rise, spinning, into the Merseyside sky."

For further information and updates on Column's development over the next few months, visit Column's own website at www.column2012.com

Notes to editors:

Column was commissioned in 2009, as part of the national Artists taking the lead programme within the Cultural Olympiad, with an award of £500,000. Like all our Artists taking the lead projects, Column was commissioned for its originality and innovation – and with that comes risk.

As a responsible funder, we have continued to carefully monitor Column and to liaise closely with the artist Anthony McCall and the Column team both to assess how the project is progressing but also to review its development needs.

One of the Arts Council's aims is to promote the conditions in which the most talented artists can be their best and can take risks, thereby constantly redefining our understanding of what great art can be.

The structure that produces Column was successfully towed to its East Float site in late August and the team has been testing Column and making structural modifications to it since then. Although a fully working Column has not been achieved as yet, the tests so far have been producing promising results.

The Arts Council will continue to monitor the project's developments, but will not put further investment in it.

To find out more about Column and to follow its progress, visit www.column2012.com