

ARTIST'S BRIEF

Walking Distance

Dorchester

Site-specific research • Temporary commission • Permanent public realm commission



Client: Dorset Wildlife Trust on behalf of Dorset Design and Heritage Forum
Art Consultant: Ginkgo Projects Ltd.
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Images: Central Dorchester (photos by Keir Francis)

G I N K G O

WALKING DISTANCE, DORCHESTER - ARTIST'S COMMISSION

Introduction

This commission forms part of *N3: Nature Network Neighbourhood*, a funded programme of six creative projects focusing on developing innovative creative responses in the public realm within Dorset in 2012.

Dorset Design and Heritage Forum with the support of Dorchester Business Improvement District, and in association with Dorset County Council Highways, are looking for a visual artist to engage with the public through a 2-month period of site-specific research in Dorchester between October and November 2012, resulting in a temporary commission or event in the town centre. This work will lead to the development a series of project ideas for permanent interventions, one of which will be developed into a series of small permanent public art commissions to be installed in central Dorchester by the end of March 2013.

The research and temporary commission will dovetail with and support the public engagement work that will be delivered as part of the highway and environmental improvements planned for central Dorchester (the Dorchester Transport and Environment Plan, or DTEP). DTEP aims to ease negative traffic impacts and make public realm improvements in central Dorchester over the next three years. The aim of the DTEP project is to explore and heighten the walking experience for pedestrians and increase connectivity within the town centre through revealing aspects of place and cultural identity. The site-specific research and temporary commission should inform the development of the permanent commission.

The project ideas developed by the artist are intended to be used to support fundraising for a third phase of the *Walking Distance* project for incorporation into the DTEP areas of development, if and when these progress in 2013 - 2015.



Background

N3: Nature Network Neighbourhood

N3 is a £62,000 programme of projects funded by Arts Council England. It also has in-kind support from Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Dorset County Council. The *Walking Distance* project is also funded by Dorchester Business Improvement District. N3 is managed by a sub-group of Dorset Design and Heritage Forum, which champions design quality in the built landscape of Dorset. (Read more about DDHF at: <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/390645>)

The N3 projects are:

PROJECT 1: The production of guidance advising groups developing community-led planning documents how to engage with culture and use the skills of creative practitioners within the planning process;

PROJECT 2: Development of networks and skills through a series of related events;

PROJECT 3: The involvement of an artist/creative facilitator on the development of Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan, North Dorset;

PROJECT 4: (this project)

PROJECT 5: A project to investigate ecological mitigation for housing development through animal architecture (such as bat/bird boxes);

PROJECT 6: A series of new creative interpretation/signage to be commissioned for sites managed by Dorset Wildlife Trust.

Dorchester

Dorchester is a historic market town on the banks of the River Frome in the Frome Valley. It is the county town of Dorset and the local service and administrative centre for a large rural hinterland. Dorchester has a rich history, a wealth of historic buildings and attractive streets and public spaces. It is also an expanding town with a population of some 16,000 with expansion taking place at Poundbury to the west of the traditional centre.

The town's roots date back to prehistoric times, with tribes believed to have been at nearby Maiden Castle since 4000BC. The remains of the previous Roman walls can still be seen in the town centre along with several Roman villas and a network of tree lined walks which are still used today. Dorchester High Street contains the longest length of continuous listed buildings in the country.

Dorchester is a quintessential example of an historic English town and as such makes a significant and important contribution to English heritage and culture. The town was the home and inspiration for the novelist Thomas Hardy (1840 - 1928) who based his novels *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* on Dorchester. Other notable people and events in the town include the 19th century poet William Barnes who was born in Dorset, wrote many of his works in a Dorset dialect, and was a friend of Hardy. Barnes was Rector of St. Peter's Church in nearby Winterborne Came for 24 years, where he is also buried. Also important to Dorchester is the trying of the Tolpuddle Martyrs at the Shire Hall in the town, which is commemorated by a plaque on the old Council office building, as well as in the Shire Hall and in Tolpuddle itself.

Background (continued)

Dorchester Business Improvement District (DBID)

Dorchester Business Improvement District is a membership organisation funded by local businesses in central Dorchester, with a view to investing collectively in local improvements to enhance the trading environment of their members. They have contributed funding towards this project. To find out more about the work of DBID, visit: www.dorchesterdorset.co.uk and www.dorchesterdorset.com

Dorchester Transport and Environment Plan (DTEP)

Traffic volumes, noise and pollution are causing pressures on the environmental quality, safety and attraction of Dorchester town centre, with traffic now at the level experienced before the by-pass was opened. Residents and those visiting and working in the centre are, as a consequence, suffering. There are difficulties for pedestrians at junctions and on narrow pavements due to high traffic volumes in historic areas; as a result they are unable to enjoy the qualities and attributes of the central parts of the town. The situation is exacerbated on market days due to increased traffic and higher levels of pedestrian activity.

Dorchester Transport and Environment Plan is being investigated and developed in 2012, with a view to implementing a phased series of agreed improvements. This creates opportunities for public realm enhancements and recognises the strong public endorsement for the concept of pedestrian priority throughout the central area.

The phased approach scheme is not dissimilar in concept from the 2005 preferred option. The essential element is that it would restrict traffic on High West Street and High East Street to one way, thereby reducing traffic flow and pollution levels. This would also enable completion of the National Cycle Network Route 26 across the town. Wider paved areas are planned and traffic flows may be accessible only in particular directions.

To read the full Dorchester Transport and Environment Plan from 2005, visit: <http://www.dorsetforyou.com/395722>

Dorset County Council's Cabinet will be invited to approve the revised, phased approach to DTEP on 5th September 2012.



Artist's impression showing High West Street, Dorchester

Project Aims

We are looking for an artist to place the idea of connections, both geographical and social, at the heart of their creative process. Some of the key ideas that we would like to see develop from this commission are outlined below:

Connecting people to place

The artworks should connect people, be those residents or visitors, to place by attracting their attention to details, vistas or unexpected incidents along the way.

Revealing heritage from new perspectives

Dorchester's heritage is very important to its identity. Artists' work will reinterpret or add to that heritage and culture in new and perhaps surprising ways. Artists will be encouraged to think laterally to reveal unknown cultural associations about happenings and events and help people to appreciate their surroundings.

Legibility and movement

Walking is a focus of this project. The artwork will aim to enhance the sense of movement as people progress through Dorchester. By encouraging people to get out walking and creating places that people want to be and feel safe and happy negotiating on foot, we are creating places that are physically, socially and economically healthier places to be.

Project aims

The overarching project aims are to:

- connect residents and visitors with Dorchester town centre using cultural references/interventions
- enhance the walking experience in Dorchester town centre, improving legibility and creating points of interest
- encourage people to walk through and between different points in Dorchester town centre
- support the aims of Dorchester Business Improvement District, which invests collectively in local improvements to enhance the trading environment of their members (local businesses)
- result in work that is innovative, engaging and contemporary in approach, in line with the aims of the Dorset Design and Heritage Forum.

DTEP aims

The main aims of the wider Dorchester Transport and Environment Plan were identified through consultation and form the overarching objectives for the DTEP proposals. While the art commission is not expected to deliver these aims, it should support them.

The aims of DTEP are to:

- Support the economic prosperity of the town
- Reduce through traffic
- Provide a higher quality environment
- Protect and enhance the historic fabric of the town
- Reduce traffic speeds
- Increase pedestrian priority and freedom
- Improve access for cyclists, the elderly and disabled
- Maintain vehicular access for emergency, servicing and public transport
- Provide accessible car parking for shoppers, residents and other essential users

Project overview

The project will progress in two stages:

Stage 1: Artist research and temporary commission

Stage 2: Development of project ideas and permanent integrated art commission

Stage 1: Artist research and temporary commission

This stage will consist of a 2 month period of site specific research in Dorchester, during which the artist should explore and develop responses to the walking experience within Dorchester town centre. The research should result in a temporary public commission or event to support this research and the stakeholder engagement process relating to DTEP. The main aim is for the site-specific research to give the artist the opportunity to collect and evaluate a range of cultural information, stories and facts to steer the designs for the permanent commission. As well as having a factual, perhaps historical, element, there is also an opportunity for storytelling and invention. The artist should interact with members of the public to gain their views through their research and the event/temporary commission. The artist will be encouraged to develop links with local artists and arts organisations during this stage.

Principle requirements

The principle requirements of stage 1 are:

- the artist should commit to spending a minimum of 4 days in Dorchester during the research period, spread across the 2 month period, with additional day(s) spent on the temporary site specific commission/event in Dorchester town centre as necessary
- the artist should, through the temporary commission, use creative means to gain more public engagement and feedback on DTEP enhancement proposals, contributing creative approaches into the stakeholder engagement process
- enliven the town centre through creative interventions
- attract people into the town centre through the temporary commission or event
- engage with Dorchester BID and the DTEP team to ensure that the project, as it develops, is supportive of their aims and ambitions.

Stage 1 outputs

- Research and engagement material showing idea formation
- Proposal for the temporary commission/event
- Delivery of the temporary commission/event.



Photos of central Dorchester by Keir Francis

Project overview (continued)

Stage 2: Permanent integrated art commission

This stage will result in a range of project ideas/descriptions developed by the artist working with the curators Ginkgo Projects. One project idea will be taken forward for delivery in stage 2. The specification for this project is a series of small-scale permanent artworks to be integrated into the public realm of central Dorchester. The artworks produced should encourage residents and visitors to explore Dorchester on foot and on bicycle, linking areas together and perhaps telling them things they might not know about Dorchester and its history.

It is hoped that one or more of the other project ideas may be developed at a later stage for integration into the future DTEP public realm improvements. Within the DTEP area, three areas of central Dorchester have been identified as offering potential for this (see right):

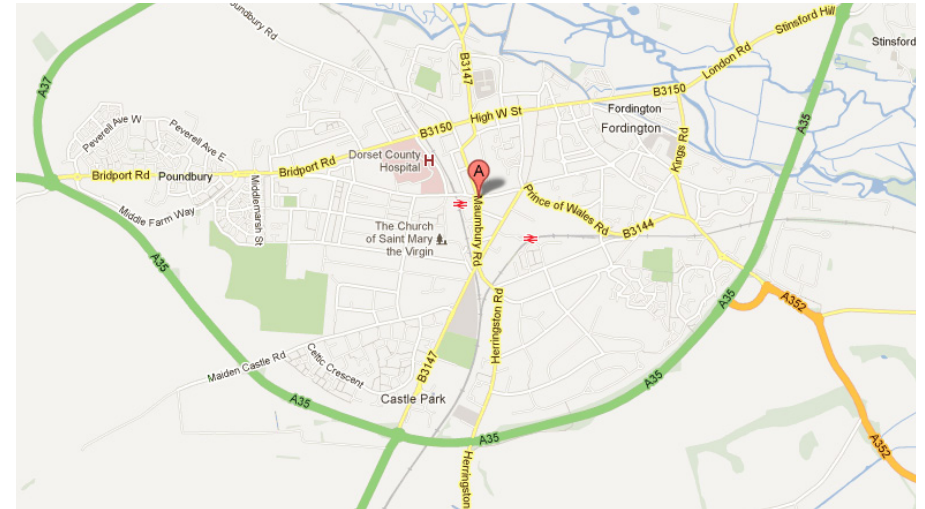
- Area 5 - Top O'Town
- Area 2 - Southgate Junction (near The Junction Hotel)
- Area 10 - Great Western Cross

The project ideas proposed may be located in all of these areas, and others, although the locations selected should come out of the stage 1 research and through discussion with DBID and the Highways team working on DTEP.

Principle requirements

The principle requirements of stage 2 are to:

- develop a series of project ideas for the public realm in central Dorchester, including future interventions into the traffic improvement programme (DTEP)
- create a series of small scale permanent artworks to be integrated into the streetscape and public realm of central Dorchester
- create robust, low maintenance artworks which respect the historic context of Dorchester and have a design life of twenty years
- create artworks that have maximum impact during the day when Dorchester town centre is busiest
- create artworks which follow from the research and engagement in stage 1
- create artworks located on land owned by the local authority
- work closely with the DTEP team at Dorset County Council to ensure that the permanent commissions are properly integrated into the public realm and wider designs, as well as being achievable in terms of the available budget and timescale
- where possible, the artist should make efforts to 'grow' the art budget by partnering with landscape allocations, eg seating, paving and informal signage.



Project overview (continued)

Stage 2 outputs

- A series of project ideas/descriptions which form a framework of opportunities for future development. These ideas should be developed through working with curators Ginkgo Projects and the DTEP team, and include identification of routes and areas for intervention. The project ideas should include one proposal that can be taken forward for delivery by the end of March 2013
- The presentation of a concept design outlining the nature of artworks for development in central Dorchester by the end of March 2013, for client approval
- Detailed scheme designs for the proposal above relating it to its context
- Proposed locations for the artworks
- A method statement indicating how the works could be constructed and any sub-contractors
- A detailed budget and programme
- The completed, installed artworks.

Approach

Location

Dorchester town centre presents an opportunity to create a temporary commission and a series of small-scale permanent works that improve the legibility and walking experience of the area, and engage the public. The exact locations for permanent artworks (delivered within Stage 2) will develop out of the Stage 1 research process. The project is focussed on pedestrian routes and spaces in central Dorchester.

Maintenance

It is essential that any permanent artworks proposed or delivered will require minimum maintenance and can be easily cleaned as part of the area's general cleaning and maintenance schedule. The artworks should have a design life of at least twenty years.

Material Quality

The material quality of the stage 2 artwork(s) is a key design element. A sense of endurance and permanence should be evident within the artist's commissions through quality, considered design, well selected and sourced materials and sound craftsmanship and installation.

Key issues to consider are:

Materiality

The location of the commission will have a number of implications that the artist should consider:

- Artworks may be in busy pedestrian areas and will need to be safe and not obstructive in any way that may cause danger to people walking by, through or over them.
- The artworks will be open to the public at all times in a busy town. Although the area will be maintained by the local authority, the artworks will need to be robust and resilient to all kinds of attention from passers by.
- The heritage and architectural nature of Dorchester may influence the choice of materials.

A sense of quality and solid structure

The artwork will give a sense of well considered quality both conceptually and physically.



Programme

The project will include interim meetings to monitor project progress. At these meetings the artist will present ideas and proposals to the project steering group which will comprise of client representatives, project partners and Ginkgo Projects. Other relevant individuals may be invited along if necessary such as project engineers or contractors. The programme for design approval meetings will be agreed with the client and artists upon selection. It is expected that the stage 2 artworks will be installed by Monday 1st April 2013, but this should be reviewed by the project steering group as the project progresses.

Artist appointment via interview	mid September 2012
Stage 1	
Site specific research	October - November 2012
Client approval of temporary event/ commission	
Delivery of temporary event/ commission	
Stage 2	
Development of project ideas leading to concept design development for permanent commissions	December 2012 - January 2013
Client approval of concept design	January 2013
Detailed design and fabrication of stage 2 artworks	January - March 2013
Stage 2 artworks installed	by end March 2013

All proposals should meet the required building specifications, contractor working methods and health and safety requirements.

The appointed artist will work on a freelance basis. The appointed artist will be expected to subcontract and manage any manufacturers or other parties required to deliver the stage 2 artworks.

It is expected that the artist will produce research, working drawings and designs in a format that is suitable for presentation to the project steering group. The exact format can be agreed with the project manager prior to any meetings.

Contracts and Payment

It is expected that the total budget for the commission will be paid in stages at agreed approval points.

Total project budget including all fees,
expenses, materials and installation costs: £16,000 exc VAT
total expenses capped at £500

This payment will be made in the following stages:

Stage 1: Site specific research and temporary event

Artist fee: £2,500
Temporary event budget: £1,500

Stage 2: Permanent integrated art commission

Stage 2a: Artist fee for development of
project ideas and concept design £2,000
Stage 2b: Detailed design, fabrication
& installation (including artist fees) £10,000

All costs are exclusive of VAT.

Invoices will be paid in arrears following the agreed approval points to be outlined in the contract. Invoices should be addressed to the client Dorset Wildlife Trust, but sent via the project manager at Ginkgo Projects.

Copyright

The copyright of all submitted research and design will be held in favour of the artist. Ownership of all submitted research, design material, models and the final work will be held in ownership of the client.

Artist specification

Artists will be shortlisted according to the following specification.

Artistic background and practice

- Someone working in the field of socially engaged practice
- An interest in walking, mapping, wayfinding and interpretation
- Work that is within the realm of contemporary art, craft or design
- Someone comfortable working on both the temporary research phase and the permanent works.

Experience

- Experience of developing projects of a similar scale to the Dorchester project
- Experience of working with other partners including community, culture and heritage groups
- Experience of working to and managing a budget
- Experience of working within larger construction projects and within design teams
- Experience of working to a project team and to deadlines.

Approach

- Public Liability insurance to £5 million

Selection process

A shortlist of artists will be invited to interview in Dorchester in mid September 2012. The interview panel will include representation from Dorchester Business Improvement District, Dorset County Council Highways and Ginkgo Projects.

How to Apply

If you are interested in applying for this project, please send:

- A recent copy of your CV
- A brief written statement about your work
- Up to 10 images or other material showing examples of your previous work
- A brief outline of how you might approach this project (no more than a side of A4)

Applications should be sent by email to suzanne@ginkgoprojects.co.uk by:

5pm, Monday 10th September 2012

Supporting information may be sent by post to Suzanne Heath at Ginkgo Projects (see address below). If you have any questions or would like further information please contact Suzanne.

Contacts

The key contact will be the art project manager at Ginkgo Projects. Other contacts will be available from the project manager upon commencement of the site-specific research phase.

Suzanne Heath
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St Judes Studio
High Street
Axbridge
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BS26 2AF

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01934 733 406

