

# northumberland public art action plan 2004–2008

Report by Commissions North for Northumberland Strategic Partnership







# introduction:

“Culture-led regeneration, including tourism, is now a major strand of the Northumberland Strategic Partnership’s activity. During the life of the Public Art Action Plan we hope to work with partners and communities across Northumberland to develop creative, challenging programmes that put us firmly on the map as a well connected county, proud of its people, heritage, excellence and ambition”.

Jane Nolan MBE, Chair,  
Northumberland Strategic Partnership

“The North East’s legacy of major landmark sculptures has firmly embedded the principle that artists have a central role within the creative design, building and regeneration process. Northumberland is already home to two of the region’s best known commissioning programmes – Kielder Partnership’s Art and Architecture Programme and English Heritage’s applied arts showcase at Belsay Hall – but the next challenge is to build on this experience, developing new artists’ commissions, which ensure innovation, creative risk, and fresh ideas are supported in order to realise the county’s wider potential as a centre for excellence for public art commissioning.”

Andrew Dixon, Executive Director,  
Arts Council England, North East

Since the late 1980s the North East has established an impressive track record in commissioning innovative and ambitious public art, an essential ingredient within the region’s approach to culture-led regeneration and renewal. Arts Council England, North East’s ambition is for the region to become a UK leader in commissioning art within the public and private sector.

Following the publication of its own Cultural Strategy for the county in 2002, Northumberland Strategic Partnership Culture Sector Board asked Commissions North, the regional public art development agency based within Arts Council England, North East, to undertake a detailed review of public art opportunities across the county.






This publication offers a summary of the public art review and recommends key objectives and the practical steps necessary to create a new climate for the development and realisation of future high quality and innovative public art projects within Northumberland.

The action plan is illustrated with selected project examples from across the region and a specially commissioned personal visual review of the county’s public realm environments by North East photographer Sally Ann Norman.

Additional artwork courtesy of the artists, Alnwick Garden, Paul Medlock, Sally Ann Norman, Keith Paisley, Mark Pinder, Alex Telfer, David Williams.

Publication researched and produced by Rebecca Farley for Commissions North.

# contents:

executive summary:	public art and the northumberland cultural strategy:						northumberland public art action plan 2004 – 2008:	further advice and support:
4	6	10	12	14	16	18	20	22



# executive summary:

This Public Art Action Plan is the result of a six-month review of public art activity and opportunities in Northumberland, carried out by Commissions North between June – December 2003 – a research process involving face-to-face meetings with key contacts in the local authorities, community, regeneration, tourism and environmental sectors across the county.

## What is Public Art?

Commissions North works in partnership with public and private sector organisations to develop high quality artists’ commissions across North East England. It advocates for a broad definition of public art, embracing both permanent and temporary artworks, functional design, large and small scale, high profile and low-key approaches.

Public art projects can involve a wide spectrum of contemporary visual arts practice, from fine art and design such as sculpture, painting, glass, metalwork, textiles, lighting and furniture to photography, film and video, digital artworks, artists’ publications and time-based events.

Artworks can be commissioned by public, community and private sector organisations for a wide range of places and spaces, including: urban, rural and environmental regeneration schemes; arts and community buildings; hospitals and healthcare environments; offices and business parks; housing; leisure and retail developments; schools and colleges; heritage and tourism sites; and transport networks.

## Public art in Northumberland

The review process revealed a number of key strengths and weaknesses which the Public Art Action Plan seeks to build on and address.

### Strengths:

- Regionally and nationally important contemporary commissioning and residency programmes including Art and Architecture at Kielder, English Heritage’s contemporary design showcase at Belsay Hall and the Berwick Gymnasium Fellowship Programme.
- Flagship cultural tourism attractions including Alnwick Garden and Hadrian’s Wall and the unique landscapes of Northumberland National Park; North Pennines and Northumberland Coast Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Strong North East track record in public art commissioning, including high profile artworks such as Gateshead’s Angel.
- Northumberland Cultural Strategy and strong cultural champions at NSP.
- Inspire – the South East Northumberland Public Art Initiative – providing delivery for Wansbeck and Blyth districts.
- Regional public art expertise including Commissions North/Arts Council England, North East, independent agencies and freelance consultants.
- High profile arts neighbours: Baltic; Newcastle-Gateshead Culture<sup>10</sup> initiative; active Newcastle visual arts community.

### Weaknesses:

- Apart from Inspire, no other specialist local authority public art capacity at district or county level.
- Little integration between local authority arts / culture, regeneration and planning departments.
- Inactive and weak ‘percent for art’ policies.
- Lack of strong public art advocacy at local authority officer and committee level.
- Little experience of the scope for contemporary public art projects, particularly in terms of temporary and new media activity.
- Little creative collaboration between local authorities and independent agencies.

## Five key zones

Early on in the review process a conceptual map of Northumberland emerged which orientated the county around five geographic zones:

- Market towns
- South East Northumberland
- Rural
- Coast
- Countywide networks

The Northumberland Public Art Action Plan – the practical strategy which has grown from this research – focuses on the particular sites and contexts of Northumberland. It aims to develop and support opportunities for public art across these five varied but defining zones, both through initiated programmes and in response to demand for new commissions from both the public and private sector.

Key public art opportunities identified during the review are highlighted in the publication, listed within each zone and categorised by sector – regeneration, urban design, offices and business, heritage and tourism, environment, etc.

## Public Art Action Plan

### Three key challenges:

- Investing in innovative public art projects rather than tried and tested approaches.
- Creating sensitive contemporary public art solutions for Northumberland’s historic and natural environments.
- Ensuring that capital developments such as new buildings, regeneration and urban design schemes make best advantage of the benefits to be gained from an imaginative public art approach.

### Five key objectives:

- Developing high quality and innovative public art commissions across Northumberland, focusing on the five key geographic zones.
- Ensuring a strategic and coordinated approach to public art activity across the county.
- Raising confidence and ambition in public art commissioning.
- Building capacity in terms of level of support, advice and expertise available to local authorities and public and private sector commissioners.
- Establishing design funding resources to stimulate the development of new public art commissions.



# public art and the northumberland cultural strategy:

## Key Priority Aim 1

### Marketing Northumberland and improving its strategic infrastructure

#### 1.1. Raising the profile of Northumberland

In creating new contemporary landmarks, such as Gateshead’s ‘Angel’ and Blyth’s ‘Spirit of the Staithes’, public art can help to build a new positive identity for a region or place.

On a smaller scale, well promoted individual artworks, art trails and temporary projects add new interest and new visitor opportunities to the cultural and recreational landscape of an area and can become important tourist attractions in their own right.

Northumberland – already home to two of the North East’s most exciting and best known commissioning initiatives – Kielder Partnership’s Art and Architecture programme and English Heritage’s contemporary design showcase at Belsay Hall – has the potential to become a county recognised as a location for excellence, high quality and innovation in contemporary public art and design.

#### 1.2. Upgrading Northumberland’s strategic infrastructure

Experience in the North East and nationally shows that commissioning artists to work with professional design teams on the development of capital projects – such as business parks, schools, housing, hospitals, environmental and transport improvements – can greatly enhance the quality of new buildings and facilities, improving the day-to-day experience of residents, workers and users and helping to create a quality environment attractive to further economic investment.

When considered at the earliest stage within the PFI and development process, budgets for new buildings and necessary infrastructural works can provide opportunities for artists to create bespoke solutions to common design challenges, creating innovative landscaping features, new approaches to signage, lighting, glass, furniture and public spaces.

Since 1999 Commissions North has advised regional NHS Trusts on 10 major new build PFI projects and has supported Tyne and Wear Fire Brigade on commissions for six new PFI fire stations.

Across the region house builders Wimpey Homes – currently working with leading designers Wayne and Geradine Hemingway on their 688 Home Zone development in Gateshead – Barratt and Bellway Homes, and housing association Home Housing have all commissioned artists to work with architects and design teams on new developments.

In the education sector Building Schools for the Future represents a new opportunity for integrating visual arts commissions into Northumberland’s proposed new build programme. Space for Sports and the Arts and individual commissions for schools, colleges and Early Years facilities in North Tyneside, Darlington and Hadston in Northumberland all provide good examples for practice in this field.

#### 1.3. Developing programmes of cultural events

Building on the programmes already established by English Heritage and the Kielder Partnership, temporary public art projects, artist-led events and residency activities can help to create fresh connections with Northumberland’s unique physical and built environment.

Looking beyond the county and establishing partnerships with innovative and high-profile arts programmes and venues across the North East – such as Baltic, artists’ studio groups and Culture<sup>10</sup> – and making links over the border to the North West and Scotland, can create a catalyst for new artistic practice, drawing in new and established talent from within and beyond the region.

The Northumberland Public Art Action Plan will make a vital contribution to the success of the Northumberland Cultural Strategy 2002 – 08, helping to address three of the strategy’s key priority aims.

#### 1.4. Promoting and supporting Northumberland’s flagship attractions

Contemporary public art commissions offer new opportunities for audience engagement with the county’s cultural flagships and heritage sites. An approach which can already be recognised as one of Northumberland’s core strengths.

The arts programme developed by curator Judith King for English Heritage – ‘Sitooteries’, ‘Sitting Pretty’ and 2004’s ‘Fashion at Belsay (FAB)’ – offers a model for rolling out visual arts collaboration with other heritage sector sites and demonstrates the innovative way in which contemporary artists and designers can engage with and reinterpret the historic environment, to both critical and popular acclaim.

The National Trust has also begun to explore this new interpretative route, with ‘Fantastic Follies’ at Wallington Hall in 2002, while along Hadrian’s Wall the continuing ‘Writing on the Wall’ and ‘Marking the Wall’ programmes are working with artists, writers and performers to engage local communities in projects to celebrate and create new local links to a designated World Heritage Site.

The growing reputation of Alnwick Garden, already working with artists and contemporary garden designers, provides inspiration for future garden-based arts commissions across the county while in South East Northumberland the redevelopment of Woodhorn Museum opens up new opportunities for the visual arts both as part of infrastructural improvements and in terms of artists’ residency and temporary projects.

#### 1.5. Promoting Northumberland’s high quality cultural landscapes and parks

Northumberland National Park, North Pennines and Northumberland Coast AONBs, and the recreational and cultural attractions of Kielder Forest are major environmental assets and vital ingredients in the county’s tourism portfolio. In South East and East Northumberland the country parks also provide important recreational spaces for residents and visitors, while heritage parks, riversides and well kept green spaces are a characteristic feature within the county’s larger market towns.

Artists can have a major role to play in the regeneration, celebration and interpretation of these unique landscapes and public open spaces with the potential for commissions to develop permanent features such as waymarkers, seating, signage and sculpture, as well as temporary interventions, photography, writing and new media projects.

#### 1.7. Upgrading Northumberland’s cultural attractions and facilities

Artists and designers can make a major contribution to the upgrading and development of new cultural buildings and tourist information and visitor centres, developing unique functional elements and feature artworks for interior and exterior spaces, creating welcoming and attractive environments for audiences and visitors.

The North East also offers some good examples of commissioning artworks within the design and environment of hotels and other leisure facilities, including Bridget Jones and William Pye’s bespoke glass and water sculpture commissions for the luxury Seaham Hall hotel in County Durham, and Maddi Nicholson and Stuart Bastik’s unique artist-designed soft play environment for Prudhoe Waterworld.

Image credits:  
'Spirit of the Staithes' (Artist: Simon Packard). 'Epidermis', Berwick Gymnasium, (Artist: Elpida Hadzi-Vasileva). 'Kielder Belvedere' (Architects: Softroom). Alnwick Garden. 'Pleasurescape', from 'Sitting Pretty', Belsay Hall, (Artist: Karim Rashid). 'Moonstruck' (Artist: Uta Kogelsberger).





**Key Priority Aim 2**

Improving access to, and participation in culture

**2.1. Encourage communities to participate in cultural activity**

Facilitating local community engagement with the public art process is one of the key objectives of Inspire – the South East Northumberland Public Art Initiative. Community involvement whether through stakeholder consultation, direct participation or artists’ briefings is an essential ingredient of good public art practice.

Public art projects can also be driven by communities themselves – organisations such as Parish Councils, development partnerships and residents’ groups can all become commissioning clients in their own right, engaging artists to design unique elements within the fabric and furnishings of new and redeveloped community facilities and making imaginative interventions to local play spaces and village greens.

Through the process of creative research and community consultation artists can also play a major role in developing local ownership in larger scale redevelopment projects.

**2.3. Use cultural projects as a way of improving health**

Recent evaluation by CABE and NHS Estates shows that good design, including visual arts commissions – feature artworks, integral design elements, or participatory programmes – can make a valuable contribution to improving healthcare environments for patients, visitors and staff.

This is a principal and practice already well established in the North East, with artists commissioned to create works and functional design elements for new PFI hospital developments – including Hexham General and Middlesbrough’s James Cook Hospital – and for new specialist care units such as the Northern Centre for Cancer Treatment and Henry Wellcome Building for Neuroecology in Newcastle. New public art programmes are currently in development with the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Prudhoe NHS Trust.

In helping to improve the visual quality of workplace and learning environments and by creating new visual features to encourage usage of the county’s extensive footpath and cycleway networks, arts commissions can also impact on the wider public health initiatives promoted by Northumberland Care Trust – including healthier workplaces and schools, exercise and ‘walking to health’ programmes.

**Key Priority Aim 6**

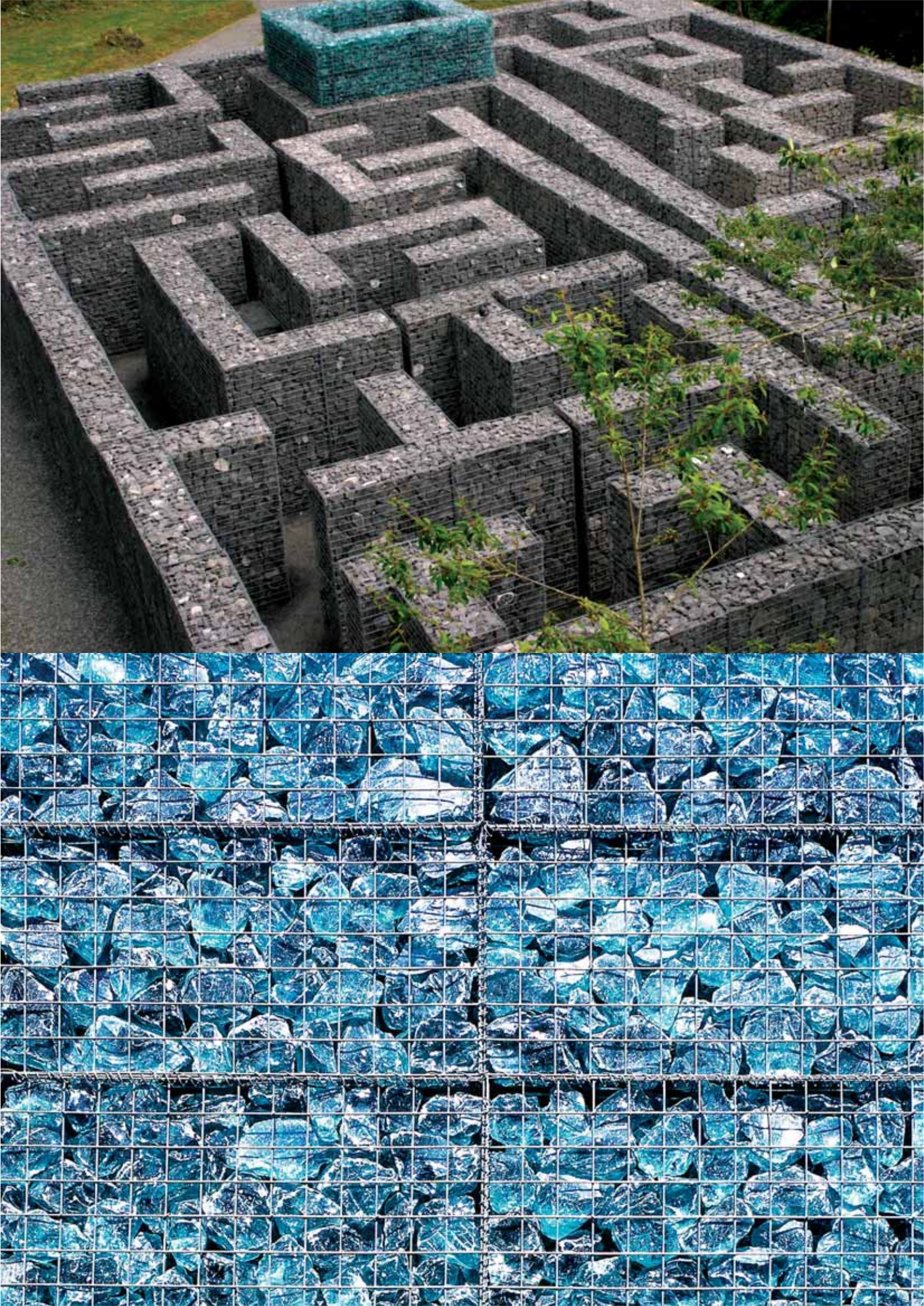
Using information and communication technologies to help culture flourish

**6.1. Develop a well-coordinated approach to ICT**

The growing availability of broadband technology across Northumberland offers a new way of thinking about public art. Providing an opportunity to create commissions which can be virtual as well as physically sited and which can be viewed through home PCs and public access internet facilities, either online or as published CDs and DVDs.

With strong digital production and curatorial expertise already available in Northumberland and the North East – including Allenhead’s Centre for the Arts [www.acart.org.uk](http://www.acart.org.uk) and Isis Arts [www.isisarts.org.uk](http://www.isisarts.org.uk) – there is good potential to develop digital work as a key strand of public art practice in Northumberland.

Image credit:  
‘Minotaur’, Kielder (Architect: Nick Coombe. Artist: Shona Kitchen).





PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES

URBAN DESIGN:

Alnwick – town centre improvements.  
Hexham – pedestrianisation scheme  
Haltwhistle – Centre of Britain square

HERITAGE AND TOURISM:

Morpeth – Town Hall refurbishment  
Alnwick Garden – visitor centre and new gardens.

ENVIRONMENT:

Morpeth – Carlisle Park; River Wansbeck Heritage Trail.  
Hexham – Tyne Green and town parks

LEISURE AND RETAIL:

Morpeth – retail and housing developments  
Hexham – Safeway relocation

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY:

Haltwhistle – new community and family centre

OFFICES AND BUSINESS:

Hexham – Tynedale Council office relocation

# market towns:

Investing in market towns as a focal point for rural regeneration is a key priority within the North East's Rural Action Plan and is an important strand for the Northumberland Strategic Partnership.

Northumberland's market towns are a vital feature of county life and although hard hit by changes in the rural economy and the decline of rural services, positive developments in Alnwick – now experiencing soaring house prices and a boom in visitor numbers attracted to Alnwick Garden – encourage a new sense of optimism.

While lively market places, heritage architecture and historic streetscapes make many of the county's towns and larger villages attractive places to visit and to live, many also suffer from the blight of vacant shop premises, bland 'identikit' retail, housing and business developments, and poor public spaces. Like the big cities of the North East, the market towns also need to refresh and regenerate, seeking sensitive and imaginative ways to balance the old with the new.

The Public Art Action Plan for Northumberland advocates the establishment of a Northumberland **market town artists scheme** – appointing a team of artists to work with market town partnerships to revitalise rural townscapes and public spaces.

Led by a rural regeneration agenda this is an approach which has already proved successful in market towns in Yorkshire and Eastern England, while in the North East Newcastle's Grainger Town is a particularly successful example of commissioning contemporary art within a listed urban environment – offering a new take on historical landmarks and reanimating public spaces with feature artworks and bespoke seating and lighting schemes.

'EXCHANGE',  
DEBBY AKAM POWER

Yorkshire-based public art agency Chrysalis Arts invited a team of artists to create a series of temporary artworks to transform Skipton High Street during a community Market Towns Renaissance planning weekend organised by regional development agency Yorkshire Forward. As part of the project video artist Debby Akam Power spent a month filming in Skipton exploring the town and making connections between urban and rural lives. The resulting video works were shown at night in the five windows of a high street shop. [www.art-connections.org.uk](http://www.art-connections.org.uk)

'GRAINGER TOWN MAP',  
TOD HANSON AND SIMON WATKINSON

Located opposite Newcastle's Central Station, the 3D Grainger Town Map presents visitors and residents with an alternative vision of the city centre. This is one of the latest art works commissioned as part of the transformation of the historic Grainger Town. The £1.2m public art programme was managed by a dedicated Public Art Panel, ensuring a consistent approach to selecting artists and developing projects within the context of the overarching regeneration scheme.



:market towns





PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES

REGENERATION:

Blyth – estuary redevelopment and waterfront design scheme

HERITAGE AND TOURISM:

Woodhorn – museum redevelopment

ENVIRONMENT:

Wildspace Network – new rural walking route

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION:

Ashington – Ashington Learning Park

OFFICES AND BUSINESS:

Cramlington – Northumberland Business Park development

Ashington – Wansbeck Business Park development

North Seaton – new business park development

TRANSPORT:

A189 – environmental improvements to roundabouts & bridges

URBAN DESIGN:

Blyth – town centre masterplan

## south east northumberland:

**Inspire** – the South East Northumberland Public Art Initiative – is located in the most industrial and densely populated area of Northumberland, covering 17 of the 25 most deprived wards in the county. A partnership between Northumberland County Council, Wansbeck and Blyth Valley districts Inspire is a three-year art and regeneration project, running from 2003–06. With a dedicated public art officer, it provides essential capacity – in terms of project funding, management ability and specialist expertise – to improve and refresh the image of the area through the development of new commissioned public artworks.

The value of public art commissions within economic, community and cultural regeneration is widely recognised, with numerous examples of artists involvement in schemes across the North East – including Tyne and Wear’s extensive ‘Art on the Riverside’ programme, Blyth Staithes redevelopment and the Grainger Town project in Newcastle. A major new public art scheme for Tees Valley Regeneration sites in Middlesbrough, Stockton, Darlington and Hartlepool is currently being set up in partnership with Arts Council England, North East.

Through Inspire, new visual arts commissions aim to make a specific contribution to the Corridor of Opportunity strategic vision for South East Northumberland:

Confident and creative people – offering local communities the opportunity to participate in regeneration projects through public art consultation processes and hands-on creative activity.

Competitive and sustainable economy – commissioning artists, artworks and buildings that raise the visual quality of business parks and housing developments.

Connected places – changing perceptions of the area’s towns and landscapes by commissioning new contemporary landmarks for flagship developments.

With this new capacity and momentum South East Northumberland is expected to become a lead area for contemporary visual art commissions in the county, with several major projects already in progress.

**NORTHUMBERLAND BUSINESS PARK, CATH CAMPBELL**

Supported by Commissions North and Inspire – the South East Northumberland Public Art Initiative, Northumberland County Council have appointed Cath Campbell as lead artist on the development of the new Northumberland Business Park near Cramlington. Working in collaboration with infrastructure contactors Babbie, Campbell is evolving a series of ideas for entrance features and landscaping. Inspired by the development of the park for office accommodation her playful ‘Pins’ design proposes a colourful series of oversized map pins to be installed on the roundabout and verges with repeated elements scattered throughout the park.

**‘CHROMAWALL’, JEREMY LORD**

Environmental regeneration partnership Greening for Growth invited five artists to make proposals for artworks to be sited along the A189 – the principal highway through South East Northumberland. The art programme is an important element of environmental improvements for the route, aiming to convey a high quality image of the region to residents, visitors and potential investors. From a varied series of proposals two artists were selected to take forward their ideas for key bridges and walls, working with lighting designer Jeremy Lord on ways to develop the artworks as a 24-hour experience.



:south east  
northumberland



#### PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES:

##### ENVIRONMENT:

Northumberland National Park – cultural interpretation strategy

North Pennines AONB – new circular trails and Geopark interpretation

Kielder – Art and Architecture commissions and residency programme

##### HERITAGE AND TOURISM:

Hadrian's Wall – development of 'Writing on the Wall' and

'Marking the Wall' programmes

##### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY:

Rural coalfield – new housing developments and public spaces

## rural:

Northumberland's wild and remote landscapes are one of the county's greatest attractions for the visitor and a major recreational asset. They are also living and working places with strong local communities.

While Kielder Partnership's working forests and waterscape have proved an excellent environment for commissioning ambitious art and architecture collaborations, smaller temporary programmes have also played a vital role in encouraging new interaction with the Northumberland landscape. The 'Land and the Samling' project funded five young artists to produce temporary commissions while in residence with school students at Kielder, and in Allenheads, the artist-run Allenheads Contemporary Art has become a centre for developing experimental projects within the remote rural setting of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Focusing on the designated areas of the Northumberland National Park and North Pennines AONB, new **rural commissions** would offer opportunities for artists to celebrate and connect with Northumberland's remoter locations, communities and traditions, helping to create new routes for public interpretation, enjoyment and engagement with places and landscapes.

As sensitive environments with strong conservation and heritage agendas these can be challenging locations for public art. While some projects may lead to the commissioning of permanent artworks in collaboration with local communities and rural user groups, a temporary and low impact approach to commissioning may be most appropriate – concentrating on new media and photography projects and artworks which are published and distributed rather than permanently sited.

#### 'MAPPING', WOLFGANG WEILEDER

Commissioned by Kielder Partnership, Wolfgang Weileder's proposal for a new minigolf course at Leaplish Waterside Park is based on two maps of the area. The first map describes the present landscape with the lake, the second showing the valley before the dam was built. The course develops out of the two overlaid maps. The fairways cross each other and starting points and holes are spread across the map, allowing the course to be played in a variety of combinations. Not only providing a surprising new way of playing minigolf, Weileder's 'Mapping' invites the visitor to engage with the unique landscape and history of Kielder. [www.kielder.org](http://www.kielder.org)

#### 'TECTONIC DISH', TOD HANSON

As part of Allenheads Contemporary Arts (ACA) residency programme, Tod Hanson used the Allenheads Heritage Centre as a studio for two months. The resulting artwork fused antique and high-tech imagery to create a composite, fantastical three-dimensional painting of the Allenheads landscape. Hanson's residency was supported by the Allenheads Trust and North Pennines AONB Partnership. Based in the Old Schoolhouse in the village, ACA aims to build up a varied interpretation of the environment through a wide-ranging programme of projects involving artists, scientists, curators and the local Allenheads community. [www.acart.org.uk](http://www.acart.org.uk)





PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES:

REGENERATION:

Amble – harbour area regeneration  
Berwick upon Tweed – quayside development  
Newbiggin – seafront and sea wall improvements

ENVIRONMENT:

Druridge Bay – public access improvements  
Northumberland Coast AONB – gateways and interpretation strategy

HERITAGE AND TOURISM:

Seahouses – new build Northumberland Coastal Centre

:coast.

## coast:

The Northumberland coast is a varied environment, stretching from the industrial regeneration areas of Blyth and Cambois, to the seaside and fishing towns of Amble and Seahouses and the open beaches of Druridge Bay and the Northumberland Coast AONB – a 40-mile length of environmentally sensitive beaches, headlands and dune systems, extending from Amble to Berwick-upon-Tweed, punctuated by historic castles and small coastal hamlets.

Although its more accessible beaches and seaside towns do receive many day visitors and holidaymakers during peak summer months, the Northumberland coast remains relatively remote and underdeveloped in terms of tourism. Increasingly, it is an important focus for economic renewal.

As an essential and defining geographical and cultural feature of the county, the coast – its harbours, seafronts and wilder beaches – offers much potential for public art in its ability to celebrate and reinvent a sense of place, and to improve environments for public enjoyment and recreation.

With 2005 signposted as 'Year of the Sea' by Visit Britain, initiating and supporting temporary and permanent projects for **coastal towns and landscapes** is a key recommendation within the Northumberland Public Art Action Plan. A programme aiming to profile and connect public art activity along the length of the coast, from activity already started in Blyth with 'Spirit of the Staithes', to the research and residency based approach of English Heritage's Gymnasium Fellowship Programme in Berwick-upon-Tweed.

'LANDMARK', TOM WOOLFORD

Tom Woolford's temporary lightwork 'Landmark' was commissioned as part of Arena, a major public art initiative organised by Hexham-based charity The Samling Foundation. Along with a team of four other young artists Woolford spent six months in the region working with local people and post-16 art students to develop his project. Installed on the cliffs below Tynemouth Priory in North Tyneside, the artwork spelled out the word LAND in four metre high illuminated letters. Visible from the pier and the Tyne ferry 'Landmark' became a real discussion point for local residents and visitors. [www.arenaproject.org](http://www.arenaproject.org)

'SOUND POSTS', HENRY AMOS

Following on from the landmark public sculpture 'Spirit of the Staithes', Blyth Riverside Regeneration commissioned artist Henry Amos to develop ideas for new artwork at Blyth Staithes. Amos's proposal for a series of interactive sound posts offers a new opportunity to use sound and light to link people with their history. In developing the project local school children, community organisations and the public will be invited to contribute their stories and sounds through interactive projects. The recordings will then be stored in a series of sound posts leading people into a sensory garden and down the length of the Staithes boardwalk. [www.blythregeneration.co.uk](http://www.blythregeneration.co.uk)





PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES:

TRANSPORT:

Roads – A1, A69, A68 and A697 and England / Scotland border points

Rail – East Coast Mainline and Newcastle to Hexham / Carlisle route

ENVIRONMENT:

Footpaths – new and improved trails

Cycleways – including Coast and Castles, Reivers and Hadrian's Wall cycleway

Rivers – Environment Agency flood defence works

## :county-wide networks

## county-wide networks:

The road, rail and 'green' transport networks – walking trails and cycleways – and the expansion of broadband technology across Northumberland, offer exciting platforms and opportunities for temporary and mobile public art activity.

Nationally, Sustrans, the sustainable transport agency, has made a commitment to public art along the cycleway network with its 'Art in the Travelling Landscape' programme, while in Tyne and Wear, Nexus has led the way in innovative transport-based commissions, involving both functional integrated artworks and temporary installation and video-based work, financed through its robust 'percent for art' strategy.

Newcastle new media agency Isis Arts has experience in touring video and digital work, while the pilot travelling cinema project Screen01 – supported by Northern Film and Media and based at Queens Hall, Hexham – now has the ability to bring artists' and community film projects (alongside mainstream cinema) to rural audiences in Tynedale and beyond.

The drive for broadband internet access has taken off strongly in Northumberland, with most of the main towns now connected, and the remainder to be connected by February 2005. In addition most Northumberland public libraries and many rural community facilities now offer free public internet access, which could provide platforms for viewing and participating in online projects.

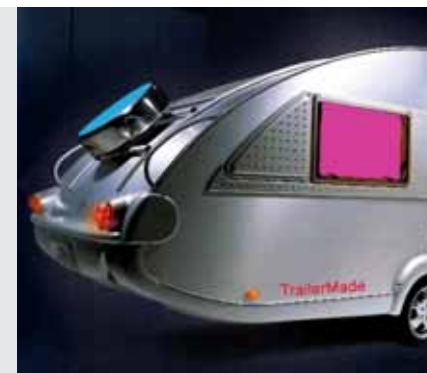
Building on these experiences and technological developments to establish a pilot programme of **temporary and mobile public art projects** for the county-wide communications networks is a key step to creating a new dynamic and innovative approach to public art commissioning across Northumberland.

### CYCLEWAY PROPOSAL, ALLY WALLACE

As part of its national 'Art and the Travelling Landscape' programme, Sustrans commissioned Ally Wallace to develop new features for the Lynemouth to Blyth cycleway in South East Northumberland. Drawing on references to industrial and architectural features in the local landscape, Wallace has proposed a series of related sculptures to be sited at three prominent points along the route. Positioned next to the cycle path the works will create new landmarks for cyclists and walkers as well signposting the route to a wider audience using the nearly A189 road. [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

### 'TRAILERMADE'

TrailerMade is a touring project organised by curator Charlie Arnold for North East designer-maker's network Designed and Made. Taking the form of a luxuriously designed domestic interior within a T@b contemporary caravan, the exhibition will showcase commissioned work in a wide range of media, including furniture, textiles, ceramics, glass, surface pattern, lighting, fashion, metalwork and sculpture. TrailerMade will launch at the Baltic in July 2004 and will tour the region over the summer before joining the UK design fair Designer's Block in London in September. [arnold.design@virgin.net](mailto:arnold.design@virgin.net)





# northumberland public art action plan 2004 – 2008:

CN – ACE: Commissions North – Arts Council England, North East  
NSP: Northumberland Strategic Partnership  
C – NE: Culture North East  
NCC: Northumberland County Council  
WDC: Wansbeck District Council  
BVBC: Blyth Valley Borough Council  
ONE NE: ONE NorthEast

- **Developing high quality and innovative public art commissions across Northumberland, focusing on the five key geographic zones.**

- **Market town artists scheme:** appointing lead artists to work with market town partnerships on strategies and projects to revitalise townscapes and public spaces.  
**Lead role:** NCC / NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 07

- **Inspire – South East Northumberland Public Art Initiative:** supporting and developing Inspire commissions for Wansbeck DC and Blyth Valley BC.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE / NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 06

- **Rural commissions:** delivering new temporary and permanent public art projects focusing on the communities and landscapes of Northumberland National Park and North Pennines AONB.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE / NSP / WDC / BVBC  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08

- **Coastal commissions:** delivering new temporary and permanent public art projects for coastal towns and landscapes, from Seaton Sluice to Berwick-upon-Tweed, including Druridge Bay and Northumberland Coast AONB.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE / NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08

- **Temporary and mobile public art:** establishing a pilot programme of projects for Northumberland’s countywide communications networks.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 05

- **Art and Architecture programme:** supporting Kielder Partnership commissions.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE / NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08

- **Regional flagships and artist-led initiatives:** encouraging and supporting innovative and strategic partnership activity.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE / NSP / ONE NE  
**Timescale:** 2004-08

- **Culture<sup>10</sup>:** establishing at least one high profile international public art commission for Northumberland as part of the wider ` regional programme.  
**Lead role:** NSP  
**Timescale:** 2005 – 10

- **Ensuring a strategic and coordinated approach to public art activity across the county.**

- **Public Art Panel:** a county-wide body, involving NSP, NCC, Inspire, district authorities, elected members, Commissions North / ACE, Northern Architecture and the private sector, to provide a strategic overview and a clear process for identifying, supporting and developing public art projects across Northumberland.  
**Lead role:** NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004

- **NSP strategic sectors:** advocating for an integrated public art approach across business and enterprise, culture and tourism, environment and energy, health and well-being, ICT and learning.  
**Lead role:** NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08

- **Raising confidence and ambition in public art commissioning.**

- **Advocacy:** using the Public Art Action Plan to stimulate and support new public art commissions.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE / NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 05

- **Awaydays:** activating a programme of public art project visits for local authority officers, members, community partnerships, potential public and private sector commissioners.  
**Lead role:** NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 06

- **Evaluation:** establishing a long-term evaluation programme for Inspire and new Northumberland public art projects to assess impact on communities and visitors.  
**Lead role:** NSP / CN – ACE / C – NE  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08

- **Celebration:** producing a publication to profile new public art initiatives and commissions across Northumberland.  
**Lead role:** NSP  
**Timescale:** 2006

- **Building capacity in terms of support, advice and expertise available to local authorities, public and private sector clients.**

- **Planning guidance:** providing advice and support for local authorities in drawing up public art guidance within planning policy and for incorporating public art commissions within capital projects.  
**Lead role:** NCC  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 05

- **Professional support and advice:** providing clients, artists and potential commissioners with access to advice available through Commissions North, regional public art agencies and recommended consultants.  
**Lead role:** CN – ACE / NSP  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08

- **Sustainability:** planning for the continuation of the Inspire programme beyond 2006 and for meeting expected increased demand for public art across the county.  
**Lead role:** NSP / NCC / Districts  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08

- **Establishing design funding resources to stimulate the development of new public art commissions.**

- **Financial resources:** with partners, establishing necessary seed-funding for the development and implementation of new public art commissions across Northumberland.  
**Lead role:** NSP / CN – ACE / ONE NE  
**Timescale:** 2004 – 08



# further advice and support:

## Commissions North

Commissions North provides a showcase for contemporary public art commissions in the North East plus advice, information and brokerage for clients. It is client focussed and works in partnership to develop new opportunities and artists' commissions that enhance and develop the region's reputation for public art and innovation. Commissions North advises a wide range of public and private sector organisations and has helped many diverse and high quality projects to be successfully realised across the region.

Services are free and include:

- **Project development:** advice, presentations and advocacy to enable clients to consider options and develop thinking for new commissions.
- **Artists:** Commissions North's Imagebank holds information on a wide range of artists within the North East and nationally which clients can select from.
- **Signposting:** Commissions North is able to broker new partnerships between clients and artists and provides contact information for arts agencies, curators and project managers in the North East.
- **Design grants:** discretionary funding to enable clients to fund artists' initial proposals and design development.
- **www.commissionsnorth.org**  
Online showcase highlighting over 150 North East visual arts commissions, plus practical information and step-by-step advice to help clients and artists through the commissioning process.

Commissions North was established in 1999. It is supported within the Arts Council England, North East and is also funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

**CONTACT:** Commissions North, Arts Council England, North East, Central Square, Forth Street, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 3PJ, 0191 255 8500

## NSP

Northumberland Strategic Partnership brings together all the stakeholders in the county within a supportive framework to work together in the interests of economic, social and environmental development.

The role of the NSP is to co-ordinate the efforts of all organisations with an interest in the regeneration of the county, helping to ensure they work to common agendas in support of the needs of its population. NSP has been given the responsibility of distributing government funds to support regeneration. It works through a variety of partnership structures that involve many agencies.

The NSP Board and Executive have delegated responsibility to six Sector Boards, including Culture and Tourism, for the progression of activities in accordance with approved strategies. The Culture and Tourism Sector Board works to the Northumberland Cultural Strategy which encompasses the arts, the environment, heritage, sport and tourism.

**CONTACT:** Northumberland Strategic Partnership, 9 – 10 Telford Court, Morpeth, Northumberland NE61 2DB, T 01670 500630, [www.nsp.org.uk](http://www.nsp.org.uk)

## Inspire

Inspire aims to improve the quality of the built and natural environment in South East Northumberland through the involvement of artists and good design. Through its Public Art and Design Officer it offers practical support, advice and discussion of existing and new opportunities. The project is a partnership of South East Northumberland North Tyneside Regeneration Initiative (SENTRI), Wansbeck District Council, Blyth Valley Borough Council, Northumberland County Council and Greening for Growth, with support from Commissions North and Northern Architecture.

**CONTACT:** Richard Hollinshead, Public Art and Design Officer, Inspire, Council Offices, Front Street, Bedlington, Northumberland NE22 5TU, 01670 843440, [r.hollinshead@wansbeck.gov.uk](mailto:r.hollinshead@wansbeck.gov.uk)

## Grants for the Arts

The Arts Council England national Grants for the Arts scheme is open to individuals and organisations. It may be able to support commissions with a wider public benefit such as community-based projects, temporary programmes, residencies and artist-led public art activity. For advice and an application pack phone 0845 300 6200.

## Useful links

[www.nsp.org.uk](http://www.nsp.org.uk)  
[www.onenortheast.co.uk](http://www.onenortheast.co.uk)  
[www.north.org.uk](http://www.north.org.uk)  
[www.cabe.org.uk](http://www.cabe.org.uk)  
[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)  
[www.commissionsnorth.org](http://www.commissionsnorth.org)





