



EXETER CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC ART
POLICY AND STRATEGY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. Introduction and terms of the Summary

- 1.1** Excellence in the public realm is once again on Britain's agenda, and Exeter, with its unique history, position and features is showing commitment towards preserving and highlighting the best of the city, while working with partners to create new spaces and improve all of its communities.
- 1.2** This is a strategy commissioned by the City Council for the integration and inclusion of Public Artworks, within corporate initiatives and key services.
- 1.3** This executive summary sits alongside a comprehensive strategy for Public Art. The main document has an opening section, which makes the case for Public Art in Exeter, and looks at models elsewhere. The second half of the main document is essentially practical and puts forward a policy, backed by detailed commissioning guidelines, recommendations on delivery and an outline action plan.
- 1.4** This summary document then, aims to do a number of things in brief and concise terms:
- To make a case for, and a definition of Public Art
 - To look at the history of and potential for Public Art in Exeter
 - To recommend delivery and resource mechanisms
 - To set out the Public Art Policy for the Council
 - Commissioning Guidelines are appended to the main document



Andrew Stacey, 'Festival of Architecture', Southgate, Exeter

2. A case for and definition of Public Art

- 2.1 People who inhabit, use and enjoy public places and spaces deserve them to be distinctive, special and appropriate. Public Art has long been used as a powerful and dynamic tool in regenerating or celebrating those places and spaces.
- 2.2 Public Art is changing. We may be familiar with commemorative or ceremonial examples of Public Art, and these can still be appropriate. In fact Public Art is not an artform in itself – it is simply a mechanism or a principle of improving or affecting an environment through the arts. It refers to artists and craftspeople working within the built or natural environment to give added value to places and spaces by investing them with character, social relevance and visual stimulation.
- 2.3 Public Art is also being commissioned within strategies to address the uses and users of a space, resulting in works which are designed to create feelings of security, encourage or discourage particular uses, stimulate, amuse, calm, act as a focal point, encourage directions, engage a particular community of interest, stimulate pride of place.
- 2.4 Public Art is becoming integrated within developments, and Public Artists taking a place within design teams, where resulting works can include landscaping, traffic calming, paving, lighting, signage, street furniture, glass, banners, boundary treatments and security features. Works may be permanent or temporary, and be created using traditional and contemporary media and processes.
- 2.5 At national level a number of initiatives both by Government and private sector are applying new thinking and criteria to planning and design. For example the Government have produced the publications '*By Design*' and '*The Urban Design Compendium*' promoting the integration of Public Art.

'Public Art' refers to **artists and craftspeople** working within the **built or natural environment** to give added value to places and spaces by investing them with **character, social relevance and visual stimulation**'

2. A case for and definition of Public Art *(continued)*

2.6 There are a number of regional initiatives which Exeter's Strategy can draw support from

Regional Planning Guidance
Regional Cultural Strategy
Emerging Strategy for the Historic Environment
Forthcoming Regional Centre of Excellence

And two new Regional initiatives which have particular significance for Public Art:

- The Architecture and the Built Environment Strategy
- The Civic Pride Initiative

When the City Council is involved in regional partnerships, regional bids, or merely seeking to place Exeter in a strong regional position, it should take serious strategic account of the role of Public Art within frameworks for improving the City.

2.7 Looking at other models

'Think of great cities and what makes them so distinctive, impressive and attractive. Without exception, the experience of the public realm – the quality of public spaces and the aesthetics of buildings and design - plays a huge part in shaping positive perceptions of a city.'

Bristol Legible Cities initiative

This Strategy is being written against the background of two other major regional cities, Bristol and Plymouth launching creative regeneration initiatives.

Researching and analysing Public Art schemes and mechanisms has led to useful conclusions from experience and thinking which should be applied to the proposed Strategy for Exeter.



◀
 Kate Malone

3. History and potential for Public Art in Exeter

- 3.1 Many of the post-war redevelopment schemes in Exeter of the 1950s through to the '70s included Public Art led by the City Council – the knight on Eastgate Street, the Phoenix and the Blue Boy statue in Princesshay, St Sidwella on Tesco's, sculpture in Waterbeer Street and the ceramic mural in the Guildhall centre.
- 3.2 In the late '80s and early '90s the Council commissioned a series of mosaics and painted murals for car parks, leisure centres and prominent gable end properties in the city.
- 3.3 The City Council adopted a Percent for Art policy in 1992, and this mechanism has been used in a limited way for securing funds for Public Art.
- 3.4 More recently the City Council has initiated a programme to fund several gateway projects, and city centre redevelopment at Princesshay has been identified as an important opportunity to involve artists in the design, interpretation and animation of the space.
- 3.5 While the above developments have been encouraged, they have emerged in the absence of an overall policy framework or strategy for Public Art development. The Gateways project encountered some obstacles due to lack of specialised Public Art expertise and resources, and questions arise over the future and maintenance of the current 'collection' of Exeter's works.

'The **city centre redevelopment** at Princesshay has been identified as an **important opportunity** to involve artists in the **design, interpretation and animation of the space**'

3. History and potential for Public Art in Exeter (*continued*)

3.6 Exeter could be said to be coming late to developing a Public Art Strategy, when set alongside other South West towns and cities. This can be a distinct advantage.

This Strategy has had opportunity to look at and learn from other models. The national and regional climate for Public Art has also changed considerably since the early days of commissioning from cities such as Birmingham and Sheffield.

Exeter is poised to take advantage of new opportunities and developments being offered especially at regional level.

3.7 Exeter City is, of course, much more than its local authority. Other organisations that have developed Public Art initiatives in the city include Exeter Health Care Arts Trust, Spacex Gallery, Exeter University, Phoenix Arts Centre and Plymouth University with the WindowSills project.

Organisations such as the Met Office, relocating to Exeter, are actively pursuing the benefits of an integrated and considerable Public Art programme within and beyond their site.



Walter Jack, 'Seating'

4. What benefits will a Public Art Strategy bring to Exeter?

4.1 Public Art has always been the manifestation of places, which have a status, and strong notion of their cultural standing. It is an outward sign of places that are important, regarded and unique.



4.2 Public Art policies create scope to:

- Demonstrate a commitment to high quality treatment of public spaces
- Introduce art that is integral but unique and inspiring and which will endure in that particular location
- Make the arts more public, accessible and appealing
- Add to the quality and variety of the natural landscape
- Strengthen community identity and vibrancy
- Sustain economies by revitalising cities, encouraging night-time economies, integrating contemporary craft and artworks using traditional materials and local Artists
- Add value to tourist strategies
- Give dignity and pride of place to social housing schemes, and other new developments

'Public Art has always been the manifestation of **places which have a status, and strong notion of their cultural standing**. It is an outward sign of places that are **important, regarded and unique**'

4.3 Opportunity for Public Art inclusion

Below is an indication of how Public Art could add value to particular Exeter schemes and partnerships

Development of Public Art Commissions within key planning proposals

- Princesshay
- Bus and Coach Station
- Quay/Canal basin
- Met Office

◆ BENEFITS/OUTPUTS

- Brings external (developers) resources and investment to quality schemes

Public Art applied to strategic citywide initiatives such as:

- Town Centre Enhancement
- Walking Strategy
- Commissions with Sustrans on cycle networks
- Signing and zoning and city trails

◆ BENEFITS/OUTPUTS

- Brings distinctiveness and particularity of place
- Helps to encourage or discourage particular routes and uses of the city
- Helps to enhance visitor and resident experience

Public Art initiatives within social inclusion agendas as:

- Neighbourhood groups at Wonford and the Valley Regeneration Scheme
- The Surestart scheme at Whipton
- With the Exwick Community Partnership

◆ BENEFITS/OUTPUTS

- Engages communities in decisions about their own place
- Provides a tangible demonstration of commitment to citizens
- Can lessen the incidences of vandalism

Public Art Initiatives with the Leisure Service. Projects could include:

- Inclusion of Public Art within the Museum development
- Arts inclusion within new leisure facilities

◆ BENEFITS/OUTPUTS

- Can become part of Exeter's heritage through quality of design and development of new techniques and continue a tradition of craft applications
- Makes the arts more public, accessible and appealing
- Helps to deliver an Exeter identity
- Helps to enhance and market new and existing activities and facilities

Public Art commissioning within any Exeter schools refurbishment or re-building programme as a result of moving from a three to a two-tier system, through partnership with the County Council.

◆ BENEFITS/OUTPUTS

- Demonstrates a positive partnership with the county
- Sets a standard of quality for Exeter schools
- Offers a tangible demonstration of innovation in education

5. Recommended Delivery and Resource mechanisms

- 5.1 It is clear that there are real opportunities for delivering and resourcing Public Art commissions through developments and agreements via the planning process.

The planning officers are enthusiastic and committed to Public Art development, and some have experience from other Authorities, although there is limited expertise in the development of Public Art or commissioning.

The second deposit Local Plan encourages developers to integrate Public Art into their proposals where possible. Most of the aspirational developments for Exeter, cited in the Vision 20:20 document, and the emerging Community Strategy, could effect commissioning through planning and development initiatives.

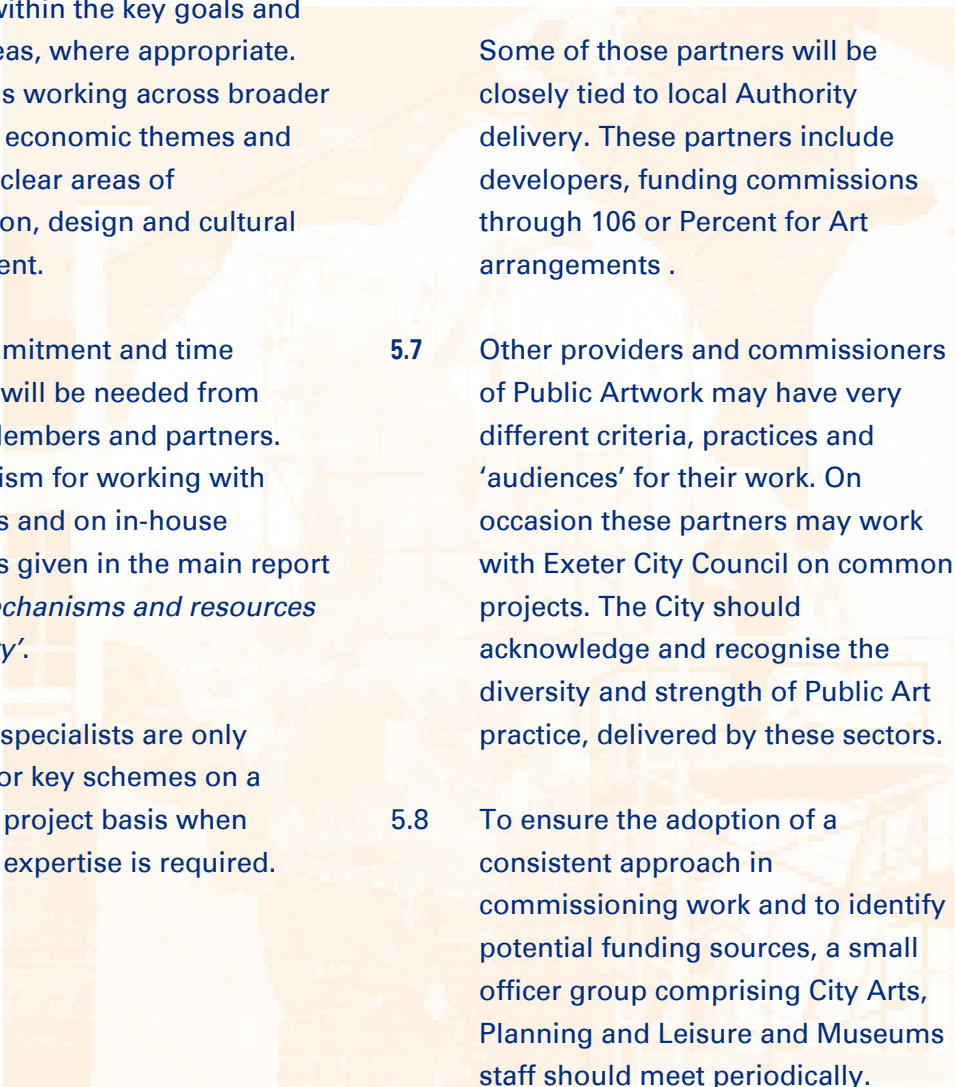
- 5.2 Public Art has a definite place within aspirations for City development, design and vision, including work with developers.

There is also opportunity for broadening the Strategy. This consultancy has shown the value and the desire for a more strategic and corporate application of Public Art. A service which can also extend to the socially inclusive and participatory side of Exeter Council's objectives, and help to deliver economic and visitor aspiration initiatives.



‘Public Art has a **definite place** within **aspirations for City development, design and vision**, including **work with developers**’

The Delivery *(continued)*

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- 5.3 As the Community Plan is being developed from the Vision 20:20 document, Public Art should be included within the key goals and project areas, where appropriate. This means working across broader social and economic themes and alongside clear areas of regeneration, design and cultural development.
- 5.4 Initial commitment and time resources will be needed from officers, Members and partners. A mechanism for working with developers and on in-house schemes is given in the main report at 3.8. *'mechanisms and resources for delivery'*.
- 5.5 Public Art specialists are only engaged for key schemes on a project by project basis when additional expertise is required.
- 5.6 Exeter is fortunate in having several strong and valuable partners in the delivery of public artworks.
- Some of those partners will be closely tied to local Authority delivery. These partners include developers, funding commissions through 106 or Percent for Art arrangements .
- 5.7 Other providers and commissioners of Public Artwork may have very different criteria, practices and 'audiences' for their work. On occasion these partners may work with Exeter City Council on common projects. The City should acknowledge and recognise the diversity and strength of Public Art practice, delivered by these sectors.
- 5.8 To ensure the adoption of a consistent approach in commissioning work and to identify potential funding sources, a small officer group comprising City Arts, Planning and Leisure and Museums staff should meet periodically.

'As the **Community Plan** is being developed from the **Vision 20:20 document**, Public Art should be included within the **key goals and project areas**, where appropriate'

Resources

- 5.9** A realistic and successful outcome to the Public Art Strategy may require a commitment to resources and funding not only from the Council but significantly from external sources and private developers.
- 5.11** Given the number and scale of likely developments throughout the city over the next five years, there is a good chance of resourcing through this route, especially as the benefits to developers can be clearly shown.

Private sector opportunities

- 5.10** As has been indicated, significant opportunities exist to secure Public Art as part of private development initiatives. The Strategy recommends working to achieve quality Public Art with developers in the following ways:
- Promoting and encouraging the use of the Commissioning Guidelines with developers
 - Encouraging developers to either:
 - Involve Exeter City Council in the commissioning and selection process
 - Appoint external Public Art specialists, who should work with Exeter City Council to achieve best results
 - Consider supporting or funding Public Art commissions in a particular community, or supporting a particular initiative suggested by Exeter City Council, where appropriate and mutually agreed. Such support may be in place of, or additional to a commission within their own development

Other sources of funding for City Council projects.

- 5.12** It is recognised that the proposed involvement of the Arts Officer in this process will carry a resource implication in Officer time, and lack of time for other important project work.
- 5.13** The Commissioning Guidelines contained in the main report, are extensive and intended to provide some guidance for commissioning . However an initial period of training, and professional input, through external consultation on Beacon or pilot projects may be required.
- 5.14** Given the drive for a strategic approach to Public Art, it may be more valuable to the City, to develop a Public Art Strategy for corridors and gateways to the City as a 'Beacon' or pilot project.
- 5.15** Percent for Art or section 106 contributions from developers, provide resources for commissions within new developments, but resources for developments in other corporate areas, are less clear cut.

Resources (*continued*)

- 5.16** Some commissions can be made within existing budgets e.g. play areas, or artwork on temporary hoardings.
- 5.17** Some works can be funded by partnership working e.g. Social Housing scheme work from Housing Associations' contributions.
- 5.18** Some city centre work might be funded through mechanisms such as the City Pride Initiative.
- 5.19** There is some scope to achieve matched funding from external sources. Most potential City Council projects would require additional funding in order to involve Public Art. The recommendation is to think when planning initiatives and setting budgets, of whether Public Art would be desirable and beneficial, and to plan it in accordingly.

Other funding sources

- 5.20** Although the National lottery Funding for Arts and Heritage is no longer the major funder it was five years ago, the Lottery and other national and regional public funding initiatives have been successful, especially in areas of regeneration and urban design.
- 5.21** Trust and Foundation funding does offer opportunities for funding of Public Art in the city.
- 5.22** County refurbishment, and Private Finance Initiative (PFI) build schemes, in schools moving from a three to a two-tier system, if approached with knowledge and in the spirit of partnership, offer opportunities for funding.

CABE(The Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment), have recently called for better design and distinctive elements within PFIs, especially in schools projects.



Detail from 'Sea Garden', Kate Malone

EXETER CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC ART POLICY

- P1** Quality Public Art provision can strengthen the quality and sustainability of the city and increase the attractiveness and viability of Exeter environmentally, socially and economically. Public Art includes works of fine art, craft and photography incorporated within the design of buildings or landscapes which are generally accessible or visible to the public.
- P2** The City Council will encourage improvements to the overall environment and open spaces through Public Art initiatives. Developers of large schemes will be requested to integrate public art where feasible, into the design of new development and environmental schemes from the outset.
- P3** The City Council will normally follow criteria for the commissioning and siting of works, and in accepting gifted artworks, as outlined in the Commissioning Guidelines contained in the Public Art Strategy, and encourage developers, partners and commissioners to do the same.
- P4** The commissioning of public art should have regard to the following basic principles. The work should normally:-
- (i) represent the highest standard of quality
 - (ii) be of economic and/or social benefit
 - (iii) present a challenge to both its commissioner and audience
 - (iv) be the subject of consultation with stakeholders
 - (v) be site specific and have a clear relationship to the local geography, features and communities in which it is to be placed
- P5** The Council as a commissioner of public art will provide, where appropriate, information and contacts, public consultation, project management and the development of partnerships.