

## How do I commission public art?

There are both similarities and differences between commissioning public art and the contracting out of other project components. It may be appropriate for a known artist to be commissioned unilaterally, particularly if there are considerations of time or specialism. It may be, however, that it is more appropriate to shortlist several artists to tender for the commission or to offer the commission in open competition. In all cases the process will involve agreeing concept designs and/or maquettes (artists' models), project realisation, installation and the preparation of maintenance schedules.

The management of a public art project involves a good deal of specialist knowledge. Involve people with experience in such work on the management team if you possibly can.

You may wish to contract out the management of the public art component of your project.

There are several public art agencies with experience in managing all aspects of public art, from artist selection, through project development and realisation, to publicity and marketing. North West Arts, the Regional Arts Board, has a Public Art Advisory Officer who may also be able to give guidance.

## Who can I contact for advice and guidance?

Your first point of contact regarding the inclusion of public art in development projects should be with the:

Urban Designer  
Places Directorate  
Wigan Council  
Wigan Life Centre  
College Avenue  
Wigan  
WN1 1NJ

Tel: 01942 489247  
E-mail: [planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk)

The urban designer will be able to give you information and advice, and will be able to suggest other contacts within the authority.

# PUBLIC ART

## Guidance for developers on achieving quality in public arts projects



Confident Place, Confident People.

“ The bottom line is that public art improves the profile of your organisation, far in excess of its cost implications. ”

## What is public art?

In the past, public art meant a sculpture in a square or a mural covering an unsightly wall. The contribution of public art to a project may be expressed in the widest imaginable variety of ways, from initial design decisions to integrated artworks; from articles of street furniture to one-off celebratory events associated with the project's completion. Whatever approach is adopted the key aim will be to produce artworks that give a sense of identity and meaning to the project and which will enrich the quality of the environment as a whole.

## Why bother with public art?

Public art demonstrates that the organisation you work for cares about its clients, customers and employees, and about the community and environment. It provides an upfront marketing tool, demonstrating your commitment to quality and positive attitudes to the present and future. Public art is often the 'jewel in the crown' that lifts a quality development above the crowd and makes it distinctive.

By introducing public art into a scheme there is also an opportunity to foster community involvement and support for your project. This can have positive cultural, educational and economic benefits for both your organisation and the wider community and can act as a catalyst for the regeneration of an area.

The bottom line is that public art improves the profile of your organisation, far in excess of its cost implications. It affects the way that you are perceived by the people who matter to you, and as such is a factor in your business success. This fact is recognised by the many local authorities which have introduced public art policies, and as many private developers that now choose to include public art in their projects.



## What will artists contribute to my project?

Artists are professionals whose job involves seeing aspects of the world that other people might miss, and share their vision with others through the use of their specialist skills. In the context of project development, public artists will find new solutions to old problems, make ordinary things seem special, and 'delight the eye' in unexpected ways.

Public artists' skills range from traditional skills of painting and sculpture to experience of urban design, electronic media and lighting. Successful management of public art input depends to a great extent on matching the skills of particular artists to the possibilities inherent in your project.

## At what stage should artists become involved?

The evidence of successful projects demonstrates that the key to the most effective public art is integration. That means involving artists in decision making from the initial design stages. The earlier artists are involved, the more effective their contribution will be.

## How much is it going to cost?

Guidance in local authority Percent for Art schemes often suggest a budget between 1/2 and 1% of overall project budgets. However, it may be more manageable to set a provisional sum without reference to overall budget. The real figure will vary depending on the extent to which artists' contributions can be realised from existing components of the budget. An example of this would be an artist-designed alternative paving scheme for a courtyard, or new street furniture. Such elements will already have capital cost, which would contribute to the public art budget. You can see how involving artists at an early stage makes sound financial sense too.

