

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	11 December 2024
Subject:	Public Art		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Louisa Davies, Head of Culture and Leisure Services		
	Email: louisa.davies@gloucester.gov.uk	Tel: 396116	
Appendices:	1. Public Art Principles for Gloucester (drafted 2020)		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out existing works, opportunities and next steps for the future commissioning of public art in Gloucester.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the report be noted and next steps endorsed.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 Public art refers to permanent, semi-permanent, temporary and event-based works of art in any media created for and presented in the public realm. For the avoidance of doubt the scope of this report does not include historic statues and monuments. Public art should have a function and/or purpose and not be merely decorative. This can include helping to convey a place's identity or narrative, interpreting a place's history and heritage, contributing to civic pride, assisting with welcome and wayfinding or creating places for people to sit. Public art can play a central role in placemaking. Art and culture play an increasingly important role in attracting people to spend time in city centres as the role of retail continues to diminish. Whilst the involvement of artists in the creation of public art is essential, the most successful public art often also involves communities in commissioning and co-design processes.
- 3.2 It is common practice for new permanent works of public art to be funded through S106 agreements linked to new developments. The importance of public art to planning design requirements is noted within JCS Policy SD4 with public art being considered as a contributor to the quality of the public realm. This is because integrating public art into new developments can empower residents, enhance community wellbeing and pride and the overall quality of the environment, whilst maintaining local distinctiveness. Public art can also raise the profile of a place, celebrate its cultural identity, and attract investment, new residents and visitors.

3.3 Existing work, projects and practices

- 3.3.1 Examples of contemporary permanent public art in Gloucester include The Candle (Wolfgang Buttress, 2010), St Kyneburgh's Tower and Wall (Tom Price, 2011) and Sculptural Edge (George King Architects, 2022) in Kings Square, which represents the Severn Bore. There are also examples of public art that are not currently on display. This includes the BHS Reliefs (Henry Collins & Joyce Pallot, c. 1970) which depict the goods that were on sale in shops at the time. The new bus station windows are the most recent example of a permanent public art commission. Semi-permanent examples include the Gloucester Brick Project (Fraisia Bruist-Papazian, 2024) and the Rainbow Square mural (Zoe Power, 2022). However, in comparison with other small cities, Gloucester has few examples of contemporary permanent public art.
- 3.3.2 Examples of recent temporary and event-based public art works include projects such as Public Trust (Paul Ramirez Jonas, presented in Kings Walk, July 2024), Globoscope (Collectif Coin, presented on Robinswood Hill, November 2021), Shadowing, a light installation that enabled lamp post lights to record and play back shadows (Chomko & Rosier, presented on Berkley Street, Southgate Street / St Mary De Crypt corner and outside Blackfriars Priory in October – November 2021) and Knife Angel (Alfie Bradley, presented outside Gloucester Cathedral in February 2023).
- 3.3.3 Future temporary public art works are planned through Together Gloucester, the Arts Council England Place Partnership project led by Gloucester Culture Trust which incorporates the commissioning of GCC's Kings Square and Bright Nights programmes. In June 2025, a new temporary public artwork commissioned by Gloucester Guildhall 'You look as though you might be a relation' by Dana Olerescu will be presented as part of a national programme for Refugee Week led by Counterpoints Arts in partnership with Moomins 80. The programme marks the 80th anniversary of the publication of the first Moomins story, 'The Moomins and the Great Flood' drawing a connection with the experiences of refugees.
- 3.3.4 In 2017, the Gloucester Public Realm Strategy was adopted. Section 5.9 describes the benefits, forms and principles of public art. In 5.9.4 it states that the 2006 document 'A Place for Art – A Public Art Strategy for Central Gloucester' (by Ginkgo Projects Ltd), should be used to guide the provision of public art within the Public Realm Strategy area. A link to the strategy is included in the Background Documents section.
- 3.3.5 In 2020, officers at Gloucester City Council developed a set of five principles for the commissioning of public art, which are provided as Appendix 1. They include improving the lives of people in Gloucester, being bold, distinctive and reputation-enhancing, involving artists and communities in decision-making, being responsive to the environment whilst contributing to the climate change agenda and being embedded in all major developments with a proportion of capital ringfenced for this purpose. The document also makes a link to the public art strategy developed by Ginkgo, published in 2006. The principles were not formally adopted due to other priorities at the time.
- 3.3.6 In 2021, Gloucester City Council commissioned Thinking Place to develop a 'place-story and place marketing approach' for the city. Thinking Place are leaders in their field and have developed comparable strategies for Derry, Hull and Coventry the

three cities to have so far held the prestigious title of UK City of Culture. Their exploratory research, surveying and consultation led them to conclude that Gloucester's place narrative should foreground 'the urban unexpected' and 'harness and animate our history'. This place narrative approach should be interwoven into any new public art framework and future commissioning briefs. A link to the strategy is included in the Background Documents section.

3.4 Important considerations

- 3.4.1 It is considered good practice for cities to have a documented approach to public art. This can be in the form of a policy, strategy or manifesto, but should set out a best practice approach to commissioning, priority locations for animation and the strategic outcomes desired from public art. A good public art framework can create coherence in terms of communicating a place's identity and story, in the same way as a curator of a museum or gallery. Gloucester City Council last commissioned such a framework in 2006. Since that time, the city's cultural sector has developed considerably, not least with the formation of Gloucester Culture Trust and the significant increase in Arts Council England funding into the city. The public realm in the city centre has also changed significantly as a result of several regeneration schemes.
- 3.4.2 There is currently no dedicated officer resource for the commissioning, curation and ongoing management of permanent/semi-permanent public art within the council. The commissioning and management of public art, especially permanent works, requires a particular set of specialist skills, including curatorial, project management and community engagement skills, alongside a thorough understanding of health and safety legislation implications, planning permissions, site preparation, surveying and engineering, development of maintenance schedules, insurance and ownership.
- 3.4.3 There is a lack of information within the council about what can be presented in the public realm, for example the weight-loading capability of the Gate Streets. Further information is needed to understand the city's infrastructure and capabilities for hosting permanent and semi-permanent works.

3.5 Next steps

- 3.5.1 Prior to commissioning any new permanent works, Gloucester City Council will need to procure the services of public art specialists to develop a new and/or refreshed approach and framework that draws on recent consultation, projects and ways of working, such as the culturally democratic approach to awarding funding and enabling community voice being developed through Together Gloucester and the place narrative work developed by Thinking Place, also taking into account future commissioning opportunities and ringfenced budgets. It should consider how public art is interpreted and where to site new and existing works such as the BHS Reliefs referred to in 3.3.1. The new framework will need to be devised collaboratively with local artists and communities, especially young people. It will also need to include information on the prioritisation, suitability and feasibility of potential sites, addressing the point raised in 3.4.3. The likely cost of this piece of work is in the region of £20,000 for which funding has been identified.
- 3.5.2 Subsequent to the completion of this work, the introduction of at least an 0.6 FTE post will be necessary to implement the framework. Based on the specialist nature of

the role, it is likely to be a G grade post with an annual minimum cost of £31,315 including NI and pension contributions.

- 3.5.3 Gloucester City Council will build a provision for public art into future S106 agreements and commit to ringfencing a minimum 1% of future capital development project budgets to commissioning public art.
- 3.5.4 Gloucester City Council will also need to sustain and/or enhance its commitment to commissioning public art in temporary and event-based forms, particularly through its Festivals and Events programme, which will be subject to a review in 2025. Temporary and event-based public art is often lower cost and requires less ongoing maintenance. A temporary intervention can often be more positively impactful on audiences than a permanent work which eventually becomes an expected part of the surroundings. The creation, for example, of a street art or paint festival could create an exciting temporary public gallery in the city.
- 3.5.5 New public art must be developed and commissioned through partnerships. From a feasibility and permissions perspective, Gloucestershire County Council are an important partner as the lead for highways. The involvement of Gloucester Culture Trust should be central to a new approach to public art, but in a similar vein to Gloucester City Council, they do not have the required specialisms or dedicated capacity 'in-house'. The University of Gloucestershire will open their new city campus in the former Debenhams building in Kings Square in 2025. A partnership which utilises the curatorial and artistic expertise in their Creative Arts faculty and creates opportunities for students within the city to develop their practice or shadow professional artists could be of considerable mutual benefit. Consideration of these partnerships and how to manifest them should be included in the deliverables of the public art specialists in 3.5.1.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

- 4.1 Public art briefs should be written in such a way that social value is central to the commissioning criteria. This should manifest in both the process, through the involvement of local artists and fabricators and/or the engagement of communities through consultation and co-creation, and the final product, in that it should enhance community wellbeing and civic pride.
- 4.2 The creation of social value is one of the reasons why public art should have a function or purpose. For example, a work such as Shadowing, referenced 3.3.2, was designed to encourage moments of play and improve public safety in urban environments.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 Public art should be commissioned in an environmentally responsible way, using local and sustainable materials, and fabrication processes that are not harmful to the natural environment.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 6.1 The alternative option would be to continue with the existing work being delivered in the public realm in 3.3.2 and 3.3.3, with the focus being mainly in Kings Square, the

Gate Streets and Docks. This would not include any permanent public art and is limited by the budgets available. For example, the budget for programming creative and cultural activity into Kings Square will reduce to £25,000 from £50,000 in 2025/26 due to the 3-year agreement around utilising remaining Kings Square capital to animate the Square coming to an end. Given the scale of the space, this will result in a limited programme.

- 6.2 In addition, this would result in opportunities to commission permanent public art in the city, as and when they arise and are acted on, being delivered outside of an agreed public art framework and therefore less likely to bring the desired strategic outcomes for the city.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 The report sets out next steps to implement the commitment to public art being made in the draft Corporate Plan 2025-2028. The recommended next steps are based on industry best practice in this field.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 8.1 The Head of Culture to develop tender documentation to procure external services as specified.
- 8.2 The Head of Culture and incoming Head of Place to work on ensuring future developments ringfence budgets for public art.

9.0 Financial Implications (approved by Finance)

- 9.1 There are significant financial implications arising from the next steps outlined in 3.5, namely the procurement of external specialists and the creation of a new Officer post. Should Cabinet wish to proceed, this will need to be approved by Council as part of the annual budget setting process.
- 9.2 The budgets of future Major Projects will need to ringfence funds for the commissioning of new public art.
- 9.3 There will be ongoing costs, specific to each new work, for maintenance and insurance. These costs will be on top of the capital costs and create a revenue budget pressure. As noted above, such pressures will need to be approved by Council as part of the annual budget setting process.

10.0 Legal Implications (provided by One Legal)

- 10.1 The procurement referred to in paragraph 3.5.1 will be need to be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Rules. The contract rules also apply to the commissioning of any artist or organisers of events paid for by the Council.
- 10.2 One Legal can assist with the preparation of agreements for artists and event organisers and advise on partnership arrangements referred to in this report.
- 10.3 It is possible for a requirement for public art to be included within a section 106 agreement subject to the requirement meeting the rules contained within the

Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). The current approach as outlined within the JCS, Gloucester Public Realm Strategy 2017 and Public Art Principles Gloucester 2020 are consistent with those rules.

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 11.1 If new budget streams are not approved, there is a risk that existing cultural programmes will have to reduce to accommodate the costs of the new public art programme. There is limited scope for this without making significant changes.
- 11.2 There are significant opportunities to be realised through the creation of a new public art framework and the commissioning of new public art, referenced in 3.1, and in the benefits created through new partnerships.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding

- 12.1 N/A

13.0 Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 None

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

- 14.1 A new Public Art Officer post is required.

Background documents:

[Thinking Place – Gloucester place narrative](#)

[Gloucester Public Realm Strategy 2017](#)