

Joint Initiatives Fund Public Art Group - Hampshire

Consultancy by Artefact Projects

Brigid Howarth and I were appointed as consultants to the Joint Initiatives Fund Public Art Group, which was a consortium of Councils including Eastleigh District Council, Havant District Council, Test Valley District Council, Portsmouth City Council, Isle of Wight Council, Hampshire County Council, Gosport District Council and Basingstoke District Council. The aim of the consultancy was to facilitate projects that each of the councils wanted to undertake. We produced an advocacy PowerPoint that could be used by the arts officers or presented by us to make the case for public art. The PowerPoint made the point that councils have to compete for funding, for developers, for people and businesses and a very cost effective and visible way of doing that is through a public art programme.

We devised a project with Test Valley Council for the then Cricklade Theatre and were successful in a major funding bid to the Arts Council. The plan was for artists Michael Marriott, Caroline Cardus and Malcolm Buchanan-Dick to work with residents at the Enham community on exploring access issues to the Theatre through public art.

We made an application for funding on behalf of Isle of Wight Council to install a Peter Freeman lighting programme as part of the Interchange development in Ryde. Again this bid was successful bringing in £87,500 of funding.

We worked with Basingstoke on an advocacy programme making a presentation to the council members, and devised a programme of inspirational seminars for council officers. With Eastleigh Council we devised a very successful forum for developers with Art Plus recognising that developers are the key funders of public art in the South East where urban regeneration is not the major motor. For Havant we worked on a remodelling of the art centre entrance. For Gosport we worked on a scoping project for building an arts centre at Priddy's Hard. For Portsmouth we worked on a Christmas lighting project. For Hampshire County Council we devised a project to use a building wrap designed by a children's illustrator to promote the redevelopment of the Winchester library building.

To work with so many councils and their officers at one time was a fascinating learning experience. It really brought home to us the limitations of what can actually be done in the public realm, not from a lack of ambition or enthusiasm on the part of the officers involved but from the capacity of officers – too much to do too little time, and from the complexity of the agencies and stakeholders involved – too many and too many different agendas. In the face of formidable under funding and patchy support our respect for arts officers increased exponentially. The JIF consortium were a really stimulating and committed group and achieved great things in the face of often trying circumstances.