

A Public Art Action Plan

FORGED in the Tees Valley

2026





Table of Contents

01

Introduction

02

Public Art - Why do it?

- a) The Impact of Public Art
- b) What is Public Art?
- c) How Artists Work in Places
- d) Context for Public Art in the Tees Valley
- e) Guidance for Planners

03

Getting Started with a Public Art Commission

- a) Six Pillars of FORGED
- b) The Public Art Funding Landscape

04

The Public Art Process and Useful Checklists

- a) Phase 1: Setting Up Your Budget
- b) Phase 2: Artist Recruitment
- c) Phase 3: Artist Design Development
- d) Phase 4: Finalising the Detail
- e) Phase 5: Delivery
- f) Phase 6: Completion & Legacy

05

Insights from the Tees Valley

06

FORGED Resources and References

- a) FORGED directory
- b) Case Studies from FORGED: Public Art in the Tees Valley
- c) UK-wide guides, policies and organisational resources

About FORGED

The ambition of FORGED is to harness the origins of creative innovation in the Tees Valley and deliver vibrant public art across the UK.

Spearheaded by Middlesbrough Art Week and Navigator North, and backed by the Tees Valley Combined Authority, FORGED is establishing the region as a national hub for public art. The programme is made up of three areas of focus, supporting emerging and mid-career artists through:

Commissioning & Touring

Public artworks created in the Tees Valley touring nationally.

FORGED Foundations

A versatile public art display system, made in the Tees Valley, showcasing a rolling programme of artworks.

FORGED Directory

A curated list of local material suppliers and fabricating businesses to support artists to produce work in the Tees Valley.

This public art action plan and supporting public art resources, aim to be both inspiring and practical, they have been developed by Beam on behalf of the FORGED partnership as an outcome of the FORGED programme.

The guidance is for commissioners, artists, developers and communities, and anyone interested in public art and how to bring it to life in our public spaces across the Tees Valley.

The aim of the guidance is to act as a catalyst and support more ambitious, connected and high quality temporary, permanent and touring public art across its five localities of Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees and beyond; building and learning from previous and current commissioning activity across the Tees Valley and looking to the future of public art and the wide range of benefits it can bring for the area.

It has been developed following consultation and research with the five local authorities and Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) stakeholders, through artist engagement and through drawing from wider learnings from the FORGED programme to date. It has also been informed by key strategic documents that may impact public art in each area and by the broader national context for public art.



The Impact of Public Art

Public art can be a key part of creative placemaking, enlivening and enriching public spaces, adding joy, curiosity, reflection and beauty to everyday environments.

It can reveal hidden histories, commemorate events or individuals, and foster pride, inclusion, and dialogue. Public art is both a creative process and a public experience, influencing how people connect with places and each other.

It has the potential to deliver on a wide range of economic, social, and cultural agenda, such as:

Cultural Impact

Public art celebrates cultural heritage, amplifies underrepresented voices, and fosters dialogue. It shapes identity and pride, creates and animates inclusive spaces, and can act as a landmark or gateway. It supports cultural engagement, collaboration, ambition, and regeneration by offering fresh perspectives and creative placemaking approaches.

Links:

<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/CVlresources/research-digest-culture-and-placemaking/>

<https://www.culturalvalue.org.uk/art-community-and-the-challenges-of-cultural-value/>

Social Impact

Public art strengthens connection to place, enhancing people's sense of pride and voice. It promotes diversity, inclusion, and participation, enabling communities, including young people, to co-create and engage in shaping their environment. It contributes to wellbeing, encourages creative learning and skills development, and fosters community cohesion through collaborative, inclusive processes.

Links:

<https://www.barnsley-museums.com/news/words-from-poet-laureate-bring-derelict-barnsley-alleyway-back-to-life>

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wss.2025.100252/space/resource/economic-impact-of-uk-cities-of-culture/>

Economic Impact

Public art enhances the quality and distinctiveness of public spaces, attracting visitors, investment, and boosting local economies. It supports local creative industries, encourages exploration, increases dwell time, strengthens local businesses, and can foster sustainable, climate-conscious approaches. Public art also builds lasting legacies that enrich places over time.

Links:

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/spillover-impacts>

<https://www.culturehive.co.uk/evaluation-learning-space/resource/economic-impact-of-uk-cities-of-culture/>

Public Art - Why do it?

“WOW! Look at what we have all achieved together... Most Creative Station has been one of the most enjoyable and enlightening experiences in a 30-year career in Rail. What we have all achieved at Middlesbrough is not only ground breaking, it's beautiful in so many ways!”

Mike Drewery

Group Station Manager for TransPennine Express.

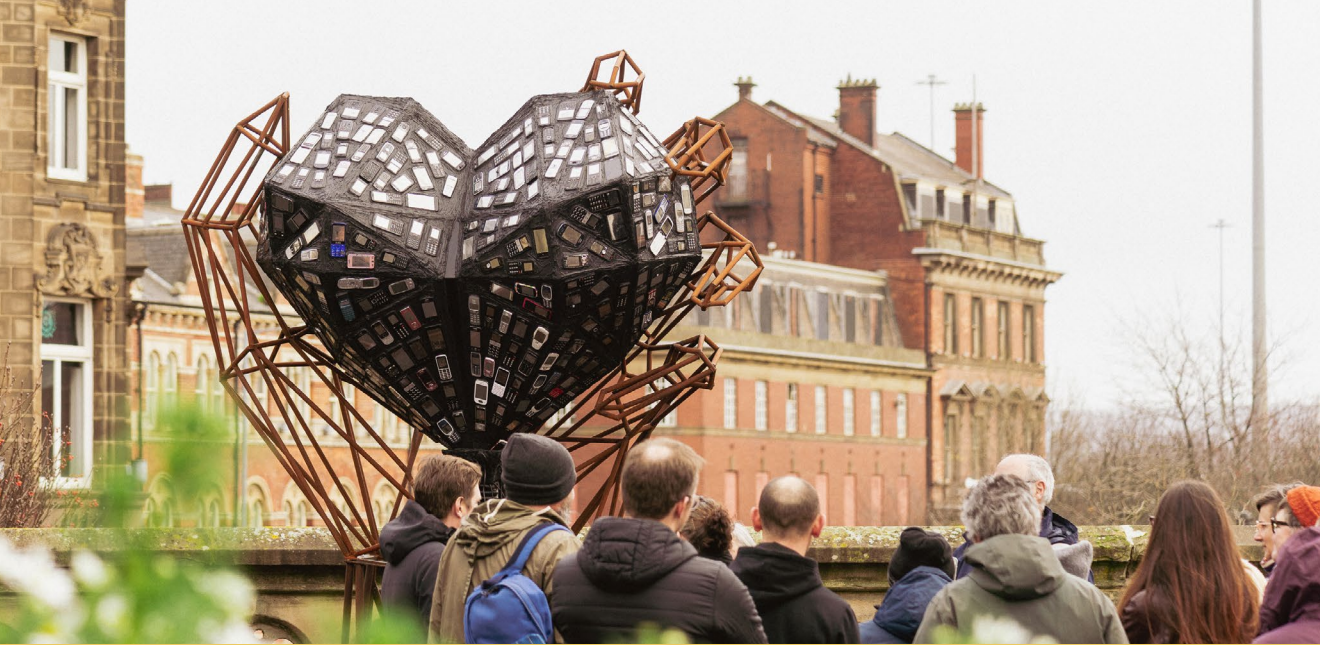
“It's an honour to be able to present such a meaningful and ambitious work in the heart of Middlesbrough. Thanks to the ongoing efforts of Navigator North, this collaborative work will further cement the town's cutting-edge creative reputation and ignite much needed conversations about lives beyond the screen.”

Stuart Langley

Commissioned artist

“... viewing public art can help you feel more connected to the area because each piece of art has a unique identity specific to the space in which it is displayed.”

Artist and curator Syeda Faiza Faiq



What is Public Art?

Public art encompasses a wide range of creative outcomes, both permanent and temporary, including sculptures, murals, land and environmental art, lighting, digital and interactive works, sound installations, performance art, street furniture, architectural or landscape features and more.

Unlike art confined to traditional gallery settings, public art is intentionally situated in the public realm - areas that are accessible to the general public such as streets, squares, parks, markets, libraries, schools, and community centres.

The primary goal of public art is to engage and interact with a diverse audience. Public art is created through a process that invites artists to engage with the

character and life of a place. Artworks can be standalone or integrated into their surroundings, small or large in scale, and designed to be temporary or long-lasting. Often, artists collaborate with local people, using shared stories, identities, and aspirations to shape artworks that are meaningful and relevant to the community, transcending the boundaries of conventional art spaces.

How Artists Work in Places

Artists and creative practitioners play a vital role in delivering public art, bringing diverse skills across visual arts, digital media, design, craft, music and performance.

They may work independently or collaboratively, often combining roles as researchers, community facilitators, designers, producers, makers, and consultants. This versatility ensures public artworks respond authentically to their surroundings, or, for touring work, to be reinterpreted to be relevant to its context.

Public art projects are frequently commissioned by towns, cities, and communities. Artists may often collaborate with urban planners, architects, and local stakeholders to integrate work seamlessly into the public realm enhancing both visual and cultural landscapes.

Artists deliver public art in various ways:

Designer

Creates prototypes or limited-edition designs such as street furniture or paving.

Designer-maker

Designs, fabricates, and installs the work, sometimes with specialist fabricators.

Design team member

Contributes creative input to architectural or landscape projects.

Lead artist

Oversees the artistic vision, manages styles and the commissions of other artists, and may produce work.

Artist in residence

Works on-site or within a community to co-create temporary or site-specific projects.



How Artists Work in Places

Artists may be local, regional, national, or international. Supporting them through fair pay, professional respect, and development opportunities is vital for quality, inclusivity, and a thriving creative sector. Artists should be remunerated for all stages - from research and concept development to design and delivery, and not expected to produce unpaid proposals. Adequate time for research and concept development is essential.

Public art projects can also provide valuable sector development opportunities, offering mentoring, shadowing, talks, collaborations with fabricators and educators, and commissions for emerging artists.

These initiatives nurture the next generation of practitioners and strengthen the wider public art ecosystem.



Context for Public Art in the Tees Valley

National Context

Public art in the UK is shaped by a strong strategic and policy framework that connects planning, design, culture, heritage, and regeneration. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) highlights the importance of well-designed, beautiful, safe, and accessible public spaces that foster social, cultural, and environmental wellbeing, all of which public art can support by creating distinctive, high-quality places. The National Design Guide reinforces this, noting that public art is a key element of well-designed public spaces.

National bodies also provide leadership and funding for public art. Arts Council England's strategy, Let's Create (2020–

30), aims to embed creativity across the nation, emphasising creative participation, thriving cultural communities, and a strong, collaborative creative sector. The National Lottery Heritage Fund champions heritage and cultural value through its Heritage 2033 strategy, supporting projects that foster pride, access, inclusion, and environmental protection.

Government regeneration policy, led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), includes a range of initiatives and competitive funding streams relevant to public art, aligning with broader agendas for placemaking, cultural development and economic growth.



Regional Context

The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) area, covering Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar & Cleveland, and Stockton-on-Tees, offers huge potential for public art as part of broader placemaking. Since being named a Priority Place by Arts Council England in 2021, the region has been activating its cultural and creative potential. Both the Tees Valley Destination Management Plan and the Creative and Visitor Economy Growth Programme underscore the value of cultural assets in shaping the region's attractiveness to visitors and the potential to embed public art into wider regeneration and cultural development strategies.

Across the region, conversations with stakeholders reveal a shared recognition that public art can deliver far reaching benefits - animating spaces, fostering community identity, supporting cohesion, and contributing to economic vitality. There is a strong appetite for guidance, policy frameworks, and advocacy to ensure that public art is treated not as an afterthought

but as an integral and embedded part of regeneration, placemaking and visitor economy plans. There is emerging agreement that to fully realise these opportunities, a coordinated approach is needed. This includes sharing best practice, developing guidance for commissioners, building advocacy capacity for public art within local authorities, and creating clear processes for commissioning, delivering, and maintaining public art.

Across the five boroughs, there is broad agreement on the potential for public art to:

Support regeneration
Ensuring that development is done with communities, rather than to them.

Enhance wayfinding and connections
using art to animate walking and cycling routes, enliven underpasses, mark gateways, and strengthen connections to the water and landscape.

Create a sense of arrival
Particularly at entry points to towns and the wider region.

Embed social value
Offering opportunities for skill-sharing, mentoring, engagement with communities, and cultural participation.

Demonstrate impact
Through clear advocacy, case studies, and frameworks to show how public art contributes to community cohesion, safety, and economic growth.

Artist Perspectives

Through surveys and engagement, artists across the Tees Valley express a strong interest in public art, but note the variability in access to opportunities across the region. There is a demand for clearer pathways into commissioning, guidance on processes, and support for developing the skills and capacity to work in public realm settings. Artists see public art as a powerful way to engage communities, enrich environments, and bring local stories to life, but stress the need for commissioning systems to be accessible, transparent, and supportive.

Guidance for Planners

Public art commissions are unique, and while processes vary, there are established systems within the planning framework. The National Planning Policy Framework and National Design Guide broadly support public art, reinforced by Local Plans. Some authorities may have specific public art guidance; but where this does not exist the approach should focus on working with developers to encourage and guide public art within the planning process.

Public art should be integrated into planning processes as early as possible. Planners play a vital role in guiding developers, ensuring permissions are clarified, and supporting commissioning to achieve high-quality, impactful works that enhance development and place.

“

The Kiosk is about gathering traces - stories, drawings, memories - and inviting people to step into the past through imagination. Hopetown feels like the perfect place to do that. It's where history was made, but also where young people today can make something new from it...by making something with your hands, you're taking part in the story.

”

Adam Shaw
Commissioned artist

Key Stages for Planning Officer Involvement

Pre-Application

- Encourage early involvement of commissioning partners to integrate art into development from the outset.
- Inform applicants about this public art guidance and share, promoting the value of artist involvement in placemaking.
- Factor in appropriate timescales from submission stage - 8 weeks for minor, 12 weeks for major.

Application

- Design and access statements should identify public art opportunities and outline commissioning processes.
- If a public art proposal is not yet finalised, use reserved matters, planning conditions, or a later separate application.
- Use audits of existing public art to inform decisions, avoiding duplication and to identify gaps and opportunities.

Commissioning

- Maintain communication with Planning Officers throughout the process, from brief and artist appointment to design approval, production, and installation.



Getting Started with a Public Art Commission

Six Pillars of FORGED

Public art commissions are unique, and while processes vary, there are established systems within the planning framework. The National Planning Policy Framework and National Design Guide broadly support public art, reinforced by Local Plans. Some authorities may have specific public art guidance; but where this does not exist the approach should focus on working with developers to encourage and guide public art within the planning process.

FORGED advocate following six key pillars when looking to commission public art in the Tees Valley which sets out the core values of commissioning across the area:



Six Pillars of FORGED

01 Placemaking

Shaping the Future

Public art can play a key role in supporting and shaping change in an area, holding space for conversations and input from a diverse range of voices.

Collaboration

Public art is commissioned by working in collaboration with other professionals such as architects, landscape designers, planners, developers, house builders and arts officers.

Anywhere

Public art can play a role in a broad range of contexts - including urban, rural, neighbourhoods and more.

02 Quality & Impact

Ambition

Prioritise high-quality, ambitious and impactful projects - for wellbeing, for value, for engagement, for communities, for civic pride, and for raising the area's profile as a culturally relevant place.

Encourage the Unexpected

Make space for managed risk and trust the skills of artists to deliver unique and innovative approaches.

Breathing Space

Enable public art projects to have the time and space they need to develop successfully.

Add Value

to existing budgets by tying in with regeneration, wayfinding, landscaping or marketing opportunities.

Diversity and Inclusion

Should be integral to public art commissioning, ensuring artworks reflect the diversity of our communities and wider society, with accessible commissioning processes.

03 Engagement & Participation

Involve

Establish opportunities within local social infrastructure where creative processes and activities can be conducted as a part of democratic consultation about the built environment.

Celebrate what's here

As a part of modelling and inspiring what could be here, look at what has been - untold stories, hidden histories, etc.

Process

Emphasis the importance of high quality engagement processes, which are given equal importance with final creative outcomes.

Authenticity

Connect with communities to tell authentic stories of place and communicate the journey of the project.

04 Transparent & Inclusive Commissioning Practices

Seat at the Table

Identify relevant boards and steering groups operating in the region and advocate for public art representation.

Instigate

Emphasise to developers that proactive, early engagement of commissioning bodies through the steering group is integral to the planning application process.

Value

Support and value the skills of artists as an equal part of the design team.

05 Developing the Creative Landscape

Creative Ecology

Foster a vibrant, inclusive cultural ecology that encourages and supports artists and creative industries practitioners to engage in public realm working.

Skills

Encourage arts engagement and participation through partnership working.

Quality & Value

Artists are paid at a professional rate. Commission high quality public artworks to achieve the best value.

Exchange

Sharing knowledge and experience between those who commission and create public art in the region.

06 Sustainability & Social Value Approach

Environment

Encourage the use of sustainable materials, which are safe for the environment and if possible, can be locally sourced. Recycling and reducing waste to be encouraged. Work with local suppliers, thereby reducing transport costs and impact on the environment.

Amplify

Think about the whole lifecycle of the commission, amplify the impact at all stages for people, places and planet.

Legacy

What is the long term imprint or social value for the local area of a public art project? Plan with the bigger strategic picture in mind to ensure the greatest long term impact.

The Public Art Funding Landscape

Funding for public art, whether temporary or permanent, typically comes from multiple sources. A collaborative approach can align projects with broader agendas and attract diverse sources of investment. Funding is often limited, so it's important to maximise existing budgets and explore match funding to enhance value.

Key funding sources may include:

Planning & Development

Section 106 agreements, planning conditions, and design budgets for architectural, landscaping, or public realm projects (e.g. lighting, street furniture).

Arts & Culture Funds

Arts Council England grants (e.g. Project Grants, Place Partnership Fund, Opportunities stemming from Priority Place designation).

Government Programmes

UK Government support for national regeneration initiatives such as 'Plan for Neighbourhoods', 'Pride in Place' Funds and others depending on geography and sector.

Trusts & Foundations:

National and local trusts such as Art Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Historic England, and local foundations.

Community, Health & Wellbeing

National Lottery Community Fund, Wellcome Trust.

Specialist Areas

Digital and innovation funding from bodies like Creative UK and Arts Council England.

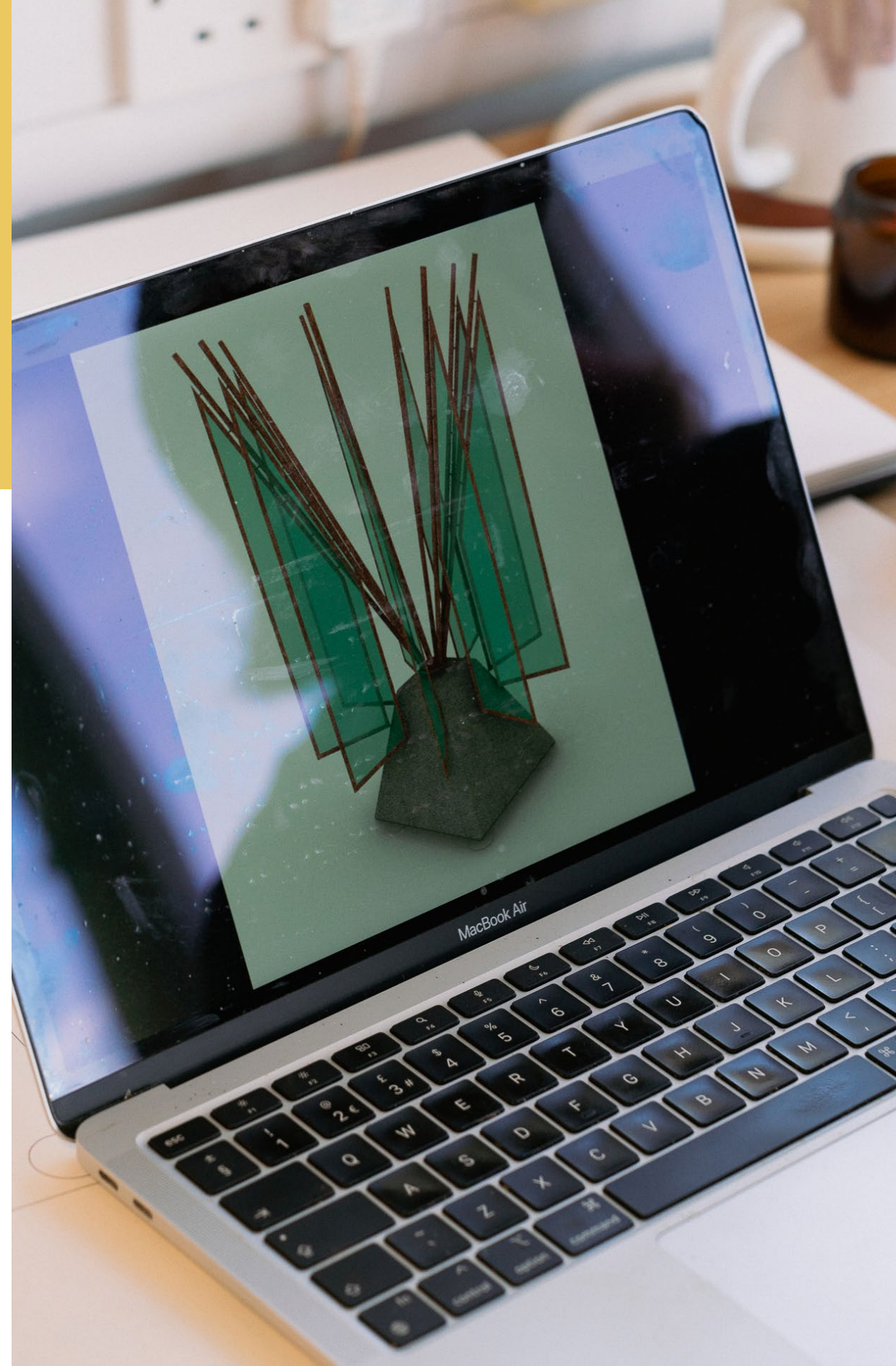
Environmental

Landfill Tax Credits linked to project geography.

Local Funding: Town and parish council grants, local authority funds.

Private & Community Support: Business/ commercial sponsorship, private donations, crowdfunding, and fundraisers.

"A multi-source funding strategy can strengthen a project's sustainability and cultural impact."



The Public Art Process and Useful Checklists

The sections below expand on the public art commissioning process and offer useful points for consideration when setting up and delivering your project.

Shaping the Initial Idea

- What is the core idea or concept for the project?
 - What is the main aim or purpose of commissioning this artwork?
 - Who is the project for?
 - Who needs to be involved (artists, partners, community, stakeholders) and in what roles?
 - Have you consulted with those directly impacted? How can you build local and stakeholder support?
 - Can production or fabrication take place in the area? (this has the potential to impact both budget and the environment).
 - Is there a proposed site or location?
 - Are there other relevant initiatives or plans to align or collaborate with?
 - What skills, expertise, or professional support will you need (e.g. curatorial, technical, project management)?
 - What is the expected timeline or any key deadlines?
 - What is your budget? What funding sources could support the project?
 - What does success look like, and how will you define or measure it?
 - What are the potential risks or threats to successful delivery?
 - What legacy or long-term impact do you want the project to have?
-

Considering the FORGED Pillars

- Have you reviewed how the FORGED pillars can inform your project planning and commissioning approach? (see section 3.a)

Governance & Management Foundations

- Consider bringing on board a commissioning body or public art consultant experienced in managing commissions. Appointing the right management expertise can be essential to a successful project outcome. Specialist advisors (e.g. conservation, heritage, structural engineering) may also be needed.
 - Establish a Project Steering Group (SG) early to guide and oversee your public art project. The SG should bring together a balanced mix of skills and perspectives, typically including the commissioner, a council or funder representative, design team member (if part of a development), site or landowner representative, an artist or curator, and community representation. Keep the group small (around six members) to remain effective, and ensure members declare any conflicts of interest and draw up terms of reference which members agree to.
 - The SG advises at key project milestones, such as artist selection, interviews, and design reviews, and acts as a resource for the appointed artist by offering knowledge, expertise, and connections.
 - Engage relevant Council departments early, such as Highways, Planning, Culture, Community and others as applicable for your project. This can help to address permissions, maintenance, or location considerations. Early coordination helps ensure a smooth and successful commissioning process.
 - Consider ways to involve the local community so the project feels embedded in its context and reflects local identity. Engagement can inspire the artist's vision and foster a sense of ownership and pride in the artwork.
 - Where appropriate, adopt a co-produced approach, bringing together communities, artists, and stakeholders to collaborate. This approach values inclusiveness, openness, and shared decision-making, enabling meaningful creative exchange and community influence.
-

Think about embedding social value opportunities throughout the commission which can enhance the project's impact further, creating lasting benefits for the community, such as:

- Skills development and creative participation for the community
 - Use of local fabricators, suppliers and resources
 - Paid mentoring opportunities for emerging artists
 - Talks or workshops in schools or local settings
 - More local people in employment, including young people
 - Supporting growth of the area's creative and cultural sector
-

Setting the Brief

- How will you develop a comprehensive project brief that defines the objectives, scope, and outcomes?
-

Artist Selection & Contracting

- How will you set clear selection criteria and a transparent artist selection process?
 - How will you appoint and contract the selected artist(s) in line with the agreed process?
-

Permissions & Legal Considerations

- How will you identify and obtain all necessary planning permissions and address any legal requirements?
- For permanent artworks, if you have a site in mind, it is sensible to conduct some basic site searches at this stage to identify any major barriers to delivering your project, e.g. establishing land ownership, considering responsibility for the artwork and ongoing maintenance, checking for underground services etc. and considering the kinds of permissions you may need.

Public Engagement

- Is public engagement a core part of your project? What level of engagement is appropriate for the scale and aims of the project?
 - If so, how might it be conducted to ensure meaningful community input?
 - How might different groups, e.g. young people be involved? What opportunities could this project offer them?
-

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Have you defined how progress and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated throughout the project?
-

Insurance & Maintenance

- Have you arranged appropriate insurance coverage for the artwork and project activities?
 - Have you planned for the ongoing maintenance and care of the artwork once installed?
-

Installation

- How will you oversee the installation process, including logistics, health & safety, and technical oversight?
-

Documentation, Interpretation & Marketing

- How might the project be documented (e.g., photos, reports, artist statements)?
- Will you create educational or interpretation materials to support public understanding and make that accessible for diverse audiences
- Will you develop a marketing or communications strategy to promote the project?

Developing a Robust Artist's Brief

A well-written artist's brief is essential to the success of any public art commission. It communicates the vision, aims, and practical framework of the project while giving artists enough creative freedom to develop their own interpretation. The brief should be clear, concise, and comprehensive, offering all necessary contextual, technical, and procedural information, without restricting artistic innovation. It also serves as a key reference document throughout the commissioning process and is often attached to the legal contract with the artist.

Items to include in an Artist Brief:

01 Background Information

- Details of the commissioning body (agency or organisation)
- Any relevant historical or organisational context
- Objectives and purpose of the commission
- Details of project partners or collaborators and their roles
- Overview of the local area (population, history, geography, culture, economy)
- Project development background - who contributed (stakeholders, community representatives)

02 Additional Context

- Relevant historical, industrial, cultural, or other insights that explain the project's motivation

03 Commission Aims and Intent

- Clear statement of the aims of the commission (e.g., to enhance a site, create a landmark, engage the public)
- Desired impact or function of the artwork

04 Site Information

- Description of the proposed site and its use and users
- Site plan, maps, CAT scans or photos (if applicable)
- Relevant historical, social, or environmental context
- If possible offer an opportunity for applicants to visit the proposed site prior to making an application, to better inform responses.

05 Artist's Role and Scope

- Outline of the artist's expected role and responsibilities
- Suggested or required themes for consideration
- Expectations for community or public engagement

06 Technical and Material Requirements

- Any preference or material guidelines (availability, durability, sustainability, maintenance)
- Constraints or limitations (technical, structural, environmental, legal)
- Design team members or collaborators the artist will work with

07 Budget and Funding

- Total project budget (including design, production, and installation)
- Payment structure or schedule

08 Timescale

- Key milestones and overall project timeline (design, approval, fabrication, installation)

09 Permissions and Maintenance

- Planning or regulatory permissions required
- Maintenance and long-term care responsibilities

10 Selection and Commissioning Process

- Description of the artist selection process
- Criteria for selection and decision-making
- Details of submission requirements (if applicable)
- Consider offering artists a range of different ways to submit their application (e.g. written or video or sound recording) to widen accessibility.
- A named contact for any questions or accessibility requirements.



Phase 1:

Setting Up Your Budget

Things to include in your budget - develop a realistic outline of the delivery costs which may include the below items. Consider how you will procure the services you require, and if there are any procurement thresholds or funder requirements which you need to consider.

Artist fees

The Artists' Union England rates of pay guidelines provides a useful guide when setting artist and professional day rates.

Project management

Artist recruitment

Mentoring

Potential to build in a fee or bursary to engage an early career artist to shadow the project.

Costs associated with community engagement

e.g. materials, promotion, room hire, refreshments, etc.

Permissions

fees associated with structural engineers, planning applications, CAT Scan / underground services checks etc.

Fabrication

e.g. materials, equipment, lighting, foundations, sub contractor costs.

Installation and transport costs

Storage costs between artwork completion and install.

Communications & Documentation

e.g. launch event, interpretation, film, photography, publications, PR.

Fees associated with any legal advice required

Insurance for installed artwork

Costs for meetings and site visits

including any support for freelance or unwaged Steering Group members.

Future maintenance costs

De-install costs if artwork is temporary.

Contingency, c. 10-15% is recommended.

VAT and / other tax.



Phase 2: Artist Recruitment

Choosing the right artist with the necessary skills, attributes, and experience is crucial to the success of your project. Once your Artist Brief is developed, there are several ways to promote and recruit.

01 Open Call

An Open Call publicly advertises the brief through platforms such as the Arts Council's Artjobs service, Curatorspace, local arts networks, or paid channels like Artists Newsletter, depending on reach and artist type.

Pros: Transparent process that attracts a wide range of artists and raises awareness of your project.

Cons: Can be time-consuming, and established artists may prefer direct approaches.

02 Invited Applications

The brief is shared directly with a shortlist (typically 6–8) of preferred artists.

Pros: Targets artists with specific skills or specialisms.

Cons: Limits applications to artists you already know and may be seen as less transparent.

03 Invited Competition

A shortlist of artists is offered a fee to develop design ideas, with one selected for final delivery.

Pros: Efficient way to explore multiple options; lowers risk and supports funding applications for next stages.

Cons: Requires budget for design fees and limits artists' ability to undertake detailed research at this stage.

04 Direct Appointment

You approach a specific artist directly.

Pros: Fast and focused, useful for highly specialised briefs.

Cons: Least transparent and may breach procurement rules; excludes new or unknown artists.

Application Process

- Allow around 4-6 weeks for artists to respond. All applications should be acknowledged and reviewed against the selection criteria set out in your brief - such as understanding of the brief, relevant experience, transferable skills, contextual fit, and technical knowledge.
- Use these criteria to create a longlist, then refine to a shortlist of 3–5 artists for interview.
- Offer to provide general feedback to unsuccessful applicants to support future opportunities.



Interviews and Selection

Before interviews, the Steering Group should:

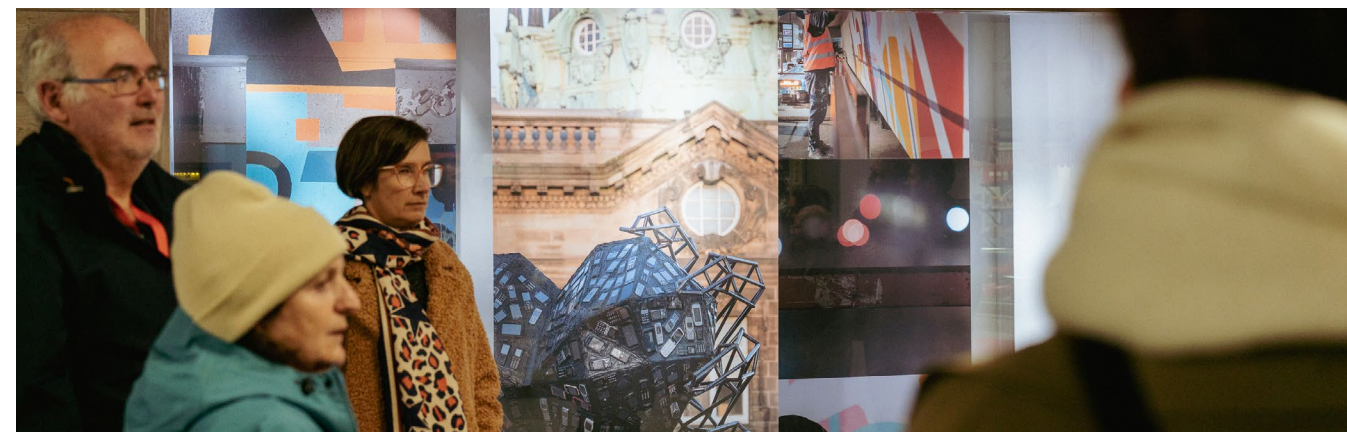
- Agree and standardise questions (and share them in advance to improve accessibility).
- Invite artists to present their work and project interest.

Following interviews, the Steering Group should discuss and minute the selection decision, ensuring reasons for appointment are clearly recorded.

Artists should be reimbursed for travel if interviews are in person; virtual interviews are an alternative.

Once a preferred candidate is confirmed:

- Obtain references and required insurances (e.g. Public Liability, Professional Indemnity).
- Issue a contract linked to the Artist Brief (seek legal advice if needed).
- For permanent works, confirm experience or partnerships with fabricators and installers.
- Offer the opportunity to share access needs or an Access Document (guide here).



Phase 3: Artist Design Development

Phase 4: Finalising the Detail

Research and Orientation

- The artist and Steering Group should hold an initial meeting to get acquainted and discuss how the group's resources, knowledge, and contacts can support the commission.
- If the project is site-specific, a site visit will help the artist understand the location, opportunities, and constraints.
- After this, the artist undertakes a research phase, drawing on Steering Group input and engaging with relevant individuals, groups, or organisations.
- This may include community engagement, such as creative activities or conversations, to deepen understanding of the project context.

Developing Ideas

Following research, the artist prepares a concept proposal or report outlining their ideas for the Steering Group. Depending on the brief, this may include one or more concept options for review and agreement on a preferred direction.

The report should include:

- Summary of research and how it informed the ideas
- Description of concept(s), illustrated visually or digitally
- Indicative materials, sustainability, and design life
- Plans for further development, research, or engagement
- Outline of fabrication, installation, and maintenance approach
- Touring plan for temporary work (if applicable)
- Indicative budget and timeline
- Any other relevant supporting information

The artist should present the proposal in person (or virtually) to discuss their ideas and respond to questions.

Once the Steering Group approves the concept, the artist proceeds to detailed design development.

Design Development & Report

At this stage, the artist refines the agreed concept through further research or community engagement, developing it into a comprehensive detailed design. This phase may involve collaboration with structural engineers, fabricators, or other specialists.

The detailed design report should include:

- Full description of the proposed artwork with visuals or models
- Detailed budget and costings
- Delivery timeline
- Materials and technical specifications
- Structural engineer's report (if required)
- Details of foundations, fixings and subcontractors
- Proof of insurances (artist and subcontractors)
- Information for planning or other permissions
- Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) for installation and long-term safety
- Maintenance requirements
- Decommissioning Plan

Site and Permissions

Once the detailed design report is submitted, the Project Manager or Steering Group should secure planning and other necessary permissions with the relevant local authority. This process typically takes a minimum of 8 weeks and should be built into the project schedule with contingency time.

Final checks should also confirm site ownership and the presence of underground services, particularly for permanent or site-based artworks.



Phase 5: Delivery



Once all required permissions and licences are confirmed, the artwork can be fabricated by the artist or their appointed fabricator, in line with the approved detailed design report.

During fabrication, the artist should provide regular progress updates, including photos or videos, to the Steering Group. A workshop visit may be arranged if desired.

Before installation, the artist must finalise the Risk Assessment and Method Statement

(RAMS) and any additional permissions (e.g. road closures or site access) must be put in place.

The artist, working with relevant subcontractors, then installs the artwork on the agreed date and ensures the surrounding area is restored (as agreed).

Any interpretation signage or associated materials should be installed at this stage or shortly after.

Phase 6: Completion & Legacy

Once installed, the client or Steering Group should **inspect the artwork** to confirm it meets the agreed specification. A **snagging or defect period**, agreed at contracting stage, can ensure any issues are addressed post-installation.

A **handover document** should then be signed, confirming client acceptance and transfer of responsibility. Both the client and artist should retain copies.

A **maintenance and decommissioning plan** must be finalised and shared to support long-term care of the artwork.

If desired, the commissioner may organise a **launch event or PR campaign** to celebrate and promote the project.

Monitoring and evaluation should follow, involving the artist, Steering Group, and communities, and reporting to any funders. Learning from the project should be captured and shared.

To **promote the outcomes**, consider:

- Documenting the project through your website, social media, photography, film, blogs, or PR (especially important for temporary works).
- Sharing the story of the artwork through **interpretation materials**, digital or physical, to extend its reach and legacy.



Insights from the Tees Valley

Conversations with key stakeholders across the combined authority point to a need for an integrated approach to public art - one that combines policy, advocacy, guidance, capacity-building, and skills development.

Examples include:

- A clear public art strategy at both regional and borough levels.
- Practical guidance for commissioners and communities on the commissioning process, budgeting, maintenance, and partnership working.
- Advocacy and case studies to build the case for public art as a vital element of regeneration.
- Mechanisms to unlock funding opportunities, including Section 106 contributions.
- Capacity-building for artists to become commission-ready, and for officers to embed public art thinking in planning and regeneration.
- Embedding a Public Art Strategy - and culture more generally - into planning policies, so that relevant expertise and community involvement are integral to local planning and decision-making processes.
- Engaging regional business and private sector more actively to create sustainable funding and investment opportunities.
- Mapping all the existing Public Artworks as a collection
- Introduce a local list (gives local recognition to its significance and special characteristics) of the Public Artworks for annual discussion and link up to relevant bodies to assess risk or advocacy needs
- Creating trails and creative resources for people to engage with Public Artworks.

FORGED Resources and References

FORGED directory

This live directory brings together fabricators and production resources across the Tees Valley, with a focus on public realm work. We recommend saving the link as a tab. It will continue to grow as new contacts and capabilities are added.

The directory is intended as a practical, easy-to-use tool, and we welcome suggestions to help expand and improve it over time.

<https://tinyurl.com/FORGEDDirectory>

Case Studies from FORGED: Public Art in the Tees Valley

Case Study: Hold Me and Show Me You Love Me, Stuart Langley

<https://tinyurl.com/LangleyHoldMe>

Case Study: The Kiosk, Adam Shaw

<https://tinyurl.com/ShawKiosk>

Case Study: What I Remember About Libya, Alia Gargum

<https://tinyurl.com/GargumAboutLibya>

UK-wide guides, policies and organisational resources

Guide to Commission Public Art

<https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/public-art/guide-to-commissioning-public-art/>

Legal impact of Commissioning Work:

www.boodlehatfield.com/articles/promoting-a-framework-for-public-art-projects-key-considerations-for-embarking-on-or-participating-in-a-public-art-commission/

Organisations

A UK-based organisation that commissions and produces public art projects.

<https://www.beam.uk.net>

A now dormant digital platform dedicated to documenting and promoting public art.

<https://publicartonline.org.uk>

An organisation that focuses on research, advocacy, and guidance for public art.

<https://ixia-info.org/>

Dressing Policy:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50050/culture_arts_and_heritage/1251/dressing_

Developers Guide:

https://www.hastings.gov.uk/planning/advice/public_art_guide/

Strategy Management:

<https://issuu.com/cityoflaunceston/docs/public-art-strategy-2023-2031>

Commission Grants:

<https://www.artfund.org/professional/get-funding/programmes/commission-grants>

An organisation that focuses on research, advocacy, and guidance for public art.

<https://ixia-info.org/>

Dressing Policy:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50050/culture_arts_and_heritage/1251/dressing_

Developers Guide:

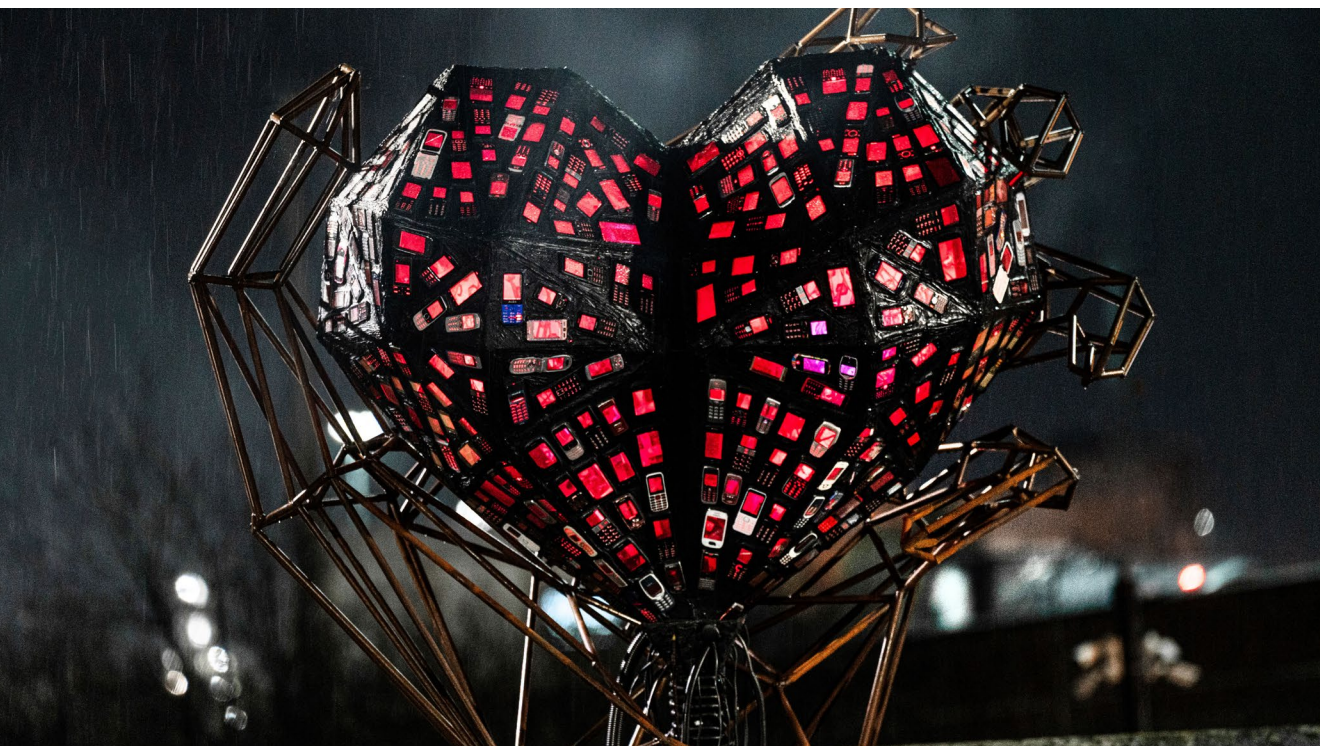
https://www.hastings.gov.uk/planning/advice/public_art_guide/

Strategy Management:

<https://issuu.com/cityoflaunceston/docs/public-art-strategy-2023-2031>

Commission Grants:

<https://www.artfund.org/professional/get-funding/programmes/commission-grants>



Contributors

FORGED project partners Middlesbrough Art Week and Navigator North worked with Beam Public Arts UK to research and produce the FORGED Public Art Action Plan as one of the outcomes of the project. Beam is a cultural development organisation working across the North of England whose inclusive approach champions, celebrates and engages artists and communities to shape and animate thriving places.

As part of this research, representatives of each of the five boroughs; Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees, Redcar & Cleveland, Hartlepool, Darlington, as well the Combined Authority, engaged in stakeholder interviews and feedback which has helped inform the local conditions and possibilities for public art in the region and beyond.

Research and Writing:

Frances Smith and Kate Watson, Primary Consultants, Beam Public Arts UK

Graphic Design:

Brainbox Studios

Photography:

Rachel Deakin, Joe Copely, Joanne Coates

FORGED Artists:

John Ayscough, Adam Shaw, Stuart Langley, Alia Gargum

FORGED Foundations:

David Stupple, FORGED Fabricator, Yendalls Engineering Ltd

FORGED Project Partners:

Liam Slevin, Artistic Director, The Auxiliary & Middlesbrough Art Week
Edel O Reilly, Executive Director, The Auxiliary & Middlesbrough Art Week
Vicky Holbrough, Director, Navigator North

FORGED Project Managers:

Dianne Bowell
Maddie Maughan

Funders and Supporters

FORGED is a partnership programme between Middlesbrough Art Week and Navigator North funded by Tees Valley Combined Authority, with supporting funding from Arts Council England and Henry Moore Foundation

<https://www.theauxiliary.co.uk/FORGED>

TVCA

NAVIGATOR
NORTH

THE
AUXILIARY

MIDDLESBROUGH
ART WEEK

HENRY MOORE
FOUNDATION