

Beam Annual Review 2023

Image:
Tapestries by Lenny & Whale
Photo © Timm Cleasby





We are delighted to publish our Annual Review as a record and celebration of Beam's work in 2023. Shining through the report is the quality and range of the commissions and the artists whose works are featured in the Review. We thank everyone in the local communities who were so enthusiastically involved in our activities.

We continue to build our relationships with local authorities, including preparing public art strategies and guidance that support place-making and future opportunities for artists. We are determined that these include further artist development and mentoring of emerging artists.

The launch of our report Building a More Diverse & Inclusive Public Art Sector is a significant step for the whole sector and Beam's organisational development, and we were pleased to work with ixia, CVAN and other partners to raise awareness of the report and facilitate discussion of its findings.

As we look forward to 2024, I want to thank our staff team and Board members for their invaluable contribution. This will be a special 12 months filled with the Our Year 2024 creative events and activities in our home Wakefield District.

Gordon Watson, Chair of Beam Board of Trustees

Image:
Ever Glow by Graeme Mitcheson with Poem by Laura Potts
Photo © Wakefield Council



Introduction

We've enjoyed an exciting 2023 working with artists and communities to enhance places and shape cultural strategy with partners across the North. This year we have commissioned 30 artists and creative practitioners, we directly engaged 700 participants, and a wider audience of over 200,000 people interacted with temporary and permanent art in public spaces through our projects.

A notable highlight of 2023 has been the completion of the ambitious three year **Dewsbury Creative Town programme**, working in partnership with Kirklees Council and with artists and communities. Commissions which came to fruition in Dewsbury this year included work by Emmeline North, Manasmitra, and Lenny & Whale, as well as concept development work by Zac Eastwood Bloom.

We brought together many of the artists for a session with Kirklees College students to share the story of their projects and inspire the next generation of creatives. It's also been exciting to see the programme brought together visually in a series of short films created by Opal Video.

In 2023 we were proud to publish the outcomes of an important year-long piece of research work developed with Bo Olawoye, exploring equity, diversity and inclusion in the public art sector. The report, '**Building a More Diverse & Inclusive Public Art Sector**', was launched in July 2023 in tandem with new research developed by ixia, the national public art thinktank for England.



Following the launch we were delighted to collaborate with partners ixia and Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN) to host an online discussion forum to reflect on the outcomes of each organisations' research in this area. We look forward to taking action to progress our research and apply our learning through our EDI Action Plan in 2024 and beyond.

Following completion of the **Walking Together trail** by artist Stephen Broadbent at Markham Vale in 2022, we spent the first part of 2023 working with Markham Vale Heritage Group volunteers, Derbyshire County Council, Rhubarb Design House and David John King, to create a detailed publication and film commemorating the 10 year project, supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Image:
Artist Talks, Dewsbury Creative Town
Photo © Kirklees College

We've had the opportunity to collaborate with a wide range of local authority partners across the year on cultural and public art strategy and feasibility work, including **North East Lincolnshire, Hull City Council, Barnsley Council and Wakefield Council.**

We were delighted that two long term permanent public art works at **City Fields, Wakefield** were realised in 2023, working with **Wakefield Council** - Living Landscapes by Broadbent Studio and Everglow by Graeme Mitcheson. Further work in our home district of Wakefield included the publication of 'A **Guide to Developing Murals and 2D Artwork**' and subsequent work to **scope potential murals** in the district.

Supporting the development of artists is a key part of Beam's ethos and we were pleased to be able to offer three **artist mentoring** opportunities in 2023 linked to commissions as part of the Dewsbury Creative Town Arts programme with support from Arts Council England.

At the start of the year we worked with Sustainable Arts in Leeds (SAIL), supported by Creative Wakefield, as part of its Advance mentoring programme to enhance our organisational approach to **environmental sustainability**. SAIL provided bespoke training, supported us to become Certified Carbon Literate through the Carbon Literacy Project and worked with us to further develop our environmental action plan.



We look forward to 2024, excited to build on existing relationships, take on new challenges and in particular to continue to build on our commitments to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion; Environmental Sustainability and Artist Development.

Image:
Tapestries Artwork
© Lenny & Whale

Kirklees Council

Completed Dewsbury Creative Town Arts Programme

Over the last 3 years we have had the privilege of commissioning 34 creative practitioners, through 13 commissions, directly engaging an estimated 830 participants and a wider audience of approximately 36,000 people and producing 3 short films.

To maximise the programme we successfully connected with other regeneration budgets and secured additional funding through an Arts Council England 'Project Grant' to the value of £29,750 which supported artist mentoring and CPD opportunities, including work with Kirklees College.

[Read more about the overall programme](#) →

Highlights from 2023 include:

d-e-w-s-b-u-r-y by **Cubic Fruit** is an art installation using recycled materials creating an eye-catching welcome to the town centre.

[Read more](#) →

Zachary Eastwood-Bloom was appointed to develop designs for a new figurative sculpture in his distinctive style for the new Town Park. Zac also mentored Batley-based artist Karen Stansfield throughout the project.

[Read more](#) →

Opal Video produced a series of short films to capture the essence of the programme including an overview film and a summary of key commissions.

[Read more](#) →



Image:
d-e-w-s-b-u-r-y by Cubic Fruit. Photo
© Lucille Moore.

Dewsbury Highlights Continued

Tapestries by Lenny & Whale is a colourful celebration of Dewsbury Town Centre, specifically the people, architecture and the built environment. Lisa Knight, artist mentee, shadowed the process from start to finish.

[Read more](#) →

Manasamitra and Duncan Chapman produced Sounds of Dewsbury creating three sound walks around the town exploring the artworks, architecture and heritage. Duncan also mentored Sam Hodgson.

[Read more](#) →

Inspiring Artist Talks hosted by Kirklees College engaged six artists commissioned through the programme to share their personal career pathways and approach to their commissions for Dewsbury.

[Read more](#) →



This opportunity has raised my Creative Practice to the next level. Wonderful learning experience, nurtured throughout the journey from the Beam team.

Mentee Artist



Image above:
Tapestries by Lenny & Whale.
Photo © Timm Cleasby.

Image below:
Sounds of Dewsbury
Photo © Nicholas Singleton.



Launch of 'Building a More Diverse & Inclusive Public Art Sector' Report

Principles of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are at the heart of our organisation and work and we have been actively working to address issues of EDI in relation to public art.

In July we were delighted to launch our new report, researched and written by Creative Engagement Producer, Consultant & Mentor **Bo Olawoye** 'Building a More Diverse & Inclusive Public Art Sector'. The report was launched in tandem with new research developed by ixia, the national public art thinktank for England.

Together the research underlines major issues and development potential within the visual arts and public art sectors for: under-represented artists and producers; emerging artists and producers working in the sector; and the provision of up to date sector support and guidance.

Our report, developed in close consultation with freelance practitioners and organisations, explores the barriers underrepresented artists are facing and how we can make the sector more fair and equitable.

We fully recognise that our research is a snapshot and there is still much more to be done, but it does highlight some of the key challenges artists working in the public realm are facing today. We are committed to using this research as a stimulus for change, both within our own processes and by engaging more artists and organisations in a wider conversation to explore how together we can foster a more diverse and inclusive sector.

[Read more](#) →



Image:
Graphic design Lee Goater.



It was a real privilege to spend time actively listening to the experiences of diverse artists and producers from across the UK about their experiences of working in the public realm.

For me it was really important to create a safe space for everyone, but particularly under-represented artists to be able to give their honest feedback and insights.

Bo Olawoye.



Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Art Sector Forum Event with Beam, ixia and CVAN

To further this aim we collaborated with ixia and the Contemporary Visual Arts Network (CVAN) to hold an online forum event on 2 October to explore research which all three organisations have led in this area, to discuss the findings, and to debate how we can make the public art sector more fair and equitable.

Chaired by Paula Orrell, Director of CVAN – speakers included Cecilia Wee (researcher for the CVAN Fair & Equitable Research Report), Bo Olawoye (researcher for the Beam research project, Building a More Diverse and Inclusive Public Art Sector), Katy Beinart and Suzanne Heath (ixia board members) and Elisabeth del Prete (UP projects).

The event brought together a range of perspectives from across the industry. There were artists, curators, students and academics, heads of arts organisations, culture officers from local authorities and leading EDI thinkers and practitioners, representing every corner of the UK: from Belfast, Newcastle, Leeds, Sheffield and Nottingham to Cambridge, Luton, London, Brighton, Southampton and Bristol.

Independent writer Henry Broome provided a write up of the event which can be viewed on our website.

[Read more →](#)



Thanks for this afternoon. It reminded me about the need to look at how co-creation/partnerships work in the long term; how everyone has an equal seat at the table to make decisions and how we build in time and resources to meet our access and inclusion ambitions.

Participant.



Image:
Participant feedback.



Derbyshire County Council

Walking Together Book & Film Launch

Supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund through the '10 Years of Walking Together' project, in 2023 we were delighted to share a short book and film which commemorate the 106 miners who died in the three major disasters at Markham, and which also shares the journey of this mining memorial project at Markham Vale, Derbyshire and celebrates all those who contributed.

The volunteers of the Markham Vale Heritage Group have, over the past ten years, spent hundreds of hours researching the lives of the miners who have been commemorated. Their meticulous research forms the basis of both [The Story Mine website](#) and of the project book and film.

The book, film and the '[Markham March](#)', a new piece for brass created by MVHG member Ken Wain, were launched at Markham Vale Environment Centre on the 20th April 2023.

[Read more](#) →



A vision and a hope that has grown and blossomed in unexpected and meaningful ways.

Community Member



Images:
Book launch © David John King.



Place Based Strategy and Feasibility Work

We've had the opportunity to work with a wide range of local authority partners across the year. In **North East Lincolnshire** we built on our work with the Council developing a Creativity Strategy in 2021, to develop a '**Public Art Approach**', outlining how art and artists can work with communities in public places and spaces across the district.

Working with **Hull City Council** we carried out a detailed **audit of public art** across Hull supported by local volunteers, and in parallel developed a **Public Art Policy** for the city to inspire and guide future commissioning and amplify existing works.

In **Barnsley** we started the year completing **Public Art Guidance** for the borough, and ended it working with Barnsley Council and partners to develop a **feasibility study**, scoping the potential for a significant arts trail.

New Artworks at City Fields

2023 saw the completion of two major art installations at key gateways to City Fields, a major urban extension to the east of Wakefield.

Ever Glow by Graeme Mitcheson reflects the natural environment of the area with particular emphasis on key water features and the green open space beyond to act as a welcome for visitors, residents and workers. The sculpture takes its shape and scale from the impressive lock gates at the nearby canal, the front of the sculpture features blue coloured glass and the granite terrace features an engraved poem written especially for the site by local poet, Laura Potts entitled Fieldsong.

[Read more](#) →



Beam has been crucial in ensuring that the Council has been able to deliver our City Fields Public Arts strategy. They have been central to the whole process of shortlisting, appointment and delivery on site. There's still much to do and we hope that we can continue working with them.



Dave Fowles, Housing Growth Manager, Wakefield Council.

Images:
Ever Glow by Graeme Mitcheson.
Photo © Wakefield Council.



New Artworks at City Fields Continued

Living Landscape by Studio Broadbent includes 5 artworks that show the adaptability of wildlife, as they weave their way along this green corridor, bending and twisting their bodies through their surroundings. The animals referenced within the artworks have been inspired by the notable species listed in the Ferry Flash Site of Special Scientific Interest. An interactive kit was also designed to engage children in learning about local wildlife which is available for local schools to book out free of charge.

[Read more](#) →



Images:
Living Landscape by Broadbent Studio
Photo © Wakefield Council.



Barnsley Council

Completion of Barnsley Public Art Guidance

The new guidance is for anyone involved in the commissioning of art in public spaces across the Barnsley Borough – from sculptural trails to murals, street furniture to temporary happenings, interactive digital installations to artist residencies in public spaces and everything in between.

It has been designed to help streamline processes, encourage best practice and inspire; ensuring that the strong foundations and enthusiasm already established for introducing temporary and permanent art into places and spaces across the borough is built upon.

[Read more](#) →



Public art is key to placemaking for Barnsley. The Trust, together with colleagues in Barnsley Museums, have worked with Beam on a number of direct commissions, as well as the development of a Public Art Strategy and guidelines which have been adopted by the Borough. Beam are a pleasure to work with, and have a flexible, friendly and creative approach.

**Barnsley Museums
& Heritage Trust.**

Images:
Public Art Guidance.
Photo © Rhubarb Design.

Wakefield Council

Wakefield Mural + 2D Art Guidance Published

In collaboration with artist Emmeline North, Beam developed a guide for the implementation of murals and 2D art in the public realm across the Wakefield district. This guide and supplementary appendices have been designed to offer inspiration, highlighting a range of possibilities alongside practical and flexible guidance on how to successfully embed murals and 2D art across the district, taking a dynamic yet cohesive approach.

[Read more](#) →

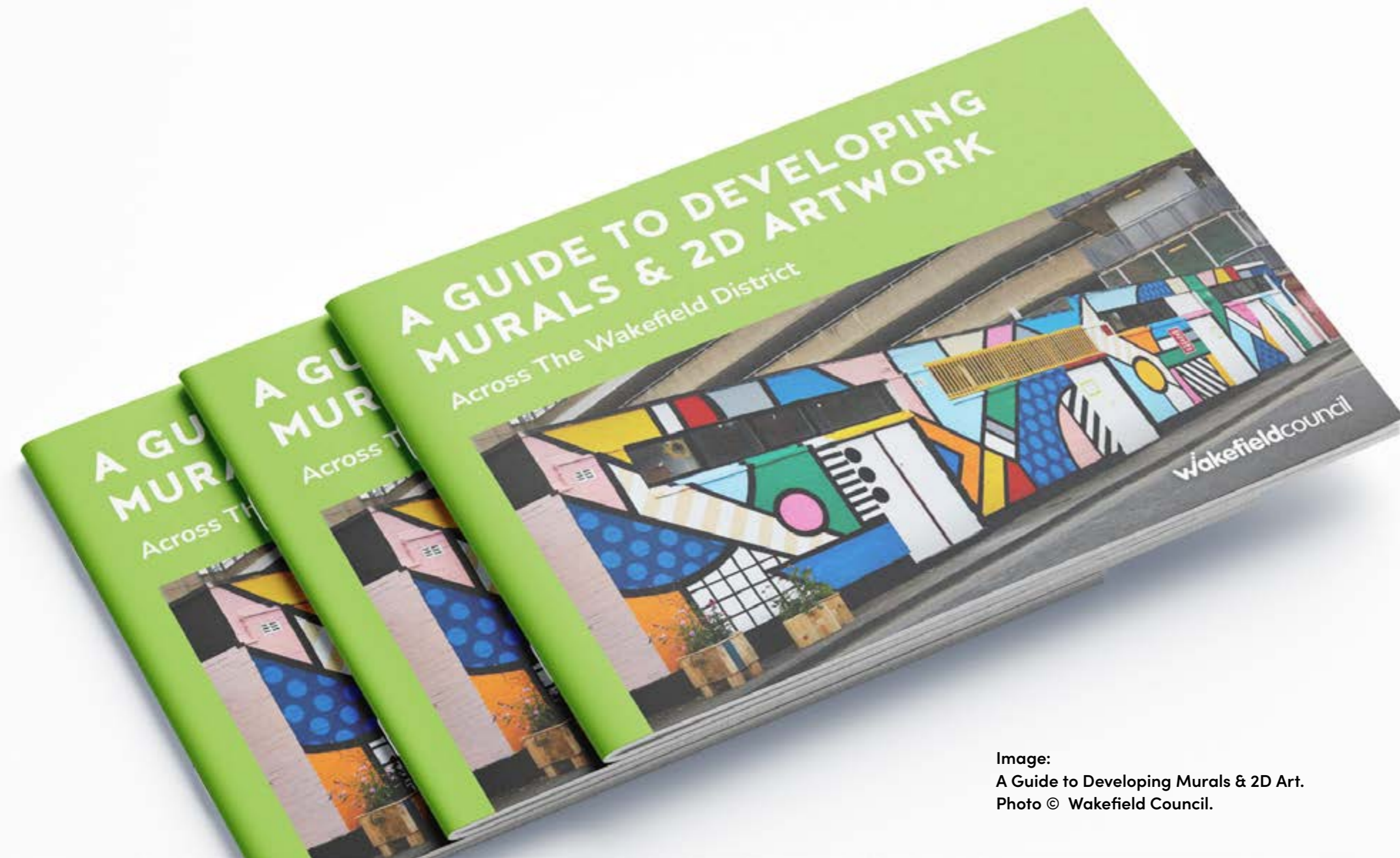


Image:
A Guide to Developing Murals & 2D Art.
Photo © Wakefield Council.



Image:
Tales of Derby Women.
Photo © She Speaks.

Artist Development

We are passionate about supporting artist development opportunities and seek to embed mentoring and shadowing within our commissioning programmes to provide learning around delivering arts in place.

Through the Dewsbury Creative Town Arts programme we embedded a number of mentoring opportunities designed as a shadowing experience made possible via Arts Council England funding.



This live learning experience has grown my skill base and understanding to make me confident to pursue commissions for the public realm, devise my installations, and seek funding or connections with events. It has indeed been a fantastic adventure!

Mentee Artist



We also provided 1-2-1 mentoring via the Creative England Advance programme, drawing on our experience, to explore arts in the public realm from application processes, interviews, engagement and consultation through to risk assessments and permissions.

About us



Beam Arts for People and Places

Beam is a cultural development organisation working across the North of England. Our inclusive approach champions, celebrates and engages artists and communities to shape and animate thriving places.

Our work supports positive community wellbeing and economic benefit.

We act locally and impact strategically.

Our Definition of Art in Public Spaces

Beam's definition of 'public art' is broad ranging and encompasses a multitude of ways in which artists creatively work in and respond to public spaces that engage in a meaningful way with people.

Image:
Tapestries by Lenny & Whale.
Photo © Lenny & whale

Why work with us?

We're an experienced and multi-skilled team working efficiently to maximise the impact of the investment that clients and funders make in our services and always seek to make strategic connections to amplify and streamline all projects that we deliver. With a wealth of experience in developing arts, heritage and cultural strategies and action plans, and acting as creative producers for commissions, we work in contexts from the urban to the rural.

We're experienced in working with a wide range of funders including Arts Council England and National Lottery Heritage Fund, developing projects and applications, project delivery, evaluation and reporting.

Bespoke services

- Creative Producers of public art programmes and commissions
- Place-based cultural strategies
- Public art strategies, action plans and feasibility studies
- Artist-led community engagement
- Artist development and mentoring
- Fundraising and bid writing

Clients

Current and recent Local Authority clients include: Barnsley Borough, Bolsover District; Derbyshire County; Durham County; Hull; Kirklees; North East Lincolnshire; North Lincolnshire; Scarborough Borough; Selby District; Wakefield District.

Other clients include: Buxton Crescent Heritage Trust; Featherstone Town Council; North Pennines AONB/ Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority; South Pennines Park; and University of Leicester.

Board of Trustees

Our **Beam board of trustees** has continued to be a strong source of support and guidance throughout 2023, with skills ranging from Museums & Galleries, Architecture & Landscape Architecture, Finance, Marketing, Higher Education, Business Development and Placemaking. We thank them for their continued commitment to Beam.

In May it was inspiring to come together for our board awayday, hosted at Leeds Beckett University where, facilitated by experienced cultural consultant Lesa Dryburgh, we reviewed progress and explored future plans.

[Read more](#) →



Trudi Entwistle



**Gordon Watson
(Chair)**



Sanaa Shaikh



Henri Pearson



Karmjit Lyal



Bongani Muchemwa



Jessica Richmond



Andrew Ball

Get in Touch

We're always happy to have a conversation to discuss your specific requirements. All our projects and programmes are bespoke, recognising the unique identities, qualities and challenges of our towns, cities, and communities.

Contact our Principal Consultants to arrange an informal chat:





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Memberships

We are proud group members of the Academy of Urbanism, Wakefield Civic Society, and sit on the Wakefield District Public Art Framework Steering Group.



Image:
Kate Watson and Frances Smith at the launch
of Walking Together at Markham Vale.
Photo © Andy Tryner.

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