



## WalkTalkArt Weymouth

Executive Summary Report of Public Art Consultation

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## OUTLINE TO CONSULTATION

Weymouth & Portland Borough Council asked for people's thoughts to help shape an artist brief, with the aim of delivering new public art work in the town of Weymouth. The council value input, ideas and opinions about this exciting initiative for Weymouth town centre. The public art project aims to enhance the built environment, improve the visitor experience and raise the profile of the town.

## AIMS OF CONSULTATION

- To gain qualitative & quantitative feedback by engaging people in conversations and online surveys
- To give a voice to interested communities that will genuinely inform decision making about what the public art commission could be
- To discuss issues arising on-site, to look, consider and discuss possible locations and types of artwork
- To inform and shape the artist brief

## METHODOLOGY

**WalkTalkArt Weymouth** – The walks took place during July and August. A series of walks through the streets with small groups of people, each led by at least two of the b-side. Various groups and individuals were invited to book a free place via Eventbrite. The WalkTalkArt sessions were held twice on each date – one in the afternoon and one the same evening, to ensure they would attract a range of participants. Carolyn Black collated the WalkTalkArt qualitative data.

**WalkTalkArt Online Survey** – The online consultation was launched on 26 July and closed on 20 August 2018. The questions used online were reframed slightly to accommodate the online survey. Dorset Councils Partnership hosted the survey on Dorset For You website. Mark Simons collated the quantitative data from the online survey, working closely with Carolyn Black. 201 surveys were completed.

## THE WALKS THROUGH WEYMOUTH

WalkTalkArt invited members of interest groups to walk through the designated areas of the town.

- The Civic Society
- Councillors
- WayProgress
- Street Pastors
- Council officers from various fields – urban design, planning, comms, town management
- Weymouth College
- WPBC officers
- ArtWey



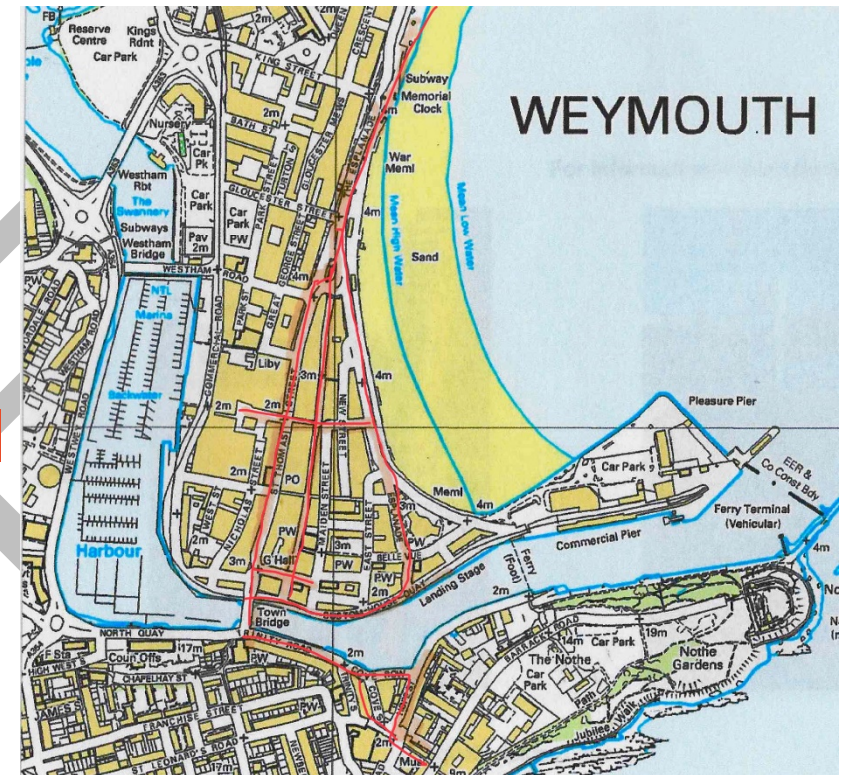


The invited groups represented a diverse range of specialist knowledge bases. Fields of interest were:

- Student visitors to the College
- Local artists/arts groups
- Culture consumers
- Town planners
- Architects
- Writers
- Historians
- Conservationists

## MARKETING

- An online and paper survey were available. Promotion was done through the local news network, social media, e-newsletters and local influencer groups.
- WalkTalkArt invited individuals and groups directly by email and phone.
- Posters were also displayed in the library and other locations; shared on various Weymouth user groups on Facebook, on Twitter via b-side, WPBC & amplified widely.
- A press release was sent out via WPBC communications
- Poster displayed on b-side website



## THE ROUTE OF THE WALKS

The route was shaped by the areas outlined in the consultancy brief, namely Weymouth Town Centre (retail area), Esplanade, harbourside, and Hope Square. Each walk used a slightly different route, to ensure we considered the streets from a range of angles and approaches

## KEY FINDINGS

The results of each of the methods used have been summarised in two separate reports, available on request. This document draws from both reports and illustrates how similar the findings were from both sources.





showing what those on the walk felt the artwork should 'have' or 'be'

**Are You More Interested In The Art Being A Single Piece Of Work Or A Series Of Are Located Throughout The Town? (Multiple Choice)**

187 people responded to this question. There was a clear preference for a mixture of and temporary artworks with nearly 60% of respondents selecting this type of delivery. popular was a single permanent artwork/structure with only 13% of respondents Just an adaptable/modular/moveable artwork on its own gathered only slightly more series of art installations however was reasonably popular with 37% supporting this

Word cloud showing descriptions of 'how' artworks may be placed/experienced/viewed

The walks provided a very physical response to place and were therefore more considered, and aware, of how one might encounter or view the artworks. Comments often related to specific actions/ways of 'how' artworks may be placed/experienced/viewed, such as looking up to see gargoyles, roof lines, or along the streets to the sea.

**Is It Important That The New Artwork Has A Practical Function (Such As A Water Fountain Or Bandstand) Or Not? And Can You Tell Us Why? (As Many Answers As You Wish)**

In statistical terms, found through the online survey, apart from the preference for signposting/trail (60% of respondents), there was a fairly even spread between public drinking fountain, bandstand/pavilion, sculpture, lighting, adaptable structures and other. The top three choices of what the art might be (which could all be part of a trail) were, in this order:

1. Public drinking fountain (48%)
2. A structure/bandstand/pavilion for performances and events (48%)
3. Sculpture (46%)

Again, the walking conversations were more complex, not having been given a range of options. Many of the words used were related to things that the artwork needs to 'have' or 'be'. Such as respectful, meaningful, shared, profound, humble and amusing.

Wordcloud



Works That

permanent  
The least  
choosing this.  
support. A  
method.

**Are There Any Particular Areas In The Town That Would Benefit From The Inclusion Of Public Art, And Why? (Answers Not Limited To One)**

The locations identified both in the survey and during the walks were almost unanimous.

Survey results:

1. Esplanade (65%)
2. Hope Square (63%)
3. Outside Debenhams/Bond Street (57%)

There was an open question following this asking: why did you select those areas? The majority described the reason to be because they are neglected, spread, open, busy and central.

During the walks, each location brought up a wide range of conversations, with many people discussing what kind of work might work in particular places. There was a keenness, generally, that artworks should respond to the locations, work with and for them. Others suggested using existing fixings – maybe we could attach works to lampstands? For example, several people on different walks referred how exciting it would be to have something underneath the bridge, only visible when it lifts. Similarly, several people suggested audio-works, but some expressed concern that the repetitiveness of sounds in a townscape can become irritating. Because a high number of creatives engaged in WalkTalkArt we received several ideas by email which could be considered to be proposals, as opposed to opinions or feedback. The suggestions within those proposals have been added to this list of possible outcomes. No particular preferences were expressed by attendees with regards as to whether the artwork should be visible during the day or at night.

**How Does It Currently Feel To Walk Through The Town And Is It Possible For Public Art To Improve This Experience? (Multiple Choice)**

The word 'unify' came up often during the walks and feedback, which is useful when planning the commission/s, as did the need to create photo-opportunities. The survey tells us:

- St Albans Street (49%) is the most inviting, whilst St Thomas Street (-45%) is the least.
- All streets came out as more relaxed than edgy, with Hope street, Custom House Quay, Trinity Road/Brewers Quay as the most relaxed
- Regards feeling cluttered, St Thomas Street, St Albans and Custom House Quay were considered to be most cluttered.
- Most areas were considered architecturally interesting, with the exception of New Bond Street.

**How do you think art could change visitors and resident's perception of Weymouth? (open text box)**

- Look to the hills – not to the gutters.
- Weymouth isn't perfect but nowhere is.
- Art is something that instigates discussion not something that everyone will like but if its ignored we will have failed
- The stones on poles already show that Weymouth can make things happen. Art does "speak" and people do care they simply are not slow to feel disappointed if the Art work is not significant. Many of the b-side events have been very thin on quality – nice try but not worthy enough and certainly not lasting enough for a Town Art investment. Think Ilfracombe Verity statue – love it or hate it crowds of people will visit specially – but with your mean budget no chance.



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- Nobody liked the aesthetic of New Bond St or the square by Debenhams. They thought it bare, plain and static.
- Someone sent a number of images of seating ideas – supporting the useful/beautiful concept
- Providing stimulating imagery or written plaques for tourist endeavors would be my go to take of action.
- By drawing attention to the quality of the built environment and architectural details – it's not just the Esplanade – and the history and the people associated with it. GIII is obvious, but there is Christopher Wren and Daniel Defoe is reputed to have stayed at the White Hart.
- It would be great if the art could reinforce the zeitgeist with regard to plastic. We generate a lot of it here, obviously – from water bottles to swim flippers. It would be great to raise awareness of the dangers of plastics getting into our seas, as well as create something beautiful and intriguing.

## Do you have a story of your own to share with us about Weymouth? (open text box)

- There were several references to the old tramway
- The relationship between tomatoes and Guernsey
- One about the naming of the Black Dog Pub.
- The Plague
- The Dreadnought Story
- Canon ball shot by the Weymouth side of the harbour embedded in the Melcombe Regis side of the harbour due to what I imagined to have been a disagreement.
- A mosaic in St Peter's Church on the Isle of Portland was laid by a self-confessed murderess.
- I think people should know about other Towns success stories
- Since Weymouth became a Seaside destination in the 1700's it has always been promoted for its health benefits. Bathing machines lined the sands, allowing visitors to 'take the waters' whilst retaining their modesty. King George III famously came to Weymouth in 1789 to recover from ill health. Originally the bathing machines were built for one or two-person occupancy, later for multiple occupancy (albeit single sex).



## CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS TO INFORM THE COMMISSIONING BRIEF

Taking into consideration the feedback we have received, we believe that there is clear evidence that the commissioning brief should be shaped around the following factors:

### Locations

A trail that connects various sites around the town, with specific attention to Hope Square, New Bond Street and the Esplanade

### Type of artwork

There is evidence of strong support for a series of public drinking fountains. The viability has been discussed with officers and specialists and desk research conducted as to what the best options are. Drinking water refill units will be most accessible (as compared to drinking fountains). They are better designed to be vandal-proof, easier to maintain, are accessible to wheelchair users, therefore give best value in terms of provision for the town. They are also on-message with environmental practice in terms of discouraging single-use plastics. Weymouth is all about water, we need to put out positive messages about how we care for it. This approach aligns with other activity in the town to combat the pollution caused by single-use plastics.

The option of a pavilion/performing space was also well received. We intend to use the designs produced for the refill units to demarcate designated sites for creative activities. Those areas can host community activities – places to hold events and deliver performances – offering attractive locations where people can congregate and enjoy what the town has to offer.

### The Construction

The refill units will be encased, surrounded by, connected with, or accompanied by, their visual and material identity. They will be constructed using unique designs, in materials that reference the Victorian and Georgian history of the towns architecture in a contemporary manner. An artist/artists will be contracted to provide designs to be constructed using sustainable materials e.g. ceramic tiles; wrought iron; glass; stone or other. We aim to initially install between 6 & 8 units, which could be added to in the future.

### Permanent AND temporary

This recommendation seeks to provide for both permanent and temporary solutions, allowing for a flexible approach that can accommodate community artworks and events in the future, as well as lead the way in creating something very special for the identity of Weymouth as a destination.

### Visibility

There were many comments about creating selfie/photo opportunities. They too will be taken into consideration when selecting suitable locations for each unit.