



Tunbridge Wells 21st Century Cycle Route Art in the public realm Call for expressions of interest

Introduction

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have secured funding to commission and install 3 feature pieces of public art along a shared cycle and foot path that connects the centre of the town to its retail park and nature reserve. They seek **expressions of interest** from artists and designers to respond to a single or combination of the available sites, to create site-responsive work that will help to energise and invigorate the route for all its users. The successful artist will work with local communities as part of the commission process.

The commission offers the opportunity to produce a significant piece of work that will become permanent fixture in a vibrant townscape where art is enjoying an increasing profile. An overarching vision for this scheme is to contribute to the creation of *meaningful* places. 'Place-making' requires genuine engagement and connection with individual community members, promoting site-responsive works that draw on the inspirational character and qualities of the sites.

Up to 6 x shortlisted artists will be offered a £250 development grant per commission, to further design the artwork.

The project is open to multi-disciplinary design teams, individual artists, or groups.

The deadline for submissions is **Sunday 6 November 2011, 11.59 pm**

**A note on artistic quality* - Public art commissions must demonstrate a commitment to high quality and artistic merit. Quality and merit relate to innovation, creativity, vision, originality and the power to communicate and interpret ideas, as well as to the highest possible standards of delivery in all aspects of a project's development and implementation.

2. Context

The “21st Century Cycle Route” is the working title of a section of the sub-strategic cycle routes identified for Royal Tunbridge Wells in the 2003 Transport Strategy. It runs from the main shopping area in the town centre close to the Royal Victoria Place Shopping Mall and goes north eastward following the mainline railway through quiet residential areas and parks to the out of town shopping/industrial area of Longfield Road.

There are three public art spaces along the route, and expressions of interest made by artists or designers can be in response to a single, combination or all of the sites.

Site 1: Town centre gateway *Jack’s Wood Spring*

Call for a site specific response to create work in a landscaped and grassed area opposite a children's playground and within a new development of flats and houses.



This area marks one end of the cycle route and as such is a gateway either to the town centre in one direction or parkland and eventually North Farm retail and industrial park in the other.

The new housing development and cycle path are built on the former station goods yard, which is where much of the former cottage industries in Tunbridge Wells took place. The railway line is still in use and runs along behind the development.

Themes to explore here are:

The domestication of former industrial space, reshaping the urban landscape :

The cottage and small industries thrived historically in this area. Tunbridge Wells is famed for the production of Tunbridge Ware, a version of decorative wood marquetry, and this is the area of the town where Tunbridge Ware would have been produced.

The former working industrial heart of the railway in Tunbridge Wells: in particular the movement of coal throughout the county by the Medway coal company.

Lives of the goods yard and railway workers.

Space available for siting the finished work: there is a grassed area next to the cycle path, the larger area in the foreground of the photo.

Community group identified to work with: residents of new housing development, ex-railway workers who may have worked the goods yard

Budget for public art within this space: £24,000

Site 2: *The Grassy Knoll*

A grassed and landscaped area on one side of the Grosvenor Road bridge. The site sits between two new developments of flats and marks one entrance into the Grosvenor Park and Hilbert Recreation Ground. The knoll is a grassed raised area accompanied by tree planting and decorative paved areas. It looks over the lake at the edge of Grosvenor Park so has potential to be seen from inside the park as a vista from afar. The grassy knoll provides a perfect plinth for mounting a large piece of work.



Themes to explore here are:

Philanthropy: the grassy knoll marks the entrance to Grosvenor Park and Hilbert Recreation Ground, two parks that were given by two separate philanthropists in the 19th century in order to improve the health and wellbeing of the ordinary working people of Tunbridge Wells.

Water: the lake at the end of the park is man-made and uses the water that springs from Jack's Wood (it is orange where it flows into the lake). This spring originally supplied water for the upper class Calverley Estate, but was redirected in the philanthropic creation of the park, which is sited in a traditionally working class area. The Chalybeate spring located at the other end of Tunbridge Wells town is the natural resource that attracted people to the area and helped create the town itself.

Community group identified to work with on this site: Friends of Grosvenor Park and Hilbert Recreation Ground.

Budget for public art within this area: £24,000

Site 3: ***North Farm Industrial Estate and Retail Park, Nature Reserve***

North Farm Industrial Estate incorporates light industrial units, leisure facilities such as a cinema and large retail outlets as well as the town's sewage farm. The current end of the cycle route also provides access to the nature reserve at North Farm.



Themes to explore here are:

How we spend our leisure time now. The contrast between leisure pursuits in the natural environment or built environment

Food and recycling - North Farm was originally a working farm producing crops that were fertilised using the sewage collected from the town at the sewage plant. This practice is now outdated, but did formerly represent a cycle of nature that has been lost with the development of the retail park.

Community group identified to work with: local school (primary or secondary) and staff and /or friends of the nature reserve

Budget for public art in this area: £12k

For more information please contact:

Polly Harknett & Suzie Plumb

Cultural Projects Managers

Civic Centre, Mount Pleasant

Royal Tunbridge Wells

TN1 1JN

Tel: 01892 554171

Please see **Appendix 2** for context and heritage information about the site.

3. Developing your proposal

The budget for each project includes design, fabrication, installation, fees and expenses.

Project team members are flexible to the wide range of creative approaches these commissions may take. The commissioned pieces should enhance the route and the enjoyment of people using the path.

4. Submission requirements

Stage 1:

Artists must initially submit a written expression of interest along with images of previous works and supporting information.

1. The expression of interest should include (max 750 words):
 - a. Your initial ideas for the commission and (where relevant) describing approximate approaches and a suggestion of materials.
 - b. How you might approach community engagement

- c. Your relevant experience
2. A current curriculum vitae including previous public realm work
3. A maximum of 8 images of previous work (JPG or PDF only)
4. Contact details of two referees

A panel will consider these submissions and select up to six artists to go forward to stage 2.

Stage 2

Up to 6 x selected artists will each be awarded a fee of £250 per site to develop a fully worked up proposal.

Each artist will prepare sketch designs or visualisations, an explanation of the concept for the artwork, how it relates to the brief and how the artist would approach its design, fabrication and installation (if applicable) including details of how the artist will engage and deliver community participation.

The artist will be invited to an interview to discuss their ideas and previous experience.

It must include a budget breakdown showing how the work can be implemented within the allocated budget. Each artist will also prepare a visual display/realisation of their concept for public consultation in each area.

Stage 3

Following the interviews and public consultation, the panel will select up to three artists to undertake the commission.

Eligibility

The process is open to artists/groups/teams who are UK residents. The Panel is committed to equal opportunities for all and the submissions will be judged as seen, purely on merit and without prejudice.

5. Copyright and Detail of Ownership

The copyright for the final design and all drawings/maquettes relating to the design work will remain with the artist. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will retain ownership of the final work when delivered and installed on site and has control over the rights for any photographic reproduction required to promote the scheme.

6. Timetable

Action	Dates
Deadline for receipt of expressions of interest from artists	By Sunday 6 November 2011, 11:59pm
Shortlist / Invitation to up to 6 x artists to progress to stage 2	By Monday 14 November 2011
Detailed proposals from shortlisted artists	By Monday 12 December 2011
Public consultation / dialogue around the shortlisted pieces	December 2011 and January 2012
Interviews	On Monday 6 February 2012
Appointment and contracting	By 13 February 2012
Engagement, production and installation period	From mid February 2012
Launch of public artwork	September 2012

Applications should be emailed/posted to

Polly Harknett/Suzie Plumb
Cultural Projects Managers

Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery
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Deadline for proposals / expressions of interest: **By Sunday 6 November 2011, 11.59pm**

Please see the timetable for details of notifications.

Appendix 1

Role of the selected Artist

The appointed artist will be responsible for the concept, design, fabrication and installation of the artwork in consultation with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The successful artist will be expected to:

- Develop their ideas in consultation with the Project Team.
- Have full creative responsibility for and control over the vision and its realisation in the completed work.
- Attend all necessary meetings and relevant events, as reasonably defined in the agreed project plan and reasonably able within budget, and to provide written or verbal feedback as required.
- Produce final designs for the commission including all technical details, costing, materials and other specifications plus a maintenance schedule giving details of any ongoing requirements.
- Provide drawings and specifications necessary for achieving relevant planning permissions or meeting any special requirements.
- Develop a method of engaging communities, and continue a dialogue with members of the community during the development and delivery of their concept and design.
- Document the development of the work using photography for marketing and evaluation purposes, to encourage a meaningful dialogue with the community, and to ensure lasting legacy.
- Produce and create the commission, or where not directly involved in production and installation to be responsible for effective overseeing of that to completion
- Take part in the press and marketing opportunities relating to the commission.
- Support and take part in the launch of the completed commission and any associated promotional events, including the provision of good quality images and textual material as requested, in a timely fashion.

A Project Manager will oversee the project delivery. The Project team consists of members of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council.

The appointed artist may need to undertake a CRB check prior to the project commencing (if necessary for engagement projects, and not already held), and must hold current public liability insurance to the value of £5m

Appendix 2

Additional context and heritage information:

Kent has a unique position among the counties of England. It is the closest point of land to the rest of Europe, has for two millennia been a major point of entry and exit from the country, the birthplace of English Law and Christianity, in the front line against repeated attempts at invasion, and still has one of England's most important trading ports, Dover. It is a county with rich symbols of Englishness - white cliffs, moated castles, chalk Downs, the Wealden forest, Canterbury Cathedral, hops and oast houses, and the unique sky-scapes of Romney Marsh.

Kent's history has been largely shaped by its proximity to London, by the River Thames as a major conduit of trade, and by its lengthy sea coast facing Europe. Many of the businesses and industries that Kent is famous for, papermaking, brewing and brickmaking, became established to supply London markets. Kent's nickname, the Garden of England, reflects the county's important contribution in supplying London with fruit and vegetables over many centuries.

Tunbridge Wells originally developed as a spa town and early tourist resort during the 1600s, flourishing as a fashionable resort in the mid-Georgian era. Competition from nearby seaside resorts led to developer John Ward and his architect Decimus Burton reinventing the town as a residential centre in the 1820s. The cycle route begins in Burton's new town centre but then heads north through residential streets that sprang up as part of a third phase of development after the arrival of the railway in 1845. The railway boosted demand for property, inaugurated commuter culture, and prepared Tunbridge Wells to meet the challenges of the later Victorian era.

The Victorian cottages near the railway on the first stages of the route were built for working people who served shops and industries in the Camden Road area. These industries included the railway itself, a sawmill, a coal depot and the local wood mosaic known as Tunbridge ware. As it passes under the Victorian Grosvenor railway bridge, the route passes through contemporary developments on the site of a railway goods yard and the Medway Coal Wharf.

At the heart of the route is Grosvenor Recreation Ground, Tunbridge Wells' oldest public park, opened in 1889 and designed by the nationally famous landscape architect Robert Marnock. Much of the land was the gift of John Stone Wigg, the town's first mayor, who was concerned about the lack of recreational facilities for the growing northern end of town. The rest was the site of the former town waterworks, its reservoir converted to an open air pool where the Victorian gentlemen of the Cygnus Swimming Club performed their outrageous top hat, clothes and umbrella race. Surviving features of the Victorian park include an ornamental lake with grottoes or dripping wells.

The Victorian park leads into its 1931 addition named Hilbert Recreation Ground in memory of the mother of its donor Edward Strange. This section retains woodland

and unimproved grassland from the days when it was a small farm called Packs-in-the-Wood or Charity Farm. These habitats support a wide range of plants and animals, some nationally scarce, and have been designated as a Local Nature Reserve.

The northern section of the route passes through another recent housing development on the site of the old town gas works established in 1880. It emerges into the Victorian suburb of High Brooms, which grew up around the gas works and the other major industry of brick making. Much of late Victorian Tunbridge Wells was built using High Brooms' bricks, and the company's red paving bricks became a distinctive feature of the town's streets. It ends at North Farm, a name which records the site's origins as one of the town's original Victorian sewage farms. Treated sewage was used to fertilise the soil to grow crops and support animals, which could be sold to aid public finances. The area was developed as an industrial estate in the 1950s, but in more recent times has attracted many out of town retail units.