

APPENDIX 8(a): MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ART WORKS ON THE PROMENADE

1. Background on Maintenance of Public Art across the borough

Many public art programmes commissioned by local authorities are funded through external regeneration grants (as was the case with Blackpool for The Great Promenade Show and the Comedy Carpet). The local authority is not allowed to build in endowment funding to create a future pot for maintenance and no public art works are totally maintenance free; any on-going maintenance then has to come from the Council's budget.

Local authorities, like Blackpool, are important commissioners of artists and creatives, often giving them their first paid professional opportunity to create work for the public domain. One of the most recent public art commissions by the Council is 'Call of the Sea' - this involved wide consultation particularly with young people, was the first permanent public art work by artist Laurence Payot and has an environmental message. The Comedy Carpet by Gordon Young has won various international awards and is a much loved work by visitors and local people. It celebrates Blackpool's rich entertainment and comic heritage of which the town is proud.

A report was taken to the Corporate Asset Management Group in September 2019 asking them to consider the condition of the town's public art collection, and determine an appropriate maintenance strategy and budget to ensure that the art works owned by the Council can continue to be displayed as designed, or decommissioned when they reach the end of their artistic and economically viable life.

The CAM Group approved an annual maintenance budget of £30K for the public art assets, following initial capital investment funded via the CRRM budget to undertake condition surveys and remedial works to restore the public art works to their original state wherever possible or decommission them at end of life if this was more appropriate, taking into account safety issues, economic viability and the artists' wishes.

Responsibility for a schedule of planned preventative and reactive maintenance for the public art collection resides with Property Services, in line with condition surveys and liaison with the Head of Arts. It was also agreed to include a sinking fund to be accrued for each asset to undertake more substantial maintenance works in accordance with a planned programme of lifecycle management.

Priority was also agreed to be given to key public art assets which the Council would consider as high profile, or sensitive in nature and should be prioritised, beyond safety issues – for example the Mirror Ball or Baby Cemetery Memorial.

Appendix B sets all the public art works presently owned by the Council, their location and maintenance issues/requirements.

2. Great Promenade Show – Maintenance Programme

The Great Promenade Show public art programme was delivered over a 4 year period between 2000 and 2004 with funding from the North West Development Agency and the

Single Regeneration Budget for Blackpool. The Tide Organ was installed in May 2003. The promenade art works originally had an intended life-span of 10 to 15 years and due to the marine environment have inevitably suffered significant corrosion with some works now in poor condition but they have done well to last beyond the intended life-span.

The Mirror Ball was considered a priority for refurbishment and this major project was successfully completed in February 2022. The Tide Organ was de-commissioned in December 2021 after detailed discussions with the artist Liam Curtin and on the recommendation of structural condition surveys.

A plan to refurbish or de-commission is now being considered for the Frankenstein Project in consultation with the artist.

3. Future Plans for Public Art

The Council will continue to consider opportunities for commissioning original art works within its regeneration projects on a case by case basis.

The Council's new Local Plan includes Policy DM25 for Public Art to encourage developers to commission artists to contribute to the quality design and sense of place in developments. The detailed Supplementary Planning Guidance Document for Policy DM25 will be going out for public consultation in June 2022.

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