

Art & the Travelling Landscape

Art & the Travelling Landscape is an extensive collection of artworks inspired by the changing environment along the National Cycle Network. It is based on 20 years of experience in pioneering and commissioning innovative art in public places across the UK, and reflects our enthusiasm, interest and commitment to enhance the Network. We work with local partners and communities to enrich the walking and cycling travelling experience, making the journey as memorable as the destination and arrival.

Through working with artists we aim to create landmarks or environments that celebrate the surrounding areas and involve local communities in the process. As well as extending knowledge and giving more people the chance to experience and enjoy artwork, this work provides a strong sense of location, thereby creating special places to visit again and again.

Over the years we have been delighted with the quality and diversity of the artworks and with the positive reactions they have generated. They have been recognised through awards and high public acclaim. As with most art commissioning and collaborative projects there are fascinating stories and anecdotes, unbelievable determination, and unpredictable responses associated with almost every piece.

Sustrans, the UK's leading sustainable transport charity celebrated its 30th birthday in 2007 and in honour of the birthday, a distinctive new gateway was installed at the start of the Bristol and Bath Railway Path in Bristol; this was the first section of the National Cycle Network to be built in 1979. The gateway, Twisted Arch, is a symbol of regeneration and growth; it reflects not only economic development in Bristol but also marks a new phase for our Art & the Travelling Landscape programme. We are now developing opportunities for contemporary artists to work collaboratively with other specialists, pioneering new ways to work along sections of the Network's traffic free paths.

Image: Twisted Arch by Louise Vergette (Cod Steaks)



Background

Over the last twenty years Sustrans has commissioned hundreds of artworks at key points along the National Cycle Network. During June 2000, at the official Millennium opening of the Network we celebrated a new collection of over 200 pieces.

Since then we have worked with around 100 artists to create over 90 artworks along 14 unique and memorable outdoor linear art galleries that tell people something about the areas they are passing through as they travel along the Network.

Twisted Arch

To celebrate Sustrans 30th birthday on July 7th (1977-2007), a distinctive new sculptural gateway was installed at the Bristol end of the Bristol and Bath Railway Path – the first route to be built on the National Cycle Network. The piece, Twisted Arch, was designed and made by local creative company Cod Steaks.

Four reclaimed steel 'I' beams were twisted to form an open archway, these support branches and leaves 'growing' from the girders to symbolise regeneration and growth. This use of common large scale building materials acknowledges the rich industrial heritage of Bristol and reflects the economic development and the shaping of the city.

We worked with local children on a series of practical art workshops, taking them to visit the path and Cod Steaks' workshop during the fabrication process. The children collected information to highlight the significance of a new gateway to this important local walking and cycling route, and also to nurture a sense of care and ownership for the surrounding area.

The involvement of local businesses is key to the role and symbolism of the gateway and cycle path, which, linking the city centre to outlying areas of Bristol and beyond, marks the regeneration of an important inner city green area and is a local public amenity for residents, commuters, tourists and long distance cyclists.

This project was delivered in partnership with Bristol City Council, Arts & Business, Community at Heart, Barcan Woodward Solicitors and other local businesses.



July 7th 2007 cyclists under Twisted Arch by Louise Vergette (Cod Steaks)



The Phoenix Trail

"The Phoenix Trail is a fine example of Sustrans' aim to provide a network of high quality routes where artwork is used to create landmarks, celebrate local characteristics and to make enjoyable and memorable journeys for those who use them." Thame Gazette, June 28 2002.

This award winning art trail runs from Thame to Princes Risborough through rolling countryside along eight miles of disused railway on the edge of the Chiltern Hills. Following in the footsteps of the local furniture making industry, students from the former Rycotewood College worked with lead artist Angus Ross and Ercol Furniture Company to develop waymarkers and benches, hand-made from locally sourced timber through a European initiative to promote local timber (TWIG).

Winged Shelter by Angus Ross reflects the wings of the red kite, which is common to the area, and Signal Seats act as levers, reminiscent of train signals, that indicate from a distance if the seat is free. Reflective Space by Leigh Roberts invites people to step into a 'picture frame', against the backdrop of the Chiltern Hills. And sited every half mile 10 Way Markers by Patrick O'Riordan represent the transition of day into night, each one depicting the mean twilight of each month. Many other bespoke benches are also installed along the route, plus Three Characters on Poles by Lucy Casson, which are distinctive figures set high above the path as sentinels guarding the travellers.

The strength of local partnerships including school workshops, exhibitions and volunteer assistance, resulted in our success in winning the 2002 Arts & Business Community Award.

The project was sponsored by ACE SE, Ercol Furniture Ltd, Arts & Business, TWIG, South Oxfordshire and Wycombe District Councils and Rycotewood College.

Art & the Travelling Landscape

Recent research has shown that creating a pleasant environment that looks at the whole travelling experience, including community and design of public space is crucial to encourage walking and cycling. Art & the Travelling Landscape plays an important part in creating this environment.

The artworks also provide stopping and resting places for the millions of people that use the Network every year. The collection of work is diverse and can be inspirational, informative and practical; ranging from waymarkers, drinking fountains and benches, large scale viewing points, bridges and sculptures, to intimate work involving text and interactive technology.



Reflective Space by Leigh Roberts



Signal Seats by Angus Ross



Winged Shelter by Angus Ross

Three Characters on Poles by Lucy Casson



10 Way Markers by Patrick O'Riordan





The Chalk and Channel Way

'...good experience of working alongside an arts organisation and the artist himself. I think that the Tower is an imaginative and extremely welcome addition befitting this unique and popular setting at Samphire Hoe, near the Eurotunnel maintenance works. I've really enjoyed my involvement in the project.' Dave Johnson, Eurotunnel UK Terminal Manager

The Chalk and Channel Way rises steeply to link the historic harbours of Dover and Folkestone along the white cliffs overlooking the English Channel, and passes above Samphire Hoe, a new piece of land created from the spoils of the Channel Tunnel.

The iconic Samphire Tower by Jony Easterby and Pippa Taylor was inspired by coastal architecture, and constructed from larch and oak to rise 33 feet from the Hoe. Internal wall paintings by Sax Impey reflect nautical charts and communication systems. The tower also houses a telescope pointing out to sea, which triggers eight symphonies by Geir Jensen, all inspired by local sounds such as the wind, local wildlife and noises from the Channel Tunnel.

Coccoliths by Tim Clapcott derive from microscopic coccoliths, skeletons left by millions of extinct plankton found in the fabric of the White Cliffs. Enlarged coccolith forms were cast in concrete and placed to form a circular seating area overlooking Folkestone harbour.

Other works include Chalk Lines by Ros Barber, a series of ten site specific poems inspired by landmarks along the path and Flora Calcarea by Rob Kessler, enlarged pollen grains collected from the South Downs flora and cast as a series of bronze waymarkers.

This project was supported by ACE SE, Eurotunnel, A&B, Countryside Agency, Interreg, Dover and Shepway DC, AONB, Norway office Contemporary Arts, Rouse Kent Award.

This image: Samphire Tower by Jony Easterby and Pippa Taylor

Top left: Coccoliths by Tim Clapcott

Top centre: Eight Symphonies by Geir Jensen and Jony Easterby

Top right: Flora Calcarea by Rob Kessler



Our supporters

The support we have received from funding bodies, local authorities, businesses and private sponsorship has made the Network's collection of artwork possible. They have understood Sustrans' core values and the important difference investment in the arts can make to our work. The Arts Councils have been particularly significant not only by making financial awards that are key to attracting further sponsorship, but also in understanding the complexities of working with artists and the commissioning process.

Participation and Education

Our projects are collaborative ventures, usually involving local people of all ages and abilities working with the artists to help inform the artwork, nurture a sense of ownership for paths and encourage people to take pride in their area. The visual arts are an important part of the school curriculum and we are committed to including workshops wherever possible. These develop personal expressive skills and awareness of the artistic processes; they are also a way to explore people's wider experiences as well as current issues such as environmental change and conservation.



"I enjoyed the idea that the children started the process and that the finished sculpture was theirs". Local teacher (Wansbeck Estuary)

Memoirs of the Dings by Claire Williamson, Beth Trimmer and Teucer Wilson



"People have welcomed the re-design, it looks so much better! I think it's a really nice environment to live in - especially for children. I enjoyed being involved in creating the many artworks around the neighbourhood as they reflect people's thoughts and memories of the area."
Local resident (The Dings Home Zone, Bristol)



This photo and adjacent: Everything Must Go Schools Exhibition. Artist and photographer: Stefan Shankland



"For many years now we have been trying to clean up The Wandle and your project is exactly what we want, to get people out helping to improve things and getting the young people to see what's on their door step. There is so much to do this is a big step in the right direction." Local resident (The Wandle Trail, Wandsworth)

New directions

Over the next five years Art & the Travelling Landscape will build on this commissioning programme and focus on other sections of the Network. We are planning to set up multidisciplinary teams of specialists, researchers and artists to collaborate and explore subjects that are relevant to Sustrans such as health, environment, CO₂ emissions, sustainable transport and citizenship. The teams will develop artwork proposals in response to their research and select appropriate landscape locations on sites across the National Cycle Network.

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has awarded Sustrans a research grant to facilitate this development. We will also strengthen our existing partnerships with Arts Councils, local authorities, and other funding bodies, and are actively seeking new business investment to help realise our ambitions on a national level.

Conclusions

Art & the Travelling Landscape encourages people to walk and cycle, and discover the enjoyment of high quality public paths, with innovative artworks enhancing the passing environment. Sustrans will continue to commission artists wherever possible and to work on practical projects so people can choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment.

For more information on Art & the Travelling Landscape, Sustrans or the National Cycle Network, visit our website or phone:

www.sustrans.org.uk

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Sustrans is the UK's leading sustainable transport charity. Our vision is a world in which people choose to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment. We work on practical, innovative solutions to the transport challenges facing us all. Sustrans is the charity behind the award winning National Cycle Network, Safe Routes to Schools, Bike It, TravelSmart, Active Travel and Liveable Neighbourhoods, all projects that are changing our world one mile at a time.

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Registered Charity No. 326550



*Genome Stripes by Katy Hallett,
Addenbrooke's to Great Shelford, National Cycle Network Route 11*