

Full Council

Date:	28 February 2023
Title:	Public Art Thame
Contact Officer:	Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To approve the signing and sealing of a Legal Agreement to draw down Section 106 Funds towards Public Art from South Oxfordshire County Council.

Background

2. Thame was awarded Public Arts Funding through Section 106 agreements in light of new developments in the town. In November 2017, The Town Centre Working Group formed a sub-Public Arts Working Group to write a Public Art strategy. The Strategy set out the definition of public art, its value, what needs to be done to ensure the s106 funding is spent appropriately and that the community is involved.
3. The strategy was approved at the Neighbourhood Plan Continuity Committee meeting on Tuesday 25 September 2018, giving the Working Group permission to progress projects proposed in Section 10 of the Strategy, within available funds to completion, in line with the Strategy.
4. Section 10 of the Strategy outlines priority projects. The first project is 'Art Leading Wayfinding', a town-wide wayfinding project that both improves communication routes through the town as well as raising awareness of Thame's Heritage. Included in this was also the aim to connect all new estates into Thame, and the improvement of wayfinding throughout the rest of town (covering Lea Park)'.
5. In 2019 £4,950 of public art funds was drawn down from S106 Ref:15S31. This funding allowed us to engage with members of the community and led to the creation of a Wayfinding report. From this, an Artists Brief for this project was created, calling for an Artist who would lead on the project.
6. In 2021, following a positive call to artists, and through a competitive interview process, a lead artist – Nicola Henshaw – was selected. The Arts Development Officer at South Oxfordshire District Council, Abigail Brown, guided us through the commissioning process.
7. In August 2021 a report was presented to Full Council to draw down further Section 106 funding to allow Nicola to engage with the community and develop public art to meet the brief of the project and see it through to implementation. Approval was given to draw down funds from S106 as follows:
 - 7.1. £47,772.47 from 15S31 "Public art contribution towards directional signage and information boards on the foot ways around Thame". This was £52,672.47, with £4,900 already spent to develop the Wayfinding Strategy leaving £47,772.47.
 - 7.2. £22,957.94 from 15S12 "towards Public Art in Thame", and
 - 7.3. £9,519.59 from 15S13 (of £31,522.97 leaving £22, 003.38 for our next public art project) "towards Public Art in Thame".

8. As soon as funding was drawn down the project started with a series of community led workshops and research.
9. Through this work it soon became clear that trying to implement a single art trail to meet the wayfinding needs of the town, and bring the towns heritage to life would not be possible. Instead, the decision was made to create 3 trails across Thame. These trails would be both an activity in themselves but would also seek to enable people to walk more easily across the town, using the footpaths and infrastructure already in place – encouraging people to leave their car at home more often. The trails will include:
 - 9.1. TRAIL 1: A story trail (leading from Thame Meadows estate on the Oxford Road into the town centre)
 - 9.2. TRAIL 2: A fun fact trail (leading from the town centre across Lea Park – helping you to connect easily with locations such as the skate park, football stadium and rugby club)
 - 9.3. TRAIL 3: A poetry trail (connect the town centre to the new housing estates on Wenman Road via Elms Park)
10. The decision was taken to implement this 1 trail at a time, with the first of them due to be installed in February 2023.
11. As per the Public Art Strategy, powers were delegated to the Public Art Working Group, reporting to the Town Centre Working Group, to oversee the development of the project and approve the designs. The locations of proposed artwork were brought to NPCC for approval on 1st February 2022. NPCC recommend approval of the proposed locations to Full Council on 1st March 2022, and this was approved by Full Council at this meeting.
12. The project then moved into the fabrication and installation phase of the work. However, it quickly became clear that not all of the work designed could be implemented within the first draw down of funding. This is due to 3 things:
 - 12.1. More substantial pieces of artwork being designed than originally anticipated – as a result of the outcomes of the community engagement.
 - 12.2. Increased costs of raw materials (both wood and metal costs increasing substantially)
 - 12.3. The huge increase in energy prices we have seen over the last year.

Funding Update

13. Negotiations have taken place with SODC Section 106 team, who have accepted that a smaller amount of work is achievable out of this draw down of funding. They have agreed that we can split the project into 3 phases as follows:
 - 13.1. Phase 1: the first draw down on funding as outlined in Section 7 of this report. This will cover the cost of:
 - 13.1.1. Research and development phase overall – creating the design aesthetic following community engagement.
 - 13.1.2. Full design work for Trail 1 and partial design work for Trail 2
 - 13.1.3. Fabrication of Trail 1
 - 13.1.4. Implementation of Trail 1
 - 13.1.5. Design proposal for Trail 2 (See Appendix 1)
 - 13.2. Phase 2: a second draw down of funding as outlined below in Section x14 of this report. This will cover the cost of:
 - 13.2.1. Completing the design specifications for Trail 2

- 13.2.2. Fabrication of Trail 2
 - 13.2.3. Implementation of Trail 2
 - 13.2.4. Completing the design work for Trail 3
- 13.3. Phase 3: a third and final draw down of funding as outlined below in Section 14 of this report. This will cover the cost of
- 13.3.1. Fabrication of Trail 3
 - 13.3.2. Implementation of Trail 3
 - 13.3.3. A celebration of all the trails being in place with publicity created in the form of a leaflet.

Funding Drawdowns Required

14. To meet the ambition of completing all of the 3 identified trails, approval is sought for the Town Clerk to sign the relevant legal agreements to allow the drawdown of this funding in the drawdowns outlined below:
- 14.1. Drawdown 1: £40,719.10 from 14S17 “Public Art Contribution - in Thame”. This would be drawn down on approval of the project proposal that will go before NPCC later this year once final permissions and consultation are obtained.
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS: £40,719.10
 - 14.2. Drawdown 2: £22,003.38 from 15S13 “towards Public Art in Thame”; £5057.72 from 15S46 ‘towards the provision of public art within Thame town centre’; and £20,196 (sum to be confirmed) from 15S32 towards ‘public art provision at the Elms Recreation Ground or The Elms Site’.
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS: £46,356.72

Legal Powers

- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act s19
- Localism Act 2011 s1 General Power of Competence

Recommendation:

- 1) ***To approve the signing of relevant legal agreements by the Town Clerk to allow the funding drawdown of both phase 1 and Phase 2 as outlined in section 14.1 & 14.2 to meet the completion of the approved ‘Art Leading Wayfinding’ Project.***
- 2) ***To note the continued delegated authority held by the Public Art Working group, reporting to NPCC, to oversee the development of the project and approve the designs. These designs, along with the locations of proposed artwork for the 2nd and 3rd trails will be brought to NPCC for final approval.***