

Project Profile: A13 Artscape

Client: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Value: Programme: £11M

Arts Strategy, Commissioning Plan, Funding Strategy and Project Management

Duration: Jan 1996 – June 1997 (PACA) then August 1997 – Oct 2005 (W pArts)





Project Aims

To transform the visual envelope of the A13 and to improve the environment for residents whilst making Barking and Dagenham more visible on the route from the Essex into Central London. The A13 is one of the busiest trunk roads in Europe and is a blight on communities close to the road.

Objectives

- To develop an art based approach to a hostile highway environment
- To create easier, firmer connections between communities either side of the A13.
- To harness the skills and creativity of artists to enhance amenity areas such as urban parks, shopping parades, walking routes, public squares and open spaces.
- To give people something to be proud of and combat perception of LBBDD as the bottom of the heap in London.
- To refocus the attention of officers to be more ambitious and visionary
- To encourage elected members to explore new possibilities and look at outside comparators for what could be achieved in LBBDD.

Outcomes

- A Commissioning Plan for the investment of £11m in art based projects.
- Agreement for partnership with SRB programme and transport for London, securing PFI investment in the programme.
- Renegotiating the landscape statement to secure a major input for artists.
- Major commissioned artworks at key sites by Tom de Paor, Thomas Heatherwick, Graham Ellard and Stephen Johnstone, Anu Patel, Pat Kaufman, Clare Brew, Alberto Duman, Shelagh Wakely, Andrew Darke, muf, Rayna Nadeem, Lynn Kinnear, Jacqui Poncelet, Phil Power and Jason Cornish, Rob Kessler. The programme also involved bolstering the local arts infrastructure by commissioning 3 arts organisations to each develop 3 year engagement programmes involving artists working with dancers, actors and musicians and local communities.

Project Overview

When they first approached Geoff Wood about this project, the client was only thinking of a £400K boundary treatment. He developed a bigger vision and showed them how to achieve it. He undertook an advocacy process with elected members and partners and showed how PFI funding could be harnessed to lever other funds including almost £4M from Lottery. The new strategy led to a new attitude towards the highest standards of commissioning and a long term public art programme that is still running now. The A13 Artscape has influenced policy throughout the borough and elsewhere in the Thames Gateway.

The projects include:

Holding Pattern, a large light installation creating a landmark at the junction of Lodge Avenue, using 76 stainless steel needles all tipped with blue luminaires. Organised according to the geometry of the roads, the needles sit on a grid of granite strips which takes on a different form depending on the direction from which it is approached. 'Holding Pattern' contains multiple references to flight, take off and landing, reflecting its position beneath a flyover and flight path, as well as to interacting elements containing or 'holding' a pattern.

A series of earthworks with interlocking geometric forms repeated at different sizes and numbers along the route.

Pump House, a pumping station incorporating programmable LEDs built into a polished reconstituted stone form.

2 artist designed subways by Pat Kaufman and Anu Patel enabling people to move freely and comfortably between the communities either side of the road.

A 3 year programme of engagement projects including dance, light and sculptural projects that gave people a real role in animating their own community whilst strengthening the local arts infrastructure and giving people strong positive experiences in their neighbourhoods.

Artists' park and landscape projects at Scrattons Farm, Newlands Park, Castle Green and Goresbrook Park to improve local amenities for residents and to involve them in the process of design and renewal. There were a great many more projects over the 9 years of our involvement.

