

# **CHANNEL 4 BIG ART PROJECT, SUTTON MANOR, ST.HELENS ARTIST'S BRIEF**

## **1. SUMMARY**

St.Helens Council is seeking to commission the creation of a permanent, high impact artwork on the site of the former colliery at Sutton Manor, which occupies a prominent, strategic, regional vantage point overlooking the busy M62 motorway.

Enclosed with the brief:

- The Channel 4 Big Art Project site nomination submission (includes extensive background material on the topography and history of the site).
- Key elements of the site investigation report done by environmental consultants Gillespies
- The St.Helens Big Art Project management and delivery structure diagram
- The Terms of Reference for the project's Steering Group.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

One-time cradle of the industrial revolution, St.Helens is once more undergoing a profound and dynamic socio-economic transformation. For having successfully overcome the primary legacy of its industrial past, St.Helens is now in the process of radically reinventing itself as a regional location of choice and a "modern, distinctive, economically prosperous and vibrant Borough" via a number of high profile regeneration initiatives.

To signify and further drive this post-industrial renaissance, St.Helens Council, in conjunction with the Forestry Commission, and as an integral part of Channel 4's Big Art Project, is seeking to commission a major artwork to be sited close to Junction 7 of the major M62 motorway, at the gateway to St.Helens and the Liverpool City Region. This regional dimension is important, particularly in the light of Liverpool's role as the European Capital of Culture in 2008, the year when this major new artwork will be unveiled, plus the site's proximity to Manchester.

It is intended that the work will form a landmark welcome to St.Helens and the Liverpool City Region, which, as a result of its originality, scale, and impact will become an internationally recognised icon associated with St.Helens, the Liverpool City Region, and the North West of England, that in its own right will also serve to attract visitors and investment, while creating positive image, identity and pride.

The site itself lies atop a former spoil heap, comprising approximately 1 hectare of brownfield land explicitly intended for soft end uses linked to tourism, recreation, and culture. While owned by St.Helens Council, the site is managed on a long lease by the Forestry Commission as part of the wider Mersey Forest initiative. This is the largest of England's 12 community forests and encompasses a major woodland development programme that has seen more than 2 million trees planted across St.Helens alone in the last 10 years. Within an hour's drive of 7 million people, and highly visible to the thousands of motorists who drive by daily on the arterial M62 linking the region's cultural hubs of Liverpool and Manchester, the site affords panoramic views of the surrounding area, from Manchester to Cheshire, Derbyshire, and North Wales. Significantly, it is also on the flight path for both Liverpool John Lennon and Manchester International airports.

Importantly, the former colliery was at the heart of the local community until its closure in 1991, and a group of ex-miners who worked there not only played a vital role in nominating the site for Channel 4's Big Art Project, but, as the primary project Focus Group, also remain a crucial element of the commissioning process. They share the vision of a high impact, high quality work

that, while celebrating the massive human endeavours that took place there during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, also highlights contemporary energy-related issues, and ultimately serves to put St.Helens on “the map” by symbolising the Borough’s positive resurgence and bright future. To this end the group has embraced the town’s 19<sup>th</sup> century motto - “*ex terra lucem*” (out of the earth comes light) - as a fitting working title for the project.

#### **4. REQUIREMENTS OF THE ARTWORK**

The artwork will:

- Make a big impact & be highly visible by both day & night
- Become a recognised & instantly recognisable “geographic & brand identifier” for St.Helens
- Become a positive icon for the Liverpool City Region & North West England
- Reference the history & heritage of the site and former colliery
- Symbolise the positive transformation, regeneration, & future of St.Helens
- Become an “informal” visitor destination in its own right <sup>1</sup>
- Act as a catalyst for the recreation & leisure development of the immediate area
- Foster community pride & help raise local aspirations
- Reference &/or consider the use of renewable energy
- Be permanent & low-maintenance
- Take account of the site’s topography, ground conditions, existing planting & wildlife
- Be capable of construction & installation within the budget & time frame set out below.

#### **5. TIMETABLE & WORKPLAN**

The outline project development and delivery schedule is set out below – please note that the project’s intended completion date is necessitated by the scheduled launch of Channel 4’s Big Art Project series in May 2008.

##### **March – September 2007: Development and Design**

- Artist shortlisting
- Artist interviews and appointment
- Research, consultation and community outreach
- Concept design development
- Concept design approval
- Detailed design development
- Detailed design approval

##### **October 2007 – April 2008: Commission Delivery**

- Secure planning permission
- Production
- Installation
- **Installation completion deadline – 30 April 2008**

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<sup>1</sup> Informal in the sense that it does not offer or require ongoing staffing and involves only minimal structural maintenance

## May 2008 onwards: Launch, Evaluation and ongoing Publicity

Linked to the above, the anticipated outline artist workplan is as follows:

### Phase 1: Research and Concept Design

- Develop designs for an artwork
- Formally present the Concept Design to the Steering Group for approval.
- Provide a digital copy of the designs for dissemination

### Phase 2: Detailed Design

- Develop detailed designs for the artwork to include materials, costings, programme, production and methodology for construction, installation and maintenance
- Work in consultation with the Community Focus Group and other key stakeholders
- Formally present the Detailed Designs to the Steering Group for approval
- Prepare detailed information to sub-contractors for tender, where required

### Phase 3: Commission

- Produce and install the artwork

### Other

- Manage the commission budget
- Liaise with the Steering Group on press and publicity for the project
- Liaise with the Community Outreach Worker specifically employed for this project.

## 6. BUDGET AND FEES

A total commission budget of £500,000 will be available to the artist for all costs associated with the design and delivery of the project to include artists fees and expenses, production, engineering, transport, insurance and installation of the artwork.

## 7. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The project is a collaboration between St.Helens Council and Channel 4's Big Art Trust, with the support of the Forestry Commission, and the active involvement of a community Focus Group. For an overview of the organisational and project management structure, please refer to the enclosed St.Helens Big Art Project diagram, and also to the enclosed Terms of Reference for the Steering Group charged with overseeing the development and delivery of the project.

Liverpool Biennial will develop and manage the art commission and manage the artist. The company's mission - engaging art, people and place - is delivered through the international festival of contemporary art it presents in Liverpool every other year, as well as on an ongoing basis via the commissioning programme it undertakes together with a range of regeneration agencies across the Liverpool City Region. Partnership is at the heart of this programme and the Biennial considers the relationships built through these projects as important as the artwork itself.

Recent commissions include *Another Place* by Antony Gormley on Crosby Beach, Merseyside (2005) on behalf of South Sefton Development Trust, and *Penelope* by Jorge Pardo in Wolstenholme Square, Liverpool (2004). Current commissions include Lime Street Station for English Partnerships. Further information can be found at [www.biennial.com](http://www.biennial.com).

A dedicated resource is being contracted separately to develop and deliver an associated community engagement and outreach programme.

**John Whaling**