

LONGFORD TOWN Public Art Placement Project



COUNTY LONGFORD
SERVICES





LOOPED WALK IN THE MALL

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Introduction

WITHIN this document there are eleven specifically selected sites that I recommend for consideration as sites for public art commissions. The sites have been selected for a number of reasons including the geographical, historical and environmental elements of their locations as well as their potential for visual impact.

This document addresses the individual sites and suggests narratives for commission briefs as well as in some cases suggesting ideas in terms of the genre and media that would be most successful visually, practically or conceptually in each specific site.

It is recommended that the 'invited shortlist' process be considered for the Public Commission process in relation to these sites. This process allows the panel to specifically select artists that have the relevant experience, or have been recommended by other arts officers or public bodies, or found through independent research and that might have previously worked in materials or conceptually in previous artwork that would be specifically relevant to the selected sites or briefs that the panel are dealing with. In terms of the selection procedure, the invited shortlist process reduces time and therefore is cost effective and ensures quality of work and process.

Artists could also be invited to present their submission in person. This process can be valuable in terms of allowing an immediate response to the panel's queries, while at the same time allowing the artist to explain and clarify their proposals. The immediacy of this process can result in a more dynamic and positive collaboration between the panel and the artist. This option in the selection process could reduce administration time in terms of accommodating optimal communication between the relevant parties.

The suggested websites and literature that have been included, specifically reference public artwork in Ireland. These forums can also assist in the selection of possible shortlist candidates but be aware that these forums do not include all artists working in the field of public art. It is also worth considering artists who have exhibited and created interesting work who may not have had previous experience in public art.

It is recommended that a database of Artists be created and built upon by Longford County Council commissioners. This could be made up of Artists that have previously worked successfully with Longford County Council or have been recommended by other County Arts Officers and commissioning bodies, as well as artists who have been sourced by means of independent research.

The database could be categorized into medium, concepts or sites. Alternatively the artists could be listed alphabetically, with images conveying a cross section of their work. It is important to note that some artists have a broad range of skills with a variety of materials and conceptual concerns while others may be skilled specifically in one material/process. It is therefore necessary to select artists that have particular skills and experience appropriate to each individual site or commission brief in utilizing the invited shortlist process.

Approaches to Public Commissions

There are various approaches to Public Commissions. Often permanent works are chosen in terms of long-term investment of the budget involved and interpretation of the brief. Other processes, for example performance, installations or music, although more transient, can produce interesting, contemporary and valuable results nonetheless. Community and schools are sometimes involved in the development process of a public commission.



Site List

Site 1 Teffia Park

Site 2 N63 Approach road

Site 3 Backstage Theatre and Longford Slashers

Site 4 Canal Walk

Site 5 The Housing Estate adjacent to the canal

Site 6 Longford VEC and Connolly Barracks

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Fig 2. Teffia Park

Fig 3. Teffia Park

Fig 4. N63 Approach Road

Fig 5. Backstage Theatre & Longford Slashers Building

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Fig 11. Mall Walk near Battery Road

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Fig 13. Mall Walk—Looped Walk 1

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Fig 16. Longford Fire and Rescue Services—Small site

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Fig 18. Longford County Council Building

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Fig 20. Housing Estate next to Leisure Centre

Fig 21. Old Bridge over Canal on N64



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

TEFFIA PARK

1 Teffia Park

The Site

Teffia Park is a housing estate located between the canal and the main road leading into town from the N4 northbound (Dublin Road). There is a large, triangular, grassed area central to the estate which is encompassed by three roads; this is the site. The community in Teffia Park is actively utilizing this space which is also located close to the Longford Leader offices and the train station.

Concept

The name Teffia originates from a time when the counties of Westmeath, Meath and a large part of Cavan and Longford formed a province. The north part of this province was called Teffia. County Longford was created in 1564 and took its name from the principal town of Longford.

Note:

There is an active website for the residents both past and present.

Considerations

Because the community uses this site, it is advised that the artwork be located near the perimeter in order to allow for sports/leisurely activities to be undertaken on the green. The material used for the realization of the artwork should be robust, taking into specific consideration the safety of the public who will have access to it. Stone, bronze or wood could meet the above criteria depending how they are used.

Note:

- *Low-lying work that could be used for either seating or play could be considered.*
- *Because of the size of this area there are a number of options regarding the specific siting of the work or works.*



2 N63 Approach Road

The Site

This site is located on the N63 at the turn-off for Ballymahon and Athlone. The site consists of a small, triangular, grassed area approximately 15ft by 25ft by 25ft. There is a planted area on the site at present that would need to be removed in order to site an artwork.

Concept

This site has a 360° view of the local area. It is located near to church ruins and a graveyard. Because of this site's location at the junction of the roads leading between the towns of Longford, Athlone and Ballymahon, perhaps the history of trade and communication between these towns could act as inspiration for a commission.

Considerations

As already stated, this site is located at a junction and therefore it is important that good visibility for drivers takes precedence.

The roadside location of this site means that any artwork sited here would act as a visual introduction to the town of Longford. As it is not practical for the public to view this site on foot, any work commissioned should make a strong visual impact from a distance.



Fig. 4 N63 APPROACH ROAD



Fig. 5 BACKSTAGE/SLASHERS—BUILDING ENTRANCE

3 Backstage Theatre/Slashers Complex

There are two potential sites at this location:

(a) Cobbled Area

The Site

The areas either side of the entrance to the shared building of the Backstage Theatre and Longford Slashers. This is a cobbled area outside the entrance to the building on either side of pillars supporting a glass roofed area.

Concept

As this site is adjacent to a shared building in terms of its function, this fact could be referenced in the artwork. Either two separate artworks could be created for either side of the entrance or one piece of work reflecting both functions (the theatre and the sports ground) could be produced.

Considerations

Awareness of disabled access through this area should be considered so that the artwork does not obstruct the thoroughfare.



Fig. 6 BACKSTAGE/SLASHERS—CAR PARK AND BOUNDARY WALL

(b) Boundary Area

The Site

The walled area marking the boundary between the car park and the public road. It is located outside the car park wall on the grass margin running parallel to the public road. This site has the potential to act as a landmark for the facilities that are located here.

Concept

This site is a long area that could be visually transformed by the incorporation of an artwork. Although the area immediately surrounding the above building has been developed and landscaped, the area near the road looks neglected by comparison. Artwork at this location would complete the development of the property whilst acting as a prominent visual landmark for visitors and passers by. Particular consideration should be taken in terms of maintenance and the chosen materials longevity and resistance to vandalism.

Both these sites are important in terms of community, activity and engagement with the public. All these issues should be taken into account when developing an artwork for these areas.

Considerations

Particular consideration should be taken in terms of maintenance and the chosen materials longevity, i.e. materials that mark, rust or change dramatically from their original aesthetic should not be considered.



Fig. 7 CANAL WALK

4 The Canal Walk

The Site

This area has huge potential for an educational interactive artwork that leads the viewer along the canal route. This thoroughfare has a large number of people using it on a daily basis and the history, nature and current function of the area hold a wide range of possibilities creatively.

Concept

Various elements of the canal could be considered in terms of artistic development: the history of the canal, its function (past and present) and its plants and wildlife.

Considerations

It is recommended that a series of works are produced for this site either by one artist or by a collection of artists given specific briefs so that the works exist in a coherent manner within the site. A series of works could lead the viewer along the canal walk. The artworks could be both informative for adults and playful for children, encouraging them to reach the next artwork on the route. Plaques with factual information supporting the artwork could be considered.

Here again it is important not to obstruct the pathways and if there is a series of artworks, their level of maintenance should also be considered as well as the height of each work so that children, adults and the disabled can all have a visual or tactile experience of the work.



Fig. 8 HOUSING ESTATE NEXT TO ROYAL CANAL—GRASSED AREA

5 Housing Estate adjacent to the Royal Canal

The Site

This housing estate has managed to sensitively retain the atmosphere of its natural surroundings appropriate to its proximity to the canal. A manmade pond area has been constructed in the communal, grassed area of the estate and here lies the proposed site.

This area has been landscaped and is sloping down from a pathway that connects the estate to the canal. The site is more appropriate as a meeting point or an area for quiet reflection rather than being inductive to the playing of sports.

Considerations

At present nothing exists that would encourage or draw people down to this area or offer them an opportunity to sit and enjoy the environment. There is the possibility of creating an artwork that leads the viewer to a seating area. For example, low lying plaques laid in the grass (that could be mown over) could provide a visual trail to the main artwork by the pond. This could comprise of a multifunctional artwork reflecting the natural environment while simultaneously providing a surface to sit on. In terms of materials chosen to create an artwork the natural beauty of the site should be respected.

Note:

Issues arising from artwork that acts as seating should be taken into consideration:

- Will rain water collect in the seating area?
- Its ergonomics in terms of the form being comfortable and the number of people that it can accommodate.
- Public safety: is it safe for children to climb on?



Fig. 9 PAVED AREA OUTSIDE VEC BUILDING

6 Longford VEC/Entrance to Connolly Barracks

There are two potential sites at this location:

(a) Outside the VEC building

The Site

This is the paved area behind the chain-link fence, directly outside the VEC building. This site has the advantage of being set back from the thoroughfare and having a resolved immediate ground area that would not require any further work other than foundations. This means that the majority of the commission budget could be used on the actual artwork and less on the groundwork i.e. value for money for the commissioning body. The site itself has several viewing points and has the benefit of being visible from several busy thoroughfares (Battery road and Principal Street) and from the interior of the building itself.

Concept

Because of the nature of the services offered within the VEC building itself, the brief could suggest referencing the ideals of education and self-development.

Considerations

Consideration should be taken to enhance the site without obstructing the view out of the windows of the VEC building. It could be suggested that the artworks are on plinths so that the artwork itself is at the eye level of the viewer from the interior of the building. It is preferable that those inside the building are not looking out at blank domineering surfaces that could possibly obstruct light into the building.

Because of the various viewing points for this site, the artwork should not just have one principal viewpoint but work visually from any angle within a 360° radius. It is also worth remembering that it will be possible to view any commission on this site at close proximity as well as from a distance.



Fig. 10 GRASSED AREA BY CONNOLLY BARRACKS

(b) Connolly Barracks

The Site

This is the raised grass area directly behind an existing bench. The area is surrounded by a stone wall and is in the direct line of sight of pedestrians and cars approaching from the town center. It already has the benefit of being a raised and landscaped site giving the artwork the necessary advantage of height needed to visually compete with the surrounding environment. Again the majority of the commission budget can be used realizing the actual artwork and less on landscaping.

Concept

The history of this site being originally commissioned for the construction of an Artillery Barracks which served the town until its closure in 2009 is an obvious consideration when designing an artwork for this location.

Considerations

Tall, vertical structures would complement this pre-landscaped area. The juxtaposition of a tall vertical form to the low-lying environmental and architectural surrounding would be visually striking. Particular consideration should be taken in terms of material choice that would be sympathetic aesthetically to the surrounding locale. There is a lot of stone work in the area and a formal or classical piece of sculpture would be appropriate considering the history of the site.



Fig. 11 MALL WALK NEAR BATTERY ROAD

7 The Mall Walk

There are five potential sites within the Mall Walk park and Leisure Centre area. These sites can be dealt with as individual sites or as a collective 'sculpture' trail that incorporates a map so that the public can be lead visually through the park and be informed about the concept, medium and artist who created the work. A large number of people use the Mall and park area on a daily basis. Groups from the Leisure Centre participate in exercise routines that utilize the whole park from running to working on the individual exercise machines placed around the park. Others meet to walk around the pathway that loops the park, while mothers and children are also regularly using this peaceful and cleverly landscaped public space.

(a) The Mall Walk near Battery Road

The Site

This area is closest to the Battery road access to the park. A small tarmac path leads from Battery Road, passing behind St. John's Church before opening onto the park. Site (a) is a large grassed area on the left as you enter the park from Battery road.

Concept

Due to Site (a)'s proximity to the St. John's Church and Battery road it would be relevant to reference Charlotte Brooke or the architectural history of the area. Charlotte Brooke, who is believed to be buried in St. John's churchyard, published a book entitled *Reliques of Irish Poetry* in 1789 and it is considered a milestone in Irish language publishing. Battery Rd. has a prominent place in history in terms of the architecture that was once in its vicinity. The Dominican Abbey that was founded by the O'Ferrall Chiefs of Annaly once stood on the site of St. John's Church. There was a jail where St. Christopher's school now stands and the Connolly Barracks is located nearby. Alternatively a large formal sculpture would be equally striking.



Fig. 12 MALL WALK NEAR PLAYGROUND

Considerations

Site (a) is a fine open site that is set back from the path. A larger scale work would suit this location as there is so much open space immediately surrounding it. It would be possible for the artwork to be visible from across the water depending on its scale. The ground in the surrounding area seems to be very wet, therefore consideration in terms of the ground works surrounding a sculpture should be considered. Perhaps a connecting path from the main thoroughfare to it or a large, slightly elevated foundation would be worth considering. At this point the commissioners should consider whether they would prefer the whole budget to be used to develop the artwork, leaving the council to develop the surrounding site. Because of the large, low-lying surrounds of this site, larger, more vertical forms would have a more successful visual impact in this location. While a variety of media such as wood, bronze or stone would work here, it is imperative that the chosen finish is sympathetic to the natural surrounding landscape.

Note:

This site is opposite a children's interactive play area that is predominantly constructed from timber. There is an existing avenue of trees running parallel to the play area. The history and placement of these trees could be explored in terms of conceptual material.

(b) The Mall Walk near Playground/Leisure Centre

The Site

This site is located opposite the playground that is situated at the opposite end of the Mall beside the Leisure Centre. There is a large grassed area at the beginning of the path that loops around the perimeter of this part of the park (opposite the fire and rescue service).

Concept

There is a view over the river to the fire station and the Leisure Centre. The playground, walkers and runners can be seen from and pass by this



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15

LOOPED WALKS NEAR LEISURE CENTRE

site. The general atmosphere of the site and immediate area around it is of activity and play. Any of these elements could be considered in terms of themes of conceptual development.

Either an interactive artwork or art created through collaboration could be suitable for this site. In terms of the research stage, questionnaires could be distributed to the Leisure Centre and members of the public using the park and artists could develop work in response to the feedback.

Considerations

Artwork sited here could have an element of exploration and investigation. The height of the artwork should be taken into consideration so that the sculpture does not become visually lost in the space. There should be an energy or element of playfulness to the work considering its location. Wood, bronze, steel or stone could all work successfully here.

(c),(d) & (e) The Loop Walk near the Leisure Centre

The Sites

All three of these sites are next to the water on the grass margin between the river Camlin and the pavement that loops the Leisure Centre end of the park. The environment here feels peaceful and natural and there are no reminders here that one is in an urban area; it feels more as if one is walking in the heart of the countryside. There are beautiful reflections in the water, mature trees and a wooded bank on the far side of the water.

Concept

The natural beauty of this area should be respected and enhanced by any artwork placed here. Objects referencing nature and organic forms could be considered and the chosen media could be natural (wood/stone) so as not to jar with the natural surrounds. There is the possibility that artworks could serve as places for the passing public to sit. There are no seating areas in this part of the park and it is an inviting place to stop.



Fig. 16 LONGFORD COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES—SMALL SITE

8 Longford County Fire & Rescue Services

There are two potential sites at the Longford County Fire & Rescue Services.

(a) Longford County Fire and Rescue Services—Small Site

The Site

There is a grassed area directly outside the entrance to the fire and rescue services. This can be seen by people driving by, passing pedestrians and those entering the building.

Concept

This could refer to the service that is provided by the Fire and Rescue Service. It would be beneficial for the artist to consult initially with the personnel who operate from this building about what is important to them in terms of the work that they undertake.

Considerations

This site is small and close to the building, therefore a smaller artwork (perhaps on a plinth) would work visually with the scale of the immediate environment and architecture.

Viewers could view artwork on this site at close proximity as well as from a distance. It is therefore particularly important that the work has a strong visual impact not only from a distance but also up close. A broad range of materials could be considered for this site such as stainless steel, bronze, stone or wood.



Fig. 17 LONGFORD COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES—LARGE SITE

(b) Longford County Fire and Rescue Services—Large Site

The Site

The alternative option is a larger grassed area bordered by the road, the river Camlin and the fire stations car park. This site is visible from the road and although there are no permanent barriers around the site, it does not appear that it is used by the public.

Concept

It could be interesting to have water as a theme for this brief taking into consideration the site's close proximity to and association with water. (The Leisure centre, the river Camlin, the Fire and Rescue Service.)

Considerations

Because of this site's size, a large artwork would be appropriate here. The surrounding environment should be taken into account in terms of material choice. The material used for the artwork should contrast visually with the surrounding environment otherwise the work might become 'lost' in the site.



Fig. 18 LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL BUILDING—FRONT ENTRANCE

9 Longford County Council Buildings

The Site

The stone pillars at the front of the Longford County Council buildings. All four surfaces of the pillars could be considered.

Concept

This could reference elements of the physical landscape and the cultural life of County Longford.

Considerations

This artwork should be a relief or series of reliefs made in bronze. This is an appropriate choice of material because of its durability and versatility in terms of casting.

The relief plaques could be placed on four sides of each pillar and have a visual narrative that circles the pillars' surfaces. If possible, it would be preferable for the artwork to be placed at a height that is easily viewed by all members of society, including those using wheelchairs.



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

HOUSING ESTATE NEXT TO LEISURE CENTRE — GRASSED AREA

10 Housing Estate next to the Leisure Centre

The Site

The site is the grassed space within the existing seating area close to the river. It would appear that the seating was placed here in response to this location being used by the local residents. The area around or in the centre of the seating would benefit from an elevated focal point or an interactive art work.

Concept

The artwork could be focused on the River Camlin (Irish definition: An Chamlinn- Crooked Pool), the origins of its name and perhaps the fish that are in the river such as roach, tench and pike. All these points could inform the development of the art work.

Considerations

Consideration should be taken of the general age group of the residents. This awareness will inform the artist as to whether to develop a playful, interactive work or work that can be experienced purely on a visual level. The piece should enhance the environment and visually celebrate the proximity of the housing estate to the river rather than impose or obstruct the views of the immediate surrounds.

**Fig. 21** OLD CANAL BRIDGE

11 Old Canal Bridge on the Lanesborough Road

The Site

This site is approximately 5 minutes from the town centre on the Lanesborough road. This site has been recently landscaped and there are two gravel areas each end of the old bridge. It is the gravel area the far side of the bridge from Longford town itself that is recommended as a site for an artwork.

Concept

Because of the location of this site there could be a variety of ideas in terms of brief concept. There could be references of travel (both of people and cargo/goods) referencing the canal and its function in the past, or travel generally in terms of the site being on a main road or references to Longford town as this site is located on a main approach road to the town.

Considerations

Because of the proximity of the site to the main road and a near by T junction the proposed artwork should take into account safety in terms of visibility of passing vehicles, drivers and pedestrians. Lighting would be a necessary consideration in terms of visibility of the artwork at night and in the winter months.



Suggested literature and research

By The Way

A selection of Public Art in Ireland

Wordwell ISBN: 978 1 905569 44 1

www.publicart.ie

Visual Artists Ireland website