

EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & COMMUNITY SERVICES
Arts Tourism: Prestongrange & Prestonpans
First Draft: discussion document

Introduction

Early discussion has taken place to consider the possibility of developing the area in and around Prestongrange as a centre for Arts Tourism. The reference point for the discussion has been a model for development in Canada where the small town of Chemainus has been transformed over the last 15 years through the creation of a large number of murals painted on public and private buildings. The town now attracts large numbers of tourists throughout the year to see the spectacular works of art

The Vision

If a successful project were to be developed in and around Prestongrange this would suggest a transformation of the visual appearance of the town and the surrounding area. Visitors would be attracted to visit an area full of artworks including painted murals, sculptures and other large scale public artworks. Ancillary services would develop to support the large number of visitors including opportunities for catering, retail development, overnight accommodation and parking, etc. The economy of the area would be transformed by this new activity and the whole community would become involved in the continuous development and renewal of the artworks.

Management of the process

The model of good practice outlined by Karl Schutz from Chemainus suggests a process of development that requires some particular forms of planning and intervention coupled with the notion of 'organic growth'. It is emphasised by Karl Schutz that this growth and development may well be in spite of public and local agency support rather than because of it. Feasibility studies and extensive public consultation are considered to be inappropriate. Making a start with a high profile project is suggested as the preferred option to inform local debate and overcome any scepticism. Where funding for the first works of art can be made available it is suggested that this will aid the growth of the phenomenon. Experience in Chemainus

and elsewhere has shown subsequent artworks being funded by public subscription and private sponsors. The infrastructure required to establish the initiative seems to be an independent charitable trust involving key members of the community.

The market

Again it is proposed that funding for extensive research to confirm the level of interest in the project would not be as effective as financing the artworks and having faith in the level of interest this would attract. General research about the need for more visitor attractions in East Lothian remains relevant as does the significance of being close to the City of Edinburgh. The suggestion is that the project will attract local people to visit from within a day trip drive radius and that visitors staying in Edinburgh can be expected to add Prestonpans to their list of places to visit for the day as part of a medium to long stay in the City.

Quality/style of art

Successful projects in Chemainus and elsewhere have focused on the painting of murals on public and privately owned buildings. These murals are largely inspired by local history and are produced by artists following a call for proposals made by the independent local trust. The style of the artwork in other projects has been mainly figurative, often depicting local history and tradition. The rich history of Prestongrange and Prestonpans provides a good basis for this approach. The notion of 'artistic direction' and quality control can presumably be addressed through the independent trust which could expect to employ a Chief Executive in due course. The possibility of inviting famous artists could be considered and the possibility of inviting artists to suggest projects (as well as respond to briefs) could result in innovative work.

Where to start

It is proposed that one of the first locations for a painted mural would be the pithead baths at Prestongrange Industrial Heritage Museum. This work would be financed by core funding from the Baron of Prestoungrange as a charitable project. Through discussion, it became evident that establishing a presence in the town by producing an equally large scale artwork there would greatly assist the establishment of the momentum required to further develop this initiative. Plans to produce artwork on

the Sea Wall are also being progressed by the walls' owner, Baron of Prestoungrange. Funding for the town based artwork could be sought from public agencies including Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh & Lothians. The possibility of seeking funding from the Scottish Arts Council Lottery Fund could also be considered for future projects.

Plan of action

As the owner of the Sea Wall, the Baron of Prestoungrange is able to commit funding and proceed with artworks on this site. The request to proceed simultaneously with a mural on the Pithead Baths at Prestongrange Industrial Heritage Museum will presumably require East Lothian Council Committee approval. The establishment of the independent trust should precede these projects with appropriate Board representation and memorandum and articles to ensure that the aims of the project are clearly defined, agreed and supported by the local community. Progressing the works on the Sea Wall and the Pithead Baths whilst seeking further sites in Prestonpans town should ensure that the momentum of the project is not lost. The timescale for the commencement of the project should take account of the following:

- establishment of a Prestonpans Arts Trust prior to commencement of any works
- planning approval
- ELC committee approval for the particular project at Prestongrange Industrial Heritage Museum
- approaches to Scottish Enterprise Edinburgh Ltd and Edinburgh & Lothians Tourist Board at the appropriate stage

Cultural Services

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