

Bridgnorth Art Statue Trail Working Group, Wednesday 8th November 2017

Present: Cllr Julia Buckley, Cllr James Gittens, Cllr Helen Howell, Sue Wilthew, Cathy Fox, Robert Davies, Ian Wellings, Brian Jones, John Price, Mike Grocock, Chris Garside, Louise Rhodes – BES art teacher, John Hart - Civic Society,

Apologies: Cllr Sarah Stevens, Brian Jones, Cllr Carol Whittle

1. Update on Business Sponsorship (Robert Davies & Sarah Stevens):

- Cllr Stevens presented a written report confirming 8 statues sponsored so far (Alfa Leisureplex, BRFC, Bridgnorth Aluminium, Hobson's, Holden's, AV Birch, GBHS and Grainger & Worrall) plus one crowdfunded statute for the community. With a further six sponsors identified, and under negotiation (some joint sponsors).
- Sponsors are discussing potential locations – needs to be fed into JG and IW to discuss with conservation officer for planning permits and H&S. Also, need to ensure sensitivity over locations despite the order that sponsors secured (e.g. SVR)
- When visiting sponsors, show map and potential site visit of locations
- Robert Davies report back from Grainger & Worrall : a fantastic offer to cast the statues in iron on site, no need for patterns, moulds, and reduced cost of £1500 per statue (2 ft x 3 ft), also offer for artists to paint/design on site at the training centre.

The group were very impressed by the generosity of the offer. It seemed to respond to several issues at once (reduced need to pay £3000 for a pattern, and a further £3-5000 for the mould before producing any statues); would keep the overall project costs down, would provide a pleasant environment for the artists, and would keep everything local.

It was also felt the additional strength / weight of the statues would probably mean they could and should be left out all winter. This solves a few more issues (storage, cost of transportation, safety/unsightliness of large concrete plinths around the town over winter). It was also felt the iron would be "in keeping" with the heritage of the locomotive, the railway, and with the area (Ironbridge etc).

Some issues were raised:

- How to transport if heavier?
- Could stay out all winter? Additional costs for maintenance and insurance?
- W&G can now provide a more complex design with more original features – how far do we want to compromise the design / retain complexity? Considering the artists, and the CMWC
- What surface coating will be applied and will the artists be happy with this?
- Would we need to mount on real rails? (narrow gauge? Could SVR / Trevithick society help us to source?)

It was decided to:

- a. Email all the member of the working group (JB) and all the artists (CF) to ask their opinion and feedback on the option of iron instead of fibreglass and any challenges foreseen**
- b. Arrange a follow-up meeting at Grainger & Worrall (RD) with JG, IW, RD and at least one artist, to take the idea forward unless any serious reason not to (following feedback email)**

2. Artists' Evening feedback

- Informal presentation – good displays of model, maps etc. Artists collected materials – pack “how to get involved”, felt we were well organised and lots of interest to participate.
- Artists happy to give their time for nothing, but concerns raised about the potential cost of materials Q: Could we offer a budget per statue for materials? (fixed, so individual choice whether to go over)
- **Maybe invite Jemina (wolves statue artist) to get an idea of actual costs for budget.**
- Artists also concerned as to who is responsible for varnishing / lacquering, and which kind.
- **So it was felt that the Council and group take responsibility for the varnishing.**
 - Brian Jones explained that locomotives at the SVR have 6 coats of paint: 2 primers, 2 paint and 2 varnish
 - James Gittens mentioned 2 local companies that we could approach to seek sponsorship for the varnish (knowle sands, Stanmore cars)
- Artists did not want to be limited to just paint, but other designs, materials and approaches (e.g. mosaic)
- Artists concerned about the selection process – how will they be selected? – nervous about “competition” element – how to match with sponsors? And when in the process? And how much autonomy / direction from sponsor? – how to match with community groups?
- It was agreed to lose the word “competition” and talk about selection process as follows:
 - 1. Artists all given submission guidelines and “to scale” 2D blank sketch of final design shape (2 pages viewed in intersection to depict the full 3D area)
 - Artists submit their design on the paper, into the group, with any requests for particular sponsors / community groups if already in contact
 - Sponsors are shown the designs and select the style they prefer.
 - Sponsors then meet with their chosen artist to discuss the design and any specific elements to be included / emphasised
 - Artist to submit revised design to sponsor for agreement
 - Artist to work with community groups where requested (at least 50% of designs if possible)

Actions:

a. CF to email artists with these revised guidelines for reference

b. IW to revise final 2D outline sketch in liaison with G&W for production – final sketch pass to CF

c. CF to send to artists the sketch and submission guidelines to “launch” the design entry phase

3. Names for the trail were suggested:

- “Catch me who can” – clear link to the locomotive, however the web domain and email already taken – confusion? And/or no room for artistic flexibility, would be fixed on historical accuracy. They do plan to have logo on road sign entry town name.

- “Find me who can” – play on words for trail to find the statues based on the original “catch me who can”. Quirky and fun, but is it too abstract for external tourists / those not involved?
- “The 1808 from Bridgnorth” – Intriguing, raises questions and interest. 1808 being the date that the locomotive was first produced in Bridgnorth (for historical accuracy) but also sounds like a train timetable (for those with more of an abstract interest)
- “Bridgnorth Art Statue Trail” – says what it does on the tin, but is a bit dull and may not generate much interest.

Action: The general mood from the meeting was leaning towards “The 1808 from Bridgnorth” but it was agreed that JB would email all members of the working group and interested parties and artists, to ask for their feedback on the list above, and to report back to the working group at least by the time of next meeting (20/11) if not sooner, by email.

4. Logistics

- It was felt the priority over the next 2 weeks was to focus on confirming the first 8 sites, and these should start in the town centre. Perhaps first 10 in the town centre, and then add on loops further out of town, gradually moving further out.
- There was a discussion as to the length of initial contracts (how long should the statues stay in situ for the first period?) There was a consensus that 5 years was a reasonable period, during which the statue should last okay, and there would be an opportunity for adding further “loops” of statues in the following years 2-5 if successful, and that it could be closed after 5 years if it was felt necessary.
- Questions about what happens to the statue at the end? Sponsors could pay the transportation costs to have it moved to their site; or renew their sponsorship and pay a small maintenance fee to keep it in situ (to cover costs for insurance and re-varnish, repairs, publicity etc); or they could even be “sandblasted” and start again with fresh designs.
- MG suggested some additional sites for statues along Cartway and Riverside and at Innage Gardens village green. Concerns were raised that these sites may cause noise and inconvenience to local residents. It was stressed that the 30 or so sites identified so far were deliberately not too close to private dwellings so as not to cause inconvenience to residents.
- There were some ideas brainstormed around linking the theme of “iron” from the original locomotive and the proposal from G&W, with the site at Ironbridge. Suggestions were that Ironbridge Council could be encouraged to consider a similar trail in year 2, and perhaps in years 3, 4, and 5 we could join up the two locations with a walking trail of iron statues along the railway line between the two.
- A discussion ensued around how to maximise tourist footfall by better cooperating with Ironbridge, and Ludlow and encouraging coach trips by offering package. **It was agreed to contact Sally Themans (Shropshire tourism) to explore the ideas (JB),**

5. Community Groups

- The groups who have so far expressed an interest include:-
 - BES school – working with ages 14-15 or 16-17
 - Bridgnorth Hockey club – got own artist,
 - Bridgnorth Rugby Football club,
 - Hope House
 - WI
 - Scouts
 - Civic society – interested to sponsor a statue. They will discuss at their next meeting and report back to our group
- We need to communicate with the groups, and work sensitively to match them with artists and sponsors to develop their designs.
- It was felt we could encourage even more public engagement by involving more community groups through the press coverage etc.. but this does need to be balanced against those artists who may prefer to work alone – perhaps we could aim for 50% of each?
- **Action: Should we ask for the display boards, we have created to go up into the library?**

6. PR / Press / Social Media Update

- Again Cllr Stevens produced a written report with all her work to develop a very professional website for the trail and suggesting 2 email addresses.
- question for website – cost of this? Can we start with FB? Price is £7.95 per year, emails free.
- **It was agreed to firstly agree on a Name (JB), then establish the email (SS) and then set up FB (SS) (as free) then website last (SS) as cost requirement, although minimal.**
- The plans for the signing by sponsors on 16th November were very impressive, with photographers and press booked; the group were very pleased about all the progress in this area and how helpful it had been to raise the profile of the project amongst the community.
- It was felt that if the offer with G&W was pursued, it should be accompanied by some more publicity at their site to announce the partnership (SS)
- Ask to produce a 3D model of the statue (to scale) to show to sponsors, and for press (RD?)

7. Organisation

- Private FB page for info, used by group, to share documents so everyone has access to the files for artists, sponsors, info packs etc. (SS?)
- Whats app group for meeting updates? (JG)
- An app for the trail linked to website – need to speak to Kev Adams (JB)
- **As soon as first sponsors sign on 16th November, Councillors (JB) to seek approval from Bridgnorth Town Council to release funds to enable production of first statues – aiming for Council meeting on 21st November (agenda on 15th)**
- Date of next meeting (held fortnightly) of the Arts Trail working group, Monday 20th, 6 – 7.15pm at the Mayor's Parlour, College House, St. Leonard's Close.

J Buckley, 09 11 2017