

Comments from Dr Michael Foxley who instigated the project.

I have always had an interest in Public Art in public buildings - probably through my father who was an architect.

My direct involvement included public art in the new primary school for Ardgour (1996) and the new Ardnamurchan High School (2002). The high school campaign group contained many determined individuals and we achieved £1.5m of additional resources and facilities into the school. The flawed element of our programme was the process determined by the Scottish Arts Council for one element of the public art.

Because of this previous interest, I was keen to see public art in the new FWHS. PMP initially suggested a statue in an alcove similar to that which they had installed in a previous health centre.

One of the very positive aspects was that a small steering group was formed keen to positively progress the proposal. This included Dr Chris Robinson of Glen Mor, Practice Nurse Sheena MacIntyre of Tweeddale, Theresa James of NHS Management and myself on behalf of Craig Nevis Surgery. The four of us worked well together.

We were lucky to have initial advice and then to employ as a consultant Ali Berardelli. Although this was one of her first commercial projects as a consultant, she had good contacts, clear thoughts and a great ability to work with us.

We were lucky with one of the main elements of funding, namely £30k from 2007. As a Director of the 2007 Board I had suggested this and helped to ensure that that funding was made available through the local 2007 capital fund.

Ali came up with a wide range of positive suggestions for the art work. The steering group were keen to see stained glass, local paintings, the use of aluminium. Over a period of several months Ali advertised the various commission and we short listed the entries

The stained glass is a tremendous success. It encompasses a number of local features and adds considerably to the waiting area.

The four major paintings are great art and tremendous value for money. They are real conversation pieces. The aluminium cultural / culture aluminium panels are lively and good value for money.

The ceramics are fascinating and of an exceptional standard.

I find the aluminium sculptures somewhat uninspiring and not particularly good value for money.

The dripping noses are either loved or hated and great value for money.

Art is very subjective and there are enough components for most people to like one element. We have the potential to hang local art and this will hopefully rectify a deficiency which is art which will appeal to teenagers and young adults.

The involvement of the Scottish Arts Council was totally negative. Two applications for funding were rejected and we abandoned the third because of the complexity and almost certain prospect of failure. One key lesson is that the Scottish Arts Council and it's now successor should be working to put public art into public buildings rather than failing to assist.

Local Sunart Oakwoods timber facings to the reception desks - this was provided from Ardnamurchan and yet when the timber arrived on site it was described as being of "firewood quality". It simply required final sanding. This oak significantly enhances the reception area.

Ideally, public art in public buildings should be a holistic process involving the architects, builders and developer. This is totally impossible as proven to me at both Ardnamurchan High School and now with the FWHC. Communications between the steering group to the developer to the builder were slow, labyrinthine and tortuous. The developer procrastinated and requested endless confirmation of elements which were really trivial. A good example of that are the delay and two engineers' reports to ensure that we could safely hang the aluminium work in the void. All that was required was a simple explanation of the likely weight to be given to the builder who could have ensured that appropriate lugs were put in place speedily and cheaply. Another example was the potential external wiring to the

external sign. By the time the builder had received instructions for this, the external surfaces had been laid and the cost came in at £17k. It was therefore abandoned. Good communications at an early stage would have ensured that our external sign was lit.

Ali Berardelli was a very competent and able consultant in this matter whom I am using in future projects and will recommend to others. She was repeatedly disconcerted and dismayed by the delays and requests for more detailed information from the developers and the builders. Unless the developers and the builders can take part in a direct personal liaison with a steering group, then all art work should simply be add-ons after the building is finished.

I am currently looking to put public art into the new community primary school for Acharacle. I have told the client, Highland Council, that this will all take place after the building is completed. I have had no communication with the builders. Although I am on good terms with the builders I do not want to face the likelihood of scepticism, scorn or contempt which I have faced in previous projects. In this next project, we will install the stain glass, ceramics, paintings and furniture after the buildings has been completed and are operational.

In conclusion, unless there is a major change by the successor to the Scottish Arts Council then I would very strongly recommend that all public art is installed after completion. In particular, despite the energy, interest and enthusiasm of the four member steering group, and the effectiveness of our consultant Ali Berardelli, the public art exhibited in the public building which is the FWHC is NOT reproducible elsewhere. It took contacts and blood-minded determination to succeed in what we have.

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