

**HOUSING PERCENT FOR ART  
– A RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION  
A REPORT FOR BOLTON AT HOME**

**December 2010**



*Mural, Rushey Lea Close. Artist: Ailsa Magnus, with Irwell Valley Housing Association*

# HOUSING PERCENT FOR ART – A RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This is an Executive Summary of a study commissioned in May 2010. Garry Churchill of Creative Options Consultancy carried out a retrospective evaluation of the first ten years of Bolton at Home's Housing Percent for Art policy, assessing the impact and helping shape and inform the vision for its future development by providing a solid evidence base and advocacy document.
- 1.2. The study considered a wide range of evidence including documentation in the archive files, consultation with community groups, participants, creative practitioners, partner services and agencies, and community consultation carried out by Bolton at Home through doorstep research in a range of sample locations.

### 2. Housing % for Art projects: the statistics

- 2.1. During the period 1998-2008, 213 project proposals were considered, with some 115 different applicants and at least 66 partners and/or co-funders. 152 project awards were made, and at least 87 individual practitioners and artists and 36 creative industries organisations worked on projects.

### 3. Impact

#### 3.1. Community impact:

- % for Art projects have contributed to place making and pride of place, raised local people's regard for where they live and helped create a sense of community in new developments.
- Many of the projects have helped integration across different generations, promoted understanding of different groups, and increased community participation including by 'hard to reach groups'.
- Some projects have made specific contributions to health and well-being.
- % for Art has promoted skills development related to employability, and given communities confidence to plan and lead projects and work with other agencies.

#### 3.2. Environmental impact

- The scheme has created a legacy of small-scale works of art and artist-designed practical features, adding distinctiveness to many of Bolton's streets and estates and encouraging public acceptance of public art.
- Most physical works have lasted well, with very little vandalism, although a few projects did not have a sufficiently robust approach to design or materials.
- The scheme has had some influence on planners and designers, especially in promoting community involvement and helping them understand residents' needs and preferences.

### **3.3. Economic impact**

- The scheme provided a direct stimulus to the local creative economy, and helped develop a pool of experienced freelance practitioners. There have been close links with strategies to develop creative industries.
- The scheme has levered match funding of at least £1.25 million up to 2008.
- Housing % for Art has contributed to the marketing of Bolton locally, regionally and nationally, and attracted national attention as a model of good practice.

### **3.4. Impact on other services**

- Housing % for Art has encouraged planners to engage communities in creative ways as well as through formal statutory consultation, and has provided a model of good practice for engaging with tenants.
- The commitment of the housing associations has been maintained, with Bolton at Home providing specialist advice, information and training for housing officers.

## **4. Comparison with nearby Housing Market Renewal Pathfinders**

**4.1.** While the Pathfinders in some neighbouring areas had benefits including additional external funding, regional networking and very specific delivery targets, Bolton had the advantages of:

- a long term policy, with continuity and consistency
- a dedicated and rolling budget allocation, enabling better planning of resources
- resources from within housing budgets, therefore not dependent on the uncertainties of external funding and fixed-term funding
- leadership by specialist officers on regular contracts
- ownership of the policy by senior managers and political leaders
- the policy being embedded in housing work through acceptance of the Housing % for Art Protocol
- value for money and close control, through direct project management.

## **5. Conclusions – achievements against objectives**

**5.1.** The evaluation concluded that the Housing % for Art policy had:

- been very successful in developing a range of arts-based activity and projects aimed at place-making
- been successful in contributing to the economic well-being agenda by putting additional value into communities and into the areas where they live, and enhancing the environment and the social fabric of communities
- made some progress in developing a strong business case for the creative use of art so that it is not seen as marginal to regeneration activity
- not yet achieved the full potential of creating a tool-box of approaches to arts activity that fits into the wider regeneration tool-box.

**5.2.** The report shows that there is a strong body of evidence that the Housing % for Art policy achieved its strategic aims of contributing effectively to sustainable regeneration and developing pride of place. In supporting other local policies, including the Sustainable Community Strategy, overall Housing Strategic Priorities and Bolton at Home's strategic objectives, % for Art is a scheme of which Bolton can be justifiably proud.

## 6. Recommendations

6.1. Recommendations presented for consideration by Bolton at Home were:

### 6.2. The future of the Housing % for Art policy

- To continue the policy, adapted as necessary, for the social, environmental and economic impact and benefits it brings for tenants in Bolton.
- To maintain the commitment of the partners, through the Bolton Community Homes Housing % for Art Protocol.
- To refocus the policy as a Housing Creative Engagement Policy.

### 6.3. Working of the scheme

- To relate all projects explicitly to the updated objectives, which should be framed such as to be specific and measurable, and evaluate them on this basis.
- To be flexible in how the percentage contribution from developments is levied.
- To have adequate long term care and maintenance plans for all physical works of art, and a de-commissioning policy.
- To continue the approach of having arts officers/creative engagement officers based in each of the neighbourhood teams.
- To plan borough-wide initiatives to deal with strategic issues which are relevant to the whole borough rather than just a specific neighbourhood.
- To research the scope for offering formal shadowing, mentoring or apprenticeships.

### 6.4. Advocacy for the policy

- To continue to provide specialist leadership, training and support to the housing associations and other social housing landlords.
- To develop a marketing and public relations strategy for the policy and the work it supports.
- To prepare a set of short case studies, and a 'good practice' guide distilling the experience and learning gained in running the % for Art scheme.
- To engage as fully as possible with regional and national networks, and to press for a wider North West Housing Regeneration Arts Partnership.
- To explore the scope for international links, with innovative social housing and regeneration schemes in other countries in the European Union.

### 6.5. Evaluation of the policy

- To adopt a standard approach to evaluation, related to the strategic objectives of the scheme and to the specific objectives agreed for each individual project, with consistent data collection and all projects evaluated for equalities impact assessment.
- To compile a short annual evaluation report for the Board of Bolton at Home and partners.

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