



Sheffield Visual Arts Group

Newsletter March 2023

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2023!

Sheffield's Culture Strategy

It has been recognised by Sheffield City Council that Sheffield needs a properly developed strategy, not least in order to be able to make credible bids for Arts Council monies. The City has adopted the Sheffield Culture Collective strategy as an interim, but now has plans to develop a more substantial approach.

A paper has been put out to tender with a plan to develop the new strategy, and the intention is to bring the proposed strategy back to the committee in the autumn of 2023. There has been investment from Sheffield City Council, the University of Sheffield and the Arts Council so far.

The approach was confirmed at the SCC Economic Development, Skills and Culture Policy Committee Meeting held on 22 February 2023. The relevant minute is attached.

At the Committee meeting, Rebecca Maddox of Sheffield City Council, confirmed that the Local Area Committees would be a forum for community discussion about the development of the strategy.

Subsequently, the Central Local Area Committee on 7 March was based on that theme: *the City's Culture, Arts and Heritage strategy*. Its invite stated: "Culture, Arts and Heritage are all important sectors to the city of Sheffield that not only improve our quality of life but have significant economic and employment benefits. They also make Sheffield a great and

inclusive place to work, study, invest, and live in.” We agree. Attached, you will find the points made at the meeting by SVAG members.

Also interesting is that the South Yorkshire Combined Authority Mayor, Oliver Coppard, is hosting a breakfast conversation on 15 March, on “Creative South Yorkshire”, when he aims to bring together senior industry decision makers, influencers and SYMCA officers to “help shape the future of the sector in the region”. Registration ended on 10 March. Are you going? We would like to hear about it!

John Lewis

It has been announced that the City Council is now considering 6 bids that have been made for the offer of a 250 year lease on the John Lewis building, but details have not been released, and a decision is not expected for some time. We have made sure that the Council has been made aware of our suggestion that the Central Library be moved into it, and then that the Graves Building on Surrey Street be turned into an Arts Centre. We are not optimistic that they will take this on board.

Thanks to those of you who have corresponded to us on this. We have appreciated your interest.

Surrey Street building: Central Library and Graves Art Gallery

Unfortunately, there has been another development: a deterioration to the outside of the Graves Building. This has meant a consequent fencing off of the pavement, to ensure safety. We have not yet seen how the building on Surrey Street can be repaired and developed and increased in its use by the public: a major sadness for culture in Sheffield.

We are of course aware of the huge financial difficulties facing the City, after 13 years of cuts by Central Government to their funding.

But interesting to see that the Scottish government has recently abandoned its plans for a £7 million cut in arts funding, after the Campaign for Arts launched an emergency campaign to stop them.

Also worrying is the announcement of redundancies in the Central Library, seemingly justified as being a necessary re-structuring of the staffing arrangements. This may have an impact on the opening of the Graves Gallery, and is sadly detrimental to the development of culture in the city. The indication that the new most senior post in the library does not have to be an experienced librarian is also not very reassuring....

Sheffield Public Artworks Project (SPAR)

We have worked with Wessex Archaeology on this project. The current stage of the project is to invite members of the public to suggest additional local public art works to add to their records: “ Now, the team behind the Sheffield Public Artworks Map wants the eagle-eyed people of Sheffield to come forward with suggestions of lesser-known artworks that haven’t yet been added to the map. ” See here: www.wessexarch.co.uk/sheffieldpublicart

Here is The Star’s recent take on the project: www.thestar.co.uk/arts-and-culture/art/sheffield-public-artworks-map-15-photos-of-the-most-weird-and-wonderful-public-art-on-citys-streets-3914260

SVAG is a member of Joined Up Heritage Sheffield (JUHS), which has been positive about the project. Our member Denise West has been invited to speak about the project at their bi-monthly meeting, on 28th March, at 10am, when Natasha Bramall from Wessex Archaeology will also be speaking. This meeting is in person at National Emergency Services Museum, The Old Police/Fire Station, West Bar, Sheffield S3 8PT.

Or via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84969363554?pwd=Nkp3QWdHbVpwQjZMWndqSTRwdTN1Zz09>

We are delighted that JUHS's strategy has recently been adopted by the Council

New Public Art Works

- There is a plan to install a statue by Jason Turpin Thomas, in Kelham Island, to represent the well-known knife maker, Stan Smith. Sheffield University engineering students will be involved.
- We have also heard that there is a plan to commission Anthony Padget to produce a piece to celebrate the visit to the World Peace Congress to Sheffield by Picasso in 1950. The location seems to be under discussion, with both the Peace Gardens and Graves Park under consideration.

Musings

These are posted monthly on our webpage by one or other members of our Group. The most recent is by Robert Scott, on the Royal William Yard in Plymouth, as an example of how a site build for one purpose can be adapted for another (eg John Lewis).

www.sheffieldvisualartsgroup.co.uk/art-musings/

And the Musings from previous months are here:

www.sheffieldvisualartsgroup.co.uk/our-past-interests-and-activities/archived-art-musings/

Other things of interest

- We understand that Sheffield Museums is interested in organising some **Art Trails**, to start from the Millennium Gallery, and visiting

major art works on the streets of Sheffield. Good idea! We will be discussing this with them later this week.

- Did you know that “**Art UK**” has had a long term project, funded by Christies, to publish a Public Catalogue, to include all public oil and tempura works? Sheffield’s publicly owned works are included and there is a copy of the catalogue in Graves. Since 2006, BBC has been involved with its digitisation, which is now on-line.

[Art UK | Discover Discover](#)

- Canada House on Commercial Street has been chosen to house **Harmony Works** as a centre for music and young people – a move to be welcomed. [Harmony Works – Sheffield – A Home for Music](#)
- And here is the link to “**Look Up**”: a new experience in a very innovative format: “A free, augmented reality art trail occupying the rooftops of buildings around Sheffield City Centre ”: www.welcometosheffield.co.uk/look-up/look-up-and-drift/

Who we are

Our Manifesto We campaign to promote and celebrate Sheffield’s outstanding visual arts, at a regional and national level. The City of Sheffield owns an internationally recognised collection of 20th-century paintings and works on paper, as well as a huge array of other treasures. We want to improve access to this vibrant collection.

Our group wants the economic and cultural importance of Sheffield’s extraordinary art to be reflected in local and national policymaking, and

ultimately for Sheffield to have the pioneering cultural centre for the arts which it deserves.

Our Group Objectives:

- To promote the city's outstanding collection of visual art
- To improve access to the city's collections and to expand these collections
- To develop, with others, a long-term strategy for the arts relevant to all the citizens of Sheffield

Where we stand

The Visual Arts Group came together originally when the existence of the Graves Art Gallery was threatened, back in 2011. Finding long-term solutions for the protection and accessible display of Sheffield's major art collections is inseparable from support for a wide range of contemporary art practices; both are fundamental to the future life of the City. Together we should be developing networks of interested parties, practitioners, communities etc. in order to be as inclusive as possible in our planning. Public engagement is vital.

How we work

We continue to campaign, lobby and influence by writing occasional papers, letters and emails to: the Arts Council, art and cultural organisations and charities; MPs; South Yorkshire Region Mayoral Combined Authority officials; City councillors; Council officers; Local Area Committees; and the press, community newsletters etc.

We network widely, and are members of "Joined Up Heritage Sheffield" (JUHS). We have an active partnership with Wessex Archaeology over the Sheffield Public Art Recording (SPAR) project. We attend relevant meetings of JUHS and SPAR and report back to our own monthly group meetings.

In addition we initiate our own occasional public meetings in the form of Study Days.

We hope you will find our newsletters of interest. We welcome your comments and suggestions

Not of interest? Just let us know and we will remove you from our mailing list

Kind Regards

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www.sheffieldvisualartsgroup.co.uk

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