

Evaluation Report

Final Frontier – Gateshead Riverside Park Project

June 2009



Executive Summary

Rednile Projects Ltd delivered successfully against the original brief set out by Gateshead Council and the aims and objectives set out in their own initial proposal.

The 42 engagement sessions were highly successful with a variety of art forms and activities available for the 214 young people that took part, challenging their perceptions of public art and making them more aware of their immediate surroundings.

The audience were highly responsive to the temporary public art works, with many people commenting that the high concentration of colour added a much needed vibrancy to the area.

The project as a whole was managed and delivered to a high standard, an opinion which was shared by all involved in the project. Rednile were very responsive to the needs of everyone involved and acted quickly when problems arose.

Locating artists who are able to deliver both engagement programmes and create temporary public artworks is a difficult task in itself and rednile Projects successfully contracted four artists capable of achieving this.

This project has made a good start to the overall regeneration of the park, placing it in local and regional mindset, as a place in its own right. A continuation of projects like this would certainly be beneficial to the overall regeneration of Gateshead Riverside Park.

Evaluation Brief

The brief for this evaluation was to report on the success of the Final Frontier project based on quantitative data collected throughout the project and qualitative material gathered from partners, artists and participants.

Project aims and outcomes

Final Frontier was an eight month, two phase project initiated and commissioned by Gateshead Council and delivered and curated by rednile Projects Ltd. The project is part of the Gateshead Riverside Park Strategy with the overall aim of regenerating the area along the riverside into "a destination in its own right".*

Rednile initiated a residency programme where they and four artists, both local and national, were given an eight to ten day residency in which to engage with the local community through workshops and develop five new temporary public artworks for the Gateshead Riverside Park. Artists were chosen through an open call process which allowed for all North-East and national artists to be considered for this programme.

Sophie Lisa Beresford and Sarah Bayliss were recent graduates from local universities which gave them a valuable opportunity and new experience. Jo Ray and David Thomas were more established artists; this project gave them the opportunity to enhance their experience on large scale projects linking community engagement with temporary public art developments.

The project's overall aims and outcomes were to:

- Create unique and innovative temporary art works/ activities within the park
- Engage children, young people and adults in interesting activities and allow them to positively contribute
- Develop communication, team work, planning, confidence and aspirations
- Encourage ownership and pride of artwork and Riverside Park
- Encourage interest in local heritage and environment
- Encourage healthy recreation of local residents by using the park
- Encourage visitors to explore the area and return
- Assist in community cohesion and helping to achieve life-long learning
- Create a legacy on which to build
- A result that has – IMPACT, QUALITY, BEAUTY

Phase One - Engagement Sessions

Rednile Projects Ltd

Groups worked with include –

Half term group (5-11yr olds) – 10hrs contact time – 24 participants

Rednile worked with the participants on making their own fantasy models of the park, introducing them to scale, colour and design. They also sought to find out the young people's perceptions of the park and how they would like it to be, raising awareness and aspirations of their surroundings and ownership of their neighbourhood. It was noted that the children worked very well together, being a lot less disruptive than they normally would have been. The older children assisted the younger ones with some of the more challenging tasks developing a sense of team work that was not always apparent with the group. Common thoughts from the children were that the park was dangerous and unsafe and their parents would not allow them to play there. The group created a series of new parks which went on display at Gateshead Civic Centre.

'We were amazed at how vocal the children were about their area and how many ideas they had.' Suzanne, rednile Projects Ltd

'Positive outcome to the parks project as they really got involved and had some great ideas.' Tammy, Youth Worker, Dunston Community Centre



Family drop in – 7hrs contact time – 15 participants

Rednile provided participants with alternative maps of the park, using craft materials, stencils and various other materials. The participants were actively encouraged to create their own parks, discussing their ideas and visualising them through art.

Derby Day – 4hrs contact time – 43 participants

This was the first session of the whole project and so very important in terms of consultation with local residence and gaining initial interest from participants. This session also allowed rednile to establish key contacts in terms of the engagement sessions overall, that had not already been established. Activities provided included making windmills and a map of the park, on which children added their ideas for their surroundings.



Jo Ray

Groups worked with included –

Young women's group – 19hrs contact time - 8 participants

This group worked with the artist on various activities - drawing memory and sensory maps with blindfolds, photography, morse code, signalled and deciphered messages, photo journal walks, designed, painted and constructed temporary sign making and flag making. The group responded well to the activities, really engaging their idea with the park and the artist.

'their signs at first echoed very practical needs asserted by usual public signage (no litter etc..) but moved into a more poetic realm as the day progressed, they began to consider more fantastic uses of the space such as 'think about the person you love here.'

Jo Ray, Artist in Residence

The group produced a large scale map based on the park, creating a montage of images and stories relating to their experiences. This became part of the exhibition at Gateshead Civic Centre and gained a lot of interest from public and council workers.



'The large place-making map got people thinking about their local area and attracted interest when put on display in the Civic Centre. It definitely helped to raise the profile of the Council's Riverside Park strategy- an outcome of which is that we have been asked to present a paper to Gateshead Strategic Partnership about the Riverside park strategy and Rednile/Final Frontier project' Bryn Roberts, Project Leader (Planning), Gateshead Council

The girls group initiated and led a 'face art' session, in which they made creative designs for eye makeup and photographed them. The big map was also laid out, and was added to throughout the sessions as girls talked about their locale and their thoughts on the area.

Family drop in sessions – 10hrs contact time – 15 participants

Jo provided the young people with template periscopes that could be decorated. This session seemed particularly successful ...

'the simple 'magic' of the periscope seemed to be appreciated by the younger participants and parents alike, who this week joined enthusiastically after initial reticence.'

Jo Ray, Artist in Residence



The group initiated two visits, informed by what they had learnt during the initial sessions – one to the Theatre Royal to see a production of Treasure Island and another to view the Yoko Ono exhibition at the Baltic. This linked to Jo's practice as an artist and her interest in the way things are viewed and tricks of imagery and illusion. The artist commented that....

'the girls really engaged with the participatory aspects of the Yoko Ono exhibition, creating good links between what they experienced at the exhibition and what they created in the workshops.' ***'They also engaged well in conversation about how the scenery was painted and the productions were staged.'***

A positive point in terms of individual development was from one girl who was interested in photography looking at art and nature, was encouraged by Jo and Suzanne to visit Andy Goldsworthy's 'Cone' as part of her research.

Sarah Bayliss

Groups worked with included –

Family Drop in sessions (all ages) – 10hrs contact time – 21 participants

Birdhouses were made in the first session with participants asking to make more than one. This session engaged all age ranges well with young people using tools and learning new skills for the first time. The young people were keen to know where in the park their birdhouses would be sited with many of them attending the Final Frontier event and following the birdhouse maps created by the artist. A sound workshop was provided on the second family day with direct interaction within the park using different hearing devices and objects. Both of these sessions allowed the participants to explore the park.

'Great benefits to the children, being able to see their finished product and how happy they are to have achieved it' Tammy, Youth Worker, Teams Community Centre



Knitting group at Fountain Court (age group 60+) – 8hrs contact time – 6 participants
The knitting club was based around a very informal 'knit and natter' style group, with the artist hoping it would develop organically to incorporate the stories and discussions heard, with work that was made during the session. This group lasted four sessions due to lack of commitment from participants. The artist still felt that this was worthwhile however as it informed future decisions on workshops and how to approach them.

Half Term workshops (6-15yrs) – 14hrs contact time – 24 participants
During these sessions birdhouses and tugboats were made. Again the children and young people were very responsive to the hands on activities and enjoyed the links and interaction with the 'bankies'. Many of the participants discussed the possibility of sailing the tugboats down the river – which is to be organised at a future date by the artist.

'Creativity wise – these activities really helped their concentration and their cooperation and skills in working with other people.' Tammy, Youth Worker, Teams Community Centre



'The Tugboat making was great as children who wouldn't normally participate did and for the whole session.' Tammy, Youth Worker, Teams Community Centre

Fathers and children group (age group 0-5yrs) – 2.5hrs contact time – 9 participants
This session concentrated on Tugboat making, creating activities and discussions through talking about the tugboats and working together to make them, allowing fathers and their children the time to work together and develop relationships and communication. This session was discontinued after realisation that the group was outside of the catchment area, unfortunately staff were very busy with the opening of the new Teams Children's Centre to be able to organise regular sessions on the Saturday that the dads wanted to meet. The dads said they were willing to travel to Teams as they really wanted to keep it going, however staff did not confirm anything despite rednile and the artist's efforts. The first session was successful and a group was formed that would be worth developing in the future.



Overall Sarah's workshops were a great success introducing the participants, especially the young people, to communication, team work, sharing ideas and taking pride in their local environment. Although some of the activities were challenging for the age group with difficulty in using certain tools and time allowed for certain tasks, the children seemed to be very happy that they had achieved a positive outcome.

Sophie Lisa Beresford

Groups worked with included –

DJ sessions with boy's group – 14 hrs contact time – 17 participants

The DJ sessions were very ad hoc with Sophie spending a lot of time getting to know the young people and how they interact with music and lyrics. The young people were very intrigued by Sophie and her different perspective on life and her opinions, something that at first they did not seem comfortable with but after the first few sessions really engaged with. These sessions were more about interaction and understanding music through DJing and dancing than having an actual outcome. Sophie commented that ...

'the lines of communication became more open as the sessions progressed, the young people seemed more at ease in expressing themselves through the music, body and dance.'



'The DJ sessions were very popular with the boys group – 10 of which actively engaged where previously they did not' Dawn, Youth Worker, Teams Community Centre

Fantastic Art Club – 8hrs contact time – 12 participants

This session began in an ad hoc fashion but grew into more structured sessions after young people showed interest. Sophie provided them with large canvasses and paint, along with music, and allowed them to be creative with no goals or objectives. Although a little apprehensive at first they did begin to relax and began producing more responsive art work to their surroundings and environment. This session worked well as it made them think differently to their more structured approach to painting learnt at school.

'The second canvas they did showed much improvement with far more creativity through imagery, rather than just writing their names.' Dawn, Youth Worker, Teams Community Centre

Crystal Healing sessions – 2hrs contact time – 10 participants

The artist introduced the medium of crystal healing which brought individuals together in an intimate setting who wouldn't normally share an experience like that. This session was regarded as highly beneficial by the youth worker who attended, allowing her to witness different sides to the young people that had not been apparent beforehand.

One young girl commented that she now understood why the artist danced the way she did and even tried out the crystal healing on family members at home.

The links between the art activities and the park were not always apparent within the artists' sessions however the participants were introduced to a variety of new interests they would not normally have been able to engage with. Sophie's highly responsive way with the young people meant that strong relationships were built on trust and new understanding allowing the young people to express themselves in many different ways. Having less emphasis on an outcome based process allowed for more development in their understanding of a variety of issues and experiences.

David Thomas

Groups worked with included –

Girls group, Dunston Drop in – 40hrs contact time – 10 participants

The artist worked with the group on creating a structure/shelter space for their personal use, exploring how to design and build as part of a team with the participants drawing up designs

on how they wanted the structure to look. David gave an introduction to his practice during the first session in which very disaffected young people actually responded and asked questions.

Due to the artist being based in Birmingham the timetable for the sessions were a little disjointed which made building relationships difficult. The artist had hoped that interaction with the space would be more apparent after it had been built. Unfortunately the shelter was not able to return to the drop in after the event due to the surface ground being re-tarmaced and no other means of storing the shelter. This did seem to dishearten them slightly; however the artists did comment that...

'The space challenged what they thought they were capable of doing – allowing them to express and push themselves'



They enjoyed working as part of a team and learning new basic skills with the tools and were highly responsive to ideas for using the space once built. The shelter was used at the final event as the main information point of the day. There were a few problems with regards to the youth worker in that she seemed fairly negative, expecting too much from the sessions in the time that was allocated.

Overall these sessions did achieve the goals set out and it should be noted that the participants were very hard to reach young people- they were in alternative education and some of their confidence was so low that they would not even speak or engage with the activity even though they had in the past shown real pleasure in being creative in the comfort of their own environment.

Family day – 4hrs contact time – 0 participants

David's session was to create sculptures based on architecture and bridges. This workshop would have been a great opportunity for young people to be involved in however there was no attendance. This was the first family day at the community centre though and interest in the engagement sessions in general took some time to take off.



Findings

Throughout the 42 engagement sessions provided by the artists, a total of 214 participants took part.

80% of young participants asked, did not know of any artworks within their area

98% of young participants asked, would like to attend more projects like this in their area

70% however, said they did not spend any time within the 'bankies' area as it was too dangerous and not very safe.

The following temporary public artworks went on display on Sunday 17th May –

- HiViS – rednile Projects Ltd
- Stand By – Jo Ray
- Superfantastic Tipi – Sophie Lisa Beresford
- Voice pipes – Sarah Bayliss
- From this world to the next – David Thomas

Approximately 450 attended the event with 20% completing an evaluation form. Of those completed, the following information was gathered:

20% were aged 15-24yrs 30% were aged 25-44yrs 50% were aged 44-64rs

98% would like to see more permanent artworks by these artists in the area

98% thought that the artworks made an improvement to the area

Conclusion

The engagement sessions successfully introduced participants of varying ages to a host of new activities and challenged their perceptions of what art could be, what was possible within their area and what they could achieve as individuals and working as a team. Participants actively contributed to the sessions, creating outcomes which allowed them to feel more ownership towards them.

The project has assisted in community cohesion and helping to achieve life-long learning by creating an opportunity for different people to engage in shared experiences from the same area but who did not know each other previously. Sarah Bayliss worked with the elderly people at Fountain Court allowing the project to spread further than the immediate hub centre and widening the age groups of people involved.

Although sometimes lacking long term focus and links to the park, the sessions were very well received and something that the young people would like to participate in more often. A more structured approach to the sessions could have resulted in a more positive impact in terms of understanding the overall concept of the project; however this was a difficult process to organise, for rednile and the artists to timetable sessions around the centre and the groups' availability.

It was hoped that some of the young people would work towards the Arts Award, however due to already existing projects, working towards the Azdan Award and school commitments, this did not happen. Sarah Bayliss and Jo Ray did however cater their sessions to helping them achieve their goals for the Azdan Award.

An important point to remember is how the project managed to balance the personal development of the artist, with the needs of raising the profile of the park in the sessions. Although some participants did not fully engage with the ideas for the park, despite regular discussions on the reasons for the whole project, they instead now have a better understanding of public art, contemporary art and what inspires the artists who do it.

Comments from the parents during the sessions were that they felt cynical towards the changes that could be made to the riverside area. Feedback like this makes the development of further projects even more important, to keep morale high and to show that changes will be made but will take time. The project has certainly made residents within the area more aware of the park as a space in its own right and residents have succeeded in creating a project that has begun raising aspirations and people's ownership to their surroundings. The community centre worked well as the hub site, although there was not the footfall/traffic throughout that particular area that was first anticipated.

Stage Two – Temporary Commissions

Rednile Projects Ltd - HiViS

HiViS worked well to dispel threatening and unsafe notions that were previously present within this space. The hi-visibility jackets allowed a once dull environment to come alive and invite people to explore sections of the park they would not normally access.

This piece proved how quickly people's perceptions of a place can change and linked well with the colourful models made by the children in the workshops. HiVis jackets were given out at the end to groups who had been involved in the project as a lasting legacy to the artwork (with Final Frontier, Gateshead Riverside Park printed on)



Jo Ray - Stand By

Jo's maypole piece worked well in terms of taking an existing structure and placing it within the park in a new and innovative way. This linked directly with the flag making and sign making that she introduced to the girls group.



The accordion player added an interesting element to the piece and worked well as a central point to the park. The work was sited along the pathway with sloping ground either side, creating a focus on a disused area which linked well to the Voice Pipes by Sarah Bayliss which was sited on the opposite side to the path.

'This piece is very striking and had the interesting addition of an accordion player.'
Anna Pepperall, Public Art Curator, Gateshead Council

Sarah Bayliss - Voice Pipes

This piece was very well received by participants on the day with many comments for more participatory work to be within the area. The participatory element allowed people to engage with the piece directly narrowing the gap between the public's preconceived ideas of what public art is or can be. The artist worked well in allowing her engagement sessions to link into her final idea for the temporary public art piece.



Like Jo Ray's work it utilised areas of the park that often go un-noticed and unexplored by the general public and local residence. By using areas like these it changes people's perceptions of the area from a dangerous unsafe place for children to an area with high potential for development.

Sophie Lisa Beresford - Super Fantastic Tipi

This piece was again interactive but more about the experience and responses from the public rather than an actual physical outcome in the traditional sense. The artist provided sessions in meditation, crystal charging and offerings which again local residence would not normally have direct access to. Sophie worked well in linking her engagement sessions to her final piece with many young people spending the whole day attending her sessions.



David Thomas - From this world to the next

David's piece was made to a very high standard and very thought out concept. There were some issues as to whether this piece made enough links with the engagement sessions at the Dunston Drop in or the overall concept of the project. It did however, react well as a high coloured piece that contrasted to the environment and introduced the participants and the public to the idea of scale, structure and material - people were very intrigued at how it had been made and the enjoyed the pleasing visual aspects of the piece.



Student Placements

A student placement scheme was set up by rednile to coincide with the Final Frontier project allowing students from the University of Newcastle and Northumberland College to experience the full process of managing a project of this scale.

This scheme was successful providing both students with the necessary skills to enhance their careers.

Comments from both students were as follows:-

'In my opinion the placement was a great success; I learnt a variety of new skills, such as writing press releases and risk assessments and gaining a good idea of how companies such as rednile Projects function, particularly when sitting in on council meetings and taking minutes.

I witnessed how to effectively pitch an idea in order to get funding, and it was helpful to see the presentation made by Suzanne and Janine. Working alongside the artists was inspiring and particularly interesting to see how professional artists work. The event was a great success and very satisfying. It was again good experience learning how to organise and manage such an event. Working with Suzanne was a privilege; she was always very helpful and supportive and always kept me busy.

Max Graham, student placement, University of Newcastle

'First of all I would like to say thank you to rednile Projects for letting me be part of the project. I have found the whole experience extremely valuable in my ongoing studies at college.

'I found the project as a whole well organised and found rednile to be very professional and helpful. They were there to offer me support whenever needed and guidance where necessary. The individual Drop-in days which I attended and helped with seemed successful and those attending seemed to enjoy themselves. I enjoyed these sessions very much and learnt a lot from the artists involved. The children commented several times that they hoped for more projects like this to be made available within the area they live in. The project has given me an insight as to how much time and organisation is involved in running such a project.'

Gail Freeman, student placement, Northumberland College

Further activities at the event...

Links were made with the following organisations to add a wider reach to the project and to assist with community cohesion. The links made were overall very beneficial to the project but could have been stretched further to maximise reach and participation from the local community. This again though is a relationship that needs to be built up overtime through similar projects.

Evelyn Brown, Community Partnership Officer at Gateshead Council commented that the 'links made through this project were excellent and should be developed further through future projects. Further work with young people – linking with problems of drinking and drugs in the is a very important aspect that needs to be looked at through future work.'

Living Streets – promoting healthy living and improving the environment through walks in the park

Sustrans – bikes rides throughout the park

Countryside Projects Team – Nature Trails and fun-filled wildlife activities

Teams Children's Centre – Creative activities inspired by the artworks

Heritage Centre – tours exploring the rich history of the Bankies, Teams and Dunston led by Green Badge Guide Gwen Keating

Conclusion

Overall the day was well attended with very positive reactions from the public and participants.

The event drew people from all backgrounds - from the staiths development, teams and further afield, students, cycling enthusiasts and local residents, adding to the aims of community cohesion. The activities with Sophie and the Countryside Team also meant that children were mixing from different backgrounds too.

The artworks were of high visibility and worked well as temporary pieces of public artwork. They brought a new atmosphere and experience to the park allowing the public and visitors to view the space in a new light. The work was curated well, allowing the viewing public to experience the whole of the park without detracting too much from the natural environment.

Although there were some issues with security of the art works over night, continuation of projects like these will help people to understand and appreciate their own environment more. Strong support was received from the council via the events staff, highways, health and safety and the introduction of an event manager on the day of the event.

The engagement sessions and temporary commissions left a lasting legacy through the publications, hivi jackets, photographs taken on the day, the possibility of longer term commissions being realised and strong interest from the strategic partnership to take things further. Through this project rednile have succeeded in bringing together a variety of organisations that currently all use the park in varying ways, such as Sustrans, Living Streets, the Heritage Centre and the Countryside Team. These relationships can now be built upon during the next phase of regeneration. The Teams Community Centre has already begun further consultation with Sustrans and Living Streets.

Through this project there is certainly a strong case for further development in terms of future temporary public art commissions and interlinked engagement sessions within the area. The whole concept of the project, with engagement sessions leading to temporary public artworks within the area, has certainly caught the local residence and visitor's attention with several people commenting that this could be an annual event.

Recommendations

This project has been highly successful creating a starting block for future projects to aid the progress of the regeneration of Gateshead Riverside Park. Looking to the future, the following developments should be kept in mind –

Community groups to work together and create their own projects, researching and raising funds themselves with assistance from the council.

Permanent public artwork should be considered to mark the beginning of the creative regeneration process

A debrief event/exhibition should be arranged to look at further ways that all partners can work together in the future towards a common goal. Contacts and communications built up throughout the projects cycle needs to be sustained in order to move forward.

Information regarding the future developments of Gateshead Riverside Park needs to be disseminated through local residence, allowing them to feel they have a say in their local environment and will help to link up with projects developed in the future

Appendix I

Comments

'The primary aims were to foster community involvement in art and cultural activity related to the park and to organise and run an arts-based event in the park to change people's perception of this area. In both respects rednile were successful and were particularly impressive in terms of structure and organisation of the project and in liaising with a broad range of contacts.'

Bryn Roberts, Project Leader (Planning), Gateshead Council

'I thought the whole event was great and the artwork was fantastic. I thought the idea to get artwork in that space was brilliant and it was nice to see the local community getting involved and coming to see the art. It would be really nice to have the event again and see some more work in the park to brighten it up, but it would be even nicer to see some permanent pieces there too'

Alan Barlow, Bike It Officer (Gateshead & South Tyneside), Sustrans

'The artists have offered different experiences to the young people and in doing so challenged their perceptions of art'

Tracy Johnson, Senior Youth Worker, Teams Community Centre

'The artists' engagement sessions attracted young people who would not normally attend these sorts of activities'

Dawn McCardle, Youth Worker, Teams Community Centre

'Sophie is a breath of fresh air – the young people are really intrigued by her and she listened to what they wanted and introduced new ideas like crystal healing'

Dawn McCardle, Youth Worker, Team Community Centre

Community engagement really made the day, with good links made with young people and local people – something that can now be built upon through future projects'

Evelyn Brown, Community Partnership Officer

Quotes from members of the public at Final Frontier event -

'Had a great day, should do it every year'

'I will visit this area more often, we thoroughly enjoyed today. Rednile have done a superb job!'

'Really enjoyed today and didn't realise how much artwork was on my door step'

'Good to see area being used and was made to feel very welcome'

'Will definitely use this walk again'

Partners

Gateshead Council

Sure Start (Teams Children's Centre)

Sustrans

St Mary's Heritage Centre

Teams Community Centre

Dunston Drop in

Living Streets

Appendix II

Press Coverage

Newspapers –

Evening Chronicle

Artists Make Splash at Riverside Park (side column +image) – 25th February 2009

Journal

Reaching the Final Frontier (by Tamzin Lewis – one full page + image) – 16th May 2009

Evening Chronicle

Art in the Park Aims to Please (Quarter page + image) – 18th May 2009

Evening Chronicle

Art in the Park – Bid to Bring Families Back to City Green Space (by Linda Richards – one full page + image)

<http://www.whatsonne.co.uk/gb/attractions/news/gateshead-riverside-park>

Evening Chronicle

Artworks to be unveiled; RIVERSIDE PARK GETS COUNCIL REVAMP – (by Linda Richards – one full page + image) - 28th April 2009

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_6783/is_2009_April_28/ai_n31590880/

Lifestyle Magazine

The Final Frontier (Double page Spread) – May 2009

A-N

Interface Listing www.a-n.co.uk

4500 flyers sent door to door and to major arts organisation both within the North East and beyond

2000 e-flyers sent through mailing list

Further coverage in Gateshead library exhibition, civic centre exhibition, exhibition in St Marys and postings on Staiths Southbank online residents' forum.