



Summary Document



Introduction

An Arts Strategy for Aden Country Park

This document marks the departure of a strategic approach to arts development for Aden Country Park. It is driven by a longer term and co-ordinated commitment to considering Aden as a creative place.

The following is a summarised version of the full Arts Strategy for Aden. To view the full version and for more information about the park, please visit:

www.adencountrypark.org.uk

or contact the Friends of Aden Country Park :

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This Strategy is directed by the Friends of Aden Country Park, with the support of its partners (Aberdeenshire Council and Buchan Development Partnership). All of the work undertaken as a result of this strategy will also seek to engage the local community and the Parks Stakeholders in the process and delivery.

Research and development of the Strategy

The strategy is the result of a period of community consultation and research, undertaken by icecream architecture. This took the form of the following programme and tools;

Scoping: Background research into the area and wider strategic framework for the future of the park.

Stakeholder meetings: Working closely with lead contacts from The Friends of Aden Country Park throughout the project. Group and individual meetings with people involved in the day to day management of aspects or services within the park.

Walking: The park was physically surveyed utilising photography, notation of places of interest and historic merit individually and through walks with different people.

Public film screening and discussion: An evening event was hosted, where ideas and approaches to public art in different places in Scotland were presented to attendees through short film extracts. A facilitated discussion followed, where the approach and vision for art in Aden was collectively debated and drafted. Followed by summarising discussions with representatives from the Friends to further edit this.

Interactive display: A creative display was produced and set up in the park and moved around it by wheelbarrow, that invited people to vote with seeds on the characteristic, themes and examples of art works elsewhere that they felt were the most relevant to Aden. It was used to engage the passing public.

Further community consultation undertaken: Stall at Aden's Christmas event, School workshops led by members of the Friends of Aden and circulation of an online survey monkey questionnaire and a public facebook page.

2. A Vision for Art in Aden

Vision statement for Art in Aden

Art in Aden will add value, animating the Park as a creative, inspiring and expressive environment for the benefit of the community. It will offer fresh perspectives and invite new connections between the park and its visitors, through surprise, discovery and encounters. Art in Aden will foster a deeper sense of local ownership and engagement.

Characteristics for Art in Aden

What kind of characteristic should Art in Aden have?

Art in Aden will be fun and playful.

‘The girls really enjoy exploring the trees and woods, the fairy tree is great for their imagination and we pretend these flowers are fairy slippers’

(Mother and 2 daughters, frequent visitors to the park)

Art in Aden will be interactive

‘You could have drums or trumpets hidden in tree houses in the park and amp sockets to plug stuff in and play music - Aden park band! Performing in the park!’

(Young people visiting the park)

Art in Aden will be educational

‘What’s the bigger picture here, Art is not about just providing entertainment, it is also about providing experience and an understanding of stuff. What do people come to the Park to experience? What do people come to the Park to find? Freedom. Peacefulness. Recreation.’

(Public Participant at Film Screening discussion)

Do you think it is a good idea to have bigger art projects that last for a while or to see smaller projects that happen and change more frequently?

PUBLIC VOTE

Big projects, less of them : 13

Small projects that change frequently : 65

Art in Aden will change

‘A treasure trail would be great, something for the kids to search for. It could be something that changes with the seasons, like toadstools sculptures in the autumn, nests in the spring. Then it makes you want to come back at different times of year.’

(A family visiting the park)

What kind of materials do you think would be exciting or relevant for art in Aden?

‘...wood, glass, light, willow, steel, metal, paper, wire, bricks, bottles, chocolate, people, shadows, recycling, paint, clay, lights, springs, ropes, concrete, granite, tiles, teddies, shoes, stone, mud, brick, lego, soil, sticks, acorns, sand, plants, hills, Elgin marble, water, grass...’

(A compilation of local children’s ideas for the materials of Artworks)

Art in Aden will be sensitive to its environment whilst confidently embracing new ideas and approaches.

‘Recycled materials, things taken for scrap or referencing the old farming equipment’

(Visitor to the park)

3. *Themes for Art in Aden*

Why are themes important for Art in Aden

Using themes for the development of art projects in Aden, can help to give a clear message to the audience and a focus for artists. Exploring one theme at a time may assist in creating a connection between different pieces of artwork and also a connection between the artworks and other programs and events happening in the park or in fact in Scotland.

A programme over the years that addresses different themes also adds to the variety and changing offer of the arts program in a way that keeps people intrigued about what is new and up next.

'The park is a man made environment within the countryside, with built and natural heritage elements, what is missing is the connection between all of these'

(Stakeholder meeting)

A selection of key themes

Secrets, mystery and stories

‘We are permanently searching for the original site of the Deer Monastery, it could be in or very close to the park, we do an archaeological dig each year to look further. It really gets the kids interested too’

(Member of Book of Deer Project)

Ancient History

‘The ancient architecture of the building and structures in the park is really fascinating (stone circles, hut circles, neolithic features,) there is some archaeological evidence recently found in the park that’s believed to be pictish - this is really exciting as there is very little in the way of pictish evidence in this part of Aberdeenshire’

(Discussion with Museum Staff)

Land and agriculture and food

‘Some people here, still grow in old fashioned ways, people make all sorts in their plots, mostly from reclaimed or legally recycled stuff, it’s quite creative really.’

(Conversation at Aden Allotments)

The Environment, Nature and the River

‘I love the Flowers in the park, snowdrops are particularly spectacular’

(Visitor to the park)

‘Every tree has a different bark’

(Meeting with Landscape Service officer)

Local Language

‘I’d love to see the use of words and language, Doric’s really important here, perhaps something that’s an audio piece repeating the farming history?’

(Park visitor at the Christmas Fayre)

4. Sites for Art in Aden

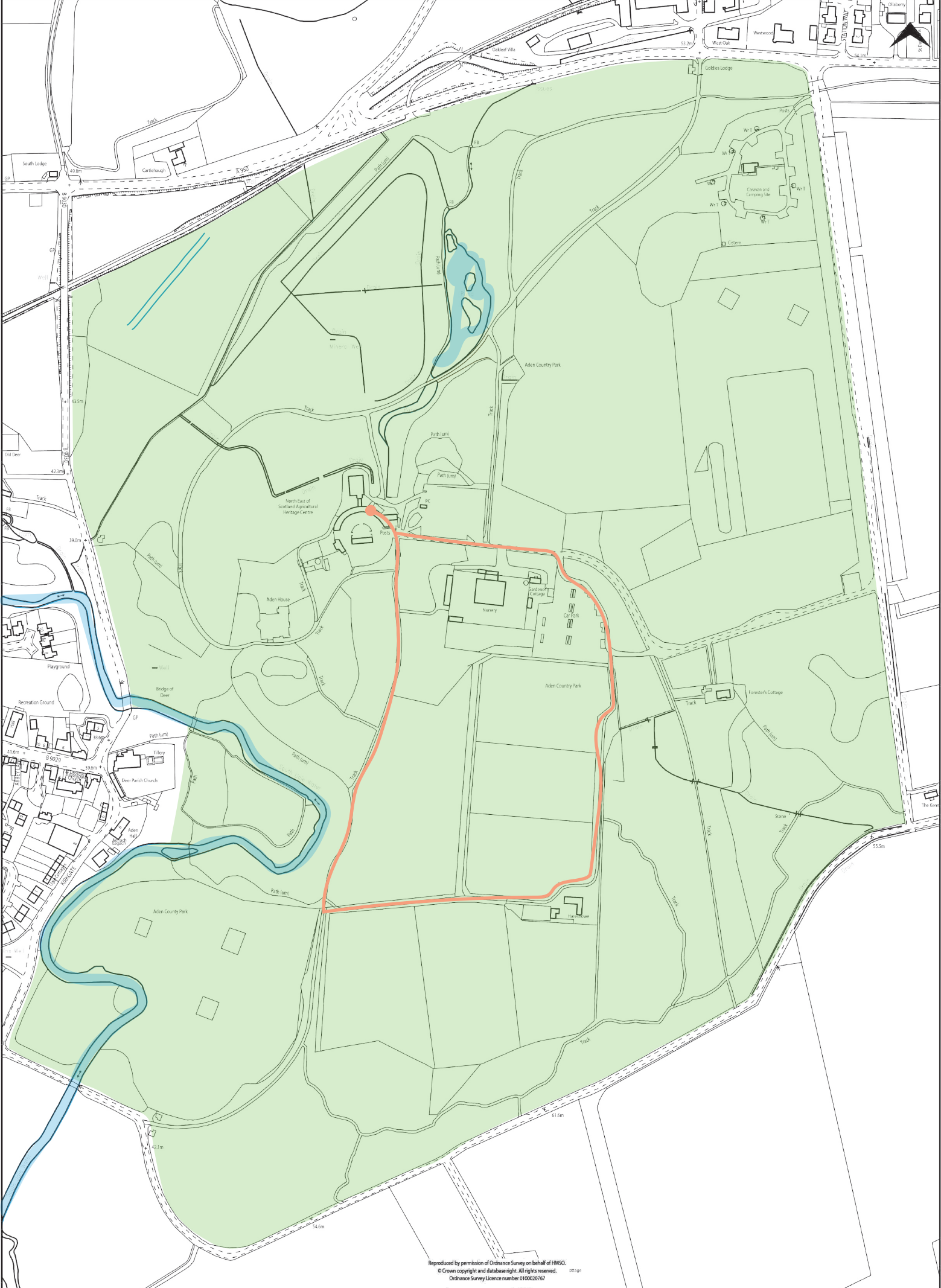
‘Stones were about navigation in a time before maps, how might public art present new approaches to navigation, through a trail’
(Stakeholder meeting)

Should Art Projects be sited in the most popular parts of the park or lead people to new areas?

PUBLIC VOTE

Popular parts of the park : 47

Lead people to new areas : 54



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A selection of sites for Art in Aden

Site 1 : Key Features; Clues, Ruins and Destinations

‘The Mansion House is crying out for something’ (Park visitor)

‘Not many people know what an icehouse is!’ (Park visitor at Aden Christmas Fayre)

Site 2 : Water; The Ugie, Puddles, Ponds and Wells

‘The lake is really missing something, something to enliven it, you must go down to the lake and see...’ (Conversation with a Landscape Service staff)

I just love the Pond in winter, have you ever seen it frozen, when all the ferns get stuck in the ice, the patterns are just stunning, it’s like a beautiful piece of art’ (Park visitor at the Christmas Fayre)

Site 3 : Lesser explored, woodlands at the Fringes

‘It should break the mould of the set walk’ (Park visitor)

‘We tend to avoid the woods at the edges of the park as we tend to think it’s just for dog walkers, but if there were artworks there we would definitely go’ (Park visitor at Christmas Fayre)

Site 4 : Thresholds; Boundaries, Gates, Bridges

‘There are a whole load of networks to be explored, tracks, cycle tracks etc. The park is mostly geared up for visitors that arrive by car, other ways of people getting there could be explored’ (Stakeholder meeting)

‘The Park is already very sectioned up, the best parts are fence free, gaps lead you from one place to another’ (Stakeholders meeting)

Site 5 : An Agricultural Heritage Trail; Hareshowe to the museum and back

‘Lots of people don’t know where Hareshowe Farm is located, there’s a need to physically continue the story from the farm to the museum and visa versa. The path should lead people between and also there is potential for some of the contents of the museum to be interpreted along the route, in the park itself, through artworks.’ (Museum Staff)

5. *Outline Aims and Action plan*

Short term aims for Art in Aden
Year 1 - 2
2016 - 2017

'It's got to be a mixed bag, nothing too deep, some people might have a fear of the word 'Public art'(Stakeholder meeting)

Aden will be a workshop, studio and site for an emerging programme of artworks and projects that introduces new, surprising and ambitious creative processes to the park. Providing opportunities for local artists to engage and contribute and for local people to expand their knowledge and interest in creativity and the park.

Medium term aims for Art in Aden
Year 3 - 5
2018 - 2020

'There is a lack of visibility for the arts in the area' (Discussion at Stakeholders meeting)

Aden will support and nurture an active and engaging local culture of creativity. Its programme will connect broadly to the wider community, inspiring and creating opportunities for any generation to grow in their experience and understanding of the creative industries.

Long term aims for Art in Aden

Year 5+

2020 onwards

‘Mintlaw will double in size in the next 10 years, a lot of new people are moving into the area and the park is a local provision for them, it’s important to look ahead at what that provision is’
(Discussion at Stakeholders meeting)

Aden will be considered a venue for the arts both locally and nationally. The park will act as a background, a site, materials and inspiration for a broad range of sustained creative projects. The programme will provide a platform for local people to experience high quality artwork of a broad range of mediums, scales, durations and forms.

6. Action Plan

Proposed programme

Programme - Year 1, 2016 *Exploration and testing of ideas.*

Spring / Summer programme (using the secured budget)

- 4 - 5 small commissions, based on a selected theme and a selected location
- Commissions launched with a public event
- Including an educational / interpretive event, such as a led walk, artist talk or

workshop hosted in conjunction with the commission, to engage the local community (for which additional funds could be sought.)

Autumn / winter programme (funds to be acquired)

- 4 small commissions, based on a different selected themes and a different location. Taking place over a spaced out period of time during the winter
- Establish an interpretation point would need to be established, this could include the commissioning of a short documentary or publication
- For each of the commission's / events, there should be one educational event or programme

Programme - Year 2, 2017

Building on what has been learnt during the first year and consolidating, pushing out into more adventurous territory with ideas and approach and working closely with partners.

Yearly programme

- 2 - 3 medium scale semi permanent artworks installed into the park, developed through an artist residency programme.
- An artist space established in the park
- A community arts programme established and trialled in the park, which might involve a live project or small arts festival established with a partner organisations, such as a local college, local photography groups, craftspeople, schools.

Considerations for the programme;

- Smaller scale commissions (£1500 and under) are more likely to appeal to recent graduates and artists in the early stages of their career. The amount of management time needed to oversee these may therefore increase.
- Management or fundraising time could be outsourced by creating a role, or funding a part time development worker/project manager to assist this.
- The management of these projects in the first year, will also need to include publicity, communication and potentially documentation of the work undertaken.
- When these commissions go live, we suggest the Aden Country Park Website and facebook would be good platforms for promoting the activity as they have a wide reach. However an independently managed blog and publicly accessible archive, will be vital for creating longer term awareness.
- Commissioned artists could be requested to produce blog posts, document their processes and final work for the use of The Friends of Aden for publicity.

Connecting creatively with events and happenings in the park (and beyond)

This could be in the form of the following;

- Hosting Open studio day during events
- Joining in with existing Events as opportunities for artists to engage with public
- Events can be good opportunities for distributing information or publicity
- Tying into events happening Scotland wide, can also increase opportunities for publicity, accessing funding and support from partners delivering these programmes

Establishing an identity for Art in Aden

A lot of the current activity in the park, from the performances at Aden-reen to Christmas craft fair are highly creative. Branding and combining communication about the wide variety of this kind of activity helps to publicly reinforce the identity of Aden as a creative place.

Establishing a working space for Art in Aden

Art in Aden can be developed without a dedicated working space, however it is likely that artists will require access to internet, desk space and ideally studio space if they are working in the park itself. The other advantage of artists working onsite is that it can alleviate the pressure on the Friends of Aden to host, lock and unlock spaces. It can also function as a space from which artists can hold meetings, workshops, drop in days for the public. This space does not need to be a new facility, better to fit out or trial the function of an arts space, through temporary use of an existing or underused building within the park.

6.3 Working with local artists (commissioning)

It has been identified that working with local artists is important for Art in Aden in order to build a stronger local culture of artistic practice and visibility for Rural Aberdeenshire. The programme of commissions in the Park for year 1 and 2, will offer a number of small scale projects, that are at an accessible scale and an exciting opportunity from recent graduates. Partnerships should be made early on with local colleges offered art and design programmes, such as:

- North East Scotland College (Banff & Buchan College / Aberdeen College)
- Grays School of Art (Aberdeen City)

Supporting the resident professional art community in the area is also vital, to ensure that briefs reach local artists local awareness about the vision for Art in Aden should be raised, by;

- Communicating through any existing local networks, press, meetings.
- Hosting an event / meeting ahead of releasing briefs, inviting local artists to attend and learn more about the overall project.
- Giving priority to the commissioning of local artists

There is also huge value in bringing in the experience of professional artists from outwith the region, regardless of where they are based. It can be a rich learning opportunity and it is important for establishing wider connections and relationships for the future, with other institutions and places in Scotland and internationally.

6.4 Partnership development

Partnership working could be really important for build capacity and wider engagement with the local community.

- To create simultaneous programmes, where different kinds of art projects can be delivered in combination with each other
- For writing funding applications relating to specific themes of fields of interest such as collaboration between an artist and a botanist etc.
- Create live projects with the Art School in Aberdeen and local art colleges.
- Work should be done with the parks stakeholders to consider how creative approaches can ‘add value’ to new infrastructure in the park. Working with Landscape Services will be important to establish if there are opportunities to bring an artist into the design stage of development.

It is recommended that a formal partnership agreement is established between the Friends of Aden Country Park and the following local council departments and Partnerships to develop an understanding of the kind of support these services might offer to the delivery of the strategy;

Landscape services (Infrastructure services)
Arts and Heritage (Education and Children’s Services)
Aberdeenshire Council
Buchan Development Partnership (BDP)

In addition to the above, the following are local stakeholders currently identified that informal partnership should be either further developed or established.

Local Schools and colleges (as discussed above)
Grays School of Art (Aberdeen)
The Rangers Services (Aberdeenshire Council) through the Buchan Ranger based at Aden Country Park <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/leisure-sport-and-culture/ranger-service/>

Aden Cafe (via the owners of this independently run business)
<https://www.facebook.com/The-Cafe-at-Aden-884225201592339/>

Book of Deer Project (via director of the group) <http://bookofdeer.co.uk/>

Willowbank day service (Existing partners of the Friends of Aden, through Aberdeenshire Council)

Scottish Sculpture Workshop (Lumsden, aberdeenshire)

<https://scottishsculptureworkshop.wordpress.com>

Extended research as projects develop towards connecting with local community groups and associations that operate around certain interests. This could be ornithology to heritage, camera clubs to craft groups.

6.5 Securing funding

Steps towards securing funding over the next 2 years;

- Create a fundraising plan at the start of the year
- Ensure that all of those involved in writing funding applications have access to shared files
- Document all art works undertaken in both progress and completed stages with good quality images or film
- Look at a combination of larger funds for specific programmes, and smaller pockets of specific funding that can be used to add value to these programs, for talks, workshops, event etc.
- There are two types of funding that may be considered. Project funding, for the delivery of programmes and commissions. Capital funds for equipment or premises. The majority of funds at the start of this strategy (2016 - 17) will be for projects funds.

For sustainability of Art in Aden, opportunities should be sought, for income generation, as a parallel to commissioning of art works. For examples;

- The programme for 2017 could include commercial art classes led in the park by local artists
- The sale of publications or prints developed through the commissions in the long term could generate funds and be sold through the shop
- Art based events, such as an outdoor cinema event in the park, showcasing artist films where tickets and refreshments are sold

7. Review and evaluation

The following milestones, should be considered as checkpoints for reviewing the success of the strategy over the first two years.

Milestones for end of year 1 - 2016

- A summer programme of 4 - 5 small scale temporary artworks commissioned within the park
- A winter arts programme of 4 small scale temporary artworks commissioned over 4 consecutive months (1 per month)
- An 'art' information point established within the park
- A minimum of 50% of the artworks commissioned are undertaken by local artists
- Funding plan and some funds secured for the work to be undertaken in 2017
- A number of interested partners identified for the following year, engaged in ongoing planning

Milestones for end of year 2 - 2017

- A minimum of 75% of the artworks commissioned are undertaken by local artists
- 2 - 3 medium scale and semi permanent artworks installed in the park through artist residencies
- A community art festival delivered with local partners
- A temporary artist studio / working space established in the park
- Funding plan and some funds secured for the work to be undertaken in 2018
- Action plan for 2018 - 19 established
- Commercial arts classes established for adults and children, run by local artist becoming economically sustainable and beginning to generate income towards further community oriented art projects in Aden
- Website and branding for Creative Aden clearly established

Lifespan of the Strategy

The vision and aims in this document have been written considering a 5 year time span. 2016 - 2021. Many of the web links and funding opportunities will require updating or verifying throughout the lifespan of this document. The themes discussed in this document may also be expanded upon as the projects develop.

The action plan outlined in this strategy is for the first 2 years, 2016 - 2017. An action plan should be devised for the years beyond 2017, following a review of the work undertaken in the first 2 years.

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