

Creative Placemaker briefing and appointment guide

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All photos from the Wales Town Booster Pilot Programme March 2026.
Credit: Creative Communities International, DCFW, Vale of Glamorgan Council.



Creative Placemaker briefing and appointment guide

This guide accompanies **CREATIVE PLACEMAKER BRIEF TEMPLATE**. Together, these documents aim to help local authorities, town councils and community organisations understand when and how to commission a Creative Placemaker, such as creative practitioner, tactical urbanist, community engagement specialist, place activator, artist or placemaking project manager, and how to ensure opportunities are accessible for smaller practices and individuals. Small practitioners are often more agile, efficient and adaptable than large consultancies to do this sort of socially engaged work; they can start quickly, adjust to community feedback, and work collaboratively across teams. Using a tactical urbanist or placemaker demonstrates innovation, inclusivity, and social value — qualities increasingly required in funding bids and performance frameworks.

It may also be useful to refer to DCFW's publication, **Introduction to Brief Writing**, which gives more general guidance on writing briefs for projects in the built environment.

https://dcfw.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Introduction-to-brief-writing_ENG_2025.pdf

When to consider commissioning a Creative Placemaking Practitioner

You should consider bringing in this expertise when you want to:

Bring perspective and creativity to placemaking

- Use of design-thinking and creative, artistic approaches to unlock local potential, generate civic pride, and uncover underused assets.
- Identifying and supporting local ideas, initiative and enterprise to develop authentic, context-specific plans.
- Building more short-medium term gains and change into longer term strategic plans.

Build community ownership, participation, inclusion and trust

- Early stages of placemaking plan delivery to enable far reaching and meaningful community engagement and visible community buy-in.
- Strengthening funding bids with robust innovative evidence of community engagement.
- Places where consultation fatigue exists. Creative engagement methods linked to actions on the ground can re-energise residents and restore trust.
- Independent facilitators can engage residents/stakeholders who might not usually participate, creating a sense of shared authorship and responsibility.

Deliver visible, quick improvements (tactical urbanism)

- Action based learning: Test and evaluate ideas and prototypes before investing heavily in permanent change (e.g. temporary street design, pop-up green spaces, pilot pedestrian areas).
- When you want to demonstrate tangible action and improvements during long planning processes.
- Facilitate quick-win, relatively low-cost, tactical interventions/improvements with many opportunities for community collaboration and involvement in the designing and doing.

Re-imagine underused or contested spaces

- Vacant lots, closed shops, redundant infrastructure, or poor-quality public realm.
- Developing practical solutions and actions which combine physical improvements with programming, events and new uses.

Build bridges between departments and stakeholders

- Facilitating cohesive interdepartmental project work together, including planning, highways, culture, environment, and community development.
- To act as an impartial connector and bridge, helping express community aspirations in ways professionals can act on whilst navigating policy and barriers.
- Identifying policy constraints and ways of working that hinder community-led placemaking and recommending alternative frameworks and strategies.

Support local regeneration and social value goals

- To align cultural programming with climate resilience, urban biodiversity, wellbeing, or economic development objectives.
- To commission work that supports local procurement and invests in local talent, materials, and suppliers.
- Supporting capacity building: training and mentoring residents, community organisations, and council officers, building long-term local capability.

Some example situations where this type of commission adds value:

- A project to make some meanwhile improvements to the public realm adjacent to the potential community hub involving local people in the implementation: test ideas and act as stakeholder engagement for the design of permanent public realm improvements.
- A need to find new uses (including temporary and seasonal) for an empty council building and land.
- Involving the local community and traders in the implementation of a parklet and other small greening opportunities on a local high street.
- Working with an active community group interested in improving the arrival experience into the town – co-design and implement some temporary and/or small scale interventions at important arrival points.
- Developing a programme of pop-up activities in public spaces which support local initiatives and entrepreneurs.
- Involving local school children in designing and installing a series of small-scale placemaking projects along important routes to and from school.
- Facilitating a set of small-scale tactical urbanism and visual interventions for local district centre bringing together local artists and creatives with the local community.
- Early visioning for a placemaking plan – designing a creative programme of engagement activities and events which successfully connects with the full breadth of a community.



Example commission pathway

1. **Define opportunity** – Identify a place, problem, or theme requiring creative engagement.
2. **Allocate modest budget** – Include separate allowance for delivery of quick-wins, e.g. materials budget.
3. **Prepare and issue the brief** – Invite proposals from sole traders/small practices.
4. **Select practitioner** – Assess on quality, experience, and approach.
5. **Collaborative inception** – Practitioner meets internal officers and community stakeholders to agree aims, approach and timescales.
6. **Action phase** – Creative engagement and tactical interventions.
7. **Reflection and next steps** – Review outcomes, agree recommendations, and decide whether to scale up or embed into long-term plans.

Commission scale and procurement approach

To keep the work open to sole traders and small practices, commissions should be structured as lightweight, low-threshold opportunities. Overly onerous submission requirements or excessively high insurance cover requirements will prohibit some potential practitioners from applying.

Budget range:

Making sure the project budget is below the thresholds for more formal and onerous procurement processes will make the opportunity more accessible to sole practitioners and small practices, typically up to £30,000. Give a fixed fee with an expectation of the number of days/time to be committed.

Typical duration:

This type of procurement suits shorter-term projects, around 3–9 months, and can be scalable and extendable according to scope.

Procurement route:

Use **direct commission**, **application**, or **quotation** processes below formal tender thresholds. Avoid lengthy PQs or online portals designed for major contractors.

Where to advertise:

consider where it is best to advertise the opportunity so that it reaches the right people. Examples might include Design Commission for Wales, Arts Council for Wales, local arts and creative networks such as Creative Cardiff, national arts and creative networks, as well as major procurement websites such as Sell2Wales.

Submission requirements:

Be mindful of the time required by practitioners to prepare applications and interview presentations. The requirements should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the commission. Consider allowing alternative forms of submissions, such as video or audio recordings in lieu of written content. This will ensure opportunities are as inclusive and accessible as possible.

Insurance and risk management proportionate to scale

To make opportunities accessible to small operators, insurance cover requirements should be proportionate to the scale of the project and associated risks e.g.:

Type	Recommended minimum	Notes
Public Liability Insurance	£5 million	Often already held by sole traders working in public spaces
Professional Indemnity Insurance	£250,000	Appropriate for advisory or design input at this scale

Authorities should not insist on corporate-level cover (e.g. £5–10 million) for small-scale, low-risk commissions, as this deters or excludes local creative practitioners. Always match insurance and health-and-safety requirements to the actual activity and budget.

***Note:** These documents are for guidance purposes only. Local authorities are responsible for ensuring fair and inclusive procurement processes are followed in line with local and national requirements.*

