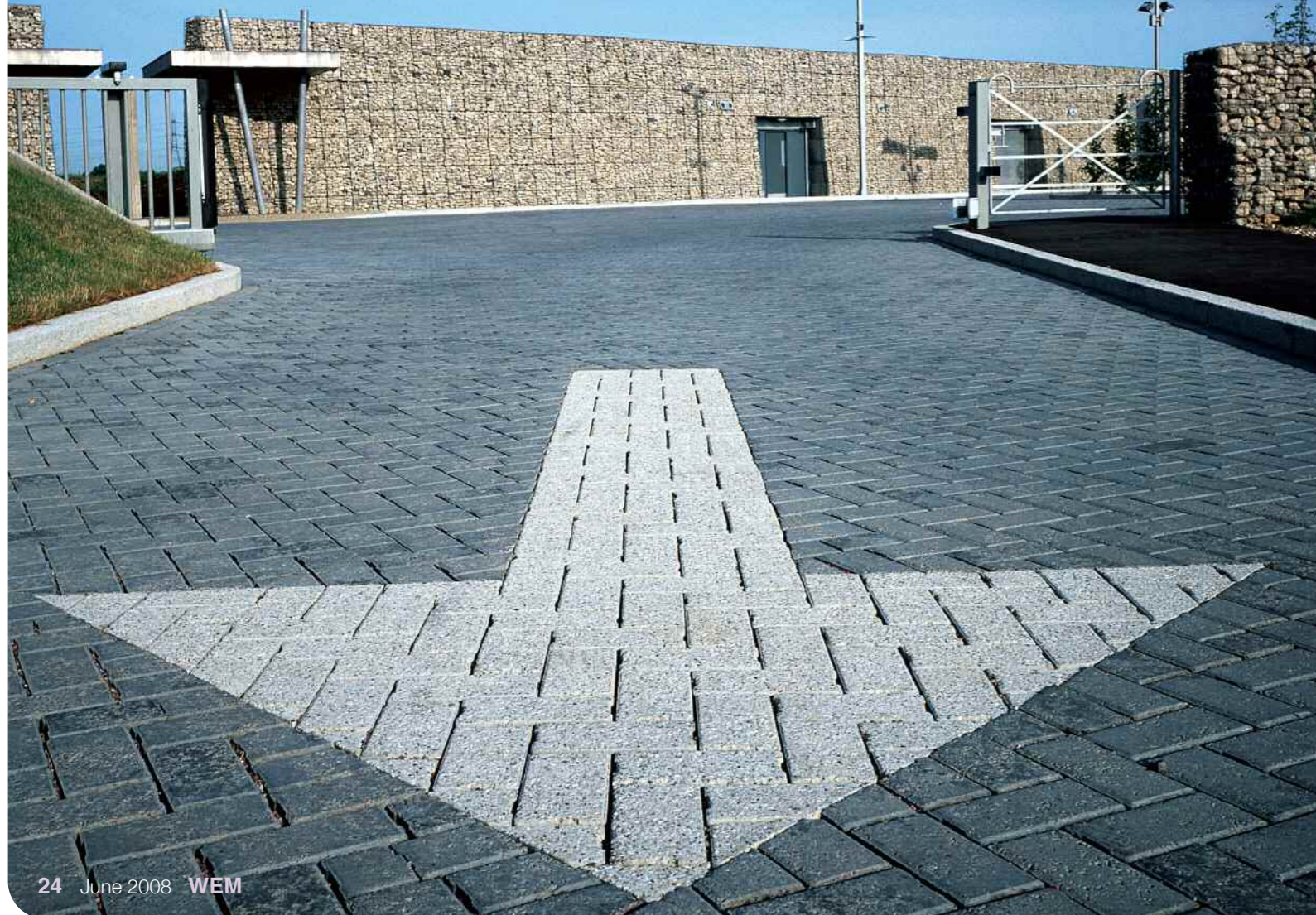


CIWEM's new Arts and Environment initiative is a vital step towards creating a wider, productive platform for the arts and environmental sectors to inform and engage with one another. Gunpowder Park is supporting CIWEM and Artistic Director, **Eileen Woods**, explains how its work demonstrates the value and potential of the interdisciplinary working practice that CIWEM is promoting.

Image: David Tothill, Gunpowder Park



CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

Since its opening in 2004, Gunpowder Park has become a beacon for arts and environment, providing an innovative programme which attracts international artists and organisations that share a commitment to the park's interdisciplinary working practice.

The 90 hectares of new public 'country park' for the benefit of people, wildlife and the arts, was regenerated from a former Royal Ordnance munitions testing facility by Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (manager of the Lee Valley Park, which runs north from the Thames and will see some of the Olympic Games developments for 2012). After 100 years as a closed site, Gunpowder Park has been transformed into four distinct, dynamic and accessible landforms, bordered by Greater London's ethnically-diverse communities, with an international visitor profile.

Gunpowder Park's programme is delivered by a not-for-profit organisation, the Landscape+Arts Network Services (LANS), through a long-term partnership with the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority. Working in the arts and environment arenas, LANS develops and manages new opportunities, where collaborative creative teams can make a positive and dramatic impact on the quality of life and the sustainable future of our communities and our environment. Our team is made up of arts producers, environmental specialists and public realm professionals, with international consultants supporting and extending our work. Our practice positions us as a creative conduit between policy and delivery systems, and our projects include creative and business plans for regeneration and new cultural site developments, devising and producing collaborative arts projects. The common denominator for all activities, the Gunpowder Park 'brand', is now recognised as promoting the value of interdependent creative development.

LANS has positioned Gunpowder Park's

heritage of experimentation from the outset to inform the creative policy of the Park's programmes: to explore the meaning and use of open space in our society through research, arts-led collaborations, education, events and publishing. It manages two major initiatives originated from Gunpowder Park. Bright Sparks is a research and development scheme for experimental arts and design-led ideas, exploring the physical and social aspects of open space. Progress and completed project reports are published on the Gunpowder Park website as part of our commitment to publicly funded knowledge sharing.

The second initiative is The Art of Common Space, a new programme of commissions, events and an international online network which asks artists and creative professionals to respond to the question: 'What is common space in our twenty-first century multicultural society?' Drawing on the historic term 'common', The Art of Common Space looks at the basic premise of 'public' space and asks if there still exists a space which we can call 'common' - an essential space that, through its use, facilitates the celebration and bringing together of individuals from the diverse cultures that constitute our modern society. Over the next year this programme will provide a unique opportunity for international artists, creative professionals and public realm specialists to explore new ideas for creative public realm development. It also provides new opportunities for a diverse audience to engage with the issues of 'common space' through non-traditional arts activities.

From the vantage point of Gunpowder Park, LANS also manages the Green Heart Partnership, a county-wide scheme involving the 11 local authorities across Hertfordshire, and Arts Council England, which places artists working alongside local authority professionals to achieve growth and capacity, as well as collaborating on

innovative public realm projects. On many Green Heart projects, local authorities have for the first time been brought together with officers in the arts and culture departments, planning and regeneration, maintenance and highways, to work on the same stage of a project. By introducing this collaborative process that LANS calls CONNECT, budgets from different departments and organisations can be identified and accessed, allowing for a joined-up approach to decision-making and delivery. In these situations, the artist acts as a creative catalyst, helping to balance ideas and delivery in a team where everyone transcends disciplines and departments to become a 'co-maker' of the final product. Now in its second three-year term, The Green Heart Partnership is providing inspiration and practical support through case studies of successful projects and an important knowledge bank.

Our other major project is the Jaywick Martello Tower at Jaywick, near Clacton-on-Sea. This former military fortification has been transformed by LANS into a multi-purpose space, exploring creative collaborations relating to the themes of community, heritage and environment. The tower has become a meeting point for local residents, stakeholders and international visitors. LANS has also been working on a long-term strategy positioning the Jaywick community as a focal point for experimental, environmental design. Through all of the LANS/Gunpowder Park projects we facilitate new partnerships across both the private and public sectors, creating a wider network of expertise, which benefits from the impact of the arts.

For further information visit:

www.gunpowderpark.org
www.greenheartpartnership.org
www.jaywickmartellotower.org
www.ciwem.org/arts