



## RYDE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICER REPORT

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>FULL COUNCIL</b>
<b>Date:</b>	07 MARCH 2022
<b>Report Author:</b>	LIZ DUTTON
<b>Report Title:</b>	MINATURE ART GALLERY LIND STREET PHONEBOX
<b>Context:</b>	

## 1. SUMMARY

In 2021 the Council committed to taking on the old BT phone box in Lind Street if a suitable use could be found.

## 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Currently the phone inside is connected and in working order. Once the phone box is purchased the phone will be decommissioned and removed by BT. The box currently has a Grade II listing so cannot be removed or altered significantly. The Council is committed to preserving the heritage of Ryde and expressed an interest in 2021 to take on the phone box to ensure the structure is protected.

Officers were asked to investigate suitable uses and discuss options with the Conservation Officer at the IW Council. The public were also invited to put forward ideas for its future use.

Due to the structure being within the Conservation Zone and having a Grade II listing the alternative uses for the box are extremely limited. No exterior alterations are permitted nothing is to be permanently attached to the interior and exterior structure.

The miniature gallery proposal has been discussed with the IW Council's Conservation Officer and he is happy with the proposals.

## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A budget of £2500 has been allocated in the 2022-23 financial year. However, as the phone box is sited within the HSAZ zone we are hopeful that grant funding can be obtained to deliver at least part of the proposed project.

## 4. PROPOSAL

The Town Council have been approached by Ryde Exhibitionists (RE:) a newly-formed collective committed to establishing and supporting micro-arts projects on the Isle of Wight who wish to use the phone box to create a small scale art gallery. With collaboration at its heart, RE would reach out to groups and individuals inviting them to become a part of the collective. RE: has identified five key areas in which the phone box gallery could work to benefit the local community.

- Collaborating with local groups/bodies such as Ryde Aspire, Network Ryde, Ryde Carnival, The Department (Shademakers), Monkton Arts, Ryde Arts, Riboleau Art Centre, The Ryde Art Collective, Ryde Heritage Centre.
- Giving individual artists/creatives an opportunity to produce original work for a truly unique Island exhibition space.
- Working with children, educators and schools.
- Promoting Ryde and Ryde people - identifying ways of celebrating Ryde both as a place to live and as a destination. Drawing on both

- modern and archive material.
- Supporting/promoting specific local events eg. Ryde Illuminated Carnival, Ryde late night shopping.

RE: has researched phone box projects across the UK and has identified a successful blueprint for showing installations while ensuring the integrity of the phone box is preserved.

This proposal is to transform the phone box into a light-box using framed acrylic panels that would sit neatly inside. The frames would be self-supporting and easily removed, meaning 3-D installations requiring the use of the whole of the interior can be easily accommodated. During the day the acrylic panels would act as a backdrop on which 2-D work can be displayed. At night they would be illuminated from behind, creating a lightbox or 'stained-glass effect,' with light shining through the images.

The initiative that inspired the proposal is called The Porty Light Box, located in Edinburgh which was converted into a gallery in 2012.

There are many types of exhibitions that could go in the box

There is also the potential for raising money for charity. The Porty Light Box ran an initiative for Valentine's Day where for £10 a member of the public could submit an artwork and/or message for their loved one which would be featured in one of the 24 panes. There is the potential to collaborate with any number of local charities.

As part of the agreement with the Town Council the proposers would be responsible for ensuring the phone box is cleaned regularly and kept in good order.

The Town Council would be responsible for routine and regular structural maintenance and electrical works and for providing a lock on the door. The costs for this would be contained within the existing budget. The proposal places little strain on Officer time or Council resources and would create a point of interest for residents and visitors.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Officers recommend that the proposal be approved and an agreement entered into to provide a miniature gallery in the Lind Street phone box.

The proposals aid the Council's efforts to save and maintain the phone box and are acceptable to the IW Council's Conservation Officer.