

Public Art Commission
The Reformers' Monument, Kay Park
Artists' Work in Public Places

Applicants with significant experience of delivering public art through participatory practice with communities are invited to apply for consideration for the role of Public Artist for Artists' Work in Public Places (AWiPP): The Reformers' Monument as part of East Ayrshire's Pride in Place Impact Fund programme. Applications from individual or collaborative partnerships are welcome.

PUBLIC ART PROJECT BRIEF

Overview

Pride in Place is a UK Government programme which aims to support the development of shared community spaces, revitalise local high streets and improve public spaces. Locally led, the programme supports improvements that reflect the pride and potential of each place, enhancing public spaces to encourage people to spend time outdoors, build relationships and take part in local activities.

As part of East Ayrshire's Pride in Place Impact Fund allocation, East Ayrshire Council has identified an opportunity to commission a public artist as part of improvements to revitalise The Reformer's Monument in Kay Park, Kilmarnock.

Celebrating a centenary of universal suffrage, it is proposed to introduce a new sculpture to the site. The current monument commemorates parliamentary reform but lacks a clear representation of the role played by women in the broader struggle for democratic rights. This project aims to address this omission by replacing the former statue of Libertas with new work celebrating the centenary of universal suffrage and the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 which equalised the franchise and extended it to more women.

Context and site

The Kay Park in Kilmarnock was gifted to the town of Kilmarnock in late 1800s by Alexander Kay, a local businessman, and the wider area resides on East Ayrshire Council's Common Good account. The park contains important heritage and historical features, the most significant being the Burns Monument, which depicts renowned Scottish Poet Robert Burns who has a number of historical ties to the town.

The park is well utilised by residents and visitors of Kilmarnock and hosts a number of events and gatherings throughout the year.

The Reformers' Monument sits in the north of the park and can be accessed via Strawberrybank Road, directly across from South Dean Road. The monument is located within a circular grass area, centrally positioned within a larger paved area often used as overflow parking. The area is lined by trees to the North, North West & West of the monument.



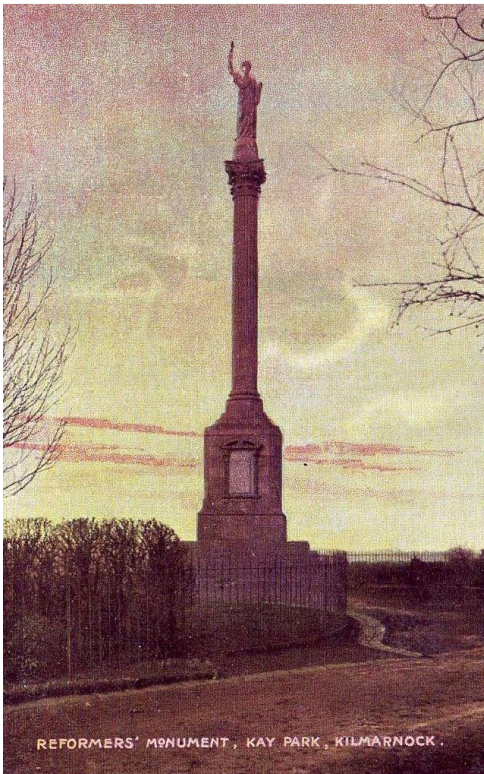
Crown copyright. All rights reserved. East Ayrshire Council AC0000849454

Scale: 1:1250

History of the Reformers' Monument

The monument was erected in remembrance of a public gathering held in Dean Park on Saturday, 7th December 1816 to protest the voting system in Kilmarnock. Around 6,000 people (out of a population of 13,000) attended to campaign for Parliamentary reform and representation for working class people. Only one man in Kilmarnock at that time was eligible to vote, with the whole of Ayrshire having only 156 votes.

Originally surmounted by a female statue symbolising liberty, by Charles Grassby, this was blown off in a severe storm in 1936 and was never replaced. The monument was on a large plinth accessed by flights of 5 steps to the east and west elevations, but work was carried out to remove these and return the base to a plain high stone plinth. The depiction of Liberty as a woman comes originally from the Roman Goddess Libertas (Latin for freedom) and was a common theme in art and literature during the 19th Century.



Listed Status

The Reformers' Monument in Kay Park is Category B Listed: according to Historic Environment Scotland's definition, Category B is conferred upon: "Buildings of special architectural or historic interest which are major examples of a particular period, style or building type."

Listed building consent will likely be required whether the monument is restored to its original appearance, is re-imagined or a modern interpretation is proposed.

Advice and guidance will be sought from EAC Planning and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) at each stage of the development to ensure that the designs would enhance the special interest of the listed structure and meet planning law.

Following a visual inspection by structural engineers of the monument, it was concluded that it has been well maintained and was found to be in a good structural condition with no evidence of any foundation issues or structural defects. Further, there was no observed foundation movement or settlement which would indicate poor ground or inadequate foundations. The monument is in good structural condition and there were no foreseen issues with the monument supporting a new similarly sized replacement statue.

While the findings of the structural report were positive, further structural surveys may be required to be undertaken to inform planning and listed building consents.

Public artwork commission

The role of the Public Artist is to work closely with the local community and key stakeholders to develop and deliver the new piece of public art.

Participatory community involvement, communication and engagement will be key elements of the project.

The artist will work with local people to participate in the project, including school children at identified local primary schools, local history and architectural heritage groups with specialist local and social history knowledge, and other key members of local communities.

The resulting work should:

- raise awareness of universal and women's suffrage and the role local people played in this movement
- be engaging, accessible, and celebrate a sense of place reflecting local culture
- recognise the cultural significance of the monument and celebrate and enhance the historical environment
- be of a high standard of design and quality

Proposals outlining different approaches are welcome including:

- reinstating a replica of the original Libertas statue on the top of the plinth column;
- a re-imagining of the original statue subject on the plinth or within the monument site context;
- a contemporary interpretation featuring an alternative appropriate subject, for example, one that provides recognition of local people in their suffrage efforts.

Artwork construction material choices can be traditional or modern, however artists must show an awareness of listed building / planning constraints when dealing with sites of historical interest.

Any scope for re-imagining or contemporary interpretations will be subject to advice from Historic Environment Scotland, EAC Planning Department and statutory planning consultees, and details on the construction methods and how the historic fabric will be protected during the proposed works must be considered.

Artists must demonstrate significance previous experience of working with historic structures or indicate methods to seek necessary support/advice from specialist conservation consultants.

Interpretation

An element of the project is to add an interpretive experience to the site which complements the artwork and tells visitors and users of the park about the project and the monument. This could be physical or have elements of digital / augmented reality. This should raise awareness and increase public knowledge about the community involvement in the project, the history of the monument and of the previously sited statue.

This project is a part of wider ambitions to revitalise the site through physical improvements and further enhancements and it is expected that the artist will feed into ideas and discussions around this.

The selected artist will:

- use the themes identified in the brief to develop new public art and interpretation for the selected area
- work closely with the local community including school children and local primary schools
- work with the steering group providing staged progress reports in line with project delivery plan
- supply technical and visual information for obtaining listed / planning permission and delivery plan reporting
- ensure safe working practices throughout the project including supply of method statements and risk assessments where required
- supply maintenance and stewardship plans
- evidence £5M Public and Products Liability (and Employers if staff/ subcontractors are to be involved)
- be subject to a satisfactory Disclosure or PVG check as appropriate

AWiPP PUBLIC ART PROJECT STEERING GROUP

- East Ayrshire Council Elected Members
- Young people from *Artclub?* project
- East Ayrshire Leisure & East Ayrshire Council representatives

DESCRIPTION AND CRITERIA FOR SELECTION PROCESS

Interested parties should submit a statement of interest including an outline of their proposed approach to the project by the defined closing date **29th April 2026**.

Please send to Geraldine.Greene@eastayrshireleisure.com.

This should include:

- A CV and/or Statement of Practice - if applying as a creative team, provide information for each individual with their role and how they would contribute to the commission.
- A statement of interest (max 1 side of A4) or a video/voice recording (max 5 minutes) outlining how you would approach the project and participatory community engagement, with a simple timeline and overview of how you would manage the budget. You can include visual materials.
- Information about any relevant past commissions or projects that you think demonstrate how your practice, skills and experience fits this brief. You can include up to 10 images (digital only please) for consideration.

Full proposals are **not** required at this stage.

Short-listed applicants will be invited to attend an interview, and will be asked to present a further developed proposal including project plan and timeline, breakdown of budget and approach to stakeholder and participatory community engagement.

If shortlisted, artist/s will receive a **£350** development fee to progress their proposal to bring to interview.

FULL COMMISSION BUDGET

Up to £120,000

This sum covers:

- All artist fees.
- All materials, time and costs involved in development, production and installation of the public artwork and interpretation including machinery, scaffolding, fittings, and transportation required.
- 10 days (minimum) of public engagement for work with schools and other stakeholders.
- All other expenses incurred by the artist, a breakdown of which should be set out at interview stage.

Costs for site and existing monument preparation work, planning consents etc are not coming from this budget.

Upon appointment a programme timetable with timeline, key milestones and progress review meeting schedule with the steering group will be finalised. A contract will be issued with fee payment schedule and trigger points.

KEY DATES

Dates below are indicative. Earlier delivery than outlined in the table would be encouraged.

Dates	
25th March 2026	Public Art Commission brief release Call for expressions of interest open
29th April 2026	Call for expressions of interest close
WC 4th May 2026	Shortlisting and invited interview candidates notified
WC May 18th May	Interviews with short-listed applicants, candidate selected
June 2026 - December 2026	Phase 1: Community engagement Public Artwork design development
2027	Phase 2: Production period
July 2028	Phase 3 Celebration / Festival