

H₂O.space

O.space is a nationwide programme that uses the excitement around the Olympics to inspire people about architecture and the built environment. O.space raises awareness of regeneration activity taking place throughout the UK in the lead up to the 2012 Olympic Games.

Working with young people, local authorities and communities, O.space will:

- Create a forum for activity and debate on UK regeneration
- Showcase the physical achievements of the Olympic Park
- Engage local communities and decision-makers across England in the transformation of their areas
- Contribute to a built environment legacy across the UK long after 2012

O.space has been developed by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) with activities produced by Architecture Centres.



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O.space in the South West took place in Weymouth, Dorset, where the Weymouth and Portland National Sailing Academy (WPNSA) and the adjoining commercial marina form the sailing venue for the 2012 Olympic Games.

The 2012 Olympic Games has kick-started regeneration in the Weymouth area. The former Naval Air Station at Portland, now known as Osprey Quay, is being developed and new residential, commercial and marina facilities are under construction. A new relief road will improve access to Weymouth.

Regeneration of the Weymouth Waterfront

Hosting the sailing element of the Olympics has provided a catalyst for Weymouth to consider wider regeneration of the town. A master-plan to improve the public realm of the Esplanade area was developed, with the aim of creating a street café culture along the waterfront.

English Heritage and Arts Council have agreed to invest over £1 million in a regeneration project. This will focus on enhancing the seafront environment for visitors and local people in 2012, creating a positive impression of the borough to a global audience.

Weymouth and Portland Borough Council have also released their public art strategy to coincide with their status as hosts for the London 2012 Olympic Sailing events.

Design Challenge Day

Using the backdrop of the Olympics and the potential for wider regeneration of Weymouth as a context, the Architecture Centre developed an exciting one-day design challenge event for 30 Year 9 (13-14-year-old) pupils from Budmouth Technology College in Weymouth.



The event covered elements of the Geography and English curriculum and was supported by six volunteer professionals from the architecture and planning sector.

Aims of the project:

- Explore the impact of waterfront regeneration with young people from a coastal community
- Explore the impact of the Olympic games/legacy outside London
- Engage local young people in the debate about land-use and regeneration in their local area
- Develop links between the formal school curriculum and wider social and built environment issues, such as the development of public space and environmental sustainability
- Encourage students to understand more about the design processes involved in the development of public space
- Provide pupils with an opportunity to work alongside built environment professionals to learn more about their careers



Site Visit and Analysis

On the site visit the pupils used cameras to capture things that they did and did not like about the space. They then scored the Esplanade space on a range of criteria:

- **Easy to find and is it accessible?**
(wheelchairs/pushchairs/signs/maps)
- **Does it feel safe?**
(day and night)
- **Are there lots of things to do/see?**
(fun/things for everyone)
- **Is it well made/does it look good?**
(materials/design/interesting)
- **Is it popular with lots of different types of people?**
(young/old/visitors)
- **Is it important to the local community?**
(well used/are people proud of it?)
- **Is it well looked after?**
(any rubbish/broken things?)
- **Is it comfortable in all weathers?**
(shelter/seating/lighting)
- **Is it a nice place to be?**
(do you want to come here?)

This site analysis enabled the students to prioritise areas to focus on when they considered their schemes for improvement of the Esplanade area.



Weymouth Waterfront Design Brief

One of the aims of the workshop was to model the design process that professionals must go through. As part of this the students were presented with a detailed design brief to respond to in teams.



Design Brief

Today you are going to be a team of urban designers and landscape architects. Your challenge is to improve the Esplanade on the Weymouth waterfront, to make it more attractive for both residents and visitors. The Esplanade is a really important area of public space at the heart of Weymouth.

As a designer you cannot just design whatever you want, wherever you want. You have to think about lots of different factors. In your design for the public space of the Weymouth waterfront Esplanade you will need to consider:

- **Landscaping:** think about materials, surfaces, layout, planting, art works
- **Street Furniture:** seating, shelter, bollards, flower beds, flower pots
- **Lighting:** how much, height, materials, design
- **Shelter:** from the sun and rain. This could be natural (trees) or man-made
- **Signage/legibility:** make sure it is easy for people to find their way around
- **Enhance the historic features:** Victorian shelters, Jubilee Clock, King George statue, Victorian and Georgian buildings
- **Activities:** is there a range of things for different people to do there?
- **Making the sea a positive feature:** link to the beach, maximise the views
- **Access:** is it easy for people to get around (pedestrians, cyclists, bus stops, maps)?
- **Facilities:** think about toilets, information points, cafés etc
- **Public art:** sand sculptures, statues, murals, colour, lighting, seating
- **Sustainability:** can the improvements be environmentally-friendly?



Design Ideas

The students worked in teams with their professional helpers to develop 2D drawings to show their design ideas for the enhancement of the Esplanade area; to produce a 3D model of their scheme; and to present their design ideas to the rest of the group and to the panel of professionals at the end of the afternoon.

The students needed to clearly explain all their ideas and how they responded to the design brief. They developed an exciting range of ideas to improve the Esplanade area, which included:

- Pedestrianisation of the area around the St George statue
- A tramway that runs along the waterfront
- New public toilets within a giant pebble structure
- Incorporating up-lighting into the pavements
- Updating the lifeguard centre, incorporating a lighthouse theme
- Turning the derelict aquarium building into a visitor centre displaying Jurassic Coast fossils
- Creating a local history timeline as a piece of public art in the pavement
- Interactive information boards in many languages, and linked to websites and podcasts
- A new pier and bandstand area as a focal point
- Improving seating and planting around the Jubilee Clock
- Pram/pushchair storage for beach users
- Creating an iconic piece of public art that expresses Weymouth
- A café with glazed frontage to maximise sea views all year round
- Using local Portland stone for surfaces and seating

Interviews

The Built Environment professionals were interviewed by students for the school magazine focusing on their careers. The Design Challenge Day will be documented in the school magazine and featured in the *Dorset Echo*.



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