

URBAN ROOM BLACKBURN

The logo for 'URBAN ROOM BLACKBURN' features the words stacked vertically in a blue, sans-serif font. To the right of the word 'ROOM', there is a yellow graphic element consisting of a square with a small notch on its bottom-left corner, resembling a speech bubble or a stylized 'R'.

Claire Tymon and Ian Banks have developed this proposal in response to the Blackburn is Open Manifesto, Blackburn town centre's 12 point plan and the newly published Farrell Review (www.farrellreview.co.uk). Many ideas, inspirational projects and local creative talents for and about Blackburn's built environment has determined the hunger to explore vacant buildings, tour 'hidden' places and rediscover Blackburn's past to help inspire its future.

Why

The suggested start point to this Hidden Blackburn proposal linked to Blackburn is Open is simply to explore and debate via an initial creative pilot programme for Blackburn's hidden architecture, certain key recommendations of the recent 'Farrell Review' that included the call for a public 'Urban Room', which was linked to their wider recommended 'PLACE reviews' (Planning, Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Engineering).

One of the Farrell Reviews key recommendation was that every town and city should have one of these so-called 'Urban Room' where "people can go to understand and debate the past, present and future of that place; and that Architecture and the built environment should be taught as early as possible in school education and through many different subjects".

It is suggested that the Urban Room could link locally to Blackburn is Open and the forthcoming FabLab. The Urban Rooms could also, with the blessing of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's Regeneration and Environment department, potentially help inform and feedback on public debate around issues such as emerging town centre frameworks for development. This might include exploring notions of embedding more culture and design alongside leisure and tourism in helping define a local sense of place. Whether this is informally or more closely linked to emerging policy as any Local Development Scheme (LDS) milestones or developing Local Plan Part 2, could be open to debate.

What

However, it is felt important that a more populist line to Blackburn's architectural heritage and future is what should be explored in the Urban Room. It is a subject that should appeal to interested public members as well as artists, designers and (of course) the architecture, planning and heritage professionals. However, it is seen as important that it does not try to replicate and bypass ongoing planning review, or any design review services such as those offered by Design Network's Places Matter! In the NW and Design Council CABE's Built Environment Experts network nationally; or to overlap into lectures and events hoisted by such organisations such as RIBA NW and

North Lancashire Society of Architects (NLSA). The Urban Rooms would add a new creative tier to compliment these programmes, although of course it might also look to potentially collaborate with, commission them or even gain sponsorship funding from them in the right circumstances.

Videoring and Video Editing of the Urban Rooms is an important part of this, as is a workable blog.

When

Running for 12 months from an inaugural October 2014 event, it is proposed that an Urban Rooms would be programmed quarterly (i.e. 4 No. in all in the first year pilot) with 4 No. linked public talks and/or performances. Also set up on an ad-hoc basis in between the main Urban Room events would be the curation of at least 4 No. interim exhibitions and/or installations within the Blackburn is Open shop unit. These could be held just prior to the Urban Rooms and could still be exhibited at the time of the Urban Room (or could be reported on).

The number of all of these events is presently governed by available volunteer donations and payable budgets where these do not exist. This includes the curation and project management which is likely to be fairly onerous. What is important, given the recent demise of many of the old Architecture Centre Network facilities, is the need to seek out a workable and sustainable solution for Blackburn, whilst taking it forward linked to the whole emerging Blackburn is Open creative manifesto.

Where

Main Urban Room events would gravitate to the locations best suited to the particular focus audience and size and venues such as St John's Centre are seen as a possibility for bigger events. Of the first 4 Urban Rooms envisaged, these would be of varying sizes ranging from an initial small 10 people invitation-only inaugural scoping event to ultimately bigger, and more public events advertised.

Size and capacity of these venues of course remain largely governed by budget and resources available to manage the audience size, so in the first instance, the first year of the Urban Room programme is deliberately seen as remaining very much a manageable pilot to help review future demand for itself, as well as begin to develop its own sustainable business and future funding and resourcing plan.

Who

The key person to invite to the inaugural Urban Room, as well as Wayne Hemingway himself, would be representatives of the Farrell Review panel to start the ball rolling, such as one of its key authors Max Farrell, as well as fellow panellist Robert Powell (also previously chair of the national Architecture Centre Network and Chief Executive of beam).

Further down the line, a mixture of key speakers representing interesting initiatives as well as local representatives of key creative projects will form a spine as speakers and discussion panel, and this

will be chaired by key local advocates. Other specialists drawn from local and regional specialists will be added to that list subject to budgets and/or voluntary donations of time. Each Urban Room will have a curated theme or direction.

As part of the concluding pilot to Urban Room #4 a suggestion is to commission someone like David Rudlin and Urbed to explore Blackburn's Urban Room pilot and run a series of public workshop tours. Urbed specialise in sustainable masterplanning and creative public engagement events and can provide their own red London double decker bus for hire for the community tour and activities.

We have budgeted for up to 2 paid panel invitees and 1 Chair, and other members are seen as either giving their time voluntarily or representing their organisations freely (and so may not require a fee payment). In both cases though, it is suggested that an expenses budget be offered as a very least. See budget suggested below.

POP UP URBAN ROOM 2014 / 15

Inaugural Scoping Event #1: October 2014 (Drawing from the past)

Featured Presentation Talks:

- Otto Saumarez Smith - Modernist Blackburn: <http://docomomo-uk.co.uk/event/lancashire-goes-pop-modernism-politics-in-central-blackburn-in-the-1960s>
- Max Farrell – Farrell Review: <http://farrellreview.co.uk>

Discussion Panel

- Philip Thornton - etcurban (Chair)
- Wayne Hemingway
- Max Farrell – Farrell Review *and / or* Robert Powell – Farrell Review, ACN and beam
- Otto Saumarez Smith
- Carolyn Butterworth - School of Architecture, Sheffield University

Urban Room #2: January 2015 (Temporary measures)

Featured Presentation Talks:

- Caroline Vrouwdeunt – City Works, Netherlands
<http://www.destedenfabriek.nl/en/about-us/>
- Dan & Tracey Thompson – Revolutionary Arts Network
<http://revolutionaryarts.wordpress.com/>

Discussion Panel

- Farrell Review Panel member (Chair)
- Caroline Vrouwdeunt
- Dan Thompson
- Andrew Ruffler - RIBA North West Regional Director
- Representative from BwD BC

Urban Room #3: April 2015 (Making in the town)

Featured Presentation Talks:

- Zuloark – architectural collective - <http://www.zuloark.com/info/>
- Creative Director – Super Slow Way <http://blackburnisopen.co.uk/projects/super-slow-way>

Discussion Panel

- Philip Thornton - etcurban (Chair)
- Charlotte Myhrum
- Others tba

Urban Room #4: July 2015 (Creative concerns)

Featured Presentation Talks:

- Vivs Long-Ferguson RSA Head of Regions <http://www.thersa.org/fellowship/contact-fellowship>
- David Rudlin – Urbed - <http://www.urbed.com/>

Discussion Panel

- Doug Chadwick – Blackburn architect and ex Chairman of RIBA NW and ex Chair Blackburn with Darwen Public Art Steering Group (Chair)
- Vivs Long-Ferguson
- David Rudlin
- Others tba

LINKED PROGRAMME

Exhibitions / Workshops / Events

Activity	Description	Dates	Venue
October			
Exhibition	Photography – architecture then and now (History Pin website)	29 Sept – 5 th Oct	BiO shop
Exhibition	Sheffield School of Architecture exhibition – plus book launch	7 th – 20 th Oct	BiO shop
Exhibition	Artist Call – Building School for the Future artist residencies	End of Oct	BiO shop and pop up cinema
Film	TBC		Pop up cinema
Intervention	Commission artists who work with the public realm to create new walking tours with interactive phone app	Throughout the programme	Town centre
Symposium	The Urban Room – introduction High profile attendance – Wayne Hemingway (confirmed), Farrell review panel members	15 th or 16 th October	St John’s Church – pop up art venue
Workshops	Mini Maker mornings every Saturday – aimed at families engaging with the built environment	Saturday mornings throughout the programme	BiO shop
January 2015			
Workshop	The Vacant Space Caroline Vrauwdeunt		BiO shop
Workshop	The Temporary Explore the idea of the pop up... Meanwhile space		BiO shop
Workshop	Placeshaking – Dan Thompson		BiO shop
Exhibition	Hidden Blackburn – photography and film + Open House event		BiO shop
April			
Launch	The Making Rooms – a new centre for creative industries with making facilities (fab lab)		Bentley’s