

Eastbourne Jubilee Green Canopy

Waymarkers and Benches.

We expect to place waymarkers and benches along the route. If you would like to donate one please email trees@EastbourneJGC.org to discuss design and location.

Waymarkers



We have commissioned Will Spankie, a stone carver and lettercutter living and working in Sussex, to create waymarkers for the Avenue. He says:

I was interested in the Platinum Jubilee Waymarker project because it will put art and craft into the natural landscape in a sensitive and informative way.

There is a long history of standing stones in this country – to mark boundaries, for religious purposes or pre-Christian rituals as well as waymarking stones to help people navigate. In fact, it amuses me to wonder how archaeologists will interpret these stones in hundreds of years' time, they may be able to explain how the Caithness stone from Scotland got here but how will they explain why?

The stones will take over a week each to carve by hand with a hammer and chisel, each one individually carved with a different subject of the local downlands, but immediately recognisable as a Jubilee way marker.

Although the route is already established the wooden posts are starting to fall into disrepair making the journey confusing. I hope the new stone waymarkers will encourage people to get out into our beautiful countryside with all the physical and mental health benefits that doing so involves and be intrigued by some of the carvings on them. Intrigued enough to want to learn more about the landscape they are walking in.

And finally, they are a tribute to the Queen herself, who has been our head of state all my lifetime, and who's service and dignity is admired by so many people.

The carving and lettering on the waymarkers will be agreed with sponsors.

Benches.

Most of the benches along the Avenue are likely to be simple and rustic, like these at Lewes Priory:



But we would like some to be special.

We have commissioned Walter Bailey, a nationally known Sussex sculptor, to create a design for us:



He says:

I have worked as a sculptor for over 30 years in the UK, on the Continent and further afield in Japan and the USA. In the UK I have a strong relationship with Surrey, particularly the Surrey Hills, where I created 12 sculptures to mark the AONB boundary and through various arts projects have celebrated views on the North Downs and encouraged appreciation of local distinctiveness and so it is a particular pleasure to be invited to be involved in creating a vision for a project so close to home in a landscape that I love and walk throughout the year.

I moved to Sussex over 30 years ago and raised my family in a small hamlet just along the coast from here, more recently we moved to a village north of Eastbourne, both places framed by the South Downs.

Trees and decline of woodland and localism

After the great storm of 1987 I began to work with fallen trees and storm damaged landscapes in need of the small healing transformations an artist can conjure. Through this process I witnessed how the simple act of giving attention and time can forge a relationship with a place and encourage care.

Through these projects I made connections with estates around Sussex including Wakehurst Place, Kew Gardens Arboretum and the Paddockhurst Estate, who supply me with trees felled by wind or disease or grown as part of agro ecological forestry. It is essential that the trees I work with, wherever I work in the world, are felled responsibly and as locally as possible so I can be sure of their provenance and that they are part of a regenerative cycle of planting and tree care.

I often carve where a tree has fallen, working through the seasons in all weathers and while I work I've been privileged to have encounters with all manner of lives, of hares, deer and badgers, itinerant woodworkers, monks, mushroom foragers and walkers

The longer I work in woodland and with wood the more I love and revere trees. As the writer Roger Deakin says, 'they are our barometers of the weather and the changing seasons. We tell the time of year by them'.

Spending time in a woodland we can begin to read it's character and presence.

The new scientific understanding of mycelial networks, the fungi that runs through woodland floor has been described 'an exposed sentient membrane aware and responsive to changes in it's environment and all who walk on it.

The poet Auden wrote that 'a culture is no better than it's woods.' We have lost more of our woodland than any other country in Europe. We have only 13% cover in the UK as compared to 38% on the Continent. And over the decades I have seen woodlands decline further due to neglect, poor management and the impact of the climate crisis. The trees are calling for our care and attention, we have lived in reciprocity with them for millennia, they need us as we need them.

Thoughts on Jubilee Way and the bench

As an artist and maker, my focus is centred around gratitude and celebration of a place, responding to the landscape.

As is my custom when exploring a land based project I've walked the first section of the Jubilee Way at different times of day, approaching from above and from below, enjoying the geological drama of this ridge on the western edge of Eastbourne.

Sitting halfway up the ridge facing East at dawn on a clear day as light pours across a birds eye view of the town is remarkable, it is really worth rising early to see.

What is obvious on taking the path through the wood that once covered the ridge is the loss of so many ash trees, ash dieback is tearing through the whole woodland and as ash is the dominant species one can't help grieve the loss of the woodland.

One of the symbols that has carried me forward since the beginning of my creative practice and through the darkest of times is the seed. The bench designs I have come up with are based on the hope inherent in the seed, the seed is a carrier of generations of tending and care, species care and people care. The benches will be made from local fallen trees, possibly yew and oak.

Small deeds help to encourage change, my bench may be a seed that encourages a time and place to rest and reflect, it may be a reminder that the common land of the local is worth loving and caring for, for us and for future generations.

As the poet and environmentalist Wendell Berry so eloquently put it:

'You exploit what you merely value, but you defend what you love'