



## CASE STUDY: INSTAR



**Cultural Organisation Group:** INSTAR

**Sector:** Education

**Video:** Arkade Event. Jaywick on Vimeo

**Author:** Culture team, Essex County Council

**Delivery period of project:**

Spring 2022 – Spring 2023



# The Story of INSTAR

## INTRODUCTION

Founded in 2013, with a debut project inspired by the science of bats, INSTAR produces multi-disciplinary contemporary artwork inspired by the natural world, from the oceans to the uplands, the urban to the rural. Their portfolio spans commissioned site specific public art, exhibition design, installation, engagement and creative interpretation. Working collaboratively to create deeper connections to the natural world through contemporary art, INSTAR aims to reveal a hidden wonder and to create emotive and inspiring legacies.

**Trish Humphreys** has worked within the arts and cultural sector for over 30 years, as an artist, project manager, facilitator, creative consultant, curator and evaluator. Alongside her own art practice, she has worked with multiple leading organisations including:

- Arts Council England
- Engage
- World Event Young Artists
- London Natural History Museum
- Nottingham Museums Galleries and Nottingham Contemporary

Throughout her career Trish has worked as a producer on many programmes, particularly those focusing on communities and young people. Trish was also the Head of People and Nature at Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust until September 2020, where she led a team connecting people to the natural world through innovation, events and research.

She has also held regional responsibility for Social Inclusion at Arts Council England, East Midlands, worked as the manager of Creative Room in Nottingham City for eight years – where she curated internationally renowned multi-disciplinary youth arts programmes by connecting young people with practicing artists and international partners - and has worked collaboratively with The National Theatre, British Council, Liverpool European city of Culture, Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery.

Nick Humphreys – who co-founded INSTAR with Trish in 2013 – has been a practicing artist throughout his life, working predominantly in the medium of (illustrative) painting, poster design and street art (stencil) and has exhibited his work on many platforms across the UK.

After gaining a BA Hons in Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University, Nick has gone on to produce award-winning illustrative works on canvas. During his career Nick has won the most prestigious award at the Surface Gallery Street Art exhibition (2014), been shortlisted for the Trinity Buoy Wharf Drawing Prize, has had his exhibited at Royal Western Academy and the Hartley Gallery. Recent commissions have also included contemporary portraits of Lord Byron, D. H. Lawrence and Alan Sillitoe as part of the Nott's Rebel Writers (Nottingham Unesco City of Literature) campaign.

As well as a visual artist, Nick is a prolific writer with a life-long passion for the natural world and researcher of natural history. He has been a guest writer for many years and has gained commissions to creatively interpret 70 UK wildlife species for online materials for the environmental sector and for natural science collections.

## THE “CHALLENGE” OR “OPPORTUNITY”

INSTAR’s ‘ARKADE’ project will engage the community in Jaywick on themes of the coast and environment over ten months and celebrating the area’s uniqueness, via light-based interventions in the heart of Jaywick, along with a temporary public art installation and associated exhibition in April 2023.

The main challenges faced so far have related to local politics and conflictions between groups. Given this experience, INSTAR have adopted a plan to be independent of all groups and to not affiliate with any one in particular.

It has also been challenging to connect with schools and the local youth project, however INSTAR are confident this will be resolved in time for the delivery of the project in April 2023.

Previously, INSTAR held a project launch event at Jaywick Martello Tower which had an excellent turn out. This has provided INSTAR with the confidence to progress engagement with both targeted and public groups in multiple locations in Jaywick.

INSTAR have been delighted to establish new partners who have advised on local engagement – namely Essex Wildlife Trust – who have just launched their Nextdoor Nature project in Jaywick. Conversations to date have been very informative on a local level to inspire their plans. This relationship will also give a legacy to the project as they can pass on their engagement onto them to continue.

## WHY THE PRACTITIONER CHOSE TO PARTNER WITH ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL (ECC)

INSTAR have previously worked successfully with ECC with the Infinity Forest commission and greatly enjoyed the collaboration. From this, ideas to collaborate in the future were fostered. When the funding opportunity arrived, there was a natural synergy and INSTAR recognised they had an exciting proposal. It is also important to note that INSTAR gravitated to the coastal habitats and communities in the Jaywick area, which inspired their proposal.

## THE RESULTS

INSTAR are in the very early stages of the project, however, from the project launch event INSTAR have been overwhelmed by the warm welcome and potential in the community. Importantly INSTAR want to create a legacy for the project that has a long-lasting impact. They are establishing collaboration and co-production where possible to enable this.

Finding a location for the artwork to be delivered and installed which is accessible and available for local people in Jaywick has proved to be a creative challenge – but at this stage INSTAR are not concerned. The instinctive venue is Jaywick Martello Tower; however it could be argued the venue is not a place visited by those hardest to reach. INSTAR are therefore working with the Jaywick Resource Centre and have booked rooms to deliver activities in February.

Another consideration for a space is a community hall behind the public house 'Never Say Die' in Jaywick. While it would be an amazing place to hire, it will come with its challenges. INSTAR's aim is to embrace these challenges to ensure the artwork is part of the community and not in an external place or away from the day-to-day reality of many. This location will be in the heart of Jaywick and will draw passing interest and engagement.

As part of the launch INSTAR consulted with audiences about plans to host 'off shore' and 'on shore' programmes – which triggered immediate interest in the project. This use of language will enable INSTAR to attract communities to take part – the idea of chartering boats to go out to sea has already sparked excitement.

INSTAR have provided free packs of postcards (3D prints) with 3D glasses to all who came to the launch event in November and was so popular they ran out. INSTAR now have plenty more which they plan to continue to distribute when working with groups. All project information and websites all feature on these as a takeaway resource of information about ARKADE.

On Saturday 12 November 2022, more than 30 people attended the project launch at Jaywick Martello Tower, including leaders from local projects and community groups and the University of Essex.

## HOW THE ECC CULTURE TEAM RESPONDED

INSTAR's application to the Arts and Cultural Fund clearly outlined how it aimed to engage with the Jaywick community. The ECC Culture team has supported the project via regular meetings and has offered assistance wherever needed in terms of marketing, PR and general project advice.

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## GETTING INVOLVED

Here at Essex County Council, we are passionate about Arts and Culture and keen to support projects across the county. If you have an idea you would like to share with us, take a look at the Arts and Cultural Fund page on the Explore Essex website here: [www.explore-essex.com/culture/arts-culture-fund](http://www.explore-essex.com/culture/arts-culture-fund) and get in touch via email us: [culture@essex.gov.uk](mailto:culture@essex.gov.uk)

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