

Lost Species Mural at Rock Mill Centre

This planning application is for an external mural that will enhance the local urban environment and help with the sustainable regeneration of the town centre of New Mills. It will create a national public artwork that has been developed in consultation with local experts and the community to ensure it is relevant and appropriate to its setting.

The mural will show some of the animals that once lived in the area. It is being designed to engage people with the natural environment and educate them about the wildlife that can live here. Through a public artwork it will also deliver one of the aims of the new High Peak Tourism Strategy by promoting New Mills as a gateway to Kinder and an experience of the outdoors. It meets the further aims of the Strategy by giving a destination to visit and promoting an artist from the town.

The *Lost Species* mural has been developed with the help of a local wildlife charity who have compiled a list of animals that once lived in the area or which are now at risk. It will link with an internal display at the Centre called *Once & Future*. This display is being commissioned to promote the Wild Peak project, who 'support community wildlife artwork as a way to engage and educate the public'. Rock Mill Centre has joined the Nature Recovery Network as a delivery partner, they comment '(the) Wild Peak rewilding project is a great example of Nature Recovery in action and Rock Mill Centre's public engagement and education efforts are invaluable in developing a network of communities to celebrate this'.

A mural on the same wall had previously been proposed by the New Mills Town Council when they ran the New Mills Heritage and Information Centre from this location; their mural design featured chimneys and bridges and covered the entire wall. Our mural will highlight the attraction of local wildlife and the importance of its habitats.

We are currently consulting with the community about which of the locally lost or threatened species should be featured on the mural. We have also been collecting donations from the community towards the cost of the mural, if this application is approved we will launch a crowdfunder appeal to further contribute to the overall costs through public sponsorship. At present the most popular species in the poll include salmon, beavers and osprey.

The mural would therefore join a series of murals celebrating the local importance of rivers that have been painted lower down the Goyt in Stockport where it joins the Tame and becomes the Mersey, in Manchester and then in Liverpool where water that falls around New Mills finally joins the sea. We are collaborating with the Mersey Corridor Project to deliver community education projects that will develop ideas that the mural introduces. The Centre is also commissioning a display entitled *A river runs through it* that will help children and adults appreciate the importance of our rivers, locally and nationally.

As mentioned above the mural will fit with the new HPBC Tourism Strategy which defines New Mills as a gateway to Kinder, from which the River Sett flows. If the Wild Peak project continues to be taken up by farmers, New Mills would also become an access point to this

partially rewilded environment; the mural welcomes this possible future. As the site is close to the centre of town, and near both the bus and train station, visitors can easily be directed to the mural and it can then introduce them to the wild High Peak. The artwork will also add to the policy of having distinctive local streets and it will give a destination for visitors, alongside the linked *Once & Future* and *A river runs through it* displays inside the Centre.

The mural will be painted by a professional local artist who paints murals to a high aesthetic standard throughout the country. As recommended by him we will be paying a premium to use a carbon absorbing paint that will mean the mural has a small positive effect on the immediate environment. The mural will be painted in natural colours and tones; it is intended to complement the view through the trees opposite the building and to remind people of the animals that used to be at home in this area. There is a viewing platform opposite the yard that gives one of the best outlooks across the Torrs, which is one of the hidden attractions of New Mills¹. The mural will add to the sense of what you are looking at from this point.

The wall is made of brick with a stone lower section, it is 3.85m wide by 7.15m high. It has a display board (2.2m wide by 1.2m high) about the local geology on the lower stone section that dates from the Heritage Centre's use of the building. The board and stone wall will be unaffected by the mural that will be painted on the brick wall above. The mural will be situated on the portion of the wall above 2m from ground level to below 6m from ground level, it will leave a border on each side and will have a maximum width of 3m (thus being a maximum 12 square metres on a wall that has a total area of 27.5 square metres).

As the wall we are intending to use is a later brick addition to the Conservation Area the mural will not be altering an original feature². By leaving a border around the mural we will preserve the current character of the building when viewed from a distance as the mural will be obscured by other buildings around the yard. The view down the lane will therefore be retained³. The owners of the wall and the yard are both supportive of the scheme and see the value to the community of giving the mural space.

The mural will also not cover the top 1.1m of the wall, from a line level with the top of the adjoining wall. We are intending to site swift boxes below the gutter at the top of the wall, as droppings from the swift boxes would mark the area immediately below them we will leave this area unpainted. By installing nesting boxes as part of the scheme we will be doing our best to welcome an endangered local species to Rock Mill Centre and into the local area for all to enjoy.

¹ The viewing platform and view are identified in the New Mills Conservation Area Appraisal of 2008.

² The Appraisal identifies gritstone, slate and wood as the predominant building materials

³ The views identified in the Appraisal all exclude the wall, yard and Centre building.

Map 3 of sub area 1 shows a significant view from the bus station towards the Torrs excluding the building.

Map 9 of sub area 7 shows glimpse views from the lane outside the Centre looking away from the building and into the Torrs.

The view down the lane is not noted as being important.