

Foyle Bubbles

Overview

'Foyle Bubbles' are a series of satellite spaces designed to house arts, commercial, educational and wellbeing activities around the riverfront. These will act as suicide prevention measures, increasing footfall, acting as natural surveillance across the site and housing trained 'helpers'. These portable pods offer the occupier an opportunity for enterprise and for community engagement through social and civic functions.

The individuals or organisations within the pods will undertake mandatory mental health training in return for reduced rent, thus enabling everyday engagement within the community whilst at the same time providing mental health support and guidance without stigma or a clinical setting. In addition, wayfinding and public services will look to provide vending points with a hybrid nature of facilities and signage.

An important function of the 'Bubbles' is to increase the presence of people in the area, and thus improve the sense of life, positivity and community cohesion of the space by bringing people together. Key to the success of increasing footfall is the rebranding of the riverside through a physical and digital wayfinding scheme on the riverfront which will help people to move around the space, reconnecting disjointed spaces and rebranding the area as a 'community space' that feels 'Peaceful, Beautiful and Safe' (see p.23) Following the local council's public consultation from the Year of Youth (2017), the pods address the need for alternative education programmes in which the most hard to reach youths within the community have the opportunity to learn and develop business skills among the enterprises that occupy the pods. The portability of the pods allows them to respond to identified negative areas on the riverfront, and accommodate to the changing needs of the environment and community. Working in tandem with the local city CCTV initiative, the pods can be placed in areas with poor footfall and isolation. They can be illuminated by pedestrian flow, becoming beacons when not occupied. During these hours, the illuminated pods can light up areas associated with anti-social behaviour (or areas with low lighting), aid statutory services and provide spaces for people at point of crisis.

It has been observed by Foyle Search and Rescue that during city scale events such as the maritime festival they have few incidences of suicidal behaviour. They believe this is due to increased footfall which temporarily transforms negative and dormant spaces into positive destinations. Interviews with public health figures showed that this may be due to a feeling of community cohesion. In response to this, the portable pods were developed to reinforce the notion of dynamic festival like events.

Community engagement showed a need for public services and destinations along the riverfront. Individuals said they felt that 'there is nothing to walk to...there is just nowhere to go (at the river)' and 'there are not enough shops and cafes along the riverfront'. Further interviews corroborated these insights, showing the need for cafes and shops, weather shelters, public toilets, mental health therapy spaces, youth zones and activities.

The need to provide a safe space for someone in crisis is highlighted, as the 'likelihood of suicidal ideation is increased if there is little hope of rescue,' (Williams, Crane, et al., 2005). The Foyle Bubbles look to provide this through general interaction and discussion with 'helpers' in the pods through everyday uses but also by providing alternative means of education. Younger people have the opportunity to take ownership of the spaces. Activities offering learning and enterprise skills may offer opportunities for employability and hope for the future or simply provide a safe space to go, out of conventional hours.

This method has the ability to reduce suicides over a longer period, as those who are unemployed are two to three times more likely to die prematurely by suicide than those in work. (Sloggett 1998) coupled with the fact that suicide is the second leading cause of death globally amongst young people aged 15-29 years, (WHO 2014).