

Local artist to create Covid memorial benches in Midlothian

Mayfield's Yvonne Weighand Lyle will work with community groups to design and create commemorative Covid benches across Midlothian, as part of the "Remembering Together" project.

The national Scottish Government funded project will see Covid memorials installed in all 32 local authority areas across Scotland. Having been chosen as Lead Artist in Midlothian, Yvonne Weighand Lyle is excited to be representing her home county to deliver the project, as she explains:

"It is a real honour to be commissioned to co-create a Covid memorial for Midlothian. Being from Mayfield, this is very much "ma bit", so I am very proud to have the opportunity to realise the ideas and ambitions of local people and commemorate the pandemic in a sensitive and accessible way.

I will be working with community groups to co-create designs for both the commemorative benches and small gardens, with the goal of creating new spaces in public parks and greenways with natural planting, where people can sit, reflect and remember."

Yvonne was also the Lead Artist for the first phase of the project, where she conducted research to identify what type of memorial residents wanted to have in their local area. She

said: “By engaging people of all ages from primary schoolers to pensioners, I discovered that people in Midlothian wanted our memorial to be accessible, environmentally friendly, outdoors, and sited in several places across the county.

As a permanent and utilitarian memorial, these accessible installations will provide a long-term resource, featuring solid benches and natural planting. The interventions will be environmentally friendly, in tune with the landscape, and will require minimal ongoing maintenance.”

Midlothian Council’s Cabinet Member with responsibility for green spaces, Councillor Dianne Alexander said: “It’s lovely to have our local artist Yvonne Weighand Lyle working with our communities to create the memorials for Covid for Midlothian as part of the Scottish Government – funded programme Remembering Together. To have local people take part in the choice of memorial and their design will make them special to residents in Midlothian.

“These benches will create beautiful memorials, and places where we go to remember those who we lost during Covid. They will be accessible and outdoors, making places where people can pause on their walk and take a rest to enjoy views of Midlothian and beyond. Hopefully they will also be places where friends can meet and friendships made.”

The Midlothian benches and gardens will be designed following a community co-creation process. A number of workshops and events will be held with community groups in early 2024, allowing people of all ages to contribute design ideas. The benches and gardens will then be installed at multiple sites across Midlothian in Autumn 2024.



Lead Artist Yvonne Weighand Lyle Image Credit: Marius Alexander Photography