

Shoe heritage celebration with trail

July 2019: Northampton's rich shoe heritage will be celebrated with a new giant shoe sculpture trail throughout the town centre.

The fibre glass sculptures were commissioned by Northampton Borough Council, with support from Northampton Town Centre Business District (BID), as part of the #CelebrateNorthampton summer programme. And the first shoes will be in place from Wednesday 24 July, with further shoes placed throughout August.

Designed and shaped by Noel Blakeman Ltd to represent shoes from our heritage, the 12 shoe sculptures are of giant stilettos, brogues, Doc Martens and Chelsea boots.

The trail has gained a lot of support from local businesses, who have sponsored the shoes and helped choose appropriate locations for the sculptures to be based.

Businesses confirmed as sponsors include Jeffery West, NPS Shoes, Steffan's Jewellers, Grosvenor Shopping, Starbucks, the University of Northampton, the Royal & Derngate Theatres and Destination Nene Valley.

The businesses also worked with six local artists to create a range of designs to paint each shoe, celebrating their brand as well as the town's culture and diversity.

The artists working on the shoe sculptures are confirmed as Kardi Somerfield, Bill Pollard, Jessica Adams, Beth Easton, Leanne Conroy and Jean Edwards.

Councillor Anna King, Cabinet member for community engagement and safety, said: "The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee found that more work was needed to highlight the town's heritage. We're excited to be bringing the shoe trail to Northampton as part of our plans to raise awareness of our rich shoe and boot making history. And with shoe manufacturers still based in the town, it's also a fantastic way to celebrate new and old designs.

"We hope everyone enjoys finding out more about our heritage, as they track down all 12 sculptures at key locations in the town centre."

Mark Mullen, BID Operations Manager, said: "We are rightly proud of our shoe heritage here in Northampton and are confident these giant shoes will give visitors yet another reason to come into our town centre."

Anyone wishing to seek out all 12 shoe sculptures will be able to download a Shoe Trail Map from www.northampton.co.uk and hard copies will be available from The Guildhall.

To tease other shoe seekers about the locations, people are encouraged to take selfies with the shoe sculptures and share them on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #CelebrateNorthampton