



The process of revealing the ‘hidden gems’ associated with every local area informs our approach to wayfinding. Deliver that, within a system like frank that brings affordable, best practice structures to any area without the need for big budgets and long lead times, and you have a winning formula

already leading public realm strategy across the UK: promoting walking and cycling, enabling accessibility to diverse town and city centre uses, showcasing local distinctiveness and the vernacular, supporting visitor management and marketing strategies, and enhancing the design quality and consistency of the urban realm.

Bringing established best practice to a wide range of towns and cities, in an affordable manner, is the driving force behind ‘frank’, a customisable, ‘ready-to-go’ urban realm system encompassing wayfinding structures, feature lighting, street names and urban furniture. ‘Rooted as it is in current good practice, frank removes a considerable portion of the design cost and so allows smaller organisations with restricted budgets to make a presence,’ says frank’s creative director Roger Crabtree of fwdesign, a design and wayfinding consultancy based in London. Working in collaboration, fwdesign and Woodhouse, specialist manufacturer of lighting and street furniture for Legible London, Canary Wharf and Kensington High Street, amongst other projects, have created frank.

One of the key principles behind the new system is to offer a best practice solution from two companies that are both experts in their fields, at a price that makes quality design and delivery truly accessible. Woodhouse’s input, which includes a



Innovative: As well as providing consistency across all potential urban realm needs, frank also introduces real innovation – from the ‘marker’ which helps define cycle routes and heritage trails, to the integration of solar powered illumination

crucial role in value engineering the designs into ready-to-go solutions at a known price, bestows additional credibility upon frank, based on its established reputation. ‘Together,’ says Woodhouse’s Romy Rawlings, ‘we have decades of experience in developing urban realm products. We are the ideal collaboration to bring an innovative solution like frank to market.’

TANGIBLE AND TRANSPARENT

Several large cities such as London and Bristol have invested heavily in legibility and developed ‘best practice’ ways to encourage pedestrians to explore and discover what they have to offer. Yet extensive investment – in terms of time as well as expense – is needed to deliver such bespoke solutions. ‘A bespoke wayfinding system comes at a price,’ says Crabtree. ‘For a typical large-scale retail development, the total cost –

including design, development, manufacture and installation costs – could range from £200,000 to £500,000. A large city centre system could be priced at twice as much – with delivery of a tangible product in the ground often remaining a worrying ‘unknown’ until some way into the design process. This is where frank, with its up-front transparency, offers a significant advantage.’

Time is also a key factor, adds Crabtree. ‘Designing a wayfinding system can take anything between six to 18 months, depending on place, the number of stakeholders and user groups and the planning and development processes. Frequently, says Crabtree, the design process for physical signage works the ‘wrong’ way around. ‘Historically, a product designer would design a family of sign structures, hand it to the graphic designer, and say “put some information on that”, and