



Steel Construction New Zealand 20th Anniversary: Public Artwork National Design Competition

Call for proposals: Steel public artwork project

Opportunity Brief

1 June 2026

Opportunity Overview

Steel Construction New Zealand 20th Anniversary

National Student Public Artwork Competition

Steel Construction New Zealand (SCNZ), with support from Christchurch City Council (CCC) and SCAPE Public Art (SCAPE), invites students from the University of Canterbury and the University of Auckland and AUT to take part in a unique national design competition to create a permanent public artwork for central Christchurch.

To celebrate SCNZ's 20th anniversary, this project will commission and install a public sculpture in Rauora Park, on Cashel Street in Ōtautahi Christchurch. The artwork will recognise the people who have helped rebuild the city following the Canterbury earthquakes, while celebrating the role structural steel has played in shaping Christchurch's recovery.

The winning team will receive a **\$10,000 prize**, with the winning concept developed for public installation in Christchurch.

This is a rare opportunity for students to contribute to the cultural identity of Christchurch through a real public project that will be fabricated, installed and experienced by the community for years to come.

Who can enter?

The competition is open to multidisciplinary student teams from the University of Canterbury and the University of Auckland and AUT. Teams must include:

- at least one engineering student – all engineering student team members must be a student member of SCNZ
- at least one fine arts student

Students will collaborate across disciplines to develop a concept that is both artistically compelling and technically achievable.

Why Participate?

This competition offers students a rare opportunity to contribute to Christchurch's ongoing story of renewal. It brings together art, engineering and community impact in a way few student projects can. Students will gain:

- experience working on an interdisciplinary public art project
- mentoring from practising artists, engineers and industry professionals
- exposure through public exhibition and industry networks
- valuable portfolio and professional development experience
- The winning team receives a \$10,000 prize (paid in two parts: half on winning, half on project completion).

The winning team will work with SCNZ, CCC, SCAPE and fabricator John Jones Steel to develop the concept for fabrication and installation in 2027.

Team Eligibility

The competition is open to multidisciplinary student teams currently enrolled at the University of Canterbury and/or the University of Auckland and/or AUT. To encourage collaboration between creative and technical disciplines, all teams must include:

- at least one fine arts student
- at least one engineering student – all engineering student team members must be a student member of SCNZ

Teams are encouraged to bring together a mix of skills, perspectives and experiences to develop a concept that is both artistically ambitious and technically achievable.

Eligible entrants should demonstrate:

- an interest in public art, design and the built environment
- a willingness to collaborate across disciplines
- an understanding of the Christchurch context and the significance of the city's rebuild

Students may only be part of one team submission. All submitted work must be original and created by the student team members.

Project Theme

Honouring the People Who Have Rebuilt Christchurch

The central theme of this project is an artistic response to the people who have helped rebuild Christchurch following the Canterbury earthquakes. The artwork should acknowledge the collective effort, resilience and collaboration that shaped the city's recovery and ongoing renewal. Teams are invited to consider how public art can create a meaningful connection between people, place and memory within the urban environment. The final artwork will be fabricated from structural steel, recognising the material's important role in Christchurch's rebuild. Students are encouraged to explore how steel can be used not only as a structural material, but also as a creative medium that expresses strength, connection, endurance and transformation.

Design proposals may respond to the theme in a broad, imaginative way. Concepts could explore:

- the people, skills and communities involved in rebuilding the city
- collaboration across disciplines, industries and communities
- resilience, recovery and renewal
- the relationship between structure, creativity and the built environment
- the visible and invisible role structural steel has played in shaping modern Christchurch

The artwork should:

- create an engaging public experience
- contribute positively to Christchurch's cultural landscape
- be visually compelling and accessible to a broad audience
- create a strong sense of place within Rauora Park

Students are encouraged to think ambitiously and creatively while considering how the artwork will be experienced by the public over time.

Site Information

Location

The proposed site for the artwork is within Rauora Park in central Ōtautahi Christchurch, opposite the Berlin Wall mural panels on Cashel Street. The site forms part of a well-used public space within the central city and provides an opportunity for the artwork to become a visible and engaging part of Christchurch's urban environment. A site plan and reference images are provided in Appendix 1.

Site Considerations

Design proposals should respond thoughtfully to the character and scale of the site, considering how the artwork will be experienced by pedestrians and the wider public throughout the day and across different seasons.

The artwork should:

- create a strong visual presence within the park setting
- encourage public interest and engagement
- contribute positively to the cultural and physical landscape of central Christchurch
- be appropriate for a highly accessible public environment

Physical Constraints

To assist with feasibility and installation requirements:

- the artwork must be located within the designated gravel area identified in the site plan
- the height of the artwork should be between 2 and 4 metres
- the artwork should be designed for long-term outdoor public installation
- designs must consider durability, public safety and maintenance requirements

Design Development

The selected proposal will be treated as a concept design that will be further developed in collaboration with SCNZ, CCC, SCAPE, engineers and fabricators prior to construction.

As part of this process, modifications may be required to address:

- structural and engineering requirements
- fabrication methods
- installation logistics
- public safety considerations
- site-specific constraints

The project team will work closely with the winning team to ensure the final artwork remains faithful to the original design intent while meeting all practical and technical requirements for public installation.

Design Brief & Judging Criteria

Submissions should demonstrate a strong integration of artistic intent and engineering thinking. Proposals will be assessed on the quality of the concept, the clarity of the public experience, and the feasibility of delivering a durable public artwork within the site constraints.

Designs must:

- Present a coherent and well-resolved artistic concept that responds meaningfully to the competition theme
- Demonstrate intentional use of form, scale, proportion and spatial experience
- Show how the artwork will be experienced from multiple viewpoints of and within the site
- Consider movement, light, shadow and the surrounding environment as part of the design
- Create an engaging and accessible public experience
- Respond appropriately to site and dimensional requirements
- Demonstrate appropriate and intentional use of structural steel, with weathering steel as the primary material (see Appendix 2)
- Demonstrate structural feasibility and appropriate engineering thinking
- Consider public safety requirements, including interaction and accessibility (avoid ability for public to climb sculpture)
- Consider constructability, including fabrication and installation requirements
- Demonstrate durability and longevity appropriate for a permanent outdoor public artwork
- Demonstrate consideration of long-term maintenance requirements, aligning with CCC asset management requirements (see Appendix 3)
- Demonstrate how the artwork can be easily and reliably kept clean
- Demonstrate successful integration of artistic vision and engineering design

Submissions must also include a concise artist statement outlining:

- the central concept and artistic intent
- the key artistic and design decisions
- how the proposed form communicates the intended idea

A panel representing SCNZ, CCC and SCAPE will assess submissions based on the following criteria:

- Artistic merit, including originality and response to theme
- Engineering design, innovation and structural integrity
- Integration of artistic intent and engineering design
- Feasibility and buildability
- Durability and maintenance considerations
- Public engagement and experience

Finalist teams will be selected by the judging panel. Finalist concepts will then be exhibited publicly, and the people of Canterbury will be invited to vote for their favourite design.

Competition Process & Timeline

Competition Timeline

	Date
Competition opens	3 Jun 2026
Initial briefing workshop	TBA early Aug 2026
Initial submissions close	28 August 2026
Finalists announced	7 Sep 2026
Finalist mentoring workshops – (artistic and engineering)	TBA Sep 2026
Finalist developed submissions due	25 Sep 2026
Public exhibition & voting	5–23 Oct 2026
Winning design announced at the SCNZ Excellence in Steel Awards	6 Nov 2026
Detailed design development and fabrication	2027
Installation	Targeting 2027

SCNZ reserves the right to adjust timelines, workshop dates or project requirements if required. SCNZ may also choose not to proceed with the competition, or not to award a winner, should the entries received be deemed unsuitable.

CCC reserves the right to decline the gift as a permanent public artwork and may instead choose to install it as a temporary sculpture, should key aspects of the brief not be met.

What Happens After Winning?

The winning team will work with SCNZ, CCC, SCAPE, engineers and fabricators to further develop the concept for fabrication and installation.

This process is expected to include up to four collaborative project meetings throughout 2027, covering:

- Concept refinement
- Fabrication planning
- Design and work-in-progress review
- Installation coordination

Attendance at these meetings can be in person or via video link.

The winning team will be required to sign a participation agreement outlining expectations, meeting commitments, intellectual property and project timelines.

The winning team will gain valuable experience working alongside professional artists, engineers and steel fabricators as the artwork moves from concept to construction.

Support & Mentoring

This competition is designed to give students experience working on a real-world public artwork project while being supported by industry professionals, artists and project partners throughout the process.

Initial Submission Phase

Teams will develop their initial submissions independently using the information, site material and design guidance provided in this brief.

At this stage, students are encouraged to draw on:

- their current university studies and studio practice
- collaborative thinking across art and engineering disciplines
- independent research into public art, structural steel and the Christchurch context

To ensure fairness across all entrants, no formal external mentoring will be provided during the initial concept stage.

Finalist Support

Shortlisted finalist teams will receive additional support to help refine and strengthen their proposals ahead of final judging.

This may include:

- workshops with practising artists
- engineering mentoring sessions
- feedback from industry professionals
- opportunities to further develop the artistic and technical aspects of the design

Finalist workshops may be delivered in person or online to support participation from students based outside Christchurch.

Technical Resources

Student teams will have access to selected technical and background resources relevant to the project, including:

- site information and reference material
- public artwork guidance
- structural steel reference information
- technical resources relating to weathering steel and outdoor durability requirements

Additional resources may be provided throughout the competition process.

Winning Team Development

The winning team will continue working with SCNZ, CCC, SCAPE, engineers and fabricators during 2027 to develop the concept for fabrication and installation.

This phase will provide students with valuable professional experience in:

- public artwork development
- interdisciplinary collaboration
- detailed design refinement
- fabrication and construction processes
- stakeholder engagement and project delivery

The winning team will work closely with Christchurch-based fabricator John Jones Steel and the wider project team to bring the artwork from concept through to installation.

Intellectual Property

All submitted designs and concepts remain the intellectual property of the student teams who create them.

By entering the competition, teams grant SCNZ, the CCC, and SCAPE permission to use images, drawings and descriptions of submitted proposals for purposes related to the promotion, exhibition and documentation of the competition and project.

The winning team will continue to be acknowledged as the designers of the artwork in project communications and associated promotional material.

The final installed artwork is intended to become part of Christchurch's public art collection. Details relating to ownership, copyright, moral rights and future reproduction of the artwork will be confirmed with the winning team as part of the project agreement prior to fabrication and installation.

All submissions must be original work and must not infringe the intellectual property rights of any third party.

Contact

Send your submissions via email with the subject line 'SCNZ Christchurch Artwork' to:

Darren O'Riley

E. info@scnz.org

T. 09 263 5635

Appendix 1: Site information

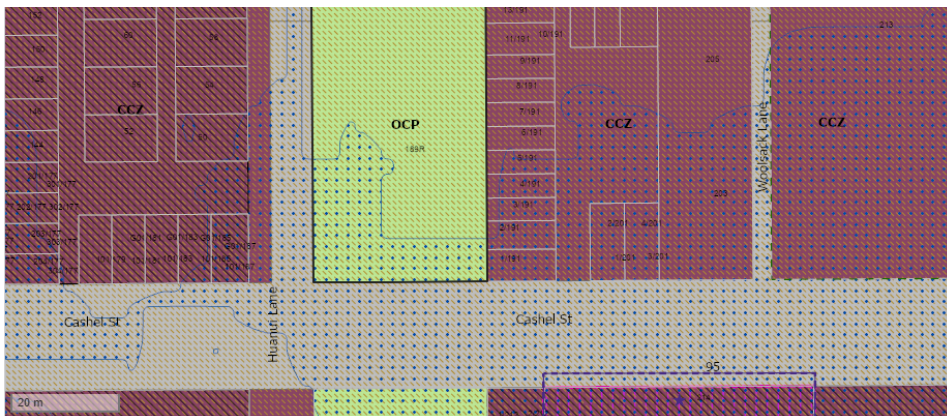
Steel Industry Artwork proposed site, 189R (193) Cashel Street.



Assets on site: Power box, cycle stands, seating, lighting, rubbish bins and some tree planting.



Site assets on left and Three waters network on the right. Note an Orion supply check would be required.



189R Cashel Street Property Search Results

The information below is relevant to the selected property. Click on the blue text below for more details.

Land Use Zones	Other Notations	Natural Hazard Overlays
Zone OCP Open Space Community Parks Zone	Noise Category 3: Lower Noise Level Area CMUA: Outer Noise Insulation Area	Flood Hazard Flood Management Area
	Overlays and Precincts Central City Frame Overlay Central City Walking Catchment	Liquefaction Hazard Liquefaction Management Area (LMA)
	Zone Central City Inner Zone	
	Urban Intensification Area Urban Intensification Area	

Consenting:

- Note, public artworks are a permitted activity. Site is in a flood management area.
- Depending on the size of the artwork a building consent/application may be required. If a connection to stormwater is required a BC application is required.
- This is a known Archaeological site, and an Archaeological check is required (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga). An Archaeological Authority may be required.
- This is a recorded Hail site, check required regarding any requirements for an environmental plan. The LLUR enquiry for 189R Cashel Street is in Trim 26/832959.

Orion network: note, all services need to be located prior to any works starting.

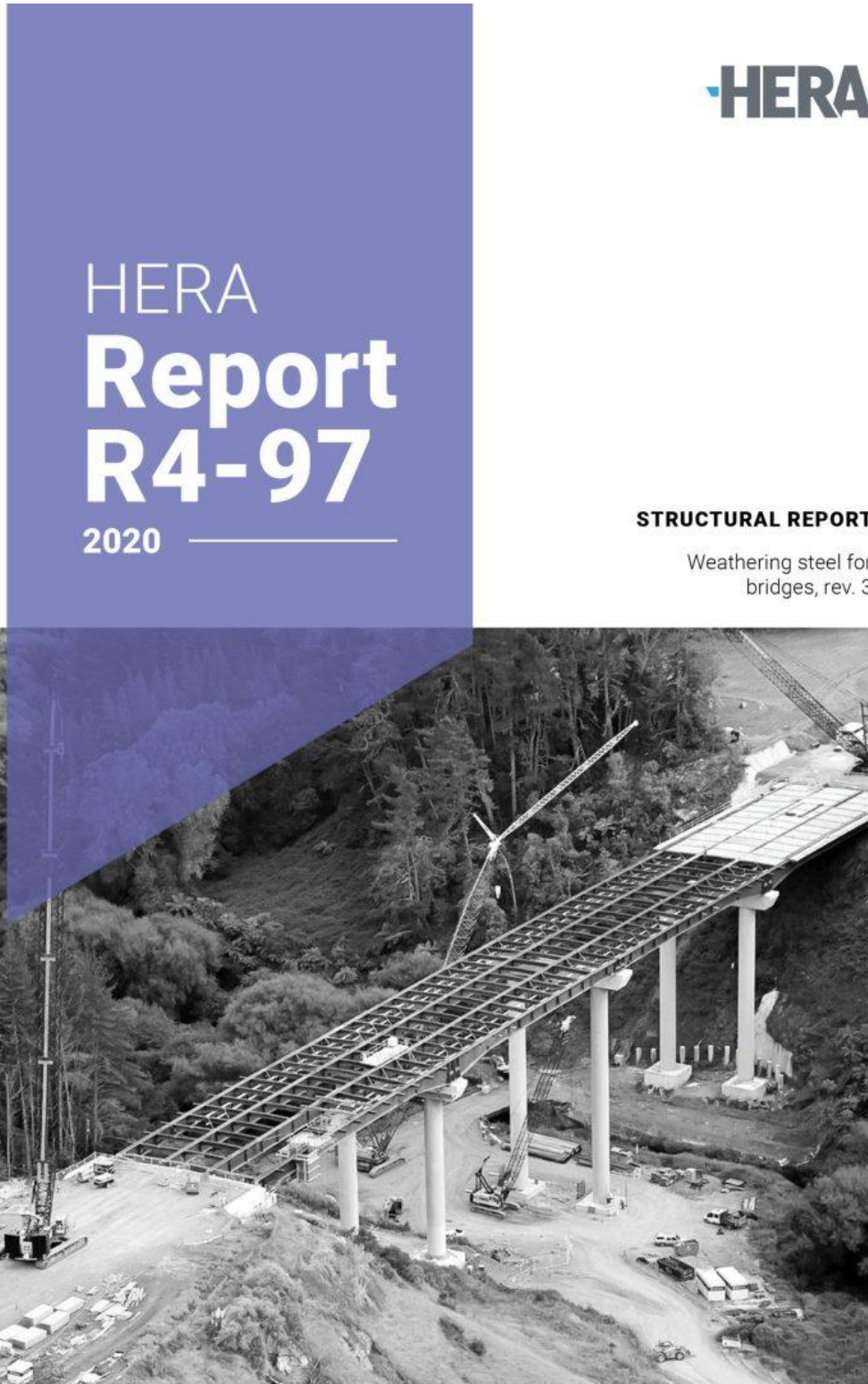
This will give an idea of where a connection may be made if uplighting is included in the artwork. Alternatively, it may be possible to connect into the lighting poles and downlight.



Note: services are indicative and would all need to be located on site prior to any works starting on the winning design. This information is sufficient for the purpose of initial entries.

Appendix 2: Technical reference material

[HERA R4-97: Aotearoa New Zealand weathering steel guide for bridges - rev. 3](#)



Appendix 3: CCC asset management requirements

Provide here an overview of the requirements (i.e. low maintenance)

CCC will require the following information:

Basic data:

- Artist name
- Title
- Date created
- Medium/materials used, including any surface treatment
- Dimensions
- Value

Maintenance

- Maintenance plan, to cover cleaning schedules, preventive maintenance and any condition/structural engineering inspections (if required)
- How the artwork is to age
- Treatment if it is graffitied

Other

- Any agreements
- Photographic record of the artwork fabrication
- Estimated life of the artwork and intent at the end of life or if it is irreparably damaged
- Maquette ownership or location if there is one

The first-year maintenance and insurance to be covered by the project.

Appendix 4: Competition Entry Form

Submission Requirements

Student teams are invited to submit an initial concept proposal responding to the project theme, site and design considerations outlined in this brief.

Submissions should communicate both the artistic vision and technical thinking behind the proposal. At this stage, teams are not expected to provide fully resolved construction documentation; however, proposals should demonstrate a clear, achievable and well-considered concept.

Initial submissions are expected to be concise and presentation-focused rather than fully resolved technical proposals.

Important Notes

- Submissions must be original work created by the student team.
- Teams are encouraged to think ambitiously and creatively while remaining mindful of the site constraints and public nature of the project.
- Finalist teams will receive mentoring and support to further develop their concepts prior to final judging.
- The winning proposal will undergo further design development in collaboration with project partners before fabrication and installation.

1. Team information

- Team name
- Primary contact (name, phone, email)
- Artwork title

2. Team make-up

- Names and disciplines of all team members
- University affiliations
- Brief bios (max ~100 words each)
Include relevant skills, experience and any connection to Christchurch.

3. Local context

Describe your team's understanding of Christchurch and how it has informed the design of the artwork. This could include why your artwork is relevant to the public site.

(150–250 words)

4. Conceptual overview & Artistic intent

Provide a concise summary of the central ideas within your proposal.

Outline the proposed artwork and its artistic intent. Explain the key artistic ideas behind the proposal and how the design responds to the competition theme. Describe the artwork's concept, and how the artwork communicates its ideas through form, scale and material.

Submissions should demonstrate how the artwork relates to the site and surrounding environment.

(200–500 words)

5. Engineering design, Integration of artistic intent and engineering design & Public experience

Explain the proposed structural approach, including how the artwork is supported and connection details, and how it is realised using structural steel.

Detailed engineering calculations are not required at this stage.

Describe how the artistic vision and engineering design inform and support each other. Highlight how collaboration has shaped the outcome, including any constraints, trade-offs or innovations.

Describe how people will experience and interact with the artwork. Consider visibility, scale, movement.

(200–500 words)

6. Buildability, maintenance and durability

Explain how the design has considered fabrication, transport and installation. Identify any features that simplify or complicate construction.

Outline how the design addresses long-term durability and maintenance in a public outdoor environment. Consider material performance, weathering, safety and strategies to minimise ongoing upkeep.

(150–400 words)

7. Supporting materials

Please provide relevant materials, including

- Concept drawings and/or renders
- Plans and elevations
- Engineering drawings
- Any additional material that helps explain the proposal

A maximum of five drawings can be submitted as part of the initial entry.



Submission Checklist

Before submitting, ensure you have included:

- Team information and team member details
- Local context statement
- Conceptual overview and artistic intent
- Engineering design, design integration and public experience response
- Buildability, durability and maintenance response
- Supporting materials, including relevant visuals and drawings