



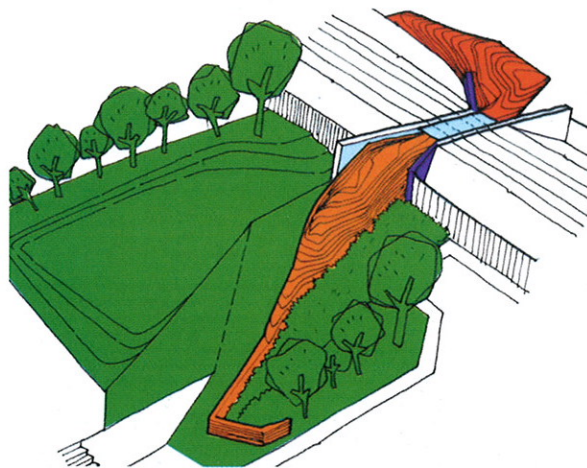
# The uplifting underpass

Described by the project architect as “cheering up those spots planning usually forgets about”, the new underpass in Castleford, West Yorkshire, is an exercise in concrete geometry

Built as part of the Castleford regeneration project, a collaboration between Wakefield Council, Channel 4, regeneration agencies and the community, the newly landscaped underpass forms a key gateway to the town centre. The project involved completely rebuilding the existing 1890s railway underpass and providing a new public space.

Designed by architects Deborah Saunt and Sam Potter of DSDHA, the underpass was opened in June 2008. It is one of the regeneration schemes being featured on Channel 4's Kevin McCloud & the Big Town Plan, in which the run-down former coal-mining town in West Yorkshire undergoes regeneration.

Other projects in the town include a new village green by Martha Schwartz in the former pit village of New Fryston, and a new pedestrian bridge over the River Aire by Renato Benedetti.



Built on a very tight budget of only £200,000 and faced with the challenging logistics of working under a live rail line, the underpass project demonstrates that small infrastructure projects can have as much impact as larger, more eye-catching ones.

**Top** The cast in-situ concrete seat draws visitors towards the underpass.  
**Above** Site diagram.

The new design includes a generous seating shelter, an open plaza and green space. The seating area, consisting of in-situ, concrete, polygonal geometric shapes, was created in collaboration with artist Martin Richman, who designed the lighting and specified the flocked rubber panelling and seating pads.

The result is intimate, welcoming and fun — words not usually associated with underpasses. The geometric shape of the concrete complements yet breaks up the rectangularity of the underpass. The bright colour and texture of the rubber panels invites passers by to sit, relax, and use the space rather than just hurry through.

As a key route into the town centre, the underpass is used by some 10,000 people daily. Previously, the spatial experience was depressing and sullen. Now it is uplifting and inviting — and ready to play an integral role in the regeneration of Castleford.