

Technical spec

Structure

Not all screens are the same model, but the majority are provided by Philips Technologies and so as a general rule the following specifications apply. All are LED screens, approximately 26 metres square and rising to a height of 10 metres or so above ground level. Some are free-standing on structural supports, others are attached to buildings. With one exception, the screens operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, muted overnight to minimise inconvenience to inner-city residents. Screens are RGB colour. Each is sited within busy, city-centre locations with the ability to host related events of varying sizes within the immediate space. This has varied from small, grassroots activity of no more than a dozen or so participants, to many thousands gathered for national broadcast events and sporting finals.

Every site is unique – see **Screen Locations**.

Audio

All screens without exception include audio playback. This is carefully monitored and set at levels that increase and decrease throughout the day, according to additional environmental noise and footfall. Most non-event playback is set to a level we term *Ambient*. Audio zoning is in operation so that excessive noise does not spill out in the vicinity of the screen, but is instead specifically targeted at the viewing area.

Any video footage containing music or soundtrack must ensure this has been copyright cleared for use first. See document entitled **Content Guidelines** if further advice is required. Please pay careful attention to audio levels - if these are too high it may result in distortion during transmission.

Resolution

Generally, the screens possess less lines of resolution: less than a domestic digital television. It should be borne in mind that work including highly defined, hairline detail may not appear to its best effect. This also affects work that is very dark, as the screen is often in direct sunlight, while video pieces containing lots of delicate, shaded elements and little contrast do not appear to their best advantage. Scaling technology is in place to enhance perception, and a typical full-screen background image would normally be delivered at 1024 x 768, should you wish to use this as a guide.

If none of this means anything to you, don't worry. Just submit material to the best of your ability, and we will take care of the rest.

Presentation

Screens are roughly landscape in shape, as opposed to portrait. Still images and artwork submitted in portrait form (imagine a sheet of A4 paper standing tall side up, instead of on its side), will result in blank areas to the left and right of the image. The alternative is to zoom in on the image, which will mean the loss of detail at the top and bottom. We mention this so that you might retain greater control over the presentation of your work.

Please note: material of any kind that has originally been intended for print or web will not automatically transfer to the screen successfully. Small, discreet typography does not always become clearer the larger it is projected, and handwriting styles are difficult to read. Keep it bold, clear, simple and uncluttered.

Screen Layouts

A screen layout may be a simple single window showing full screen live or MPEG video, or it may be composed of multiple windows up to a maximum of six, each of which may be sized and positioned over the background image. Separate windows may be created to show time and/ or date, static text, tickertape or video. Windows may be overlaid with a priority to determine which window lies on top and which lies underneath.

Standard artistic playout is usually full-screen, or full-screen with scrolling descriptive text.

Text

Standard Text – stationary message, crawling, or scrolling tickertape derived from TXT file. Text messages are rendered in real time. They can be sized, positioned, coloured and displayed in a large variety of typefaces. Text messages can scroll and crawl up, down, left, or right within the window and be made to repeat with a pre-programmable gap between repeats.

Web Text – stationary message or crawling tickertape derived from part of a web page (XML format). Using an Internet connection to extract the required strings of characters from a web page, store them in a local TXT file and render them in the required size typeface and colour. Strings from multiple web pages may be combined.

Plug 'n Play

This refers to an access box, usually outdoors, in the form of a discreet weatherproof unit. Most screens have at least one at the base of the structure, while others have one or more additional units distributed across the city. Cameras, laptop computers or other forms of video/image generating equipment can plug directly into these in order to appear live on the screen. The connectors required are x1 BNC composite video and x2 XLR audio connections.

Please note: Some of the plug'n play points at the base of screens include an additional feed of the on-screen camera. Please contact each site manager for individual facilities.

Format

All video and animated material will be converted into mpg format. We prefer to do this ourselves and ask that you submit using DV-Cam or Mini-DV as the starting point, but it may be possible to accept work that has been encoded to disc in mpg 2 format ONLY (extension: .mpg or .mpv or .mpa or .mp2). Some screens cannot currently accept mpeg4.

Should you only be able to submit DVD, this too is possible, as a secondary preference, although it may result in a barely perceptible reduction in quality.

Please submit an SAE if you wish to have your work returned. Tapes/DVDs without and SAE will be held for 6 weeks only following final broadcast for personal collection - arrange with manager beforehand.

(continued on following page)

Accepted file types and formats:

Common format	Digital files	Graphic files	Audio files
Mini DV	mpg	tga	mpa
DV Cam	mpv	bmp*	wav
DVD	mp2	png	mp3
	swf	gif	wma
	wmv	jpg	
	mva		
	m2v		

* For .bmp files, these must be no lower than 16 bit depth.

Screen delivery preferences:

Site	4:3 ratio	16:9 ratio	Mini-DV	DV-Cam	DVD
Manchester		x*	x*	x	
Birmingham	x	x*	x*	x	x
Liverpool	x*	x	x*	x	x
Hull	x*	x	x*	x	x
Leeds	x*	x	x*	x	x
Rotherham	x*	x	x*	x	x
Bradford	x*	x	x*	x	x

*asterix denotes preference

Video Optimisation

Width & height: 720 x 576

Kbits/sec: 6000

Audio settings: 44.1kHz

Data rate: 224 Kbits

If the above settings seem unfamiliar, don't worry. Strictly for data gluttons only.