# Banksy mural’s costly removal leaves Lowestoft community divided over lost economic opportunity



In August 2021, a surprising transformation took place at a property in Lowestoft, Suffolk. Garry and Gokean Coutts, who were renting out the building, received a call from their tenants about unexpected scaffolding that had appeared overnight. Initially believing it was a council project to repair the chimney, the couple was soon astounded to discover that the scaffolding was masking a 14-foot mural of a seagull, later verified as a work by the elusive artist Banksy.

As news of the mural spread, the property unexpectedly became a tourist attraction, drawing large crowds eager to photograph the piece. However, the sudden influx of visitors brought new challenges. Concerns regarding security and maintenance loomed large; the local council proposed preserving the mural at a staggering cost of £40,000 annually. This financial burden proved unmanageable for the couple, as Garry himself lamented, “I'm completely depressed and sick about it.” The couple ultimately faced episodes of vandalism, including attempts to cover the mural with paint and even a theft incident that necessitated hiring a night watchman.

Faced with these myriad issues, the Coutts decided to remove the mural altogether, incurring expenses that soared to about £250,000. This included the operational cost of safely dislodging the artwork, which was eventually lifted and transported by crane. Currently, the mural is in storage, with the couple bearing a monthly cost of £3,000 as they seek a buyer. Art dealer John Brandler has noted that the mural's value could range between £1 million and £3 million, a potential return that stands at odds with their immediate financial strains.

Interestingly, Lowestoft is not unacquainted with Banksy’s impactful presence. A separate mural, known as "Crowbar Girl," also surfaced in August 2021 on an old electrical shop and was subsequently removed and sold privately in November 2021 for a reported £2 million to £2.5 million. This decision sparked public discontent, as many locals had hoped such artworks would bolster tourism and community pride. The potential economic benefits of these iconic illustrations have not gone unnoticed; residents felt they were missing out on a unique opportunity to foster local interest and revenue.

The removal of Banksy’s murals in Lowestoft has elicited broader conversations about art's role in community identity and urban life. Critics argue that such artworks should be preserved not only for their artistic merit but for their ability to galvanize community engagement and promote the local economy. John Brandler, among others, expressed disappointment over the loss of the seagull mural, remarking that its removal was a missed opportunity for the town.

The saga of these murals in Lowestoft encapsulates a poignant clash between artistic legacy and commercial realities, as local residents grapple with the impact of art on their community and the decisions made by the property owners. As the couple continues their search for a buyer, the enduring question remains: Could these works have offered more than mere aesthetic charm—they might have indeed become the cornerstone of a revitalised local economy, had they been allowed to stay.

Despite their eventual removal, the dialogue surrounding Banksy’s work continues to resonate, leaving both the Coutts and the local community to contemplate what could have been.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1, 2
2. Paragraph 2, 3
3. Paragraph 4, 5
4. Paragraph 5
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.edp24.co.uk/news/25173113.banksy-artwork-lowestoft-leaves-landlords-hefty-bill/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/british-homeowners-spend-250000-remove-banksy-mural-2309530> - In August 2021, Garry and Gokean Coutts discovered that a Banksy mural had been painted on their property in Lowestoft, UK. Initially assuming municipal repairs, they were surprised to find a 14-foot seagull mural. The artwork attracted large crowds, leading to security concerns and maintenance costs. The local council proposed preserving the mural at an annual cost of £40,000, which the owners found burdensome. After a theft attempt and vandalism, the couple decided to remove the mural, incurring nearly £250,000 in expenses. The artwork was stored while they sought a buyer. Art dealer John Brandler estimated its value between £1 million and £3 million.
3. <https://www.suffolklive.com/news/lowestoft-banksy-sold-much-2-6502221> - A Banksy mural, known as 'Crowbar Girl,' appeared in Lowestoft, Suffolk, in August 2021. The artwork depicted a child with a crowbar next to a sandcastle on the side of an old electrical shop. In November 2021, the building's owners removed the mural and sold it privately, reportedly for £1.5 million to £2 million. This decision sparked disappointment among local residents who hoped the artwork would attract tourism to the town. The mural was initially expected to be auctioned in the U.S., but it remained in the UK.
4. <https://metro.co.uk/2022/01/16/landlord-sells-banksy-mural-for-2000000-after-ripping-it-off-wall-15927106/> - In August 2021, a Banksy mural titled 'Crowbar Girl' appeared on the side of an old electrical shop in Lowestoft, Suffolk. The artwork depicted a child with a crowbar next to a sandcastle. In November 2021, the building's owners removed the mural and sold it privately, reportedly for £2 million. This decision was met with criticism from local residents who felt the artwork should have remained in the town to benefit the community. The mural was initially expected to be auctioned in the U.S., but it was sold within the UK.
5. <https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/lowestoft/banksy-mural-removed-from-suffolk-wall-sells-privately-for-r-9235383/> - A Banksy mural depicting a child with a crowbar next to a sandcastle appeared on the side of an old electrical shop in Lowestoft, Suffolk, in August 2021. In November 2021, the building's owners removed the mural and sold it privately, reportedly for £2 million. This decision was met with disappointment from local residents who hoped the artwork would attract tourism to the town. The mural was initially expected to be auctioned in the U.S., but it remained in the UK.
6. <https://www.suffolknews.co.uk/lowestoft/final-piece-of-banksy-mural-worth-up-to-3m-removed-to-horro-9314390/> - In May 2023, the final section of a Banksy mural depicting a seagull snatching a chip from a skip was removed from the side of a building in Lowestoft, Suffolk. The artwork, part of Banksy's 'Great British Spraycation,' had become a beloved landmark in the town. The removal sparked anger among residents who felt the artwork was an 'amazing gift' to the community. Art dealer John Brandler estimated the mural's value between £1 million and £3 million and expressed disappointment over its removal.
7. <https://www.adt.co.uk/news/23437849.removed-lowestoft-seagull-banksy-worth-3m/> - A Banksy mural depicting a seagull swooping down to steal polystyrene chips from a skip appeared on the side of a building in Lowestoft, Suffolk, in August 2021. In May 2023, the final section of the mural was removed, sparking disappointment among local residents. Art dealer John Brandler estimated the mural's value between £1 million and £3 million and criticized the loss as a missed opportunity for the town. The removal was part of necessary structural work on the building.