

the loop *



The Bright Country

Wolverhampton sees the light

Queen Victoria famously demanded that the blinds be drawn when she was travelling through Wolverhampton, preferring the darkness of her carriage to that of the industrialised Black Country. But these days the city is visibly brightening, with 14 permanent light installations being set up in a council project called Out of Darkness.

The Brutalist 1960s building that houses Wolverhampton University's School of Art and Design will, from December, be animated nightly by constantly changing colours, created by 98 cold cathode tubes mounted on its eight-storey facade. "We didn't want to turn the city into Las Vegas, but we wanted to make the building sing," says installation designer Peter Fink. Other initiatives involve projecting films on to buildings, which are activated by passers-by.

The project is named after Wolverhampton's motto - "of Darkness Cometh Light" - and its aim is to make people look twice. "When we tested the lights recently, people were hanging out of their car windows and cheering," says Fink.

Who knows, even passing royals might now take time to glance outside. *Belinda Bamber*