

## Creative Ground: Open commissions 26

*Growing creative practice, rooted in place*

### **Introduction**

Across the last couple of years, we have been piloting creative commission opportunities across our Hampshire priority places of Gosport, Rushmoor and the New Forest. We've been enthused by the support that these specific, developmental opportunities have gained and the tangible outcomes for people making creative work in these areas. We're pleased to be launching a consolidated round of Cultural Development Commissions for 2026, supporting artists and creatives to develop their practice, experiment with ideas, and deepen their connection to place across the New Forest, Rushmoor and Gosport.

These commissions form part of Hampshire Cultural Trust's role as a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) for Arts Council England. Our work focuses on supporting the cultural sector and increasing participation in Arts and Culture and supports creative development, learning and collaboration, particularly at early or exploratory stages, rather than the delivery of finished outputs.

### **Purpose of the Commissions**

We invite proposals that test ideas, build skills, explore new ways of working, strengthen local creative relationships, and respond to specific communities or places.

Artistic experimentation and risk are welcomed where learning is clear. Expectations around health and safety, safeguarding, pay rates and general good practice are non-negotiable, and support is available for these.

All of our Priority Places have developed Cultural Strategies or Frameworks, we strongly suggest aligning your priorities with these local priorities.

For examples of previously supported commissions, please see recent case studies in the Stories section our website.

### **Value of the commission**

Commissions of up to £3,000 are available and may be used for fees, materials, training, equipment, travel, professional advice and may be used as match funding. Access costs are available in addition, please outline in your budget. We anticipate making commissions of a variety of different value, depending on the needs of the person(s), likely between £200 and the maximum of £3000.

This opportunity is offered as a commission, not a grant. We are commissioning artists and creatives to deliver a defined piece of development-focused activity that contributes to Culture Connects' outcomes around cultural development and place-based work.

While the focus is on exploration, learning and experimentation, commissioned activity is expected to respond meaningfully to place and to generate learning, participation or sector development aligned with the aims of our programme.

### **Criteria**

As a commissioned programme, all projects are expected to contribute to at least one of the following Cultural Development aims:

- Supporting the development of artists and creatives working in the New Forest, Rushmoor or Gosport
- Increasing engagement or participation in arts and cultural activity
- Strengthening local creative networks, partnerships or relationships with venues, communities or peers
- Generating learning about creative practice, place-based working or engagement approaches

### **Who can apply?**

Those making creative work in the New Forest, Rushmoor or Gosport. Proposals may be from freelance individuals, collectives or small organisations (ie, informal groups, CICs, or small arts organisations)

By creatives we mean those working in the cultural sector, across all art forms and including heritage professionals.

### **Conversations before you apply**

Artists and creatives are strongly encouraged, but not required, to book a 1:1 conversation with the Cultural Development team. These conversations support development and readiness and do not guarantee funding. Request a conversation by emailing [Cultureconnects@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk](mailto:Cultureconnects@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk) or book online.

### **What can be supported?**

- Delivery of creative programmes for public participants i.e. workshops, events, performances
- Piloting or testing new partnerships or collaborations which result in a public facing output
- Residencies or research and development periods

- Match funding a larger project or application where the commission is directly funding a discreet element delivered within the time period of this opportunity and which responds to our cultural development aims

Projects may be public-facing, sector-facing, or a mix of both. We're always interested in supporting training and development of creatives and artists; your application can include a proportion for training and personal development purposes.

### **Commissioned delivery and accountability**

Successful proposals will be commissioned to deliver the agreed development activity within the outlined timeframe and budget.

Commissioned artists and creatives will be expected to:

- Deliver the activity described in their proposal, with flexibility where learning and development require
- Work to agreed standards of health, safety and safeguarding
- Engage constructively with the Cultural Development team during the delivery period
- Share agreed evidence of activity and learning to support programme monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and reporting will be light touch and proportionate, reflecting the scale and developmental nature of the commission awarded.

### **Health, safety and safeguarding**

All commissioned activity must meet appropriate standards of health, safety and safeguarding.

Artists and creatives should demonstrate an awareness of their responsibilities and confirm they can work safely and responsibly, particularly where activity involves:

- Members of the public
- Children and young people
- Adults at Risk
- Activity in public or shared spaces

While artistic experimentation and creative risk are welcomed, risks relating to health, safety or safeguarding must be identified and managed appropriately. Where relevant, commissioned artists may be asked to provide basic risk assessments or safeguarding information before delivery begins and support is available from the cultural development team throughout. All successful commissions are asked to send a copy of their Public Liability Insurance.

### **How to apply:**

You are asked to submit a proposal outlining the proposed activity, the intended learning and outcomes, and how the work relates to place.

Proposals may be submitted in:

- Written format, no more than 1 page of A4 (e.g Word or PDF, please note, we are unable to open Pages documents)
- Audio or video formats, spoken responses recorded as an audio file (e.g. MP3, WAV), video responses (e.g. MP4), with no requirement for high production quality.

In addition to your proposal, you are also asked to provide:

- A simple budget
- A proposed timeframe for activity
- Basic information relating to health, safety and safeguarding (where applicable)
- Copies of your most up to date insurance certificates

Submit your proposals to [Cultureconnects@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk](mailto:Cultureconnects@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk)

### **Access and proposal formats**

We are committed to making this opportunity accessible. Artists and creatives are encouraged to contact the team in advance to discuss any access requirements. Access costs are available in addition to your project budget, please outline separately.

Proposals may be submitted via:

- Written responses
- Audio or video responses

Alongside this guidance we will also provide:

- FAQs
- Case study examples of previous commissions on our Stories page

If you need an alternative format, additional support, or want to discuss access requirements, you can contact us at [Cultureconnects@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk](mailto:Cultureconnects@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk) before applying.

### **Key dates and timeframe**

Dates for the Creative Ground Commissions are outlined below:

- Commission opens: 1 June 26
- Application deadline: 18 July 26
- Decisions announced: 31 July 26

- Activity period: August 26 – February 27

Artists and creatives should ensure they are able to deliver the proposed activity within the stated timeframe. Projects should be appropriately scaled to reflect the developmental nature of this commission.

### **Assessment**

Your proposal will be assessed by a panel including

- A representative from our Cultural Development team
- A representative from the Culture Connects partners consortium
- A representative from one of our three local authority partners or a cultural sector partner working in Rushmoor, Gosport or the New Forest.

Proposals will be assessed against the following areas:

#### 1. Development benefit – 30%

- Clear benefit to the artist/creative's development
- Learning, skills-building or experimentation
- Reflection on what success and learning might look like

#### 2. Relevance to place – 25%

- Clear connection to the New Forest, Rushmoor or Gosport
- Thoughtful response to people, context, or local creative ecology

#### 3. Engagement and participation – 25%

- Appropriate engagement with public, peers or communities
- Consideration of accessibility and inclusion

#### 4. Deliverability and good practice – 20%

- Realistic plan for activity within budget and timeframe
- Clear consideration of health, safety and safeguarding
- Appropriate scale for a development commission
- Artistic risk is welcomed where learning is clear

### **Support during the commission**

We aim to offer supportive, proportionate guidance throughout the commissioned period.

Commissioned artists and creatives can expect:

- A named contact within the Cultural Development team
- Check ins at key points during delivery
- Practical support in problem solving where challenges arise
- Signposting to relevant networks, venues or partners



Support is intended to enable learning and development rather than to direct or manage creative content.

The commissions will be paid in tranches as follows:

80% upon signature of your agreement and receipt of insurance documentation

20% upon completion of your defined work and submission of monitoring data and case study.

We look forward to your proposals.