



activate
performing arts

Nature Calling Artists' Commission Brief

New commission opportunities
inspired by people and landscape

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Nature Calling

Nature Calling is a ground-breaking national project, that will commission an exceptional, diverse range of artists to explore and celebrate nature and our National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Specifically designed to listen to communities and ensure our landscapes are a place for everyone, Nature Calling is inviting writers and artists to respond to this brief, for a programme that culminates in a season between May and October 2025.

This is a nationally significant project, bringing the special qualities of our National Landscapes to the fore, and creating opportunities for artists and communities to respond to Nature Calling.

A partnership between the National Landscape Association, Activate Performing Arts and Poetry School with six regional National Landscapes to commission artists, the project will engage new audience across England – and inspire the whole National Landscapes family.

Thanks to national funding from Arts Council England and Defra (Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs), as well as funders from each English National Landscape – specifically for these commissions, thanks go to the following National Landscapes in the Chilterns, Dorset, Forest of Bowland, Lincolnshire Wolds, Mendip Hills and Surrey Hills.

National Landscapes

There are 46 National Landscapes in the UK, and this project works with the 34 located in England. These are places with national importance, protected for the nation's benefit, and cared for by local teams with a deep understanding of the distinctive web of interconnecting factors that make these places special.

The National Landscapes Association provides a strong voice for the nation's National Landscapes – places so special they have been designated in the national interest.

National Landscapes are living places. An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a landscape designation and caring for natural beauty is about so much more than habitat management. Landscape is made up of geology, landform, history, human influence, cultural heritage and wildlife.



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So much of the work of National Landscapes is defined in policy or scientific terms, but instinctively, our experience of place is personal, measured by our emotional response. Artists have been inspired by landscape throughout history and artworks have in turn helped us to discover, appreciate and share a greater understanding of natural beauty.

National Landscapes are very lucky to have a loyal existing audience. People fall in love with National Landscapes and continue to visit throughout their lives, and we hope that the new audiences engaged through Nature Calling will continue to visit, enjoy and care for the long-term when the project ends.

However, there are significant barriers for some, and we are aware that people from certain backgrounds are underrepresented in National Landscapes, as visitors, residents, members of staff teams and within our governance structures, as highlighted in the Landscapes Review, written by Julian Glover for the Government.

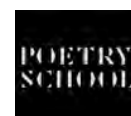
These groups include people from the global majority, people from underserved groups, neurodiverse people, people with reduced mobility, people from the LGBTQIA+ community, Under 25's and people from urban areas.

As a network, the National Landscapes and the National Landscapes Association want to ensure that wherever we can, we work to remove these barriers. Everyone should be able to enjoy and celebrate beautiful places. There is much more to do, but the journey has begun. The new National Landscapes brand has been designed to be as accessible as possible, with input from underserved groups.

There are great examples of work by National Landscapes teams to remove barriers and ***Nature Calling is a significant national programme that aims to engage the public in National Landscapes, creatively.***

Brief

The National Landscapes Association is working in partnership with Activate Performing Arts to commission projects in 6 areas – starting with words. We are working in partnership with Poetry School to commission 6 writers with a new perspective on nature that will inspire artists commissioned to present a project in 2025.



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We have a unique opportunity to build on our relationship with writing, and our long-standing partnership with Poetry School and The Laurel Prize. We want to take words as an inspiration and commission artists to respond to one of 6 National Landscapes, creating a season between May and October 2025. There are six sets of commissions we are inviting across England, each one specific to a special landscape. The National Landscapes these focus on are:

1. [Chilterns National Landscape](#)
2. [Dorset National Landscape](#)
3. [Forest of Bowland National Landscape](#)
4. [Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape](#)
5. [Mendip Hills National Landscape](#)
6. [Surrey Hills National Landscape](#)

The special qualities and focus of the commission for each of the six National Landscapes are detailed in Appendices 1-6.

Writing Commission

We are inviting proposals from published writers from any writing discipline – poetry, song, prose, rap; ideally you will be new to nature writing and with some connection to one of the National Landscapes.

You don't need to be based in the landscape you are choosing to pitch for, or to be born there, but we would like you to have some connection to the place and a genuine interest. We are seeking new perspectives of nature, place and people.

We want to commission you to come to the specific National Landscape, visit the place, meet the people and write a piece, distinctive to it. Your writing will then be used as the inspiration for a project commission that could be any art form – it might be dance, theatre, installation, digital, or music for example. The period of engagement will be Summer 2024.

We are looking for a higher number of writers from the global majority.



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Artistic Project Commission

A project commission inspired by the writing is available for artists.

Commissioning funds are available for artists from a diverse range of disciplines to create a presentational piece, and to co-create and engage with people within and near to the National Landscape as part of a national season in 2025. The community groups we will be working with are underrepresented in National Landscapes. We are considering the option of presenting the artistic work outside the National Landscape, if this means we engage more of the audience we want to reach. Look at the website links in the Appendices for the National Landscape boundaries and the special qualities that led to these areas being designated.

We are inviting proposals for the commission of interpretive, site specific or site responsive temporary installation artworks and performances in the National Landscapes which also respond to the work of the commissioned writer. The Appendices for each different National Landscape details the specific themes, places and communities the artists need to respond to.

The writer will start once commissioned and should be completed by October 2024. You will either collaborate with the writer or wait until the writing is completed and take up the words to inspire what you will create, engaging with the community as an integral part of your process.

The public presentation should attract a large audience throughout the duration – as a guideline we hope to reach an estimated 42,000 people across the 6 sites. Our national season runs between May-October 2025.

Sited outdoors predominantly, we are looking for artists with experience of working in the public realm /outdoors or in the landscape and engaging with communities, either in the lead up to the presentation, as part of the presentation and/or reflecting the communities and place in the presentation.

Theatre makers, dance makers, sound artists, visual artists, musicians, digital artists, light artists, multi-disciplinary artists are all welcome to apply.



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You will need to have experience of working in non-traditional venues/sites and engaging in different ways with communities and be inspired by the National Landscape and the community/ies they want to engage. Consideration of weather conditions and accessibility is paramount in proposals.

Developing diverse engagement in the National Landscapes is central to our ambition, along with connecting people to the importance of climate and nature recovery.

There will be six project commissions across England that will be part of the national season between May-October 2025. We hope to have a range of different artists' projects distinct to each place.

Commissioning Options

We therefore have the opportunity for two commissions in each location: the writing commission and the project commission. There are options for artists to:

- a) **Apply together – writer and artist/s/company as a partnership.**
- b) **An artistic company with writing as part of their practice to apply for both commissions combined (for example a theatre co. that has a writer, a dance company that has collaborated with a writer or a lyricist).**
- c) **For the writer and project commissioned artists to be selected separately.**

We have answered some questions later in the FAQ document that accompanies this brief.

Fees

The writing fee is set at **£5,000** (excluding VAT)

The project commission is set at **£40,000** (excluding VAT)

This should include all costs for presenting the work: the artists travel, accommodation, per diems. The artistic work created will remain the property of the artist, with agreed permissions of use.

There will be additional modest budgets for participation, production and delivered around the commissions.



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Protected Landscapes

National Landscapes are protected landscapes, with some sites being subject to more protection than others.

We will expect to see that the artists are willing to work with the National Landscape team and producing partner to consider their approach to siting the artistic works, for example identifying whether there might be a site of special scientific interest (SSSI), ancient scheduled monument, protected species and habitats/ground nesting birds, and the impact of the project to the site.

Information Day

We recommend, if possible, artists applying for a commission make a site visit to the area before a proposal is made. We will be hosting artists information days in late April to provide more information, meet local teams and lead walks around the sites where possible. No separate fee payments will be made for attending this.

Dates of the artists information days in each of the 6 locations will be published in early April on the National Landscapes Association website and each local National Landscape website.

Please contact us if you have any access requirements and plan to attend.

For those who cannot attend the artists information days in person, we will be hosting an online information session with the local teams from our office on 8th May.

Please register your interest for the online information session by emailing kerenza.mcclarnan@national-landscapes.org.uk

Please contact us if you have any access requirements and plan to attend.

Selection Process

The commission proposals will be considered in terms of:

- The strength and quality of the artistic ideas / approaches.
- The contribution to the interpretation of the specific local landscape, heritage, wild-life and special qualities of the National Landscape as well as the issue of climate change.



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- The approach to engaging/ co-creating with communities and access.
- The financial and logistical requirements of pieces.

We will also be considering the composition of the national programme season as a whole and the audience experience including access.

A project could have other potential match funders as long as it addressed the specific criteria of Nature Calling.

Proposals must be feasible and will be expected to be fully realisable and achievable within the production period and commission budget.

All plans must address the practical issues of installing and presenting pieces outside, including considerations around security and health and safety.

Each location will have a small selecting committee comprising:

- The National Landscape lead for Nature Calling at the location.
- The arts organisation supporting the producing of the artistic work.
- A representative of the community/ies.
- Activate as Executive Creative Producers.
- The Arts Development Programme Manager for the National Landscape Association.
- Poetry School (for the Writing Commission).

Please be aware that your proposal will be shared with the selection committee and treated confidentially.



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Timeframe 2024-2025

Phase 1: March'24-May'24

1. Writer and project commissions live.
2. Artist's information days.
3. Information session online for interested artists.

Phase 2: May'24-June'24

1. National shortlisting.
2. Writing and project commission selection.

Phase 3: July'24-Oct'24

1. Selected artists announced.
2. Writer undertaking engagement with communities and potential for project commissioned artists to start planning.

Phase 4: Oct'24-Dec'24

1. Commissioned artists begin/continue.
2. Engagement associated to the commissions begins/continues.

Phase 5: Jan'25-May'25

1. Commissions work toward season launch.
2. Season launch.

Phase 6: May'25-Oct'25

1. Nature Calling season live to the public.

Phase 7: Oct-Dec'25

1. Draw together documentation and reporting.



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Support for Commissioned Artists

At the start of the commission, selected artists will be welcomed to join us for the day to meet experts and partners who are familiar with the area, go on site walks, explore and enjoy a shared meal with some National Landscapes team and partners working on Nature Calling. We will invite our partners such as archaeologists, historians, wildlife and environment specialists and volunteers, advisory group members with knowledge of the area to take part, give presentations and share their knowledge.

Through the development period the local National Landscape and their Producer will support artists where needed in making connections to communities, to help identify sites and connect artists to specialists.

We will provide:

- Advisory support for artists and the commissioned pieces, including individual mentoring support from Poetry School for the writers.
- Commission programme administration including budget payments and monitoring.
- Producer support for the artistic and event management.
- Marketing and media communications.
- Support permissions for the use of the sites.
- Technical support and practical advice.
- Health and Safety Management expertise (you will be expected to have your own Public Liability Insurance).
- Stewarding of pieces and performances.
- Advice on materials and equipment for installation of the pieces (where necessary).
- Audience and public management.

Who can make a proposal?

- Individual writers, artists, creative people and designers.
- Arts organisations, collectives and creative companies.
- Artists may collaborate with others on the development of ideas (other artists, makers, community participants, engineers, technical experts - for example).



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Please consider carefully how you will be inspired by the writer's approach/writing.

We particularly welcome applications from people who have experienced barriers or prejudice relating to their age, gender identity, ethnicity and/or having a disability or long-term health condition, their sexuality, or being from a working class/low-income background.

We are keen to address under-representation in the cultural and environmental sector, through positive action in our commissioning.

Making the Application

To apply please submit a proposal, up to 3 pages of a PDF, in one document, outlining your approach to the brief, whether you will be applying in a writer/artist partnership, writing within your artistic company or as a separate writer or artist willing to work in a collaboration. All applicants will need to send their proposals to the National Landscape Association.

For the writing aspect – please include your connection to the place, links to published work and how you would approach the writing commission.

For the project – please include your suitability, experience of working in the public realm/outdoors/in the landscape and with communities. Please include a budget with the proposal clearly detailing the development and presentation periods.

You can submit your proposal in alternative formats such as video and audio – maximum length of 3 minutes. * Please contact us if you require longer than 3 minutes related to your access needs.

Please also include up to 3 links to examples of previous works, and background, as well as 2 referees.

Please also complete our [Equality Of Opportunity form](#). This will be treated anonymously and will not be used as part of the selection process.

If you have any access requirements, please contact us below and we will be happy to help.



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Send your proposal, marked using the following references with your submission date:

Chilterns – CHILT

Dorset –DORS

Forest of Bowland – FOB

Mendip Hills –MENHIL

Surrey Hills –SURHIL

Lincolnshire Wolds –LWOLDS

For example – Email header for an application to the Chilterns National Landscape would be area ref and date of submission: –

e.g CHILT 24.05.24

to: naturecalling@national-landscapes.org.uk

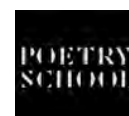
We recommend using [WeTransfer](#) to send large files.

Closing Date: Midnight 24 May 2024

Notification of shortlisted applicants: 10th June 2024

Interviews will be end of June. Unfortunately, we won't be able to give feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

For an informal discussion about the application, please contact Kerenza.mcclarnan@national-landscapes.org.uk



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If you would like this document in another format such as BSL, Large Print or Audiofile, we will happily arrange this for you or if you need further information, please contact Kerenza.mcclarnan@national-landscapes.org.uk

Equality and Diversity

We wholeheartedly support equal opportunities in all areas of our work. We strive to be a bold organisation that listens to the communities we work with. We encourage feedback on our services and how we can improve. We are committed to removing barriers.

We oppose all forms of unlawful discrimination in relation to the protected characteristics. We are committed to having a staff and board that reflects and represents all sections of the community we serve and eliminating discrimination that is unlawful; under the Equalities Act 2010.

Background

The Producing Partners

We have secured the following key arts partners to work in partnership with the national hub leads to support the producing of the projects and/or connect the National Landscape to new audiences.

See next page.



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Producing Partners:

- Revoluton Arts with the Chilterns National Landscape.
- Activate with Dorset National Landscape.
- Blaze Arts with Forest of Bowland National Landscape.
- Super Culture with Mendip Hills National Landscape.
- Surrey Hills Arts with Surrey Hills National Landscape.
- Magna Vitae with Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape.

More details of these organisations are included in the Appendices.

The Nature Calling National Project

Alongside the commissions, the Nature Calling project includes training for National Landscapes officers and artists and opportunities for artists and communities across the country. More information about this will be available on the dedicated Nature Calling website in the summer.

Project credits next page.



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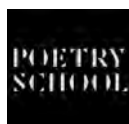


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National Project Partners and Commission Leads:



With Associate Partner:

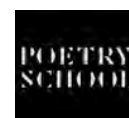


Local Project Partners:



The project is made possible nationally with funding from:

Arts Council England and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as credited in the footer below.



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