

Volunteer Voices: Blue Sky Ideas Application Pack

Contemporary Art Volunteer Ambassadors

Introduction

Arts&Heritage is an agency based in Northumberland, working nationally to forge creative collaborations between artists and museums/heritage organisations to present history in different and imaginative ways.

Volunteer Voices was a collaborative project between Newcastle University and Arts&Heritage, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to increase knowledge and confidence of volunteers to present contemporary art at heritage sites. As the final part of this project, funded by Newcastle University, the volunteers will select an artists' Ideas for Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, Hadrian's Wall, Ushaw Historic House Chapels and Gardens and Durham Cathedral. The selected Ideas will appear on Arts&Heritage's website.

We are issuing 4 artist briefs (below) that have been written by a group of volunteers for 4 heritage sites in the North East – Durham Cathedral, Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, Hadrian's Wall and Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens. Each artist brief outlines the location of the site, briefly describes its history and location. Each brief presents different opportunities for artists to develop creative, ambitious, even impossible ideas, without the restriction of a physical installation – in short, we encourage real Blue Sky thinking.

We want to receive ideas from artists of all disciplines about what you would make for one of these sites, **if there were no limits**. No practical constraints, no budgets – the Idea doesn't even need to be technically possible! We are looking for maximum creativity and audacious imagination, and want to receive your imagined artwork in visual, audio, film – or any other form we can display on our website. Don't think about how it could be made or the cost of it – just send us good visuals, film edits, sound files – anything that gives us a clear, lively description of your idea. The response you send us is, in itself, the artwork, so stretch your imagination and ambition to its fullest. You can find examples of the sort of thing we are looking for on our [Blue Sky Museums page](#).

The Volunteer Voices group (now called Contemporary Art Volunteer Ambassadors) will select 4 responses – one per site – to appear on the A&H website, and be shared on our newsletters and social media channels. Each artistic response that is selected will receive £500. We would like to stress that the responses we are inviting will not result in a full-scale commission – this is an opportunity for artists to engage in untethered idea development, without any restrictions.

How to take part

UK-based artists are invited to consider the briefs of the 4 heritage sites and choose those that are of interest. Research into the sites can be conducted online (some sites may have more information than others and website links are included in the brief).

This opportunity is open to all artists based in the UK, working in all disciplines, including writers, musicians, performers and filmmakers.

We are confident that within these sites like narratives that have not, up until now, been told or highlighted. We welcome responses from artists at all stages of their career, working in different artforms and living across the country.

How to respond

To submit an idea, please send us one email containing the following:

- Your name, contact details and website address (if applicable)
- A short paragraph about your practice (up to 250 words)
- Why you have chosen your site and what it is about it that interests you as an artist (up to 250 words)
- Your response outlining what you would do. This can include written word and/ or images, drawings, an audio file or a short film clip etc (up to 500 words; do not worry if you do not use the whole 500)

Please send all of the above as one document / PDF when applying (with a second attachment if your application includes an audio / film file).

Please email all responses to Becky Orwin at becky@artsandheritage.org.uk, and also complete this Equal Opportunities Monitoring Survey (responses are anonymous and used for data monitoring purposes only): <https://forms.gle/1zCKySVnbhCiiDVHA>

The deadline for responses is **5pm, Friday 13 May**.

The Selection Process

A selection panel will be made up of volunteers at our partner heritage sites, and we will select 4 responses – one per site – to appear on the Arts&Heritage website. Whilst you are welcome to submit ideas for more than one site, if we have selected your idea for one site then you will not be selected for others.

We want to make sure our final selection reflects diverse artists and practices, and the decision-making will take this into account to ensure a broad spectrum of practice and experience. If selected, it is important that you agree to the proposal appearing on our website: this will mean we may not necessarily be able to protect your intellectual copyright, though the IP and copyright remains with each proposing artist and we will try and protect this as much as we can.

The four heritage sites taking part are:

1. Durham Cathedral

<https://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk/>

2. Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens (English Heritage)

https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/belsay-hall-castle-and-gardens/?utm_campaign=aka_belsay_hall_21

3. Hadrian's Wall (National Trust)

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hadrians-wall-and-housesteads-fort>

4. Ushaw Historic House, Chapel and Gardens

<https://ushaw.org/>

Artist's Briefs: download here

[Durham Cathedral](#)

[Belsay Hall, Castle, Quarry and Gardens](#)

[Hadrian's Wall](#)

[Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens](#)

Key dates

4 April – applications open

13 May – deadline to receive all applications

10 June – artists informed of volunteers' selection

24 June – selected ideas displayed online

Publishing your ideas online and how you will get paid

Arts&Heritage aims to publish the selected ideas online by 24 June. We will inform you of our decision by 20 June, and if you have not heard from us by this date then please assume that your idea will not be published. If this is the case, we may not be able to provide feedback, as we are expecting a large response and our team is small.

Fee payments will be made by either by the University or by Arts&Heritage. If by A&H we pay by BACS on receipt of invoice, and we will request an invoice when we inform you that we want to publish your ideas.

We hope you enjoy this opportunity for ambitious creative thinking. Please do consider the artworks created as part of the [Blue Sky Museums project in 2020](#), for examples.

Contemporary Art Volunteer Ambassadors

Newcastle University

Arts&Heritage