



Dark Skies/Blue Skies: Call for Proposals

Lead Commissioners: The Cultural Spring and NEPN

The Cultural Spring and NEPN invite proposals from a lead artist, collective or arts organisation for an innovative participatory project with and for the people of Sunderland.

The commission is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Main Purpose and Aims

The project will see high-quality photographic artists working with community members to imagine and give creative form to future-facing aspirations through publicly sited artworks and/or publications. The project aims to create confident cultural activists who recognise their own creative potential.

The project is inspired by the creative and scientific desire to explore the world and understand our place in it, and by the wish to imaginatively explore the future. We are particularly keen to receive innovative proposals that fuse currents of creativity shared by science, technology and photography. Proposals could incorporate a journey through early traditional photographic process as a means to record and imagine the world (photo-grams, cyanotypes, stereo-grams) as well as contemporary photographic technologies such as mobile phones with which we share and communicate our lived experiences.

This commission will be developed through community consultation, using a collaborative methodology and shared sense of ownership of the project. We will commission an artist(s) for whom social engagement is integral to their approach.

Project outcomes should be:

- Innovative and ambitious in scope
- of the highest artistic quality
- Relevant, diverse and inclusive for the communities of Sunderland

Additionally, they should:

- Raise aspiration and represent the experiences and future hopes of Sunderland residents
- Increase the profile of culture, specifically photography, locally, nationally and internationally.

Commission Details

Dates

May 2018 – November 2018 (7 months), with the final public event/s in November 2018

Commission Fee: The Lead Artist/Organisation fee for this commission is up to £25,000 (*expected to be at least 70 days, inclusive of VAT and expenses (travel/accommodation)*).

The Commission Fee does not include the following, which are managed directly by The Cultural Spring/NEPN:

- Marketing.
- Production and materials budget (to be agreed with Lead Artist and participants).
- 'Go and See' funds for participants.
- Documentation and evaluation of project.
- Associate Artist Fees (see below).

The Lead Artist/Organisation will be required to:

- Develop the artistic vision and direction of the project with participants.
- Devise a programme which primarily uses photography, but which could include other artforms, for example moving image, creative writing.
- Devise outcomes for the programme appropriate to the mediums, participants and contexts of creation, which will celebrate the project and provide focal point/s.
- Liaise with Programme Managers of NEPN and Director of The Cultural Spring on a regular basis to review budget and performance.
- Develop the project in The Cultural Spring wards of Hendon, Millfield, Pallion, St Anne's and Sandhill and be open to participants from elsewhere in Sunderland.
- Work with The Cultural Spring and NEPN to identify community groups and participants over the duration (we envisage this to be at least 4 groups, up to 150 participants).
- Develop a brand and lead image for the project.
- To work with The Cultural Spring and NEPN to develop a marketing strategy for the project.
- To work with The Cultural Spring and NEPN to evaluate the project.

Additional Information

Talent development will be central to the project. The programme will seek to support 20 young people engaged with the project through Arts Award to bronze level, supported by The Cultural Spring.

The project will also support up to three associate photographic artists (ring-fenced to NE region) to work alongside the lead artist(s) to deliver engagement workshops and to develop their own professional practice. The lead artist will be expected to support mentoring of these artists with NEPN and The Cultural Spring.

An external evaluation will be conducted which will include an assessment of the creative and aspirational journeys of participants, professional development of artists and local engagement with outcomes.

The project will engage a group of undergraduate students from the Northern Centre of Photography at the University of Sunderland to develop creative documentation of the project, giving profile to the project and sharing the process throughout and informing the evaluation.

Applications

To apply please supply a written proposal including:

- Your artistic idea, including one succinct paragraph about how you would describe it to a resident living in the Sunderland area and how your project connects to the main purpose of the commission (max 750 words).
- Your approach to building partnerships and developing engagement with the local communities in The Cultural Spring wards (max 500 words).
- Your approach to managing the project and ensuring your ambitions are deliverable, including your previous experience in delivering similar scale commissions (and any experience of mentoring or supporting your peers) and a brief biography of the key organisations and or artists involved in the proposal (max 500 words).
- Please outline any additional support you may need to undertake this project.
- Please attach:
 - Proposed timeline / work-plan (including research & development, liaison with delivery partners & communities, artistic outcomes and evaluation.
 - Provisional budget including your daily fee and number of proposed days and approach to materials and production budgets (*we expect the materials budget to be £3,000 and the production budget to be £10,000*). Please also indicate any additional match funding you could bring (support in kind and /or cash) both confirmed and expected.
 - Links to viewable images of your previous works.

Commission Timetable:

Deadline for proposals: **Monday 26 March, 5pm. Please send a single PDF to: nepn@sunderland.ac.uk** with 'Dark Skies/Blue Skies Commission' as the subject.

Shortlisted applicants will be notified by **Thursday 29 March 2018.**

Interviews for shortlisted applicants will be held on **Monday 16 April and Tuesday 17 April** in Sunderland. The panel will consist of representatives from The Cultural Spring, NEPN and community champions from Sunderland wards. Shortlisted applicants will be required to prepare a short presentation. Reasonable costs associated with economy travel to interviews will be reimbursed on production of receipts. The final decision will be reached and communicated on or before **Monday 23 April 2018**.

Selection

Through the application process we will assess the following:

1. Quality and ambition of the artistic idea and the quality of connection to the brief
2. Engagement and partnerships approach
3. Artistic track record of the artist, collective or organisation
5. Project Management, feasibility and deliverability
6. Value for money

All contracted artists will need to have Public Liability Insurance (up to £5m cover), Professional Negligence Insurance (up to £5m cover), Employer's Liability Insurance (up to 10m cover, where appropriate).

The selected Lead Artist/Organisation will need to go through the HMRC's IR35 assessment process (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ir35-find-out-if-it-applies>) and DBS checks will be required.

Payments and contracts will be issued by the University of Sunderland.

For further information, or to discuss a potential proposal please email: Emma Scarr, The Cultural Spring: emma.scarr@theculturalspring.org.uk or Amanda Ritson, NEPN: amanda.ritson@sunderland.ac.uk.

Commissioners

The Cultural Spring

The main partner in this project, **The Cultural Spring**, is the Sunderland and South Tyneside Creative People and Places programme, funded by Arts Council England to raise participation and engagement in the arts amongst local communities. This project will represent The Cultural Spring's 2018 Sunderland commission. Since 2014 The Cultural Spring has produced innovative and award-winning large-scale projects that include community engagement as a key part of the commission. Past major commissions of The Cultural Spring have included WildWorks' *A Great Night Out*, the *Summer Streets Festival* and *Inventors* led by Sunderland born Dominic Wilcox, which has subsequently become 'Little Inventors' and continues to inspire young people to develop their own invention ideas. www.theculturalspring.org.uk

NEPN

NEPN is a development agency for photography that uniquely works across HE and creative industry sectors to create a critically engaged context of photographic activity. Established in 2009, NEPN has commissioned over 30 lens-based projects, delivered innovative professional development programmes, curated a programme of critical dialogues around photography and developed national and international partnerships for the presentation of

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new works. Recent commissions, including *Newborns* by Julian Germain, *The Economy of Appearances* by Mark Curran and pop up photo studios by Kuba Ryniewicz have explored photography as a social practice, visualising lives and experiences through dialogue with community and cross-sector partnerships. NEPN's current project 'Observe. Experiment. Archive' explores the relationship between contemporary photographic practice and science, creating new opportunities for artists to engage with non-arts partners and inviting audiences to engage with photography as a means to understand natural, astronomical and health sciences. Partners include Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens, Breeze Creatives, Royal Horticultural Society, Kielder Observatory and Sunderland Living Lab.

NEPN is based in the Northern Centre of Photography, University of Sunderland and is part of the University's Arts and Creative Industries Research Institute. www.northeastphoto.net



Supported using public funding by

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