



A partnership between:



## **Memorandum of Understanding between Arts Council England & Forestry Commission England 2016 - 2020**

### **Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England, distributing public money from Government and the National Lottery. Its 10-year strategic framework, *Great art and culture for everyone*, states: 'we want arts and culture to thrive and to be excellent, and we want to make sure we and others create the right conditions for that; we want as many people as possible to be stimulated by arts and culture wherever they are'.

### **Forestry Commission England**

Forestry Commission England works with others to keep the Public Forest Estate as a special place for wildlife, for people to enjoy and businesses to thrive. We achieve this by adopting a strategy that integrates all three drivers of sustainable land management: People, Nature and the Economy. Forestry Commission England is the largest provider of outdoor recreation in England with an estimated 70 million visits to the Public Forest Estate last year. Forests contribute significantly to the quality of life for people in rural and urban communities alike, enhancing the local environment and biodiversity, and helping to mitigate the impact of a changing climate, assisting in reducing air pollution and providing important health and learning benefits.

## **Vision**

Forestry Commission England will work with Arts Council England to support achieving *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* in England's public forests. We believe that great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. We believe that woods and forests are vital places for contemporary artists to engage with, to make and present new work. We seek to create high-quality, ambitious work that breaks new ground for both artists and audiences.

*Forest Art Works* is a partnership between Arts Council England and the Forestry Commission England to support achieving great art and culture for everyone in England's public forests. *Forest Art Works* will reach new arts audiences and inspire new audiences to engage with woods and forests. It is driven by the following vision:-

- Woods and forests are an important part of England's cultural history and it is important that they are part of our contemporary arts.
- Artists gain insight and inspiration from their interactions with woods and forests.
- Audiences access new experiences through engagement with art in forest environments.
- Art brings people to woods and forests helping to generate public profile and engagement.

## **Background**

Since 1968 Forestry Commission England has pioneered arts initiatives across artforms, across the Public Forest Estate. The first Memorandum of Understanding between Arts Council England and Forestry Commission England 2012-5 was the catalyst for a transformational period in arts development in England's woods and forests nationally and resulted in the first *Forest Art Works* programme, which involved a range of artforms and was presented across England.

Evaluation of this first Memorandum of Understanding demonstrated that the partnership with Forestry Commission England supported the delivery of Arts Council England's strategic goals and has ensured the embedding of strategic arts programming across England's Woods and Forests. A key focus of this next Memorandum of Understanding is on targeting places with little cultural infrastructure and low cultural engagement and using audience data to increase engagement levels.

### **How we will work together**

Our partnership will build on knowledge and experience from our previous successful Memorandum of Understanding and shared organisational learning. We will seek to develop projects and programmes to be delivered across all Forest Districts and Arts Council Areas. Programmes will be both nationally led and developed through site-specific partnerships, supporting area priorities.

Forestry Commission England is committed to supporting and enabling this work and has dedicated staff resource to lead and facilitate this vision. Arts Council England will welcome applications from Forestry Commission England and its partners into its Grants for the Arts and strategic funding programmes as relevant, subject always to the proviso that Arts Council England cannot fetter its grant making discretion and therefore cannot guarantee that any such bid will be successful.

These **10 Guiding Principles** will be embedded into the development and delivery of *Forest Art Works*:

- 1. National Strategy:** Develop a multi-layered approach to programming across artforms, whereby nationally developed programmes support joint area priorities and are enhanced and complemented by site-specific offers.

2. **Shared Insight:** Gather and share audience data that is both qualitative and quantitative to build a strong understanding of audiences experiencing *Forest Art Works* programmes, sharing insight across the National Agencies Group<sup>1</sup>.
3. **Artistic Quality:** Create high-quality, innovative, creative programmes, offering appropriate opportunities across artforms.
4. **Artistic Talent:** Embed talent development, delivering well-supported, ambitious transformational opportunities for artists.
5. **Marketing:** Produce a shared branding and communications strategy for *Forest Art Works*, enabling both organisations to present the initiative internally and externally.
6. **Knowledge Transfer:** Build on knowledge and experience through facilitating peer learning and relevant professional development opportunities for artists and staff at all levels.
7. **Match Funding:** Leverage increased funding from a wide range of sources to ensure programme delivery is appropriately resourced through a mixed portfolio of investment.
8. **Legacy:** Ensure the sustainable legacy of this programme by embedding arts development into future planning, organisational strategies and forest business plans where relevant.
9. **Evaluation:** Support knowledge transfer and organisational learning through high-quality artistic and audience evaluation of projects and reviewing progress annually.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Agencies Group is formed of all the national agencies with which Arts Council England holds a Memorandum of Understanding. The group includes Arts Council England, Canal & River Trust, Forestry Commission England, National Trust and The Churches Conservation Trust.

**10. Environmental Awareness:** Enable artists and partners to work sustainably with forestry teams ensuring that projects are delivered in accordance with best practice environmental standards.

**Governance and advisory support**

Successful delivery of the programme will require support from specialist advisors as well as partners with relevant expertise in specific creative fields. Arts Council England and Forestry Commission England will work together to secure relevant expert advice through sharing of contacts and providing nominated national leads and regional contacts to support all aspects of scoping, planning and evaluating the programme. Both organisations will also contribute to the knowledge transfer of best practice, planning and collaboration through the National Agencies Group. The *Forest Art Works* programme will be managed as part of Forestry Commission England's Marketing, Communications and Strategy team focussed on Engagement Programmes.

**Good partners' agreement**

Arts Council England and Forestry Commission England will each inform the other partner prior to any sensitive messages emerging that might impact on that other organisation. Both partners will share information with each other about any agreements with third parties as appropriate. Both organisations will observe confidentiality as required in relation to shared information that is not in the public domain.

Arts Council England is a 'public authority' for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('the FOI Act'). Subject to certain exceptions, it is required to supply information to members of the public on request. This potentially includes any information that relates to activity conducted under the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding. Forestry Commission England agrees to notify Arts Council England as soon as possible if it considers any information it give Arts Council England to be confidential or covered by one or more of the other FOI Act exceptions. Arts Council England will not be liable for any loss or damage the Forestry Commission England

may suffer from its disclosure of information under the FOI Act. This clause will not affect the rights of the Forestry Commission England under the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **Term of the Memorandum of Understanding**

This Memorandum of Understanding shall take effect from the date of signature by both parties and continue, in the first instance, for four years. It will be reviewed after the first six months and annually thereafter by both organisations' lead officers. It is not intended to – and shall not – create any legal obligation between the parties.

### **Strategic action plan**

Following agreement to the Memorandum of Understanding, Arts Council England and Forestry Commission England will draw up a strategic action plan in line with the shared vision outlined above and both organisations' strategic planning processes. This plan will form an appendix to the Memorandum of Understanding and will be annexed as a schedule to this Memorandum of Understanding. It will include an overall evaluation framework and methodology for annual reporting, which will feature input from all funded projects and from Arts Council England's national and area teams.

This Memorandum of Understanding is made on:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

between

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

for and on behalf of:

Arts Council England

21 Bloomsbury Street

London WC1B 3HF

and

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

for and on behalf of:

Forestry Commission England

620 Bristol Business Park

Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1EJ

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