

ASSOCIATE ARTISTS RESIDENCY BRIEF 6:

Natur am Byth – Brilliant Bryophytes Project

This residency is a collaborative project between Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Plantlife, Public Health Wales (PHW) and Addo, and is funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council of Wales.

Budget: £15,000 for 10 months starting in 24 June 2024 – 31 March 2025

We are inviting applications from artists/makers/designers and other creatives with a collaborative and participatory approach and an interest in communicating wider ecological issues to undertake a residency based in two locations in Powys – in the north of the county, in and around Newtown, and in the south of the county in and around Rhayader. The residency aims to explore the role of artistic processes in re-thinking the way we see species – particularly those that are small in scale and unremarkable at first glance.

The residency is one of a series of ten being commissioned as part of the Natur am Byth Arts Engagement Programme, which aim to:

- (i) Explore the role of artistic processes in re-thinking the way we see species – particularly our most vulnerable, which are often small in scale and unremarkable at first glance;
- (ii) Use creative strategies and activities to engage people, specifically with low physical and/or mental well-being (including those impacted in this way by the COVID-19 pandemic) in reflecting on the issues impacting the species at each of the project sites across Wales, with a view to enhancing and protecting the wellbeing and habitats of both species and participants.
- (iii) Create an online archive of digital artworks produced through the residencies that helps to tell the fascinating stories of our most vulnerable species to a wider audience and reflects the national context of the Natur am Byth programme.

Background

The residency is part of **Natur am Byth** - Wales' flagship Green Recovery project, through which nine environmental charities (Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bat Conservation Trust, Buglife, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Butterfly Conservation, Marine Conservation Society, RSPB, The Vincent Wildlife Trust and Plantlife) have partnered with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to deliver Wales' largest natural heritage and outreach programme. The programme name refers to the Welsh rallying cry – Cymru am Byth! (Wales Forever!) and means Nature Forever.

The aim of the artist residency programme is to deliver against strand three of the *Natur am Byth* programme – Re-thinking the way we see species:

“Re-thinking the way we see species will specifically target those with low physical and/or mental well-being, including those impacted in this way by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nature has an amazing, well-documented ability to help us to heal and lift

our feelings of physical and mental well-being. This strand will use creative activities and mini projects to work with this audience to tell the fascinating stories of our most vulnerable species through arts and culture.”

Ten Associate Artists will be commissioned through the programme to work with harder-to-reach communities at a place-based level in order to:

- Engage communities with species that are under threat;
- Help individuals rethink the way that they see species;
- Connect people to nature to benefit health and wellbeing;
- Promote inclusion, diversity and the Welsh language.

The Site & Species

The *Natur am Byth* programme spans 11 place-based project sites across Wales and multiple species.

This particular residency will focus on some of the rarest Lower Plants including (bryophytes and lichens), fungi, and invertebrates:

- Bryophytes - non-vascular plants, which have no roots or vascular tissue, but instead absorb water and nutrients from the air through their surface;
- Lichens - formed through a symbiotic partnership of two separate organisms - a fungus and usually an alga.

The artist will be based across two sites in the Welsh Marches, within the county of Powys – in and around Newtown and in and around Rhayader. Both sites have colonies of more accessible bryophytes. There are two other locations, namely Stanner Rocks and Roundton Hill, which have very rare bryophyte examples. However, these have steep, rocky and difficult to access habitats, and although staff are able to facilitate artist visits to these, they are unsuitable for public activity.

The Welsh Marches project aims to encourage people to empathise with these tiny forms of life, recognising a shared basic biological similarity. Exploring themes of vulnerability and isolation, this residency intends to improve the plight of bryophytes through research, storytelling, visualisation, and more broadly creating collaboratively with local people in order to improve well-being and nature connectivity.

Powys (covering an area in excess of 2,000 square miles) is the largest and most sparsely populated county in Wales. Primarily rural it is predominantly mountainous and contains both the Cambrian and Black Mountains, in addition to Radnor Forest, the Brecon Beacons, Lake Vyrnwy, and the Elan Valley and its reservoirs. The largest settlement in the county is Newtown with a population of around 11,500. Rhayder has a population of approximately 2,000.

Plantlife and NRW staff will facilitate exploration through guiding the artist to accessible areas to research and investigate including: Gilfach Nature Reserve, north of Rhayader in the Marteg Valley, managed by the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust

<https://www.rwtwales.org/nature-reserves/gilfach> - the site covers over 160 hectares which includes high moorland and meadow; and the Elan Valley, over 80% of which is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The Project

We would like to commission an artist to develop and deliver a participatory project that engages the public, Buglife staff and volunteers in order to investigate and understand how best to communicate the importance of bryophytes within our ecosystem while also conserving and preserving sites in which these rare species thrive. This project will give a unique opportunity to research and explore lesser-known plant-life, raise awareness of species, in order to aid recovery through innovative, transformative and creative solutions that include local people in these vital conversations.

Local groups and associations will work with Addo, NRW, Plantlife and the artist to identify local participants in the initial stages of the project. We have a working relationship with arts organisations across the area including Oriel Davies, CARAD, Elan Valley Trust, and Gregynog Trust.

Expected Outcomes

The material outcomes of the engagement work undertaken during the residency are open but may take the form of temporary artworks, installations, and activities/events (e.g. arts interventions, exhibitions, workshops, talks, seminars, and tours) created with input from / co-produced with local people, volunteers and staff. Interesting and contemporary ways to explore and share information about the species and their habitats to a wider public is a key expectation of each of the residencies.

The aim of the arts engagement aspect of the residency is to use creative strategies to engage people in reflecting on the issues impacting the species at each of the project sites across Wales, with a view to enhancing and protecting the wellbeing and habitats of both species and participants. The artist will work with the project partners to measure the impact of the participatory work undertaken on participants' wellbeing, as part of a wider evaluation framework for the whole programme.

The programme partners wish to engage with audiences and communities at a site scale through each of the individual co-produced place-based artists residency projects lined to conservation issues to reinterpret our illusive, vulnerable and tiny species, as well as develop a holistic narrative around the ambitions of the whole programme through the collation of digital outputs from the residencies in an online digital resource and archive, which will be created and hosted by NRW and extend the reach of the work to a national audience.

Therefore, the artist will be expected to produce a suitable work for inclusion in this online archive during the residency. The participatory work undertaken during the residency need not necessarily be delivered in a digital format, however, thought should be given to how best to capture ephemeral activity to share digitally, e.g. through photography, film, writing, audio, or similar.

Delivery Schedule

The project will therefore consist of three stages:

Stage 1. RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (24 June – 09 August 2024):

The artists will undertake a period of research and development into the themes and issues relating to the site, species, and habitats outlined in the brief, with a view to developing a proposal for the delivery of the Arts Engagement Activity and production of the Digital Outcome.

This R&D may include but is not limited to: site visits; meeting and talking with staff and the Project Development Officers working at the site, organisations, partners, and other relevant stakeholders and communities of interest; desk research; and initial engagement activities if applicable.

The artist's fee for this stage is £2,250.00 (based on rate of £300/day), plus up to £500.00 for travel, project and material expenses.

By 28 July 2024 the artist will provide a draft proposal for the delivery of Stages 2 & 3 (an Arts Engagement Project and Digital Outcome) that meet the objectives of the brief within the remaining £12,250.00 budget (inclusive of all artists fees and expenses and any material or project costs associated with the delivery of the engagement activity and digital outcome).

The proposal must include:

- Details of concept, approach, and methodology for engaging the target communities of interest outlined in the brief and the development and production of the Digital Outcome;
- Details of partners, participants, and other stakeholders that may be involved;
- Budget breakdown;
- How they will work with partners to assess the impact on participants' wellbeing; and
- A schedule for delivery that fits within the timeline for the wider programme.

The proposal will need to be developed in consultation with and presented to and signed off by the Natur am Byth project partners, the Project Delivery Officers for the project site, and Addo by 09 August 2024.

Stage 2. DELIVERY OF ARTS ENGAGEMENT PROJECT (12 August 2024 – 10 January 2025):

During this stage the artist will deliver their proposed Arts Engagement project and produce their proposed Digital Outcome.

The artist must produce risk assessments for the work that they propose to undertake in stages 1 and 2, which must also assess any potential impact on the sites, habitats or species being explored through the project. The artist will be supported by the PDOs (Project Development Officers) and Addo to complete these.

Stage 3. COMPLETION & SUBMISSION OF DIGITAL OUTCOME (13 January – 31 March 2025):

The artist will use this time to complete and submit their Digital Outcome for the online *Natur am Byth* archive on or before 07 February 2025.

ONGOING EVALUATION (from start of project - 31 March 2025):

The artist will work with the project partners, PDOs and Addo to devise and use appropriate methods to assess the impact of the arts engagement aspect of the project on participants' wellbeing.

The artist will complete a final report, which includes information on the number and type of participants, number of participatory sessions, direct comments (verbal or written) in addition to visual information (photos and films), press releases, invitations and catalogues/other print. Within the report the artist will also reflect on their own creative journey, detailing what they have learned and achieved in addition to information on what could have gone better, information on legacy and any aspects which may continue.

Addo and the PDOs will also help and support the artist in gathering and processing this quantitative and qualitative information.

Governance & Support

The artist's contract will be with NRW and so any contract issues should be raised with NRW during the project.

However, Addo will oversee the day-to-day management of the project, monitor progress and act as the main point of contact between the commissioning organisations and the artist, offering mentoring and support on a one-to-one and group basis with the cohort of ten artists. The one-to-one mentoring sessions are optional but the artist will be expected to attend the group sessions with the cohort of 10 artists.

Group mentoring sessions may also involve expertise from the project partners and/or other community/professional experts and would enable cross-pollination of ideas, experiences and expertise across the programme and provide a wider network of support for artists, partners and communities. There may also be opportunities to invite a wider network of partners and participants involved in the individual commissions to sharing events/activities during the delivery of the programme, if relevant and of interest. This would help to further widen and build the audiences for the programme.

Group Mentoring Sessions will take place as follows:

- Session #1 – w/c 01 July 2024, an opportunity for all of the artists to meet and develop the sense of a cohort. Agree format for future group sessions with artists.
- Session #2 – w/c 12 August 2024, to discuss proposals going forward.
- Session #3 – w/c 21 October 2024, Online Group Mentoring Session to discuss progress.
- Session #4 – w/c 03 March 2025, Session of Sharing Digital Outcomes and Reflective Conversations that will form part of the Evaluation.

One-to-One Mentoring Sessions will be offered as follows:

- Session #1 – w/c 08 July 2024, initial online session offered as artists start to develop their ideas.
- Session #2 – w/c 22 July 2024, offered to artists as they further develop and complete their proposals.
- Session #3 – w/c 12 August 2024, offered to artists as they start their engagement work.
- Session #4 & #5 – as needed between 28 October 2024 – 10 January 2025, two sessions offered to artists as they deliver and complete their engagement work.
- Session #6 – as needed between 13 January – 07 February 2025, offered to artists as they completed their digital outcomes.

The PDOs will also collaborate with and support the artist in the ground, supporting them to gain a better understanding of the site, species and habitats and the issues affecting them and to connect with local partners and communities of interest during the R&D stage and in the delivery of the arts engagement activity.

The artist will be expected to attend a series of progress meetings across the project that will act as milestones for the project partners to review the progress of the project against the aims and objectives of the brief, which will also allow for payment of artist fees at regular intervals across the project timeframe in line with NRW's policy of paying on completion of services delivered.

Progress Meetings will be held as follows:

- Progress Meeting #1 – w/c 24/06/2024, an in-person induction meeting;
- Progress Meeting #2 – w/c 15/07/2023, a mid-stage meeting;
- Progress Meeting #3 – w/c 05/08/2024, an end of stage meeting to feedback to artists about their draft proposals;
- Progress Meeting #4 – w/c 16/09/2024, to review progress and identify any support needed;
- Progress Meeting #5 – 21/10/2024, to review progress and identify any support needed;
- Progress Meeting #6 – 25/11/2024, to review progress and identify any support needed;
- Progress Meeting #7 – 13/01/2025, on completion of engagement work and starting to finalise digital outcome;
- Progress Meeting #8 – w/c 17/02/2025, to feedback to artists about digital outcome and address any snagging issues.

The Artist

The artist (an individual, partnership, studio or group) will be interested in artistic research, nature, and habitats with previous experience of working with others to develop creative ideas. An ethos of collaborative practice and engagement is uppermost.

This opportunity is open to UK-based Artists.

Applicants must demonstrate:

- Creative originality and professionalism in their work;
- The ability and desire to work collaboratively with the public and other partners as part of their creative practice;
- A willingness to immerse themselves in the life and culture of the area;
- An understanding of the issues of working in partnership and the concerns and opportunities presented by the themes of the residency, i.e. protecting species and habitats, creating narratives around climate change, ecology, public engagement, the potential impacts of engaging with nature through the arts on wellbeing;
- The artist must be aware of and abide by the laws for working with children and vulnerable adults, should they undertake such work as part of the residency;
- In the event of manufacture/installation of artworks by the artist, the artist must demonstrate current and appropriate indemnity insurance relevant to the artist in person and to any object/s to be manufactured;
- The artist will also have appropriate levels of professional indemnity and public liability insurance or commit to acquiring these if commissioned;
- The ability to produce a digital artwork/output either independently or in collaboration with their associates.
- The ability to deliver the project in Welsh is desirable.

Project Base / Studio

There are a number of potential work spaces across the proposed residency site, suitable for various methods of production and use (studio/workspace/meeting space/gallery). Therefore, the exact location of the artists workspace(s) will be negotiated with NRW in the early stages of the residency period.

Budget & Delivery Schedule

The total budget for each Associate Artist Residency is £15,000 (including all fees, travel, living expenses, and project and material expenses).

The artist will be engaged with a contract that includes a two-stage process of sign off by the partners, i.e. artists are required to submit proposals following a period of R&D for sign off by the client before moving on to the delivery stage.

Therefore, each artist is given an initial £2,250.00 (based on rate of £300/day and including all travel, living and ordinary studio expenses), plus up to £500.00 for project expenses to undertake R&D (including meeting with partners, communities of interest, research and initial engagement activities/meetings) and to provide a proposal for the delivery of a project meeting the objectives of the brief they are given and within the remaining £12,250 (including details of concept, approach, partners, participants, strategies for engaging people, budget breakdown, schedule, proposed digital output, contingency etc.). The budget of £12,250 is inclusive of all artists fees and expenses and any material or project costs associated with the delivery of the engagement activity and digital outcome).

The Artist Fees for the R&D phase will be paid in two instalments:

1. £1,125.00, due after a Mid-Stage 1 Progress Meeting, expected to take place w/c 15/07/2024; and
2. £1,125.00, due after an End of Stage 1 Progress Meeting and sign off of the Artist's Proposal for the Arts Engagement Project and Digital Outcome.

Spend against the £500 for project expenses during the R&D phase must be agreed in advance with Addo and may be claimed with itemised invoices and accompanying receipts to NRW.

Payment installments will be agreed with artist for the remainder of the project, after sign off of their proposal and in line with the schedule of Progress Meetings listed above.

Payments will be made on receipt of an itemised invoice and a short report outlining progress made and days used for delivery.

How to Apply

Please send the following information to commissions@addocreative.com by the **Application Deadline at 5pm on 24 May 2024:**

- Up to 10 digital images in a PDF document or a PowerPoint presentation, or a 10-minute (max) showreel. All work should be numbered and include, title, date, dimension and media;
- An up-to-date CV;
- A statement (either written, audio, or video) with information about past projects and experience that broadly outlines why you are interested in this opportunity and how it is relevant to your practice;
- Two letters of support.

Please note that we do not require a project proposal at this stage as we anticipate that details of activity to be undertaken as part of the residency will be developed following a period of interaction with the area, community and key stakeholders.

Artists shortlisted for interview will be asked to submit a short 'Invitation to Quote' form supplied by NRW, which includes terms and conditions.

Shortlisted artists who have completed the 'Invitation to Quote' form will be interviewed in w/c 17 June 2024. The final selection will be made by a panel made up of representatives from Addo, NRW, ACW, PHW and the PDOs working at the site.

Contact Details

For queries and further information, if you have any further queries about this opportunity, please contact: Sarah Pace, from Addo at sarah@addocreative.com

About the partners

Natural Resources Wales: <https://naturalresources.wales>

Natural Resources Wales is the largest Welsh Government Sponsored Body (employing 1,900 staff with a budget of £180 million) and is responsible for making sure that the environment and natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, sustainably enhanced and sustainably used, now and in the future. Formed in April 2013, it largely taking over the functions of the Countryside Council for Wales, Forestry Commission Wales and the Environment Agency in Wales, as well as certain Welsh Government functions. NRW's roles and responsibilities currently include air quality, green spaces, climate change, energy, water, forestry, waste, health and wellbeing, and agriculture.

Plantlife: <https://www.plantlife.org.uk>

Plantlife's aim is to make lasting positive change for wildflowers, plants and fungi. Our goal is to help mitigate the impact of climate change while rebuilding biodiversity within our ecosystems. As with this project, we regularly join forces with others to protect the vital habitats which so many species call home. We help rare and threatened species by working to protect and restore temperate rainforests, meadows and other environments. This has had a major impact over the years, with many plants increasing in number as a direct result of our work.

Public Health Wales: <https://phw.nhs.wales>

The public health institute for Wales, which aims to protect and improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities in Wales. It has a major role in providing system leadership, both in the health and care system, and also more widely across public services, using its position as the public health institute for Wales to impact positively on all the determinants of health and well-being.

Addo: <http://www.addocreative.com>

Addo work with artists, communities and private, public and voluntary sector partners to curate, manage and produce critically situated art projects that enhance the wider cultural ecology of places, communities and sites. These include: permanent/temporary works, artist residencies, strategies, reports, fundraising, evaluation, research, events and exhibitions. 'Addo' means 'to give, bring, place, inspire, cause, add, join' in Latin and 'to promise' in Welsh, reflecting our commitment to creating opportunities for others to produce and experience contemporary art in arts/non-arts spaces, working collaboratively to develop ideas, share our expertise and promote best practice. Our role adapts in response to a given context, from curator to mentor, fundraiser to negotiator, producer to administrator, project manager to researcher, evaluator to activist.