



## **Memorandum of Understanding between Arts Council England and Forestry Commission England**

### 1. The Vision

Both Arts Council England (ACE) and Forestry Commission England (FCE) believe that high quality arts activity has an inspirational and transformational effect. It can change lives and affect communities for the better by enabling people to see the world in new ways and recognise new potential within themselves. Arts interventions in the forests create a fresh dialogue between artists, the forest environment and its associated communities. Facilitating new perceptions and understanding, they add to the richness and variety of the visitor experience.

Based on this shared belief, FCE and ACE wish to make the contemporary arts an integral part of FCE's daily offer, building new audiences – particularly in areas of low arts engagement, or limited arts infrastructure - and offering new opportunities to artists and arts organisations whilst also contributing to its response to climate change and the transition to a low carbon economy.

The proposed partnership is designed to encourage collaboration between the two organisations in a number of ways – strategically at national, regional and local levels; and operationally, through individual locations and programmes. The principal outcome of this partnership will be an increased level of high-quality and innovative arts activity across FCE sites, delivered primarily by FCE in conjunction with arts organisations, supported by the specialist knowledge and expertise of ACE.

Such an initiative will enable:

- senior FCE managers to recognise and support opportunities for enhanced arts activity at key FCE sites;
- the development and implementation of an arts policy by FCE;
- ACE to offer advice to FCE on how to engage strategically with a range of artforms and assist with identifying issues and models of best practice to ensure that quality is embedded in FCE guidance and policy;
- artists and arts organisations to explore new creative opportunities to make excellent art (not least by taking inspiration from the forest environment and its communities of staff, residents and visitors);
- artists to work alongside FCE on existing and new woodland creation and management initiatives, especially those that link or demonstrate future sustainability issues including those related to climate change;
- the development of a 'toolkit' approach to embed guidance through organisational development programmes;
- development of larger and more diverse audiences experiencing contemporary art within the forest environment, especially in places which lack alternative arts infrastructure, or with low arts engagement;
- the identification of where there may be geographic, thematic or strategic linkages with other partners, partnerships and national agencies.

The delivery of this vision will involve organisational development within FCE and close involvement and support from ACE.

## 2. The Contemporary Arts Programme

With the above vision and strategic objectives in mind, ACE and FCE have instigated a partnership that will:

- operate in accordance with the parameters of this Memorandum of Understanding;
- be consistent with both organisations' values and with their separate strategic and corporate objectives;

- respond to both partners' developing priorities;
- enable at least one major new contemporary arts initiative in each of the six Forest Districts of the FCE's restructured estate over the period of the agreement;
- maximise opportunities for audience development, especially in places which lack alternative arts infrastructure, or where arts engagement is currently low.

Implementation of the above ambitious programme of work will require dedicated staff time.

The key outcomes of the programme will include:

- A greater presence of high-quality contemporary arts activity in FCE's sites, extending the link between forests and the arts.
- An increased number of creative opportunities for artists and arts organisations.
- An environment where the contemporary arts have a dialogue with woodland and forest environments, with the activity and the setting enriching one another.
- New and broader audiences – both for the contemporary arts and for FCE – and increased opportunities for high quality engagement by FCE visitors, arts audiences, and local communities.
- New and developed relationships both within and across the two partners to this Memorandum of Understanding (at local, regional and national levels) and with other appropriate agencies.
- An organisational infrastructure and culture at FCE that supports further activity in this area so it can be delivered effectively and creatively.

### 3 Organisational and Professional Support

In order for the programme to be delivered to the level of expertise and excellence envisaged by the two national bodies, the programme will require:

- a champion in the new FCE senior management team;
- a dedicated sponsoring officer in FCE with responsibility for the initiative
- an advisory structure;
- professional development provision for FCE staff where appropriate e.g.

peer mentoring and knowledge transfer mechanisms to ensure that experience and learning are shared and skills developed;

- specific training initiatives;
- partnership and relationship building with regional managers and staff.

#### 4. Resources

Successful delivery of the programme will be dependent on the availability of resources in both organisations. In the first year of this MoU, both organisations will explore appropriate resource requirements and opportunities.

#### 5. Branding and communications

The partners will agree a shared branding and communications strategy for the programme that addresses both internal and external needs and objectives. The strategy will ensure that both national bodies can speak clearly, both internally and externally, about the value of the initiative and how it relates to their individual corporate strategies.

#### 6. Good Partners Agreement

ACE and the FCE undertake to:

- Inform each other prior to any sensitive messages emerging that might impact on that other organisation.

- Share information with each other about any agreements with third parties as appropriate.
- Observe confidentiality as required in relation to shared information that is not in the public domain.
- Share expertise and experience with respect to risk.

#### 7. 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, until 31 March 2015. 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.

#### 8. Action plan

Following agreement to the Memorandum of Understanding, ACE and the FCE will draw up an action plan in line with the shared Vision, Aims and Objectives outlined above and both organisations' strategic planning processes. This Plan will form an Appendix to the Memorandum of Understanding and should be considered to be an integral part of it.

This Memorandum of Understanding is made on

Date \_\_\_\_\_

between

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

for and on behalf of

Arts Council England  
14 Great Peter Street  
London SW1P 3NQ

and

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

for and on behalf of

Forestry Commission England  
620 Bristol Business Park  
Coldharbour Lane  
Bristol BS16 1EJ

## APPENDIX: An indicative pilot programme

The pilot programme will involve a number of FCE sites hosting, presenting and commissioning a diverse range of high-quality and innovative contemporary arts initiatives - for example exhibitions, events, residencies or projects. These will relate to FCE objectives and promote understanding of the place that forests have in existing and emerging agendas. These will celebrate artistic excellence, provide artists with career-development opportunities and make visible the relationships between people and places.

The pilot programme will have clear aims and objectives e.g.

1. To enable and encourage high-quality and innovative contemporary arts activity, consistent with the objectives of both organisations, at a number sites. This will involve:
  - i. selection of a cohort of sites in accordance with mutually agreed criteria and both organisations' national, regional and local objectives;
  - ii. working sensitively with artists and arts organisations to ensure consistency with both organisations' core themes, objectives and strategies;
  - iii. ensuring that the programme is genuinely diverse in terms of the range of artforms involved, the backgrounds of participating artists and the composition of audiences;
  - iv. establishing a peer mentoring network of FCE sites and personnel with partner arts organisations, sharing knowledge and expertise;
  - v. ensuring that proposals are of the highest quality and that projects are consistent with FCE environmental and safety guidelines and credentials.
  
2. To develop audiences and enhance the quality of visitor experience, e.g. by:

- i. deepening levels of engagement with local communities and the wider public and taking their views into account in developing projects and proposals;
  - ii. encouraging participation by people from across the community and supporting this through interpretation and learning;
  - iii. responding to public reaction;
  - iv. undertaking audience research and developing joint national and regional audience-development strategies as appropriate.
3. To enable artists and arts organisations to engage more fully with FCE activities, e.g. by:
  - i. brokering relationships between forest managers arts organisations and artists;
  - ii. forest managers engaging enthusiastically with arts organisations and artists and encouraging them to become involved with all the relevant staff in a district, and their users, at the outset of a project;
  - iii. encouraging artists to consider the ways in which they might develop their careers in and beyond the forest environment;
  - iv. FCE developing a commissioning programme and establishing an appropriate remuneration policy for artists.
4. To fully realise the ambition and potential of this partnership initiative e.g. by:
  - i. facilitating the embedding of artists within the organisation;
  - ii. ensuring quality and best practice throughout the projects developed;
  - iii. developing and adopting appropriate marketing strategies;
  - iv. developing and adopting appropriate evaluation mechanisms;
  - v. building on and realising the scale of strategic opportunities within the public forest estate in England.
5. To build partnerships within and between the FCE and ACE and with other agencies, e.g. by:

- i. regular communication between ACE officers and FCE staff and forest managers to alert the FCE of opportunities to programme innovative work, in line with ACE goals and priorities;
  - ii. developing links and partnerships between FCE sites, ACE offices and local, regional and national partners, such as arts organisations, other environmental and heritage agencies, local authorities, funding bodies, commercial galleries and artists.
6. To establish support systems for effective delivery, e.g. by:
- the FCE appointing a dedicated staff member to manage and coordinate the programme and assist with facilitating individual initiatives;
  - establishing a clear planning framework, including a strategy for developing the necessary financial resources;
  - convening an advisory group to offer objective judgement and practical support to the initiative;
  - formalising and supporting a learning dimension, whereby the woodland acts as an introduction to arts in the environment;
  - having in place mechanisms for recording and disseminating experiences and lessons from the pilot programme with a view to encouraging further sites to participate in future years as appropriate;
  - developing a shared and integrated branding and communications strategy;
  - sharing data and collaborating, where appropriate, on marketing initiatives, and audience research;
  - identifying CPD needs and solutions;
  - adopting a systematic approach to risk; including agreeing and regularly updating a risk framework; and identifying responsibilities within that framework;
  - establishing a programme of evaluation.