



National
Trust



Memorandum of Understanding between Arts Council England and The National Trust

1. The Partners in this Memorandum of Understanding

- 1.1 Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England, distributing public money from Government and the National Lottery. Its ambition as stated in its 2008–11 plan is to put the arts at the heart of national life and people at the heart of the arts: *'Our aim is for everyone in the country to have the opportunity to develop a rich and varied artistic and creative life. We will ensure that more high-quality work reaches a wider range of people – engaging them as both audience and participants. We will support artists and arts organisations to take creative risks and follow new opportunities.'* Arts Council England sees the development of a long-term strategic relationship with the National Trust as offering exciting new opportunities to achieve these aims.
- 1.2 The National Trust was founded in 1895 to care for places of historic interest or natural beauty. These places include stretches of coastline, woods, farms, habitats for wildlife, ancient stone circles, cotton mills, gardens, villages, castles, country houses, works of art and libraries. Paintings, furniture, sculpture and textiles – the contemporary art and craft of their time – are displayed in the decorative interiors or gardens for which they were commissioned or acquired. The relationship between the former owners of National Trust properties and artists and craftspeople resulted in acts of creation that have made the heritage of these properties an almost unique resource in the world. However, that creative bond often risks being broken when properties and sites are acquired by the National Trust or other institutional owners. The National Trust is seeking to re-establish this connection between its properties and sites and artists and craftspeople, and believes that this will be greatly facilitated by a partnership with Arts Council England.

2. Context

This document summarises the background to a new relationship between Arts Council England and the National Trust, designed to enable the two organisations to work together in achieving a shared vision for the interaction between historic properties and contemporary art.

In 2006, Arts Council England published Turning Point, a ten-year strategy for strengthening contemporary visual arts in England. The strategy has five priorities:

- Audiences, participation and education
- Support for artists
- Innovation and risk
- Diversity and leadership
- Places, spaces and partnerships.

In pursuing these priorities, Arts Council England is seeking to deliver particular key outcomes, such as *'stronger regional, national and organisation-to-organisation partnerships'*, including *'in contexts beyond the gallery'*. Significantly, in terms of this partnership, *'the main emphasis is on linking contemporary art with art from the past and with heritage'*, and the desired outcomes also include *'more opportunities for people to experience and engage with the contemporary arts, wherever they are in the country'* and *'greater engagement in and understanding of, contemporary art in its historical and cultural context'*.

These priorities and desired outcomes suggest that there should be a natural synergy between Arts Council England and the National Trust. With over a million objects, hundreds of unique gardens, open spaces, walks and over two hundred properties, the National Trust holds a remarkable and largely untapped resource for upcoming and established artists, makers, and curators of contemporary art and crafts. This resource can be enhanced and focused through collaboration with the expertise and national artistic overview of Arts Council England.

The National Trust has worked in this area in the past: between 1986 and 2001, it supported the commissioning and presentation of contemporary art through its Foundation for Art. The proposed new Arts Council England / National Trust partnership will build on that experience to develop a more strategic approach, reflecting how the presentation of contemporary craft and art in heritage contexts has developed in recent years.

The National Trust and Arts Council England wish to make contemporary art and craft an integral part of the Trust's daily offer, building new audiences and offering new career opportunities to both emerging and established artists. In response to these shared aspirations, the two organisations have worked together to develop this Memorandum of Understanding, the implementation of which will be overseen by a Project Board of lead officers drawn from both partners.

3. The Vision

Both Arts Council England and the National Trust believe that high-quality and innovative art 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 realise potential within themselves that might otherwise have lain dormant. Arts Council England and the National Trust also recognise that the art of the past has an inextricable synergistic relationship with that of the present and that a dialogue between them is essential. That dialogue – in the form of the juxtaposition of contemporary art and historic setting – stimulates artists and audiences and facilitates new perceptions and innovations.

In that context, this partnership is designed to encourage collaboration between the two organisations in a number of ways – strategically at national and regional levels; and operationally, through individual properties and sites. The principal outcome of the partnership will be an increased level of high-quality and innovative contemporary art and crafts activity across National Trust properties and sites, delivered primarily by the National Trust, but supported by the specialist knowledge and expertise of Arts Council England.

Such an initiative shall enable:

- as many National Trust properties and sites as possible to engage with contemporary art and craft, wherever and whenever appropriate;
- artists to explore new creative opportunities (not least by taking inspiration from the historic);
- larger and more diverse audiences to experience contemporary arts and crafts and National Trust properties and sites.

It is hoped that, through this initiative, the core National Trust visitor base (many of whom will not be regular attenders of contemporary art events and exhibitions) will be challenged, excited and stimulated by encountering contemporary art in an historic setting; and that visual arts audiences (who may not normally visit National Trust properties or sites) will be intrigued by seeing contemporary work in National Trust settings and be encouraged to explore further.

With the above vision and strategic objectives in mind, Arts Council England and the National Trust 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;
- enable a contemporary art initiative in a number of diverse National Trust properties and sites, beginning with a pilot programme of 10–12 projects across the Trust's portfolio. This initiative (discussed in more detail in the next two sections) is intended to establish and develop a mutually beneficial way of working for Arts Council England and the

National Trust that will enable the two organisations to nurture a productive long-term relationship;

- encourage the sale of contemporary art and craft work through the National Trust's properties and sites, shops, website and print publications;
- maximise opportunities for audience development;
- undertake an advocacy and development programme, which will include (a) the creation of a specialist advisory group drawn from the art and crafts world and (b) professional development provision for National Trust staff where necessary.

It is recognised that the delivery of this vision will involve organisational development within the National Trust and close involvement and support from Arts Council England. It is also recognised that successful delivery will be dependent on the availability of resources in both organisations, and that these resources cannot be guaranteed for the three-year period at the start of the project.

4. The Contemporary Art Initiative

In the first instance, the initiative will contain three main strands:

1. A cohort of 'lead' properties and sites for a pilot programme, selected jointly by the National Trust and Arts Council England in accordance with mutually agreed selection criteria and the separate organisations' national and regional objectives.
2. Organisational learning – including talks, publications, peer-to-peer mentoring and online guidance material around curatorship and commissioning contemporary art within the context of the National Trust's core values and corporate themes.
3. A strategic plan (based on the pilot) for a long-term, sustainable programme of exhibitions, commissions, residencies and artistic interventions.

The key outcomes of the initiative will include:

- A greater presence for contemporary art and crafts in National Trust properties and sites, extending the link between the properties and the contemporary arts.
- An increased number of creative opportunities, commissions and sales for artists and craftspeople.
- An environment where contemporary art and crafts have a dialogue with historic settings, with both elements enriching one another, challenging and strengthening the continuum of practice and using the present to illustrate the past.
- New audiences – both for contemporary art and craft and for the National Trust (including an expansion of its membership) – and increased engagement, both with National Trust members, contemporary art and crafts audiences, and the general public.

- New and developed relationships both within and across the two partners to this Memorandum of Understanding (at regional and national levels) and with other agencies such as MLA Renaissance Hubs, the Crafts Council, Contemporary Art Society and English Heritage.
- A culture of enhanced organisational learning in the properties and across the National Trust, and a willingness to embrace organisational development where required.
- An infrastructure that supports further activity in this area, including an emphasis on skills development to ensure that programmes can be delivered effectively and creatively, and a supportive structure of advice and guidance.

5. The pilot programme

The pilot programme will involve a number of National Trust properties and sites hosting, presenting and producing a diverse range of high-quality and innovative contemporary art and crafts exhibitions, events and commissions. The pilot phase – running from 2009 to 2012 – will involve 10–12 participating properties and sites celebrating artistic excellence; providing artists with career-development opportunities; making visible the relationships between people and places, past and present; and acknowledging the current core National Trust themes of ‘cultural heritage’, ‘our natural world’, ‘climate change’ and ‘local food’.

The pilot programme will have the following aims and objectives

1. To enable and encourage high-quality and innovative contemporary art and craft activity, consistent with the objectives of the organisations, in a number of National Trust properties and sites, by means of the National Trust and Arts Council England:
 - i. selecting a cohort of properties in accordance with mutually agreed selection criteria and the organisations’ national and regional objectives;
 - ii. working sensitively with curators and artists to ensure consistency with both organisations’ core themes, objectives and strategies (‘cultural heritage’, ‘our natural world’, ‘climate change’ and ‘local food’ for the National Trust; and Turning Point for Arts Council England);
 - iii. ensuring that the programme is genuinely diverse in terms of the range of artforms involved, the backgrounds of participating artist and curators and the composition of the audiences;
 - iv. establishing a peer mentoring group of National Trust properties, sharing knowledge and expertise;
 - v. ensuring that proposals are of the highest quality and that projects are consistent with National Trust conservation guidelines as contained in the conservation manual and associated worksheets.

2. To develop audiences and enhance the quality of visitor experience, by:
 - i. deepening levels of engagement by members and public, encouraging participation by people from every community;
 - ii. responding to the public (in accordance with the National Trust's ambitions for improvement, such as listening to supporters' views, openness and transparency, involvement and progressiveness);
 - iii. jointly undertaking audience research and developing joint national and regional audience-development strategies as appropriate.
3. To enable artists and curators to engage more fully in National Trust activities, by:
 - i. brokering relationships between curators, property managers and artists;
 - ii. property managers engaging enthusiastically with artists and curators and encouraging them to become involved with all the staff in a property at the outset of a project;
 - iii. encouraging artists to think further about ways in which they might develop their careers in and beyond heritage and historic settings;
 - iv. the National Trust developing a commissioning programme and establishing an appropriate rewards strategy for artists and curators.
4. To build partnerships within and between the National Trust and Arts Council England and with other agencies, by:
 - i. regular communication between Arts Council England officers in the regions and National Trust regional staff and property managers;
 - ii. using that forum and others to enable Arts Council England to inform the National Trust of opportunities to programme innovative work relating to contemporary debates that also explore historical connections;
 - iii. creating links with similar external bodies, such as the Crafts Council, MLA, English Heritage and the Environment Agency as appropriate;
 - iv. developing partnerships between National Trust properties and Arts Council England regional offices and other local, regional and national partners, such as regularly funded (and other) arts organisations, local authorities, funding bodies, and commercial galleries; and with artists and curators as appropriate.
5. To establish support systems for effective delivery, by:
 - i. the National Trust, with the support of Arts Council England, appointing a dedicated Contemporary Art and Crafts Project Director to manage and coordinate the initiative and pilot programme;

- ii. jointly establishing a clear planning framework, including a strategy for developing the necessary financial resources;
 - iii. jointly appointing an advisory group to offer objective judgement and practical support to the initiative and pilot programme (see Section 6);
 - iv. establishing a learning dimension whereby properties act as introductions to art and use art works to engage young people;
 - v. having in place mechanisms for recording and disseminating experiences and lessons from the pilot programme with a view to encouraging further properties to participate in future years as appropriate;
 - vi. jointly developing a shared and integrated branding and communications strategy (see Section 7);
 - vii. sharing data and collaborating, where appropriate, on marketing initiatives and audience research;
 - viii. identifying CPD needs and solutions (see Section 8)
 - ix. jointly establishing a programme of evaluation (See Section 9)
 - x. adopting a common approach to risk; including agreeing and regularly updating a risk framework; and identifying respective responsibilities within that framework.
6. To create a more effective framework for encouraging the sales of contemporary crafts, by:
- i. encouraging National Trust properties with 'selling galleries' to engage with the pilot programme to increase their sales of contemporary art and crafts;
 - ii. accompanying the pilot programme with a sales strategy based on clear objectives that are not solely focused on income-generation;
 - iii. working, where appropriate, with other agencies, such as the Crafts Council;
 - iv. exploring the potential of Arts Council England's Own Art initiative in this context.
7. To establish a shared strategy to the development of resources for this initiative (see Section 10), by:
- i. agreeing a shared strategy;
 - ii. identifying and securing the necessary internal funds within each partner organisation;
 - iii. brokering partnerships with external funding sources as appropriate.

6. Advisory support

In order to ensure the initiative has access to specialist expertise and advice at the appropriate level, an advisory group of c. 10–12 individuals will be selected to reflect a broad range of expertise and experience across different aspects of contemporary art and crafts. This group (or subsets of it) will act as

a sounding board for the National Trust and for individual properties. It will also act as a support system for the post-holder within the National Trust charged with delivering the initiative.

7. Branding and communications

The partners will agree a shared branding and communications strategy for the initiative and the pilot 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 the pilot programme and how they relate to their individual corporate strategies. It will also ensure the coordination of joint and separate messages communicated by the National Trust and Arts Council England.

8. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The programme will involve some National Trust staff undertaking professional development in certain areas and additional support in others. These will include:

- peer mentoring, through which properties involved in the programme share experiences and learning and individuals can be enabled to develop appropriate skills;
- specific training initiatives (e.g. half-day courses on particular issues such as contemporary art marketing, programme planning, leadership skills and exhibition exchanges);
- partnership relationships with local experts in individual regions (e.g. contemporary art galleries, organisations, agencies, artists or curators).

9. Evaluation

Arts Council England and National Trust will evaluate the effectiveness and success of both the initiative and the pilot programme. The evaluation will be undertaken primarily by the partners through self-assessment, against a predetermined set of criteria, complemented and tested through external assessment. It will adopt the following methodology:

1. Agreement of the objectives of the initiative, derived from this Memorandum of Understanding;
2. Agreement of the objectives of the pilot programme, derived from the Aims and Objectives as set out in Section 5;
3. Agreement of any local objectives that pertain to individual regions, properties or sites.
4. Establishment of both 'hard' (i.e. numerical) and 'soft' (i.e. qualitative) measures and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each objective;
5. Creation of a baseline (e.g. activity levels, visitor numbers, financial parameters, educational take-up, satisfaction surveys) for the KPIs, compatible with the National Trust's benchmarking of supporter engagement and Arts Council England's Taking Part survey data.

6. Establishment of light-touch tracking mechanisms for the pilot programme (e.g. visitor surveys).
7. Documentation of all projects in the pilot programme through a range of media;
8. Employment of an external evaluator to engage with the initiative from the outset.

10. Resourcing Strategy

Both the initiative and the pilot programme will require significant resourcing, including:

- strategic infrastructural funding, including the salary and on-costs of a Contemporary Art and Crafts Project Director; research and/or seed-corn funding for projects and CPD; documentation; and evaluation;
- project-specific funding for individual commissions, exhibitions, etc.

Arts Council England and the National Trust will work together to develop a plural funding strategy to address this need, containing the following elements:

1. an internal National Trust application for a block grant for infrastructural funding from the 2009/10 allocation;
2. matching funds for the strategic infrastructure from Arts Council England's national managed funds;
3. Arts Council England and the National Trust jointly seeking funds for the initiative (infrastructure and pilot programme) from a headline 'sponsor';
4. individual properties participating in the pilot programme applying for project-specific support from the remaining Foundation for Art funds and from regional or sub-regional sources (e.g. local authorities, RDAs, Arts Council England regional offices, other statutory bodies, trusts, foundations and businesses);
5. exploration of the potential of funds from AHRC or other funding and grant-making organisations.

Whilst both organisations intend to seek funding throughout the three years of the project, this cannot be guaranteed, and the project objectives may need to be adjusted to suit the level of resources available.

11. Good Partners Agreement

- 11.1 Arts Council England and the National Trust will each inform the other partner prior to any sensitive messages emerging that might impact on that other organisation.
- 11.2 Both partners will share information with each other about any agreements with third parties as appropriate.

- 11.3 Both organisations will observe confidentiality as required in relation to shared information that is not in the public domain.
- 11.4 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. The National Trust 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 National Trust may suffer from its disclosure of information under the FOI Act. This clause will not affect the rights of the National Trust under the Data Protection Act 1998.

12. 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.

13. Action plan

Following agreement to the Memorandum of Understanding, Arts Council England and the National Trust 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

The National Trust
Heelis
Kemble Drive
Swindon SN2 2NA