

Open Call for Creative Proposals

Open Call for proposals for the Birmingham 2022 Cultural Festival:

NATURE, TRAMS and BLACK ART



BIRMINGHAM
2022
commonwealth
games

BACKGROUND

In 2022 we welcome the world to Birmingham and the West Midlands region with a global sporting event like no other, as we host the Birmingham 22 Commonwealth Games.

From March to September 2022, a 6-month arts festival will encapsulate and explore the spirit of the Games, and finally give Birmingham its moment in the spotlight. It will reach artists and audiences across the West Midlands region. The festival will aim to double the reach of the sporting events of the Games themselves - engaging at least 2.5million audiences and participants.

Our vision:

To present an ambitious arts festival that will harness a once in a lifetime opportunity to positively disrupt the region's cultural sector and inspire lasting change.

Collaborative and original work by artists and communities will connect people, time and place, as we host the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Audacious, playful and inclusive, over 6 months it will entertain, engage and embrace at least 2.5million people, setting Birmingham and the West Midlands in a new creative light.

Our approach is focused on creativity, collaboration and Commonwealth, always seeking equity in artistic partnerships. **Three simple curatorial lines** invite and embolden artists to make artworks for this specific context and moment in time. They represent a starting point – as threads that interweave and overlap, with each informing the other. **They are:**

- **Our place in the Commonwealth**

Celebrating Birmingham as the Commonwealth Games host and profiling the many communities of the city and region with roots in other Commonwealth nations, must go hand-in-hand with creating the space for honest conversations about the existence of the Commonwealth and its origins. This should include any perspective grounded in fact, allowing historic identities and traditional narratives to be questioned or overturned. We will seek to articulate a common ground across the festival programme, with projects built on lasting exchange, between communities of the city, region and Commonwealth.

- **The present moment**

The programme should speak to the present moment, addressing the timely and urgent issues of the world we live in, catalysing a collective activist spirit. The Games is an extraordinary moment, representing the coming together of over 6,500 athletes, most of whom are young people, in this place and time, representing the Commonwealth. It is a moment in which the positive disruption of our everyday experience

of the city and region, can reveal and enable the collective and often unrealised power of youth and youthfulness.

- **Stories of Birmingham and the West Midlands**

This is a moment to shine a light on the rich, untold and living history of the host city and region, and to hear the stories that shape our identity and perspectives. These are stories that resonate with people, true and reimagined, that connect us to our place in the world, that come from here but are universal. We believe the expression of narrative can span all art forms and be delivered equally well through linear storytelling and non-linear experiences.

We want to see creative risk-taking and ambition, with inclusion, representation and collaboration at the heart of each artistic idea. It is essential that the festival is created with, not just for, local residents, so that people can recognise themselves and the uniqueness of our region in the work. We will look for and promote new work that recognises the region's intersectional artistic and cultural practices – sensory concerts, runners' club art tours, building 'takeovers', contemporary carnival, Drag bingo and community-led architectural 'pavilions' – the festival will draw on all of this and more.

Artworks ranging from the playful to provocative will occupy the highstreets, neighbourhoods, parks, waterways, venues and civic spaces of the West Midlands, across traditional art forms and more experimental mediums. It will encourage people to explore and play in public spaces, to discover our region's heritage and offer opportunities for all ages to find the 'common ground' in Commonwealth, especially children and young people.

CREATIVE BRIEFS

This first group of Open Calls is made up of three specific Creative Briefs, listed below. **Each applicant (individual or organisation) may only submit one proposal, in response to one of these three briefs:**

- 1) **NATURE** Green spaces, urban nature and canals
- 2) **TRAMS** Social transport heritage
- 3) **BLACK ART** The Black Art Movement in the West Midlands

AUDIENCES AND ENGAGEMENT

Each of these commissioned works should reach a minimum audience and/or participant base across live and digital platforms, **specified in each individual Creative Brief**. We are particularly interested in projects that will engage our priority groups, namely

- Children and young people
- d/Deaf and disabled people
- People and communities that established cultural institutions do not regularly, or easily, engage

- People and communities with roots in other Commonwealth nations and territories

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Each creative brief has been developed in collaboration with supporting organisations from the region whom we are delighted to be working with. They will support the submission process by providing advice to interested artists and cultural organisations and by feeding back on the proposals we receive. They may also support the creation and presentation of the projects receiving the full commission. More detail is provided in each Creative Brief.

MAKING A PROPOSAL

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Only artists and cultural organisations based in Birmingham and the West Midlands are eligible to make a proposal.

The budget available for each Open Call commission must be between 70% and 100% of the total cost of the project.

The project must take place during the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival, between 14 March – September 2022 (end date TBC)

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This will be a two-stage process, as described in the section below. The selection will be made by the Cultural Programme team in consultation with the supporting organisations listed in each individual Creative Brief, and based on the following criteria:

At Stage 1, our assessment criteria are:

- The idea is ambitious, original and artistically-led
- The idea is a compelling response to the brief and provocations
- The idea fits with our **curatorial lines (as described on Pg. 2)**
 - Our place in the Commonwealth
 - The present moment
 - Stories of Birmingham and the West Midlands
- The artists and/or organisations involved have the capacity and competency to deliver the project
- The budget is realistic and includes fair pay for artists

We will also be looking at geographic and art form balance across the commissioned projects. All three briefs make specific reference to particular and possible locations and contexts.

At Stage 2, additional assessment criteria are:

- The project will reach the minimum audience target specified in the individual creative briefs including some or all of the named priority groups
- The approach to delivering the project will make a contribution to the delivery of Birmingham 2022's social value charter
 - **Sustainability** – ensuring environmental, economic and social aspects are considered in all key decisions
 - **Health and well-being** – maximising the opportunities to improve the levels of physical activity and wellbeing
 - **Inclusivity** – making the Games accessible to all

- **Human rights** – having the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) always in mind
- **Local Benefit** – ensuring the Games contributes to the local economy and provides opportunities for local people
- The project will contribute towards the Cultural Festival’s overall delivery of the following outcomes of the National Lottery Heritage Fund
 - people will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions
 - heritage will be identified and better explained
 - people will have improved wellbeing
 - a wider range of people will be involved in heritage
- The project includes collaborations between artists and heritage practitioners

HOW TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

There is a two-stage process for proposals.

Stage 1

Interested parties should send a proposal that includes:

- A name or working title for the project
- A description of the idea, including proposed location/s for the work
- An explanation of how it fits the brief and its connection to the curatorial lines
- A list of participating artists with weblinks

This part of the proposal is to be a maximum 500 words or 5 minutes of audio/video.

In addition, we also will require

- a completed budget breakdown spreadsheet; incorporating the following headings; *Commission Amount, Artistic fees, Marketing & Audiences, Pre Production & Rehearsal, Access & Inclusion*. Please also note if any secured or expected funding is applicable to this project. Please ensure your budget is balanced and any formulas are correct.
- a completed equal opportunities form using the webform link on our website.

All first stage proposals are to be sent to culture@birmingham2022.com, with the subject line <BRIEF NAME – YOUR NAME – PROPOSAL>.

The deadline for proposals for all three briefs is 5pm on Tuesday 27 April.

Stage 2

A limited number of projects will be shortlisted by the Cultural Programme team and receive a fee to develop their project idea for Stage 2.

For the NATURE and BLACK ART Open Calls the idea development fee will be £500 (+ VAT where applicable)

For the TRAMS Open Call the idea development fee will be £1,000 (+ VAT where applicable)

At Stage 2, the shortlisted projects will work with the Cultural Festival team and supporting organisations to develop their proposal and present it to a panel from the Birmingham 2022 Cultural Festival team and a representative of the supporting organisations.

The Stage 2 timetable is different for each Creative Brief and detailed below.

SUPPORT WITH MAKING PROPOSALS

We will run a series of surgeries (question & answer sessions for interested artists and cultural organisations) on selected dates in April with representatives of the supporting organisations also present, to answer specific questions from interested artists and organisations. To book a surgery slot, please contact Kashmire.hawker@birmingham2022.com

For support with your proposal, or questions please contact louisa.davies@birmingham2022.com

ACCESS

Inclusivity is one of five values in the Birmingham 2022 Social Values Charter and we want the Games to be accessible to all.

We can provide access support with proposals.

For this Open Call, we will work with Deaf Explorer, who forge radical approaches and creative opportunities to produce contemporary Deaf culture. They adopt the social model of disability, and identify the barriers in society as the main contributing factor that disables people. Their expertise is access and communication support. For this Open Call, they will provide accessible information and will support artists with access requirements to apply.

www.deafexplorer.com

Please contact louisa.davies@birmingham2022.com to let us know if you there are any reasonable adjustments we can make to ensure this process is as accessible as possible to you, or if you require a large print or alternative accessible format version of this document.

We are also happy to receive proposals in a range of formats, including written, audio or video files but will require a detailed balanced budget spreadsheet produced using the headings detailed above.

TIMETABLE

24 Mar 21 Open Calls announced
13 Apr 21 NATURE Surgery
15 Apr 21 BLACK ART Surgery
16 Apr 21 TRAMS Surgery
27 Apr 21 Stage 1 proposals deadline
by 20 May 21 TRAMS shortlist notified
by 21 May 21 NATURE shortlist notified
by 25 May 21 BLACK ART shortlist notified
7 Jun – 18 Jun Stage 2 presentations
21 Jun – 8 Jul Commissioning period
Mar 22 Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme begins

FAQs

How are you defining West Midlands?

The West Midlands is one of nine official regions of England. It covers the western half of the area traditionally known as the Midlands. The region consists of the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands and Worcestershire.

As Birmingham 2022, we have a geographic focus on

- the 7 constituent authorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority: Birmingham, Sandwell, Solihull, Dudley, Walsall, Wolverhampton and Coventry
- the locations outside of the West Midlands Combined Authority hosting Games sports competitions, namely Warwick, Leamington Spa and Cannock Chase.

Can we apply in partnership with other organisations from outside of the West Midlands?

Yes. We welcome partnership proposals and collaborations with individual and organisations from the 72 nations and territories of the Commonwealth, including the four nations of the UK.

If successful, can we use the commission as ‘match’ in funding applications?

Yes. It is acceptable to use the commission as match for funding applications and/or to use existing resources towards project costs, where funding sources are not duplicated. The funder of the three Open Calls is the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Do you require ‘match’ funding?

No

What do you mean by ‘any artform’?

The Cultural Festival will be a festival of all artforms, the spaces between them and the new forms and ideas that emerge when art forms collide. We will incorporate dance, theatre, music, spoken word and literature, the visual arts, film, photography, digital media, craft and architecture. As one of the UK’s test city/regions for 5G, we are particularly interested to see projects that creatively use and explore this new capability to reach new audiences.

Brief 1: NATURE

Green spaces, urban nature and canals

Two commissions of £49,000

Working with Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust, Canal & River Trust, National Trust

Audiences: minimum audience of 5,000 people per commissioned project

On the map and in people's minds, Birmingham and the West Midlands conurbation manifest as an urban, industrial landscape. Yet, Birmingham is home to 3,500 hectares of parkland and across the city and wider region there are many beautiful wild green spaces and waterways. Green space is also found in unexpected spaces, growing on central reservations on many of the city's arterial roads and springing up in post-industrial spaces, as they rewild.

The Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee (OC) wish to commission two new public artworks (of any art form) that seek to be transformative of our relationship with the natural heritage and green spaces of Birmingham and the West Midlands.

The two commissions will be presented as part of the Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival.

"No-one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they haven't experienced."

"The fact is that no species has ever had such wholesale control over everything on earth, living or dead, as we now have. That lays upon us, whether we like it or not, an awesome responsibility. On our hands now lies not only our future, but that of all other living creatures with whom we share the earth."

David Attenborough

These two quotations from leading environmentalist David Attenborough encapsulate the focus of this brief: to explore the responsibility on all of us to respect, conserve and connect with the natural world. We are looking for artistic projects which consider all or some of the following ideas:

- Humans are part of nature, not separate from it
- The impact of the global pandemic on people's relationship with nature
- The responsibility to reconnect with and protect nature
- How to cultivate a spirit of exploration and discovery in overlooked spaces
- That there is as much nature in the city as in the countryside and post-industrial landscapes can present an opportunity for biodiversity to thrive
- The relationship between our natural heritage, climate change and the Commonwealth

The commissioned works

- will be ambitious and transform spaces and our relationship to them
- will most likely be temporary public art works
- might be playable interventions that make a contribution to placemaking at a local level
- could be site-specific/responsive or take place across and connect a number of spaces
- should encourage local people to enjoy, respect and conserve the natural heritage of the city and region and draw them towards other opportunities to engage with it

Supporting Organisations

The commissioned projects will be supported by Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust, Canal & River Trust and the National Trust through access to spaces, staff and volunteer support and additional marketing.

In turn, we are keen to support the regional priorities of these organisations, broadening their reach and engagement with communities and signposting audiences to their learning, conservation and volunteering programmes.

Locations

We are open to project proposals that manifest in and connect any green space/s across Birmingham and the West Midlands.

We also welcome proposals for projects that would take place in and/or connect the priority locations of our supporting organisations on this open call, namely:

- Clent Hills (National Trust)
- Parks with key involvement in the Future Parks Accelerator Programme
 - Dawberry Fields Park
 - Ward End Park
 - Witton Lakes and Perry Common Recreation Ground
- Centre of the Earth, Winson Green (Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust)
- Eco-Park (Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust)
- The nature reserves looked after by Birmingham & Black Country Trust
 - Moseley Bog and Joy's Wood
 - Hill Hook
 - Portway Hill
 - Deer's Leap Wood
 - Turner's Wood
 - Peascroft Wood
- Green spaces adjacent to and including all, or part of, the canal corridor, where green spaces and waterways create and connect places, particularly:
 - The Alexander Stadium to Wednesbury
 - Wednesbury to Birchills, including Walsall Town Arm,
 - Birmingham City centre to Smethwick
 - Birmingham City centre to Spaghetti Junction
 - Birmingham City centre to Selly Oak
 - Digbeth to Small Heath
 - Coventry Canal Basin to Hawkesbury Junction

Brief 2: TRAMS

Social transport heritage on trams

One commission of £145,000

Working with Black Country Living Museum, Transport for West Midlands and West Midlands Metro

Audiences: minimum audience of 100,000 people

Birmingham and the Black Country sit at the epicentre of a vast network of roads, railways and canals, and for hundreds of years people have travelled and goods have been transported in, out and around the region, servicing industry and commerce, bringing families together, providing customers for hospitality and retail and enabling leisure pursuits.

Trams are seen as the future preferred and most sustainable mode of public transport in the region, with the extension of the West Midlands Metro line to Brierley Hill currently in progress and further lines planned. The vision for carless city centres, reducing congestion and pollution means that an electric and shared form of transport is desirable once more. For large numbers of people, particularly those working in offices, the daily commute has disappeared as a result of Covid 19 and the instruction to 'work at home' – the long-term impact of this on working and commuting patterns remains to be seen.

We have gone full circle. In the Black Country, trams were phased out in the 1930s, and in Birmingham, the last of the Birmingham Corporation Trams ran in 1953. Many were replaced by trolley buses which all importantly were not confined to tracks and could navigate around a parked car or other street obstacles, but still ran on electricity from an overhead line. They were phased out after the Second World War, as private vehicle ownership became increasingly the norm. The Beeching Review of 1963/65 saw the closure of nearly half of the nation's railway stations and a third of the tracks, also due to competition from road transport.

The growth of all forms of public transport in the early 20th century democratised travel across the city, region and country. Trams, trains, buses and trolley buses gave freedom to travel, particularly to women, and enabled people to pursue both business and leisure interests that would previously would have been inaccessible to them. Those services created and sustained jobs, and as post-war migration to the region from the Caribbean and South Asia increased, they brought people from different backgrounds and communities into shared, transient spaces.

The Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee (OC) wish to commission one new public artwork (of any art form) that takes place on the West Midlands Metro line and explores how an evolving regional social transport network has impacted on the lives and experiences of people and communities. We are particularly interested to see projects that utilise digital technology and the city/region's 5G testbed capability.

The commission will be presented as part of the Commonwealth Games Cultural Festival.

The commissioned work

- will be ambitious and artistically-led
- will draw on stories of Birmingham and the West Midlands
- will enable people to discover and learn about social transport heritage
- is likely to use 5G or digital technology
- will be a temporary public artwork taking place on trams and/or at tram stations
- should encourage local people to use the West Midlands Metro

Supporting Organisations

The commissioned artists and/or organisation(s) will work closely with Transport for West Midlands and West Midlands Metro to develop their project.

They will also be supported by Black Country Living Museum who will work with them to draw inspiration from their collections.

Brief 3: BLACK ART

The Black Art Movement in the West Midlands

One commission of £50,000

Working with Coventry University, Wolverhampton School of Art, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Culture Coventry (The Herbert) and Coventry Biennial

Audiences: minimum audience of 10,000 people

2022 marks 40 years since the founding of the BLK Art Group by Keith Piper, Eddie Chambers, Marlene Smith and Donald Rodney, a group of highly influential conceptual and installation artists, painters and sculptors based in the West Midlands. Donald Rodney died in 1998; Keith Piper, Eddie Chambers and Marlene Smith are practising artists to this day. Examples of their work are held in significant national collections, including the Tate and the Arts Council Collection.

From the outset, the BLK Art Group's work was political and critical of race, class and gender relations in the UK and institutional racism in the art world, paving the way for British Black art as we now know it. Their work frequently used art as activism, challenging oppression and injustice, giving voice to a generation whose lived experiences often went unnoticed and undocumented.

Keith Piper and Eddie Chambers met on their art foundation course in Coventry in the late 70s and the exhibition Black Art Group took place in 1981 at the Wolverhampton Art Gallery. In October 1982 a group of black art students hosted The First National Convention of Black Art at Wolverhampton Polytechnic. Their purpose was to discuss 'the form, function and future of black art'.

In early 2022, British Art Show 9 comes to Wolverhampton, with a curatorial focus on living in the UK today and 'living with difference'.

The Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee (OC) wishes to commission a new public artwork that draws on the region's key role in the development of black art in the UK over the last 40 years, and explores the relationship between contemporary art and activism. We are looking for the resulting artwork to open up or recontextualise the living heritage of the British black art movement to brand new audiences. The commissioned work should be sited in Coventry and Wolverhampton.

The commission/s will be presented as part of the Commonwealth Games' Cultural Festival.

We are particularly interested to receive proposals from early to mid-career artists of a social identity underrepresented in public art. These points are an effort to promote inclusion, rather than 'eligibility' criteria. We are conscious of the intersectionality of social identity, and of our responsibility to promote and establish equitable working and artistic relationships.

As with all cultural festival commissions, we encourage proposals to respond to the brief and the context of the festival through the curatorial lines, taking any or all of these as a starting point or lens on the work.

The commissioned work

- will be ambitious and artistically-led
- should enable audiences to learn about this significant and living aspect of the region's artistic heritage
- will most likely be a temporary public artwork

Supporting Organisations

The commissioned project will be supported by Coventry University, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Coventry Biennial and Culture Coventry (The Herbert) who will work with the commissioned individual/s and/or organisations to develop, present and contextualize the work.



Supported using public funding by

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