Creative Islands, Isles of Scilly

Artist’s residency brief – energy, sustainability and new technologies

About the Isles of Scilly

Located 28 miles off the coast of Cornwall and out into the Atlantic Ocean the archipelago of islands that are the Isles of Scilly make for a truly distinctive destination. With a small population of just over 2,000 people across the five inhabited islands, Scilly is quite unlike anywhere else in England. The islands present a spectacular land and seascape that are as unique in their beauty as they are fascinating in their culture and island life within.

Scilly’s cultural offer is both rich and varied, reflecting its long and proud history. From shipwrecks to treasure and from burial chambers to deserted villages, the history of Scilly is utterly compelling – especially as it mingles so tantalisingly with modern-day life on the islands. Scilly’s cultural heritage naturally revolves around the sea and the traditional pastimes of farming, fishing and pilot gig rowing – all of which prosper on the islands to this day - something that all Scillonian families are proud of.

Today Scilly faces real challenges. Isolated from the marketplace and limited in their options to diversify, the islands are sustained almost entirely by an economy based on tourism. Yet, since 2003 visitor numbers have declined by over 30%. Work is underway to address this, and a number of initiatives are contributing to a co-ordinated and renewed sense of direction and sustainability. These include a new Destination Management Plan as an overarching framework, and Smart Islands, an exciting and innovative programme which aims to sustainably and affordably tackle some of the Isles of Scilly’s main infrastructure and utilities issues.

Creative Islands

As the Destination Management Organisation for the Isles of Scilly, the Islands’ Partnership has been awarded a grant from Arts Council England through the Cultural Destinations programme. This is a national initiative which encourages partnership working between the cultural and visitor economy sectors. Creative Islands, our Cultural Destinations project, is informed by the opportunities and challenges that are particular to the Isles of Scilly, and is seen as a major part of securing a sustainable future for the islands. The project has three interrelated but distinct aims:

1. To use culture to reposition the Isles of Scilly in the minds of the visitor - helping to provide definition to what is a rich but hidden cultural heritage – and in turn, attract new audiences.

2. To utilise new technology and the islands’ new-found superfast and 4G connectivity as a means of bringing the islands’ culture to life.

3. To lay the cultural foundations and harness the creative dynamism that is being cultivated by Smart Islands
Creative Islands has two approaches. Firstly, we are finding new ways of celebrating and sharing Scilly’s culture, including developing and enhancing the artists, events and assets already here. Secondly, we are using culture and creativity as a way of celebrating and sharing Scilly’s distinctiveness, enabling visitors and residents to find new and imaginative ways of experiencing its special character.

**Energy, sustainability, new technologies and Scilly**

The current infrastructure challenges on the Isles of Scilly are considerable. Providing affordable and reliable electricity, drinking water, sewage treatment and waste disposal for Scilly’s remote island population is expensive and presents considerable practical challenges. This must all be achieved within the beautiful but sensitive environmental and heritage context of the islands. The Smart Islands programme is intended to sustainably and affordably tackle some of the Isles of Scilly’s main infrastructure and utilities issues, whilst providing a model for how other communities can profit from a rapid transition from being carbon intensive to having a low carbon footprint.

There is an exciting opportunity on Scilly to take a fundamentally different approach to waste, water and energy. The ambitious goals of the programme can be achieved by the introduction of a Smart Grid, generating energy from waste, sewerage and a mix of renewable energy sources; unlocking value and savings for Scilly’s residents and businesses through a locally owned Community Energy Services Company. More information about Smart Islands can be found here: www.smartislands.org/

It is this same spirit of innovation and collaboration that we wish to explore through an artist’s residency and subsequent commission.

**Artist residencies**

As part of our aim to commission new and imaginative ways of experiencing the Isles of Scilly we are launching a series of artist’s residencies with a view to developing projects with permanent legacies responding to particular aspects of Scilly life. For this residency we will invite an artist to explore the themes of energy, sustainability and new technologies within the distinctive Scilly context, and to propose creative responses to these themes. We are particularly interested in the use of digital media, and creative work which responds to and ‘makes visible’ some of the abstract data generated through the Smart Islands initiative.

There will be 2 stages to the residency:

**Stage 1 – Research and Development on the Isles of Scilly**

The selected artist will spend 7 days on the islands to get to know Scilly, explore the opportunities and challenges associated with the residency themes, make relevant local connections, and research contexts for their proposal. While primarily an opportunity for research, we expect the residency
period to include some sort of public engagement or visibility such as an artist’s talk, demonstration or workshop.

Stage 2 – Development of proposals

Following this initial residency period the artist will complete and submit an outline proposal for a permanent work, which on approval will go forward for further development and fundraising. A more detailed brief for this will be discussed with the selected artists, and we are particularly interested in commissioning work with the following principles:

- Sense of place – exploring and celebrating what is distinctive about Scilly and its past, present and future, and being sensitive to its particular environmental qualities
- Quality – presenting work, activity and experiences which are imaginative and well-executed
- Accessibility – enabling a wide range of people, residents and visitors, to easily engage with and enjoy what’s on offer
- New perspectives – presenting work, activity and experiences which invite people to discover, explore and see things differently
- Collaboration – encouraging creative partnerships and new connections

We will then work with the selected artist towards implementing the agreed proposal, including securing funding and permissions, and project delivery.

Artist specification

- Track record as a practising artist in their chosen artform demonstrated through exhibitions, commissions, projects, publications etc.
- Experience of creating work for the public realm, whether site-specific or online
- An interest in energy, sustainability, data and new technologies, and an ability to explore these issues as part of their practice
- Experience of working with and engaging communities, and an ability to communicate with a range of people
- Ability to work with a range of professionals in other disciplines in order to successfully complete projects and commissions
- Ability to manage budgets and work to deadlines

Timescales

We anticipate the week’s residency taking place in September 2019 with exact dates to be agreed with the selected artist. We would like a completed outline proposal by the end of October in order to start the fundraising process.
Fees

We are able to offer a fee of £2,500 to cover the week’s residency (including any engagement activities) and completion of an outline proposal.

In addition we will pay for return travel costs to the Isles of Scilly, accommodation and per diems for the duration of the residency.

The fees and budget for the completed proposal will be agreed as part of the fundraising process following the residency.

How to apply

Artists wishing to be considered for this residency should express their interest by submitting a CV, 6-8 images of relevant previous work (either as jpegs or with website links), and a covering letter indicating how they meet the above artist specification, and outlining their experience relevant to the aims of this project.

Expressions of interest should be submitted by 5pm on Friday 12th July to enquiries@islandspartnership.co.uk (FAO Tammy Bedford). For an informal discussion or further information please ring Tammy Bedford on 07721 844548.