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Avon Riversides 2100: Creative engagement and art commission

Connecting riverside communities through creative engagement and art

Total commission value: £22,500 (inclusive of all fees, expenses, and materials)

Four individual commissions at ~£5,000 each

Deadline for Expressions of Interest: 5th May 2026

Interviews (if required): 15th May 2026

Commission start date: w/c 18th May 2026

Bristol City Council are looking to appoint 4 artists, artist collectives, creative practitioners or organisations to devise and manage a creative engagement process with local citizens, communities, and stakeholders to support the Avon Riversides team by giving communities a meaningful voice in shaping the future riverside environment.

The creative engagement commissions will have a focus on reaching less-heard-from groups. The aim is to enable alternative, more accessible routes into the engagement process, and offer different creative ways for people to share their ideas and perspectives beyond the more traditional public engagement activities.

All four commissions will form part of a wider engagement programme being undertaken to explain the Avon Riversides flood defence scheme and to hear from citizens about what they like about the riverside and what they'd like it to be like in future to help inform the next exciting stages of project design.

1. Background:

Bristol City Council is working with the Environment Agency and the West of England Combined Authority on a long-term project, Avon Riversides 2100

(AR2100), to better protect homes and businesses from flooding along the River Avon. Once complete, it will safeguard Bristol and neighbouring communities from increased tidal and fluvial (river) flood risk up to the year 2100 and beyond.

Avon Riversides 2100 is more than a flood defence scheme. It presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape Bristol's relationship with the river by creating new public realm, improving connections between communities, and enhancing habitats along the Avon so that people and nature can thrive together.

Avon Riversides 2100 has entered a new exciting phase of the project – the design phase. This phase will take us up to 2031 and include the development of a landscape vision, conceptual and detailed designs, as well as an application for consent to construct the scheme. During this phase, we are looking to gather the ideas and perspectives from communities living in the areas affected by the project to inform the landscape vision and emerging conceptual designs. We are particularly interested to hear from people who are less represented in decision-making or less likely to engage in more formal engagement and consultation activities.

These commissions will feed into the landscape vision document which will be consulted upon in a public consultation in Autumn 2026 and finalised in Spring 2027. The project will then move into detailed design and consenting up to 2031. Construction of the defences is expected to start from late 2031.

More information about the project is available online www.avonriverside.co.uk and [here](#). Please refer to the '[Outline Business Case](#)' report and the '[Preferred Options](#)' report for further details.

Please note this commission forms part of a broader programme of public engagement over the spring/summer. See Appendix 1 for further details.

2. Purpose of the Commissions

The purpose of the creative commissions is to give communities affected by the proposed flood defences along the River Avon a meaningful voice in shaping the future riverside environment. It will also help to raise awareness of the flood risk and the AR2100 project ahead of the first public consultation in Autumn 2026.

The commission should:

- Engage communities - particularly young people and other underrepresented people - that are impacted by flooding along the River

Avon and/or the proposed flood defence proposals, as well as those who are interested in the future of the riverside/flood defence proposals.

- Capture the perspectives, opinions, experiences, memories, and stories of the above mentioned community groups about the river/riverside.
- Connect affected riverside communities that are impacted by flooding along the River Avon and the flood defence proposals – creating a coherent narrative that ties the affected riverside communities together, where possible.
- Produce creative outputs that can be used in and influence the landscape vision document, as well as to generate publicity, visibility, and engagement with the project among local communities and the wider public.
- Build awareness, trust and conversation with participating communities.

3. Objectives

The commissioned artist(s)/creative practitioner(s) will:

Facilitate creative engagement

- Design and deliver an inclusive, creative engagement process across riverside communities affected by flood risk and the proposed flood defences.
- Ensure meaningful involvement of a wide range of community groups, but particularly those who are less represented in decision-making or less likely to participate in more traditional consultation activities, for example:
 - Children and young people
 - People with disabilities
 - Refugees and asylum seekers (including those who may have experienced flooding outside of the UK)
 - People from lower socio-economic backgrounds
 - Older residents
- Facilitate creative engagement activities that allow people to explore their:
 - lived experiences of flooding
 - connection with the river and use of the riverside
 - hopes, concerns, and aspirations regarding future changes to the riverside environment.

Produce creative outputs

Produce engaging creative outputs that:

- Amplify community voices in relation to flooding and riverside changes.
- Are suitable for using in and informing the project's landscape vision, as well as for public sharing, media coverage, and social promotion.

Outputs could include (but are not limited to):

- A short film or series of micro-films
- A collection of high-quality photographs
- A digital or printed creative output e.g. photo storybook, zine etc
- Social media content packages
- Audio stories or soundscapes
- Creative walks and trails
- A public art intervention, installation, exhibition or creative event to attract both community and press interest
- Explore opportunities to create a legacy resource, e.g.:
 - a digital archive
 - a community-owned photo/storybook
 - a durable/reuseable exhibit for community spaces
 - co-created artworks that can be displayed in communities

4. Commission requirements:

Engagement process

The artist(s)/creative(s) will:

- Develop and deliver a minimum of 4-5 creative engagement sessions per commission that are community-focussed, creative, fun, accessible, and culturally appropriate.
- Work collaboratively with Council officers, community champions, local groups and other commissioned artists/creatives
- Reach and involve a diverse group of people, particularly those traditionally underrepresented in formal engagement and consultation activities and especially young people.
- Use methods that enable sharing of perspectives, opinions, stories and experiences e.g. walking interviews, workshops, mobile studio, pop-up activities, creative making sessions, or digital submissions.
- Deliver a tangible community focussed or codesigned creative output that also offers a creative legacy component.

Proposals can be either one of the following two categories:

- **'Roaming Commission*'**: Artist(s) to design and deliver creative pop-up activity throughout affected riverside communities and/or alongside Avon Riversides 2100 engagement events. The commission

will provide an alternative, creative way for people to engage with the project and share their thoughts and ideas.

- **'Place-based'**: Artist(s) 'in residence' in a set of riverside location(s) based on the geographic clusters outlined below to work with communities, groups and networks in the area, as well as convening publicised opportunities for people to drop in and get involved in creative engagement activities and share their thoughts and ideas on the Avon Riversides 2100 project.

***All commissions** will be expected to engage and connect children and young people, people with disabilities, refugees & asylum seekers, older residents, or those from lower social economic backgrounds with Avon Riversides 2100 flood defence programme and help set out their future aspirations for Bristol's relationship with the River Avon.

Creative engagement activity should be delivered across one or more of the following clusters of riverside communities impacted by Avon Riversides 2100:

- Cluster 1: Pill, Shirehampton and Sea Mills
- Cluster 2: Hotwells, Spike Island and Ashton Meadows / Bower Ashton
- Cluster 3: Redcliffe, St. Philip's Marsh, Feeder Road and Netham Lock
- Cluster 4: Crew's Hole and St. Annes

Outputs & deliverables

For each commission the artist(s)/creative(s) must deliver:

- a) A minimum of 4-5 creative engagement sessions
- b) A final creative output (or suite of outputs) that can be used by the Avon Riversides 2100 team to inform the project's vision document and influence the designs of the flood defences. This output should also be suitable for use and sharing via:
 - a. media and PR
 - b. digital and social media
 - c. community events
 - d. other public engagement and consultation activities
- c) A short narrative report summarising:
 - a. engagement activity undertaken
 - b. groups reached / involved

- c. key themes, viewpoints and recommendations that emerged from the engagement to inform the landscape vision document and concept designs
- d) All assets produced must:
 - a. be rights-cleared content for Council use
 - b. have captioned versions of digital media (where applicable)
- e) A legacy component (physical or digital) that can remain with the participating communities or be used during future phases of the project.

5. Budget:

Total available budget: £22,500* made up of:

- 4 commissions of £5,000 each
- Bristol City Council will hold a further £2,500 to support with production of final creative legacy components.

The commission budget of £5000 per commission is inclusive of:

- Artist/creative fees
- All materials
- Event/workshop costs
- Travel and expenses
- Production costs
- Licensing/permissions
- Final outputs

A proposed budget breakdown will be required as part of your EOI proposal.

6. Timeline

10am Tuesday 5 May	Deadline for submissions
Friday 15 May	Date for interviews if needed *please hold the date* - potential interviewees will be notified on Wednesday 13 May.
w/c 18 May	Commission awarded / creatives engaged
May - June	Scoping, research & planning, marketing activities
June - early August	Delivery of engagement activities
July - August	Development and delivery of creative outputs

7. Eligibility, required skills and experience

The commissioned artist(s)/creative(s) should be based in Bristol or the surrounding area, or have a strong connection to the area and be able to demonstrate:

- Experience of working creatively with communities, young people and underrepresented groups to gather their viewpoints, perspectives and experiences.
- Strong storytelling or documentary skills (film, photography, audio, or mixed media).
- Understanding of inclusive practice and co-creation.
- Understanding of, or passion for, the River Avon and/or riverside environment in Bristol.
- Community connections or networks in the cluster(s) you are proposing to work with.
- Experience creating work that achieves public engagement, visibility, PR or media interest.
- Ability to work within a given timeline and budget.

8. Council support

The artist(s) will be primarily supported by the council's Arts Development Team, working with the Avon Riversides 2100 team who will provide:

- Background information on the flood risk, the project and riverside areas.
- Introductions to community partners, other commissioned artists and local groups, as needed.
- Support with event permissions, and promotion.
- Guidance on required channels, formats, and messaging.
- Support with press releases and social media on Bristol City Council channels

9. Evaluation and success measures

Success will be measured by:

- Number and diversity of participants engaged.
- Quality and reach of creative outputs.
- Contribution to public awareness and understanding of the flood risk and AR2100.
- Positive feedback from communities involved.
- Strength and relevance of the legacy element.

Expression of Interest – what to include:

Your Expression of Interest should include:

- Your name/organisation name, address & postcode, lead contact details, and preferred pronoun.
- Whether your proposal is roaming or geographic and your preference of cluster/s.
- A statement (2 A4 pages maximum) outlining your suitability for this work including:
 - How you feel your work and approach suits the commission
 - Short description of your creative engagement proposal & proposed creative output/s.
 - Examples of engaging creatively with underrepresented communities and other skills, experience, and attributes you/your collective/organisation bring to the project
 - Your connection to: the areas and communities you propose working with; Bristol and/or the River Avon / riverside
 - An example of strong community engagement and co-design or co-creation you have led that involved collaborating with young people and/or underrepresented people and groups
- An outline potential budget to include a breakdown of artist fees and number of person days you would allocate to the project
- Confirmation you can deliver the project within the timeframe and a timeline demonstrating how you will manage the tight timescale.
- Images of relevant previous projects / website links
- A referee who can talk about a commission you have undertaken in the public realm with a strong community focus.

Please submit your EOI to artsdevelopment@bristol.gov.uk by 10am Tuesday 5 May.

If you are successful, we will need:

- Public Liability Insurance (cover up to £5 million)
- Confirmation of which of the following baseline documents you currently have in place. **Some baseline documents may be less relevant to your project.**

Baseline documents:

- Risk assessments for all aspects of your project delivery

- Adult safeguarding policy
- Child safeguarding policy
- Valid DBS for all staff working with children and young people
- Volunteer policy (if volunteers are involved)
- Data protection policy
- Equality & diversity policy
- Health and Safety policy

Selection criteria:

- Experience of working creatively with communities, particularly with young people and underrepresented groups and creatively expressing/translating their viewpoints, perspectives and experiences into tangible, useable outputs for decision-makers.
- Demonstrable socially engaged, inclusive and co-creation practice
- High quality collaboratively produced creative outputs and strong storytelling or documentary skills (film, photography, audio, or mixed media).
- Experience creating work that achieves public engagement, visibility, PR and media interest.
- Demonstrable understanding of, or passion for the River Avon and/or riverside environment in Bristol
- Connection to or networks in the community cluster(s) you are proposing working with.
- Ability to work within the timeline and budget.

The highest scoring submissions will be reviewed by an internal BCC panel and commissions awarded to achieve a balance of:

- **breadth of community/audience focussed engagement**
- **coverage of geographical clusters**
- **type of creative outputs**

***It may be necessary to hold interviews in order to make the final decision, these will be held on Friday 15th May – please keep this date free. We intend notifying potential interviewees on Wednesday 13 May.**

Score	0	1	2	3
Rationale	Unacceptable - not been answered or the answer raises serious doubts.	Partially answered but reservations remain about the clarity / robustness / credibility of the answer.	Acceptable - answered to a satisfactory standard.	Excellent - fully answered and exceeds satisfactory standards.

Further details

If you have any questions about the commission or EOI process, please contact: artsdevelopment@bristol.gov.uk

For questions about the Avon Riversides 2100 project, please contact: avonriversides@bristol.gov.uk

Appendix 1

Other public engagement activities planned for spring/summer 2026:

- **AR2100 will attend community events** from Pill/Shirehampton through to St. Anne's including, for example, summer fairs and markets, community group AGMs, community-led river walks, repair cafes, Bristol Harbour Fest etc.
- **Monthly public walkabouts:** running from May to September, these walks will offer the public an opportunity to walk each stretch of the proposed flood defences to share their views about the future of the riverside in each area.
- **School creative workshops:** one-off workshops, offered to primary schools in each of the project areas, to gather the ideas and viewpoints of young children (likely year 4s) to inform the vision and emerging designs.
- **Short online/paper survey:** to understand how the public currently use the riverside, what they like, don't like and what they would like it to look like in future.
- **Hello Lamp Post:** an online chat service offering the public the opportunity to take part in an ai-generated conversation about the flood risk along the Avon and the project, as well as give their ideas and perspectives about the future of the riverside.