

HELIX ARTS.

The People's Tree

Information Sheet

Helix Arts are working in collaboration with [George King Architects](#) to deliver The [People's Tree](#). This is a [National Trust commission](#), following a public vote and judging panel of sector experts.

The People's Tree was chosen from six shortlisted proposals. It combines public participation, sound, architecture and storytelling to respond to the loss of the much-loved Sycamore Gap tree.

The tree stood in a dip along Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland for more than 100 years before it was illegally felled in September 2023. Its loss hit people far beyond the North East, and the National Trust wanted whatever came next to reflect the widespread feelings the feeling evoked.

Purpose of the project.

Rather than centring on a single memorial, The People's Tree aims to reimagine legacy as something shared and living, with a **UK-wide participatory programme** where people will be invited to record reflections on their own relationships with trees and nature – to **Pause, Listen and Reconnect**.

The **key aims** of The People's Tree **community engagement** work are to:

- celebrate and empower local communities
- reach people facing barriers to nature and heritage
- use art as a tool for connection and storytelling

Voice of the people

The memory of the tree is also held by people. Working with communities along Hadrian's Wall, we will co-create artworks inspired by themes of the tree, seeds, hope and nature using wood from the tree itself.

During this making process, memories, and stories connected to the tree and landscape will be shared, recorded as digital sound files and stored on speakers hidden within the seed forms.

Voice of the tree

Within its tree rings, the Sycamore Gap tree holds its own memory, a physical record of time, weather, growth, and place. Working with sound artists, we will reveal the tree's story by translating these rings into sound, allowing the tree itself to be heard.

Resembling a series of spinning wooden records on a turntable, the resulting abstract soundscape becomes a unique auditory portrait of the tree and its life in the landscape.

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Telling the story

These stories, in the form of the rings and community artworks, will be shared in a series of immersive, multi-sensory exhibitions across the country that tell the tale whilst inviting new voices to contribute.

The project concludes with a permanent legacy, a sound sculpture in a location to be decided along Hadrian's wall becomes a place of arrival and departure. Visitors gather to reflect and hear the voice of the tree and the people before continuing their journey into the landscape, to visit the gap and create new stories.

What we will do:

- Work with George King Architects to produce a permanent sound sculpture;
- We will work with 10 communities across the 80 mile stretch of the wall in a series of creative workshops; public and closed session
- We will work with 10 schools across North-East and Cumbria
- We will host a youth residential
- We will hold a national touring exhibition in 4 locations across the UK
- Host a digital story repository for people around the world to record and share their nature and sycamore gap experiences with us and others
- Provide opportunities for touching and connecting with the physical tree

Key contact:

Sarah Jones

Creative Producer

0191 380 2971 Extension 005

sarah.jones@helixarts.com

General number and Whatsapp 0191 241 4931