The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

The Peoples Tree is commissioned by the National Trust, following a public vote and judging. Helix Arts are working in collaboration with George King Architects. Find out more about the commission and our plans for the project.

The storycatcher (*who might be from any creative background)* will **plan and facilitate a series of story capturing sessions** in schools and/or community settings as part of 'The People's Tree' engagement programme commissioned by The National Trust.

The sessions could include walks in nature, attendance at public and closed making workshops and visits to local community groups and schools.

The sessions will provide space for members of the public, community groups and school pupils to **share stories of Sycamore Gap** and themes of grief, hope, nature and connection, as well as capture found sound in nature.

The captured stories, spoken word and found sound will be archived and form part of a soundscape commission and public artwork. People can also submit digitally to a web repository.

Aims

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

Artist brief

The **storycatcher** might be a storyteller, musician, writer, dramaturg or digital artist.

We want people who are passionate about Sycamore Gap and its legacy. You will be pivotal in sharing what The People's Tree means to people across the world! You will be **encouraging people to share their stories** in different ways; open, semi-structured, listening in etc.

The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

Artists will:

- Plan inclusive and engaging workshops for members of the public, community groups and/or school pupils
- Facilitate a minimum of 20 half day workshops in diverse community settings
- Structure a set of prompts as a guide reflecting the aims of the project and representing the strands of the project (Reference: The People's Tree Information Sheet)
- Co-produce high quality creative outputs with diverse groups of people
- Record spoken word responses by participants and found sound in nature
- Capture, edit and store records efficiently
- Respond to the project themes in inspiring and creative ways
- Work as part of a creative project team
- Work alongside Helix Arts to collect the required monitoring data for participants
- Attend regular review meetings with Helix Arts on progress of workshops/artwork as agreed with Creative Producer
- Work closely with partners to review and reflect
- Provide high quality evidence of the process and outcomes

The artist will be able to demonstrate the following skills and experience:

- Strong experience in grassroots community engagement and/or schools engagement
- Ability to lead engaging storycatching workshops and/or sessions that are of the highest quality
- Proven track record of high quality artistic output
- Excellent ability to engage and co-produce work with a wide range of people
- Passion for creativity, nature, heritage and communities
- Excellent communication skills
- Good knowledge of the North East and/or Cumbria
- Ability to work successfully both independently and as part of a project team
- Ability to monitor and review project plans and develop them as the project progresses
- Ability to work to and meet tight deadlines
- Commitment to reflective practice

The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

Fees
Freelance, based on £175 per half day inclusive of expenses and VAT.

A materials budget and recording equipment will be provided, as well as access to the Sycamore Gap wood as appropriate to the role.

Minimum of 20 half days delivery to be worked between October 2026 and March 2027. Dates will be agreed in advance with the Creative Producer. See indicative timetable below.

The successful applicant will be subject to the Enhanced DBS, must hold or obtain public liability insurance for a minimum of £5 million, and ensure equipment is insured against loss or damages from fire, theft and other usual risks for the duration of the contract.

The successful applicant must have the ability to travel across the country for workshops which will include hard to reach rural areas.

Please refer to application, selection and timeline details.

Planned timetable

August - September 2026	Artist recruitment and onboarding
September - October 2026	Up to 1 full day of preparation
October - December 2026	Workshop delivery in community settings and/or schools - between 10 and 30 half day sessions
December 2026 - March 2027	Post-production of recordings - up to 2 full days
April - September 2027	Public exhibition of artworks from the project
September 2027	Public artwork and sculpture launch

The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

Key contact
Sarah Jones
Creative Producer

0191 380 2971 Extension 005
sarah.jones@helixarts.com

General number and Whatsapp 0191 241 4931

Staff/Volunteers
Workshops with communities will be supported by volunteers and Helix Arts staff where possible.

Through partnership working with community organisations, further support in workshops will be provided by the individual sites.

Workshops with schools will be supported by school staff.

Some workshops will be in collaboration with a maker/craftsperson leading artwork creation.

Participants
Community Participants - We will work with a range of participants from various sectors and backgrounds. Context and information will be provided upon agreement of delivery timetable. We anticipate 10-20 participants at each workshop.

School Participants - Ahead of delivery in each school, information will be provided about the number of students, ages and access needs. We anticipate 30 students at each workshop.

The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

Monitoring
Prior to sessions, all plans should be sent to the Creative Producer.

The artist will be required to take a register of attendees at each workshop. Templates will be provided to complete this. This must be reported to the Creative Producer after each workshop.

The artist is expected to send a brief report via email or voice note to the Creative Producer after each workshop.

The artist will be required to complete three Artist Diaries (at the start, middle and end of the project) documenting the progress of workshops and reflections on delivery. The diaries should include:

- Summary of the activities that took place
- Quotes or key moments from participants
- Reflection upon your own practice

A template will be provided with prompts, however other formats are welcome if preferred e.g voice note.

The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

Project Context and Information
Helix Arts and George King Architects have been commissioned by National Trust to produce *'The People's Tree',* an ambitious collaborative project working with communities, rooted in sharing stories, and enabling people from near and far to take part. Permanent and temporary artworks will whisper words, memories and sounds about the Sycamore Gap tree - a tree that lives on in the heart of Britain.

From September 2026, hundreds of people of all ages and different backgrounds will take part in inclusive workshops with local artists in communities and schools along the length of Hadrian's Wall. They will help create artworks, share and record stories, and go on walks to record nature's sounds.

Seed pods created during the workshops will become sound vessels in interactive exhibitions across Britain, with Sycamore Gap tree rings acting as "records" of the tree's life.

These elements will bring to life a soundtrack that tells stories and exchanges memories.

A permanent sound sculpture will be installed along Hadrian's wall - a large section of the tree at its heart - protected for eternity. Its sounds and stories will mirror those created in the workshops and shared in the touring exhibition.

The permanent and touring artworks will also invite people to explore the stories, memories and sounds of the tree; and add to them. A website will collect and share stories from people around the globe.

This project will create lasting legacies: the tree's remains preserved close to the place it called home; a living archive of stories, memories and sounds growing and seeding in people's hearts and minds; artworks and stories shared with schools across Britain.

The project will empower people to tell their stories, reflect, remember, be inspired by each other, be amazed by nature, and to share what it means to be human.

The People's Tree Storycatcher Brief

Our Commitments

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Helix Arts is committed to cultural equity, diversity and inclusion. We have detailed policies to support our commitments and we oppose discrimination of any sort. Where our approaches or processes may pose a barrier for you, we welcome different ways for you to connect with us or apply for opportunities. We are constantly learning and improving our policy and practices, so please let us know how we may need to adapt to your needs.

Please see our Helix Arts Access Statement.

Safer recruitment

Helix Arts is committed to providing a safe environment for all those working with us, visiting our projects and participating in our programmes. Safe recruitment of all those who work for us is an important part of fulfilling this commitment.

Safeguarding

The successful applicant must adhere to our Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Procedure. You must have a current DBS upon application.

The documents below summarise the key points about safeguarding when working or volunteering with Helix Arts. They **do not replace** the Safeguarding Policy or the Safeguarding Procedures which should be read to find out more information.

The documents can also be shared via links to documents on our website. The links are:
Regular size Safeguarding overview
Large print Safeguarding overview

Upon contract you will have read the policy and procedure, **you must complete our Safeguarding Questionnaire** prior to commencing work.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Stephen Pritchard stephen.pritchard@helixarts.com.

The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

Helix Arts
Helix Arts specialises in the development of projects and initiatives exploring the role and potential of the arts in a social context.

Long-term partnerships, particularly with the public and voluntary sectors enable Helix to produce projects designed to engender broad participation, collaboration and sustainability. Established in 1983, Helix Arts has charitable status and is revenue funded by Arts Council England, North East.

Helix Arts works with artists, in partnership with public and voluntary sector organisations, to create opportunities for people to participate in high quality arts activity.

Our Vision is based on our belief that participation in creative activity is fundamental to the well-being of individuals and communities and therefore should be accessible to all.

Our Mission is to increase equality of opportunity for people to participate in the arts and our focus is on those who currently have least opportunity including: children and young people at risk; unemployed adults and employed people on low incomes; people living in deprived neighbourhoods; those with special educational needs; and people with poor health, particularly the elderly. We work across a range of art form areas including visual arts, film-making, creative writing, graphic design, animation, street dance, music, DJing and MCing, photography, drama and textiles.

The People's Tree is one of our flagship projects which aligns to our values and ambitions to support communities who may be less heard and have barriers in their way to engagement, along with a vision to connect to communities and audiences who may not have the same opportunities for this type of work. We are also passionate about everyday creativity, connection and change which this project will achieve!

www.helixarts.com

The People's Tree
Storycatcher Brief

George King Architects

George King Architects is a London based design studio that works within the disciplines of architecture, art and landscape. Shaped by a unique creative partnership between codirectors George King and Catherine Booth, their respective backgrounds in architecture and psychology provide a distinctive approach to their work that is rooted in place and community. This dual perspective allows them to approach each project not just as designers, but as listeners and facilitators. They specialise in co-creation, crafting site-specific works that are embedded in their environment and shaped by the people who inhabit them. Each project is a process of dialogue and transformation, resulting in artworks that feel local, meaningful and emotionally resonant.

They believe every project should reflect the distinct qualities of its site, drawing inspiration from the natural landscape, the built environment, and the cultural narratives of its history, people and stories. By immersing ourselves in local context, we create designs that are not only visually striking but also strengthen identity and foster a sense of belonging.

GKA's work has received both national and international recognition. In 2023, their Sheffield Covid Memorial won the Sheffield Design Award for Public Art, and in 2024 Re-green North Kensington won the New London Award for Public Space. Their memorial to the Sousse and Bardo terror attacks received two BALI National Landscape Awards and was featured in Phaidon's In Memory Of: Designing Contemporary Memorials. Their work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, the Detroit Design Festival, and Sculpture by the Sea in Sydney. It has been featured in publications such as Wallpaper, The Architects' Journal, Dezeen, and in broader media including The Sunday Times, The Huffington Post and the BBC.

www.georgekingarchitects.com

The People's Tree Storycatcher Brief

The National Trust

The National Trust is Europe's largest conservation charity, caring for nature, beauty and history for everyone to enjoy. Founded in 1895 by Octavia Hill, Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, the organisation was established to protect historic and natural places and make them accessible to all. More than 125 years later, that original mission remains at the heart of its work.

Working with millions of members, volunteers, staff, donors, communities and partners, the National Trust protects and cares for some of the UK's most treasured landscapes, coastlines, historic buildings, gardens and collections. Its work extends across more than 890 miles of coastline, over 250,000 hectares of land, more than 500 historic houses, castles, parks and gardens, and nearly one million works of art.

The National Trust believes that access to nature, beauty and culture is vital for people's wellbeing and sense of connection. Through conservation, restoration and public engagement, it works to safeguard places and stories that matter, while creating opportunities for people to connect with nature, heritage and each other.

Guided by its *People and Nature Thriving* strategy, the National Trust has set three long-term ambitions for 2050:

- Restore nature, not only on National Trust land but beyond its boundaries.
- Help end unequal access to nature, beauty and history.
- Inspire millions more people to care for and take action on behalf of nature and heritage.

Working alongside communities and partners across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the National Trust seeks to ensure that nature, beauty and history can be enjoyed and cared for by current and future generations, for everyone, for ever.

https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us