



## THE NATIONAL FOREST

### **Caroline Scothern Award II**

The National Forest is commissioning an arts project for 2026 themed around Culture and Cycling. The proposed idea should bring together cycling, nature and creativity and be developed for and shared within the Heart of the National Forest.

#### **Heart of the National Forest**

The Heart of the National Forest covers around 10-square miles between the settlements of Swadlincote, Ashby-de-la Zouch and Measham. Located in central England and surrounded by some of the largest cities in the Midlands, the area has seen great change over the last 30 years through the creation of the National Forest.

What was once a place marked by coal and clay extraction has been restored to become a newly-forested landscape. The Heart of the National Forest has undergone an incredible transformation, evolving from a landscape with just 2% forest cover to one where trees now cover 40% of the area. This striking change underscores the power of reforestation and the positive impact trees can have on our environment and communities.

Key venues and locations in the Heart of the National Forest include Conkers Discovery Centre, Albert Village Lake, Moira Furnace Museum and Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre. Each of these are connected with multi-use pathways.

The Heart of the National Forest Vision was launched in 2024 outlining Investment Priorities and Investment Sites to further to establish the area as a destination founded on sustainability, nature and wellbeing. The Vision is available from <https://bit.ly/HOTFVISION> and maps of the area can be found at the end of this brief.

#### **Caroline Scothern Award**

This award was launched in 2023, to celebrate the life and memory of Caroline Scothern who championed outdoor learning in the National Forest with passion, creativity and care.

For the first award the National Forest commissioned story specialists Adverse Camber to deliver a creative learning project based at Oversetts Community Woodland, working with children from a local Primary School to focus on wildlife, trees and the imagination.

<http://www.adversecamber.org/oversetts>

## **Culture & Cycling**

This second commission takes inspiration from Caroline's love of cycling and the fact that before joining the National Forest Company she worked at Hicks Lodge Cycle Centre.

Therefore, we are inviting proposals which bring together the areas of creativity, cycling and the natural world. This can be delivered through any artform, potentially incorporating performance, sound, visual arts, creative writing or any other discipline that you would use to creatively activate the landscape through pedalling!

The project should help to highlight the wellbeing benefits of being active outdoors, whilst demonstrating how creativity can offer new perspectives and experiences to be explored within the landscape.

You might have an idea for a performance which travels to different locations via bicycles, want to set up a mobile studio to deliver workshops in different settings or create an event which celebrates place-based pedal power.

### **Aims of the commission are to:**

- Celebrate nature and the outdoors through creativity and cycling.
- Provide opportunities that demonstrate the benefits that cycling can have on our physical and mental wellbeing.
- Bring people together to connect with each other and the natural world.
- Showcase the opportunities for cycling across the Heart of the Forest.

### **Criteria:**

- This opportunity is open to Midlands based artists and creative practitioners.
- Applicants should be able to demonstrate how they would take a sustainable, low carbon approach to the commission and will be asked to record carbon data connected with the project.
- Proposals should consider accessibility throughout and demonstrate ways of ensuring that activity is as inclusive as possible.

## **Budget & Payments**

Up to £5000 is available for the commission, to include all fees, materials, production costs and travel. A proposed budget is required as part of the application.

50% of the budget will be available at the beginning to cover costs within Phase 1, up until 31 March. A further 40% will be available for Phase 2 from 1 April (exact dates agreed as part of contracting process and the remaining 10% paid on completion of the project.

Evidence of all expenditure associated with the commission will be required i.e. a receipt or invoice for each item should be submitted with invoices. A project report summarising the core activity, achievements and challenges should also be submitted with the final invoice.

## Personal Access Costs

If you, or any project collaborators, experience barriers because you identify as:

- D/deaf or Disabled
- neurodivergent
- experience learning difficulties
- having a mental health condition
- having a long term health condition

there may be extra costs relating to your access needs which can be included in addition to the £5000 maximum commission budget. For example, this might include a BSL interpreter, additional admin support or personal assistance in the delivery of your project.

Personal access costs can be covered to a maximum of £1000 and will need evidence of the expenditure to be included with your invoice.

Costs can only be for the commission period (between your project start date and end date) and must be specific to the Culture & Cycling Commission. We are not able to cover costs for support that is unrelated to the activity or that is covered by Access to Work or other sources.

## Timings

- 11 December 2025 – Application Deadline
- 15 January 2026 – Applicants notified of outcome
- 31 January – 31 March 2026 - Stage 1, research, planning & development
- 1 April – 31 October 2026 – Stage 2, further development & sharing of the project
- By 30 November 2026 – Evaluation & reporting complete

NB completion of stage 2 is flexible and if it's more suitable to share outcomes earlier i.e. in the Spring/early Summer, then delivery can be moved forward.

Support can be provided in organising permissions, developing connections with local groups and communities, promotion and event staffing.

## **How to apply**

Applications should be made via the 'Culture & Cycling Commission application form'.

Please also send a completed 'Diversity Monitoring Form' to - [monitoring@nationalforest.org](mailto:monitoring@nationalforest.org), and title the email 'Culture & Cycling Commission'.

The deadline for applications is 5pm Thursday 11 December 2025.

If you would prefer to submit your application in another format for access reasons or require the information in an alternative format then please get in touch.

We welcome and encourage applications from those who are underrepresented in the creative and environmental sectors, including but not limited to, people from the Global Majority\*, D/deaf and disabled people and LGBTQ+ individuals.

\*Global Majority is a term that refers to people who are Black, Asian, Brown, dual-heritage, indigenous to the global south, and/or who have been racialised as 'ethnic minorities'.

For further information about the National Forest - [www.nationalforest.org](http://www.nationalforest.org)

## **Selection process**

Applications will be reviewed the week of 15 December and will be assessed against the aims and criteria outlined above.

Due to the Christmas break all applicants will be notified of the outcome by 15 January 2026.

## **Further information**

### **Jo Maker**

Arts & Creativity Manager, National Forest Company

[jmaker@nationalforest.org](mailto:jmaker@nationalforest.org)

07816 213225

# The Heart of the National Forest



