

Cair: Caithness Artists in Residence

Cair, cayr v to return to a place where you have been before

(A Scots Dictionary of Nature, Amanda Thomson 2019)

Background

Lyth Arts Centre (LAC) is the UK's most northerly mainland arts centre, located in the geographical heart of Caithness in the North Highlands. LAC strives to be a nationally and internationally recognised, industry leading small arts centre that practices radical localism and challenges conceptions about what it means to be 'rural'. Our Caithness community is at the heart of everything we do and we work across the county acting as a cultural hub for the North of Scotland.

Following the global coronavirus crisis, LAC has had to find new ways of working as our usual methods quickly came to a halt. As an organisation, we were able to quickly reformat our activity to play an important role in the community emergency response. This has mostly been around providing essential creative support and activities to promote wellbeing and positive mental health. This has enabled us to engage with local artists in new ways, and reach communities we have previously not engaged with, for example, [Say it With Flowers](#) and [Back to Space](#). Whilst this has had its challenges, it has offered us an opportunity to step-change as an organisation, which has led to the development of this project.

The Project

Cair: Caithness Artists in Residence is a brand-new community arts initiative that connects artists with distinct Caithness communities. Developed with community care at its heart, *Cair* will explore what it means to return to a place where we were before coronavirus, and where we can be now and in the future. This project will explore how LAC can work with artists and facilitate creative responses to local problems, encouraging creative cultural activism and prioritise an artist and community centric approach to recovery post-coronavirus.

Before coronavirus, in January 2020, three reports were released that identified inequalities in Caithness following a year-long project coordinated by Caithness Voluntary Group and supported by the Scottish Government's Aspiring

Communities Fund. Whilst there were many positives, these reports clearly capture the nature of deprivation in the three areas described in the reports (Wick, Thurso and Rural Caithness). Unfortunately, many of these inequalities have been worsened during the pandemic; this project examines the wider socio-economic crisis that surrounds Covid-19. LAC has identified several community partners across Caithness who all are excited about the potential of culture as a transformative opportunity across our society.

About

LAC is seeking 5 professional artists, to each work with a community, within the Caithness area for an extended period of 7 months. The community could be a geographical community but also includes social communities or groups, or a specified demographic. During this period, the artist will co-design a bespoke programme of work that will be participatory, socially engaged and collaboratively explore local themes and issues.

The residencies will be available to artists who are based in Caithness, or have a strong connection to the area or the Caithness communities they will be working with.

We are seeking proposals from professional artists who work in any art-form or medium and at any stage in their career.

Your proposal might want to explore some of the issues highlighted in the Locality Plans which you can read in the 'Useful Info' section at the end of this document.

We are not looking for fully-formed project proposals, but rather ideas that demonstrate the following;

- Flexibility and responsiveness
- Authenticity
- Importance, relevance and benefits
- Connection to the Caithness community
- Innovative ways of working (especially during coronavirus restrictions)

There are no fixed outcomes for this project and the programme of work will be developed in collaboration with the artists, the LAC team, partners and the community.

This is not a traditional 'artist residency', we use the term residency to describe the fact of *being* in a place. We anticipate the residencies will be an opportunity for artists to collaboratively explore their practice and process, rather than focus on producing specific works.

Details

The artists will work for 1.5 days a week for an initial seven-month period. All artists will receive extensive support from the LAC team including training, marketing, participant recruitment support and project management. There will be regular opportunities for the five artists to come together to share experiences and learning.

The contract will be for 42 days (approximately 1.5 days a week for 7 months) plus 8 paid training / sharing / evaluation days. We anticipate the artists will design their working patterns, in collaboration with the community they are working with.

The fee is £150 per day (total fee £7500) plus £2000 materials budget and a £500 training budget for each artist. There will also be travel expenses available. We are happy to discuss different payment schedules.

How to Apply

We are asking artists to complete a short form which asks the following the questions;

1. Who are you and what is your artistic practice?

Tell us about yourself and your work. What is your connection to Caithness? It would be useful to know here what experience you have in participatory or socially-engaged art projects (don't worry if you don't have experience).

2. What specific community or community group are you proposing to work with?

Each artist will work with a specific community. We mean 'community' in the broadest sense. This could encompass a geographical community like a particular village, town or a school, or a social community or group like a youth club, LGBTQIA+ folks, farmers or isolated older people. Please identify the community you would like to work with here.

3. Tell us about your idea

What is your idea? What themes, ideas or issues would you like to explore? Can it be innovative and responsive to coronavirus measures?

4. Why do you want to explore this idea?

Why now? Why in this way, using this form? What do you think might come out of it?

To apply, please complete the [Google Form here](#) by midday on Monday 23 November. You will need to login with a Google account. If you are unable to do this, for any reason, please email info@lytharts.org.uk and we will send the questions via email. If you require any support to make this opportunity more accessible to you then please email info@lytharts.org.uk. We welcome proposals that address accessibility issues and challenges of diversity.

If you would prefer to provide a video application (max 3 minutes), please send a link using the Google Form (we recommend uploading it to Youtube or Vimeo - let us know if there is a password).

If you have any questions or would like to speak about your application please contact charlotte@lytharts.org.uk

Key Dates:

Call out released: Friday 6th November

Deadline for applications: Midday Monday 23rd November

Shortlisting: Monday 23rd November

Informal discussions with shortlisted artists: Wednesday 25 & Thursday 26 November

Decisions Communicated: Friday 27 November

Start: Mid- December for initial training days and projects launch in January 2021

Finish: Projects finish June / July 2021

Other Useful Info

- LAC define a creative practitioner/artist as anyone who uses creativity overtly in their work – whether that is visual artists, makers, writers, performers, filmmakers, producers, designers or researchers – and invite applications from all backgrounds
- As a commissioned artist/creative practitioner you will be working directly with a selected community partner. Some examples of our existing partners include; Pulteneytown People’s Project, Thurso Youth Club, Thurso Development Trust, Caithness Community Connections (Lybster), HomeStart Caithness and Highland Council Children’s Services.
- Together, with all involved directly in the project, you will also be part of the ‘CAIR collective’ that explores the overall themes that emerge through the project through a series of training, sharing and evaluation sessions and activities co-ordinated by LAC

- LAC is committed to supporting strong local relationships with our community partners and as such preference will be given to artists that can demonstrate a local connection/ understanding of the community they are proposing to work with. If you do not have a local connection and established local relationships, we ask that you clearly demonstrate in your form how your approach to the project would address this challenge
- The national guidelines for social distancing and safe working will be observed at all times. We are encouraging creative responses, travel to and from communities at this difficult time and are imagining a combination of virtual and socially distanced delivery. We will endeavour to accommodate particular personal circumstances of practitioners and participants
- The Locality Plans discussed above, can be read here;

Thurso Locality Plan: [thurso 2019 aspiring communities .pdf](#)

Rural Locality Plan: [final report rural .pdf](#)

Wick Locality Plan:
[aspiring communities report for wick 2019 by jennifer harvey.pdf](#)