

Southampton Outdoor Sports Centre

Public Art

Artist Brief – Expression of Interest Stage a space arts



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Summary and Key Information

Intro

'a space' arts are looking to commission an artist (or artist collective) to create a new public artwork to be part of a major new redevelopment of Southampton Outdoor Sports Centre.

Fee

There is a £25,000 artist fee available for this commission, inclusive of all materials and transport. A separate Access Fund for additional access support is available if its needed.

Key Stages

> Stage 1: Expression of Interest (EOI)

Closing date: **Monday 23rd November at 12pm (midday)**

EOI is a light-touch request for information, including a written or recorded summary, initial sketches and CV only – see the full 'How to Apply: Expression of Interest' section for further details and how to apply.

> Stage 2: Proposal Development (for reference only at this point)

Four artists will be selected from the EOI stage to develop their proposals. Each artist selected to develop their proposal will receive a £500 fee. The developed proposals will then be presented to the key stakeholders who will make the final decision.

Shortlisted artists notified: **w/c Monday 7th December**

Developed Proposal deadline: **Monday 1st February**

Artist interviews with 'a space' arts team and client: **w/c Monday 1st February**

> Stage 3: Artist Commission (for reference only at this point)

The selected artist will be awarded £25,000 and be notified in February 2026 and will need to deliver a final artwork by September 2027.

Selected artists notified: **Friday, 5th February**

Artist start-up meeting: **w/c Monday 8th February**

Artwork delivery deadline: **Tuesday 31st August 2027**

Questions

If you have any questions or if you would like to discuss your individual access needs, please contact James Hunter, Outreach & Artist Communities Manager using the details below.

Main Contact

Name: James Hunter

Email address: james@spacearts.org.uk

Phone: 07824 326005

Project Overview

This public art commission is part of a major new redevelopment of Southampton Outdoor Sports Centre opening in 2027, led by Southampton City Council and Morgan Sindall, with support from Sport England, the Football Foundation, British Cycling and the UK Government. The public artwork will be located near a brand-new family and young adult area, consisting of a play park, BMX pump track, skate park and picnic area. The artwork will therefore need to respond to some key themes relating to this area (see 'Project Themes' section for more detail).

The vision for the new 'family and young adult area' is that it becomes a hub for local residents and families using the wider facilities, allowing families to spend a longer time at the centre by providing multiple activities, along with new pop-up food facilities – all in the same area.

The commissioned artwork will be one of the first things visitors will see as they approach the new family and young adult area, so our client's vision for the artwork is that it gives a feeling of arrival or transition, while also creating a sense of unity by representing the activities and communities that will be using the area. This is an opportunity to create a public artwork that is distinctive, playful and joyful.

Artistic Intention

We are now looking to engage an artist, or artist collective, to deliver this public art project and become part of the overall professional team. We would expect the artist to have some experience of public art or working to deliver projects in the public realm.

The artist will be required to meet and engage with the project team to shape the final works, along with agreeing their final locations across the site. This will require the artist to work alongside other professional services, such as the landscape designers and site contractors. The artist will be directly supported through the process by 'a space' arts who will also be the artists first point of contact throughout the process.

The intention is for either a singular artwork or a series of artworks located at the main entrance and/or across the new family and young adult area. Site areas, alongside open areas of land, that could be included are: the floor, the access road, fencing, and the buildings located within the area. The whole area is shown in "Site Location" at the end of this document.

A successful public artwork will give visitors a clear sense that they have entered the family and young adult area and unify the space. In doing so, the work will hopefully feel integrated within the site and help build the sense of an intergenerational environment. Taking into consideration current infrastructure and design is important.

Artists are able to create work onsite, but the area will be open to the public from January 2027, so this needs to be considered. Artworks can take any form, be made from any appropriate materials and we are open to all forms of artistic response as long as the proposed ideas complement the site, work within the landscaping designs and can be delivered on time and within budget.

Materials are a key consideration: the artwork will need to be safe, robust and suitable for unsupervised public locations, for example, not flammable or prone to rust. We expect a minimum of a 10-year lifespan on any artworks proposed.

Project Themes

We offer artists a series of prompt questions as starting points for inspiration with themes linked to the site's ethos, its environment and its future users of the centre. Artists do not need to respond to all the themes. However, artists can choose one or more to respond to with their artwork.

Motion

The newly developed area will consist of a play park, including swings, slides and roundabouts; a BMX pump track, which is a continuous loop of small bumps (called "rollers"); and a skate park full of ramps and slopes. Key words to think about are flow, momentum, trajectories, spins and arcs.

How does motion make us feel? How do we change when we move? What is the 'motion of life'?

Transition

Transition in the physical sense of moving from one space to another. Or, transition in life: from small child to teenager, or from starting a family to playing with your grandchildren. This is a space that provides for all stages of life.

How do we feel when we transition? How do we change? How do we mark the changes or stages of our transition? How do we know when we've arrived?

Play

Play is a universal language. Play exists in pattern, rhythm, repetition and colour. Play is exploration, play is learning, play is fun. The new family and young adult area responds to our need to play at different stages of our lives.

Why do we play? How does play unify us? What can play teach us?

Project Stages

The project stages below give headlines only and an overview to the programme. At this stage all dates are subject to change (except for the EOI deadline and site completion date) and are indicative; a detailed and confirmed programme will be available to the final selected artist.

October and November 2026 – Expressions of Interest

- Deadline for Expressions of Interest – Monday 23rd November 2026 at 12pm (midday).
- Internal review of all EOIs by client team with shortlisted artists selected for proposal development stage.

December 2026 and January 2027 – Proposal Development

- Four artists invited to Proposal Development stage and paid £500.
- Proposal Development stage (see proposal requirements below) deadline anticipated to be Monday 1st February.

January 2027 – Family and Young Adult Area opens to the public

- Major construction is due to finish in January 2027
- The area will be open to the public

February 2027- Interviews and Selection

- Artists interviews with client team w/c Monday 1st February.
- Selected artist appointed by Friday 5th February.

February and March 2027 - Community Engagement & Research (optional)

- The client has previously carried out community engagement with two local schools as part of the development process for the new family and young adult area. The results of this will be available to the selected artists at the Proposal Development stage.
- The client would ideally like selected artists to engage with, either the two schools, or the wider community, in whatever capacity is suitable for their artwork, proposal or practice. Given the project timeline and budget available it is recognised this will be light touch.
- If the artist chooses to engage with the two schools then they will be supported with outreach by a member of the client team.

February to August 2027 - Artistic Production period

- Across 2027 the selected artist will make, fabricate and produce the final works of art.
- This year long period will also include site meetings with the client team, studio visits at relevant times throughout the process, third party fabrication, site testing as required and anything needs to happen to make the work and be ready for site installation at the latest date of Tuesday 31st August.

Spring 2027 (date TBC) - Celebration Event

- There will be a public event to celebrate the opening of the new development

September/October 2027 (date TBC) - Installation

- We are aiming for a flexible installation period so integrating and installing work can be coordinated with the project team and site contractors.

How to Apply: Expression of Interest (EOI)

We appreciate the time and effort that goes into writing proposals, that most artists operate as freelancers, and that making a living as an artist is not easy. Therefore, we offer a two stage approach to lessen this burden, with an initial light-touch Expression of Interest stage, followed by a paid Proposal Development stage for shortlisted artists.

Who can apply

We encourage artists, creatives and collectives from all backgrounds, artistic disciplines and at any career stage to submit an EOI.

What to include in your EOI

For the EOI stage we would ask artists to submit:

1. Up to 500 words, or if recorded (voice note or video) up to 3 minutes, outlining:
 - Your approach to the project
 - How your proposed work communicates your chosen theme
 - What excites you about the project and what motivates you to take it on
2. Up to 4 images or sides of A4 showing:
 - Initial sketches, design ideas, or artistic expressions that convey your ideas and gives us a clear sense of your artistic intentions.

3. Your artist CV including any relevant experience and recent achievements. Please ensure you include a link to your website or professional social media platform

How to submit your EOI

All EOI's must be sent via email and please limit the overall combined size of all file to no more than 10MB. We suggest formatting your proposal as a PDF, or as an .mp3 (if sending an audio file), or .mov/.mp4 (if sending a video file).

Please put “**EOI – Southampton Outdoor Sports Centre**” in your subject line.

Applications must be sent to james@spacearts.org.uk by the **Monday 23rd November at 12pm (midday)**.

Upon receiving your EOI we will reply with acknowledgment that we have received it – **if you do not receive an acknowledgment by Monday 23rd at 11am, then we have not received your application, so please contact James to check about your application.** If you send your application after 9am on Monday 23rd, then we will try to acknowledge it before midday, but please be aware that this does not give us much time to respond if there are any issues, or for you to resend any missing applications.

Please be aware that we will not accept any late applications and that no hard copy/postal applications can be accepted.

At the EOI stage individual site meetings can not be arranged but clarification calls on any points from within this brief can be arranged with James or another member of the ‘a space’ arts team.

Online Information Session and Site Visit

An online information sessions provides an opportunity for artists to hear from the ‘a space’ arts Outreach and Artist Communities Manager, who will talk through the artist brief and be available for any questions.

The session will take place on **Wednesday 21st October at 6pm** – please use the follow link to join the session: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83578058255>

A site walk around will be on offer for those artist that are able and would want to see the area in-person. This will take place on **Thursday 22nd October at 12pm (midday)** and will take approximately 45 minutes. We will record the site walk and share the recording afterwards for those interested via our Youtube channel.

To sign-up for the site walk around then please follow this link:
<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/e/yHTE2YwaQm>

Proposal Requirements (if selected for the proposal development stage)

Up to four artists will be selected for this stage and paid a £500 proposal development fee.

Further details and a developed brief will be shared with the selected artists for the Proposal Development stage but we would expect artists to have significantly developed their ideas with proposals including; a costed budget, costed third party fabrication costs, proposed materials, a production timeline and a set of well developed designs/images that clearly and fully convey your artistic intentions.

When selecting materials at the stage please consider any future maintenance implications as a future maintenance pack will be a requirement of the final selected artist.

At the Proposal Development stage individual site visits can be arranged along with proposal development sessions facilitated by a member of the 'a space' arts team.

Fees, Budgets and Payments

Expressions of Interest (EOI): £0

- There are no fees at the EOI stage and are intentionally kept high touch.
- All EOIs will be reviewed by the project team with up to four artists shortlisted to move into the Proposal Development stage.

Proposal Development: £500

- The four shortlisted artists will all receive a £500 proposal development fee, if they are selected as the final artist or not. Further details of the proposal requirements will be released to the four shortlisted artists.

Delivery Budget: £25,000

- The project has an total delivery budget of up to £25k to cover artist fees, materials, third party fabrication costs, travel, expenses and VAT (if applicable).
- All invoices will be processed by 'a space' arts and the artist will be contacted to the organisation.
- A separate Access Fund for additional access support is available if its needed.

Artist Fees: 30-40% of Delivery Budget

- As part the developed proposal we will request a fee proposal and would expect the artists fees to be aligned to an industry standard rate, for example the Artist Union England or A-N.
- We would anticipate the artist fees being in the region of 30-40% of the total delivery budget.

Payment Schedule

- The delivery budget will be issued in phased payments aligned to the overall project timetable and based on percentages aligned to key project stages between February 2027 and September 2027, e.g. 20% on signing the agreement followed by 10% payments at agreed stages and a final 10% on installation/completion.

Access Fund

The project has a designated 'Access Fund' which is available to artists who have access needs with financial implications. However, this funding is limited and use of this budget will be agreed with shortlisted artists on an individual basis at the next stage of the application process.

Alternative Formats

This brief is also available in large format and can be provided in an audio on request. If you would benefit from a different format that is currently unavailable, please contact us

using the details below, so we can discuss your individual needs and provide appropriate support for your application.

Contact Details

All Expressions of Interest should be sent to: james@aspacearts.org.uk

Project enquiries, clarification about the project, and additional access requirements can be accommodated. Please email james@aspacearts.org.uk or call 07824 326005 – if the call can't be taken please leave a message and we will get back to you.

Appendices

1. About 'a space' arts
2. About Public Art Projects
3. Map of Area and Site Locator
4. Site Plans
5. Landscaping Plans
6. Building CGI's

1. About 'a space' arts

Established in 2000 'a space' arts is visual arts organisation and charity that supports artists, audiences and communities with an inspiring cultural programme. Our artist communities inhabit a range of spaces from converted railway arches and vacant shops to refurbished and revived historic monuments. Our work culturally reanimates forgotten spaces across Southampton and welcomes the public to explore and engage with cultural experiences. We are multi-functional visual arts organisation offering a range of cultural projects and services. Please see – aspacearts.org.uk

Our project portfolio currently consists of:

Gods House Tower (GHT) – our RIBA and Solent Quality Place award winning arts and heritage venue housed in a refurbished 700-year old scheduled ancient monument and located in Southamptons Old Town. We culturally reanimate GHT to create a dynamic and welcoming public venue with a programme of contemporary exhibitions, activities and live events. GHT also hosts a permanent exhibition 'stories behind the stones' that immerses visitors in the fascinating and little known story of the monuments history dating back to medieval times – godshousetower.org.uk

The Arches Studios – home to 27 visual artist studios the Arches offers affordable studio space and inhabits four converted Victorian railway arches. The resident artists benefit from subsidised studios, 24/7 365 access, management and mentoring; in 2025 the Arches celebrated its 20th anniversary as the longest running independent visual arts studio complex in the city – aspacearts.org.uk/arches-studios

RIPE - is an ambitious programme of exhibitions, events, residencies and professional development opportunities. Developed to retain artistic talent in the city the project is delivered in partnership with Winchester School of Art (University of Southampton) and SouthamptonSolent University to support an annual cohort of post-graduate artists. Alumni from the programme have an option to join the ZEST Collective: an independent and growing group of retained artists - ripesouthampton.org.uk

Public Art Projects - we create, commission and deliver public art projects for developers with section 106 obligations and support artists to create new and ambitious works of public art to enrich the public realm and connect with local communities - aspacearts.org.uk/public-art-projects

2. About Public Art Projects

We believe great public art can enhance places and neighbourhoods and improve the wellbeing of communities. We offer a broad definition of public art enabling this to take the form of sculptures, murals, installations, publications, performances or socially engaged events and happenings that make meaningful contributions to communities and enhance localities.

To achieve this we call on a wide range of skilled artists and practitioners, working across a range of disciplines to produce artworks which sensitively and imaginatively respond to the context, environment or history of a location.

For developers, our management service provides expert assistance and advice on delivering public artworks and meeting planning obligations as well as offering a new creative perspective and USP for their development. Our aim is to commission artworks that add to the experience of living in a community or place and increasing the public's awareness and understanding of the site's history or their sense of pride in the places they live, work or play.

When possible we work with local artists, fabricators and suppliers to support the local economy and environment. However we also believe in commissioning the right artist for the project and invite national artists to propose and make work for our local communities.

A selection of completed projects have been included in this proposal others can be seen here - aspacearts.org.uk/public-art-projects that include:

- Courtyard Constellation - aspacearts.org.uk/courtyard_constellation
- A History of Movement - aspacearts.org.uk/a-history-of-movement
- The Walls - aspacearts.org.uk/fruit-market

3. Site Location

Link to Google Maps - <https://maps.app.goo.gl/MGcGLFXTb1W7G2f28>

Site Address - Thornhill Rd, Bassett, Southampton, SO16 7AY

What3words: bland.fuzzy.hero

4. Site Plans



This site plan is specifically for the family and young adult area. There is a site plan for the entire Southampton Outdoor Sports Centre in “Supporting Documents” where the Family and Young Adult Area is the white area with a light blue outline, shown as number ‘10’.

5. Drone Footage

The link below takes you to some drone footage, which was captured in July 2026, before the site had been completed. The family and young people area can be seen from 00:09 - 00:21:

<https://www.morgansindallconstruction.com/our-projects/live-projects/southampton-outdoor-sports-centre-osc/latest-news-and-project-updates/southampton-outdoor-sports-centre--july-2026-update/>

There is more footage, taken in June 2026, that shows the family and young adult area between 01:05 - 01:21:

<https://www.morgansindallconstruction.com/our-projects/live-projects/southampton-outdoor-sports-centre-osc/latest-news-and-project-updates/southampton-outdoor-sports-centre---july-2026-update/>

More footage taken from previous drone flights can be found via the link below:

<https://www.morgansindallconstruction.com/our-projects/live-projects/southampton-outdoor-sports-centre-osc/latest-news-and-project-updates/>

6. Landscaping Plans

Please see “Supporting Documents”.

This selection of plans is intended to give an overview of the sites landscaping, such as trees, hedges and ornamental flower beds. Although the trees on the site are not formally designated with Tree Protection Orders (TPOs) they are treated as such because they are located within Council land. Any potential impact on the trees will need to be considered, and the Council’s Tree Officer should be consulted, along with consideration of the tree root protection zones, during any proposed works.

7. Building CGI’s

See the “CGI Images” folder for images of various key areas of the overall development - please note that these images are not of the family and young person area, but they do show the style of the general development.