



THE BURTON
AT BIDEFORD

OPEN CALL: WATER FEATURE COMMISSION

The Burton at Bideford is inviting proposals from South West based artists, designers or architects to create a site specific water feature or installation for our public garden as part of our community-led landscape regeneration project 'Connecting Roots and Future Hopes'.



Detail from Andy Hughes zine 'Shimmer film Machinima', Burton Environmental Commission 2024.

ABOUT US

The Burton at Bideford is an art gallery and museum based in North Devon, situated in the historic town of Bideford where craft, agriculture and maritime heritage meet at the water's edge.

Founded in 1951, we are a National Portfolio Organisation and one of the leading cultural venues in the South West, attracting over 150,000 visitors last year. With two exhibition spaces, a dedicated ceramics gallery, a museum, a commercial craft gallery, a shop, a workshop space and a café, we provide opportunities for people of all ages to access and engage with artists, collections and exhibitions.

Placing community at the heart of our activities, The Burton also offers a rich programme of outreach activities to engage those who do not have easy access to a traditional arts venue in a predominantly rural region. Located in the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, the uniqueness of place is a key part of our context and our vision for the future.

Our programme celebrates internationally renowned artists alongside nurturing local creative talent. In 2025 our exhibitions included the major solo project 'Melting Ice | Rising Tides' with Emma Stibbon RA, our annual schools exhibition presenting work by children across Torridge, a partnership with The Hepworth Wakefield to present 'Into Abstraction: Modern British Art and the Landscape', and an installation of lithographs by Spanish Catalan artist Joan Miró in collaboration with Hayward Touring.

The Burton is a North Devon Biosphere Business Partner, a registered member of the Gallery Climate Coalition (GCC), and is working towards a Carbon Literate Organisation Certification.



COMMISSION OVERVIEW

The commission should:

- provide a site specific water feature or installation that looks to the aims of the overall landscape project.
- respond to the natural environment and The Burton's location within an area of outstanding natural beauty.
- engage the public with the themes of climate change and sustainability.
- create a piece of artwork that becomes part of The Burton's continuing story.

Delivery: September 2026

Artist Fee: £5,000

Inclusive of all associated costs. To cover the research, design, production and installation of the commission.

Contract: The commissioned artist will be contracted on a freelance basis and is responsible for paying their own tax and national insurance where applicable.

Copyright: The copyright of the artwork will remain the property of the artist who will grant The Burton full use of photographic images in perpetuity without additional payment.

The Connecting Roots and Future Hopes project aims to deliver a holistic approach to the landscape design around The Burton's building, supporting biodiversity, climate change impacts, sustainability and community action.

Working with local organisations and volunteers, we will create a natural ecosystem that protects and promotes habitats, species and local ecosystems - leaving a landscape for future generations to enjoy.

The Water Feature Commission is funded as part of The Burton's Arts Council England Capital Investment Fund project 'A Sustainable Museum', that has supported the installation of solar panels, double glazed windows, and the refurbishment of our public toilets with accessible and low energy design.

Open to individuals or collectives based in the South West, this commission offers an opportunity for a variety of creative approaches to raise awareness of the challenges facing the environment and their impact on local communities.

SITE LOCATION

The Burton is located in Victoria Park, a much-loved public recreation site in the centre of Bideford adjacent to the River Torridge estuary.

The park is managed by Torridge District Council, and The Burton maintains a long-term lease for the gallery building and the immediate planting areas where the Water Commission will be sited.

Our ‘Connecting Roots and Future Hopes’ landscape plan has been created in collaboration with Lizz Dobinson of Nature’s Curators.



The chosen site for this commission is in the planned pollinator planting area of our landscape design (seen on the next page). This area sits on the right hand side of the gallery, accessed by a side gate and bordered by a public footpath.

The installation will be sited adjacent to a stained-glass window depicting the coastline and estuary presented by the Friends of The Burton Gallery in memory of James Paterson 1915-1986 designed and made by his son Robert in 1994.

Inspiration could be drawn from the site’s orientation to the sun, connection to the adjacent estuary and catchment within North Devon’s Biosphere Reserve and North Devon Coast National Landscape (formerly AONB)

The National Landscape contains a diversity of scenery, landscapes and habitats and encompasses the Hartland Heritage Coast, North Devon Heritage Coast and UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.



SPECIFICATION

Design specification

- The design should actively consider the surrounding environment and ambitions of the 'Connecting Roots and Future Hopes' project.
- We encourage designs which prioritise the use of locally-sourced, recycled and/or reused materials.
- The water feature will be installed aside our 'pollinator garden' area, so consideration might be given to the plants that will surround it.
- A water supply is located nearby and we are particularly interested in designs that ensure full circulation of water or consider rainwater harvesting.
- Designs should be relative to the scale of the site area and take into account the potential spread/spray of water in both vertical and horizontal directions (inclusion of an anemometer and/or remote switch is encouraged).
- The materials used must be durable and able to withstand strong coastal winds, salty air, heat and freezing temperatures.
- The design should be created with the intention of remaining in-situ for five years.

Site requirements and health and safety

- The water feature or installation will need to be made safe and secure, ensuring it cannot be moved by members of the public.
- The water feature or installation may need to be connected to a water supply but should aim to have the function of recycling water.
- Industry health and safety standards should be considered in relation to holding water, water depths, and circulation if relevant.
- The commission should not overhang the designated site boundary as there is a public footpath adjacent.
- Any noise generation should be relative to the site and surroundings.
- Details of the installation requirements should be considered as part of the design and included in your proposal.
- Consideration should be given to the ongoing cleaning and maintenance of the water feature, and you will be asked to provide a maintenance schedule as part of the commission.

Additional considerations

- A Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) will be required prior to installation which will be checked by The Burton and Torridge District Council before approval is given to proceed.
- Upon delivery, the commission will be checked by The Burton to ensure it is safe for installation.
- The commissioned maker may be asked to make modifications if required, and the final sign off will be the responsibility of the The Burton.

APPLY

To apply for the Water Feature Commission please include:

1. A 1-2 page A4 statement or 5 minute audio/video recording to tell us about:

- Your practice and experience to date.
- Why this commission interests you.
- Initial ideas for how you might approach the commission.

2. A pdf or word document of supporting materials to demonstrate the quality of your work. This might include a website link, photographs (5 maximum), video clips, written material.

3. A completed equal opportunities monitoring form [available here](#)

Applications should be emailed to info@theburton.org must include the subject line 'Commission 1: Water Feature Commission'. The deadline for applications is **10am, Monday 6 July 2026**.

Selection Process

Applications will be considered using the following criteria:

- The creative strength of your work and ideas.
- Your proposal
- The feasibility of delivering the commission on the required timescale.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interview in the w/c 6 July 2026. The interview panel will include Warren Collum (Exhibitions and Collections Manager), Nathalie Cameron (FOH and Operations Coordinator) and an external artist advisor.

Key Dates

- Application deadline: 10am, Monday 6 July 2026
- Interviews: w/c Monday 13 July 2026
- Site visit: July 2026