



National
Trust

Open Call: 'Garden Stories'

Creative Commission, to open August 2027

Trengwainton, West Cornwall



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The Opportunity

We are looking for an individual or collective, experienced in community engagement and ideally based in Cornwall or the South-West, to collaborate with gardeners and researchers on a temporary commission in the walled garden from August–October 2027. Any creative practice or art form that can take place outdoors will be considered: you might be a visual artist, writer, designer, performer, educator or gardener. This commission is one part of a wider, international research project, [Plants, Enslavement and Public History: Re-imagining green spaces as places of heritage and healing](#), that looks at historical connections between plants, gardens and histories of enslavement and seeks new ways to interpret and communicate this past with care. We want this commission to express that Trengwainton is a multi-layered place encompassing global connections, where many voices are heard.



The aim is to use creative methods to engage visitors to Trengwainton with sensitivity and imagination, to reflect upon our shared histories and their lived legacies. The commission will offer a meaningful, thoughtful, memorable experience which deepens our collective understanding of one aspect of Trengwainton's multi-layered past: the garden's links to enslavement during its ownership by Rose Price (1814 – 1834).

We're interested to hear ideas that acknowledge the past and propose a positive future, celebrating stories of resilience and care revealed through the lens of plants and gardens.

Applications will be reviewed by a panel in two stages:

1. Expression of Interest: approx. 500 words / 3 min video, submit via email by midnight 1st November 2026; replies by midnight 16 November 2026.
2. Selected candidates will be paid 1 day (plus travel expenses) to interview on site in early December 2026 where they will present a detailed, costed proposal (a budget template will be supplied). A decision will be made by 21st December 2026.

The National Trust has the motto 'For everyone, for ever' at its heart. We're working hard to create an inclusive culture, where everyone feels they belong. It's important that our people

reflect and represent the diversity of the communities and audiences we serve. Therefore, we strongly encourage applications from creative practitioners of all backgrounds.

Please contact Sarah or Anna by email at gardenstories@nationaltrust.org.uk to request this information in a different format, to arrange a complimentary visit to the garden during the Stage 1 open call period (9 October –1st November), attend the online drop-in session, or with any questions you have about the application process.

Action	Key date / timeframe
Online drop-in session for stage 1 applicants to ask questions.	Tuesday 27 th October 12.30-2pm
Stage 1: Submit Expression of Interest – up to 500 words plus CV/portfolio with maximum 8 images, or a 3 min video (email us to request a private upload link)	By midnight, 1 st November 2026
Stage 1 applicants notified. <i>Regrettably, due to staff capacity, we cannot guarantee individual feedback on Stage 1.</i>	By midnight, 16 November 2026
Stage 2: Shortlisted practitioners to submit detailed, costed proposal and attend an on-site interview (will be paid £350 for 1 day of time, plus travel expenses).	Late November/ early December 2026 dates TBC.
Practitioner/collective appointed	21 st December 2026
Research, development and community engagement	Spring 2027 (February–April)
Commission installed and open to visitors	1 August–31 October 2027
Commission deinstalled	November 2027 (date TBC)

Budget	Total and detail
Creative Practitioner fee	£6,000 + VAT if applicable, covering the practitioner(s)' time (to be divided between individuals if submitting as a collective).
Production budget	£4,000–£8,000, depending on the Stage 2 proposal
Production budget to cover	Materials, production, transport, installation, deinstallation and agreed expenses (a budget matrix to be supplied to candidates shortlisted for Stage 2).

Background and new research:

Trengwainton - 'Home of springs' - is set between the moors and the sea. The garden has been shaped by many people over its [long history](#).

This project looks at the specific period when the garden was owned by [Rose Price](#) (b. 1768-d. 1834). Price bought Trengwainton in 1814, long before the current residents of the house, the Bolitho family, which has no link to Price, acquired the estate.

Price's wealth came from inherited sugar plantations in Jamaica including Worthy Park, which is documented by a substantial archive. Between 1814 and 1834, during the time of the campaign to abolish slavery in England – which Price opposed – he created a landed estate in the picturesque style and a ten-section walled garden, with unique sloping beds designed to grow produce.

Next Spring, the creative practitioner(s) will spend time with National Trust gardeners and expert researchers from the University of Bristol to exchange ideas and generate knowledge. In this video, researcher Elena summarises what she has discovered so far:



Click the image or click [here](#) to watch the video

The Commission

This project shifts the focus from Price's biography to the lives of enslaved people whose labour, knowledge and expertise generated the income which enabled him to buy Trengwainton. The creative work will recognise the absences in the Worthy Park archive and re-think these histories measured by the longer timelines of plant species. We want this experimental collaboration to trial new approaches to the public interpretation of histories of transatlantic enslavement in gardens.



We are looking for:

- a person or group interested in engaging visitors and fostering a genuinely open space for conversations around Trengwainton's global context.
- creative, collaborative approaches to interpreting and generating new research
- ideas that demonstrate how plants, gardening and experiencing green spaces can help develop a praxis of care and healing when sharing histories of enslavement.

The commission might involve activities, sculptures or installations using living plants, plant materials, plant products or by-products of the garden (e.g. seeds, leaves, fibres or timber – for example, there are some felled beech trees that grew during the Rose Price era). Storytelling might feature as sound, written or spoken word, poetry, music, movement or making workshops. What takes place might engage multiple senses or be a dynamic proposal that changes over the season, that can be added to by visitors, or that offers them something to take away. The key priority is to work collaboratively and respond imaginatively to the research and garden setting to create opportunities for participation, remembering, acknowledgement, learning, reflection and care.

There is the potential (subject to budget) for a short stay during off peak times in nearby National Trust holiday cottage accommodation during the planning phase to spend more time getting to know the garden site, staff and volunteers.

Location

The commission will take place in 'Rhubarb 1', one of the five upper compartments of the walled garden built under Price's direction in 1815. In this video, Head Gardener Tom guides you through this part of the walled garden:



1939 OS Map showing Trengwainton's walled garden. **Click the image or click [here](#) to watch the video**

'Rhubarb 1' is enclosed by Grade II listed brick walls, so any installation must be freestanding, with supports no more than 13cm below ground. The access into the garden is narrow, and existing mature shrubs and trees in the borders must be protected. The central lawn is available for use, subject to agreement with the garden team. Any use of plant material must be agreed with the Trengwainton gardeners in advance, and ongoing maintenance should be included within the production budget.

If wind speed is measuring 50mph or over, there is no access to site, and limited access with 40mph wind speeds. There is limited secure storage on site for overnight holding of personal possessions and materials.

Trengwainton is open to visitors from 10am to 5pm, Sunday to Thursday. With previous agreement, creative practitioners can access site between 8:30am and 10am, before visitor opening and on Fridays between 8:30am and 4:00pm. Access information can be found here: [Property Name Access Statement](#)

Audience

This commission should be welcoming to all visitors to the garden. In line with our Everyone Welcome values creative practitioners may need to make adjustments to their work in order to create experiences that are accessible to everyone. Read more about our commitment to inclusion and diversity [here](#).

The project is an opportunity to build on Trengwainton's relationships with communities of colour in Cornwall and the South-West. The commission will be open during Heritage Open Days (11-20 September 2026) when Trengwainton offers free access for everyone and will span Black History Month during October 2027.

During 2025-26, Trengwainton garden received around 56,000 visitors. Approximately 77% of our visitors are National Trust members, 35% of these come from within a 30 minute drive time, and 51% from a journey over 120 minutes. 60% of member visits are over 65's - more than the regional average. There is a fee to enter the garden, National Trust members and under-5's have free entry. Trengwainton offers family programming over half term breaks and school holidays. The garden closes to the public during the winter months after Autumn half term and reopens in time for February half term.

More detailed information from ongoing audience research will be available to inform the appointed creative practitioner(s).

Partners, Communities & Engagement

The main point of contact for the creative practitioner(s) will be the Project Curator, Sarah, and the Community & Participation Co-ordinator for West Cornwall, Anna, who will connect them with wider expertise across the National Trust and project partners. The appointed practitioner will be expected to attend some online and in person team planning meetings, staff and volunteer briefings, and public events.

Black Voices Cornwall

The team at Trengwainton are working in partnership with [Black Voices Cornwall](#). BVC will be represented throughout the selection process, on the panel that shortlists the Stage 1 creative practitioners and the interview panel to select the successful proposal in Stage 2.

University of Bristol

This is one of a number of commissions related to a University of Bristol research project funded by a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship Grant: [Plant Public History – Plants, Enslavement and Public History: Re-imagining green spaces as places of heritage and healing](#) Although not directly involved in the National Trust partnership, the context of this sister-project led by [The International National Trusts Organisation \(INTO\)](#) and the Re-imagining International Sites of Enslavement or [RISE](#) network is important (and inspiring!) background. Nine organisations from the RISE network were awarded funding in 2026 for diverse projects on the interpretation of plant stories and audience engagement: [Project partners – Plant Public History](#)

How to Apply

Stage 1: Open Call 5th October – 1st November 2026

Please email your expression of interest to gardenstories@nationaltrust.org.uk by **midnight on 1 November 2026**. Send up to 500 words **or** a video of up to three minutes, plus a CV or selected portfolio of up to eight images in PowerPoint or PDF format.

To submit a video, please email us at the address above to request a private upload link. As large files can't be received by the inbox, we need to send you a link where you can securely upload your video. Please put 'Video upload link' in the subject line and allow enough time to request and receive your upload link before the submission deadline; we advise requests to be made by Tuesday 27th October.

On the following page, you can also find the link to the National Trust's equal opportunities monitoring form, which is completely optional and anonymous.

Please tell us about:

- your area of creative practice
- why this project interests you
- your experience of participatory practice or engaging with communities
- your relationship to Trengwainton, its global connections, Cornwall or the National Trust, if relevant
- An initial idea or possibility (not a fully worked out proposal) that demonstrates:
 - a collaborative approach
 - the capacity to engage visitors in a meaningful, accessible way
 - connections with one or more research theme (plants, green spaces, public and global histories of transatlantic enslavement and resistance, environmental histories of plantations and gardens, collective memory, climate change)
 - awareness of sustainability

Regrettably, due to staff capacity we cannot guarantee individual feedback for this first stage.

Stage 2: 1st November – 21st December 2026

Up to three practitioners or collectives will be shortlisted by a panel of representatives from Black Voices Cornwall, the National Trust and the University of Bristol.

They will receive an information pack, and be invited to submit a detailed, costed proposal, to be presented in person at final interviews on site in early December, with a decision made by 21st December.

Equal Opportunities

The National Trust celebrates diversity and is committed to creating a fair and equal society, free from discrimination. You can read more about our commitment to inclusion and diversity here: [Our commitment to inclusion and diversity | National Trust](#)

Separate to your application we encourage you to complete this [equal opportunities monitoring form](#) which helps us to understand a bit more about whether our opportunities are reaching practitioners from a wide range of backgrounds. This is completely optional and anonymous.

The National Trust

The National Trust is a conservation charity founded in 1895 by three people: Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, who saw the importance of the nation's heritage and open spaces and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. Today, across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we continue to look after places so people and nature can thrive.

The challenges of the coronavirus pandemic have shown us this is more important than ever. From finding fresh air and open skies to tracking a bee's flight to a flower; from finding beauty in an exquisite painting or discovering the hidden history of a country house nearby – the places we care for enrich people's lives. Entirely independent of Government, the National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 780 miles of coastline and 500 historic properties, gardens and nature reserves. The National Trust is for everyone – we were founded for the benefit of the whole nation. We receive on average more than 26.9 million visits each year to the places we care for that have an entry fee, and an estimated 100 million visits to the outdoor places that are free of charge. Paying visitors, together with our 5.6 million members and more than 40,000 volunteers support our work to care for nature, beauty, history. For everyone, for ever.