



Summer 2021 Project – Brief and Request for Expressions of Interest

Background

Time and Tide Bell is a unique, UK wide project initiated and created by artist and musician Marcus Vergette. Its purpose is to celebrate and reinforce connections in local communities, between different parts of the country, between the land and sea, between ourselves and our environment.

In sites all around the coast of the UK the specially created bronze bells ring due to the impact of the waves at or around high tide. The first bell was installed 10 years ago and in 2018 we received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to expand the reach of the programme. Currently 7 bells are installed, 5 sites are under development, and our aim is to install a total of 16. There is voluminous information about it on our [website](#); the short video [here](#) shot during one of the recent installations tells the layered story well.

A major aim of the project is to connect all the diverse communities which host a Time and Tide bell: Aberdyfi and Morecambe, Appledore and Trinity Buoy Wharf, Mablethorpe and the Isle of Lewis, Cemaes Bay to the new bell sites – to explore the similarities and differences of these unique coastal places. The Time and Tide Bell organisation is therefore announcing a creative commissioning opportunity to achieve this. The commission will strengthen the ties between bell communities through a unique shared artistic project that will be imaginative, captivating and surprising. It will have at its heart the magic of the sea and the shoreline, a passionate sense of place and an inspirational care for the planet.

There is also a number of locations where there is active work towards the installation of new bells, many of which are likely to be involved in this project. They include Par, Cornwall; Brixham, Devon; the Isle of Wight (location undecided); Harwich, Essex; Happisburgh, Norfolk; Redcar, Yorkshire and Eyemouth, Berwickshire.

The Commission

The Time and Tide Bell organisation (T&TB) is inviting Expressions of Interest from artists or arts organisations in a broad range of disciplines (hereafter 'artists') interested in working with us. The aim is to create a project that will link the very varied bell communities to make the whole greater than the sum of the parts, and which will explore a core theme – changing sea levels.

The bells are or will be all in locations where individuals and communities have developed an appreciation of the power of the bells as public artworks, as a warning about the effect of climate change and as a comment on sea level rise. They are a growing contribution to each location's identity – past, present and future – and serve as a focus and catalyst for dialogue, shared experience and community action.

Each bell is able to tell a story about its community, and every community is different. In almost every case there is an individual or group of people for whom the bells form a focus in some form, be it artistic, environmental or community oriented, although levels of engagement do vary. The national Time and Tide Bell organisation aims to support bell communities by helping them to animate the bells. A good example is the work we do with local primary schools to support learning on the beach. Another is a citizen science project linked to a number of bell locations, under development with association with the Marine Biological Association.

The key aims of the commission are to:

- Develop and create a high-quality arts project for the summer of 2021 that can be taken to the large majority of the bell sites. For the purposes of this commission we are not prescriptive about the form of the project, which may involve a range of art forms.
- Include an event or some form of celebration that creates a sense of a linked journey.
- Animate the bell sites over a period of time in the summer of 2021. This may cover the holiday season or possibly school terms in July or September. There may be gaps between these events.
- Create the project using thoughts, ideas, facts and feelings from the bell communities involved. It could involve local groups (schools, residents, youth groups, local history socs, etc) recording their memories of the coast, how things are at present, and answering questions about the future.
- Explore, in a constructive way, the significance of sea level and its gradual rise (see website) to provide a meaningful connection between the very varied communities involved with each bell, making the whole greater than the sum of the parts.
- Be flexible and adaptable and at home in different settings, ideally both indoors and out, and accessible to a wide range of audiences – from primary school pupils, people in a community centre or passers-by on the beach.
- Embrace a broader concept of change, over and above sea level rise; all bell locations – and coastal settlements in general – have over past decades and centuries been particularly subject to changes in their economies, *raison d'être*, and identities, including tourism, fishing practice, and coastal economies.
- Deliver a legacy in some form, something lasting and meaningful to communities and visitors to Bell locations.

The commission and any surrounding events will serve to animate the overall T&TB project in a way that has not been achieved previously. It will offer obvious marketing and PR opportunities, but above all will help the communities involved, and ideally all coastal communities, undertake the journey into the uncertain and challenging future that all face.

It may be that the project could extend beyond 2021 and into 2022.

This commission will work best in close collaboration with the existing Time and Tide Bell team, particularly Peter Gingold (Producer and National Coordinator) and Juliette Heppell, (Education Coordinator). Peter (formerly founder and director of TippingPoint, facilitator of arts/climate change dialogue) has been involved in the T&TB project for over three years, and has helped develop it to its current state. This collaboration is likely to extend from the outset, including

discussion and exploration of the treatment of sea level, through the whole of the operational stages.

Other points

- We are committed to reflecting the diversity of contemporary Britain in our work. Accessibility of the company's projects and programmes to people of all backgrounds and capabilities is both a priority and a necessity. Whilst we sometimes work in demanding environments, the principle of inclusion underpins everything we do.
- Thought needs to be given to ways in which necessary physical travel and the overall project would be done with minimum CO₂ emissions.
- We have considered the possibility of a journey by boat and have ruled it out, on grounds of practicality and cost.
- The bells already communicate powerful messages about change and warning, together with a perspective on sea level. This commission does not require a slavish adherence to bell imagery or symbolism at its heart.
- Inevitably activity will have to conform to whatever Covid-related restrictions are in place.

Process

Expression of Interest submissions should be submitted by midnight on August 16th, sent in Word or PDF format to commission@timeandtidebell.org. These should be on no more than two sides of A4. This can include web links to existing work but within reason, please: we are unlikely to be able to look at long videos or do justice to large websites. We hope this brief is self-explanatory, but are prepared to enter into limited communication on the subject via the same email address, though cannot promise to respond in time to last minute queries.

The criteria by which we will be evaluating this stage of the Commission are:

- The quality of creative and imaginative ideas
- The approach to the treatment of 'sea level'
- The commitment to community engagement
- The form the project's legacy will take
- Your experience in this type of work

We aim to develop a short-list by mid September. Short-listed artists will be invited to expand on their ideas before final selection. This may take place in September, or it may be delayed – see below. A fee of £500 will be available for this. There will be an interview process before final decision.

Funding

Our current rough budget estimates are for the project to cost in the range £50k - £70k. We have an amount of funding for the project at present and are actively seeking the balance. The current confused funding situation makes it difficult to know when fundraising will be completed. It may therefore be that there will be a pause in the final selection process, in order to avoid wasting people's time.

The Organisation

The Time and Tide Bells Organisation is a charity, registered in 2019. It is currently funded very largely by the National Lottery Community Fund. See [here](#) for details of trustees.

Addendum

Personal reflections by Peter Gingold Producer and National Co-ordinator Time and Tide Bell

Prior to T&TB I was founder and director of TippingPoint, an organisation which ran a series of facilitated meetings and meaningful conversations between artists and scientists, with the aim of helping artists engage with the subject of climate change. We worked for over 10 years both in the UK and across the world, ultimately with over 2,000 artists; TippingPoint developed a strong reputation. We also commissioned some 15 mostly performative artworks, and 12 written works.

This gave me personal insights and convictions as to effective approaches. I have listed a few of these and other reflections on more recent work on the communication of climate change below.

- In my experience, producing serious artwork relating to climate change requires that the artist has thought about the subject long and hard – for years rather than months. The reason is obvious – it is an extremely complex subject, and developing a meaningful, original artistic response is difficult.
- The ethos of the Time and Tide Bell project – Marcus Vergette’s conception – is generous, in a number of ways. It invites people in, it asks them to contribute their creativity; it is not a vehicle for an ego. The commission needs to reflect that spirit.
- Contemplating climate change/rising sea level has real capacity for causing depression, anxiety or despair, particularly in young people. We must be mindful of this; we have a responsibility.
- A linked but not identical point: what are we trying to say? If it is just that the sea level is rising, perhaps expressed in a novel way, is that enough? My own conviction is that there is a need for a constructive response. I can’t see the point of doing anything else.
- There is a complication for climate-related artworks in current times. Recent surveys show that public concern on the subject in the UK was at an all-time high (pre-Covid-19 85% were either ‘very’ or ‘somewhat’ concerned about the subject). This figure may not be sustained, but it strongly suggests that ‘awareness-raising’, the label which best fits as an umbrella over much climate artwork, is now needed less than in the past. Which begs the question, what is needed now? To me the most obvious answer is ‘helping people decide what they, and ‘we’ should do about it’, which carries further artistic challenges; art is better at asking questions than providing answers.