Apply Now

Freelance Sculptor

BOOKMARKED: Thirsk 2026

Deadline: 5pm, Sunday 15th of November, 2026

Where: Hybrid working at Rural Arts and in Thirsk

Total Fee: £3,000 Artist Fee and £1,000 for materials

Rural Arts

YORK & NORTH YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY | DAVID SKAITH MAYOR

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Opportunity: Freelance Sculptor
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Project Overview:
Bookmarked: Thirsk is a year-long programme of cultural events, creative workshops, performances and community-led experiences designed to animate Thirsk High Street, increase footfall, and strengthen connections between local people, businesses and cultural organisations. Building on the proven success of Thirsk Bookmarked 2025, this expanded programme embeds culture into the everyday life of the town throughout 2026 and aligns with the National Year of Reading 2026, positioning Thirsk as a welcoming, distinctive and vibrant market town.

The project will deliver a flagship launch festival followed by a sustained programme of visible, accessible cultural activity hosted directly within high-street businesses and community venues. Activities will include author talks, storytelling, expressive writing, visual art workshops, pop-up exhibitions and performances. All activity will be co-produced and programmed with residents, local businesses and community groups to ensure relevance, local ownership and direct economic benefit, supporting increased dwell time and repeat
visits to the town centre.

A central outcome of Bookmarked: Thirsk is the co-creation of an arts trail and community-designed town signage concept. Professional artists will work with diverse groups, including older residents, young people, carers, people living with dementia and those experiencing social isolation, to create artworks reflecting lived experience of the town.

These will form a temporary arts trail across the High Street, encouraging exploration of the town centre, supporting independent businesses and acting as a testbed for placemaking and wayfinding ideas. Learning from this pilot will inform the development of a permanent signage and identity scheme beyond the funding period.

Alongside creative delivery, the project will support High Street resilience through business and website accessibility audits, helping local businesses become more inclusive, improve visibility, and enhance the visitor experience. This practical support will help remove barriers to access, broaden customer bases and strengthen the long-term sustainability of the High Street.

Role Overview:

Rural Arts work with hundreds of people in North Yorkshire, the Tees Valley and beyond, enriching lives and connecting communities by providing incredible experiences and inclusive sessions.
Alongside the workshops, performances and exhibitions we hold at The Courthouse, we also deliver additional support within the community.

Rural Arts are looking for a Sculptor to:

- Create a piece of Art that reflects Rural Arts and its values, to sit outside the front of the building. We are open to the material used and the art form. This sculpture needs to be weather resistant, permanant and visible above the front wall.
- Work closely with groups that access Rural Arts and its creative offer and with the general public in Thirsk, to understand what the general public want to see.
- The approximate sizes of the sculpture that we would like are:
  135.5cm x 143cm and 1 to 2 metres high

Once this work is created we would like the Artist to:

- Collaborate with the other 4 Artists in Residences who will have worked at The Ritz, Thirsk Community Library and the James Herriot Museum and White Rose Book Cafe, to create an Art Trail for the final event weekend of Bookmarked in April 2027, combining all learnings from the different residencies. This will take into account the thoughts and ideas from the various Groups that have accessed during these residencies, to then bring it to life to the rest of the Community at the Art Trail.

Project Timeline

- To meet with the staff at Rural Arts to understand what exactly they want to achieve in the sculpture and to visit Rural Arts and the area to get a feel for the community in November 2026.
- To organise 2 full days of meeting the Rural Arts Community and then another for meeting the general public in the market place in November / December 2026
- To finalise the sculpture by the end of March 2027
- To work with other assigned Artist in Residences during February and March to bring the work together for an Art Trail in April 2027, with support from Rural Arts.

Fee

- 15 freelance days @£200 per day
- 3 days of development and prep
- 6 days of delivery - onsite and hybrid
- 6 days of making

Total fee: £3,000

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Material Budget

- There will be an assigned budget of £1,000 but that is to cover the work with the specific partner (in this case - Rural Arts) and for the Art Trail in April 2027

Location

Thirsk and Hybrid, dependent on the phase of delivery / making

Specific dates can be organised with Rural Arts and the Artist, once appointed.

Who We're Looking For:

We'd love to hear from freelancers who:

- Have a strong, distinctive artistic voice and portfolio
- Is experienced in working with communities or in co-creative processes
- Can work sensitively with participant-led and community-generated content.
- Have excellent communication and organisational skills.
- Are enthusiastic about championing creative and community-focused projects.

How to Apply

Please send the following to recruitment@ruralarts.org **by 5pm on Sunday 15th of November 2026:**

- A short statement (maximum 400 words) outlining your approach to this brief and describing a similar project you have successfully delivered.
- Examples of previous work, including sculptures or exhibitions. This can be:
  - Photographs of previous sculptures and exhibitions
  - links to your portfolio,
  - your website,
  - and/or social media accounts showcasing your work.

Alternatively, you may submit a video application (maximum 5 minutes) covering the same information.

What's Next

Applicants will be notified by Monday 16th of November. Informal conversations will take place between Tuesday 17th and Friday 20th of November, with a final decision made by the end of the day on Friday.

We appreciate the short turnaround and are not expecting lengthy applications, we're looking for a clear sense of your experience, creativity and approach.

Please ensure you complete the Equal Opportunities form before submitting your application.

Questions?

If you have any questions about the opportunity, please contact the team via, recruitment@ruralarts.org.

Thank you.

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