

OPEN CALL | Research and Development £2,500 | b-side 2026

Deadline: 09/02/2026

City: Isle of Portland, Dorset | Region: Dorset | Country: United Kingdom | [b-side CIC](#)

OPEN CALL Research & Development Opportunity, Artist Fee £2,500. That Other Place b-side Arts Festival 2026.

b-side invites proposals from artists working in any medium for a site-responsive Research & Development opportunity as part of b-side 2026. We're excited by proposals that get curious, investigate, and gently disrupt ideas of otherness, oddness, "Islandness", queerness, using the Isle of Portland as a place of inquiry — to question, listen, and imagine. We welcome approaches that map questions, encounters, and generates research, shared as part of an evolving body of work on That Other Place.

Commission Fee: £2500

Deadline: Feb 9th 2026

Access: If you require this information in another format, or have access requirements, please contact maddi@b-side.org.uk

Questions: For general questions about this open call, contact maddi@b-side.org.uk

About the Theme — That Other Place

That Other Place is a strand of b-side's wider curatorial framework, Common Lands, which considers the Isle of Portland as a microcosm through which to explore our relationships to land, locality, and community. Under Common Lands, previous festivals have explored: This Land — Portland's natural and built heritage, and, Who Do We Think We Are? — identity and migration. We are now inviting artists to explore another strand of Common Lands; 'That Other Place' — It explores identity, belonging, imagination, ecology, queerness, and transformation. It asks what happens when the land we are standing on — socially, politically, emotionally, imaginatively — no longer feels like it's working.

- What does That Other Place mean to you?

- How do we inhabit spaces of transition or uncertainty?
- What identities, stories, or ways of being have been overlooked, misread, or othered — and how might they be reclaimed, celebrated, or reimagined?

We invite artists to respond to That Other Place in ways that feel speculative, playful, or meaningful within your practice.

Context

b-side is an internationally recognised and locally loved arts organisation based on the Isle of Portland, Dorset (UK). Our work is shaped by the island's histories, communities, geology, and ecologies, and by the conversations that emerge when artists spend time here.

Each year, b-side festival brings together international and Portland-based artists, local residents, and visitors to explore Portland as a site for experimentation, dialogue, and imagination.

This Research & Development opportunity sits within the 2026 festival programme and offers time and support for artists to engage with Portland as a site of research — through its landscape, community, history, ecology, or distinct sense of remoteness and connectedness.

We invite artists to treat Portland as a place to test ideas, form relationships, and follow lines of inquiry that may later evolve into more developed work.

What This R&D Opportunity Offers

- £2,500 artist fee to cover time, research, development, and materials
- Light-touch curatorial support from the b-side team. (Details to be worked through during the interview process and introductory call)
- Access to local knowledge, archives, and community connections
- Optional research space on Portland, depending on need
- Curated R&D visits to support site-based exploration
- Invitations to relevant b-side events

- Work-in-progress sharing

We would love to share your research during b-side 2026 (September). This could take the form of:

- an artist talk
- a workshop
- a walk
- a conversation
- a test, experiment, or open sharing of ideas

A fully realised artwork is not required as this is a space for exploration. We can also support artists to explore further funding routes to develop ideas beyond this R&D phase.

Who This Opportunity Is For

We welcome proposals from artists who:

- Work in any discipline (visual, performance, sound, digital, socially engaged, interdisciplinary)
- Are interested in research-led, process-driven, or exploratory practice
- Have an existing or emerging connection to otherness/place/identity/ecology/queerness/speculative worlds
- Are open to working with Portland as a site of inquiry
- Are comfortable with ambiguity and unfinished thinking
- Are self-disciplined and able to work independently with support from b-side where needed.

You do not need prior knowledge of Portland to apply.

Who can apply?

Anyone! We welcome proposals from artists at any stage in their career. b-side values diversity and is working to make the application and

commissioning process accessible to all and welcomes proposals from those currently under-represented in the arts.

How to apply

Applications must be made via CuratorSpace using this link
<https://www.curatorspace.com/opportunities/detail/research-and-development-opportunity/10168>

The application will ask for:

- A proposal describing your R&D idea and how it relates to That Other Place
- A short statement about your practice (portfolio, links, CV if relevant)
- Any initial thoughts on participation, approach, or engagement
- A sense of what you'd need to make it happen (timelines, research support, access needs)
- A budget outline
- Images or links to previous work

You may apply in written or video/audio format.

Applying by Video/Audio

As well as written proposals, we can also accept audio and video responses too.

If you want to submit your whole proposal or part of it via video or audio, please take a look at the process below:

1. Record your video or audio in response to the application form.
2. Upload it to an unlisted YouTube link, or a Google Drive/Dropbox folder.
3. Add an accessible link and any relevant passwords to your CuratorSpace form in the relevant question boxes. If you have recorded your whole application via video (except contact details etc), then please paste the video link in every question box. If you have recorded

your response in answer to specific questions, then please paste the video/audio link in the corresponding question boxes

4. Please remember to include any passwords for password protected links.

The questions which you should answer in your recording are listed below:

1. Give us a brief description of your idea (200 words) (approx. 200 words or 1.5 min video/audio recording)
2. Budget Outline. Please provide a draft breakdown of how your budget would be spent (inc. artist fee, materials, resources, equipment, transport etc.)(approx 1 min)
3. A proposal describing your That Other Place project idea. Please give detail on how your project will develop between the time of April 2026 and March 2027, including areas of research / material exploration / site visits etc. (500 word or 3 minutes video/audio recording)
4. A little about your practice (approx. 200 words or 1.5 minutes video/audio recording)
5. Images or weblinks illustrating your/your arts collective's proposal and/or previous work.

Note: We understand that presenting your work on video/audio is different, so we will accept reasonable differences in the timings above. But your application must be no longer than 15 mins total when watching or listening.

If you cannot make an application on the online portal CuratorSpace then please contact maddi@b-side.org.uk for alternative options.

What happens after you have sent a proposal?

- We will acknowledge receipt of your proposal if you have sent it by email (if you were not able to use the Curatorspace portal). A message acknowledging receipt will be sent to all artists applying via Curatorspace shortly after the deadline.

- The selection panel will read every single proposal and make a shortlist of artists to interview
- Interviews will take place online over 1 or 2 days (depending on how many proposals have been shortlisted), the dates for this are March 25th/26th. Interviews last approx 30 minutes.
- Selected artists will be sent a contract and the fun begins! You will be allocated a commission manager from the b-side team to bounce ideas off, help you connect with people of Portland, find sites etc if needed.
- Shortlisted artists not selected will be given feedback

About b-side

b-side commissions site-responsive work for public spaces on the Isle of Portland, Dorset (UK) revealing aspects of the island, its environment and communities that are often overlooked. We commission artworks that speak to this magical place, and to our island's relationship to elsewhere. We commission work that is thoughtful, maverick, subversive, poetic or just simply delicious looking. The artworks we commission come together over a 4 day period, every September. Check out our website to see more about what we do, how we work, and also more about the Isle of Portland www.b-side.org.uk

Access

We deeply value diversity and are working to make our application and commissioning process accessible to all. We welcome proposals from those currently underrepresented in the arts and particularly from disabled artists. We will endeavor to work with artists to mitigate barriers to making their work for the festival. We welcome access documents from artists at any stage of the process. Some more info on access documents <https://www.accessdocsforartists.com/>

Equality Monitoring

We are collecting information from artists applying for this opportunity for reporting purposes to funders and to find out who we are reaching and who is missing. Optional Equalities Monitoring survey, link at the end of this section (takes 1 minute to complete).

PROPOSAL TIMELINE

All proposals due by
Feb 9th 2026

Shortlisted artists notified by
March 16th 2026

Interviews
March 25th/26th 2026

Notification of Outcome
April 3rd 2026

Research and Development Meet up
April 15/16th 2026

Work installed
Sept 05 - 09th 2026 (or by arrangement)

b-side 2026 public dates
Sept 10 - 13th 2026

Feedback and evaluation
Sept 2026

Please note:

- Artists will be selected on the basis of their initial proposal and will then have further opportunity to research and develop the final work if they are selected.
- All applications not using the Curatorspace portal will be acknowledged on receipt.
- All unsuccessful applications will be notified at earliest opportunity.
- We regret due to our limited team capacity it is not possible to give feedback to all unsuccessful applications however we aim to give feedback to all shortlisted applicants that are selected to interview.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON B-SIDE 2026

- b-side takes place over a four day period with installations and events at a number of locations across the Isle of Portland - a tied island based off the South coast of Dorset, in England.
- New artworks/commissions form the core programme of b-side with artists also contributing to talks and other events prior to or during the festival.
- Proposals for artworks and interventions are temporary. We are interested to see if the work you propose is also site responsive to somewhere on the Isle of Portland, and we list below a selection of sites on the island we have used in the past, as well as further research links that may be of interest to you.
- We welcome proposals that involve working with Isle of Portland residents and festival visitors as individuals or groups for more intimate, reflective artworks and interactive encounters.
- Proposals should be for new work but may be part of a larger or on-going project.
- Applications are invited from artists/arts collectives at any career stage.
- This commission offers £2500 to develop research from April 2026 to March 2027. This covers the artist(s) fee and all costs including site visits, travel, all materials, and research access etc.
- Applicants are welcome to bring additional funding from other sources to support their proposal if it is greater in ambition than our commission levels allow.

- If and where appropriate, the selected artist / artist collective will have access to curatorial support. Artists will also have the opportunity of using our b-side shop front project space - 77 Fortuneswell, on the Isle of Portland for use as private or public facing research, meeting or work space and engagement venue.

FURTHER CONTEXT AND INFORMATION

Information about the Isle of Portland, Dorset, UK

Portland is a curious island with a very particular history and ecology offering huge scope for research and inspiration. Located in the South West of England just off the coast of Dorset and approached via a narrow causeway, this hulk of limestone, bounded by steep cliffs and treacherous seas is unlike anywhere else in Dorset. Prior to the first road bridge built in 1839 linking it to the mainland, it was an isolated agricultural community sustained by farming and fishing and with its own unique ways and customs. Many ancient land use and management practices continued long after joining the mainland.

However Portland has been dramatically changed and influenced over the years by quarrying and military appropriation and secret experimentation, resulting in what is now widely regarded as an industrial landscape and economy. It is a small island just 1.7 miles across and 4 miles long, it's coastal edges subject to the forces of nature, eroded by the sea, landslips and rock falls, its interior removed by quarrying and mining. With an ever-increasing population, space is at a premium and land use contested. As policies of growth and the impact of climate change collide, the opportunities to develop a sustainable community are challenged.

More recently tourism is seen as the growth industry, as former quarries are re-wilded as nature reserves and Portland's unique ecological, historical and leisure attractions are increasingly recognized by climbers, divers, walkers, bird watchers, naturalists, geologists and historians. Portland, as a community and place, encapsulates in miniature the characteristics of what is happening in a wider world context

ISLAND SITES AND RESEARCH LINKS

Get to know Portland

You can explore a rich historical archive created by Portlander Geoff Kirby at

The Portland Museum online Archive, which includes information on many of the sites and venues used for previous b-side events as well as information about Portland and its history and geology

<https://archive.portlandmuseum.co.uk/>

Previous sites b-side sites and venues:

- Chiswell Community Garden
- The Esplanade and Quiddles café, Chiswell
- Fancys Farm
- The Engine Shed
- High Angle Battery
- The Stadium Bowl
- The Governors Community Garden (The Grove)
- Easton Gardens
- St Georges Church
- Portland Bill area

This Dorset Explorer website mapping system is useful for exploring many different layers of information on Portland

<https://gi.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/dorsetexplorer#map=10.33/50.79691/-2.31539/0&basemap=1/100/100>

Equality Monitoring

Please complete this short optional questionnaire. Your answers are completely anonymous and will not be read alongside your main application. We don't believe people fit easily into boxes so for any answer you can select Other to self-identify, and you are also welcome to select Prefer Not to Say. This monitoring form helps us to understand who we are reaching and how we can improve access to our opportunities. If you have any questions about this form, please email info@b-side.org.uk.

Link for the form (this will take you away from the Curatorspace website)

<https://forms.gle/YgYqUzdEfkGcdWJh8>