

**A&HP\_NT2\_Interview\_22\_May\_2018**

**Date:** transcribed 9<sup>th</sup> June 2018  
**Comments:** anonymised March 2021  
**Duration:** 01:19:02

**KEY:**

Cannot decipher = (unclear + time code)

Sounds like = [s.l + time code]

**I: = Interviewer**

R: = Respondent

NT1, NT2, NT3 = National Trust Staff

A&H = Arts&Heritage Co-Director

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**I: As far as I can see, that is recording. Good.**

R: So with that, thinking with those two different heads on, there may be some things that I just have to be quite careful about, I suppose. There may be some things that I will respond as '[R's] personal experience', and then there may be then a 'National Trust' [laughter] answer.

**I: Mm, yes, yes. Yes, yes.**

R: So I think, yes, I just need to be... I'm not necessarily saying that they will differ that much – they probably won't, but...

**I: But you've got your own opinion (over-speaking 00:00:42) [laughter].**

R: I've got my... yes, I've got my [laughter] own opinion.

**I: Yes, absolutely, we all have. Yes, there's this double thing about being an individual and talking about an organisation.**

R: Yes, yes.

**I: So the first thing is very straightforward.**

R: Sorry, I don't think I've ever read that bit.

**I: Oh, right.**

R: If there's a problem or a complaint. [Laughter].

I: **Oh, that's just... that's (over-speaking 00:00:59) University research project thing, you know. Because, actually, sometimes this goes to other sorts of research participants who are not... they are individuals, rather than representing organisations.**

R: Right, okay. Okay.

I: **Like the focus group thing.**

R: Yes.

I: **Sorry, and you should have one of these.**

R: Oh, okay, thank you.

I: **So that's yours. Those are yours now.**

**Okay. So the first thing is quite straightforward. And this is really just for the sake of the recording.**

R: Right.

I: **// it's recording.**

R: Yes. [Laughter].

I: **Can you tell me about your role at the National Trust and with Trust New Art?**

R: Yes. My role at the National Trust is a new role that was created only about... oh, gosh, when did I start? I started back in September, so is that eight months ago?

I: **Okay. Okay.**

R: And I am the cultural programme coordinator of the North East.

I: **Yes.**

R: And, I suppose, what that is, I have... I sit within consultancies. The National Trust is, kind of, made up of three parts. You have people that work in property, so they are, you know, [Name] and the [s.l [Name] 00:02:01].

I: **Mm-hmm, yes.**

R: And then we have people that work at Heelis, who do all of our... I suppose, a lot of our strategic–

**I: Heelis?**

R: Heelis is our head office.

**I: Oh, okay.**

R: And they do a lot of our strategic work – the magazine, pulling in, kind of... I suppose all of our heads of departments, they are based down there. So, [NT1] and [NT2] are based down there.

And then you have consultancy. I think, within each region – there are six regions across the Trust – you have a team of consultants that have specialisms in different areas.

**I: Yes.**

R: So you have, you know, conservators, visitor experience consultants, curators, and I sit within that. So my specialism, I suppose... and there is only one other position of mine that exists. But what we are finding is, actually, *my* position is very different from my counterpart's in the North West.

**I: Okay. Who is your counterpart?**

R: It's [Name].

**I: How do you spell that?**

R: [First Name spelled out]

**I: Yes.**

R: And then [Last Name].

**I: [Last Name], okay.**

R: But the reason why my role is very different from [their] role – even though [they are] the cultural programme coordinator – in effect, [they are] the programming expert. So that's what... fundamentally, my role is to support properties in what programme it is, what that can look like, how we integrate that in, and how we use different, I suppose, visitor intelligence to inform that. So, looking at visitor flow, audience (unclear 00:03:19), and trying to get a balance out of visitor numbers so that it's not these peaks and troughs.

**I: Yes. Okay, okay.**

R: As well as them, cultural partners to enable us to do that, and making it relevant to our different audiences that we are trying to attract.

**I: Okay.**

- R: So that's, kind of, *one* part of my head, of my role. And the other part, for me, is the Trust New Art stuff, which, actually, in the North West, that is delivered by somebody else, which is why I said–
- I: **Oh, I see. Yes, okay. So you've got a cultural programming role, as a consultancy.**
- R: Yes.
- I: **And then, within that, you've got Trust New Art.**
- R: I've got Trust New Art within that, as well as partnerships. That's with Newcastle University.
- I: **Okay, okay.**
- R: So, again, it's interesting because, in the South West, they have three different people doing those roles, and I'm doing all three.
- I: **Okay. Wow [laughter].**
- R: For lots of reasons, funding is a huge one. But that's why my role is quite fast and complicated.
- I: **Okay.**
- R: And I think, actually, it works. It works better having one person who has eyes over that because, for me, a programme [s.I mixes up 00:04:30] all of that. You know, it is Trust New Art, it is the contemporary art programme, as well as different partnerships to enable you to do that, to make it site-specific, relevant and resonant to our different audiences. And that is fundamentally what makes up a programme.
- I: **Yes. So is there a programming outside of Trust New Art that you can–?**
- R: There *is* programming outside of Trust New Art that I do, yes.
- I: **Okay. What does that look like?**
- R: That looks like a variety of different things. Another *huge* strand to enable us to develop this is... it has made a shift. It used to be called the National Public Programme, but it is now called the Challenging Histories strand.
- I: **Is that what it's called?**
- R: Yes.
- I: **And that's a public programme, the Challenging Histories strand.**

R: Yes.

I: **And that is Prejudice, Pride, Place, women (over-speaking 00:05:13).**

R: Prejudice, Pride... and Women and Power, which is this year. Next year–

I: **So it's Challenging Histories, did you say?**

R: Yes, it's called Challenging Histories.

I: **Okay.**

R: And so, basically, what it is, this is then all made up by... I can't work out... is that an N?

I: **[Laughter] yes.**

R: NPP.

I: **Okay.**

R: And there are different segments, so another one, which is coming soon, is called Wonderland.

I: **Okay, Wonderland [laughter].**

R: Yes, Wonderland.

I: **Yes, okay.**

R: And that is specifically for outdoor programming.

I: **Oh, okay.**

R: So it could be... art is often a really good output. But it could be just, you know, different forms of working with local communities and audiences to develop *how* they relate to the site.

I: **Okay. So it could be gardening.**

R: Yes, exactly.

I: **It could be a park run.**

R: Yes.

I: **Okay, yes.**

R: And then there are other things as well. So another thing that I need to keep an eye out for is another strand, which is, I suppose, national celebrations. So, you know, the tercentenary of Capability Brown, you know, Chippendale this year. So that's another strand that I have eyes over.

And then there is another one where if there are particular objects that the properties want to highlight, then that's... highlighting those is a separate strand. And then there is also the National Portrait Gallery as well. But in the North East, at the moment, we don't have anything to do with that.

And I'm not saying that I specialise in all those areas, but I need to have eyes over them. And so these are different ways in which we can programme that property.

I: **Yes, yes, yes.**

R: And it's not saying that *one* is exclusive; that ideally, they would all connect up. The idea of programming is that it is across every single element of your site. So it's not just the visitor experience; it's catering, it's landscape, it's the house, it's the collection, and it all makes sense.

I: **Ah, yes.**

R: And so that is what I am trying to do, to make a cohesive offer that is integrated across the site in its entirety. And that changes, and that could change every year, it could change every three years, it could change every three months. Again, all of that is determined by each property – their capabilities, their skillsets, again, how many visitors they have got, budgets. So I am just starting that conversation.

I: **Wow. And this is North East and Yorkshire, is that right?**

R: North East predominantly. And then for Trust New Art, I'm North [laughter], so that's another thing.

I: **[Laughter] God, I can't keep up with that.**

R: [Laughter].

I: **Would you say, in terms of your... obviously, we have only had a site review, really, in your production...**

R: Phase.

I: **It was only in the production phase within Trust New Art. Because I saw a photograph of you, and there you are, like, holding up a sign while someone is drilling into the wall.**

R: [Laughter].

**I: That's like... is that your... at Trust New Art, have you got more hands in Trust New Art than you have with other things?**

R: Trust New Art is probably more my specialism, just because my background is in contemporary arts.

**I: Yes.**

R: Just because my background *is* in contemporary arts.

**I: Okay.**

R: And it's interesting – for my interview, that wasn't attached to my role, and the predecessor, who had the North, left before I started this role, so they said, "Would you be interested?"

And I said, "Yes, I would," because it's very much my area of expertise.

**I: Yes.**

R: But, I suppose, a huge part of why I get my hands dirty is because, at the moment, programming is new for our properties, completely. I mean, not just in the North East – nationally. Like, we haven't really been doing that [laughter].

**I: Yes.**

R: As well as, of course, contemporary art, as another strand, is completely new. So that idea of how you commission an artist, how you write a contract, how you go through that proposal process.

**I: Yes, yes.**

R: And I am there to support people with that actual delivery. So I suppose it's having eyes over this, but actually it is... and that's why I love my role. Because, even though I sit within a consultancy, I sit slap-bang in-between property and consultancy. I have the flexibility to actually get my hands dirty and support them, and to feel part of the team, to show them that actually they *can* do this.

**I: Yes.**

R: And it also means that I don't necessarily need to get embroiled in lots of strategic asks that are coming down from head office. I mean, I do. I used to be aware of them, like (unclear 00:09:37), which is where a lot of this sits within. But in terms of, I suppose, delivering that, it's not really about that. It's about moving properties, that they are able to have the skillsets, and able to deliver the ambition of what it is that we are trying to do as an organisation.

**I: Yes. And is yours a permanent role, or is it a fixed-term?**

R: No, fixed-term. So, this time next year, I will not be here.

I: **Really?**

R: [Laughter] and I think, you know, they are saying...

I: **So that was the contract?**

R: That was the contract, yes.

I: **It was just an eighteen-month...?**

R: Well, it was originally... yes, eighteen months, but it will be just under two years.

I: **Okay.**

R: But I think they are seeing such huge successes and rewards from the role that they are talking around how or whether it can or should be extended. And also, similar roles across the Trust are starting to appear as well, which is good.

I: **How do you think that is going to be funded – external funding?**

R: No. You see, my role, again, is really interesting, and this allows me to have more relationship with the properties. So my role is a very weird consultancy role, where I am funded 100% by the properties.

I: **Oh, okay.**

R: So not centrally, and not by the consultancy pot.

I: **Okay.**

R: And depending on, again, the size of each property, they put in different amounts for me.

I: **So you've got a portfolio of properties that you are fixed to working with.**

R: Yes, which are the seven in the North East, seven portfolios.

I: **Seven National Trust properties in...**

R: Portfolios.

I: **Portfolios?**

R: Yes.

I: **What's that?**



R: So, for example, Lindisfarne, it's Lindisfarne Castle and Northumberland Coast.

I: **Oh, I see, okay, yes, yes.**

R: And the Farne Islands. So that is theirs. And Gibside is Gibside, Penshaw Monument and Washington Old Hall.

I: **Okay. So they come in little groups.**

R: They come in little groups. The Hadrian's Wall portfolio is Hadrian's Wall, Cherryburn and George Stephenson's Birthplace. Cragside is its own, Wallington is its own, Seaton Delaval Hall is its own, and then we've got Souter Lighthouse and The Leas, and the Durham Coast.

I: **Yes, okay, right, okay.**

R: [Laughter].

I: **Right, yes, so those portfolios, they fund your work.**

R: So they fund me.

I: **Yes, okay.**

R: And then my strategic development across the North is that I do the strategy for Trust New Art across the North, and what that looks like, and put in the funding bid, and do all the reporting back. But I don't help the delivery for those projects, apart from in the North East.

I: **Apart from those ones, apart from that.**

R: Yes.

I: **Okay. Gosh, that's a... yes, the National Trust [laughter]...**

R: And that's four days a week.

I: **Okay, yes.**

R: Because, the other day a week, I am the... I always get my titles mixed. The creative programmes coordinator at Croome, which is another National Trust property where our programme is all around the arts.

I: **Okay.**

R: It was, kind of, the pilot property for the trust.

I: **At...**

R: Croome, C-R-O-O-M-E.

I: **Oh, Croome.**

R: And we don't really have a collection. We have 500 objects. And everything we do, we work with artists. So the last commission that I worked on was a commission with new talent artist, Chris Alton, and Hew Locke.

I: **Okay. So all the work at Croome... ah, yes, okay.**

R: It's quite well known in the Trust, in terms of pioneering and in terms of what we are doing, but also outside of that – you know, *how* we work, the artists that we work, and I do all of that commissioning and contracting.

I: **And is that the outside T(over-speaking 00:13:04 – 00:13:07)?**

R: So, again... this is funny. Trust New Art is an interesting, kind of, brand, I suppose. Trust New Art was set up by this memorandum of understanding between them and ACE. And it wasn't necessarily to say, "Trust New Art is specifically for projects that are funded by ACE, but it's more of a seal of approval that these projects are of high quality and high worth, and that they should be given, I suppose, the time and space deserved for those sorts of art works." Because I think what we were seeing was a lot of art works that were popping up, but they didn't have the time, space and research into it for them to have the gravitas in that sector.

I: **Mm.**

R: And so, along with that, we had to try and put a framework around that. We had branding guidelines that were developed alongside that, so everything that came under that bracket is associated with that, so it is *of* that standard and *of* that quality.

I: **Yes, yes.**

R: Some of the projects we do at Croome are Trust New Art-funded, but some of them are Trust New Art-supported. So, for example, this project is a Trust New Art-supported project because, of course, HSE are funding it.

I: **Yes, yes, yes, yes. Okay.**

R: So even that is quite complicated [laughter].

I: **So even that is also quite complicated.**

R: But, you know, that's the Trust, isn't it [laughter]?

I: **Okay [laughter].**

R: So I'm still there one day a week, and the reason for that is because, if this position comes to an end, I can go back to there. And I was there three days a week prior to that. And then prior to that, I was also at there, and at [s.I Penthouse 00:14:55] Gallery as the learning programme manager. And then before that, I was at Tate and the National Trust, and I was at Tate for about four years.

I: **Yes, okay, great. And so you come from a... you're a (over-speaking 00:15:06).**

R: I come from a fine art background, actually.

I: **A fine art background, (over-speaking 00:15:08 – 00:15:10).**

R: Well, I did... I... oh, perhaps this is strange.

I: **[Laughter].**

R: So I went to Chelsea College of Arts and I studied fine arts. Initially, I went there because I didn't know what medium I wanted to specialise in. I started off as a filmmaker. And, actually, towards the end, by the end of the three years, I didn't make art objects at all. I didn't find that they were able to connect up to my own thinking. And I was in collaboration with a fellow fine arts student, and we created, I suppose, happenings – so different areas where you could start to critique, kind of, language or social parameters around different types of discourse, and how different... depending on the social set up, it can change the type of discourse that you have with others. And so it was more around, I suppose, pedagogical structures and how you can break those down, and how those are, kind of, I suppose... trying to break into those hierarchical structures that are often presented within those pedagogical systems. And so we were trying to diffuse those from within, which was great.

I: **Mm, mm. Yes, yes (over-speaking 00:16:14) [laughter]. From within, yes, sounds good.**

R: Yes. And that's where I... and I suppose I always knew that I wanted to be an artist, but I was really interested in, I suppose, cultural change and what that looks like, and enabling people to do that, and not doing that just on my own, but doing that with others. So I then went on to work at Peckham Platform, which is a socially engaged art practice, in which, of course, you know, embedded within that is 'working with people to develop x'. And then, from there, it then progressed into what I am doing now.

I: **Okay.**

R: So it has always been there. And I also went to Goldsmiths and did an MA in contemporary art theory.

I: **So you've been busy.**

R: I've been busy.

I: **You've been really busy.**

R: Yes [laughter].

I: **So you said you've been at Croome for about four years?**

R: I've been at Croome for three years now.

I: **Okay. So tell me a bit more about Croome. Let's go back to that.**

R: Croome.

I: **Croome. Tell me a bit more about Croome.**

R: Croome, that's another interesting and very long story. Croome was acquired by the Trust about ten years ago. And, basically, it was an empty shell. It has had an amazing history. It was acquired by the sixth Earl of Coventry back in 1751, and he was the first... he was one of the pioneering people in terms of what Croome's spirit of place is. And he commissioned Robert Adam for his very first entire-space design – you know, ceiling, walls, everything – as well as 'Capability' Brown for his first entire landscape. He really wanted to champion creatives in the early stages in their career to be able to project onto the next level up. And that is basically what is embedded within (unclear 00:17:50).

I: **Mm.**

R: After the Second World War, the majority of the collection got sold off. It then became a boys' school for 30 years, run by the diocese. And then it became the centre for Hare Krishnas for about 10 years. And then it got in the hands of a property developer, and then, again, it got sold on to us.

So, because of that, because most of the collection got sold off, we only have about 500 objects. We knew that we'd have to do something very different. It was basically an empty shell. We were also applying for HLF funding at the time, to make the building sound, and to have proper electrics, and not to have [s.l water running through 00:18:26].

I: **Mm, mm.**

R: So they thought, actually, that they could use that as an opportunity to change the visitor experience. And so, within that, they wrote that, actually, they wanted to use it as a test bed to be able to commission or to try different methodologies within a creative structure. That doesn't just mean fine arts; that could mean theatre, writing, conversation, whatever you deem to be creative, to find out different ways in which we can specifically relate to our different audiences, and for them to be embedded within the process.

**I: So were you there at the beginning of this programme?**

R: I wasn't there at the beginning.

**I: Okay.**

R: They got HLF funding, and along with that came three new positions. One was the... I can't remember what [they were] initially called, in terms of [their] title, because it has changed, but [they are] now the creative partnerships manager, [Name]. There was a creative director, and then there was – which I was originally – a creative programmes assistant.

Two years in, the structure changed. My position was supposed to be, again, that support for new talent. They were supposed to be one to one-and-a-half year posts to develop that way of thinking, and then you could, again, go off and do something else. I was the second, and there was meant to be one after me. And, for various reasons that I won't go into at the moment, that structure wasn't working.

**I: Mm.**

R: And so they changed it, so then our creative director actually got made redundant. He is now (unclear 00:20:01) Royal Historic Palaces. And I was asked to then step up, to be the creative programmes coordinator and, again, work more closely with the property. Because what we are finding is that, kind of, projects are over *here*, the property was over *there*, and part of it was meant to be integrated so that it was just a way of working, rather than an extra thing. And from there, actually, we have just gone from strength to strength. That was about six months into me being there. And now we have got our programming blueprint, we know what that is, we know how we commission.

**I: What's a programming blueprint?**

R: So, what we have created is looking at, I suppose, what our programme is, so what our vision is, but also in terms of where we like to have different things that happen over the course of the year, so looking at, again, our visitor flow. So, you know, in March we like to launch something, in June we like to launch something, in September we like to launch something, and then in November. So it's looking at all of the structure in terms of, you know, "It's crazy to do anything in the holidays." And looking at audience segments, so then which type of exhibition you plot. Your plan, at that moment in time, relates to the audience that you are trying to either attract or that is already coming in the audience segmentation.

**I: Yes, yes.**

R: As well as that, there is another layer in terms of participation, where if there is an audience segment that you particularly want to attract, you work *with* them to develop that artwork. Chris Alton is a fantastic example, where he worked with

four different groups to actually the concept of what the artwork was going to be, and then he produced it. So, yes, that's kind of what Croome is.

**I: Okay.**

R: And we have come to the end of the project. The project finished in March, and this is the way it has been so successful, this is the way in which they are work. That, you know, my post has now been extended for another four years, and we are looking at different funding streams to make it...

**I: Yes, so it's now embedded in–**

R: It's now embedded, yes. Last year, we won a Museum + Heritage Award for one of our projects, Potter and Ponder, working with children who have a variety of physical and learning disabilities. They developed a sensory map. That was produced by William Hanekom, who, again, is an artist from a similar sort of background as well, working in partnership with Outside In, who are an organisation who support artist who have a variety of different learning and physical disabilities. And that's what I mean in terms of partnering up, in relation to our programme, to make it stronger. It's about seeing where we don't have the skillsets and finding different people who have that, to enable us to do that, but also of mutual benefit.

**I: Okay. Yes. Let's come back to that, because that's one of my (unclear 00:22:32).**

R: Oh, okay.

**I: It's about partnerships, so we can come back to that one.**

R: Perfect. So, yes, Croome is a funny one.

**I: So Croome has got... if I was to go on the website and look at the Croome site, the webpage, does that give me a good picture of – (unclear 00:22:48) – all this different activity?**

R: Yes, yes, yes.

**I: Some of which will be flagged and badged as just Trust New Art.**

R: Some of it will be flagged and badged as... some of it just Croome.

**I: And some of the participatory stuff is possibly less Trust New Art, is that right?**

R: No – *more* so.

**I: More so? Really? That's interesting.**

R: It is interesting, and it's because of the needs, the wants and the objectives that have recently changed for Trust New Art.

I: **Yes, okay.**

R: (Over-speaking 00:23:09) ACE, because they want us to work with different audiences, audiences that don't have access to the arts, and just to work in a more participative, interactive way.

I: **Okay, so that's to do with the MoU between ACE and National Trust as the formation of Trust New Art.**

R: Yes.

I: **So you've just said that that has slightly changed. So, in terms of Trust New Art's aims and objectives, can you say a bit about that and maybe the recent changes?**

R: I would say it's more...

I: **I've seen the MoU and...**

R: Yes, so we are... we as an organisation are realising that we need to connect with our audiences. We need to be more relevant and resonant with them for us to enable them to actually survive, in really basic terms.

I: **To develop your audiences and...**

R: To develop our audiences, but also, what we are finding is, at the moment, we have got a healthy audience base, but they are of an older, probably, generation. And what's happening is that even though we are still able to hold on to those, we are finding that we are not replenishing as much as we possibly *could* and *should* do.

I: **Yes, yes, yes.**

R: And so what we are finding is also, looking at different audience segmentation in specifically millennials, what we are finding is that they want to feel part of that process, to feel embedded within, and to feel validated. And what better way to do that than to be in conversations with them? To find out actually what it is that *you* find interesting. So, rather than us saying, "We think that you will find this interesting," we're actually just asking the question, and then hopefully enabling that to be realised in some shape or form.

I: **Mm.**

R: And that's around our strategy called 'move, teach and inspire'. So it's around just connecting with our different audiences, again, inspiring them to be passionate about our places, as well as them being more understanding around our cause,

what that looks like, why we do this, why it's important for heritage and culture to be preserved, and also for them to find out a little bit more about that. So that's the 'move, teach and inspire' bit.

**I: Yes, yes.**

**R:** And then, as a sub-strand for that, ACE... I don't know all of them off the top of my head, but what we are finding is that – and I agree, from a personal perspective – it's not good enough anymore just to say that we are going to do art. That actually it is around, I think, similar sorts of aims; that it is around, actually, working with people to see how it is relevant, how they can get involved, and how it can inspire them to do something different. And so therefore, in terms of the next round, in terms of their vision, it came out very clearly, actually, with the new NPOs that came out last year – that is a want and a need from them to show commitment to working with different people to enable these things to happen.

**I: Mm, mm.**

**R:** So it's not saying that every single project has to do that, but it's just saying that, within our bid, because we go into a bid regionally, we have to show that we have a commitment to do that, and to engage with different audiences and our local communities to inform what we are doing and why we are doing it. And that's why I think... you know, interesting with the last NPO round, some of the cultural organisations that had been supported previously, this time around aren't, because that wasn't visible.

**I: Yes, yes, yes. So when you were saying about... thinking about, say, for example, what you might do at Croome or what you might do at Gibside.**

**R:** Yes.

**I: You are thinking... I suppose there's (unclear 00:26:42). Maybe Wallington is a better example, because it's a house with things in it. It's more of a collection.**

**R:** Yes.

**I: Whereas, from what you said about Croome and what I know about Gibside, these are landscapes and empty shells and ruined buildings.**

**R:** Yes, mm-hmm.

**I: And what you have said so far is that most of... when you are thinking about the programme and you are thinking about your audience, of which I presume you mean both your members and your [s.I day visitors 00:27:06]–**

**R:** Yes, yes, and local community.

**I: And your local community who are involved...**



- R: Although we are not doing it that well in the North East, at the moment.
- I: **Okay. But where does the actual... and then you've got this other thing, which is the story you told me about Croome – you know, what Croome is, where it comes from, and its architecture and its (over-speaking 00:27:25).**
- R: Each property has a spirit of place, and that is the philosophy as to what that property is – or what that *place* is. And each place, whether it is even a landscape, or the Farne Islands, or Wallington, everyone has one, and it's around, "What is the key thing that you want people to go away with or to learn about?"
- I: **Yes.**
- R: And so, of course, Cragside's is around being a place of innovation and pioneering technology. Of course, Armstrong is a huge part of that, but it isn't necessarily the key. So the project we've got at the moment with Newcastle University, within the STEM sector, we are working with young female innovators to envision what Cragside can be in the future.
- I: **Yes.**
- R: So, even though Armstrong is the starting point, it's around, actually, "How do we make that, again, relevant now? What is happening within the wider context in terms of the STEM sector?" So that is always our starting point. And, again, we don't... we *can*, but I suppose, within my role, it wouldn't be advocated, again, just to do things for something's sake, or just to do things and say, "Oh, well, *that* audience will like it." It *has* to be rooted within place, again, for our audiences, otherwise it wouldn't make sense. It wouldn't make sense as to why we would have, I don't know, George Stephenson's steam train in Gibside. It just wouldn't make sense.
- I: **Yes, yes.**
- R: Also, that's the element, I think, that makes each property incredible unique. That's, I suppose, the gem that you want to unveil. And that's why we work, I think, *more* so, actually, in the North East, as a cluster, to pull on everyone's strengths. And I think we have a really great, diverse range of properties in the North East to enable that to happen.
- I: **Okay, good. Okay, good.**
- R: Have you not seen Gibside's spirit of place? You probably should have.
- I: **I probably have seen it.**
- R: Okay [laughter].
- I: **I think I've seen some of them, because they are internal documents, aren't they?**

R: Yes.

I: **They are not public documents.**

R: Mm.

I: **Maybe I've seen the one which (over-speaking 00:29:31 – 00:29:32).**

R: You know, and Cherryburn, for example, is all around Bewick and creativity.

I: **Yes, (over-speaking 00:29:33) those. We should have those.**

R: You *should* have them, yes.

I: **I don't know whether we... we may have done. It's like, you know, we are (unclear 00:29:39–00:29:43).**

R: Yes. Some are stronger, some work. And, again, Croome's is very much a philosophy.

I: **Yes.**

R: But some are more specific. I would say, actually, in the North East, again, they are stronger. And that's where [Name] ... that's [*their*] consultancy hub, so [they] support[ ] properties to develop that.

I: **Yes, [they're] the spirit of place.**

R: Yes, [they're] the spirit of place guru [laughter].

I: **Okay. So, if I wanted to get hold of those documents, is that [them] or you?**

R: Oh, either.

I: **Oh, okay, alright. Because originally my questions here were about Trust New Art, but obviously we have talked around–**

R: Sorry.

I: **No, no, that's fine, because you have got a wider remit, and this wider creativity going on.**

R: [Laughter].

I: **So I know, from what I can gather, just to summarise, that the National Trust is doing lots of different cultural activity, including arts activity of all kinds.**

R: Yes, yes.

I: **And some of that fits–**

R: It all fits under that National Public Programme.

I: **Yes, the National Public Programme, and some of it is under Trust New Art. Do you see this activity that the National Trust is involved in, in terms of this contemporary arts activity and heritage properties, as something that is unique to Trust New Art? Or do you see it as part of a wider field of practice?**

R: Yes, I think the latter. I think it is part of a wider field of practice.

I: **Yes.**

R: And I think that's really great, actually. Again, I think it's always that question that comes up, which is the reason why that framework was created, Trust New Art, around quality, what quality means, and who determines quality.

I: **Yes. I'm just checking it's still going, but yes.**

R: But I think it is also good, the fact that it is branded in that way, so that if you are particularly interested in that strand of work, there is a website that you can go to and see different places nationally where it is all happening. But I do think it happens outside of that as well.

I: **Mm. Where is it happening outside of what the National Trust is doing?**

R: Specifically contemporary art-related?

I: **Yes, yes.**

R: Within our organisation?

I: **No, *without*, outside, beyond... if you think of what you are doing nationally, it's part of a wider field of practice of contemporary activity and heritage sites. Do you see it that way? Or do you see just what you are doing?**

R: Well, I would say... well, again, English Heritage does that a lot.

I: **English Heritage, yes, yes, yes.**

R: I would say that there are also... gosh, I've forgotten what it's called. What is it called, in Oxford, where Churchill was born, beginning with B?

I: **Oh, yes.**

R: Anyway, *there*.

I: **Yes, yes, yes, yes.**

R: So I think that it is a wider conversation. There are plenty of places down in the South West. The previous place I worked at, s.l Penthouse 00:32:37] Gallery, they have contemporary art and it's in a historic house.

I: **Yes.**

R: So it *is* part of a wider conversation. I just think we... the strength of Trust New Art is because I think it is... we are such a huge organisation. It's across multiple sites, and we have that platform to be able to elevate it, I think. But it *is* part of a wider conversation. I don't know how much we are engaging with the wider conversation. That would probably be more of a question for [NT2]. That's probably[their] field.

I: **Yes, yes. And, to be honest, that is possibly part of our role in this research project as well, just thinking, "Is there a wider conversation going on? Is it fragmented? Is there a lot of knowledge in one area in which maybe some other people haven't got?" You have to renew all of this knowledge [laughter] all the time, don't you?**

R: Yes, yes.

I: **And are there are any international precedents or examples that...**

R: That I am aware of?

I: **That *you* are aware of, or the National Trust or Trust New Art is... is there any dialogue with others?**

R: I know that [NT1]is keen for us to look at touring. And I don't know whether he is thinking of that in terms of, I don't know, a variety of different biennales or just different cultural organisations, but I know that that is something he is keen to develop.

I: **Okay.**

R: I don't know how far that has got to in the conversations. Oh, yes, and, of course, Royal Historic Palaces.

I: **Yes, yes, yes.**

R: And the same elsewhere.

I: **Yes.**

R: So, again, I wouldn't necessarily say that I am involved directly with that conversation, but it definitely...

I: **No, but it's, sort of... it's feelers, isn't it?**

R: Yes.

I: **And getting... I mean, it's like that thing I went to in Birmingham. There were lots of different people in the room. There was a guy from Historic Palaces there, I think, as well.**

R: Yes.

I: **Okay. Okay, let's go on to the commissioning, more nitty-gritty part of it.**

R: Mm-hmm.

I: **You've already touched on it, but can you tell me a bit more about the processes involved in commissioning a Trust New Art project?**

R: Specifically Trust New Art? And do you mean Trust New Art funding or supporting?

I: **Well, maybe not. Maybe any kind of contemporary... let's narrow it down what I would call 'visual art' perhaps, because that's what our project is about.**

R: Okay, okay.

I: **In terms of commissioning new visual arts (over-speaking 00:35:12).**

R: And not with projects, just what we would usually... the process that we would usually use.

I: **Yes, yes. Or the processes, you know, did they vary? I remember they *do* vary.**

R: They do vary, they do vary.

I: **Yes. What processes? Yes.**

R: So, what do we do? I suppose, first of all, it's looking at what it is that we want to do. Is there a particular object that we want to highlight, or a particular theme? And then what I could advocate for is then the project team to write a project internal brief, so looking at what the aims and objectives are for that project, whether you want to specify which type of artist that you want to work with, which process you want within that. So, I suppose, specifying whether it's medium-based, whether it's concept-based, or whether it's process-based. So there are different types in terms of, you know, what the outcome may be, and how open or contained we need to be in that circumstance.

I: **Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.**

R: Then that would be signed off by various different people. If it's a Trust New Art project, we would have that conversation with myself beforehand, which will then get submitted to ACE in a regional bid, and then you can then develop that project when you have said that you are going to develop, and then the funds are there.

I: **Mm.**

R: After you have then developed that project brief, if it's *not* Trust New Art-funded, we would then have to look at funds, so whether we wanted to go externally to partner up with somebody or whether it is that we are able to commission that 100% in-house.

I: **Mm, mm.**

R: And then, depending on whether it is a partner, we will then go back and look at that brief and see how we can make it what type of collaboration it is. And then, obviously, we will write down a memorandum of understanding with that organisation.

I: **Yes.**

R: And then, depending on which medium, artist, etc. we want to work within or with, we will then develop the next stage. So, sometimes it may be that we specifically know that we want to work within the medium of paper, so then, usually... I mean, again, at Croome, at which I presumably... what I do in this role, that we haven't come around that yet – I go and do some research into who those artists are, different localities, whether it has to be local artists or whether it's not, depending on the funding. And then I report that back to the property.

Usually, we would then ask for a short proposal process. Sometimes we pay for that, and sometimes we don't, depending on how much we are asking for. And, again, sometimes that will be a site visit or not. For them, usually, we would ask for four of those, and then we would select a person from that. So that's one way.

I: **Yes. Yes, yes, okay.**

R: It could also be that we know that there is an artist who is 100% fantastic, we definitely want to work with them, and we know them – so [s.I Nadine Chaudhry 00:38:04] at Croome is a fantastic example. You know, we have–

I: **Yes, so that's a direct invitation.**

R: A direct invitation. And we say, "This is the idea that we've got, but we don't know what the outcome is going to be." And, again, all of these, we *should* know what the outcome is going to be. That's something that I'm trying to drill into people at the moment.

I: **[Laughter].**

R: We *should* know what the outcome is going to be.

And then, of course, the other way is open call. So we don't mind, we have huge flexibility, we would like to actually see what different possibilities different people from different mediums come back to, and then we go through a similar process of inviting them to interview, etc. and then go down that route.

I: **Yes, yes, yes. And that, kind of, selection panel...**

R: And then there's the selection panel with different areas of expertise. But we do write an artistic brief.

I: **Yes, yes.**

R: So, sometimes we work that up with the artist, depending on how we've approached. But, of course, prior to open call, we would always write an artist brief that we would send out. And then we would then go into, like, what does this look like? What timescales? How does it fit? And so on.

I: **Yes, yes, yes, yes.**

R: But, in terms of the artistic involvement, I suppose that those are the main three that we usually do.

I: **Mm, okay. And then it is contracting all the–**

R: And then it is, yes, contracting straight away, developing the project, workshops, marketing, installation, de-installation, and all of that stuff.

I: **Mm. And how long does that process, sort of, (over-speaking 00:39:32)?**

R: It varies completely. I mean, ideally [laughter], we would know a year in advance who we were working with.

I: **Yes.**

R: So that all of this process would hopefully be done, so then they have enough time to be able to do all of their research, develop their project proposal, it to be signed off, you know, all of that. So I would like to say a minimum of a year, but I have turned it around much quicker than that.

I: **Okay. And you have probably got some things which are commissioned, and you have got some things which are residencies, and some things which are other sorts of activity that we have had.**

R: Yes.

I: **So you have got commissions, that's one strand, and that's the thing (unclear 00:40:16 – 00:40:18) got residencies. And what do you call the other**

**sorts of things? Is that workshops, or socially engaged, or (over-speaking 00:40:26 – 00:40:27) development?**

R: Yes. I mean, it's funny, actually, because I don't know whether I differentiate them in that context.

I: **No, no.**

R: Because, for me, it's still a type of commission, whether it's a residency...

I: **Yes, yes, a research commission or...**

R: Yes. I would say that the main thing for me is whether, I suppose, we want a specific *output* – rather than *outcome* – or not. So, I suppose, whether we want something to be physically... or, kind of, produced, something that is produced at the end, or whether it's research and development.

I: **Yes, okay.**

R: And often, what we try to do specifically with properties that haven't been through the process before, we advise them to do research and development first, and then go into the actual production, you know, whatever that is.

I: **Yes, yes.**

R: So they can do all of the feasibility study and apply for extra funds if it's needed. That's what we did at Lindisfarne – we did research and development prior to this. And then... and you can on board with their proposal, and then we went back and we got funding for it.

I: **Okay. Yes, because you said... yes, originally, you said about having, kind of, outlined the proposals from the portfolio, of what you wanted to do, and then that goes into the bid or for the Arts Council.**

R: Yes.

I: **So they know that you want to do something... well, maybe not in Lindisfarne exactly, but you want to do some things at Gibside or something.**

R: Yes. So, what we would do... at the moment, the piece of work that I'm working on is around the strategic development of which properties should go into that bid. And it's quite a strange position, in terms of actually... because there are lots of different parameters that we are currently looking at. I don't quite know how much I should say, really, but it's looking at a skillset within the property already, learnings... and I mean learnings in terms of that they don't necessarily have to get everything right, if they have done it before, but actually having real... being an advocate for that round of work, and actually really wanting to embed that in – those that have been doing it for a long time but haven't had financial support,



those that couldn't do it without financial support. So there are lots of different parameters which we are looking at.

**I: Mm.**

**R:** And so we weigh all of those up, along with other huge projects that they have got going on-board, that are happening on site. So, do they have the capacity to be able to do it?

**I: Yes. That could be a conservation project.**

**R:** Yes, it could be a conservation project. Is it that, actually, they would be a fantastic property in the future, but not necessarily now, in this round of bids? Because the way that Trust New Art works is that you... you kind of have a year off. We're kind of in a year off at the moment, where you are reporting from the last two years and then putting in your bid for the next two years.

**I: Okay.**

**R:** You then have two years of actual delivering, and then you have your year off. So, at the moment, we're in the strategic planning of which properties in the North should be in that bid, and trying to create a framework around it, rather than... because I think it's a thing where, if you frame it in terms of, "Here is some funding – do you want in?" most people will say, "Yes, of course, that's brilliant."

**I: Yes, yes [laughter].**

**R:** And we are trying to get away from that because, actually, there should be a need and a want and a desire to a) do it, but b) also to make it sustainable. So the point is that we are not just a constant source of money; that, actually, this should be integrated, and that we should see signs of it being integrated by the end of the project or by the end of the support.

**I: Yes, okay. So that could lead to individual properties or individual projects then going [s.I blank 00:44:03] at Lindisfarne or...**

**R:** Yes.

**I: Okay.**

**R:** I mean, Lindisfarne, again, is a special case, so I don't know whether it's the most fantastic example. In the last round of funding, when we applied for research and development with Lindisfarne, they said yes to research and development, "But we weren't quite ready to know what the final piece was going to be." And so we said, "Would we be able to, on this very one-and-only occasion, put in a separate bid to ACE?" And they said, "Yes, but we don't usually advocate for that, because we go into this regional bid."

**I: Mm, mm.**

R: And so we did, and luckily, we were successful. But that is part of our memorandum of understanding, which you will have read – the reason why we go in a regional bid is that then you can't apply for other pots of ACE funding.

I: **Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.**

R: But Lindisfarne is a special case.

I: **So it's a bit like being an NPO or something.**

R: Yes, exactly.

I: **Is the National Trust an NPO?**

R: No, no, because we have this memorandum of understanding with them.

I: **Okay, yes.**

R: I don't know how much, but they reinvest x amount of money. I don't know what the money is. And then each region applies to that money very differently. So, actually, the North and the Midlands are very similar, by going into it regionally. And more of the allocation of funds is internal. So that's the relationship of me with the properties to say, "This project, what is your idea? This artist could be good. This is a participation project, so therefore that might take more money." And so I have to just, kind of, work out what those breakdowns are, and then that builds up what the pot is and what the ask is, and then that's that way.

Down in London South East, they apply individually for our property, but they have, again, a pot that they can go into. But I don't quite know how that works. It's much nicer, I think, in a regional way.

I: **Yes. It's interesting to, kind of...**

R: But probably a better example of it is Craggside. So, even though there are artistic elements of it that are still of an incredibly high quality...

I: **This is the project that you are doing now?**

R: Yes, yes.

I: **Okay, yes, with NICAP, is that right?**

R: With Newcastle University.

I: **Yes, yes, Newcastle... we call it the Newcastle Institute for Creative Practice.**

R: Yes.

I: **Yes.**

R: It's working with their experimental architecture with Rachael Armstrong.

I: **Yes, okay. Right, let's just... my next set of questions... this is about commissioning or about the processes we've talked about. And then you've talked about... in some of those things, you are very integral to that in terms really acting as the curator, producer, advisor and advocate for that kind of work.**

R: Mm-hmm.

I: **And sometimes, like for the project we are doing together, you work in partnership with other organisations. And, obviously, with Lindisfarne, you work with local suppliers.**

R: Yes.

I: **Can you tell me a bit more about these partnerships, the sort of partners you might work with – and, obviously, those two, like you've got the University and then an arts agency – and how that works and why you do that?**

R: Again, a variety of reasons. It could be because we don't have the skillset in a particular area. It could be that we want to work with a particular audience. So, for example, at Cragside, we wanted to work with young innovators to develop x. And we wanted to, I suppose, again, give the [s.l foundation 00:47:29] Locus+. The reason that was developed was because, again, my predecessor, who was based in Manchester, [they] couldn't offer the support in the delivery of a project.

I: **Sort of, locally.**

R: Locally.

I: **Yes.**

R: And so, actually, that was set up to enable that commissioning support for the property. And because, at that point, I wasn't here, they didn't have that area of expertise in terms of that commissioning.

I: **Mm-hmm.**

R: It could be that we work with an organisation that already has links to a particular community. So we are in conversations... although it hasn't... so don't quote me on this... we are in conversations with Amber Collection on the Durham Coast, because they have been working with local beaches there for ten or fifteen years.

I: **Yes, yes, yes.**

R: It could be that they have access to... it could be that, yes, like [A&H], who has fantastic wealth in terms of different artistic practices within different localities.

**I: Mm.**

R: It could be funding. So it could be that we both want to work on a project together, and we can work out of different pots of money.

**I: Yes, yes.**

R: So it is completely variable, depending on what it is. It could be that, actually, we are both really excited with (unclear 00:48:41) ethos is, so we want to work on a project together. So I wouldn't say that there is a particular remedy or methodology, but I think partnerships are the way forward, actually, for us as an organisation, and it's one that we want to develop much further into the future.

And, you know, from another practical [s.I level 00:49:01], it makes them reach much wider. And it's great; it's great to have people from different perspectives working on the same thing.

**I: Yes. I don't know whether you are able to say [laughter]... it's difficult to say this because we are, obviously, working in partnership. You might not want to comment, as yet, on our project. Maybe that comes later, I don't know. You can if you want to. But what makes a good partnership project, and what are the issues within working...? Because, even with us, you know, the University is a big institution in itself, and I don't quite understand how it works. The National Trust is another–**

R: A *huge* organisation.

**I: –big organisation and organised a totally different way.**

R: Yes.

**I: So you've got two things there. And then you've got something like the National Trust and the way it's working, and then a very small agency, like Locus+, or indeed, Amber.**

R: Yes.

**I: You know, I (unclear 00:49:51 – 00:49:52). So there are lots of different issues of scale or, I don't know... have you found that?**

R: I mean, I think, for me... it's interesting, actually. Because, in terms of the start of this research project, I feel I'm quite hard to judge. I think it's because I wasn't there at the beginning of the conversations – and I wish I was. I think what I found, from my position, is there was a little bit of unpicking that I needed to do [laughter].

**I: Yes, yes. Well, we all... yes, yes, yes, yes.**

R: Which I would have thought, usually, there would have been those sorts of parameters already laid out and discussed. So a memorandum or a letter of

understanding between the two organisations, which, again, is something that I would always advocate for with *any* partner, whether it's small or big, who is leading on what, and what the marketing plan is. So, all of those things that we have now got in place would need to have happened from the very outset. And then even within that memorandum of understanding, saying who is leading on what – so who is doing the artistic commissioning, what positions are we within it. “Are we, as the National Trust, a host? Are we a financial partner? Are we not a financial partner, but we are 50/50 in terms of internal voice, in terms of marketing, in terms of all of that other stuff?”

**I: Mm-hmm, mm, mm.**

**R:** And I think that's where, potentially, this project lost a bit of time, actually, by having to revisit that project about all of those process only, you know, six or seven months ago.

**I: Yes, yes.**

**R:** And so that would be... I think that's the key to a good partnership. It's not necessarily that it's all about forms and everything has to be written down, but it's just about having that open and honest discussion, and then revisiting that over the course the partnership.

**I: Yes, yes, which we have in this project, a bit, and we sit between Gibside and Cherryburn. But they are different as well.**

**R:** Well, I think, also, how we have come on in the last six months, it is phenomenal, actually. And I think we have been able to teethe out some of those initial confusions, having had those conversations, much more quickly than I think the thinking of these two huge entities would have been able to have done. I think it's because of the people involved, actually. But, actually, what we have been able to achieve, specifically within four months, I think is... I mean, I still find it amazing that we have been able to achieve the amount that we have done

**I: [Laughter] (unclear 00:52:14).**

**R:** Yes, yes.

**I: Yes.**

**R:** But I do think, yes... you know, there were just some processes that, again, even if we were just the host – I say *just* the host, but I'm not trying to demean that –we, again, would have liked to have seen. So, like, for example, the artist contracts. If we are hosting it, and we have got a lot of the liability in terms of, you know, [s.l how it happened 00:52:35].

**I: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.**

- R: And it's not to say that we would want to have ownership over that, but it's just that we are aware of parameters are being set with those artists from the start-off. So, again, we know how we are being presented to those artists from the beginning.
- I: **Mm, mm. Yes, it's interesting, isn't it? A lot of it is about communication and messages and...**
- R: Communication, messages... again, and then who is leading on what part, I think, is another huge learning that we had, from both the NT and from the University perspective as well.
- I: **Yes, mm, yes. I mean, I think... I suppose, reflecting on this project myself, it's slightly unusual. Obviously, Newcastle University is a big institution and it has been there [laughter]... you know, it's a solid... you know, it has been there for a long time. But, actually, the people you are working... the micro-organisation that you are working with, if you'd like to call it... it might be contemporary art... but, you know, our research project is only a temporary coming together of individuals in a team. It's almost like a new mini-organisation in itself, which is because of the AH... I'm not trying to justify it, I'm just reflecting on it. Just the AHRC funding comes in at certain times. [S.I you've got three years 00:53:46], and you can't start the work before that, so that's why those... but if you were working with an established – it doesn't matter how big or small – arts organisation or producer, they might have, like, Arts&Heritage or Locus+ around them. You know, they pre-exist, and they have got their own... similar things to you. They have got their own language and parameters and (over-speaking 00:54:10 – 00:54:11).**
- R: No, I mean, I understand that, but I suppose, also, that is the reason why you have... you know, I don't know [s.I every role 00:54:16], but that's the reason why I think it was great that you've brought [A&H] on board, who brought that expertise to be able to support them through that process.
- I: **Yes, yes, yes, exactly, yes, yes.**
- R: And, again, I don't know how... and I think that's an interesting thing with me taking over from [NT3], who I think was the person who initially it was set up by.
- I: **It was [NT1], actually.**
- R: Oh, [NT1].
- I: **Yes, originally. When we did the original AHRC bid, which I was involved in as well, the original conversations were with [NT1], who was leading Trust New Art at that time.**
- R: So, again, I think that's really interesting in terms of those different layers, even though... you know, fantastic, but, again, actually starting those conversations with, you know...

**I: Yes, yes, yes, exactly.**

R: As you said, the smaller organisations that haven't done these... so, in our case, Cherryburn and Gibside, to have had those conversations. So, you know, I understand completely why, and I think it has been a fantastic success, but I think that's one of the key things that I...

**I: Yes.**

R: You know, as I said, I was quite surprised when we were already at that stage ten months into the project, that that stuff hadn't been...

**I: Hadn't been ironed out, yes, yes, yes.**

R: Ironed out, yes, yes.

**I: Yes, as part of that, sort of, selection process – even before that, actually.**

R: Even before that.

**I: Before that.**

R: *Even* before that.

**I: It should be before that. So if you went into that before...**

R: Yes, yes.

**I: Yes, I think it's probably because we didn't have... yes, it's like... I suppose it's the other way round (unclear 00:55:36). With that sort of research work, it's not until you actually start doing things that you work out what you need to–**

R: Completely, yes.

**I: –do before the foundation stuff, because you don't know how it's going to work out, whereas actually... that's interesting. I think anybody interested in learning for other... you know, there must be lots of other people in the University who are doing research projects with external museums or other organisations, and how the University actually manages its partnership working and its protocols for that, and training for its (over-speaking 00:56:09).**

R: Mm-hmm. Yes. I mean, I know that the project isn't as big. You know, it's not (over-speaking 00:56:13), but I think...

**I: Yes, yes, yes.**

R: And also, maybe it's because I was in-post. I mean, I'm not trying to say, "I'm really good and I wrote this...." That's not the case at all. But, in terms of how we have collaborated with Craggs and Newcastle University, we had that conversation *very, very* early on. And, again, it's not saying that we have got a document on which it is all written down. We didn't need that for that, at the moment, for that project, but just understanding, actually, *why* it is that we all want to work together – "What is that you want to get from it? What can we take away from it? Again, what kind of partnership is this? How are we going to position ourselves within this partnership?" And we have said, you know, 50/50 the whole way, and that's how it is. And, you know, again, we have done that [laughter].

I: **Yes [laughter].**

R: But I was surprised that it didn't seem as if... even though I think we knew that would happen, and we thought that would happen, but the fact that, I think, because it is *such* a huge project, we needed that structure to say, actually, if we do write a press release, that the other side will look at it, and vice versa.

I: **Yes, yes, yes.**

R: And, again, it's our... you know, we have done... "It's not just you guys. It's us as well."

I: **[Laughter] yes.**

R: Yes, and I think, actually, that's why it is really interesting, positions like [A&H] and mine within these projects. If it is a new-born, I don't know, *collective* of people, I think those positions are really important and key.

I: **Mm, mm, mm.**

R: Yes.

I: **And looking at it the opposite way... maybe you can't... I don't know if it's difficult maybe for you to... and, obviously, I'm going to interview people. I mean, there were some core people in the National Trust – yourself and [NT2], (unclear 00:57:47) management, and [A&H] at Arts&Heritage. But I am also going to go and do some interviews with some of the arts organisations who have been involved, so (unclear 00:57:58 – 00:58:00). I'll go and ask them about their experience from their perspective of it as well. But I don't know whether you are able to say anything about how... well, the practicalities about how the Lindisfarne project came across from your point of view. If you are not happy to do that, then I can talk to them about it.**

R: Hmm, that's quite...

I: **But if it's...**

R: I mean, again, it's funny, actually, because I feel like I...



**I: I know it's quite fresh.**

R: It's quite fresh, but also, I have inherited quite a lot of projects [laughter].

**I: Yes [laughter].**

R: Locus+ are *brilliant*. They are incredibly skilled in what they do, and they have obviously been doing it for a lot of years. And they were really frenetic in, I suppose, bringing us along the journey. But, again, I think there are definite learnings that we can take away from that, as a partnership. And it's a very... actually, that is probably the partnership that I have reflected on the most – more so than this one, actually. And I think that was more around, again, what does a partnership mean, and more specifically around the monetary value, and who is putting that in. So, therefore, who has the ultimate, I suppose, say or obligation. And I felt that sometimes that may have been lost a little. And I'm not saying that that was anyone's particular fault, but I just think that... I think us revisiting that, so that next time, if we were to work with a commissioning arts organisation specifically – again, what does that mean, how will they present that in relation to the other projects which they have done, and what are the keepings that they want to get from that. And we had a contract with them, specified in terms of what we needed them to produce, which they did. They have done everything.

**I: Mm-hmm.**

R: But, actually, again, it's wider than that. It was all the things that... so we've said that, of course, they could use it on all of their platforms. But then, even in terms of that 'who's project is it', all of those sorts of things, we are still in conversations around that, because of what they, as an organisation, represent. You know, they are a commissioning body, which is quite interesting.

**I: Yes. And it's interesting, these different layers and different times when it seems to be... yes, and when an organisational ego comes across, and so your [s.I no-go goes at the top 01:00:53], because it just is.**

R: Yes.

**I: You are sending it out, so it's your thing, but then there is (over-speaking 01:01:00) as well.**

R: All of those sorts of things.

**I: I mean, obviously, there are others. I mean, there is, I think, probably, before you started this work, Unravelled Arts, Meadow Arts, and some other similar-sized organisations in other parts of the country who have worked with the National Trust in that similar... or in some form, to deliver projects. So I'm going to go and talk to some of those people as well, to get that...**

R: Yes. It's interesting. I don't know... my main question is... and I suppose this is more of a personal... I think this is more of a personal thing than a National Trust thing. This is, kind of, [R] thinking.

I: **[Laughter].**

R: If we are committed to this, if this is a good way of working, should we not – and I think we are starting to – value that internally? So should we not fund posts like myself, who have the skills and expertise to be able to deliver that, who come from that background, who understand that, who have a huge wealth of artists, rather than going out and asking organisations... and I think, you know, again, I'm not saying that I'm not an advocate for partnerships. I think that they are brilliant and fantastic. But I do think there is an element where, specifically around commissioning, specifically commissioning... you know, Trust New Art was set up in 2009. Again, it should be embedded in quite a few properties. I feel that it should be embedded now. And my question is: if that is not happening, why not?

I: **Mm.**

R: And is there a wider disconnect that is happening?

I: **Mm, mm.**

R: I *do* think it is happening slowly. You know, the Trust New Art team is growing, the national programme team is growing, and there are positions like mine that are popping up. But, actually, there is a huge desire to have that skillset there to support properties to be able to do this stuff.

I: **Mm.**

R: And, yes, I just wonder whether that is... that's why. And I think, you know, we are at the stage now where... which, again, I understand why specifically, Locus+, that project was brought up. You know, in terms of [NT3] was down in the South West, and they needed somebody there to support the properties. But, you know, now that I am here, and that is my role, would we have used the same process? I don't know. Maybe, but I don't know.

I: **Yes. I mean, it does make things... that partnership work, it makes it... it's a way of, yes, bringing in additional expertise and resources, but it does make things much more complicated.**

R: Complicated.

I: ***Much* more complicated.**

R: *Much* more complicated.

I: **And much more opportunities for slippage and [laughter] things like that.**

R: Completely.

I: **And also, I don't know... if you are thinking of property... so, Lindisfarne, I don't know, it probably has a tiny staff.**

R: A team of four.

I: **Yes.**

R: [Laughter].

I: **So they are not going to be... and Craggside, there is no... you have to have a slightly (unclear 01:04:15) and describe yourself as a 'floating' person to make that happen.**

R: Person.

I: **Yes, but even the... so the individual... because I remember, years ago, when I worked at the Arts Council here in Newcastle, in Commissions North, we did an early project with Craggside, because the house was closed and they wanted to do something in the grounds. And I remember the experience of that. Craggside came to the Arts Council to try and develop something, and we did develop something.**

R: Yes.

I: **But, again, it was expertise... you know, it's that shift in... there wasn't anybody like yourself, at that point, to offer that expertise. There's a big gap, isn't there, between an organisation and then working with another organisation, and the skills to do that.**

R: Yes. And I think it's very different working, for example, with an organisation like a university or, I don't know, another... even, potentially, another arts organisation. But I think specifically with a commissioning organisation, yes, I think it can be quite complicated. Hmm, yes.

I: **Yes, it's complicated.**

R: It's complicated [laughter].

I: **It's just complicated [laughter]. It's complicated enough, but then taking it with two organisations and...**

R: Yes.

I: **Okay.**

- R: Yes. And also, I don't know whether it's just particular organisations as well. So, for example, I don't know whether that has been the case – I don't think it *has* been the case – with Arts&Heritage.
- I: **Mm.**
- R: But I could be wrong. But, again, I haven't worked with Arts&Heritage.
- I: **Yes, if you think about the different sorts of models. You know, small arts foundations have different kinds of models, and some are more [s.I representative of their 01:06:09] artists.**
- R: Yes, yes, in a way.
- I: **In a way that they... and have a long-term relationship with an artist in that, kind of, non-gallery capacity.**
- R: Yes.
- I: **And then others who are much more open to a wider field.**
- R: Yes. And I think that's the other thing. I think if it's around the conversation of, you know, "We want that artist and we know that that organisation has got a link with them," I think that's one conversation. But then to continue that partnership past the end of that, once you have got that, again, I think is really interesting. And I don't know whether we... just the position that we are in, specifically within the North East, I don't know whether we would need that at this current time.
- I: **Yes. Because it's that... and this is happens quite a lot, when I worked at the Arts Council in a commissioning support role, and we worked with all sorts of different organisations – local authorities and in the private sector. And a lot of it was coming... it was about funding. They want to do something, but a) they don't know how to go about it, and also b) they don't have the contact with the artist.**
- R: Yes.
- I: **So how do you reach these artists? I suppose anybody can do an open call, but where do you do that?**
- R: Yes. And when—
- I: **How do you get out there? Or you invite an artist as...**
- R: How do write an artist's brief?
- I: **How do you do all that?**
- R: Yes, how do you do that?

- I: How do you (over-speaking 01:07:32)? And then what sorts of artists are there out there? And that kind of thing.**
- R: Yes, yes.
- I: So that's, sort of, like, a channelling to that.**
- R: Yes, mm.
- I: And I've got quite a lot... I mean, I don't know if we have... okay. We've been talking for an hour. I've got some other questions here, which we could maybe come to later on.**
- R: Okay.
- I: Which I'll come back to in another interview later on, which are more about the value and benefit for artists and other... about the benefits for organisations like Locus+ or for ourselves, and visitors, and that sort of thing.**
- R: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.
- I: But maybe we will come back to that at a later date.**
- R: Okay.
- I: And the other one, which is about... well, maybe we'll ask that one as the final question now. Trust New Art we've talked about, but, say, Croome or this cultural programming – how do you see that developing over the next five or ten years in terms of...? Maybe in multiple terms, tell me the sort of practice it is, the sort of artists who are involved, or the sort of roles that are needed.**
- R: Well, that's interesting, actually, because that's another part of role – to develop three-to-five-year plans for properties. So, I think, for me, it is knowing [laughter] further than six months before, what it is that you are doing and when you are doing it.
- I: Yes, yes.**
- R: I think it's around being intelligent as to what it is that you are doing and why you are doing it. I think, by that point, by five years' time, there will be some properties who will start to have a *really* great reputation for a) understanding the process, and b) treating artists correctly. And I mean *correctly*, actually. As well as being able to deliver stuff, and giving it the space, time and, I suppose, also, the ownership that I think creative or cultural programming needs.
- I: Mm, mm.**

- R: And I would hope, with that, us developing into, I suppose, the cultural ladder of being seen as a player in that sphere.
- I: **Yes, yes. Well, that's exactly my question. I mean, you see, sort of, you know... the National Trust we think is a heritage organisation with nice country houses.**
- R: I would like to say that there is a strand of work where that is felt, and I think Trust New Art could be one of those. I don't think that will be the case with every single property, and I don't think that we should advocate actually that it's at every single property.
- I: **Mm, no.**
- R: But I think that we should be... I would hope that we would be known as an organisation that has a really great specific contemporary art programme at some of its sites. And, again, it's not necessary saying that, "Always at Croome, you know that there will be contemporary arts." But I think just nationally, as an organisation, that we have a great contemporary art programme that happens and changes, that has *really* interesting ways of working and really interesting partnerships that I want to know about.
- I: **Mm, mm, as somebody who is interested in a visual or contemporary art, yes.**
- R: Yes, yes. I think we are getting there, and I think we are being quite smart, actually, with who we are approaching for different projects, and I think the fact that we are much more versatile in comparison to what our ask was right at the beginning. Because I think, at the beginning – and, again, [NT2] is probably better at understanding this – it was much more around the visual arts, whereas now it's creative arts, it's much broader. And I think that that enables us to be much more dynamic, and also resilient, so us being able to connect with different people much more.
- I: **Yes. And where has that come from, the broadening it out? Because I did do an interview with [NT2], and we talked about the history of Trust New Art, and how it built on various interim things, and about arts collections, and national, you know... but how do you think... why has it opened out or, as you said, in the future, opening out to different sorts of cultural practice? Is that a reflection on the way this field has... you know, the artists who want to work in this environment? Or is it to do with what you want to do in terms of (over-speaking 01:11:55)?**
- R: Yes. No, I think it was the first, actually. I think it us being adaptable to change and seeing that there was a need and a want there from people that we've worked with, asking why we are segregating off that.
- I: **Mm.**

R: I don't know whether that was a direct question, but I think there were definitely, kind of, murmurs. And actually just seeing the possibility of that, so that actually creativity isn't just a physical or visual representation of x, but it's much, much broader than that, and there are different really exciting ways in which you can engage with different people to enable that to happen. So, yes, that's what I hope. And I also hope that, again, it's not just arts of art's sake. Personally, I'm very passionate that it should never be about that. But, actually, again, we are connecting with different people, so whether it is in the process, or whether it is that piece of art connecting with that person when they are there, in whatever way that they feel comfortable, that they want to go away and learn more about something, whether it's about the site, or the artist, or the process. Again, that's the thing that I think is key.

I: **Can I ask you just one other thing? It also cropped up at that conference I was at. I think I asked this awkward question last week as well, and it comes back to the commissioning. And this obviously affects commissioning more broadly than just the National Trust. But, say, you were commissioning a physical artwork, or something that has become something else, like a piece of literature, a novel, a sequence of poems, or a film, or some other kind of output. What is the afterlife of that artwork, beyond its time within its National Trust project for which it was commissioned or presented?**

R: So, in most of the cases... so, again, this is where the contractual agreement comes in too with the artist. Most of the time, from the outset, it is owned outright by the artist. It's part of that commissioning agreement. So you will specify how long you want it on-site, and then you would have a loan agreement with the artist. After that, depending on the property, it could then be a negotiation with the artist to then continue the loan on for x amount of time. It could be on a long-term loan. It could be that it just goes back to the artist. Or, on a very rare occasion – and I've only had it a couple of times – the Trust wants to buy that piece of work. And then there is a separate, kind of, contractual agreement and negotiation.

I: **Mm.**

R: We aren't necessarily advised, actually, to acquire new contemporary artworks, for a number of reasons. The fact that we have huge connections anyway, so are we able to care for another artwork, on top of the other artworks? Space is another issue. Do we have the skillset as well to be able to preserve those artworks (over-speaking 01:15:12)?

I: **Contemporary artworks.**

R: Contemporary artworks. Then we would have to, kind of, build up a whole catalogue of that, etc.

I: **Mm.**

R: And, again, I don't know whether we are in the right space to be able to be in that conversation again. I'm not saying that we shouldn't aspire to that. Personally, I think it's something that would be great. And, again, it *is* a layer of our history that

I think is as relevant – again, that's a personal reflection – to things that happened 300 years ago.

**I: Yes.**

R: And, again, it is also dependent on each site. So, again, we are in conversations at Croome to own some of the artworks there, because it's so site-specific, it wouldn't work elsewhere, and we don't ever want to see it going.

**I: No.**

R: And then also, of course, it is around the care of the artwork. I mean, in the majority of cases, the artist is still alive. So then, even though we own the artwork, we would then have to be in conversations with the artist if we wanted to re-show it anywhere, how often it came out, all of those sorts of things. Currently, we don't have the skillset, actually, to be able to do that.

**I: Yes.**

R: So those are, kind of, the different parameters around (unclear 01:16:16) artwork.

**I: Yes. But it's interesting, isn't it, thinking about that into the future? Perhaps you are thinking about your *audiences* into the future.**

R: Yes.

**I: But it's about thinking about the fabric of the properties and the collections that go with those properties. In 100 years' time, this work that has been happening since 2009, where does that sit in terms of the...?**

R: I agree, I agree.

**I: Then you get a gap. You know, it is like, 'this property ends in'... I don't know. That happens, doesn't it, because Craggs is presented in...?**

R: You know, 100 years ago.

**I: Yes.**

R: Yes, that timeframe.

**I: Yes, a certain thing, and there's a cut-off.**

R: And that's why I think that what they are stating... again, this is probably outside of my area of expertise, but I know that that's a conversation that I know that [NT1] is specifically having – actually, is it relevant for that property? So, I mean, Croome is a fantastic example. You know, we want to be advocates, we have no collection, so therefore, us adding to that collection every year, or every three years, that would be brilliant. That wouldn't be the end of the world. Whereas



somewhere like Calke Abbey that has 23,000 items in its collection, to add that that [laughter] every year wouldn't be feasible.

**I: Yes [laughter], yes, yes.**

R: So, again, I think it's about... as long as we are clear with the artist beforehand as to what the expectation is, and the reasons why we probably couldn't acquire that piece, I think that's absolutely fine.

And I think, also, it's us showing that we are valuing artist's careers now, so that we want to continue to support them to be able to create x, that they then own and can use in whichever way that they would like it to be shown in.

**I: Yes, yes, mm, mm.**

R: But I agree. I mean, personally, I'm a real advocate for that, but I understand that there are complications and constraints to enable that to happen.

**I: Yes. Oh, yes, yes.**

R: And, again, I think, in five years' time, there *will* be some properties that are able to acquire pieces. And also, a few of the pieces that we have acquired are digital, because they are much easier to store [laughter].

**I: Yes, to store [laughter]. Yes, until technology runs out.**

R: So, as I say, I think, you know, that's really interesting.

**I: Yes, until you can no longer play a DVD [laughter].**

R: [Laughter] it's only a matter of time.

**I: Yes [laughter]. Okay, well, let's end it there. I think that's quite a good...**

R: Yes.

**I: Unless there is something else? Is there anything else you wanted to add at this point that we--?**

R: No, I don't think so.

**I: I mean, I'm sure that what we'll have (over-speaking 01:18:49).**

R: The types of conversations, it's really interesting, actually, yes.

**I: Okay. I'm going to stop the recording.**

R: Thank you.

**I:        Okay. Thanks very much.**

**R:        You are welcome.**

**I:        Great. Okay, good.**

**[End of Recording]**