

Freelance Communications Lead

Contract length: Regularly spread days to the end of March 2027. (With possible extension, subject to outcomes and funding.)

Fee: £10,000

Application deadline: Thursday 27 August 2026

Applications should include: a CV and a maximum two-page covering letter outlining relevant work-based experience, fit with Art Gene and the brief, and proposed broad approach to fulfilling the contract, including the number of days offered.

About Art Gene

Art Gene is an arts charity and Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation. An artist-founder led contemporary visual arts organisation, we programme visionary arts projects focused on engaging people with their social, natural and built environment. It is an exciting time as we plan for our 25th anniversary exhibition in 2027.

Art Gene is based in the Nan Tait Centre, the historic old technical college in Barrow, and now home to the Art Gene gallery, the Mezzanine gallery, artist studios, office and fabrication spaces. We have also created and continue to develop an outside project space, Allotment Soup: the Isle of Walney community growing space, managed for organic food growing and biodiversity. A third site of operation, an environmental centre on Walney Island, 'The Earnse Project' is in development subject to a funding decision in the autumn.

We plan to develop projects, exhibitions, and events across all of our sites with freelance artists and other historic or natural environment specialists. Always socially grounded in the issues that matter, our work is wide-ranging and has a national and international outlook. In the past two years, we have delivered Deluge (centred on local saltmarsh, with Scottish and Dutch partners), See Me North (on homelessness, with the University of Northumbria), Sea Like a Mirror (with Cement Fields, marking the 200th anniversary of the RNLI), and Remember Nature, delivered with Tate Modern and the Serpentine. Current projects include a one-day exhibition in the outdoors in September, an exciting (and potentially politically sensitive) one-woman show by artist Azraa Motala in November and our 25th anniversary group exhibition in 2027.

About the brief

With this contract, we are trialling a new way of approaching our communications. Until now, communications, design and marketing have been shared informally amongst project and programme delivery staff. We have lacked a strategic approach and not always fully capitalised on the fabulous work we produce to achieve the reach and impact it deserves.

We are seeking an experienced, well-networked professional to take a strategic and objective look at what we do, to make recommendations about the channels and tools we use, and to work practically with our team to produce regular, timely, impactful communications.

We appreciate candidates might not have strengths in all the areas we are looking for; if you can meet most of the brief, please do apply. The Appendix to the brief includes a list of the tasks we propose could be continued in-house.

Contract priorities

Content and engagement

Lead on an activity included in our ACE Annual Plan: “Use digital storytelling and interactive content to broaden and deepen online engagement. Create 10 digital stories with 1000 digital engagements; show measurable growth across Art Gene’s social media accounts.”

Identify stories, events and programmes that may be suitable for press coverage and ensure that agreed press activity is reflected across Art Gene’s own channels including website, newsletters, and social media.

Write inviting, well-judged copy for a range of uses, including press releases newsletters, web pages, magazines, and external visual art platforms and listings. Ensure press coverage for each exhibition as a minimum.

Advise the senior team on reactive communications if and when appropriate.

Communications channels

Ahead of Art Gene’s 25th anniversary, review and propose updates to Art Gene’s core communications channels, including our Newsletter platform; agree with the Director a short style and tone guide for staff to use.

Advise the team on social media style/branding and support post scheduling.

Keep an overview of and give direction for Art Gene’s core communication channels, ensuring content is welcoming, accurate, builds awareness, encourages engagement, drives visits and is in keeping with Art Gene’s values and tone of voice.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitor performance of communications activity across key channels and produce short summaries to support internal discussion, reporting and improvement; create a process that the in-house team can use to track impact.

Desirable: Campaigns and promotion

Plan and deliver local marketing campaigns that support visitor growth and income generating activity, including venue hire and Charity Shop sales.

Put us in a position to share information and assets with tourism bodies and partner organisations, supporting joint promotion and visibility, should it be appropriate.

Bringing up to date knowledge of GDPR legislation, review Art Gene's photography and filming policy and procedures.

Contractor Person Specification

Experience & understanding

Strategic experience of managing and directing communications in an arts context.

Practical experience of delivering day-to-day marketing and communications activity across a range of channels, websites and platforms.

Up to date knowledge of social media platforms and how to achieve reach with them.

Experience of writing copy that encourages visits or engagement.

An interest and understanding of contemporary visual arts, and ideally, nature recovery, environmental issues and climate change.

A sophisticated understanding of GDPR, image permissions and consent.

Skills

A high standard of literacy, and excellent written communication skills, with the ability to produce clear, engaging copy for different audiences and formats.

Strong organisational skills and the ability to plan work, manage competing priorities and meet deadlines, supporting others to do the same.

Confidence using digital tools and analytics including social media platforms, websites and email marketing systems.

Ability to take a hands-on approach to communications and marketing delivery when necessary, with care and attention to detail.

Confidence in implementing accessibility best practice in marketing and communications.

Ways of working

If working remotely, committed to regular, focused and effective online meetings with Art Gene's senior team.

Collaborative and approachable, with the ability to work constructively with colleagues who work flexibly in a small team.

A thoughtful, practical mindset and a willingness to take responsibility for delivery.

Commitment to producing welcoming, inclusive and accessible communications.

Awareness of how sustainability considerations can inform the delivery of the contract.

Application and Selection Process

Please send a CV and maximum two-page covering letter, including recent examples of outputs and an outline approach to fulfilling the contract to jo.reilly@art-gene.co.uk by 27 August 2026. If more than one person will be placed on the contract, please include all CVs and be clear about the daily rate of each person and what they will be responsible for.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a short online interview on Tuesday, 1 September or Wednesday 2 September 2026.

Appendix: Background

Proposed tasks by (non-specialist) in-house team

Publish day-to-day content across social media platforms, including capturing and sharing photo and video content where appropriate; respond to engagement in a friendly and appropriate way.

Keep website content up to date, including visitor information, events listings, images and news, so that potential visitors understand who we are, what's available and how to take part.

Maintain the accuracy of visitor information across Art Gene's platforms.

Prepare, take and edit content and images, including photography and video, for use across different formats and platforms.

Organise and maintain digital images and marketing materials so they are easy to find and reuse. Select and edit photography and images to support marketing and communications.

Design and produce in-house marketing materials for print and digital use, such as posters, flyers, signage and advertisements.

Coordinate the production of printed materials, working with designers, photographers, printers and publishers.

Context for the contract

For more information about our work visit www.art-gene.co.uk

Our main **social media** channels are Facebook and Instagram. Barrow has an unusually active Facebook community. Our art audience is more widely spread and favours Instagram.



@ArtGeneLtd

We may require advice on the set up of Facebook; it seems to have become entwined with staff personal accounts.



@art__gene

End