

Bioregioning Tayside – Reimagining Tayside as a Living Bioregion

Open Call: Artist/Illustrator Competition £1000 prize & commission contract
Opens 10am, 4th March, closes 5pm, 10th April 2026

We are launching an open competition to find an artist or illustrator who can help shape a distinctive visual language for Bioregioning Tayside, one that grows from the land itself. We are seeking work that listens to the river, the soils, the coastlines and hills; that recognises the intricate patterns of watersheds, food webs, seasonal cycles, and human communities woven together across the Tay catchment. This is an invitation to interpret Tayside not as a map of administrative borders, but as a living, breathing system, dynamic, interdependent and alive.

Overview

[Bioregioning Tayside](#) is new organisation that aims to build community resilience through the concept of a Bioregion. A bioregion is defined not by political or economic boundaries, but by its natural characteristics - its geology, topography, climate, soils, hydrology and watersheds, agriculture, biodiversity, and the plants and animals that live there.

Bioregioning reconnects people with these natural systems - and with each other - through the places they live. It deepens understanding of our interdependence with the living world and supports the urgent action needed to restore healthy, balanced relationships between human and ecological communities.

Our vision is a flourishing, resilient Tay Bioregion founded on care for the natural world and for one another.

Our mission is to highlight and support the many people in Tayside already acting in bioregional ways, and to grow wider capacity for Bioregioning. We do this through practical projects, supportive new infrastructure, and collaborative events and activities that help co-create solutions to the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, and our broken economic system.

What We're Looking For

This new visual language will help us tell the story of the Tay Bioregion in a way that is grounded, hopeful and regenerative. Its imagery should evoke the flow of the River Tay from source to sea, the richness of farmland and forest, the diversity of species, and the communities who care for this place.

This work will give conceptual direction and atmosphere for our public-facing materials, and will seed the identities of emerging initiatives including the Bioregional Financing Facility, Bioregional Observatory, Bioregional Learning Network and Catchment Trusts. We are not expecting finished branding systems at this stage. We are looking for imagery that feels rooted yet contemporary, capable of holding complexity while remaining accessible, bold and inspiring. This is not a corporate rebrand. This is a cultural and ecological translation exercise.

The winning submission will win a cash prize of £1000 and a paid commission contract to further develop the visual language and other digital assets that can be used for storytelling and public outreach. (Details on fee, timeline, and deliverables will be agreed with the selected artist.) We invite artists and illustrators to draw inspiration from the living systems of the Tay Bioregion itself. Rather than relying on generic environmental imagery, we are looking for a visual language that grows from the ecological, geological and cultural realities of this place.

Key sources of inspiration may include:

- **The River Tay catchment** – source-to-sea flow, tributaries, confluences, and the shaping force of water.
- **Watersheds as natural boundaries** – organic forms that replace rigid lines; territories defined by ecology rather than politics.
- **Ecological networks** – mycelium, food webs, pollination pathways and other visible and invisible systems of interconnection.
- **Seasonal cycles and deep time** – circular rhythms, phenology, geological layers and the sense of time held in soil and stone.
- **Biodiversity and habitat mosaics** – the richness of farmland, forest, upland, wetland and coast woven together.
- **Commons, care and collaboration** – shared stewardship, reciprocity, and community resilience.

What's Inspiring Us at the Moment

We are currently inspired by close attention to the overlooked and the quietly extraordinary.

Lichens and mosses in the Den O' Alyth, intricate, resilient and ancient, are teaching us how to see landscapes at a slower, more intimate scale. Their forms, textures and patterns reveal whole worlds within a few square centimetres, reminding us that richness often lives in the margins and the micro.

We're drawn to iridescent and shifting colour palettes: hues that change with light and perspective, echoing ecological processes rather than fixed symbols. Seeing the bioregion through a magnified lens, spores, wings, veins, soils, water movement, opens up new ways to understand connection, fragility and abundance.

We're also inspired by the visual and conceptual work of Mothlife, particularly their approach to storytelling, ecological rights, and celebratory, systems-based thinking:

<https://mothlife.org/>

<https://mothlife.org/moth-festival/>

Their work demonstrates how ecological awareness can be playful, political, poetic and visually bold, holding seriousness and joy at the same time. This spirit of attentiveness, experimentation and celebration strongly informs the direction we hope to explore.

Submission Suggestions

Submissions do not need to be entirely new or fully finished. We are happy to see re-contextualise earlier work for this brief, combination of old and new material into a single narrative. Show thinking, process, and curiosity. We welcome:

- Compilations of existing work if it fits the brief.
- Previously created illustrations or typographic experiments
- New but unfinished ideas
- Sketches, fragments, or in-progress work

We are interested in seeing a visual composition that communicates your interpretation of the Tayside bioregion, bringing together colour palettes, textures, materials, photographic and illustrative references, abstract marks, cartographic gestures, and hand-crafted or mixed-media imagery to convey atmosphere, character, and sense of place.

Exploratory typography and icons: We are particularly interested in handwritten or hand-drawn typographic styles that feel human, local and grounded in land, water, weather or history. We would especially like to see typographic exploration as part of your submission. This might include partial alphabets, repeated words or phrases, typographic sketches or annotated lettering. We are looking for expressive direction rather than a finished typeface or complete icon set at this stage.

Required - Written Statement (200-300 words)

Please describe:

- How you interpret Tayside as a bioregion
- What themes you are responding to (e.g. river, upland–lowland flow, agriculture, climate, culture, people)
- How your visual direction reflects place
- How you imagine it could develop further

Selection Criteria & Prize

Submissions will be assessed on:

Criterion	What We're Looking For
Bioregional understanding	Awareness beyond admin boundaries
Originality	Distinct from generic eco aesthetics
Visual coherence	Clear relationship between elements
Craft & sensitivity	Even at sketch level
Expandability	Ability to grow into a full system

£1000 cash prize for the winning submission

Paid commission to further develop the visual language and other digital assets that can be used for storytelling and public outreach. (Details on fee, timeline, and deliverables will be agreed with the selected artist.)

Submission Information

- No more than a 4 page PDF, which includes your short written statement.
- Submit by email, upper limit of 25MB or other file sharing service if larger

- Your full name and contact details.
- 2 relevant links to online websites or socials you think best represent your work
- Opens 10am, 4th March, closes 5pm, 10th April 2026. With the winning artist/illustrator to be informed by early June 2026.

Originality and Authorship

Proposals must include a short statement by the artist, in their own words, outlining their interest and approach. All submissions must be original work by the applicant and must not infringe upon the rights of others. Sources of inspiration may be referenced but should be clearly acknowledged. By submitting, artists confirm compliance with copyright and intellectual property law.

Intellectual Property & Ethics

Artists retain ownership of their submitted work.

The winning artist will agree separate licensing terms for commissioned outputs.

Non-winning submissions will not be used and deleted.

We are committed to a transparent and respectful selection process.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- **Do I need to be based in the Tayside Bioregion?** We are seeking artists with a genuine connection to this place. You might live or work in the bioregion, have been born or raised here, or maintain a strong creative, cultural or ecological relationship with it.
- **Can I submit unfinished or sketch work?** Yes. We recognise that unpaid competitions can place demands on artists' time, and we want the submission process to be as accessible and low-labour as possible.
- **Can I reuse previous work?** Yes, especially if it helps explain your thinking.
- **Can I collaborate with others?** Yes. Please name all collaborators.
- **Is this a graphic design competition?** No. This is an interpretive visual competition.
- **Can I submit physical work?** No, submissions are digital only, as we don't have the capacity to receive physical work. However, if email submission is a barrier for you, please get in touch and we'll do our best to find an alternative.

Please email your submission to donna@bioregioningtayside.com

Add 'Reimagining Tayside as a Living Bioregion' to the subject line.

<https://bioregioningtayside.scot/> our website contains many reference photographs.

Thank you for your time and interest in Bioregioning Tayside.