

# Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No.02/20

Date:	24 January 2020
Briefing paper to:	All Members of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee
<b>Purpose:</b>	The briefing note sets out information on the Cultural Development Fund in response to a request for further information by the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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## **Creative Estuary – Culture Development Fund briefing**

In January 2019 the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, announced an award of £4.3m from the Cultural Development Fund (CDF) to the University of Kent.

The fund aims to allow cities and towns to invest in creative, cultural and heritage initiatives that lead to culture-led economic growth and productivity and has been awarded to contribute to the development of the Thames Estuary area as Europe's largest creative corridor, making it a world-leading location for creative and cultural industries. This will cover areas including Basildon, Canterbury, Castle Point, Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, Southend-on-Sea, Thanet, and Thurrock.

Plans for the CDF funding, now titled Creative Estuary, are built around seven 'Sparks', building a programme of activity that develops critical cultural infrastructure, R&D and innovation, training and capacity building for local businesses and the commission of new cultural products.

Over four years, January 2019 to December 2022, delivered by a partnership including Locate in Kent, Thames Gateway Kent Partnership, University of Essex, Arts Council England, Kent County Council, Thurrock Council, Southend on Sea Council, Metal, Cement Fields and Opportunity South Essex, the investment will help support the creation of over 500 creative industry jobs, provide skills and qualifications to 200 workers and 60 apprenticeship opportunities for young people in the region.

## Project structure and 'Spark' overviews

The evidence base and the emerging case for investment in the Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC) identified three broad areas of action to help the Estuary develop as a preeminent corridor for culture and creative production. These areas for action are aligned with the Creative Estuary ambitions:

- Our Identity
- Our Space and Places
- Our People

Under each of these themes, the programme will deliver a portfolio of cross-cutting creative and cultural innovations which Creative Estuary investment will help to grow, elevate and connect. Each is a 'spark' - an outcome that if achieved, will enable a new generation of culture-led place-making and creative growth.

### Our Identity

To support the development of a shared cultural and economic identity for the Thames Estuary, it is intended to use CDF investment to boost the areas production capacity, drive innovation, catalyse talent development and build confidence. This will be achieved through a programme of cultural R&D, production and presentation. Festivals, new commissions, talent and innovation will be brought to the fore to boost our profile and capacity united by the TEPC brand. Celebration of the shared cultural identity of the area will drive greater collaboration between partners and producers in South Essex and North Kent. This in turn will provide immediate demand for creative production; changes in mind set and ambition; and greater civic provide and social action.

- **Spark 1:** Estuary 2020. Use great art and culture to challenge perceptions and create a new shared identity for the Thames Estuary.

Spark one will support scaling development, growth and reach of Estuary Festival. Estuary 2020 will be an internationally significant, curated festival of visual art, literature, performance, film, showcase & discussion.

- **Spark 2:** Estuary Commissions. Increase capacity of the Estuary's hugely diverse organisations

This new hyper-local commissioning scheme will support one-off commissions at a number of scales; from small scale grassroots commissions for emerging cultural activists, to large scale commissions.

Working with University of Essex's (UoE) new BA Creative Producing course, the programme will support 20 organisations to develop their producing

capacity/experience, via 6-month producer residencies, supported by training, mentoring and creative bursaries

- **Spark 3:** Estuary Place Promotion. Embed a stronger, more consistent cultural identity into the inward investment and promotional offer of all our towns – commissioning our cultural and creative voices to explore our distinctive heritage, contemporary cultural offer and future promise.

Using Estuary 2020 as our starting point, a 3-year programme outline will provide a strong foundation for the delivery of this strategy and the cementing of a strong TEPC brand.

### **Our Places and Spaces**

CDF funding will be used to unlock assets and provide long term sustainable provision of space for cultural production in perpetuity, developing workable business models by meeting demand from upriver as well as nurturing it locally. The programme will work to shape cultural production infrastructure that works long-term and are connecting it to opportunities to experiment, present and experience culture.

- **Spark 4:** Public Assets for Culture. Make best use of space and create supply of flexible and affordable cultural space in perpetuity.

The programme will build upon international best practice and the experience of our partners in London to develop a long-term collective and strategic model to identify and pool local authority assets to provide space for Cultural Production.

The programme will provide proof of concept and demand as well as a support a short-term uplift in provision across the Estuary, and test the vehicles to place prominent vacant and underused urban buildings into, to deliver 'new' space at an unprecedented scale (c150,000sqft) of geography and coordination (under the TEPC banner). Testing different models and what would work in our context, as the first step providing space for cultural production which is both economically and artistically sustainable.

- **Spark 5:** Cultural Co-Location Pilots. Demonstrate new practice in the role that art and culture can play in planning and place making.

Cultural Co-Location Pilots are proposed, initially in Ebbsfleet (Garden City); Purfleet (Major site regeneration). In each, arts and culture will be embedded into the design and functioning of planned new facilities and public spaces; engaging and participatory creative and cultural activity will be commissioned, which brings local people on the journey and gives them a voice in the process; an associated development programme for up-skilling cultural and creative industries

practitioners to engage in the process will be offered; work in the spaces to enable sustainable cultural programmes for places.

At the end of the process, it will be reported back the Culture, Planning and Development sectors to enable enhanced collaboration and policy-based learning in the Estuary and beyond.

## **Our People**

The programme aims for creative and cultural activity to be a more visible choice for training and employment, with pathways to a rewarding career visible in all our places. The regions creative entrepreneurs need to be supported to implement their ideas and diversify their activities. A cohort of leaders and role models will be created who will become the figureheads for cultural activity in our places.

The regions creative talent has played a compelling role in reframing its sense of identity and place – Billy Childish in Medway, Tracey Emin in Margate, Depeche Mode in Basildon, These New Puritans in Southend, and Rachel Lichenstein from Leigh with her love story for the homeland: Estuary.

Despite its heritage, research has shown us that residents in locations such as Gravesham, Swale, Rochford and Castle Point have a lower propensity to access cultural and creative employment. Occupational analysis shows that our areas export over 17,000 of their creative and cultural workforce each day (this is particularly true in Medway and Southend). With a further 6,000 freelancers working in North Kent and South Essex, there is further potential to diversify and grow small business activity.

- **Spark 6:** RE:Generation 2031. Develop a collective solution to challenges of delivering sector-led training and apprenticeships, supporting a new generation of cultural leaders for the Estuary.

Building on the highly successful young cultural leadership and creative skills project – ART31 based at the Gulbenkian Theatre, the programme will initiate a new model of Creative Apprenticeships targeting future sector leaders in the Estuary aged 15-24 years supporting the SELEP Skills Strategy. This new model will be developed in partnership with others in the HE and Further Education, schools, creative freelancers, SMEs, and skills agencies (including The Education People and CC Skills) and young people themselves.

- **Spark 7:** Innovation Labs. Increase innovation, diversification and commercialisation through enhanced knowledge exchange.

Through a series of innovation labs led by University of Kent and University of Essex, the programme will bring together entrepreneurs, technologists,

academics & leading professionals from sectors such as health/social care/ageing. With each lab focused on a specific cross-sector action research question, participants will share knowledge and explore and prototype new culture-led solutions to contemporary Estuary issues

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