

# Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee

BRIEFING NOTE – No.05/20

Date: 10 March 2020

Briefing paper to: All Members of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Purpose:** This briefing note has been produced in response to a request at the meeting of the Regeneration, Culture and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee for information on the University of Kent's Cultural Development Fund

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The following information has been supplied by Liz Moran, Director of Arts and Culture/ Partnerships Director Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries University of Kent:

## **Cultural Development Fund – Creative Estuary**

### **Background**

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. The fund is from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) with a total budget of £20 million available. Arts Council England are responsible for administering the fund which includes carrying out assessments, releasing payments and monitoring grants, but the decision on successful applicants was made by the Secretary of State for DCMS.

### **The Project - Creative Estuary**

In early 2019 the University of Kent was awarded £4.3m (total project cost £6.7 million) from the DCMS Cultural Development Fund on behalf of a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations, working together to support the delivery of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC). They include the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent and Essex County Councils, the Greater London Authority, 11 local authority areas represented by Thames Gateway Kent Partnership and Opportunity South Essex, South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN), University of Kent, University of Essex, Locate in Kent and cultural organisations Metal, and Cement Fields.

The ambition is simple: to transform 60 miles of the Thames Estuary across Essex and Kent unlocking its potential as an international production hub and a collaborative, inspirational space for a new generation of creative talent.

## **Funding**

CREATIVE ESTUARY is the vehicle to start to deliver the Thames Estuary Production Corridor vision in Kent and Essex, a 3 yr. programme placing arts and culture at the heart of economic growth in the Thames Estuary. The investment is for the benefit of areas of North Kent and South Essex along the Estuary. Some funding is allocated to geographical areas, but the majority is not broken down into local authority areas. Projects are still evolving and developing therefore it is not possible to give an accurate figure of financial support for one place/area but as Medway is a key area of the Estuary, as well as a delivery partner, it will benefit greatly from the overall ambitions of the project. Creative Estuary is a catalyst for change and builds on our strengths and a commitment to developing transformational cultural assets and infrastructure. In doing so, it will make a significant contribution to the ambitions of Medway to successfully bid for City of Culture, ensuring that we have the necessary infrastructure, skills and profile. Working with partners across the region, we want to capture imaginations and change perceptions; both with those external to the region but equally for local people

The project is broken down into a series of “SPARKS” detailed below:

### **1. Estuary 2020 convened by METAL in Essex and Cement Fields in Kent - £863,000**

Estuary 2020 will be an internationally significant, curated arts festival and will take place on the river itself, and along the 60 miles of South Essex and North Kent coastline. An ambitious programme of artworks and events will explore and respond to powerful themes resonant to the Estuary including industrial heartland, nationally important heritage sites, protected wildlife, acres of open marshland, together with seaside fronts and London commuter towns.

The festival will include installations, exhibitions, large scale events with an accompanying film and talks programme. Performances set in the landscape, or on the river itself, artist led walks, field trips and podcasts will explore the rich, diverse culture of the region and bring new audiences to significant sites fostering a deeper understanding of the Estuary

Chatham will be one of four hubs for the festival and Medway Council are co-commissioning new work in partnership with the festival.

### **2. Cultural Commissioning and Production convened by the University of Kent - £650,000**

Support to develop the commissioning and producing capacity of Cultural organisation across the estuary, from small scale grassroots commissions for emerging artists to large scale commissions which might include a new Digital/Projection Festival in Medway. Key to the project is the development of creative and technical producing capacity and experience. A programme of residencies, training, mentoring and creative bursaries will be offered. Allocation of funds will be determined by an advisory board made up of curators, commissioners and producers, with expertise across a range of artforms including dance, performance, live art, music, film and visual arts, and including the Project Director, Creative Estuary and University of Kent's Director of Arts and Culture

**3. Cultural Identity of Creative Estuary convened by Locate in Kent - £320,000**

To develop a distinctive and consistent cultural identity for Creative Estuary including an inaugural cultural tourism strategy for the Thames Estuary. Virginie Giles – Place Manager, Medway Council is a member of the Place Branding Steering group ensuring that Medway's voice and needs are well represented. The stakeholder consultation and brand development process will:

- Help to draw together the variety of stakeholders into a shared vision and understanding of the project and equip them to be Creative Estuary ambassadors
- Provide clarity about what the project is all about
- Provide the tools to communicate in a powerful and succinct fashion about Creative Estuary
- Deliver a compelling narrative for Creative Estuary that captures an authentic local voice

**4. Public Assets for Culture Convened by Southend-on-Sea in Essex and University of Kent in Kent - £500,000**

Medway specific allocation £100,000

Learning from international best practice such as Artscape, Toronto and Isle de Nantes we will develop a strategic model to identify and pool local authority assets to provide space for Cultural Production. This will include undertaking feasibility studies for a new creative digital hub (a partnership project between Medway Council, Chatham Historic Dockyard and the University of Kent

**5. Cultural Co-Location Pilots convened by Kent County Council - £450,000**

Demonstrate new practice in the role that arts and culture can play in planning and placemaking. Two Cultural Co-Location Pilots are planned in Ebbsfleet and Purfleet. This will include embedding arts and culture into the design and functioning of planned new facilities and public spaces; we will commission

creative and cultural activity that brings local people together and gives them a voice in the process. There will be associated programme for upskilling cultural and creative industries practitioners to engage in the process.

**6. RE:Generation 2031 convened by the University of Kent - £750,000**

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

Building on the highly successful young cultural leadership and creative skills project – ART31 based at the Gulbenkian, University of Kent we will initiate a new model of Creative apprenticeships/skills development targeting young people aged 15-25 years supporting the SELEP skills strategy. We will pro-actively recruit in our most disengaged and disadvantaged areas. The project will tackle the challenges faces by small businesses and creative freelances in terms of capacity and financial support.

**7. Creative Innovation Labs convened by the University of Essex - £371,800**

Through a series of innovation labs led by The University of Kent and University of Essex we will bring together entrepreneurs, technologist, academics, students and leading professionals from sectors such as health/social care/ageing addressing contemporary Estuary issues. Each lab will focus on a specific cross-sector action research question. A series of connected sector summits will share learning from the labs and have a wider reach via live streamed and downloadable content.

**Timeline**

Start date 1 February 2019  
End date 31 March 2022

**Role of University of Kent**

Management of the overall project with responsibility for the development of Creative skills including Creative Apprenticeships; feasibility study of The Docking Station development and a proposed new festival of Light for Medway. In partnership with University of Essex Innovation Labs and Sectoral Summits and participation from our academics and students in Estuary 2020. An additional amount of £420,000 is allocated to the Project Management team staffing costs and contingency

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