

Creative Estuary Commissions

Invitation to emerging producers, curators, artists/creative practitioners and organisations.

Creative Estuary is a partnership of public sector and cultural organisations working together with a simple ambition- to transform 60 miles of the Thames Estuary across Essex and Kent into one of the most exciting cultural hubs in the world.

Stretching from Southend to Margate, the Thames Estuary is a region of untold creative potential. A network of fishing towns, heritage sites, imposing dockyards and post-industrial communities, it is home to some of the fastest growing regions in the UK and benefits from unprecedented levels of regeneration investment.

We are just getting started on a three year, £7m programme funded through the DCMS Cultural Development Fund and by our partners.

Working with our partners, we want to capture imaginations and change perceptions; both with those external to the region but equally for local people. We want people to feel more excited, ambitious and hopeful about the future of the area and to celebrate its unique identity.



Map: Creative Estuary region

Our research (and nose for these things) tells us that fantastic work is already taking place, driven by talented micro creative industries, start-up companies and dynamic individuals with great ideas and a determination to make things happen.

We'd love to get to know you better and at the same time, support you to achieve your ambitions that bit faster and that bit easier. Sometimes through access to funding, sometimes through training and development opportunities and possibly most importantly creating strength and visibility in numbers through linking you up to others working in a similar way.

Our first invitation

Over the next two years, *Creative Estuary Commissions* will support projects at a range of scales; from small scale grassroots commissions for emerging cultural activists, to large scale commissions with a range of partners.

Our first opportunity to get off the starting blocks is in the form of an invitation. We are looking for four 'lead partners' to help create a vibrant response to the recent call out for Associated Programme to *Estuary 2020* the festival of visual art, literature and film that will take place between 18 September and 18 October later this year.

The festival will have four main geographic hubs:

- In South Essex: Southend (Shoeburyness) and Basildon (Pitsea)
- In North Kent: Gravesham and Chatham Intra

We would like to find a lead partner for each of these hubs.

What do we mean by lead partner?

We are open to responses from individuals (curator, producer, artist etc) or from organisations (either solo or in partnership)- but what we mean by 'lead partner' is that we are looking for someone to lead on a set of ideas that include contributions from a collection of creatives.

A few examples could be: a number of new commissions sited along a high street / a collective exhibition / a performance that could travel between venues / a weekend of programmed talks or activity on an estuary-based theme. The point is, while it's fine to include some activity of your own, we are looking for a more collective response and one that enables and strengthens collaboration and partnership. We would anticipate that the outputs should be free to access for the public.

The lead partners will be responsible for all matters relating to securing necessary insurances, permissions and licensing, contracts and agreements.

What do we mean by 'emerging'?

We use this term to mean artists, organisations or creative practitioners who have reached a critical moment in their career development, and would benefit from support in order to make a step-change in their practice.

Why we would like to do this?

We want to hear from exciting new, creative voices across the region. We want to help enable your ambitions: to scale up; to try new things; to put ideas into practice; to show off your work.... We want to get to know you better and we'd love to tell you more about the ambitions of Creative Estuary into the future. We are also interested in work which reflects marginalised, hidden or

forgotten peoples, activities, locations and histories.

This invitation is targeted emerging producers, curators, artists/creative practitioners and organisations who are not in receipt of regular funding. There will be opportunities in the future for larger scale commissions for more established creative companies and artists.

Estuary 2020 is one of the Creative Estuary funded projects and we think it offers a great opportunity for a spotlight moment for the region and the potential of increased audiences for all of us. The *Estuary 2020* team have committed funds to produce marketing materials for the Associate Programme, providing valuable additional marketing and an amplification of our collective offer across the region. The work that you and your partners create in response to this invitation will benefit from this marketing and profile, helping you to reach new audiences and helping us to celebrate the talent in the region.

How much funding is on offer?

We have four £15,000 awards, one for each festival hub, amounting to a total of £60,000.

Each response must outline how they might go about adding value to this amount, with at least £15,000 in match funding (combined cash and in-kind) and clear plan of how you will secure that support.

We expect that no more than £5,000 of each award will be spent on staff costs and overheads. Since the *Estuary 2020* team have committed funds to produce marketing materials for the Associate Programme, we would not expect you to cover marketing costs from this award.

How to Apply

Please set out your response to this invitation on no more than 4 pages A4 including images and weblinks if useful. We want to hear about your exciting ideas and ambitions, how you will work with artists, creative practitioners and partners to deliver a programme or series of events at one of the hubs. We do not have set questions, however your proposal should tell us about:

- what you'd like to do
- where your project will take place, your connections to / knowledge about the hub and why you want to work there
- how your project will involve and support artists and creative practitioners
- how your project fits our ambitions for Creative Estuary
- who will benefit from your project
- what difference your project will make to your practice and what the impact will be for your work, how it will help to make a step change in your practice
- what your ambitions are over a longer timeframe
- where you plan to secure match funding and support from
- your experience delivering a project like this

Please include an outline budget with your proposal.

Criteria for Selection

- How well your proposal responds to *Estuary 2020*?
- How clear your plans are to engage with and support artists and creative practitioners?

- How realistic and achievable your match funding targets are?
- How ambitious the programme is for you/your organisation?
- How well you demonstrate that this is new work which responds to this particular opportunity.

Selection

Creative Estuary commissions will be selected 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.

Deadline

Responses to this invitation should be sent by email to Natalie Parsons, Creative Estuary Project Assistant n.j.parsons@kent.ac.uk to arrive no later than noon on **Monday 9th March**.

The panel will make a final decision by **Friday 20 March**

Full details of your programme and activity will be required by **30th June** in order to be included in the marketing for the Associate Programme.

More detail on *Estuary 2020* can be found at www.estuaryfestival.com and in this pdf.



Image: Crossing Bell by Angus Carlyle, Estuary 2016. Benedict Johnson

About Creative Estuary

Led by a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations, our £7m programme (over 3 years) will drive forward the creative and economic evolution of Essex and Kent, and unlock its potential as an international production hub and a collaborative, inspirational space for a new generation of creative talent.

Creative Estuary will establish the region as a sustainable location for international creative industries to develop, offering new space, new infrastructure and new investment opportunities to support culture-led growth. It will support more than 400 new jobs, and deliver new skills, qualifications and apprenticeships for 300 people.

Creative Estuary will:

- Help build a shared identity for the Thames Estuary
- Spark sustainable culture-led growth across Essex and Kent
- Stimulate and strengthen established creative networks, and support new infrastructure for industry expansion and innovation
- Embed culture within inward investment and place-making plans for the region
- Deliver new training, apprenticeships and jobs for the next generation of cultural leaders
- Position the Thames Estuary as one of the most attractive locations for international creative businesses to work, collaborate and grow

Early initiatives for the project include: new commissions to shine a light on the area's cultural resources; expanding the lauded *Estuary* festival into a month-long curated programme of visual arts, literature, performance, film and discussions; developing new accessible, affordable and transformational cultural infrastructure including new workspaces; and supporting the ambitions of our future cultural leaders.

In early 2019 the University of Kent was awarded £4.3m from the DCMS Cultural Development Fund on behalf of the partners.

The Creative Estuary vision is supported by a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations, working together to support the 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 Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport funds the Cultural Development Fund which is administered by Arts Council England." More information can be found [here](#).

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