

Artist Commission, Basildon 2018-19

Budget: £10,000
Deadline: 23 January 2019
Interviews: 30 January 2019

Introduction

For ten years Essex Cultural Diversity Project (ECDP) has been working closely with many different organisations, bringing together artists, museums, libraries, performers and writers with local authorities and commissioners to significantly improve and enhance the artistic and cultural diversity of the area, ensure that excellence is thriving, and that cultural integration and understanding is supported and enhanced through arts and cultural activity. This is more important today than it has ever been since ECDP was established.

ECDP is now an Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) with a key role to play across Essex and the East of England in continuing to support diversity in arts and cultural practice. Our key strategy to achieve this is through a programme of exciting but challenging place-based commissions for artists to work in areas of Essex where there are opportunities to explore diversity through their practice. For 2018-19 we are focusing on five towns/places where community engagement in the arts has been traditionally low – Canvey Island, Harlow, Basildon, Grays and Jaywick Sands. Basildon is the focus of this commission.

The Basildon Commission is being undertaken in partnership with Basildon District Council and The Foundation for Essex Arts.

Basildon Town Introduction

‘Basildon will become a City which people from all over the world will want to visit. It will be a place where all classes of community can meet freely together on equal terms and enjoy common cultural recreational facilities.’

2019 will be the 70th anniversary of Basildon New Town, with Basildon being one of the most well-known of the New Towns from the post-war period. The Basildon Development Corporation was appointed in February 1949 to co-ordinate the development of the New Town. The above quote is from the Rt. Hon. Lewis Silkin, Minister of Town and Country Planning in Clement Attlee's post war Labour Government, taken from a speech he made in September 1948 at a packed public meeting at Laindon School.

The development of the New Town was not universally popular, not least as it affected the communities already in what a largely rural area characterised by small settlements. The concept of New Towns was proposed as a national solution to the post-war inner-city housing problems. Billericay Urban District Council saw an opportunity for a proposed new town to improve sanitation, housing and communications across the local area which had seen largely unplanned growth often focused on the ‘plotlands’ – small areas of land developed by families from East London. There are many people still living in the local area who remember the development of the New Town and the changes that came as a result.

Basildon is now the largest economy in Essex and is a has a business and industrial base that has increased rapidly over a number of years. The availability of land following the establishment of the New

Town has been a major factor, and the area has particular strengths in Creative, ICT and Digital sectors. A number of global businesses operate from Basildon include Ford, New Holland Agriculture and COSTA who recently opened a coffee roasting plant.

Basildon Town Centre has suffered as have many town centres and High Streets over the last few years and plans have been developing for many years on major regeneration initiatives. Plans include a new campus for South Essex College to be developed right in the centre of town on the site of the old market, with the market having been moved to St. Martin's Square.

ECDP's Partners in the Commission

ECDP works with many partner organisations across Essex to support the development of diverse arts, cultural and heritage. For this commission we are working closely with Basildon Council and the Foundation for Essex Arts, both of whom are keen to support ECDP and the appointed artist(s) for this commission.

The Foundation for Essex Arts

The Foundation for Essex Arts (TFEA) was established in 1999 as the Essex Gallery Commission with a focus on campaigning for a building to showcase Essex arts and culture, and early successful projects included 'The Basildon Heritage Project' and 'Our Basildon'. In 2013 TFEA merged with the Basildon Arts Trust (BAT) who had been looking for support and advice relating to the care of the BAT Art Collection. TFEA continues to care for the BAT Collection today while embarking on the renewed mission – enriching lives through the arts. TFEA has established a bursary in partnership with the University of the Arts London (UAL) to support students from Basildon and Essex facing financial hardship, enabling them to pursue their studies in any art subject across the UAL colleges.

<https://www.tfea.org.uk/>

Basildon Borough Council

Basildon Borough Council covers an area that includes Basildon, Wickford and Billericay, Laindon and Pitsea – the second largest district or borough in the County of Essex. Basildon Council are keen to support the development of a strong culture and leisure offer in the district that meets the needs of its communities now and in to the future. The Council are leading the 70th anniversary of Basildon New Town celebrations, and will support a range of cultural/arts and heritage activities over 2019. It is hoped that the 70th anniversary programme can foster renewed pride in the town and inspire the increasingly diverse communities to come together to reflect on the future and the next 70 years.

www.basildon.gov.uk

The Council are keen to use this opportunity to help explore these pertinent questions in our 70th anniversary year:

- What does culture mean to the people of the borough – what does it look/feel like?;
- What does leisure mean to the people of the borough – what does it look/feel like?;
- What are our community assets of importance across the borough?

The Commission

ECDP's has a key role to explore the concept of 'diversity' across Essex, working with a wide range of partners and providing opportunities for artists and creative practitioners from diverse background and contexts. Through our commissioning programme ECDP aims to support the production of challenging work that responds to specific places and the local context (place-based), as well as reflecting on national themes and issues around diversity.

Basildon as a town and a Borough has become more ethnically and culturally diverse as the New Town has developed and the economy grown. Basildon is now one of the economic drivers of the wider Essex economy attracting people to work in the borough from neighbouring areas. The Council recognises that the town is changing and ageing and that positive action should be taken to support community relations. ECDP wants to support local partners in this respect and recognises the unique role that the arts and culture can play in exploring issues relevant to diversity, taking on difficult and challenging subjects while engaging audiences, participants and volunteers.

This commission should be focused on the New Town of Basildon rather than the wider Borough as ECDP and its partners would like to support the 70th anniversary of Basildon programme for 2019. For Basildon Council the 70th anniversary is a time to celebrate the history and heritage of the New Town, creating a platform for exploring the culture, communities and businesses in the area. The Council will host a series of events over 2019 with four key themes: Community, volunteering and civic pride, Physical activity and culture, Business and Education.

Although this ECDP commission will not be a formal part of the 70th anniversary programme, ECDP is keen to engage with this as it provides an excellent opportunity to explore how the culture of Basildon has evolved over the last 70 years, and in particular to work with older people in the New Town. Older people are often less engaged with arts and cultural activity with challenges around physical access, mobility and social isolation, and this is an issue that ECDP as an organisation is keen to better understand and engage with as a key element of 'diversity'. Our partner organisations, Basildon Council and the Foundation for Essex Arts have good contacts in Basildon and an awareness of local organisations, and can offer support for engaging with older people's groups and charities.

There is no imperative to propose solutions for improving Basildon as a place (socially, culturally or economically). However, the commissioned artist should seek to understand and engage with current and future regeneration and development plans where possible as well as the 70th anniversary.

How this commission is undertaken, which art form and which community groups are engaged – ECDP and its partners are open and would like to keep the opportunity as free as possible to encourage creative exploration. Please ensure that you address your approach to both engagement of communities and older people in particular, and art form clearly in your response to the brief.

As this commission is part of ECDP's core National Portfolio Organisation programme for 2018-19, it is very important that the appointed artist(s) are able to monitor the outcomes related to the commission – for example numbers of volunteers, number of live audiences, number of audiences online.

Support throughout the Commission

The commissioned artist can count on the ongoing support, advocacy and advice of the ECDP Creative Director throughout, as well as other ECDP staff/associates as necessary. Neither TFEA or Basildon Council are managing the commission directly but they are happy to liaise with the commissioned artist in terms of local contacts, information and partnerships.

ECDP staff will liaise with the commissioned artist to establish a timetable for delivery and identify times for recording digitally the ongoing creative process (this is as important for ECDP as the final outcomes in terms of understanding community engagement with the process).

Budget and Promotion

The budget available for the commission is £10,000 (to include any VAT). This will cover artist fee, travel and materials. The need for promotion, advertising and web resources can be discussed with ECDP, therefore we do not expect the £10,000 to cover anything related this.

Promotion for the commission can be undertaken in partnership with ECDP and other partners as appropriate. ECDP will promote the commission and related activity on the ECDP website and support the process throughout on social media. ECDP hopes that the commission will attract significant numbers from the local community both in terms of active engagement and audience, as well as attracting audiences from further afield (where possible/appropriate). ECDP and its partners would expect to see good levels of audiences online (not necessarily exclusively during the actual commission).

Because this commission is funded in the financial year 2018-19, we would like to see work start as close to the appointment as possible, so it is important that you are able to start delivering from February/March onwards. We would like to commit as much of the £10,000 as possible prior to April 2019. Please consider this in your response to this brief.

Commission Panel

A small Basildon Commission Panel has been established to oversee the commission. This includes representatives from ECDP, Essex County Council, Basildon Council and TFEA. At approximately half-way through the commission, and at the end of the commission, the artist should expect to meet with the Panel to discuss progress and/or process of reflection on the outcomes achieved. This can be agreed in more detail after appointment.

Responding to this ECDP Commission Opportunity

Please respond via email to jo@essexcdp.com including the following:

- Outline artistic and community engagement concept for the commission, including the proposed community engagement process and what art form(s) will be the focus
- CV with relevant previous commissions and work (no more than 4 sides of A4). Please provide links to relevant websites and social media/media
- Outline budget breakdown showing how you would utilise the £10,000 and approximate timeline for the work.

Please ensure that proposals are received by 23.59 on the 23 January 2019 - Send to jo@essexcdp.com

Interviews will be on 30 January 2019 at a location in Basildon (venue to be confirmed) – Interviews will include an opportunity for a 15-minute presentation on your proposal. If you are shortlisted for an interview we will let you know by the 25 January 2019.

Please note, if your application is not shortlisted in this instance we will not be able to provide feedback due to the number of applications.

For further information on Essex Cultural Diversity Project visit www.essexcdp.com

