



Call for Proposals

Becoming Constable: National Trust Flatford

Budget: £15,000
Deadline: Monday 23 February 2026
Timeline: March to September 2026
Interview: Monday 9 March 2026

Image credit: The Vale of Dedham by John Constable, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21866170>

Essex Cultural Diversity Project and the National Trust invite proposals from creative practitioners for a new commission, as part of *Constable 250*.

The National Trust at Flatford, in the Dedham Vale National Landscape, is getting ready to celebrate the 250th anniversary of John Constable's birth. We are seeking a creative project that will explore routes to 'Becoming Constable', focussing on the local area that inspired and shaped the boy and man who became one of our most iconic English landscape painters.

We would like to celebrate Constable's life and work through his inspirations and experiences, and to encourage people to find belonging in Flatford and in their own landscapes, by drawing out how our interaction with a place can help define us and forge our identity, especially in our early years.

We are keen to see project proposals that engage locals and visitors alike who pass through the Flatford Hamlet, which at its heart flows the River Stour. We would like to explore how people can connect to this special place and help them unlock an understanding that without John Constable, Flatford would be largely unprotected today.

Locations, Participants and Audiences

Our immediate local area is represented by the painting on the front of the National Trust Flatford guidebook, *The Vale of Dedham* (pictured above) painted in 1828. The view from Gun Hill along the River Stour to Dedham village and the distant Stour estuary was a favourite subject of Constable, which he painted several times.

We are looking for a residency style approach to this commission, with the appointed artist(s) spending time in and around Flatford with local people, visitors, and community groups who they have invited to participate. We want the artist(s) rooted in the place, much as John Constable was.

We would expect the creative practitioner(s) to act as a bridge between the community and the National Trust, and be proactive in finding, recruiting and liaising with new audiences and participants; the appointed artist(s) would act as an ambassador of Flatford and help initiate new relationships that can be developed after the project by the Trust - an important legacy of the commission.

Using Flatford as the central hub of activity throughout, participants, community groups and audiences can be drawn from the key project catchment area, which is along the Stour Valley between Sudbury and Harwich. Primary participants and audiences would be found at Flatford itself, East Bergholt and Dedham to reflect Constable living, working, and going to school in these locations. Secondary participants and audiences could be found in the Stour Valley between Sudbury and Harwich. Routes to participants and audiences could be sought through low socio-economic support networks, mental health support groups, and/or groups with restricted access to nature, beauty and history.

Constable 250 Wider Programme

Please note that, in this important anniversary year, there will be lots of events and projects to celebrate Constable, and many of our partners and friends in the area will be leading activities such as walking tours and visits to explore the history and landscape of 'Constable Country'.

We are looking for a project that is creative and unique, which will complement these wider programmes but not be too similar. Creative Practitioners need to bear this in mind, especially if proposing walking tours as part of their projects.

The project will run from March to September 2026, with a number of key delivery dates to be considered, including Constable's birthday on 11 June, a press day in early Summer, and the Summer holidays from July to September.

About our Commissions

This is the seventh creative commission that has been delivered jointly by The National Trust and Essex Cultural Diversity Project.

Our commission call outs are open to creative practitioners working across any media, at any levels of career, as individuals or as part of a collective or a company. This includes, but is not limited to, visual artists, digital artists, writers, poets, performers, theatre practitioners, musicians, dancers and multimedia artists. We are keen to support diverse practitioners and those working in diversity, to develop their socially engaged and participant-led projects and practices.

Successful projects have put communities at the heart of the creative process, while also being central to the artists' practice and own lines of enquiry. Commissions can capture the spirit of place, give people a voice, connect communities and let people tell their own story in their own words.

How to Respond to this Opportunity

We accept **written**, **verbal** and **video** proposals for this commission. Video proposals should be no longer than 10 minutes in length.

To apply, please email your proposal to jo@essexcdp.com by midnight on Monday 23 February and include the following:

- An outline of the artistic concept and its creative starting points, your project title, intended participants and any groups you may like to work with (if known), and your community engagement process (no more than 600 words).
- How your practice and project explores or promotes diversity (no more than 200 words).
- Some info about you and your work. This could be a short biography/artist statement with examples of previous work / a PDF portfolio / a CV / links to your website and social media.
- A short, estimated and basic budget outline, showing how you would utilise the £15,000 (we suggest 4-6 lines)
- A short approximate timeline for the work (we suggest 4-6 lines with key milestones)
- A completed Commissioning Monitoring Form - <https://bit.ly/ecdःp-commissions2025-6> (please note on some computers this document goes direct to your downloads folder once clicked)

Further Support & Accessibility

It is highly recommended that you visit the **ECDP Commissions Frequently Asked Questions** page at <https://essexcdp.com/commission-faqs-flatford/> which has supporting information and practical advice to support you in putting a proposal together.

We are committed to making our application process accessible, and can be adaptable to your needs. We welcome proposals in various formats, such as a written, video or audio proposals, or via a recorded Zoom call.

If you would like to talk this brief through or need further information about the commission, we'd be very happy to offer a 1-2-1 to support you and answer your questions. Please email Jo on jo@essexcdp.com to arrange a meeting.

To request a text / audio / large print version of this brief, contact Jo at jo@essexcdp.com

Useful Links

- About National Trust at Flatford
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/suffolk/flatford>
- People and Nature Thriving: National Trust's Strategy to 2035
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/our-strategy>
With special reference to 'End unequal access to nature, beauty and history'
- About Essex Cultural Diversity Project: <https://essexcdp.com/>
- ECDP Commissions: <https://essexcdp.com/commissions/>