



Call for Proposals

Shoeburyness Creative Commission 2027

Budget: £10,000
Deadline: Monday 24 November (midnight)
Interview: w/c 7 December 2027

Project timelines:
January – August 2027 | Evaluation September 2027

COMMISSION BRIEF

Essex Cultural Diversity Project invites proposals for a new project that will creatively respond to the history of Shoeburyness, located to the east of the City of Southend, and help articulate the future aspirations of its community. For over a century, the ‘Proof and Experimental Establishment’ at Shoeburyness was a military site for testing ordnance, artillery and ammunition. We are seeking a project that can reflect on and echo the language of military, war and defence, focussing on community, heritage and care.

We have teamed up with the Cart & Wagon Shed, the community and heritage space managed by Shoebury Coastal CIC, to host a commission that aims to engage local communities and underrepresented voices. We want to celebrate the area, enable local people to tell their own stories in their own words, and play a role in shaping a strong and collaborative future for Shoeburyness.

Through the commission we are looking for a project that will creatively collect and bring to life historical and contemporary stories of the people and places across Shoeburyness, which can illustrate the unique heritage of the area, and provide a platform for less heard and marginalised voices.

Shoebury Coastal CIC have recently secured funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to put in place an updated and interactive museum focusing on the area’s military history, social and economic development, as well as its important natural habitats. A new exhibition will draw on some of the 1000s of documents and artefacts that make up the Shoeburyness Archives, which are housed at the Cart & Wagon Shed. It is hoped that some of the commission outcomes could contribute to this larger project and tie in with future exhibitions.

A suggested creative starting point: “Proof and Experimental Establishment” Reflecting military words connected with the site

The military and testing heritage of Shoeburyness is present across the whole area, most prominently at the Garrison and Gunners Park, but also through place names, stories and personal histories, as well as the environment and natural space. The area retains its military testing role through the operations overseen by [QinetiQ](#) at the New Ranges and Foulness Island.

In 1905, the Experimental Branch of the School of Gunnery at Shoeburyness became an independent unit and in 1920 was renamed as the Experimental Establishment, commonly referred to as XP. In 1948, XP was re-organised as the Proof and Experimental Establishment (P&EE). For a brief history of Shoeburyness (including military) see - [History – Cart and Wagon Shed](#)

We are interested in gathering stories that can help illustrate the human side of this military heritage, as well as celebrating a site which is currently in transition and transformation. One way forward could be to draw links between the language of military testing with that of community, heritage and care.

For example, 'Proof' could be evidence gathered of lives lived - testimony, oral history and the power of community voices – the things we offer as proof of belonging, or as a measure of our care towards each other and the environment. 'Experimentation' may be our willingness to try something new for the area, to take risks in a safe environment, and explore creativity as a tool to improve our mental and physical health, or just to play and be curious.

We would also be interested in seeing proposals that explore and celebrate the role of women at the P&EE and QinetiQ, and throw a spotlight on a less well-known part of the history of the operation at Shoeburyness. Women have played key roles over the years, including collecting fired out shells on the perilous mudflats during the Victorian era, and later utilising plotting equipment to collect essential scientific data for proofing and testing trials.

We would like to see project proposals that reflect elements of the above as a starting point, either directly or indirectly, for community engagement, collaboration and co-creation.

Project Approach, Delivery and Final Artwork

Through our commissions, we support participatory practice; the voice of the community is at the heart of all our commissioned projects. We would expect the appointed creative practitioner to act as a bridge between the community, us and our local partners, and be proactive in finding, recruiting and liaising with new audiences and participants. We would like the project to engage no less than 150 individuals; connect with at least three community groups in the area; and deliver at least six workshops for residents and communities.

The creative vision, participatory process and final artwork will be shaped by the creative practitioner, their proposed project and practice, as well as the participants they work alongside.

Regarding the final artwork, we tend not to support large-scale site-specific work or public art, due to limitations of the budget, timescales and ongoing maintenance costs (although this can be considered with a clear and strong proposal with technical evidence and insight). Past commissions have proposed and delivered artworks in various forms, including picnic blanket designs, community films, collective zines, collaborative tapestries, nature habitats designed by school children, shared writing, performances and processions, podcasts, tarot card packs, interactive websites and maps (please refer to the ECDP website for examples of past commissions).

We are happy to be led by the appointed creative practitioner but would expect to see a brief outline of approach and ideas of what the final piece may be in the proposal. The final artwork is to be presented or exhibited at the Cart & Wagon Shed in Summer 2027.

About the Cart & Wagon Shed

Our partner for this commission is the Cart & Wagon Shed, run by the Shoebury Coastal CIC. The building is an early example of a prefabricated iron-frame military building. Built around 1860, it is Grade II listed for its special architectural or historic interest. Sitting at the heart of the redeveloped Shoeburyness Garrison site, it has the historic Garrison buildings to one side and the newly formed Gunners Park to the other. To the front, it sits on the edge of the Thames Estuary with its beautiful and interesting views. Shoebury Coastal CIC is taking inspiration from both the ancient and more modern history of Shoeburyness and the Garrison site, the Shoebury Archives and artefacts, the natural heritage of Gunners Park and the wider nature reserve and Thames Estuary to create a heritage and visitor centre for all to enjoy.

The Cart & Wagon Shed comprises four main internal areas which could be used for project activity (subject to prior agreement and availability): a heritage display hall; archives storage rooms (with space for research); community rooms for workshops, meetings and activities; and a café area. There is also outside garden space. It will be possible for some creative inspiration to be taken from the archives located at the Cart & Wagon Shed.

About ECDP and our Commissions

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 24 November and include the following:

- An outline of the artistic concept, 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 £10,000 (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, downloadable at <https://essexcdp.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/0-Commission-Monitoring-Form.docx> (please note that, as a MS Word document, on some computers this document goes direct to your downloads folder once clicked – contact jo@essexcdp.com if you have any problems downloading this form)
-

Further Support & Accessibility

It is highly recommended that you visit the **ECDP Commissions Frequently Asked Questions** page at <https://essexcdp.com/commission-faqs-2> 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 Essex Cultural Diversity Project: <https://essexcdp.com/>
- ECDP Commissions: <https://essexcdp.com/commissions/>
- Cart & Wagon Shed: <https://www.cartandwagonshed.org/about/>