

EST UARY 2021

Evaluation summary report



Prepared by

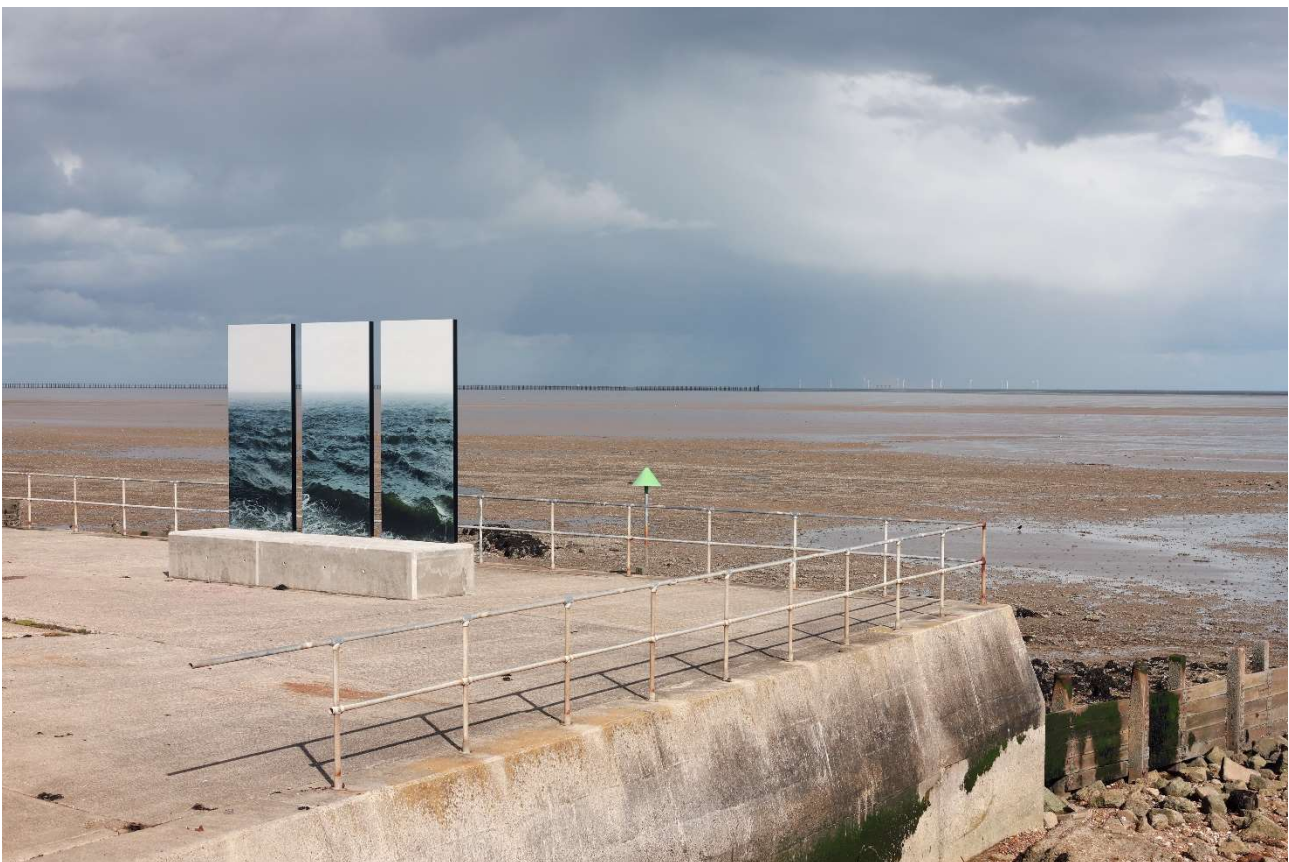
Metal: South Essex
metalculture.com

Cement Fields: North Kent
cementfields.org

estuaryfestival.com / @EstuaryFestival

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In The Beginning Is The End by Nadav Kander, installed in the landscape at Gunner Park
Image credit: Mark Massey

Introduction

Estuary 2021 took place over 23 days from Saturday 22 May to Sunday 13 June 2021. It was the second edition of the large-scale arts festival, curated to respond to and celebrate the lives, landscapes and histories of the spectacular Thames Estuary.

It took place along the 107 miles of South Essex and North Kent coastline, online, and on the river itself. Contemporary artworks, discussion and events explored powerful themes resonant to the estuary through the lens of contemporary concerns, including climate justice, protest and rebellion, imperial legacy and the rich, often overlooked stories of its diverse communities, bringing new audiences to a deeper understanding of the region.

Scope

This report focuses on 23 days of the festival, from Sat 22 May to Sun 13 June. Some commissioned artworks have remained in the landscape beyond these core festival dates, and two Estuary events took place in Autumn 2021.

Delivery

Estuary 2021 was delivered through a partnership between estuary-based arts organisations, Metal (South Essex) and Cement Fields (North Kent). The festival was a key element in the Thames Estuary regional bid to the DCMS Cultural Development Fund (CDF) in 2018. This bid outlined seven programme 'Sparks'. Estuary 2021 was Spark One and was funded in large part through this grant. Creative Estuary, set up as the delivery mechanism to deliver on all seven 'Sparks' is one of five UK Cultural Development Fund projects, administered by Arts Council England (ACE) and supported by The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Creative Estuary is led by a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations which includes the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent County Council and Essex County Council, 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, and Locate in Kent.

Covid adaptations

As the impact of the pandemic unfolded, the festival was reframed to include a digital, live streaming element ensuring we could still involve international artists, as well as reach wider audiences. We found new ways to connect artists to the landscape and communities, through virtual LABs and meetings, film footage, sound recordings and detailed research documents. As lockdowns continued, the festival was re-focused to be an entirely outdoor and online festival. We re-imagined its presentation as an epic 107 mile 'trail' of outdoor works and events. The festival opened just as the UK allowed planned events, walks and talks to go ahead with a capacity of up to 30 people.

Aims and Ambitions

Estuary is conceived as a highly visible, high impact, multi-faceted arts festival as well as a cultural development tool. As a key event as part of the wider vision for the Thames Estuary Production Corridor and Creative Estuary, the aims of *Estuary 2021* were as follows:

1. To contribute to the image of the Thames Estuary as a vibrant, creative, innovative and exciting place to live, work and visit, and highlighting the enormous cultural significance of the Thames Estuary
2. To create access to excellent quality art, supporting artistic talent, and attracting new audiences and participants
3. To deliver a positive economic impact; encouraging visitors from outside the area, enhancing local skills, and supporting the development of the creative economy
4. To bring people together, creating a sense of cultural identity between communities along the banks of the Thames

The key elements of the festival were:

- A large-scale, curated visual art, film, literature and music programme at multiple venues in the landscape across both banks of the Estuary, and online
- An Associated Programme that includes a wide range of cultural activities and stories that sit within the wider Estuary story.
- An integrated skills programme, to nurture the next generation of artists, curators and creative producers, delivered in partnership with HE and FE partners across the region.



Arts in Transit by Lata Upadhyaya, a work that travelled to six sites across Estuary 2021

Headline Statistics

Overview

107 miles
23 festival days
94 locations in the landscape
66 partner venues
130 programme partners

Artistic

265 artists
63 commissions
11 publications
27 artists' films
6 podcasts
73 events
86 creative projects in the Associated programme

Taking Part

2817 participants -1081 young people
248 students / 8 universities
15 Higher and further education partners
224 workshops/sessions
24 schools
68 volunteers, working 286 days

Audiences

208,764 live audiences
107,854 digital audience
40 million reached through press and media
1.3 million through @estuaryfestival social media posts



Bob & Roberta Smith. The Draw Hope pavilion. Image: Rob Harris

Evaluation methodology and key findings

An evaluation framework informed by the festival's Aims and Ambitions was established with the external assistance of BOP Consulting. This report has been compiled using audience feedback questionnaires, stakeholder feedback and collation of internal and external data.

Perceptions

Estuary 2021 contributed to an improved image of Thames Estuary as creative and cultural place

- Our audience survey reports that 97% of our physical audiences who visited one or more of the Estuary 2021 artworks and sites, strongly agreed/agreed that Estuary 2021 has been good for the location's image
- 90% of our audience stated that their visit to Estuary 2021 improved their perception of the Thames Estuary as a creative and cultural place.
- 45 million people were reached through a wide ranging and successful media campaign that saw multiple features, listings and interviews in both national and regional print and broadcast platforms.
- Press coverage included: Arts Industry, Arts Monthly, British Journal of Photography, Evening Standard, iNews, Independent, Metro, The Guardian, Conde Nast, Traveller, Country Walker, Esquire, TimeOut, BBC Radio Kent, Essex Life, BBC Essex, Kent Online and Essex Chronicle, BBC South East Today
- Reach through Estuary 2021 direct social media accounts: 1,315,489

"Estuary has done so much for national awareness of this area's cultural significance, and I feel privileged to have been a part of that - so I want to continue to contribute as much as I can in future."

Estuary 2021 artist, Lydia Brockless

"I had never really thought of myself as an estuary-based artist... yet when I look back I can see the influence that the estuary and the people of the estuary have had on my work. I'm already developing research ideas that continue along the communities of the estuary theme."

Estuary 2021 artist, Lata Uphadyaya

Economic impact

Estuary 2021 delivered a positive economic impact and encouraged visitors from outside to travel to the area

Economic activity and economic impact figures have been calculated by The Audience Agency, based on audience attendance and current industry metrics:

- Estuary 2021 generated £16,818,418 of **economic activity** in the Thames Estuary area.¹
- **Economic impact** on the Thames Estuary area was £6,514,794²
- 208,764 in-person visits. 89,768 (43%) travelled from elsewhere, of which 54,176 (60%) came specifically to visit Estuary 2021. 118,996 (57%) visits were from local audiences.

Positive economic impact

139,176	Total number of Estuary 2021 participants/attendees. Estuary 2021 attracted 208,764 in person visits. Audience Agency estimates this to be 139,176 unique visitors after taking into account repeat visits and/or multiple site visits.
54,176	Total number of visits generated by Estuary 2021 event(s). Calculated by asking respondents whether they were visiting because of the event, as opposed to another reason.
11,676	Visits generated by event(s) which involved visitors staying in paid accommodation
£15,329,835	Total participant/attendee spend generated
£1,488,583	Total spend by delivery organisation(s)
£16,818,418	Total economic activity Overall amount of money that was spent by members of the public due to the project and money spent by the organisation(s) delivering the project.
£4,593,506	Additional attributable spend by participants/attendees. Money spent in the Area of Interest by participants/attendees who would not otherwise have been in the area.
£618,329	Additional attributable spend by delivery organisation(s). Calculated by subtracting the total project income from funders based in the Area of Interest from the total money spent on services/products delivered by organisations/individuals based inside the Area of Interest.
£5,211,835	Total economic impact (before multiplier)
£6,514,794	Total economic impact (after multiplier) Multiplier derived from previous research and industry standards.

Jobs, employment, skills and volunteering

¹ **Economic activity** refers to the overall amount of money that was spent by members of the public due to the project. This includes money spent by participants/attendees in order to take part in the project, and money spent by the organisation(s) delivering the project. Not all economic activity can be categorised as economic impact. See additional information [here](#).

² **Economic impact** refers to 'new' money that has been 'injected' into the economy of the Geographic Area of Interest (from outside this area) that would not have been present had *Estuary 2021* not taken place. For example, all money spent by project participants/ attendees who live within the 'Geographic Area of Interest' is excluded from the economic impact estimate - money spent by this group of people is viewed as money which would have been spent in the area's economy with or without the project. Furthermore, only money spent by participants/attendees who were motivated to visit the area because of the project is included. Similarly, when it comes to working out the economic impact associated with spend by the organisation(s) delivering the project, only money sourced from funders based outside the Area of Interest that is spent on services/products provided by individuals / organisations based inside the area counts as economic impact. See additional information [here](#).

68	Number of volunteers that worked on the project
£84,387.00	In kind contribution made by volunteers
2	Number of full-time jobs created
56	Number of part-time jobs created
2	Number of full-time jobs created for local people that live within the Thames Estuary area
40	Number of part-time jobs created for local people that live within the Thames Estuary area
248	Students took part in skills development opportunities in partnership with 8 universities

“Estuary 2021, like all events in the UK and beyond faced huge challenges due to the arrival of Covid-19. Despite this the organisers presented a festival of ambition and scale, with outstanding artistic commissions taking place across a huge geography”

Stakeholder comment



Inside Arts in Transit by Lata Uphadyaya during its visit to Chatham in Medway. Photo: Rob Harris

Encouraging visitors to the region

84% of audiences planned additional cultural activity within the Thames Estuary region, alongside their visit to Estuary 2021.

- 61% planned to visit a restaurant / café or bar
- 28% visit an historic site
- 23% planned to go shopping
- 34% another arts or cultural activity

43% of audiences were visiting the region from elsewhere, with 57% coming from the Thames Estuary and the wider counties of Kent and Essex.

Audiences responding to our survey include respondents from Scotland, Wales, as far South West as Falmouth in Cornwall and as far North East as North Yorkshire.

1% of our audiences were visiting from overseas, despite very stringent travel restrictions remaining in place, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, for the entirety of our festival period.

89% of survey respondents selected the location of the Thames Estuary as one of the key drivers in their decision to visit the festival

Note: These figures have been provided to Estuary 2021 by the Audience Agency based on audience surveys collected both in person and digitally during *Estuary 2021*. Figures in the Audience Agency report were generated using the West Midlands Cultural Observatory Economic Impact Calculator.

Cultural impact: artistic talent

Estuary 2021 enabled access to excellent quality art, and support artistic talent

- 97% of our audiences rated the quality of exhibition Very Good/Good
- 97% found all the works Easy to Access
- 93% found their way from one work to the next easily
- 92% found the information supplied about the art and artist Very Good/Good
- 98% found our invigilators and volunteers very welcoming
- 81% said that they would actively recommend the area / festival to a friend, family member or colleague

“Love how the artwork is displayed and wonderful atmosphere created”

Audience member visiting from Basildon

“a sense of the Thames Estuary as a coherent place in its own right”

Art Monthly

Cultural Impact: audiences and participants

***Estuary 2021* attracted new audiences and participants, and those least likely to engage with arts**

- 87% of visitors were new to the festival, with 13% of audience visiting Estuary festival in 2016.
- 27% of *Estuary 2021* audiences were from the four ‘least engaged’ segments, as defined by Audience Finder, far exceeding South East levels (19% least engaged).

Presenting works outdoors, in public estuary locations and within local businesses (e.g. pubs, cafes and hotels) meant that there were multiple points of connection for new audiences. 29 local businesses partnered with the festival, many of whom hosted artworks and/or events.

‘Love that it’s here in the park on the estuary, not in gallery, so you get an idea of the land they’re talking about’

‘This is wonderful and really interesting. So nice to have something local’

“I had never heard of these woods before and feel very grateful for the discovery. The walk itself felt fairly accessible too.”

Quotes and feedback from audiences



Audiences enjoy Lore of the Wild, an audio storywalk by Bernadette Russell and Sophie Austin in Lesnes Woods. Photo: Ellie Kurtz

Social impact: communities

Estuary 2021 created opportunities for diverse communities to explore the Thames Estuary, participate and share experiences, building a sense of community

Audience profile

Gender: 63% female / 33% male / 4% described their gender in another way

Ethnicity: 18% ethnically diverse / 82% white

Disability: 19% identified as disabled / 81% as non-disabled

Age: 31% were under 16 / 69% were 16 and older

Cultural engagement

‘Audience Spectrum’ segmentation tool tells us more about our audiences’ attitudes to culture:

- 33% of our audience were from the five categories least likely to engage in contemporary culture (Heydays 3% / Kaleidoscope Creativity 5% / Facebook Families 9% / Up Our Street 10% and Homes and Heritage 6%)
- 21% was our highest engagement with any one segment – Trips and Treats – this group tend to have a strong preference for mainstream arts and popular culture, so it is noteworthy to see this level of engagement with contemporary visual arts, film and literature.
- We attracted strong engagement and participation from Experience Seekers (13%) / Commuterland Culturebuffs (10%) and Metroculturals (8%) as might be expected for experiential and site specific contemporary culture.

Building a sense of community

- 93% of audiences Strongly Agreed/Agreed that Estuary 2021 was welcoming for the whole community
- 92% felt that the event encouraged participation in community life and events
- 92% Strongly Agreed/Agreed that Estuary 2021 enhanced the sense of community in the Thames Estuary
- 97% Strongly Agreed/Agreed that the event is good for the location’s image

Estuary 2021 delivered 224 workshops / sessions for learning for 2817 participants, and worked with 24 schools.



Audiences enjoying Nadav Kander’s work (right) and picking up their VR glasses for Jack McNamara’s Tremor at the Edge of Vision (left). Images from social media posts.

Social impact: climate

Estuary 2021 built awareness in relation to climate change and sustainability

- 79% of our visitors found the festival themes important or very important factors in their decision to attend the festival.
- Of those that cited one of the three themes, 66% cited *climate* as the theme that interested them most.

“Lovely idea. Really important to educate people about the decline of parts of our ecosystem.”

“A wonderful experience and I have learned a lot about climate crisis, ecology and ethics.”

Audience comments, via Audience Finder



“It’s such an eye opener! Until someone points things out you don’t think, but I’ve learnt today about microplastics and carbon markets”

Audience comment on *Out to Dry* (pictured above) by Andy Freeman and Samantha Penn

Our marketing campaigns and partnerships with C2C and Southeastern Railway companies worked hard to promote sustainable forms of travel.

- 49% of our audiences travelled to the festival using a combination of public transport, cycling and walking
- 21% used rail or bus
- 41% cycled or arrived on foot

Key climate justice issues highlighted by works in the Estuary programme, included:

- A call to action around our often-passive relationship with climate change
- Climate in relation to our financial systems
- The plight of locally threatened birds, mass extinction and human progress
- The ecology and energy of the Thames Estuary: with a past as a factory of oil and gas, the future as a place of wind power
- Estuary plant life and the changing climate over millions of years.
- New ways of understanding how plants can mitigate climate damage going forward
- The significance of the Universal Declaration of Climate Rights
- Recognition of worldwide movements declaring climate emergency
- The phenomena of coastal darkening
- How to survive when London is flooded
- The impact of 200 years of industry on the Thames Estuary
- Exploring new relationships between people and ecology



REBEL by Ackroyd and Harvey shared three archive speeches by climate activists, through promenade performance in three locations across the Estuary, alongside photosynthesis portraits of their authors. Also exhibited at Wat Tyler Country Park in Pitsea, South Essex.

Image: Mark Massey

Expert speakers on climate included:

- Chloe Aridjis – Writers Rebel, UK
- Jay Griffiths – Writers Rebel, UK
- Osman Yousefzada – designer and activist, UK
- Caryn Franklin – designer and activist, UK
- James Marriot – curator, artist and author, UK
- Terry Macalister – writer and journalist, UK
- Lazarus Tamana – activist and campaigner, Nigeria
- Dr Vandana Shiva – activist and campaigner, India
- Laura Littleton – Environment Agency, UK
- Laura Blake – activist and campaigner, UK
- James Pier Taylor – Bioregionalism expert, UK
- Morgan O’Hara – artist and activist, USA



“Really lovely interactive idea for the family”

Audience member visiting *Our Land* (pictured left) at Wat Tyler Country Park in Pitsea

“One set of teens started off with three, liked it so much they went and got someone else, and then they all came back with two more to show them.”

Testimony from one Mum who visited with teenagers

Image left: Couple planting their strawberry plants at Our Land, audio walk and planting project by Sonia Hughes, Jo Fong, Andrew Wrestle and Lisa Mattocks. Image: Pauline Leftley



Our Time by Marcus Coates. Birdsong heard on the hour every hour from five civic clocktowers along the North Kent coast (Dartford, Gravesend, Rochester, Faversham, Herne Bay and Margate), highlighting birds that are locally under threat. With the support of the RSPB.
Image: Samuel Taylor

"We had no idea that so many bird species are vulnerable... It's a really important issue."

Audience comment, via Audience Finder on *Our Time* by Marcus Coates

Strategic impact

Estuary 2021 acted as a catalyst for new partnerships and opportunities in the Thames Estuary, supporting the creative community

Estuary 2021 worked in direct partnership with 101 diverse partners, including:

- 29 community partners
- 22 arts and heritage partners
- 19 Local Businesses
- 15 HE/FE partner institutions
- 14 Strategic partnerships
- 13 Local Authorities

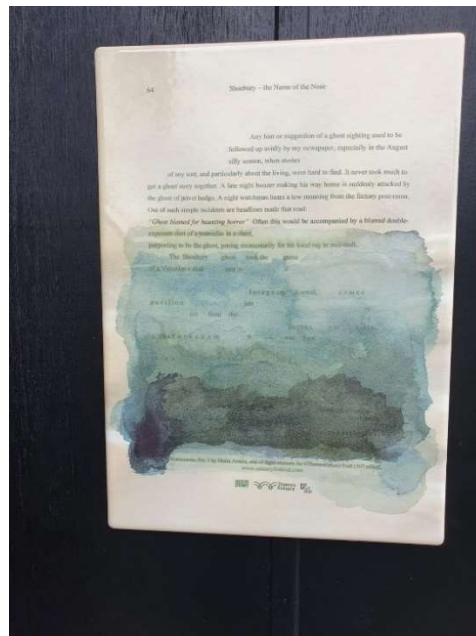
In addition, 86 creative projects were showcased through the Associated programme, with sixteen 1:1 advice surgeries provided through the estuary team, and 3 professional development seminars commissioned by Estuary 2021 from external expertise.

"I have felt so welcomed into the local artist community, it really feels like everyone is rooting for one another, and organisations are all working together to benefit the area."

Estuary 2021 artist

"We were certainly pleased with the opportunity the Associated Programme afforded our students, prompting a collaboration between Visual Communication and Fine Art and a link with Artrack Gravesend that we will definitely build on".

Senior Lecturer, Fine Art, University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury



Three of the Watermarks signs by artist, Maria Amidu, marking the 107 miles of the Thames Estuary Trail at (from left); Three Daws pub; Thameside Nature Reserve; Shoeburyness Hotel.

Estuary 2021 was made possible by:



CREATIVE ESTUARY PARTNERS

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