ENGLAND'S CREATIVE COAST
EVALUATION REPORT
March 2022

England's
CREATIVE COAST

RMR

Contents

About this report

This report explores the outcomes and impact of the England's Creative Coast project and is structured around the project objectives.

Before the report proper, the **Summary** sets out findings and conclusions in brief.

Section 1 gives an introduction to the project and its context.

Section 2 explores how the project met its aim of rebuilding the South East visitor economy.

Section 3 discusses visitor experience and how the project encouraged visitors to lengthen their stay.

Section 4 explores local people's engagement and how the project supported new perspectives on their places.

Section 5 discusses how the project developed partnerships across the region, and the development of shared information and resources.

Section 6 concludes and shares the learning from the project and recommendations to partners, funders and for other similar work.

The **Appendices** include links to supporting documentation.

Summary

England's Creative Coast was an ambitious project aimed at shifting the whole approach to cultural tourism in the South East of England.

It was designed to create a new outdoor cultural experience for visitors (international[1], national and local) that connected art with landscape and local stories with global perspectives.

Led by Turner Contemporary and Visit Kent, it was principally funded by Arts Council England's Cultural Destinations programme and Visit England through the Discover England Fund.

Although originally designed to run from December 2017 to January 2021, it was paused due to the pandemic, and then extended until November 2021.

Absolutely unique. Amazing. Really worth coming here to see it. Well done everyone

Geocacher, Hastings

The project can be seen as consisting of seven elements:

1) *Waterfronts* **commissions**: A series of seven artworks commissioned from international artists and set along the South Coast (Essex, Kent and East Sussex).

2) **Local engagement and Art GeoTour**: Accompanying each *Waterfronts* commission was a programme of community engagement centred around developing "the world's first-ever art GeoTour"[2].

3) **Art Homes:** A pilot initiative encouraging people to let their properties out to visitors for short-stay holidays connected to an art experience and local cultural milieu.

4) **Partnership working:** The project brought together seven major cultural partners and destination management organisations for the first time to leverage their power of collective working.

5) **A multi-channel marketing strategy**: Developed with the partners to reach new tourist audiences, maximise tie in with key cultural events in the region and specifically target UK and international travel journalists to encourage coverage.

6) **Information base**: Developing knowledge through research, training and shared learning was a key part of the project.

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[1] Due to the pandemic, the visitor focus moved from the international to the English market.

[2] See https://www.englandscreativecoast.com/see-and-do/englands-creative-coast-art-geotour/

The project in numbers

7 major new artworks

27 artists commissioned – locally, nationally and internationally

131 events held

227 people worked on the project

1,146 participants in local engagement work

1,460 geocache tour users

422,000+ in-person engagements

£1.9M of economic impact for the region

£8.4M of regional economic activity generated[3]

1.38 Bn readership for media coverage

The impacts

This evaluation assesses four areas of impacts:

Rebuilding the South East visitor economy

The impact of Covid 19 meant that supporting the rebuilding of the local economy – particularly the visitor economy – was a key aim for the project.

We find that:

o With over 400,000 engagements, ECC generated £8.4M worth of economic activity in the area and brought £1.9M of economic impact into the region.

o Over 227 people worked on the project.

o The project fit extremely well with new trends in tourism. It was outdoors, it linked to a resurgent interest in the seaside and a growing recognition of the South East as destination for cultural tourism.

o Nationally it was a model for innovative campaigns that promote visits to (and within) a region.

o The success of the project has generated massive opportunities for the partners to build on at many levels.

However, it is too early to quantify longer term impacts of the project, specifically:

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[3] Region defined as the SELEP area – the County Areas of Kent, Essex and East Sussex (including Medway, Thurrock and Southend)

- How much ECC has changed perceptions of the region.
- The support it provided to a sector (culture and tourism) which was severely challenged by lockdown.

Inspiring visitors to lengthen their stay

The project wanted to inspire visitors from outside the region to visit, to stay longer, and to do a wider range of things while in the region. This would encourage future visits and change perceptions of the region.

This was achieved through the promotion of the work and the region, the quality of the offer, the way the art linked to the locality, and new ways of engaging with art and place.

We find that:

- A successful PR campaign reached a large global audience, generating high profile coverage, driving website traffic and in-person visits.
- Website traffic was lower than expected and the lack of a strong social media presence was a missed opportunity.
- *Waterfronts* commissions were viewed as high quality pieces of art, appropriately linked to place.
- Visitors found *Waterfronts* artworks interesting and moving, with most people liking them.
- The geocache trail was viewed extremely positively by the geocache community for its innovation and the beauty of the caches.
- Although small in number, the geocache trail did drive some visits and extensions of stay.

- 15% of ECC visitors stayed overnight for an average of 3 nights, generating around 136,000 bednights, and it is estimated they spent around £14.5M locally.
- ECC visitors tended to be older and were more likely to come from deprived areas than the local average.

Local people exploring their town and region

England's Creative Coast sought to involve local people in the experience - engaging them with their locality whilst developing their understanding of the local arts offer.

This work was largely carried out through the partner organisations' engagement departments. It proved challenging as the use of geocaching technology was new to all but one partner.

We find that:

- A range of approaches were used that centred on the local residents and valued local artists' input to the process.
- Those taking part had an increased pride in place and changed perceptions of their locality.
- Participants' views of art changed – particularly the sense of relevance to them and their preparedness to engage with it.
- Local people feel positive about tourism and its role in supporting the cultural offer locally.

Partnerships across cultural and tourism networks

Bringing cultural partners together with those responsible for developing tourism lay at the heart of the project. It was both a catalyst for the success of the project and a legacy for the future.

A huge amount of time was invested in this partnership working, especially by the core project team – for example, in managing meetings, conducting training and communicating with multiple stakeholders and participants – and by the partners involved in the project.

We find:

o The partnership working was hugely successful, with potential for long term impacts that shift how both the culture and tourism sectors operate across the region.

o There was a high level of buy-in to the project in terms of time given, particularly at a senior level. Partners tended to feel they benefitted in proportion to the amount of time they put in.

o The commitment was to include partners in all decision making and implementation – and in most areas, this was felt to have worked. However, there could have been a more collaborative approach to some of the planning, leading to greater buy-in at all levels.

o An increase in mutual understanding of the pressures and challenges faced within the cultural and visitor sectors.

o Although there was some sharing of language between sectors, there was a realisation further work is needed to develop this.

o Partners within the cultural sector made new and deeper links across the geographical area, particularly in local engagement

and marketing. This was valued and organisations want further opportunities to develop this.

o Time for reflection and sharing practice was valued.

o The information bank developed was useful for the few partners who used it – however, its use and value were limited due to sector changes arising from Covid 19.

o All the partnership development outcomes were massively disrupted because of wider issues – in particular, the pandemic resulted in heavier workloads at all organisations, staff being furloughed and high staff turn-over.

Conclusions

Key successes

England's Creative Coast was an ambitious, exciting project which managed to achieve results despite an extremely challenging set of circumstances.

The project's major successes were:

o **In a year where visitor volume was just over half of the norm, it attracted over 400,000 visitors, many of whom stayed overnight, and contributing to the region's economic recovery.**

o **A series of seven major artworks were commissioned together with the world's first art GeoTour – these were enjoyed by visitors and locals alike.**

o **The GeoTour drew on, and showcased, local creativity via an artist-led engagement programme, and was praised for its innovation and beauty.**

- Extensive press coverage appeared in a number of high-profile publications demonstrating recognition of the quality of the work – and also driving website traffic and in-person visits.

- The partnership – of arts and visitor organisations together with multiple delivery partners across all sectors – was successful and built mutual understanding that has resulted in a commitment to continue working in this way.

Challenges

The project faced many challenges:

- The multiple effects of Covid 19, including the catastrophic effect on the visitor economy and existential challenge to all partners.

- Structural issues around a complex funding model.

- The size of the geographical region being covered.

- The number of elements contained within the programme.

- Different working cultures between the visitor and cultural sector.

- The uncertainty and restrictions of a Hard Brexit, especially given the original focus on European visitors.

Learning

The project's ability to thrive has led to significant learning around how to approach major place-based culture and tourism projects in future.

a. Maintaining ambition and quality

Strategic partners and funders were impressed by the way in which the project maintained its ambition through difficult circumstances.

By holding their nerve, and working incredibly hard, the England's Creative Coast team managed to deliver a project which has been described as an exemplar for other large-scale projects.

b. High-quality leadership

Focused and experienced leadership from the Project Director was the lynchpin in the project succeeding.

In addition, the core leadership group were able to take diverse funders and partners on a journey, persuading them to trust in the project during the most trying of times.

c. Developing valuable partnerships

Time and effort were needed both from the core team and partners to develop the valuable partnerships that underpinned ECC – particularly the cross-sector partnerships around different elements of the work.

It should be recognised that in many cases these were not completely new but existing relationships that were extended and developed as the project progressed.

d. Creating value in many ways

ECC has created obvious, tangible value in a number of ways – additional spend, a boost to tourism and a positive economic impact – at a time when the negative impacts of Covid 19 are still keenly felt, especially in the cultural and tourism sectors.

There are other ways the project will have created value – in the richness of people's engagements, developing a sense of pride in place and connections built between partners – which will only be fully understood as part of the project's legacy.

e. Clear marketing messages

Getting communication right is a challenge for all complex projects. ECC succeeded in creating clear messaging around the *Waterfronts* commissions.

Despite the obvious intricacy of messaging required, this consistently folded in the GeoTour and other activities happening across the various towns – particularly two major festivals (Creative Estuary and Folkestone Triennial) with which ECC aligned. This could have been strengthened with a co-ordinated social media approach.

f. An immediate and future legacy

The immediately legacy can be seen in the tangible assets that have been created. For example, *Waterfronts* artworks can still be seen either in their original location or in other places (see *Appendix 5* for more details).

A potentially far richer legacy is the strength and depth of the partnerships formed, which include a shared understanding across sectors and the wish to work together in the future. Additionally, the project has created an aspiration and confidence around future work in the region.

Recommendations

We recommend that the England's Creative Coast partners should:

A.   **Proactively develop future partnership work**

B.   **Recognise the importance of place making, place recovery and levelling up**

C.   **Articulate the full value of the project**

D.   **Share the learning widely within the cultural and tourism sectors**

E.   **Work together to develop research and intelligence for the sectors in the region**

F.   **Resource future projects appropriately**

G.   **Introduce space for reflection and action research into all projects**

H.   **Use ECC as a model for innovative cultural tourism projects including replication elsewhere in England**

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1.   About the project

England's Creative Coast was led by Turner Contemporary and Visit Kent and was principally funded by Arts Council England's Cultural Destinations programme and Visit England through the Discover England Fund, with support from a number of key investors, including; the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Essex County Council, Visit Essex, Southend Borough Council, Experience West Sussex, The Historic Dockyard Chatham and Southeastern, and in partnership with Cement Fields, Creative Folkestone, De La Warr Pavilion, Hastings Contemporary, Metal and Towner Eastbourne.

It was originally designed to run from December 2017 to January 2021 and was paused and then restarted to extend to November 2021 due to lockdown delays.

It was an ambitious project which aimed to shift the whole approach to cultural tourism thinking in the region. It was designed to create a new outdoor cultural experience for visitors (international[4], national and local) that connected art with landscape and local stories with global perspectives. The model was to commission new work by some of the world's leading artists, uncover the creative spirit of each place as told by the locals that live there, unveil the world's first geocaching digital treasure hunt, and develop online self-build itineraries that included food, travel and accommodation.

Alongside the immediate benefits in terms of the visitor offer, and the economic and perception change impacts that could bring, it also hoped to build understanding and develop the working relationships between and within the cultural and visitor sectors of the region.

1.1   Challenges and adaptation

From the start, the project faced some considerable challenges. These were further exacerbated by global challenges which happened during the project timeframe.

Non-aligned project funding: ECC was funded through two main sources, however these did not overlap in timing. Cultural Destinations funding, which focused on the artworks and local engagement, covered the period December 2018 to November 2020 (extended to November 2021), and Discover England funding, which focused on the marketing and visitor economy tie in, covered December 2017 to November 2019. This meant that from the start the marketing was scheduled to end before the artworks were launched, which wasn't ideal but was workable. However with Covid-related delays, this separation of timing meant that much of the preparation work wasn't relevant, and there was no funding to adapt to the new context.

Hard Brexit: Although the project was developed in the context of Brexit, at the start of the project the final arrangements for Brexit and the ease of cross-border travel, and thus the implications for

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[4] At the start of the project, international visitors were the main target, with a focus on French and Dutch markets due to location and easy travel routes. Following the restrictions to international travel which the pandemic lockdown brought, this shifted to a focus on the English market.

the visitor sector of the SE of England, were not clear. It was at the time seen as unlikely that the agreement would take so long or that the border would be as strong as seems likely at this point. This had implications for the success of the marketing strategy of attracting the nearby markets of northwest Europe even before lockdown effects.

Covid 19 pandemic: Alongside the rest of the cultural and visitor sector, ECC needed to pivot rapidly to adapt to the lockdown. The decision was immediately made to suspend the project and move the Waterfronts' launch date to May 2021 (from 2020), moving the end date to Nov 2021. Data shows that this was a very sensible decision to make at that point; in 2021 the international visitor market fell to 95% of 2019 levels, and visitor spend in 2021 is estimated to be up 51% on 2020 – though still at 56% of 2019 figures.[5]

It did however have the effect of further offsetting the two funding streams.

This had immediate issues in terms of needing to stop work, ask the freelance project team to stop and then restart and effectively extend the project by nearly a year without additional finance. In addition, lockdown was extremely challenging for many partners with a lot of staff turnover meaning that they weren't able to plan consistently across the project, and there was a need to constantly induct new partner staff. Many of the partners had some or most staff in furlough or were closed up to just before the launch.

The continuing international restrictions in 2021 meant that the preparation work with international press was largely redundant for the immediate work (though it may well pay dividends in future years) and a whole new England focussed marketing campaign was needed. This was all carried out without additional funding.

Delivery needed to change to an online approach for nearly all of the work (barring the Waterfronts and GeoTours) which meant adapting the local engagement work so that it was both Covid-safe and accessible. This had some interesting impacts such as the opportunity to work with keyworker children at schools in Hastings, but also limitations in working with some other vulnerable groups.

The lockdown did have some benefits in that there was a boost to the UK visitor market from English visitors – particularly the seaside visitor market which the project was well placed to link into.

1.2 Post-Covid aims and objectives

The project was seen as a key component in the recovery of the region's visitor economy.

It would contribute significantly to rebuilding visitor numbers and encouraging tourists to return to England's Creative Coast in the South East (Essex, Kent and East Sussex).

To achieve this, it would create an innovative and immersive new visitor experience driven by the region's exceptional art and culture.

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[5] Source: 2021 tourism forecast | VisitBritain – see links in the Appendix for more details.

The redeveloped post-Covid objectives of the project were:

o Help rebuild domestic visitor numbers to the South East visitor economy

o Inspire visitors to lengthen their stay and local people to explore their town/region

o Create a partnership across cultural and tourism networks in Essex, Kent and East Sussex

o Develop the information and knowledge core through research, training and shared learning

1.3   ECC outputs

Over 422,000 in person engagements

1,146 participants in the local engagement work

1,460 geocache tour users

227 people worked on England's Creative Coast across a huge range of sectors – mostly locally based

131 events

7 major new artworks

27 artists based locally, nationally and internationally

£8.4M economic activity in the region.[6]

£1.9M economic impact on the region

1.38 Bn readership of total media coverage

1.4   Elements of the project

1.4.1   *Waterfronts* art commissions

Waterfronts was a series of seven artworks curated by Tamsin Dillon, commissioned from international artists and located along the South Coast. In their work, each artist explored the "edge of England" – the meeting of land and sea – and the social, ecological, geological and political themes this raised.

Below are brief descriptions of each work (for a fuller description see https://www.englandscreativecoast.com/).

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[6] Region defined as the SELEP area – the County Areas of Kent, Essex and East Sussex (including Medway, Thurrock and Southend)

'**Walking through the town I followed a pattern on the pavement that became the magnified silhouette of a woman's profile'** (Mariana Castillo Deball) responded to Eastbourne's local archaeology, with the main piece – a large geoglyph on the South Downs – accompanied by an art trail around the town (including embedded objects) and a curated exhibition at Towner Gallery.

'**Invertebrate'** (Holly Hendry) was a sculpture outside, inside and on the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill that responded to the ideas of "edges", and was complemented by an exhibition, 'Indifferent Deep' in the Pavilion's gallery.

'**The first thing I did was to kiss the ground'** (Jasleen Kaur) drew on the deep and complex history of migration in the area, and consisted of a sound installation and sculptural piece on Gravesend Pier.

'**Janus Fortress: Folkestone'** (Pilar Quinteros) was a two-faced sculpture – one facing inland, the other out to sea – embodying the dual nature of a border. Located on cliffs overlooking Folkestone, it featured in the procession that ended the 2021 Folkestone Triennial.

'**April is the cruellest month'** (Michael Rakowitz) was situated on Margate. The sculpture of a British soldier who fought in the 2003 Iraq War was conceived as an "anti-war memorial" – it navigated multiple meanings, exploring the space where hospitality and hostility mix.

'**HELLO'** and '**RETREAT'** (Katrina Palmer) were two works – a concrete form at Shoeburyness in Southend-on-Sea and an online piece – that contrasted different notions of the English seaside and Englishness.

'**Seawall'** (Andreas Angelidakis) consisted of eight identical structures placed in a small square outside the Hastings Contemporary gallery. In playing with the idea of sea defences, it responded to the nearby seafront but also the issues of coastal erosion and climate change.

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1 Mariana Castillo Deball – 'Walking through the town I followed a pattern on the pavement that became the magnified silhouette of a woman's profile' - Eastbourne

2 Holly Hendry - 'Invertebrate' - Bexhill

3 Jasleen Kaur - 'The first thing I did was to kiss the ground' - Gravesend

4 Pilar Quinteros - 'Janus Fortress: Folkestone' - Folkestone

5 Michael Rakowitz - 'April is the cruellest month' - Margate

6 Katrina Palmer - 'HELLO' - Southend-on-Sea

7 Andreas Angelidakis - 'Seawall' - Hastings

1.4.2   Local engagement and art GeoTour

Described as "the world's first-ever art GeoTour"[7], this 'GPS-enabled treasure hunt' complimented *Waterfronts* as a whole, but also each artwork individually.

The content was created by local people facilitated by the local arts organisations. Through a series of workshops and using a co-creative practice, the partners supported people in the seven towns and around the coast of Essex to share stories of their places, reacting to the conceptual and artistic themes from the *Waterfronts* artwork locally. The GeoTour asked visitors to find 'geocaches' – hidden (physical) items and/or ways to access online content in a physical container. This was done via the Geocaching® app installed on a visitor's smartphones (or other devices).

For example, in Eastbourne artist Amy Leung worked with young people from the YMCA LGBTQ+ group to develop objects to be placed in the geocache containers. The resulting zoomorphic designs were inspired by local Anglo-Saxon grave finds, building on the theme established by Mariana Castillo Deball's *Waterfronts* work.

Together the seven local sets of geocaches made up the Art GeoTour as a whole. In addition, at each location was an Adventure Lab, separate to the geocache but using similar technology. This focused on taking the visitor from one place (a "find") to another, and wasn't reliant on physical caches or items. So at each location, for example in Bexhill, the visitor would be led by the Adventure Lab

trail from one find to another, learning about the town through audio content. The Adventure Labs were added in response to Covid (as they are non-physical) and offered an easier way for people to engage than the full GeoTour.

Figure 1: GeoTour planning

The Art GeoTour and Adventure Labs were developed in partnership with commercial organisations (Geocaching HQ, Geocaching Adventure Labs) and volunteers (Geocaching Association of Great Britain).

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[7] See https://www.englandscreativecoast.com/see-and-do/englands-creative-coast-art-geotour/

1.4.3   Art Homes

A further part of the project was the piloting of Art Homes, led by Visit Kent and Turner Contemporary, and developed by Quality In Tourism.

This initiative encouraged people to let their properties out to visitors for short-stay holidays connected to an art experience.

1.4.4   Self-build itineraries

These were trips that could be personalised and planned using the www.englandscreativecoast.com online platform. To give a complete cultural travel experience, this featured full information about the project, recommendations for the best food, drink and accommodation, suggested itineraries and links to affiliated local businesses and key travel operators.

1.4.5   Partnership

The project brought together the seven cultural partners and destination management organisations for the first time, aiming to prove the power of partnership to create something new, innovative and impactful across the region.

1.4.6   Marketing work

A detailed marketing strategy was developed in conjunction with the partners. Clear campaign moments for the project were identified which looked to maximise key cultural events and announcements for the South East region including Folkestone

Triennial and Estuary. As Covid hit the campaign was pivoted to look much more towards digital initiatives.

Investment was also given to delivery partners in order for them to target their own local markets working closely with the project team.

www.englandscreativecoast.com website was developed (initially led by Visit Kent). The core elements of the site were translated into French, Dutch and German.
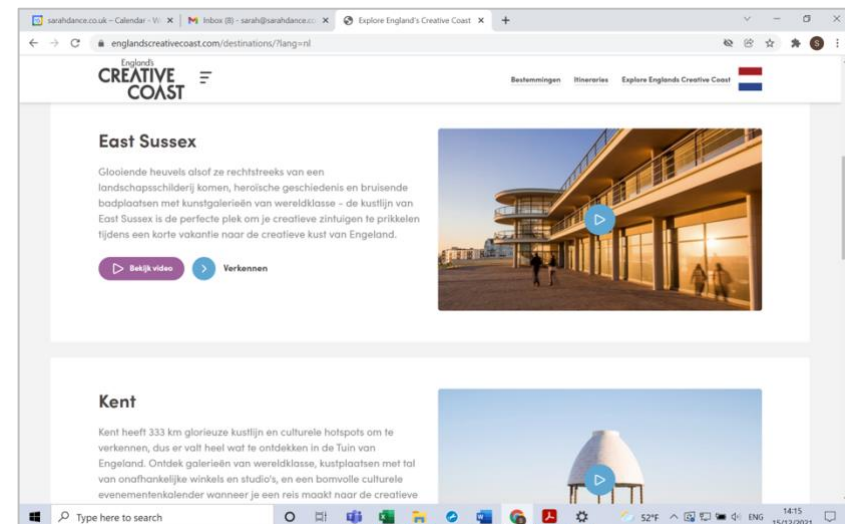

Figure 2: ECC website, Dutch translation

Over 100 tourism businesses were onboarded to the platform and linked to the itineraries. The artworks and geocache tour were uploaded once completed.

Pickles PR were appointed as the PR agency and developed a detailed press strategy in consultation with all our partners.

Visit Kent and England's Coast (englandscoast.com) promoted England's Creative Coast to national and international tourism press. Visit Kent worked with two international media agencies, House of Britain (Holland) and Avia Reps (France), to reach the French and Dutch market.

1.4.7   Press trips

Despite the challenges of Covid, various press trips took place. However, these were mainly personalised for individual press rather than a large group. This took considerable time to organise and meant that the project team were involved in meeting and showing various members of press across the area. The only exception to this was two international press trips from 22 – 26 October 2019 which featured a five-day experience for nine journalists from France and the Netherlands.

1.4.8   Background research and information base

One of the key objectives for the project was to develop the information and knowledge core through research, training and shared learning. Much of the tourism knowledge and understanding work took place in the early part of the project and it is important to note that the travel market has since changed considerably. Workshops led by Visit England took place to which cultural partners were encouraged to attend. Taking England to the World

(TETTW) training gave organisations the opportunity to learn in detail about how to bring their business to the international market. From the other angle, the England's Creative Coast project and what it means to the visitor was highlighted within the South East module within the England's Coast Ambassador training[8] platform (another Discover England Fund project).

Several pieces of perception and volume baseline research were carried out in 2019 and made available to partners.

1.5   About the evaluation

RMR's approach to evaluation is holistic and integrated, measuring the full impact arising from the interaction of all elements, and linking to the delivery so that data collection is built into delivery where possible. In addition, we take an iterative approach, feeding back findings as they emerge and using reflection sessions to challenge and develop learning, rather than just waiting for a report at the end.

The evaluation was lengthened to fit with the extension of the project, and the approach was expanded to include supporting footfall counting and supporting partner organisations to adapt their methods particularly around the local engagement programme. There were some real challenges in data gathering from already overstretched organisations with high staff turnover, as well as challenges in the need to stretch over time in terms of resources, memories and staff turnover.

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[8] see https://www.englandscoastambassador.co.uk/

Data collection included: use of secondary data from partners, onsite audience surveys (using Audience Finder questionnaires), group discussions and surveys for the local engagement programme, interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and delivery partners, reflection workshops with the programme steering group. Due to the challenges of visitor sector research in this period, XV Insight was contracted as an expert partner to review existing data and analysis. Their analysis feeds into the report and is available via links in the Appendix. The Audience Agency were contracted to provide Audience Finder survey with bespoke questions for England's Creative Coast and to carry out an Economic Impact Assessment. Their findings feed into this report.

2.   Rebuilding the South East visitor economy

Following the reangling of ECC in response to Covid 19 changes, supporting the rebuilding of the local economy – particularly the visitor economy – was a key aim for the project. It is too early to be able to quantify the likely longer-term impact of the work in changing perceptions of the region, and thus potential support to a sector which was severely challenged by lockdown, however we find that:

○ With over 400,000 engagements, ECC generated £8.4M worth of economic activity in the area and brought £1.9M of economic impact into the region.

○ Over 227 people worked on the project.

○ The project fit extremely well with new trends in tourism being outdoors and linking to resurgent interest in the seaside and growing recognition of the SE as an area for cultural tourism.

○ The project is seen very positively nationally as a model for an innovative campaign for promoting visits to and within a region.

○ All of the project work, and the levels of recognition reached is likely to have longer term impacts and offers huge potential for

further development by partners in the project, building on these opportunities.

2.1   Visitor volume and value estimates

There were over 422,000 engagements with England's Creative Coast, including 1,090 participants in the local engagement work, and over 1400 people[9] who did the GeoTour.

Over 227 people worked on England's Creative Coast across a huge range of sectors – from artists and arts organisations, to fabricators, marketeers and promoters, researchers, logistics and security. The majority of them were locally based, creating more work in the local economy.

Using The Audience Agency Economic Impact modelling we estimate that the England's Creative Coast artworks and GeoTour generated around £8.4M worth of economic activity in the region.[10] Taking a tight definition of economic impact[11], the estimated economic impact on the region was £1.5M (before multiplier), or £1.9M (after multiplier).[12]

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[9] 700 geocaching accounts, which often represent more than one person - for example, a family group. Due to lack of concrete data from anecdotal feedback we estimate an average of two people per account.

[10] Region defined as the SELEP area – the County Areas of Kent, Essex and East Sussex (including Medway and Southend)

[11] See below for explanation.

[12] **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

However, these figures are based on immediate impact, as well as on the data we had available (see below on data gaps). They do not take into account the longer-term economic impact which will arise from shifts in visitors' perceptions of the region, and from the partner organisations' ability and ambition to broaden and deepen their audiences.

In looking at economic impact, we used a tight definition excluding people based in the region in terms of their spend on the basis this might be displaced from what they would do anyway – however it is possible that were there no local offer like ECC, many of the visitors would have chosen to travel further afield into other areas of the country.

Given the overwhelmingly positive feedback from visitors, both local and national (see section 3 below), there is a real potential for the experience to generate direct economic impact from additional visits in future years. Having discovered the attractions of the area, people are likely to do more 'stay and visit' style holidays – or short trips to nearby places – rather than feeling they need to travel elsewhere in the UK and Europe for cultural experiences. This may not be due to the artworks and GeoTour per se, but having them located alongside and linked to the local arts organisations means the association is still strong. There could also be longer-term visits arising from people who noticed the publicity and didn't manage to

visit in 2021, but have shifted perceptions of SE England as a cultural destination.

Below we explore the context in which ECC sits and opportunities for the region's visitor economy which partners can use this experience to build on.

2.2   Visitor economy context for England's Creative Coast

ECC initially aimed to attract both:

o New international visitors - by highlighting the arts offer of the SE region - a very accessible destination for NW Europe – and changing perceptions of the UK offer and building a short break market among cultural tourists

o A wider range of domestic visitors to the seaside towns of SE England thus diversifying visitor demographics and attracting a younger audience and one which might spend more/differently and come year-round.

In both cases it was the combination of location and offer which would be attractive, and there was extensive initial work put into marketing for these.

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project, and money spent by the organisation(s) delivering the project. As not all economic activity can be categorised as economic impact, we have taken a tight definition of economic impact.

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 the project 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

With recognition of the full extent of Brexit (a very 'soft' and relatively fast Brexit was still on the cards when the project started) along with the catastrophic impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic on the visitor economy, the explicit aims of the project changed to rebuilding the domestic market post-pandemic. There was also a decision to delay the project for a year.

2.2.1   Issues with data

In order to assess the impact of these decisions, as well as the potential for ECC to build on opportunities, we had hoped to explore the recovery of the visitor sector in the SE as a whole, and in particular around cultural and seaside tourism. Unfortunately, as a result of the pandemic, there are four major issues with data which mean conclusions can only be indicative:

1) The tourism sector shut for many months through 2020 and early 2021. The inbound tourism market has yet to fully restart. This means any footfall and visitor volume data that may be available cannot be interpreted as the norms and trends that would normally be used no longer exist.

2) Almost all tourism sector research stopped in early 2021 and has yet to resume or, if restarted, has yet to report. Again, interpretation of this data when available will be an immense challenge as the past norms are no longer relevant.

3) The impact on this sector is likely to be felt more in the medium to long term when changes in perception and recognition have had a chance to take effect.

4) The timing of the report, and the work mean that data for 2021 is not yet available and it is also hard to define valid baselines as 2020 was an extraordinary year. National indications are that in 2021, while better than 2020, the visitor sector had in no way reached back to 2019 levels (visitor spend in 2021 is estimated to be up 51% on 2020 – though still at 56% of 2019 figures).[13]

As a result of all of these, the ability to accurately assess the impact of the outdoor artworks on regional tourism is not possible to do in a quantitative way.

2.2.2   Growth in the SE England visitor market

Despite the problems with data mentioned above, indications are that the visitor economy is beginning to recover, with the SE recovering faster than average for England in terms of occupancy and average room prices, and the SE seems to be gaining from the shifts in domestic visitor perceptions with 14% of people feeling that the SE is their preferred destination – compared to 9% in 2019.

2.2.3   Opportunities with the international market

Although it is too early to see results, the work with the NW European visitor press sector may yet bear fruit as the SE of

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[13] Source: 2021 tourism forecast | VisitBritain – see links in the Appendix for more details.

England does seem to be gaining in interest from an international market.

31% of international travellers intending to visit England say they would visit the South East (second only to London at 40%). This is combined with the fact that international travellers intending to visit England are young to middle-aged, and 37% envisage the coastline being their main destination with strong interest in cultural attractions (50%) outdoor activities (45%) self-drive tours (37%) and cultural events (37%).[14] All of these factors point towards a good market for the arts offer reflected by ECC, meaning that travel journalists involved in the early stages of the project may have an incentive and interest in revisiting and writing up new pieces on the region as an arts destination.

2.2.4 Alignment of the project model with visitor trends

Much research has been done during the Covid-19 pandemic, looking at the immediate impact of the crisis on well-being, attitudes and behaviours and projections for the future and whether past normality will return or whether newly learned behaviours are here to stay.

There has been a greater focus on well-being within daily life that is likely to feed into visitor inclinations to get out, exercise and be active. In addition, with restrictions on indoor activities, being outdoors became a more popular option – dog ownership increased and outdoor activities and venues grew in popularity. This is reflected in research showing hesitation remaining around indoor attractions, compared to outdoors.

ECC's offer completely fits with these trends, and could help to reset thinking about cultural tourism as being more than art galleries and museums, but about public art and its local setting as well.

Linked to this, as people become more certain of the type of destination they want to visit, seaside and rural coastlines have not changed significantly, whilst there has been a decline in intent to stay in towns or the countryside.[15]

Recent research from Visit Kent on perceptions of the region by visitors from outside the region show an increased recognition of the arts offer – with 62% of those who had visited since March 2020 recognising the cultural activities on offer, compared with 43% of those who'd visited before 2016 recognising this.[16]

In interviews, Destination Management Organisation partners Visit Kent, Southend Council and 1066 Country also noted the potential of these trends to result in future visits. All felt that the sector was recovering fast, and saw cultural offer as a key driver for this, particularly when linked into the wider offer of the seaside and coast within their respective counties[17].

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[14] Source: Visit Britain Inbound Sentiment Tracker Wave 3: PowerPoint Presentation (visitbritain.org)

[15] Source: Visit Britain Consumer Sentiment Wave 39 PowerPoint Presentation (visitbritain.org)

[16] Kent Perceptions Research – NOT yet published, shared with XV Insight for RMR

[17] For example, Kent's Heritage Coast was named by Lonely Planet at no.4 in their Best In Travel 2022: Top 10 Regions - see https://www.lonelyplanet.com/best-in-travel/regions

At a national level, VisitBritain and England's Coast noted strong anecdotal evidence of a likely continuation of interest in short or medium visits to coastal locations, for a mix of culture and outdoors experience. This would sit within an overall expectation of the UK holiday market moving to people taking one international holiday, but seeing their second and subsequent holidays as UK based, both for cost, safety and increasingly environmental reasons. This will be further supported by the Lonely Planet accolade for Kent Heritage Coast which won international recognition as the 4th region on Lonely Planet's *Best in Travel 2022*. Kent was the only UK destination to feature and was selected for its unique experiences, 'wow' factor and its ongoing commitment to sustainable tourism practices with cultural offer mentioned as part of the recommendation.

2.3 Other steps taken to support the visitor economy

2.3.1 International marketing

In 2018-19 a significant international marketing and press campaign was developed. This included:

A partnership with House of Britain, one of the largest Dutch trade operators. Through this a dedicated newsletter for England's Creative Coast was sent on 29 January 2019, with a focus on the four destinations and their existing cultural offer as well as highlighting that there would be seven artworks to come in 2020.

The email generated 450 clicks through to the House of Britain website, showing the high level of interest in the product. A second newsletter was sent on 19 February 2019, focusing on the top cultural reasons to visit England's Creative Coast this summer and autumn. This was sent to 2,900 recipients and received a 16% click through rate to their website about England's Creative Coast tours).

A partnership with E-Voyages, one of the largest French trade wholesalers, which was developed to a joint product development and marketing partnership. E-Voyages had expressed interest in picking up the England's Creative Coast product and has identified key distributers to sell the product to. They are starting to see a rise in cultural (art) tourism and believe this product could place them 'ahead of the curve'. They had expected visits to take place from 2020 onwards. The pandemic obviously put this all on hold, but it could be picked up as borders reopen.

During 2019 **B2B (business to business) international promotion** also took place including, Vakantiebeurs, a Trade/Consumer Show at Utrecht in the Netherlands in January 2019, the UKinbound Convention in Glasgow 5th – 8th February 2019

Visit Kent also worked closely with VisitBritain's marketing managers in both France and the Netherlands to secure promotion of England's Creative Coast through VisitBritain's channels oversees, including newsletters, website and social media.

The core elements of the website were translated into French, Dutch and German.

The project team also worked with international bloggers to create three dedicated advertorials about *England's Creative Coast*. The three bloggers were given briefing notes but had creative freedom to write about any aspect of the project they wished. Each blogger includes references to all destinations and the seven new artworks expected in 2020.[18]

2.3.2   Art Homes

The aim of the Art Homes project was to scope the potential for a new 'Art Homes' accommodation offer, investigating product viability, market proposition, best practice and route to market, to enable artists to generate an additional income stream, in line with current tourism standards, and contributing to the growth of the creative industries.

It was an initiative which encouraged people to let their properties out to visitors for short-stay holidays connected to an art experience.

This had two benefits:

o Visitors experienced a unique overnight stay which engaged them with the creative spirit of a town.

o For the hosts, there was the chance to enhance their accommodation offer and link it directly into the local cultural economy.

It was seen as a new tourism product that would appeal to international and domestic visitors and promote the region's exceptional art and culture offering. Research was conducted to test the market and scope the potential for an Art Homes accommodation offer. The research indicated that there was real market opportunity and interest, and an Art Homes toolkit was developed to support potential hosts.

A pilot was launched in September 2019 but because of low uptake and the pandemic, it relaunched in March 2021. Take up was still low due to concerns around opening up homes during Covid 19. Despite this, visitor sector partners still believed in the potential of the model as a way to help visitors immerse themselves in the local art scene and provide a unique visitor experience.

A key development is that the DMOs now recognise the real need to reduce the qualifying process for the accommodation providers, without risking a lack of quality or connection with local art.

2.4   Conclusion

ECC has already played a part in the recovery of the regional economy through work creation and attraction of visitors to the towns. Despite delays and gaps in the data, it is likely that ECC will have some longer term impacts, and more significantly, it has developed a model for project partners, particularly within the visitor economy sector, to build on which can take full advantage of

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[18] See Appendix 6 for example blogs and links

shifting patterns within the UK visitor market, while still building on the work within local European markets.

3. Inspiring visitors to lengthen their stay

The project aimed to inspire visitors from outside the region to visit, to stay longer, and to do a wider range of things while in the location. This would also change perceptions of the region and inspire future visits.

This was to happen through the promotion of the work and region, the quality of the offer, and the way the art linked to the locality and through the introduction of new ways of engaging with art and place.

We find that:

- A very successful PR campaign reached a huge number of people and generated several prestigious articles. This drove visits to the website and in person visits.

- Overall website traffic was lower than might have been expected and the lack of a strong social media presence was a missed opportunity.

- The *Waterfronts* commissions were viewed as high quality pieces of art, appropriately linked to place.

- Visitors found them interesting and moving, with most people liking them.

- The geocache trail was viewed extremely positively by the geocache community both for its innovation and the beauty of the caches.

- Although small in number, the geocache trail did drive some visits and extensions of stay.

- 15% of ECC visitors stayed overnight for an average of 3 nights, generating around 136,000 bednights, and estimated they spent around £14.5M locally.

- ECC visitors tended to be older, and were more likely to come from deprived areas than the local average.

3.1 Media profile and impact

Together with the partner arts organisations, the project used a range of online and offline communications – including radio ads, outdoor advertising, social media campaigns etc - which potentially reached millions of people in the UK and beyond.

Pickles PR were appointed as the PR agency and developed a detailed press strategy in consultation with all project partners. A significant amount of press was achieved:

- 128 pieces of coverage

- 3.63 m estimated coverage views

- 1.38 Bn readership

o Over 22,000 social shares[19]

As part of the partnership with the train operator Southeastern, posters were displayed at over 70 railway stations throughout the region between 13 August and 26 September 2021, potentially reaching up to 12 million people.

A number of videos were created to promote the project including a trailer, to provide more background to the artists and artworks and as part of the (online) launch. Versions of the trailer (and its update films) were viewed over 1,500 times[20].

Some of the press coverage was high prestige and incredibly positive:

o **Condé Naste** listed ECC as one of the Best of 2021 Cultural Festivals in the UK.

o **National Geographic** highlighted ECC as one of Seven of the Best Coastal Family Adventures in the British Isles and featured in it in their top 21 best places in the World.

o **i news** listed ECC as one of the best new things to do across the UK in their Days out near me.

o **Suitcase** listed ECC as one of 21 UK Destinations to visit.

o **Time Out** listed ECC as one of The UK trips we'll book in 2021.

o **The Observer Critics** choose ECC as one of the best art shows for 2021 as part of the grand reopening.

And the overall reach and quality of the work, and its fit to time and place, was recognized by Artlyst, the UK's leading art information website. They placed ECC Project Director Sarah Dance at number 12 in their international Alt Power 100 list for 2021.[21]

Much of the marketing drove people to the ECC website (www.englandscreativecoast.com) to find out more about the project and to plan visits – so website activity can be taken as an indicator of engagement.

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[19] From Pickles PR report for England's Creative Coast - https://sphelps.dyndns-home.com:9000/index.php/s/AP9E3qLmwWCGKh0

[20] "Plays" collected from YouTube, 8 December 2021

[21] See Alt Power 100 Artlyst 2021 – Art Makes People Powerful https://www.artlyst.com/features/alt-power-100-artlyst-2021-art-makes-people-powerful/

From 29 April to 14 November 2021[22], the website attracted 24,006 users (264 per day) resulting in 52,798 pageviews – 64% of users visiting on mobile devices and on average looking at 2 pages per session.[23]

Given the profile of the project and the scale of the marketing activity, this is a relatively low number of users. Also given the depth of visitor information, an average of 2 pages per session may be considered low.

The 10 most popular web pages accounted for 50% of pageviews – these included the home page, "7 New Artworks..." page, the main Art GeoTour page and six of the destination pages.

There were noticeable peaks in activity driven by media coverage, email campaigns and the Facebook campaigns. The biggest daily peak in traffic was 1,107 users (vs a daily average of 264) on 26 May 2021, with almost 500 users coming from The Guardian website[24] alone.

The project not having its own social media channels meant it relied on partners and ad campaigns – yet social media was the biggest source of traffic to the website (44%) with Facebook the dominant source of that traffic.

Figure 4: Example of partner social media

Collectively, the seven arts organisation websites received an estimated 28,000 pageviews[25] for ECC related pages – yet their pages drove very little traffic to the main ECC website (239 users). This may indicate that people only wanted to visit one town and found all they needed for a local visit

Overall, partners sent out 36 email campaigns to over 200,000 recipients – and this seems to have generated increased web traffic in peaks in May and June. Anecdotal data seems to show that website visit peaks aligned with email mailshots from key partners and national press articles.

The most prominent partner marketing was the SEA ART billboard campaign run jointly by De La Warr and Towner at seven sites in London[26]. Branded as part of ECC, it was aimed at attracting visitors

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[22] 29 April to 14 November 2021 inclusive, from launch of the project to the end of the *Waterfronts* artworks being displayed – prior to this the website had under 2,000 visits with the first recorded visit on 22 February 2021

[23] All data from Google Analytics – this is unfiltered data so will include all user activity including members of the project team and partners. A user is a visitor to the website; a session is a period of time that user is engaging with the website, pageviews are number of webpages viewed by a user.

[24] Brave front: thought-provoking art on England's south-east coast, The Guardian, 26 May, https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/may/26/waterfronts-exhibition-englands-creative-coast-art-sculpture-project

[25] Estimate based on data supplied by 5 of the 7 galleries and for pages specific to ECC

[26] Sites were 147-161 Morning Lane, 79 Kingsland High Street, Brick Lane Bridge, Peckham Levels, The Hand of Glory, Vinegar Yard, Westminster Bridge Road

to the two galleries, and by association ECC, and is estimated to have been seen by over 8 million people.

3.2 Quality of the artwork

Quality within art should be judged through the inputs to the process as much as through the outputs of feedback. ECC chose to work with an international level curator, Tamsin Dillon, who carefully curated the theme of *Waterfronts*. She selected a range of artists who would be able to appropriately respond not just to the theme, but also the places. She then worked with the local settings, and in most places in conjunction with the curators or artistic directors at the partner organisation to select the right artist to fit with their place and other factors. In three places, the commission was part of a wider festival – the Estuary Festival covering Southend and Gravesend, and Folkestone Triennial. In these cases, the commissioned work also needed to fit with their themes.

The selected artists were at a range of levels of experience both in working on major commissions, and in their knowledge of the local place. They all responded with very different pieces, in a few cases adapting to local need or logistics.

3.2.1 Peer views

This level of commitment to the process of creating quality work paid off. Feedback from a number of senior figures in the arts, with

experience of visual art, was that all the pieces are good, with most being excellent high quality stand out commissions, appropriately linked to place.

It was really high quality commissioning, drawing people into that amazing landscape in a really compelling way.

The artworks are all imaginative, well executed, thought provoking and engaged.
Curators – partner organisations (talking about work they weren't involved in commissioning)

3.2.2 Visitor views

The majority of audiences[27] (86%) felt the work was good (29%) or very good (57%), with comments ranging from those appreciating it as art enthusiasts

I sought out the new sculpture having seen it mentioned at the gallery and found it an amazing piece of work. The figure itself is striking but when I read the context of how and why it was created, I was very moved and profoundly impressed by the ideas behind its construction. Fantastic public art! [Margate]

To those who were appreciating it viscerally

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[27] The overall data is very skewed in this question from an oversampling of respondents from one site. This site had a wide variance from the average in terms of responses on quality so has been removed

from these answers. Including that site the answers would be VG 37%, good 29%, DNK/NGNP 17%/6% poor 5%, VP 6%

Very moving and soulful. So emotional. Inspiring. Makes me think about how self-centred we can be... [Gravesend]

To those who found it something entertaining:

Everyone is friendly and nice. The piece really reflects the character of the town, which is so good. Fantastic that this is happening in Gravesend.

It's beautiful, wasn't sure what it was, saw it from the hill [Eastbourne]

And particularly in Bexhill and Hastings a lot of comments about it being good for children:

They love it, its good as a recreational thing. From a fun point of view we like it [Bexhill]

And at least one 'convert'

It's different, quite original, have to walk round other side to read what it's about. Not really interested in art, only been to Turner once and wasn't that keen. Come out for a wander and cup of coffee with friend after work. [Margate]

There were a lot of positive comments about the invigilators and assistants and how helpful they were in explaining things.

Quite a few people felt unable to give a definitive view on quality of the artwork saying either don't know/not applicable or neither good nor poor (11% and 1% respectively). The comments around this were similar in themes to the 2% who felt it was poor/very poor.

Negative comments revolved mainly around the quality/look of the works – would they last, could they have looked more 'finished', **wanting more interactivity (children being able to climb),** a general lack of appreciation for art or 'art like this', **not understanding it, liking the idea but not the execution**, several comments around the signage and need for more explanations. However it was notable that most of the negatives were quite small, **meaning that a few small changes could drastically improve feedback and user experience.**

3.3 The GeoTour experience

The GeoTour was a hugely innovative element of the project, and was challenging for many of the partners to implement. Numbers were small compared with the overall visitor base, but they represent a very different group from traditional arts visitors – and indeed the ECC artwork visitors, so they are an interesting innovation. A mini-report on GeoTour experience is linked to in the Appendix to show our full findings.

3.3.1 People overwhelmingly enjoyed the GeoTour and found the caches beautiful and interesting

The feedback from Geocachers on the whole is overwhelmingly positive. There are many glowing comments left on geocaching.com:

Love, love, love this. Well done Turner Contemporary.
Geocacher, Margate via geocaching.com

Many people were engaged by the creativity put into the caches themselves:

Such a creative cache, it was worth the search

Geocacher, Chalkwell Metal Cache, via feedback

Absolutely unique. Amazing. Really worth coming here to see it. Well done everyone

Geocacher, Hastings, via geocaching.com

Some of the caches really caught the imagination of Geocachers, notably the Theatre Royal cache in Margate and The Scroll cache in Hastings. These two caches received the most favourite points (a way for geocachers to acknowledge their favourite caches on geocaching.com) and recognition of their creativity.

Yet another brilliant cache in this series. Ingenious.

Geocacher, Margate Theatre Royal cache, via geocaching.com

Many thanks for placing these memorable caches for me to enjoy searching for today. Favourite added

Geocacher, Margate Theatre Royal cache, via geocaching.com

We have never found anything like this before, favourite point given

Geocacher, Hastings The Scroll cache, via geocaching.com

This one was very different loved it great concept and good fun to find

Geocacher, Hastings The Scroll cache, via geocaching.com

3.3.2 Some people spent a lot of time and money committing to finishing the trail or an area.

Many people who completed or found more than one cache talked about spending a lot of time and money on the trail, including travelling great distances and staying overnight in hotels in the local area:

We live in Kent, so were able to complete the ones in Margate. Folkestone and Gravesend as days out. The ones on the South coast we booked an overnight hotel near Eastbourne and did them over a weekend and the Essex ones a similar overnight stay for those... We certainly put in a lot of time and money into it.

Geocacher, Kent, via feedback

Sharon had the idea of us coming and spending a few days in the south east to get round as much of the trail as we could... we added on 900 miles to the clock on my car, with lots of hours spend sat in there, but we managed the whole trail from Harwich to Eastbourne.

Geocacher, Eastbourne, via geocaching.com

One Geocacher even reported that as one of the caches had been temporarily unavailable when they had been in the area, they returned at a later date to complete the trail.

3.3.3 Seasoned Geocachers enjoyed and engaged with the art where they might not have typically

Many of the people logging the caches were Geocachers who had been active Geocachers for years, some with hundreds and thousands of previous finds. They report really enjoying the art tie in and how it had shown them something they might not otherwise have seen.

> **I loved the art tie in. It made it really interesting and a way to spend time geocaching without lacking a bit of culture :) The art tie in was what kept me wanting to finish it**
> Geocacher with 6,000 previous finds, Shoeburyness, via feedback

> **Enjoyed discovering the artworks which we probably would have overlooked and interesting to find out more about them**
> Geocacher with nearly 7000 previous finds, Chalkwell, via feedback

> **So good to see caches engaging with their local area in such a creative way**
> Geocacher, via geocaching.com

Some specifically mentioned that they did not usually engage with the art but had done as a result of this trail:

> **I don't go out looking to interact with the arts. I would only interact if there was an additional reason such as geocaching, or I was passing and it caught my eye**
> Geocacher with 6,000 previous finds, Shoeburyness, via feedback

Other comments from the feedback highlighted technical issues such as being able to access the art via the QR codes, or not having enough mobile phone signal to connect to the internet to access things, which may have affected uptake figures.

3.4 Visitor motivations and local place experience

From survey responses,[28] 67% of audiences to the artworks came with others – about two thirds of these including children.

32% intended to visit the associated gallery as well.[29]

The website and word of mouth were the biggest drivers of information about the artworks, with 24% and 23% respectively of audiences having heard about the work via these. Other comments included being a participant in the event, saw it being erected and geocaching. 12% of people learnt about the artworks simply by passing by on the way to work or whilst walking, amongst other reasons. This is more than were informed via ECC leaflets/brochures, Twitter and newspaper or magazine advertising.

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[28] From Audience Finder survey carried out onsite at 7 artworks and via QR codes with 788 responses

[29] (Gravesend, Folkestone and Southend-on-Sea removed, only includes those who answered).

Other websites specified by participants included Visit Gravesend, the Guardian website and the Geocaching website. No one specified a mobile app. Many newspapers and magazines were mentioned by participants, the most popular being the Guardian, local and free newspapers such as the Bexhill Observer, and Art Monthly. Most people who reported radio or television saw a piece on the news, often local.

The main reasons for attending were social or circumstantial, with 34% coming to spend time with family and 20% coming for the general atmosphere. Analysing the 'other' reasons given, 22% were just passing. 18% did specifically give visiting Contemporary Art as a driver (Contemporary Art is an important part of who I am), with 6% giving that as the main reason. 13% said they wanted something new, and others mention curiosity. One person said they wanted to do something they could do on their own that would be wheelchair accessible.

3.5   ECC visitor support to the local economy

40% of respondents who had travelled gave visiting the artworks as a key driver for their visit to the area.[30]

Furthermore, of those who came from outside the region, 21% felt it was very important as a reason for their visit, 12% felt it was important.

15% of visitors had stayed overnight and 55% of these had stayed in paid accommodation – 8% of all visitors.

This had generated 704 hotel bednights among the 725 respondents and a spend of at least £11,227 on accommodation. Respondents also estimated another £20,000 additional spend on food, drink, travel and other purchases during their stay.

Scaling up if these people represent all visitors would mean ECC visitors generated over 73,000 hotel bednights, and a spend of over £14.5M.

This does not equate to economic impact as these figures include spend by people from within the region and spend by people who had another reason for their visit to the region.

3.6   Who were the visitors?

Visitors who responded to the survey were more likely to be female (59%), and tended to be older, with 85% were over the age of 35, and 25% over 65. This differs from the GeoTour users who had an average age of 36. The majority were White British (85%), and 10% defined themselves as being D/deaf or disabled or having another long-term health condition. [31]

They were significantly more likely to come from the poorest 30% of postcodes in England than the SELEP region average.

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[30] 17% of all respondents, 39% said 'not applicable, I live locally'

[31] 7% were White Other, 3% Asian/Asian British, 2% Mixed and 1% Black/Black British. For full detail on demographics see Appendix for links to Visitor Survey and LEP Feedback

Visitors came from across the UK, with only a few coming from outside the UK. The majority came from the SE (74%) and London (14%)

Map of postcodes: UK
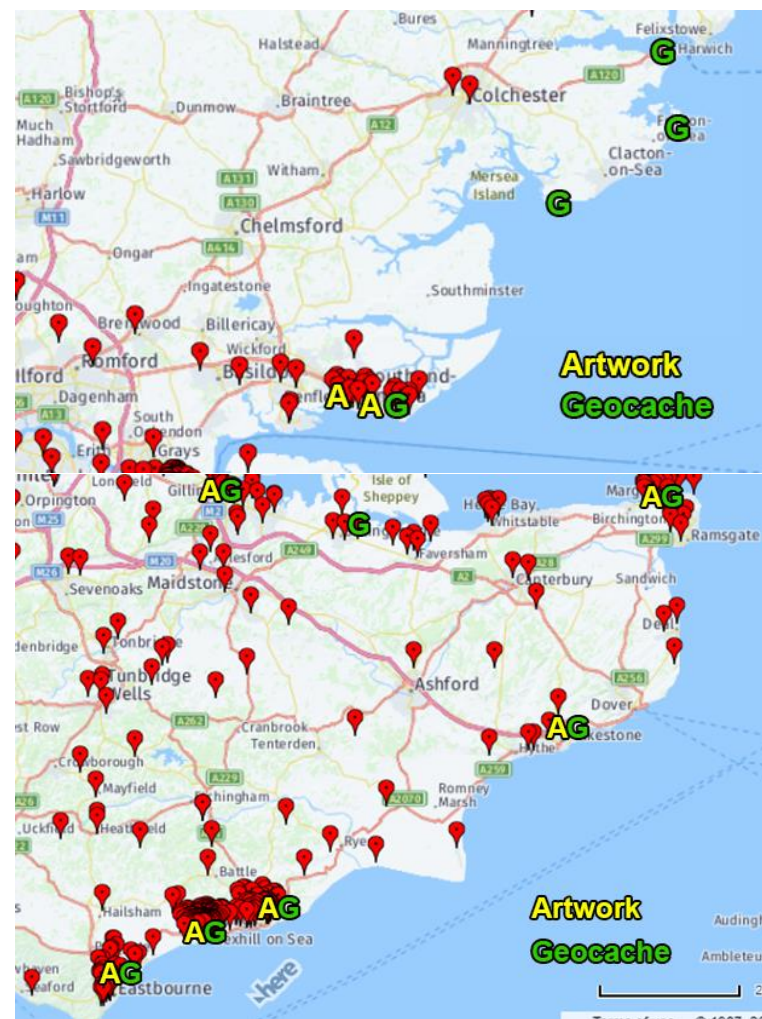
Map of postcodes: Southeast region – Essex, then Kent and E Sussex with locations of ECC artworks (yellow A) and geocaches (green G) shown.

4.   Local people exploring their town and region

England's Creative Coast aimed to involve local people in the experience, not simply drawing ideas from them to make the GeoTour, but also exciting and engaging them with their local place, and increasing their knowledge and understanding of the local arts offer.

This work was largely carried out through the partner organisations' engagement departments, and was a challenge as the use of Geocaching technology was new to all but one partner. We find that:

o   A range of approaches were used – all put the local residents at the centre and valued the input of artists based locally

o   Increased pride in place

o   Changed perceptions of their place

o   Changed views of art – particularly sense of relevance to them and preparedness to engage with it

o   Local residents are warm to tourism and its value to supporting the cultural offer locally

4.1   Approaches to engaging local people in ECC

Partner organisations engaged local people with a variety of approaches. All explicitly put the community at the centre in how the work was developed which was a key requirement of the ECC project. Many chose to run a series of creative workshops with people ranging from school children to local groups such as members of a Rough Sleeper Initiative and a Refugee Buddy Project. In some of these workshops the participants created art, and in some, including the ones held by Hastings, the participants themselves created a series of geocaches to be used in the geocaching phase.

Successful local engagement also included work into linking the GeoTour with the art. A great example of this is Hastings bringing in students from a local college to invigilate the art, as well as discussions with those who attended workshops who were then motivated to tell friends and family.

Some partners took a very personalised approach to local engagement. For Cement Fields, artist Jasleen Kaur worked in the living rooms of members' homes, which led to communities feeling heard, and engaging well with the programme.

I was hosted like a family member. They were keen to share with me the history of the group. They were very open from the start, and excited about working together and being given recognition or a platform for their work, which is overlooked.

Jasleen Kaur, working with local engagement groups

Many participants in local engagement workshops mentioned increased confidence after the work, especially in their abilities to be creative. People frequently mentioned how friendly, kind and helpful the staff and volunteers were.

Working with colleagues across the partner organisations was celebrated as a real highlight of the project by artists and participants alike. People mention the benefit of having a network, and how any problems have been able to be solved quickly by having the help of other teams to fall back on.

Hastings found that the Geocaching element intrigued and attracted people to the project. This is also mirrored by geocachers in the GeoTour who said that the art tie in was what motivated them to keep going to find the remaining caches.

4.2   Increasing pride in place

Nearly all felt more proud of their local area as a direct result of the workshops, with many feeling it helped them to share their story of their area and connect to their town in a new or different way. A common theme among people who have felt more connected or part of the community following the workshops is those who were new to the area, or had moved in recent years and struggled to meet people in the pandemic:

I don't know anyone in the area apart from my parents as I used to live in London, so it was nice to be part of this project. I now consider Folkestone to be a very creative place and I love all these creative opportunities.

Workshop participant, Folkestone

Several people also mention that learning the history of where they live made them feel more connected to the area. When asked their favourite part of the programme, responses included, "rediscovering Margate" and "meeting local people and listening to their stories".

4.3   Changing perceptions of the locality

Participants showed changing perceptions of their local place during the local engagement artist workshops. Primary school children working with DLWP local engagement artist Holly Hendry reported feeling that Bexhill was OK, but that it could be a bit sad. During the workshop they produced art with a focus on 'reduce, reuse, recycle' and taking more pride in their local coastline by reducing plastic waste on the beach.

Participants in Hastings reported knowing more about and feeling more connected to the Hastings area:

I felt really connected to my town and I know more about Hastings and their art. It helped me reconnect with Hastings as I didn't want to move back but had to for health reasons.

Hastings participant

Other participants talked about seeing the area with fresh eyes:

I thought I knew the area. Hearing the stories was great to look at areas I know, but through other people's eyes.

Turner Contemporary participant

4.4   Change in views of art and local venue

Some participants did not have previous experience of working with artists before this project, but are reported to be open to working in this way again following their positive experiences.

I don't think the group has collaborated with an artist in the contemporary/visual arts before. From working with them and from their feedback, they would be keen to work in this way again but perhaps to realise existing desires/ambitions/needs held in the group.

Jasleen Kaur, Cement Fields artist

For some participants, the process changed their view of artists themselves:

So artists, I found very sensitive, very attentive, they want to understand you, they want to listen to you, so whatever you're trying to say, I felt there was no judgement, that's what I felt working with artists was, it was eye-opening in a way. I'd never worked with one before.

Cement Fields participant, working with Ain Bailey local engagement artist

Participants also learnt new things about their local venues, bringing opportunity to spark imagination and create returning visitors. Seven and eight year olds were asked what they had learnt during one of DLWP artist Holly Hendry's workshop, and one replied they had learnt about the 'cool new sculpture'.

4.5   Tourism insights on local responses to cultural tourism

Drawing on research by partner Visit Kent[32], we find that local residents generally feel positive about tourism in their region, and see its value to their lives.

A residents survey carried out in Summer 2020 and Winter 2020/2021, so in advance of artworks going on display, but during

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[32] This insight has kindly been provided by the team at Visit Kent - Kent Residents Research PowerPoint Presentation (visitkentbusiness.co.uk) - Kent Perceptions Research – NOT yet published

the lifetime of the ECC initiative and across the Covid-19 lockdowns found that:

o 65% of residents see their area of Kent to be a tourist attraction and 88% of residents support winter tourism in their area.

o The coast and beaches are perceived as the main attraction (34%), though Museums/historic sites/buildings (27%) and countryside (23%) also feature, reflecting the diversity of the tourism offer in Kent.

o Most residents (88%) agree that tourism helps preserve historic buildings and monuments and 92% agree that tourism increases demand for local historical and cultural attractions. However, 63% have some concerns around the potential harm that tourism can do to the natural environment (countryside and coastal).

o 96% agree that tourism improves the local economy and increases job opportunities (92%)

o 72% of residents perceived a reduction in cultural attractions (exhibitions, events etc) reflecting the restrictions imposed through Covid. However 10% of residents felt here had been an increase through the winter in visitor footfall.

o Among a list of 10 tourism benefits to the community Attractions & events – Range of attractions to visit and events on offer for locals to enjoy, including arts and cultural sites ranked 5th, ahead of food & drink quality, historic site preservation, the beach, the countryside and local area promotion. All benefits ranked higher relate to the economic benefits.

5.　Partnerships across cultural and tourism networks

Bringing cultural partners together with those responsible for developing tourism lay at the heart of the project. It would be both a catalyst for the success of the project and a legacy for future work.

A huge amount of time was invested in this partnership working – by the core project team in managing and co-ordinating meetings, training and communication across the partnership – and by the partners through their involvement with these activities.

We find:

o This was a hugely successful area of the project, with potential for long term impacts that shift how both the culture and tourism sectors operate across the region.

o A high level of buy-in to the project in terms of time, particularly at senior level. Partners felt they benefitted in proportion to the amount of time they put in.

o A commitment to include partners in all areas of decision making and implementation. In most areas this was felt to have worked. However, a more collaborative approach to some of the planning would have resulted in greater buy-in at all levels.

o Each of the sectors (cultural and tourism) gained an increased understanding of the pressures and challenges faced by the other.

o Some sharing of language between sectors and a realisation of how much work is needed to develop this further.

o Partners within the cultural sector made new and deeper connections across the geography, particularly in local engagement and marketing. They enjoyed working collaboratively, recognised the value of this and hoped for further opportunities to work in this way.

o A recognition of the value of time for sharing and reflection.

o The information bank developed at the start of the project was found to be useful by a few partners who used it, however its value was limited due to sector changes arising from Covid 19.

o All the outcomes in this area were hugely affected by the timing of the project and the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic – staff furloughed, people leaving jobs and heavier workloads.

5.1　Catalyst for enhanced ambition and redefined role in place leadership

There is no doubt that the project enhanced partnership working across the geography, shifting perspective on what was possible. This was particularly true for the arts sector – both in terms of self-perception and external views.

Partnership working raised the ambition of the partners in terms of their geography and their ability to take part in wider debates:

> **It was a positive project which enabled us to see a bigger geography than we usually work in... recognising the need to think beyond our 'bureaucratic borders' which aren't relevant for visitors**
>
> Lead for arts organisation partner

By responding fast to the Covid 19 crisis and adapting the project – to a different audience focus, timescales and the recovery agenda – ECC positioned the arts sector as having the potential for place leadership and to bring value for multiple agendas.

All project funders noted the way the project moved beyond simply working on sector survival, to reformulating a model for longer term collaboration on place change.

This repositioning of the role of the arts sector to act as a leader within place will take longer. It is clear that ECC acted as a catalyst to get partners:

o Thinking and working differently

o Modelling the value of working across sectors, and

o Showing place leadership.

5.2 New and deeper partnerships

Partners within the cultural sector made new and deeper connections across the geography, particularly in local engagement and marketing.

> **[I]deas that have been shared are interesting – not something that would normally be discussed... it's been refreshing**
>
> Marketing Lead - partner organisation

> **It's created relationships with venues that will continue, we have a network. That will offer future opportunities of working together on projects...**
>
> Lead - partner organisation

As well as the conversation and shared strategy, partners felt they gained from practically working on the same project:

> **It's the value of working on something creative together – not just at a bureaucratic level**
>
> Lead- partner organisation

For several organisations, as well as the links cross-geography and cross-sector, the local engagement programme was a particular source of new partnerships within their own localities:

> **We do feel much more connected to the geocache partners up the Essex coast.**
>
> Lead – partner organisation

> **It helped us in our aim to build relationship locally, rather than particularly being a project to drive people to the gallery.**
>
> Lead – partner organisation

5.3   Partnership buy-in and value

There was a high level of buy-in to the project in terms of time, particularly at senior level. For the majority of partners, leads attended most meetings and contributed thinking to the steering group as well as ensuring relevant staff attended curation, marketing and local engagement meetings.

This collaboration was particularly important as it felt very co-operative and positive:

> **It enabled us to set aside all the old-fashioned ideas about competition – it's all about art and getting people to see the region differently**
>
> Lead – partner organisation

This was clear within evaluation interviews, where despite the different experiences between and within organisations, there was little or no sense of cliques or competition.

Partners felt they benefitted in proportion to the amount of time they put in, and the level of opportunity they leveraged:

> **[B]e opportunistic and see what else the project can give you**
>
> **Take the chance to talk and see what opportunities might arise**
>
> Leads – partner organisations

It is clear that not everyone got the full value they could have. Towards the end of the project, during reflection sessions it was noted:

> **My organisation didn't make enough of it, it should have been more incorporated into the venue programme. I didn't ensure enough organisational buy-in.**
>
> Lead – partner organisation

Organisation Leads agreed that the greatest value came from:

o   Aligning the artwork with a show in the venue (for example, Holly Hendry's show within the DLWP alongside Invertebrate)

o   Aligning the artwork with another event (for example, the Essex-based artworks with the Estuary Festival)

> **There was a huge value from Estuary Festival and ECC happening at the same time – this was also a challenge as they hadn't been planned to coincide but when it proved necessary due to Covid the team made it work – they have the same aims: to gain coverage and awareness for the area.**
>
> Lead – partner organisation

o   Ensuring real alignment of curation, marketing and learning programme within the organisation itself, and

o   Seeking out other opportunities (for example, METAL having 'HELLO' included in a promotional film for Southend)

5.4   Model of project operation

ECC as a project officially sat within Turner Contemporary and Visit Kent, with a freelance team of Project Director (Sarah Dance), Project Curator (Tamsin Dillon) and Project Manager for the Cultural Destinations funding (Bryony Bishop, then Christina Ackah-Annobil).

There was a commitment to include partners in all areas of decision making and implementation. Four different steering or advisory groups were set up involving representatives from every relevant partner.

In most areas this was felt to have worked, and as stated above, there was very good buy-in from the leadership at arts partners. There was less involvement from destination management organisations and local authorities – though this may relate to the level of challenge (from the pandemic and related issues) they were experiencing.

Feedback to the evaluation identified areas where collaboration could have worked better:

5.4.1   Work around challenging elements

Some of the elements proved challenging and more work might have been helpful to get full buy-in from all partners.

The travel itineraries developed by Visit Kent and tourism partners before the pandemic were not fully consulted on or refreshed before the artworks opened. This meant opportunities to specifically orient itineraries to arts audiences were lost.

Most partners considered the **geocaching element** was 'imposed' – making it for them challenging to engage with and a struggle to make meaningful.

> **[Geocaching was] hard to navigate, it felt 'imposed'… trying to squeeze things into that format was a barrier, too prescriptive…**
> Curator – partner organisation

However, for one partner this was not the case. Because they were a little more confidence with the technology, the trail was fully thought through and embedded into the art.

5.4.2   Greater alignment between curation and local engagement

The structure of the project split curation from local engagement. Separate meetings for the two teams from the start meant missed opportunities for crossover between the seven major commissions and the local engagement artworks.

> **Frustrating that it was kept so separate, that was a missed opportunity**
> Lead – partner organisation

In some places, this was overcome by explicitly linking the artists at a local place level, but the overall narrative between a *Waterfronts* commission and local works wasn't at all clear.

This is most clearly illustrated on the website where the work of the artists involved in the local engagement programme is not profiled

at all. Where curators from the partner organisations commented on the local engagement work, they noted the high quality of that work and the way it responded to the major artwork.

Several people noted some challenges in thinking about how the work connected to the audiences. This is clearly a responsibility for everyone. But the separation of roles might have meant the curation group assumed this sat within marketing and local engagement rather than being the responsibility of everyone.

5.4.3   Greater clarity of roles on communication

Around communication, in some cases there were misunderstandings and lack of clarity about who took what role. The communication routes were very complicated. They needed to span not just multiple organisations from multiple sectors, but also across four years (including a year of no activity during lockdown) and massive staff turnover and furlough. It was agreed that:

> **[the] Project was managed extremely well particularly as it is effectively a lot of disparate projects – that's the challenge and excellence of Sarah and Bryony.**
> Funder

But at times the challenges meant that information wasn't shared fully and that not everyone knew everything they needed to. It was understood this was a learning for the future:

> **Next time we need to be really clear about what we are seeking to do and ensure all partners are signed up. Have upfront conversations with partners at planning stage to ensure all are on board.**
> Steering Group member

5.4.4   Core team model

There was discussion about the value of a strong core team and the challenges that might bring.

Overall, the team was seen as extremely strong. Having a single point of leadership in the Project Director – particularly with a leader who was keen to share that role – was agreed by all to be key.

Partners saw value in the marketing being strongly co-ordinated by the Project Manager. However, as this role was scaled back with lockdown and a pause in the project, and Bryony Bishop left the team, there was a clear gap in marketing and communication. Managers from the partner organisations simply didn't have the time to fill this.

Curation attracted a mix of viewpoints from partners. Having a single clear vision across all artworks was felt to be valuable. However, there was tension between the curation of the wider project – which had a logic at that level – and specific local needs – particularly around the location of artworks. This was felt less where there was a strong working relationship between project curator and the partner organisation curator, when the artistic vision could be more clearly shared.

In terms of local engagement, though people valued holding the budgets locally, more support from the centre would have been welcomed to:

o Give the teams from the different organisations more time to share learning and experience

o Support the incorporation of geocaching into programming.

Overall, the learning is twofold.

o The value of the core team having a generous approach: Sarah's willingness to share leadership brought the project partners a shared leadership with less time investment than would be otherwise needed

o The necessity to resource this core time properly, particularly valuing all roles right through the project.

5.5 Increased understanding between cultural and visitor sectors

There was some increase in understanding of the different pressures and challenges faced within the cultural and visitor sectors and some sharing of language.

There is recognition from the visitor economy and economic recovery sectors that the arts sector contributes hugely to the USP of the region:

> **The focuses for the region are the coast, and the creative sector, so this acts as a great crossover.**
> Funder

Working between the tourism and arts sectors still has a lot of challenges. For example, the timescale of the project meant that marketing and itinerary development work was finished before the artworks were fully developed, therefore not allowing any real cross-pollination between the two.

However, the challenge and opportunities lie deeper, in organisations understanding the different priorities of each other's sectors and how to work with these. Understanding and aligning with each other's timelines are the key in this respect.

For example, one curator told how she'd come to understand that her wish to keep plans about an artwork fluid and secret – to give the artist space to develop their idea and to ensure maximum excitement over the unveiling – directly conflicted with the destination management organisation's need to have details for an itinerary ready in advance.

Another curator recognised the value of permanent (or longer lasting) artworks linking into tourism:

> **… when Southend commissioned a tourism film we persuaded them to include 'Hello' because it was planned to stay around – this wouldn't have been possible with a temporary piece. However it was down to us to see the potential, Southend didn't spot it on their own.**
> Curator - Partner organisation

There was also a recognition of the value of each sector's expert knowledge and the importance of sharing this:

> **[T]he tourism sector is savvy on general audiences, but less on cultural audiences and opportunities to grow this market, working together helps communication to all audiences**
>
> Visitor sector partner

Partners realised how much additional work is needed to develop this crossover and the difference in languages between the two sectors:

> **Sometimes they are speaking and I just don't understand what the words mean. I guess it is the same for them when I speak…**
>
> Curator – partner organisation

5.6   Value of time for sharing and reflection

Nearly every interviewee commented on the value of having time to stop and reflect about the project. During focus groups held at the interim and final points, there were comments about the value of reflecting together.

It was generally felt that this should have started earlier, and that there should have been more mechanisms for feeding that reflection back into planning and adapting the project:

> **It's good to have an external person for evaluation, but we should have started evaluation earlier and ensure it had reporting and feedback points during the process for learning.**
>
> Curator, partner organisation

The approach to evaluation taken allowed for this to a degree. Informal feedback was given on learning as it arose, and the project team were very keen to implement changes. However, the scale and timing of the evaluation limited the effectiveness of this.

One of the key discussions which started during a reflection session was around legacy – of the project's learning, the partnership and also the artworks.

Partners recognised the importance of sharing internally through all levels of the organisations, as well as into the wider sector – especially the best practice examples around ambition and flexibility. They also saw the importance of maintaining the partnership (in whatever form) to maximise the project's value into the future.

Although legacy for all artworks was secured by the end of the project,[33] several curators saw it as an oversight that plans for the legacy of the artworks were not included from the start and that they didn't bring the artists into this legacy discussion. They felt themselves to be partially responsible for this. Building in this legacy would have secured larger (long term) audiences. Also, from a sustainability perspective, a short-lived artwork that took huge

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[33] See Appendix 5 for details

resources to create was felt "not to resonate with the world we are in" (Curator, partner organisation).

5.7   Potential value for an information bank

At the start of the project, a considerable amount of work was done commissioning research and collating information which was shared across the partnership. This was not used widely, but was found to be useful by a few partners who did use it:

> **It's been invaluable, I've used it extensively in bids, really eye opening**
> Development lead – partner organisation

However, by the end of the project its value was severely limited due to sector changes arising from Covid 19. It is clear from the evaluation that there is very limited data about the arts and culture and cultural tourism sectors in the region. Commissioning thorough research and data gathering would be very beneficial for those who want to plan future projects. However, there is limited capacity within busy arts organisations (and smaller organisations in the tourism sector) to interpret and use this data once it is gathered.

Thus, before repeating this sort of work, there needs to be consideration of how the data is held and shared, as well as the support and resources required for organisations to use it to its full potential.

5.8   Building partnerships in a time of challenge

All the outcomes in this area were hugely affected by the time (a global pandemic) in which the project took place. For example, venues reopening after a long period of closure, many staff affected by furlough, high staff turnover and heavier workloads because of the impact of Covid 19 restrictions.

This was recognised by all, and seen as one of the greatest challenges internally, but one of the greatest successes externally:

> **It's been really hard going at times, … but it's worked and been worth it –**
> Lead, project partner

> **It was a success, yes, but could have been even greater if not for Covid –**
> Lead, partner organisation

> **I was really impressed that the partners picked it up in 2021 just as everything else was opening again and workloads were really high**
> Funder

Partners should recognise the achievement in overcoming a challenge of this scale at such a turbulent time, and delivering a project seen widely as a success. They should also explore how the partnership can be used in multiple ways to help overcome future challenges.

6.   Conclusions

England's Creative Coast was an ambitious, exciting project which managed to achieve exciting results despite an extremely challenging set of circumstances.

o **In a year where visitor volume was just over half of the norm, it attracted and inspired over 400,000 visitors, many of whom stayed overnight contributing further to the region's economic recovery**

o **A series of seven major artworks were commissioned and enjoyed by visitors and locals, and linked to the innovation of the world's first arts GeoTour which drew on and showcased local experiences via an artist-led local engagement programme -largely delivered online through lockdown.**

o **Extensive press coverage was achieved including prestigious articles showing recognition of the quality of the work, which drove website hits and visits.**

o **Around and through the extremely destabilising effects of Covid 19 lockdown, staff changes and organisations struggling to survive, a partnership of arts organisations, visitor organisations and a huge array of delivery partners across all sectors worked together to build mutual understanding and a commitment to continue working in this way.**

6.1   Learning

The project set out with many challenges – from the structural issues of the complex funding model, to the size of the geography covered, the ambition and number of elements within it and the different cultures and understanding between visitor and cultural sector.

It then faced the restrictions of a hard Brexit, and the huge number of challenges which lockdown brought, from delays to the schedule, the need to move sensitive engagement work online, the existential challenges for all partners, huge amounts of staff turnover and a catastrophic effect on the visitor economy which remained at 56% of the pre-Covid level even in 2021.

The project's ability to thrive has led to significant learning around how to approach major place-based culture and tourism projects in future.

6.1.1   The value of ambition and quality

Strategic partners and funders were particularly impressed by the way in which ECC managed to maintain ambition through these circumstances.

o The initial scale and ambition of the project, in terms of geography, number and newness of partnerships, the mix of

elements and the level of risk taking were integral to making the project noticed.

- The work was high quality 'despite challenges' – not 'considering challenges'. Continuing to maintain quality despite the need to adapt timeframes, build partners, location details and materials paid off in the level of recognition the work gained. Ensuring the quality was high across all elements was also key – it was notable how positive engagement participants' responses were to direct engagement with artists – whether one of the *Waterfronts* commissioned artists or one engaged through the local engagement programme.

- There are challenges in taking this approach, in particular the scale of the work – in terms of the geography – 14,000km of coastline across a major Estuary, 3 counties and 2 unitaries – and the partnerships involving 18 core and funding partners, along with tens of other companies and freelancers across multiple sectors. A key piece of learning for the project was the amount of work needed at the centre to keep these partnerships on track, and align the project with a myriad of other initiatives which were taking place. In reality, this was under-costed within ECC, and the success is down to a huge amount of extra time input by project partners and particularly the freelancer teams who ran the project and produced the work.

This is useful learning for future projects who might be tempted to cut back on ambition and quality when faced with challenge. By holding their nerve, and working incredibly hard, the England's Creative Coast team managed to deliver a project which has been described as 'an exemplar' for other large scale projects.

6.1.2   Leadership

High quality, focused and experienced leadership was the lynchpin which allowed the project to succeed. This sat to a large degree with the Project Director, Sarah Dance, who combined experience of delivery, with ambition, experience of building partnerships, and willingness to work extremely hard to take the project over the line. It was complemented by the full involvement of many of the partner organisation leads, who stepped up to form a core group which held a clear vision and commitment. This in turn gave confidence to others.

As a result of this clear vision, Sarah and the core leadership group were able to take diverse funders and partners from beyond the project on the journey and keep their faith to agree to continuation during difficult times, adaptation and appropriate extension.

There was potential for this leadership to have been more widely shared, so that full ownership of the aims and potential of the project reached across all partner organisations at all levels. Furthermore, the strength of leadership and confidence in Sarah may have allowed some of the partner organisations leads to step back from taking full responsibility for ensuring potential was reached.

I don't think I did the things to get the full value of this to our organisation
Partner Organisations CEO

However, it is hard to disentangle this issue from the challenges of the time in which the project happened. Every partner was going

through extremely tough times organisationally and financially so it is likely that whatever the intentions and whatever the leadership approach, they would have found it hard to take the level of responsibility, and input the amount of time needed to make it work.

All of this has important implications for projects in looking at leadership. The importance of a clear vision, owned and shared by all is key. The value of a leader who can hold that vision, and recognition of the range of skills and experience needed to do this cannot be overstated. However, partners need to be aware that to get the maximum value from any project they need to take responsibility for fully engaging with thinking about how they link it into their own organisations.

6.1.3   Partnership

The effort needed to develop the value of the partnerships formed, particularly the cross sector and overlapping sets of partnerships around different elements of the work, was an important learning of the project. This was made more difficult by the timescale, finance, workload and meeting implications of Covid 19, but would have been a challenge in any time.

Other important learning includes recognising that part of what made the project work were that these partnerships were not completely new. They built on years of previous relationships, sometimes in pairs and small clusters which the project extended and connected into others, sometimes limited to one particular type of work which the project developed into a cross-theme partnership.

These required a lot of work at the core from the project team, but also time and commitment of partners. It was notable that project partners who went along to more meetings and engaged more fully in the project overwhelmingly felt they had gained more. They also were the people who felt they hadn't gained all they could – showing the importance of seeing this project as a step on a longer journey of developing partnerships within a region.

All agreed that the main benefits of partnerships lay in:

o   An increased exposure to different agendas and languages which offered huge learning

o   A chance to try out shared projects and take steps which would have been too ambitious to tackle alone

o   Particularly at levels below the CEOs and Directors – new contacts and a belief in the value of working together and sharing learning more in future

6.1.4   Creating, understanding and building on value

In 2021 alone, ECC has created additional visits, additional spend and economic impact in a sector which was particularly challenged by the impacts of Covid 19. It did it partly through the national reach of the promotion of the project, and through the synchronicity of the offer with the wish for Covid-safe opportunities and a move to UK-based holidays.

However this isn't likely to be the full economic value and it certainly isn't the full social value of the project. The project tested the potential for cultural tourism to generate economic impact in the form of attracting visitors from outside the area, but more

importantly encouraging them to stay overnight, and stay longer, and attracting a different range of visitors which would make the local visitor sector more resilient to economic challenges.

Due to the timescales and data issues, it is not possible currently to conclude the potential value of this, and modelling it is impossible given the lack of comparator data. However, further research on the local visitor sector – specifically tying into the arts offer – and the legacy of ECC, would be valuable in understanding the potential for this.

A full social value assessment was outside the remit of this evaluation, but drawing on previous experience, the richness of the engagement which some of the participants had with the artworks, and the shift in their sense of pride in place would have some measurable social value outcomes were they to have been measured. Furthermore, the value in terms of range of skills, connections and knowledge among partners – particularly those who took the opportunity to engage fully in the project at several levels, and among the many freelance producers, artists and makers involved is likely to be huge.

Important learning from the project is that considering a project like ECC in a holistic sense, as the project team did from the beginning, thinking about marketing locally, nationally and internationally, linking into new audiences for art (for example, through the geocaching community), making a commitment to involving as many delivery partners as possible, as well as local people and visitors, is a good way of maximising value.

All this value is greater because the project built upon previous work, at individual and partner level. The greatest benefit will be felt if further work builds on ECC itself, with the value growing exponentially with each iteration.

To a large degree this approach seems to have been instinctive on the part of the project team; there would have been a real value in articulating it from the start.

The project partners have a real opportunity now to build both on the potential from the new partnerships and the wider pool of funding that offers, and the national profile of the work in re-positioning partner organisations' level of innovation and how well networked they are.

6.1.5 Communication

Getting communication right is a challenge for all complex projects. ECC did well in its clear messaging of the offer around the *Waterfronts* pieces, and tying that in well with the GeoTour and other activity happening across the towns – particularly the two major festivals which aligned with ECC: Creative Estuary and Folkestone Triennial. The success in this is shown by the prestige and reach of the press coverage.

A huge amount of thought was put into marketing and communications from the beginning of the project, partly as a result of the strategic appointment of a communications specialist, Bryony Bishop as Project Manager. Clear documentation and messaging were shared with all partners. Language to suit both visitor and the arts sectors was considered, and a real effort was made to ensure internal communications were clear and positive.

As with any long and complex project there were challenges that provide learning. These include how to ensure that everyone in all roles across all organisations and across timeframes have all the information they need. Plus making more time for sharing learning, rather than just updates and information, during the project. The value of these were recognised in the evaluation workshops.

The strongest learning comes from a principle and aim of the project which is about recognising the real divergence of language and communication needs across different sectors. The project took huge steps in raising awareness of difference, and understanding of the drivers and requirements of partners across visitor economy and arts. More time is needed with a continuation of the commitment to dialogue from partners to take this further.

6.1.6   Legacy

Projects create the greatest value by considering legacy and thus sustainability of impact. Part of the legacy of ECC is ensured through both tangible and intangible assets. Many of the *Waterfronts* pieces will remain available to audiences, whether in their current location or moving to partner galleries (see *Appendix 5* for more details), and the website content will be preserved as part of England's Coast.

This was not part of the original conception of ECC, and has come about through 2021 as the value of the work, and interest from partners locally and nationally became clear. The value of building this sort of discussion in from the beginning was raised as learning from the project by several of the curators.

A potentially far richer legacy of the project lies in the strength, breadth and depth of the partnerships formed, particularly in the shared understanding across sectors and the wish to work together further, and in the confidence and aspiration for future work in the region.

This will be maximised if meetings between key partners continue, and further funding bids are put in as opportunities arise.

Other partnerships can learn from the value of explicitly investing time and energy in working together intensely and across a long period of time, with a sense of ambition, and thus achieving this very intangible but essential outcome of mutual understanding and a shared language and intent.

6.2   Recommendations

We recommend that the England's Creative Coast partners should:

A.   Proactively develop future partnership work

ECC's partner organisations should look at the opportunities to work together again to ensure the full value from the project is realised.

This involves both maintaining the momentum of partnership work so far, and maximising the value arising from the artworks, GeoTour and promotion.

For example, by recognising overlapping agendas, project partners should look at further ways to gain economies of scale – particularly in marketing and intelligence gathering – to support all of their work.

This might involve growing existing partnership to bring in other organisation in the region. It is important that the level of ambition be maintained for maximum value.

B. Recognise the importance of place making, place recovery and levelling up

In ECC, the partners put together a project which managed to encapsulate and deliver on shifting agendas for funding. Place making, place recovery and levelling up were of particular importance.

Partners should look to put together funding bids that use artworks, learning and the partnerships from the project to show how they can contribute to economic recovery, place-making and visitor economy strategies.

These should focus on the role of the coast and the creative sector in developing the region's USP – both for those who live in the region and those who want to visit.

By working together they can ensure that the cultural and cultural tourism sector gains recognition for its role in place leadership.

C. Articulate the full value of the project

It is important to discuss and share the different layers of value that a project like this brings.

Not just the immediate economic impacts but other less tangible social benefits, as well as the longer term economic and social value likely to arise.

The partners should ensure that they share not only the headline 'big numbers' but also the wider impacts which are likely to bring far reaching change.

These should be promoted to multiple audiences in the specific context of partners and localities.

D. Share the learning widely within the cultural and tourism sectors

There is a benefit for many other projects and partnerships to learn from the processes and experiences of ECC.

The scale and ambition of the project, alongside the adaptations needed to deliver through the challenges, have led to a multitude of insights. These sit within the project partners' teams as well as the core team.

The partners should make explicit time and effort to reflect on the process both internally and publicly. They should use these to positively shape future work.

E. Work together to develop research and intelligence for the sectors in the region

Although made redundant by the impacts of Covid 19, the information base had real potential value and probably needed more support for all organisations.

Partners should work together to explore the research and intelligence needs for the sectors in the region, particularly the arts sector.

There needs to be consideration of issues such as different sector and partner requirements, how data can be sourced efficiently and stored long-term. This could include developing expertise in action research to build that reflective approach into projects from the beginning.

It may be of benefit to look at the model of the Regional Cultural Observatories[34] – though in the current funding climate, in a much more lightweight form.

F. Resource future projects appropriately

The core team worked extremely hard in difficult times to make ECC work. However, the project was under-resourced with freelancers and partners picking up the slack.

Any future project should consider the time and resources needed to run a project of such scale and ambition.

G. Introduce space for reflection and action research into all projects

The value of reflecting on what was working and having a space to think about legacy and learning, was raised repeatedly through the evaluation focus groups and interviews.

It was clear that there would have been a benefit in having this built in from the start, with regular space given to reflect and adapt the project accordingly.

In addition, the introduction of a clear and simple Theory of Change would have helped with sharing and agreeing vision, values and aims throughout a very complex project.

H. Use ECC as a model for innovative cultural tourism projects including replication elsewhere in England

The whole ECC experience offers a model for those planning similarly innovative cultural tourism projects. There are lessons – both positive and negative – on how to make the model work, but the learning from the project tells us that the key success factors are ambition, quality and leadership.

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[34] See https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/article/chem-zanimayutsya-kuljturnie-observatorii for information on cultural observatory models

7. Appendices

Further information on specific areas can be found in the links below:

Appendix 1: Tourism impact report
(2.7MB PDF)

https://sphelps.dyndns-home.com:9000/index.php/s/avoFUQFk468weqH

Appendix 2: Geocaching report
(302K PDF)

https://sphelps.dyndns-home.com:9000/index.php/s/xttKYASQBhEsab3

Appendix 3: Visitor survey and LEP feedback – fuller data
(227K PDF)

https://sphelps.dyndns-home.com:9000/index.php/s/oW2CNCJXPXBOZ50

Appendix 4: Pickles PR report
(PDF, 68.2MB)

https://sphelps.dyndns-home.com:9000/index.php/s/AP9E3qLmwWCGKh0

Appendix 5: Current and planned locations for Waterfront commissions

All of the *Waterfronts* artworks have found new homes:

o Andreas Angelidakis' work has been transported to Lewisham as part of London Borough of Culture.

o Part of Holly Hendry's piece is to be exhibited in Goldsmith's Centre for Contemporary Art.

o Jasleen Kaur's piece is to be re-sited in The Hidden Gardens, Glasgow.

o Katrina Palmer's piece was acquired by Southend Borough Council to become a permanent artwork.

o Mariana Castillo Deball's geoglyph faded away naturally over time. Most embedded objects will remain as permanent artworks, with others going into Towner Eastbourne's collection.

o Michael Rakowitz's sculpture is to be included in Towner Eastbourne's collection.

o Pilar Quinteros' piece is a now permanent artwork in Folkestone's Payers Park.

Appendix 6: Examples of international travel blogs:

o One Hand in My Pocket
   (https://www.onehandinmypocket.nl/2019/08/15/englands-
   creative-coast/)

o Wat Zig Zegt (https://www.watzijzegt.com/2019/08/englands-
   creative-coast/)

o Stop and Stare (https://www.stopandstare.nl/kunstzinnig-kent-
   aan-englands-creative-coast/)