



Attendees:

AC	Andrea Cunningham	Metal
AF	Alison Fogg	Colchester BC / Colchester Amphora
AR	Alex Riley	South East LEP
BM	Ben Morgan	Thurrock Council (and SECCADS)
CD	Clare Dobson	Towner Gallery Eastbourne
DC	Dan Chilcott	Thurrock Council (and SECCADS)
DEt	Damian Etherington	Hastings Borough Council
DEv	Dave Evans (<i>minutes</i>)	East Sussex County Council
DS	Deborah Shaw	Marlowe Theatre
EW	Emma Wilcox	E W Associates / Thames Estuary CDF
HR	Helen Russell	South East LEP
HS	Hedley Swain	Arts Council England
IR	Imogen Robertson	Medway City of Culture 2025 Bid
JH	Joe Hill (<i>meeting Chair</i>)	Towner Gallery Eastbourne
JK	Jane Kilby	Wealden District Council
JN	Jo Nolan	Screen South
JS	Jo Simmons	South East LEP
KM	Katie McGown	Canterbury Christ Church University
KS	Katharine Stout	Focal Point Gallery
LC	Lorraine Cox	Southend Borough Council

LM	Lucy Medhurst	Ideas Test
MB	Matthew Brown	Colchester BC / Colchester Amphora
MD	Marc De'ath	Chelmsford City Council
MNr	Marina Norris	Thurrock Council (and SECCADS)
MNw	Matthew Norwell	Thames Gateway Kent
MP	Melanie Powell	Rother District Council
MTo	Mo Tomaney	Wise Birds Network
MTy	Michael Tymkiw	University of Essex
PC	Paul Cowell	Medway Council
PW	Philippa Wall	Thurrock Council (and SECCADS)
SD	Sarah Dance	Sarah Dance Associates
SF	Sujun Fieldhouse	Southend Borough Council
SHa	Sam Hawkins	CCSkills
SHu	Stephanie Humphries	University of Essex
SO	Susan Oliver	University of Essex
SS	Sally Staples	East Sussex County Council
ST	Stephen Taylor	Thurrock Council
SW	Sarah Wren	Kent County Council
TW	Tony Witton	Kent County Council
VP	Victoria Pomery	Turner Contemporary

Apologies:

BW	Brian Warrens	National College Creative Industries
CB	Collette Bailey	Metal
HW	Heather Walker	Royal Opera House, Purfleet
JP	Julia Payne	The Hub, Colchester

LF	Lorna Fox O'Mahony	University of Essex
LS	Lorraine Smith	Folkestone & Hythe District Council
RW	Rob West	CCSkills

1. Introductions & apologies

- 1.1. **JH** welcomed the group to the first *virtual* meeting of SECEN and provided some general guidance for using Zoom. He advised that the purpose of the meeting is to provide updates on SECEN's key workstreams in light of the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, and to allow the group to openly discuss the impacts and opportunities of the crisis on our sector.

2. Review of previous minutes/actions

- 2.1. **JH** ran through the minutes of the previous SECEN meeting (12 Feb 2020) noting that all of the actions had been completed or are in progress. The minutes were approved by the group as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Workstream updates

Workspace

- 3.1. **SS** advised that a brief for the Workspace Masterplan had been put out to the marketplace and there was interest, but it was necessary to pause this work at the start of the Covid-19 crisis. Work is now restarting but in light of the crisis we'll need to revisit the brief to ensure it's still fit for purpose, e.g. the High Street is in even more trouble, flexible workspace will be more important, a larger number of people will remove the commute from their lives... all of this means that the project has renewed focus. A revised brief is expected to be ready within the next month.

Prospectus

- 3.2. **JH** advised that work on the Prospectus had also paused due to the Covid-19 crisis. An updated draft was due to be presented to this meeting, but again the content now needs to be reviewed. The difficulty is that we're faced with a changing landscape, so if we want to get the content absolutely right then we may need to pause further. Note that the SELEP Local Industrial Strategy is also on hold, and the documents are very linked. **TW** commented that it's important we have a 'calling card' and the

previous Prospectus gave us the ability to move quickly, so even if it's a scaled-back version, it's important to have something.

England's Creative Coast

- 3.3. **SD** noted that culture and tourism venues are closed nationally with all travel/holidays effectively banned. It has therefore been agreed, in collaboration with all partners, that this project be postponed until this time next year (around May 2021). Whilst this is obviously disappointing, particularly as the first sculpture was due to be unveiled last month, it will be really positive next spring and will enable us to focus on reinvigorating local communities and the domestic tourist market in the meantime.

South East Creatives

- 3.4. **ST** advised that the programme is still delivering, and it's reassuring that there's still demand: business support services have moved online and are continuing, and the grants programme has approved 40 grants since the start of the crisis, with a further 16 to be considered today. Any ongoing issues, such as being behind target on outputs, are being monitored and worked through, while some of the original issues with the grants process have now been resolved and we're seeing more smaller grants.
- 3.5. The main concern/risk around Covid-19 is that the grants offered won't be spent, but again this will be tracked and followed up. ERDF requirements are stringent so there isn't much flexibility, but conversations are taking place with MHCLG to see if we can support businesses in different ways – we're trying to be as flexible as we can within the boundaries. **JS** advised that she's pulling together a SELEP-wide response to MHCLG on this, as SELEP has 16 projects that need flexibility. Where we target our conversation is the key, as whilst we have a regional contact at MHCLG, this is now a national issue so needs escalating further.
- 3.6. **MNr** encouraged the group to promote www.southeastcreatives.co.uk, as well as [@S_E_Creatives](https://twitter.com/S_E_Creatives) through Twitter and other social media platforms, as it's an asset to support businesses at this difficult time.

4. Open feedback session

Arts Council England

- 4.1. **HS** provided a brief update on Arts Council England's current position in terms of the Covid-19 crisis. ACE is working with Government and the sector to establish three phases of support through the crisis: *response*, *stabilisation* and *reset*. The aim of the first phase is to protect as much as possible in the short term, and includes repurposing £160m of funding into emergency response – a largely positive process, and on the whole most of the people who approached ACE have been supported. The response phase also includes relaxing funding conditions, signposting to other sources of sector support, and gathering evidence through an impact survey.
- 4.2. ACE is now giving thought to how it can move through the next phases, and is talking with Government continually to put together an 'ask' for our sectors (recognising and articulating the many different demands). We know there's lots of lobbying going on but the aim is to come up with a single joined-up approach for the whole sector. The intention for the 'stabilisation' phase is that ACE will be able to support organisations to reopen and to adapt business models to operate in the changed environment. The final 'reset' phase is intended to be longer term (say from later this year or early next year) to support the sector in resetting for the so called 'new normal'.
- 4.3. **HS** commented that the intelligence ACE is getting through groups such as SECEN is extremely helpful, particularly any case studies based on real data and any strategies from organisations that really know their audiences (imaginative and creative strategies for getting us going again, e.g. from galleries and theatres who can talk to their audiences to get real data on the ground).

[Action: SECEN members to continue feeding data/evidence/intelligence on the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis to Arts Council England via HS]

South East LEP

- 4.4. **HR** provided an update on SELEP's intelligence gathering work, which has been comprehensive. The data is explored at national, regional and LEP levels, with a sectoral analysis too, and focuses on the impacts, gaps and opportunities created by the crisis. SELEP is currently pulling together an 'economic intelligence pack' which will be released cyclically over the coming months.

- 4.5. **HR** advised that SELEP is regularly feeding messages into Government, and emphasised **HS**'s earlier observation that Government is interested in evidence-based data and facts. **TW** noted that Kent is gathering/coordinating such evidence (real people with real issues) and feeding it in through Kent's cultural transformation board. **HR** asked the group to continue feeding in as much real data as possible.

[Action: SECEN members to continue feeding data/evidence/intelligence on the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis to SELEP via HR]

Open discussion on the Covid-19 crisis

- 4.6. **JH** led an open forum discussion on the impacts/opportunities of the current crisis on the creative sector. The following key points were made:

- We now need to be forward-thinking as we cannot go back to the way we were.
- Our universities have people with technical expertise who can really think about future technology, so we should use that resource; **SO** offered to help broker conversations between technical academics and creatives about agile ways of delivering projects.
- **SHu** added that the University of Essex can also support businesses with their projects through Innovation Vouchers, as well as a variety of other programmes and schemes; more information at www.essex.ac.uk/business/expertise/funding-opportunities/innovation-vouchers.
- An interesting note from South East Creatives is that while people may be nervous, they're still asking about grants in 2021, so people on the ground are already looking forward.
- The various sectoral roundtable discussions that have taken place have been useful, but the challenge is identifying common issues that we as a group can work into our strategies.
- We need to give ourselves the time and space to think and be innovative. Whatever strategies we put in place should offer us enough flexibility to take advantage of whatever comes – thread R&D through how we think to allow new ideas to seed and grow.
- As well as working in the creative and cultural sectors, a lot of our organisations must also think/work in more commercial and business terms, particularly the small companies and freelancers. There shouldn't be a disconnect between the two areas. We should consider how to bring wider business engagement into any future strategies to cross that divide.
- Should we rethink how we fund things moving forward and stop thinking in terms of 'projects' as we normally do?
- Organisations are adapting their offer, recognising that 'relationships' are at the root.
- People are accessing new routes into culture *online*, so it's vital that the online offers are properly developed with realistic business models behind them.
- The amount of free online access would be interesting to track to see if it attracts new audience members moving forward, i.e. while we might all visit Glyndebourne, Chelsea Flower Show etc online this year, will the venues attract the same customers next year when they have to pay, and how will that be managed?

5. AOB

- 5.1. **LC** advised that Southend BC is starting some work to investigate the property sector in the Thames Estuary area – the Creative Estuary Assets Development project – as it's thought there will be an increase in opportunities to secure more space for CCI use.

- 5.2. **AF** advised that **JP** at The Hub is starting a project looking at the mental health of creative entrepreneurs, and will circulate a survey in the coming weeks.

[Action: JP to circulate a mental health survey to the SECEN group via DE]

- 5.3. **JH** thanked everyone involved in the continuing work going on behind the scenes; he also formally thanked **SS** and **LF** for their work as SECEN Co-Chairs. The next meeting will be chaired by **KS**, the new SECEN Co-Chair for Essex.

Summary of actions:

- 4.3 SECEN members to continue feeding data/evidence/intelligence on the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis to Arts Council England via **HS**.
- 4.5 SECEN members to continue feeding data/evidence/intelligence on the impacts of the Covid-19 crisis to SELEP via **HR**.
- 5.2 **JP** to circulate a mental health survey to the SECEN group via **DE**.