

ROYAL
OPERA
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BRIDGE

THE PATHS WE TAKE

Royal Opera House Bridge 2012 to 2015 and beyond



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Children writing their feedback on
the Deloitte Ignite evaluation wall

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Welcome

Learning and participation is at the very heart of all that we do at the Royal Opera House. It's an area that has grown in importance over many years and this is echoed in many other cultural organizations nationally. Across the sector the number of national portfolio organizations that meet Arts Council England's goal for improving access for children and young people has increased significantly in the last three years.

However, far too many children and young people still do not have the high quality and vibrant local cultural opportunities that we believe they are entitled to – opportunities that can make such a difference to their lives. Arts Council England's Cultural Education Challenge is a timely and relevant call to all of us in arts, culture and education to forge stronger cross-sector connections that will ensure we reach the areas of most need.

At the Royal Opera House, we are ambitious about increasing the reach of participation opportunities. ROH Bridge plays a pivotal role in our learning and participation strategy, enabling us to extend our work

across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex and North Kent. Through Bridge's strategic support of Local Cultural Education Partnerships, new forms of collaboration are being explored and we are developing innovative models that can be expanded to have a national impact.

There is a huge challenge in improving access to arts and culture for all, but with challenge comes the opportunity for innovation. It's been very exciting to see the new approaches, strong partnerships and diverse programmes that have developed in the Bridge region. The case studies collected here illustrate that diversity and demonstrate how we are building on examples of good practice to achieve long-term benefits.

I hope you enjoy reading about the work we have been supporting through ROH Bridge and will be encouraged to take up the Cultural Education Challenge, to connect more children with great art and culture and to really make a difference.

Alex Beard CBE

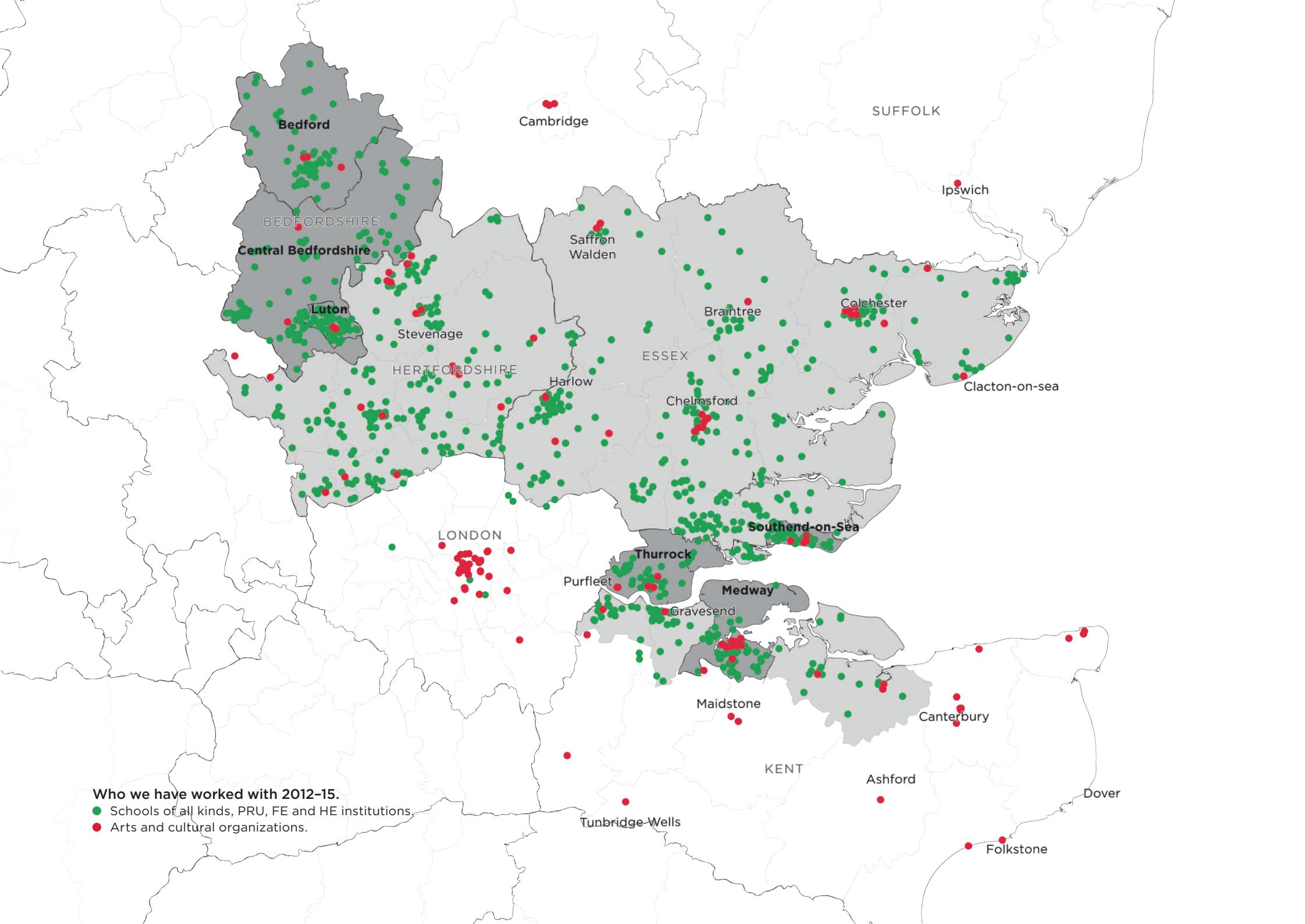
Chief Executive, Royal Opera House



Children performing at the FUSED
Festival as part of Thurrock Trailblazer
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Brian Slater.

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About Royal Opera House Bridge

Royal Opera House Bridge works strategically across Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex and North Kent to connect and nurture high quality, sustainable cultural learning for all children and young people.

We do not deliver arts activities or work with children and young people directly, rather we provide strategic support for delivery organizations and advocate for long-term investment in arts and cultural infrastructure.

We are based at High House Production Park in Thurrock and are one of 10 Bridge organizations across England. We are directly funded by Arts Council England and are part of the Royal Opera House Learning and Participation Department. ROH Bridge is currently funded until 2018.

We have three main aims:

- Assure cultural education is guaranteed for all children and young people.
- Nurture the cultural ambition and skills within organizations.
- Champion the value of investing in arts and culture at a local and national level.

We meet these aims through strategic partnership investment, workforce development, research and advocacy – particularly in communities where there is limited local provision or experience.

We promote Arts Award and Artsmark as ways to structure, track and celebrate cultural education on a personal and organizational level. All of our work is based on local need and partnerships.

Between 2012 and 2014 we invested £717,108 in sustainable partnerships and an additional £284,018 in the target areas of Film, Teaching Schools, Diversity and Heritage. This investment leveraged an additional £1,680,020 in co-investment. With our support, 226 schools gained Artsmark status and 8,655 young people achieved an Arts Award.

'Working with ROH Bridge has allowed me to develop my offer to local children, especially those from backgrounds where access to the arts has been limited and to those with learning disability.'

ROH Bridge Annual Survey

Find out more about us at www.roh.org.uk/bridge or follow us @ROHBridge

What We Do...

Our Vision

To empower a generation through connecting children and young people to a sustainable, high quality cultural learning offer that assures progression and has the needs and interests of children and young people at its heart.

Our Aims

By 2018, we aim for successful delivery of our programme to result in:

- Fairer and more universal access across every part of the region, so that all children and young people can engage with culture on their doorstep.
- High quality provision with clear progression pathways that are place based and responsive to the characteristics and needs of our sub-regions.
- A motivated workforce and wider community that values the arts and culture and recognizes the benefits of cultural engagement for children and young people.
- A sustained legacy for ACE's investment, independently developed and delivered by a wide range of cultural, learning and community partners operating within strong local infrastructures.

Our Values

Values and principles that underpin our work:

- We believe that creative and cultural learning lies at the heart of education, with assured opportunities not only to develop skills, knowledge and understanding but also to progress.
- Inclusivity and diversity is central to all we do.
- The thoughts, ideas and opinions of children and young people lie at the heart of our programme.
- Our strategic interventions will be informed by evidence and tailored to need.
- We recognize the importance of celebrating and finding contemporary relevance in heritage.
- We incentivise new models of working and practice that strengthen local infrastructure.
- We foster resilience and sustainability in all our cross-sector collaborations.
- We promote aspiration, quality and excellence.

Our Priorities 2015-18

Assuring cultural education entitlement for all children and young people

Working directly with schools and other education and youth providers, frequently in partnership with the cultural sector, we will increase sustainable and planned access to excellent cultural learning for all children and young people. This will build on local cultural assets, be tailored to local need and assure progression.

Nurturing cultural ambition

Working directly with the cultural sector, frequently in partnership with schools, local authorities and potential co-investors, we will increase the quality and extend the reach of cultural learning opportunities for children and young people across the ROH Bridge region. We will encourage innovation and culturally diverse practice throughout.

Advocacy and influence

The quality of the cultural infrastructure in our region will attract creative professionals and encourage investment. With ROH Bridge support,

new cultural champions will emerge from within existing structures and networks. We will increase the value that all cultural organizations within the region place upon children and young peoples' learning and participation. We will also help parents understand that cultural learning is important in order that they might better support their children's involvement.

Priority four

Our fourth and final priority changes annually. In 2015/16 our fourth priority will focus on the development of Local Cultural Education Partnerships (LCEP). We will use this year to effectively establish five LCEP within our focus areas of Medway, Colchester, Bedford, Thurrock and Luton. We will galvanize our existing partnerships within these areas to support a clear articulation of a local cultural offer to teachers, parents, children and young people and the arts and cultural sector. New partnerships will be created and existing partnerships will be enhanced.

For details of our 2015/16 action plan please email the relevant Programme Manager (p48).



Finger knitting at Deloitte Ignite 15
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Sim Canetty-Clarke

Are We Nearly There Yet?

When we set off on this journey as Royal Opera House Bridge in 2012, I'm not sure I fully envisaged all the many different paths we would end up travelling. The goal has always been clear but the landscape is forever changing.

As we have developed new partnerships, learned together and trialled innovative models, new opportunities have continued to open up. Now, embarking on a second three-year term until March 2018, it is a key moment to look back on all that has been achieved and to look ahead at the new challenges and new paths we will take together.

Feedback from our annual stakeholder survey suggests that the role of ROH Bridge, as a broker of cultural education relationships, is increasingly understood and that there is a growing confidence in the impact of that work. Our annual conference Ahead for Culture, this year on the theme of leadership, attracted over 200 delegates. This shows a flourishing movement of skilled professionals who are championing cultural learning in the region

and a real desire to connect across sectors.

We are proud of the recognition that the connections we have brokered have received: for example the prestigious curriculum development award attached to Creative Writing through the Arts in Billericay (see p28), the increasing numbers of schools now subscribing to Thurrock Trailblazer (see p36), Canvey Island schools choosing to invest in work with Pop Up (see p16), the national interest shown in the Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit that we have helped develop in Kent (see p12) and an increase in support for the work of music hubs in special schools across the region (see p40).

We are becoming better at helping to build working relationships that find sustainable solutions to local needs. However, we are operating in an evolving landscape that requires a flexible and agile response. Only 54% of respondents to our survey felt confident about the future of arts and culture for children in their area. There is still much we must do.

The climate that the ROH Bridge Programme Managers are working in is a cautious and tentative one. Many organizations face reduced capacity. Arts departments in secondary schools and FE colleges are shrinking; all schools face a new OFSTED framework and new accountability measures for indicating school performance; primary schools are engaging with an unfamiliar, more knowledge-driven curriculum while fighting to maintain standards and build aspiration in their learners and cultural organizations have increasingly small core teams and must rely on freelance support for their learning work. This kind of austere ecology makes growth difficult.

However, there are many positives on the immediate horizon. The Artsmark Award has been revitalized, by schools for schools, and provides a new and flexible way to support whole school integration of arts and culture. Arts Council England has issued a cross-sector call to arms through the Cultural Education Challenge, with a clear focus on establishing Local Cultural Education Partnerships. The Royal

Opera House's new Learning and Participation Strategy is full of new approaches to increase reach beyond London through partnerships and innovative use of digital technologies.

The number of successful applications to the ACE Grants for the Arts programme has increased significantly across the whole Bridge region since 2012. While this is not all for cultural learning activities, it does show a growing ambition and effectiveness among arts organizations in our area.

Looking towards 2018, we are committed to helping establish a high quality cultural learning offer for all children and young people in our region. We will do this through nurturing new Local Cultural Education Partnerships, helping partners to embed Quality Principles in their work and supporting all schools with their Artsmark journey.

The Paths We Take presents a selection of strategic partnerships that we have supported in different ways over the last few years. It offers a long-term view on the nature of the changes in cultural learning opportunities for

children and young people that we have witnessed develop in that time. The aim is not to simply reflect on three years of our partners' accomplishments. We want to make visible the leaps of faith, false starts, timely interventions and real triumphs that make up such journeys so that they can inform all of our next steps. My hope is that by hearing from our partners, in their own words, we can celebrate the multiplicity and vibrancy in the region, and that these models can guide us along other paths to success.

Yes, there is a challenge ahead, but as a community we are prepared. In our survey, 68% of respondents said they now feel more confident to advocate for arts and culture in their area.

So, are we nearly there yet? It may be a long road, but together we have the confidence, skills and passion to make huge strides.

Sally Manser
Head of Royal Opera House Bridge.



A cross-sector networking day
Photographed by R. Cherry

Arts and Cultural Commissioning



Next Generation Youth Theatre perform at
the Ahead for Culture conference at the
Royal Opera House
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Sim Canetty-Clarke

Commissioning is an exciting but complex and challenging new opportunity for arts and cultural organizations. Laura Bailey, Arts Officer for Kent County Council, and Lucy Medhurst, Strategic Manager, Artswork Bridge, describe how a coalition of County Councils, commissioners, Bridges and cultural providers formed around what initially seemed like a simple challenge: how can commissioners and the cultural sector work together?

In 2014 Kent County Council's (KCC) Arts and Culture Service developed and managed a pilot commission in partnership with Royal Opera House Bridge, Artswork and Public Health. The pilot aimed to deliver improved well-being for young people using creative interventions, and capacity building for cultural organizations to enable the sector to become commission ready.

The pilot resulted in the Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit (ACCT) - www.artcommissioningtoolkit.com - an animated online resource to guide providers through the commissioning process. It also led to KCC being selected as a national partner in the Arts Council England funded Cultural Commissioning Programme.

Starting the Conversation

The work was born out of conversations between ROH Bridge's Programme Manager Emma Crook and KCC's Arts and Culture service in 2012 about the potential for arts and cultural organizations to deliver public services through commissioning. It was acknowledged that neither the culture sector nor commissioners had much knowledge of how each other worked but that both could benefit from joint working.

A steering group was set up that included KCC, ROH Bridge, Artswork, public health and arts providers. Events brought together representatives from both disciplines where synergies were instantly recognized.

Going Beyond the Pilot

Over the following two years the partnership evolved and strengthened, particularly as public health became part of Kent County Council. The idea for a pilot to test commissioning arts interventions for health outcomes progressed from a small scale, small budget proposal to a £250,000 project across six districts in Kent based around KCC's Six Ways to Wellbeing campaign (developed by New Economics Foundation, NEF, and South London and Maudsley NHS Trust, SLAM).

It was important to us all to capture the process of the pilot so that it could be developed into a learning resource for the culture sector to inform a longer term sustainable plan for arts and cultural commissioning. MB Associates were contracted to record the process from the perspective of all stakeholders, establish recommendations for a future commissioning mechanism, and develop a toolkit for the culture sector.

A mix of six arts organizations and collaborative partnerships were contracted as service providers and a bespoke support package was devised to help the providers through the journey. The organizations were expected to deliver creative interventions that could improve the well-being of young people at risk of mental health issues and to disseminate the Six Ways to Wellbeing messages among the wider population.

A Challenging Journey

The journey was a challenging but rewarding one. We were all new to public service commissioning and procurement processes. There were rules to be

'A highlight was seeing first-hand how participation in some simple, but unfamiliar arts activities can make a huge difference in individual young people's wellbeing.'

Senior Youth Worker *The Grand*

adhered to, a new language to learn and new partnerships to develop, but a shared vision and a willingness to learn together helped keep the momentum. Communication between partners was at times challenging but solutions were found that enabled the project to progress successfully.

The interventions delivered were incredibly varied in approach and art form and all were of excellent quality. They



The Infinity Box: an ArtBeat project led by Turner Contemporary for Kent County Council's Six Ways to Wellbeing



home process about contact glossary

Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit

This toolkit will help you understand and engage with commissioning. Being commissioned provides an opportunity for the arts and cultural sector to deliver contracts for a whole range of public services whilst other funding is under increasing pressure.

Commissioning is about identifying people's needs and deciding how best to use the resources available to improve outcomes for communities.

The toolkit has been produced by Royal Opera House Bridge, Artswork and Kent County Council (KCC) for the UK cultural sector as providers, and the people who might commission them. It includes practical advice and learning from people and organisations in Kent who piloted commissioning for wellbeing in 2014.



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© 2015 - Arts & Cultural Commissioning Toolkit (ACCT).
Web design and animation by morphic.co.uk

Artswork ROYAL OPERA HOUSE BRIDGE

clearly demonstrated how arts can be incredibly beneficial for engaging young people and improving wellbeing, despite the data set from the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale used to evaluate outcomes being too small to show significant improvements. Public Health commissioners now appreciate the value of arts and culture to deliver health benefits and are committed to embedding them into mainstream services where appropriate.

Arts Award

Some 541 young people took part in the interventions across the three North Kent districts, with 92 achieving an Arts Award and 14,396 members of the wider public attended festivals. Arts Award targets were challenging for the providers and young people, but where they were fully embedded into the activity, rather than as additional, they worked well and gave young people confidence in their abilities.

Growing Partnerships

The success of this partnership and pilot opened the door for KCC to work with New Economics Foundation as part of the national Cultural Commissioning Programme. KCC has continued to work with Royal Opera House Bridge and Artswork. Together they are seeking to develop best practice in commissioning the arts and bring about policy change that will enable the sector to readily engage with a much broader range of services across the Council.

It was important that work was done internally to develop the opportunities for the culture sector to respond to while supporting them to develop their business models. The Arts and Culture service, together with the Bridge organizations, are now working with Adult Social Care, Early Help and Preventative Services and even Waste Management on major commissions to embed arts and culture into mainstream provision, deliver social value and test innovation through new pilots.



'Arts Award training and achieving Arts Award Adviser Silver qualification was one of my project highlights. It was like the puzzle pieces falling into place regarding my future role as a youth worker.'

Apprentice youth worker

Sharing the Learning

The Arts & Cultural Commissioning Toolkit (ACCT) will now come into its own as a valuable resource to help arts providers develop partnerships and win contracts through these commissioned services and many others in the future.

The Six Ways pilot allowed the associated gains of wellbeing through cultural activity to be experienced by a wider audience, including those considered hard to reach. The relationship developed with Early Help and Preventative Services as a result of this work will now increase opportunities for all children and young

people to experience great arts and culture through universal provision and some targeted intervention.

The pilot and toolkit are gaining recognition among colleagues, with partners frequently presenting in different parts of the country.

KCC are currently working with the Bridge organizations to develop a multi-agency leadership group following the principles of a cultural learning partnership to provide a more comprehensive approach to tackling some of the issues facing children and young people. The Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit will be used as a valuable resource to inform a comprehensive approach to commissioning as one means of delivering positive outcomes for children and young people.

www.artsccommissioningtoolkit.com

Related Programmes

As Local Authorities are given increasingly greater responsibilities with regard to maintaining public health this is providing opportunities for dialogue between sectors about arts engagement and its effect on health and well-being. ROH Bridge has been supporting the cultural sector to gain an insight into this way of working and to explore opportunities to engage with commissioning.

Essex

Cultural organizations and commissioners from the Essex County Council schools team came together during a Creative Commissioning series in 2013/14 to talk about better outcomes for children and young people in Essex.

Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire has marked the start of its own relationship with the Public Health

team at Hertfordshire CC with an event in 2015 on arts and health hosted by Creative Hertfordshire.

www.creativehertfordshire.com

Kent

The Kent Schools Olympic Legacy Programme, INSPIRE, is in its third and final year. This year the INSPIRE programme will be working with KCC's Health and Well Being team to deliver Ways to Rio, building on the Six Ways to Wellbeing. In the first two phases of the INSPIRE programme (2012-15), Bridge investment enabled the culture strand to be developed across the programme.

www.kentschoolsinspired.org.uk

£254,000 investment secured by the steering group to develop a Six Ways to Wellbeing pilot

Eight cultural organizations successfully win the tender

Over 904 young people took part in the entire programme across Kent and it reached 20,038 members of the wider community

2014

Tender for the Six Ways to Wellbeing pilot published

2015

Arts and Cultural Commissioning Toolkit Website Launch event

Growing a Cultural Education Enterprise



Storyteller Rich Sylvester as a frog at a Pop Up festival at High House Production Park, Thurrock
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Patrick Boyd

Starting up any small business is a challenge – succeeding as a cultural education provider requires much more than magic. Dylan Calder, Director of Pop Up Projects, explores how through collaboration, innovation and an ‘activist-passion’, micro-businesses can have a big impact on children’s lives.

Pop Up and Royal Opera House Bridge share an activist-passion for making not just our own art-forms but all arts relevant and meaningful to children and families who might not ordinarily set foot in an opera house or literature festival.

A Portal to Another World

Children often form strong opinions about literature as early as seven years old, as they’re shepherded from the immersive panoramas of picture books towards the study of prose. Reading becomes less sensational; as learning focuses on the technology of writing it can simultaneously eradicate the magic so that, slowly but surely, those portals that stories open into other worlds start to close. As you advance up the educational ladder, books are things to be scrutinized, dissected and regurgitated in critical reviews; writing is something you’re tested on. Reading and pleasure, once intimately entwined, become firmly segregated from one another.

This is why Pop Up exists: to seek out children in danger of becoming alienated from books, families who have turned their backs on reading, teachers hemmed-in by set texts, schools stifled by targets and standards and communities and

public spaces who’ve never hosted a literature festival but would love to.

Trusting Relationships

To achieve this, we need to work with and through organizations and people who have trusting relationships with the schools and communities we want to engage. ROH Bridge have patiently forged intimate alliances with schools. They spot synergies between people and places and intuitively bring them together, operating on the principle that togetherness brings about change.

As a micro-organization doing biggish things, Pop Up thrives on collaboration. Collaboration represents a merging of skillsets, makes us reflect on our values and improve how we do things, shoulders the burdens and makes ideas possible. By combining forces we increase the power and potential of something.

In summer 2013 our collaboration with ROH Bridge, Royal Opera House and Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust in Shropshire came to life through generous funding by Arts Council England to produce three Pop Up Festivals, one each in Telford in Shropshire, Swiss Cottage in London and High House Production Park in Thurrock.

Turning Formats on Their Head

Pop Up Festival turns the literature festival format on its head. Instead of readings, talks and workshops, we commission children’s writers, illustrators, poets and storytellers to design and present imaginative, interdisciplinary experiences, activities and installations for children of all ages – and to involve local or visiting children in co-creating aspects of each commission. It’s not a quiet or well-behaved festival. Hardly anything is time-based, and audiences have total freedom of movement, dipping in and out until they find the experience most meaningful to them.

Across the festival tour, we collaboratively delivered 180 hours of free live literature to a combined audience of 8000, and a

total of 30 workshop days in schools in the run-up to the festivals. Headline evaluation findings included:

- 100% of children ‘enjoyed’ the festivals.
- 100% said they would ‘recommend it to friends’.
- 96% of adults considered it to be ‘special or different’.
- 94% of children and 74% of adults said they were more likely to ‘buy or borrow’



Picture book author Ken Wilson-Max visiting local schools *Photographed by Patrick Boyd*



Drawing with illustrator Jane Ray *Photographed by Patrick Boyd*

a book because of coming to the festival'.

- 90% of artists said the experience had given them 'insights of value for (my) creative work'.
- 84% agreed the same about their education practice.
- 91% of artists said there had been 'benefits' to them because of the collaboration with the Royal Opera House design team.

Igniting Change

ROH Bridge introduced us to Essex and ignited a chain of consequences which have, in funding terms alone, enabled us to sustain and grow our literature movement in the region. Within just one month of the festival at High House Production Park, with investment from ROH Bridge, Essex County Council (ECC) and the schools themselves, Pop Up delivered a large-scale schools literature programme with 20 schools in Canvey and

Thurrock, where over 180 classes took part in a six-week reading for pleasure programme culminating in a workshop with the author of their book.

Hungry for more, the 12 schools who make up the Canvey Schools Partnership (CSP), leveraging further investment from ROH Bridge and ECC, undertook a second programme just six months later with all 140 nursery to Year 8 classes; while another eight schools each in Braintree and Medway commissioned – with match funding from ROH Bridge – small-scale Pop Up pilots.

An Adaptable and Effective Model

On the back of this expansion, having proved our models are adaptable to and effective in rural and small town contexts, Pop Up secured Arts Council NPO status, quickly followed by Paul Hamlyn Foundation funding to scale-up in Medway and roll-out the model to new learning communities (Cambridgeshire,

2012

Pop Up meet with ROH Bridge to discuss delivering their first ever festival outside of London at High House Production Park, Thurrock

2013

Pop Up secure strategic touring money from ACE to run three festivals in London, Ironbridge and Thurrock

Royal Opera House Bridge agree to invest £46,102 in Pop Up to work with schools in Canvey Island and Thurrock

'The emphasis on diversity is also a great strength. In some of the schools visited, there was little evidence of ethnic diversity in class book collections. It is evident that the Pop Up programme pushes the boundaries'.

Independent Evaluation of a reading programme delivered by Pop Up

Shropshire, Wrexham) where there is an evidenced need for creative, enterprising approaches to tackling literacy challenges.

Meanwhile back in Canvey Island, where CSP has leveraged full funding to commission a third 140-class programme in 2016, Pop Up are in dialogue with the schools, Essex Book Festival, Essex-based Just Imagine and Metal Culture and London's Stellar City Libraries, around producing a wider family and public programme of children's literature events under the title Canvey Reads to run alongside the schools programme. Our

aim, in the long run, will be to get the whole island immersed in reading.

Transformation through Partnership

Transformation is at the heart of every children's story. Partnership working with ROH Bridge has been nothing less than transformative for Pop Up, and the scale and depth of that transformation has been awesome. In just 14 months since our Pop Up Festival at High House, we've worked with 36 new schools; and within 14 months time we'll be delivering Pop Up Education in 1000 classrooms across eight learning communities in England and Wales.

By autumn 2016, 27,000 pupils will be reading new books and encountering their authors; and in the 2015-18 period we expect to deliver an incredible 44,000 books to our 80 partner schools. Togetherness has made this possible.

www.pop-up.org.uk

www.pop-up-hub.com

Related Programmes: Cultural Education Enterprises

ROH Bridge has supported several Cultural Education Enterprises to develop new programmes for schools across our region. Often, these are small organizations with big ideas....

A Sense of Place... A Sense of Change - Regional Film Competition

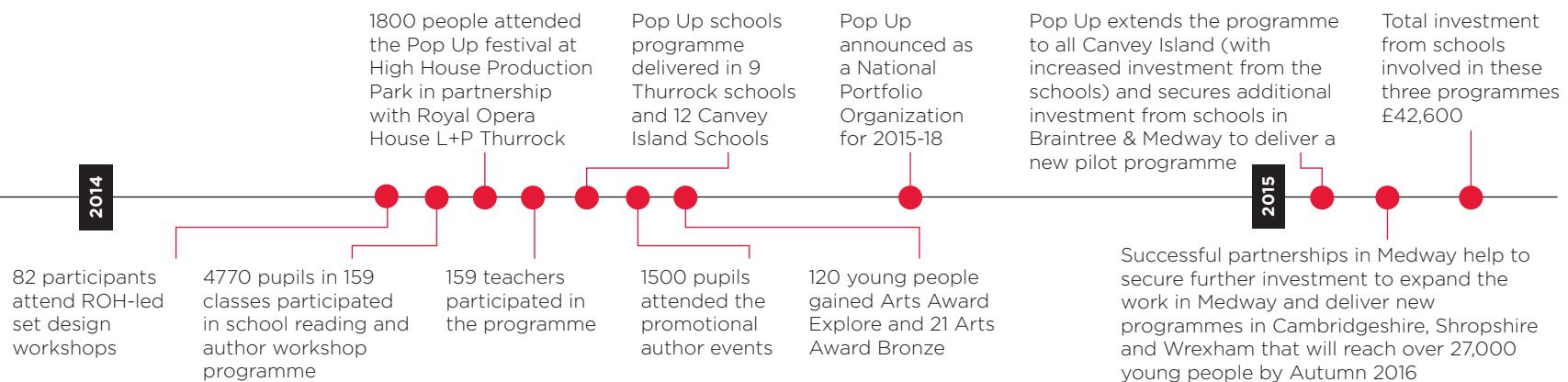
In 2013 ROH Bridge established a regional film competition for young people, managed by Elstree Film Design. The success of year one led to a second competition in 2014, with a final event held at the British Film Institute. Elstree Studios and Warner Bros. have pledged to co-invest in the competition for its third year. In 2015 Elstree Film Design won a Gold Marcom Award for their work on the film competition, which was judged to 'exceed the high standard of the industry norm'. www.elstreefilmdesign.co.uk/a-sense-of-change-film-competition

Letting Imagination Fly – Storytelling and Story Acting

MakeBelieve Arts (MBA) delivered their recognized Helicopter stories programme in primary schools and early years settings in North Kent in partnership with the Every Child a Talker initiative 2012/13. ROH Bridge were keen to build on the success of this work and to support MBA to develop work that engaged directly with parents and families. It was through this programme that Helicopter at Home was born, which has now become part of MBA's core offer.

As a result of this work, we brokered a relationship between MBA and Thurrock Council's Early Years team, resulting in a number of primary schools now working with MBA and their helicopter technique. Stifford Clays school in Thurrock is now a centre of excellence for the Helicopter technique.

makebelievearts.co.uk



RITUAL LANDSCAPES

This exhibition of Neolithic ritual finds from Britain highlights the importance of these objects in prehistoric society. These items were made for specific rituals and had a spiritual purpose.

IN THIS SPOT 2500 YEARS AGO YOU WOULD HAVE BEEN UNDER THE

Connecting Schools with Local Cultural Providers



Pupils take on the Culture Challenge at
The Higgins Bedford
*Photographed by Graham Watson/
Cat Lane*

Communication between schools and cultural providers is often difficult to establish but once started it can lead to long-lasting partnerships with profound impacts on both sides. Kayte Judge, Associate Producer at Bedford Creative Arts, looks at how the Culture Challenge concept helped galvanize links and stimulate ambition.

The Culture Challenge (www.culturechallenge.co.uk) was developed in response to needs identified through the Royal Opera House Bridge seed funded Bedford Culture Network, a network of cultural leaders and teachers which met six times in 2013. The aim of this network was to encourage more engagement in the arts for young people via schools. It emerged that a lack of clear communication was a clear barrier to schools working with creative and cultural practitioners.

A Call to Action

In response to this, the Culture Challenge was developed. Its aim is to increase the number of young people accessing, enjoying and making art and culture by providing clear details of local cultural providers to schools through a searchable online directory. Alongside this sits the Culture Checklist, a list of 30 things young people might like to try before they leave school, developed in consultation with young people, cultural leaders and teachers. The list provides a call to action, an aspirational checklist for young people and a practical tool for schools to identify opportunities for cultural learning.

For us the underlying goal of the Culture Challenge is to increase social

mobility through cultural activity. This assertion is based on the research found by the Cultural Learning Alliance that shows that learning through arts and culture improves the engagement and prospects of young people.

Arts Award and Artsmark

We undertook the pilot with 14 schools, including lower, primary, middle, upper, independent and a pupil referral unit. While the approach differed in each setting, a total of 1866 children took part in the pilot – each accessing at least two cultural activities over one term, and undertaking both the challenge checklist itself and an evaluation questionnaire.

Shortstown Primary serves an area of socio-economic deprivation in Bedford Borough. Prior to the Culture Challenge the school often engaged with outside practitioners but hadn't considered Arts Award or Artsmark. They chose to undertake the Culture Challenge with 12 Year 5 students attending an intervention group called 'Life skills'. They undertook a felt self-portrait making session with artist Anne Marie Stijelja in which they explored their emotions, and a performance and puppet-making workshop with The Theatre of Widdershins.

Raising Aspiration

The students' data shows a nuanced picture, which may reflect the complex nature of this small group. While their overall enjoyment of school seemed to dip, the numbers of students who were inspired by recent cultural activities rose from 67% to 89%, and those who felt that cultural activities helped them with their school work rose from 44% to 56%.

The teachers reported increased levels of interest and engagement: 'The children are more interested in the cultural aspects of learning and independently expressed a desire for more work of this nature.'

'Since engaging with the Culture Challenge the school is prioritising arts and culture on next year's development plan in order to work towards achieving an Artsmark Award.'

Denise Cottam Head teacher

Beauchamp Middle School had begun their Artsmark journey when they began the Culture Challenge pilot and had delivered Arts Award before. They decided to use Arts Award Explore as an intervention activity for eight Year 6 underachieving boys as a SEN inclusion project. They visited and had outreach



Completing the Culture Challenge at the Panacea Museum *Photographed by Graham Watson/Cat Lane*

'We have been touring for over 20 years and we have found it really difficult to get schools to book us. This website is opening up doors for us, and allowing schools to book our work with confidence.'

Penny Earey *Theatre of Widdershins*

from the The Higgins art gallery and museum, and worked with Paul Pibworth, a sculptor and artist. They also successfully attracted Arts Award Access Funding.

The comments from the students showed that for some this had been a particularly positive experience: 'Art has changed my life because it is amazing', enthused one.

Lead teacher Darren reported that being part of the project had helped him to work with artists and access funding: 'Using the Culture Challenge website and contacts helped our case in applying for money. The process has been an exciting

one as it has enabled us as a school to use real artists with the assurance and safety network of a committed website.'

Professional Benefits

The pilot had good results for the creative practitioners as well. Over half of the practitioners who responded to the evaluation had seen an increase in bookings, which is remarkable for the small number of schools we were working with during the pilot,

Teachers were more positive still with high percentages reporting that the project had increased the number of cultural activities undertaken by their learners both inside and outside of school, and 91% agreed or strongly agreed that cultural activities had had a positive impact on their learners. Their use of the website and checklist was trouble free and easy and 91% of them would value a Culture Challenge badge or identity, showing a high value to the project.



Schools using the Culture Challenge to bring more creativity into the classroom
Photographed by Graham Watson/Cat Lane

The new Bedford Culture Network holds a series of events where delegates identify needs and aspirations and begin to map the local cultural offer

Bedford Creative Arts develops a Partnership Investment proposal securing £12,000 from Royal Opera House Bridge to produce an online Cultural Map

2013

2014

Network members identify the need for a galvanised local arts and cultural offer that is more accessible by schools

New Goals

Our goal now is to roll out the service across all Bedfordshire schools and to become the 'go-to' site for cultural activity for schools in Bedfordshire and beyond. We have achieved buy-in from Bedford Borough Council and the Bedford Borough Learning Exchange, a consortium of local Head teachers. We hope to increase the marketing reach through a sustained communication strategy, a partnership approach, by offering professional development opportunities for both teachers and practitioners and through developing leadership in the use of creative and cultural approaches to curriculum needs. We are in early discussions with neighbouring counties to explore how the geographical reach of the project could be expanded.

www.culturechallenge.co.uk

Bedford Culture Challenge pilot evolved from the initial map concept. Local artists and arts organizations acknowledge the impact on their level of school bookings

Bedford Creative Arts successfully renewed their NPO status naming Goal 5 for the first time

Related Programmes: Connecting with Schools

Cultural partners are developing unique and inspirational programmes with schools that demonstrate a lasting commitment with programmes that develop and evolve in partnership with schools over a number of years.

Metal

Since renovating the Grade II listed Chalkwell Hall and creating a new base for cultural learning in Southend, Metal have continued to innovate and connect arts and culture in the area. Since 2012, ROH Bridge and Metal have worked closely together on a range of projects that connected local schools with inspiring arts and heritage activity. These included the On the Line festival, an arts and heritage programme that culminated in Chalkwell Hall being transformed into a museum with all exhibits created by children; piloting the Arts Award Artsbox mobile app in schools; and the world's

first NetPark in 2015. Through the Village Green and Village Beach festivals and plans for a Thames Estuary Festival in 2016, Metal are connecting and supporting ever more schools across the whole region.

www.metalculture.com

First Time Live programme

In 2014/15 Royal Opera House co-invested with Orchestras Live on a programme in Luton involving partners UKCCA, Luton Culture, Luton Music Service and City of London Sinfonia. The project called First Time Live has worked with schools and gifted young musicians to create original music using the theme of Carnival. In year one the final performance was live streamed into local primary schools.

www.orchestraslive.org.uk

Bedford Creative Arts submit a second partnership investment to ROH Bridge to enable roll out of the challenge to a larger cohort of schools

2015



Developing New Models for Place-making

Place can make a huge impact on cultural education – it can inspire and challenge, it can connect through experience or isolate through geography. Ali Pretty, Founder of Kinetika, found a move out of London opened surprising new opportunities for growth. Through outdoor arts, Kinetika is opening conversations with communities and helping them find ways to make a new sense of their own place.

In 2014 we moved Kinetika from East London to Purfleet. Initially we were tempted out of London to Thurrock by the brilliant spaces provided at the Acme Artists Studios, but it only took a few days to realize that we also had great neighbours, including the ROH Bridge team.

Sparks

It so happened that the Tour De France was passing through Essex that summer and the Bridge and Essex CC Cultural Development team were keen on working with schools in the Epping area to create a visual welcome to the cyclists as they came through. We worked with 120 primary school children to create their own silk flags featuring drawings of the local area. One of these schools, St. Andrews, took up the offer of the Discover Arts Award and a whole Year 3 class came to the Kinetika studio warming event where they could visit the ROH Production Workshop, as well as our own studio, and meet artists from a wide range of disciplines.

This sparked a further conversation around ways in which outdoor arts could engage children and young people in cultural learning and participation. I was invited to work with ROH, Artswork and Festival Bridges to devise a one-day

symposium – Changing Places. This was a great opportunity for key players in the industry, such as Nicky Webb of Artichoke, to inspire potential commissioners from Local Authority officers to the National Trust to think about how outdoor arts can make a significant impact on their communities.

Walking and Making Places

One of the challenges in engaging people in the arts in rural and isolated communities is lack of arts venues and in some cases virtually no arts provision at all.

I've spent the last four years developing creative walking projects moving away from the city and into remoter landscapes, and I've recently completed leading River Crouch Celebrations – a unique project supported by the Bridge that focused on the River Crouch.

I was approached by the Arts Development Officer for Rochford to devise a programme of work that would create a response to the River Crouch. After a series of preparatory walks last summer, we noticed how communities on both sides of the river, who were once connected by it, were now disconnected as there is only one crossing left in the form of the Burnham ferry, a small dinghy run by two brothers.

We devised a concept of a 100-mile walk that would connect eight communities, four on either side of the river, working with eight local artists who were partnered with eight schools.

In partnership with digital artist Richard White, we collaborated with the local artists to work together as one team. We selected three questions that would be the starting point for the work in each community.

- Why is this place here?
- How do you cross the river?
- What are the stories and how do you become the storyteller?

In liaison with the local community children created welcome moments at each village for when the walkers passed through.

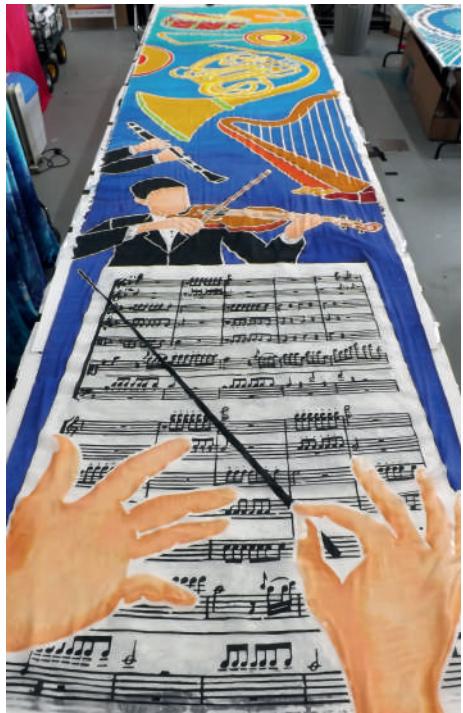
Ali Pretty Founder of Kinetika

I kicked off the process using these questions to generate drawings that reflected each community's perception of the river. I then spent 10 days based at The Crouch Yacht Club in Burnham and The Brandy Hole in Hullbridge to create eight four-metre high silk flags that we were to collect and carry on the walk.

Artists were grouped into pairs and each artist worked with a different school



Opposite: Royal Opera House, Thurrock ©ROH/John Snelling, 2012. Above: Children lead the way on a Thurrock 100 walk with Kinetika flags Photographed by Mike Johnston



One of Kinetika's 12 silk banners made for Deloitte Ignite 15 ©ROH 2015. Photographed by Mike Johnston and Mark Forrest

across the river from one another. We asked the children how we could communicate across the water and, in liaison with the local communities, they created welcome moments at each village as the walkers passed through.

Partners in Adventure

Highlights of the eight-day walk for me were:

- The launch event with Jo Melville and Chris Mathews at Bradwell, with the Rector Brigid sending us off with a blessing and the children tying a 60 metre ribbon around St. Peter's Chapel.
- Alan Hockett and Sue Willis delivering a shoebox of mud tiles created by Burnham Primary School to RSPB ranger Simon on Wallesea Island and seeing the Burnham artist Maryam relieved that we got the correct birds on the flag!
- The boat trip to Paglesham Creek with John and Bill on the Burnham Ferry, watching seals bask in the sunshine.
- The bells ringing at Canewdon Church as we walked through.
- Receiving the Crablines poetry box from Riverside school at Hullbridge while standing on the tunnel entrance.
- The Boat Day travelling up river seeing the landscape from another perspective.
- Chair of Rochford Council, Heather, carrying the flag onto the Burnham jetty to hand over to the Mayor making an unusual cross river connection.
- Seeing Ashingdon school kids on the jetty at South Fambridge from across the river and hearing the funny noise Stuart Bowditch made when he received a signal from Helen Morse-Palmer and the Cold Norton kids who jumped up with their semaphore flags at North Fambridge!
- Walking on water with Damian Robinson and 32 adventurous kids from Collingwood.
- Sending messages to space through the flags with Laura Trevail and Trevor and Pete of Essex Ham Radio.

- Walking with all eight artists and all our flags through South Woodham Ferrers and along the seawall on Saturday morning.
- Climbing onto the rubber dinghy, flags flying to make the final crossing.
- Getting everyone trying and join them up to make the map of the Crouch. And they did join up!
- Getting home and sleeping for a long time!

New Conversations, New Connections

Through this walk and related series of events a new conversation has started that is connecting two local district councils (Maldon and Rochford), the Essex County Coastal Officer and the Arts Council. The project engaged us all in thinking differently about the possibilities that work of this kind, loosely termed as outdoor arts, can have in reaching remote audiences. How it can encourage local people and children to ask questions about where they live and how it is

Bridge Programme Manager for Essex gives Rochford DC Arts Officer notice that Kinetika are moving to Essex

2014

Kinetika move from London to Thurrock

Kinetika works with 120 primary school children from Uttlesford, Braintree, Chelmsford and Epping on a Tour de France project partnering with Active Essex, Essex County Council, Essex Museums and Essex District Council

Kinetika invited to visit Rochford. The Lost Walks of Rochford idea is conceived in a tea shop in Rochford

Kinetika work with ROH Bridge, Artswork and Festival Bridge to deliver a SE outdoor Arts Symposium at High House Production Park that was attended by 70 delegates from over 45 organizations

2015

83 Arts Award Explore achieved from the Tour de France project

River Crouch Celebrations fundraising and partnership development

connected to a wider community. I'm very much looking forward to developing this conversation, growing the model and continuing the journey into other parts of Essex and the East of England.

Now, in Autumn 2015, we can start to see the legacy play out. Our boat day as part of the River Crouch walk brought together the two councils from either side of the river, and since then funds have been raised for a new Coastal Team for Crouch and Rochford are appointing a new culture and tourism officer. The River Crouch Coastal Community Team will be a new partnership, building upon the successful Dengie Gateway Project.

The main aim of the team is to encourage greater local partnership working in coastal areas. The team will bring together local stakeholders, especially those involved in the visitor and outdoor leisure sectors (including nature and sailing), to work together for the community, building visitor numbers to

the River Crouch and encouraging people to experience the fantastic outdoor attractions the area has to offer.

Meanwhile, here at our home base in Thurrock, we are busy developing the walking model for Thurrock100 to become an annual ten-day arts festival. In 2016 we aim to create 100 Stories of Thurrock working with Heritage groups and sites and engaging 20 schools in creative writing and illustration and working with dance and performance groups to create a site-specific dance finale.

Looking ahead to 2017 we wish to add an international dimension and we have secured a Re-Imagine India Research grant to explore taking the model to Kolkata, scoping out a 100 mile walk along the banks of the river Hooghly and initiating an exchange between Kolkata and Thurrock Schools.

www.kinetikaonline.co.uk

Related Programmes: Place-making

Dartford Creative

Dartford Council has been successful in securing Grants for the Arts funding to continue to develop and expand their community and outdoor arts programme, Dartford Creative. This is a continuation from the ROH Bridge investment in 2013 that supported their work as a Portas Pilot Town. Dartford plans to use cultural programming to invigorate town spaces and to develop a thriving professional arts community. Dartford Creative is managed by Icon Theatre in partnership with Dartford Council. We are now working with them to explore a learning strand to the programme.

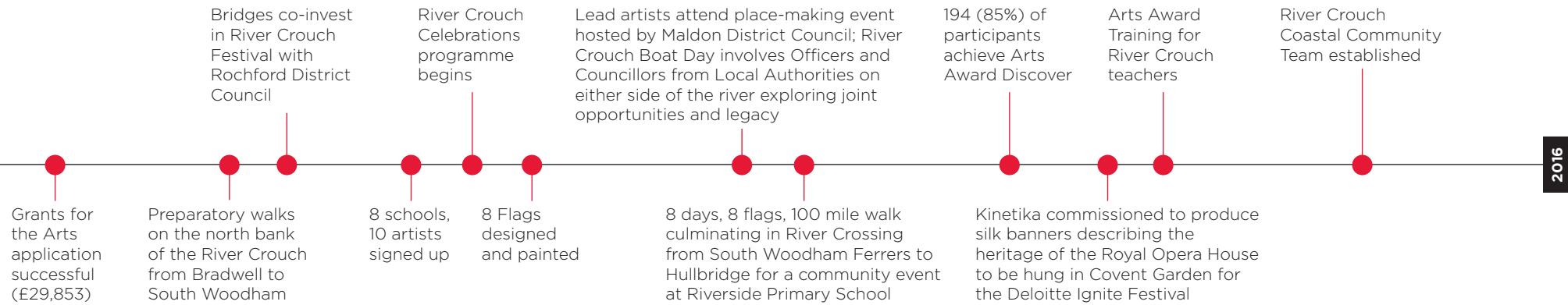
www.dartfordcreative.wordpress.com

Art Town project

Art Town was a place-based project in Houghton Regis, an area in Central Bedfordshire high on the indices of

multiple deprivation. Full House Theatre took up residence there for a year with partnership investment from ROH Bridge. The programme included an Arts Leaders group of older young people who worked on their own artistic projects and designed, delivered and lead projects for younger children as part of their Silver Arts Award. A high proportion of the activity took place in Houghton Regis Library and included children's theatre and events for younger children and families. Footfall at the library increased significantly during the programme.

Building on this success, Full House Theatre have now secured funding for another two years. The programme has also helped establish strong partnerships between Central Bedfordshire Library Service, Houghton Regis Town Council and the local Youth Provider's 4YP. www.padlet.com/ROH_Bridge/arttown



Early Career Teachers and Literacy Curriculum Development



Arts Award Discover In a Day
workshops held at Village Beach
Festival in Greys
Photographed by Gavin Bell

In 2014/15 Royal Opera House Bridge supported the Billericay Teaching School Alliance in Essex and Anglia Ruskin University in a project to help grow early careers teachers' confidence in working with the cultural sector. Here, Lyn Corderoy, Head teacher at Grange Primary School in Wickford, reflects on her role in the project and the learning she will carry forward.

My school and I are passionate about the use of creativity to inspire learning. As a Creative Learning lecturer at Billericay School Centered Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), I strongly believe that children learn best in a creative and inspiring curriculum. However, as an experienced head teacher I am also very mindful of the need for schools to fulfil the Government's standards agenda and pressures that develop around Ofsted. I firmly believe that most Primary Heads know in their hearts that creative learning through the arts is the best way forward, but it's hard to follow that through when SATs results and Ofsted are looming! To provide a way for schools to do both is a win-win situation!

So, I was delighted when I was asked to contribute to this project that aimed to bring these two challenges together.

An Effective, Focused Partnership

The project aimed to develop children's creative writing by enabling teachers in their classrooms to make use of music, drama and illustration activities to engage children in developing their writing.

Eighteen primary school teachers, in their second to fifth year of their career, from 13 schools in Essex, took part. The

teachers attended creative events facilitated by a range of local cultural providers. They also attended research design workshops led by Anglia Ruskin University. The teachers then planned and implemented their own in-school projects. Since it began, the programme has been presented at an International Arts in Society Conference and been awarded a national prize for curriculum development from the British Educational Research Association, the British Curriculum Forum and publishers Routledge Taylor-Francis.

There was much initial discussion with my project colleagues, Tony Ward from Billericay Teaching School Alliance and Dr Paulette Luff and Dr Geraldine Davis from Anglia Ruskin University, on the best route to take. We decided that a way to 'hook' schools onto the project and give it sustainability was to explore how schools could raise standards in writing with the support and inspiration of arts practitioners.

The schools and Head Teachers that showed an initial interest were really attracted by the chance of raising standards in writing - any Head's dream! Writing is an ongoing key focus for all schools, especially with the challenge of reluctant boys. The Heads were very

supportive of both the creative ideas and the fact that their school would be involved in research.

Combining Practical Projects with Research

Working alongside other professionals from different educational 'strands' has been both inspiring and extremely enlightening. To be able to develop creative learning opportunities alongside the research element has been an ideal combination.

The staff who took part brought a lot of energy and enthusiasm to the sessions with the House of Illustration, MakeBelieve Arts and other cultural providers. I think

'The collaboration was focused and effective from the start, with shared aims. All the contributors had their expertise, and this has produced a project that is stronger than any one organization could have produced individually.'

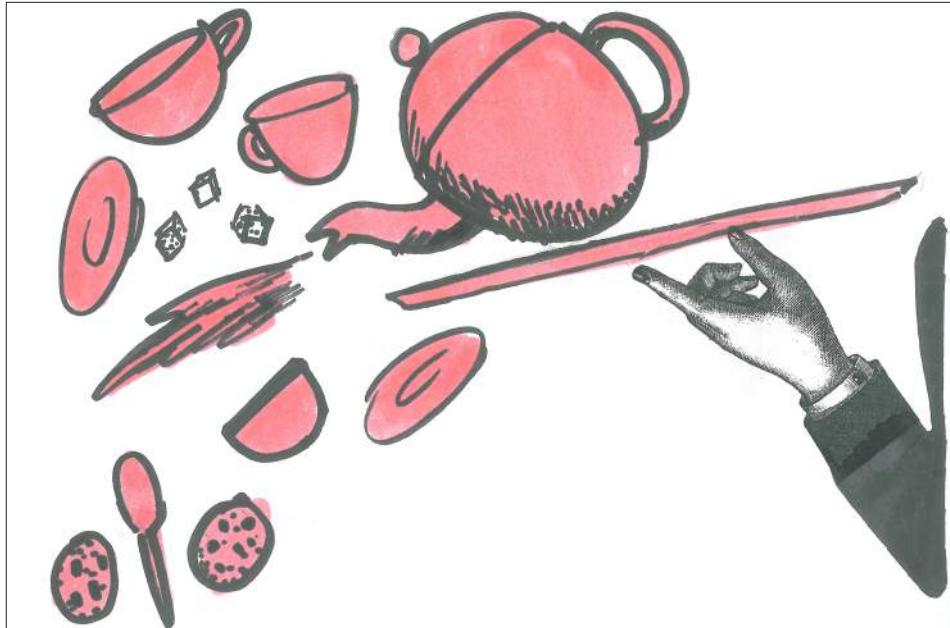
Dr. Geraldine Davis

Anglia Ruskin University

the teachers loved the opportunity to be creative themselves and were even more excited that they could then go and share all that excitement with their pupils - that they could confidently show their students



Early Careers Teachers from Billericay share their research with colleagues.



An example of an illustration made by a teacher on a Creative Writing through the Arts inspiration day

how the arts could help them improve their writing. As the project developed and evidence increased, the teachers' belief that creativity had a positive effect on their students writing confidence and standards grew and grew. Many teachers commented that they could no longer identify a 'reluctant writer' group in their classroom.

The energy and ability of the ECTs and their willingness to give to and productively take from the project has been very important, and appreciated. This was evident throughout. The displays [at the final event in June] provided evidence of the obvious connection between the teachers' engagement with cultural providers and the changes they had made to their class activities.

Continuing Professional Development

As well as having an impact on students, there were also very positive comments

on the effect working alongside artists was having on the teachers' confidence to use the arts. As the year developed the teachers began talking about how they were spreading the word in their schools, leading inset days and sharing their ideas with colleagues – all very positive steps on the leadership trail.

There were some challenges with time – fitting in meetings and correspondence around an already busy schedule. The tight budget also meant that the number of artist visits to schools was modest, and teachers were hungry for more contact. However, this did encourage more peer to peer support between teachers, which was very beneficial.

For me personally, to have the support of other professionals to push the importance and value of creativity; to be able to discuss and hear other professional viewpoints; to work collaboratively with a range of professionals and schools was a vital part of my own professional development.

2013

Postdoctoral research fellow from Exeter University conducts research on behalf of ROH Bridge into initial teacher education across our region in order to identify strong partners with whom we could work

2014

Initial discussions with key stakeholders from Anglia Ruskin University, Billericay Teaching School Alliance and SCITT

13 schools sign up to be part of the programme (18 teachers) and 3 cultural partners secured

Related Programmes: School Clusters

Unlocking Potential

I am convinced that this kind of project can be developed, improved and expanded. With the backing of the research that has been done by senior lecturers from the School of Education at Anglia Ruskin University, schools should jump at the many opportunities this model offers to improve their learning provision.

There is also the positive impact the model has on the confidence and self-esteem of the staff involved - a key component in staff retention at this time when young teachers are leaving the profession after only a very few years.

This model gives schools a chance to relook at providing a broad and balanced curriculum that will unlock the potential of teaching staff and equip pupils with lifelong interests, skills and talents - not just a set of test results.

www.billericayteachingschoolalliance.com
www.anglia.ac.uk

Curriculum of North Kent

Inspired by the success of other creative literacy programmes, Primary Literacy Co-ordinators in Medway have used Bridge investment to develop the Curriculum of North Kent (CONK). Working with the Guildhall Museum, arts organizations, LV21 and four more heritage sites, CONK explores creative approaches to literacy learning and increases opportunities to learn outside the classroom.
www.engagingwithmuseums.org/project-pages/curriculum-of-north-kent

Professional Study Group Programme

ROH Bridge provided partnership investment with Central Bedfordshire Teaching School Partnership for an arts specific Professional Study Group Programme. Through the programme, enthusiasm in arts as a vehicle for driving the curriculum has grown among the Central Bedfordshire schools. The

Professional Study Group Programme was complemented with additional Arts Award refresher sessions and Artsmark briefings for the whole partnership.
www.cbtsp.co.uk

Braintree Dance Initiative

A network of 16 schools are actively engaged in the Braintree Dance Initiative that ROH Bridge co-invested in for its first two years. All schools in the network have set up a dance club and participated in a sharing event, with over 2000 children and young people benefiting. A steering group, comprising two dance practitioners and four local teachers, is helping the network to become self-sustaining, and investment has been secured from participating schools to allow further professional development to be arranged for schools across the network.

Academic Year 2014/15: a year of action research with teachers exploring how music, drama and illustration can impact on children's creative writing

2015

Unsuccessful application to ACE research fund

Final sharing event and evaluation concluded by Anglia Ruskin University

Dissemination event of final report and first planning meeting for year two

All programme schools agree to embark on an Artsmark journey

Grange Primary School selected for new Artsmark Award pilot programme

Project receives a curriculum development award from Taylor Routledge

Programme receives £15,000 of Bridge funding to continue inspiration work while steering group engage in fundraising activities

Grange Primary School awarded Platinum Artsmark Award

2016

Young Cultural Leaders

Bridgefest Ambassadors at the
You Ask, We Answer event held
at the Royal Opera House
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Nick Strugnell



Building on previous research and experience, Royal Opera House Bridge asked The Audience Agency to co-produce new research on young peoples' views of arts and cultural opportunities in the region and explore how young people could become active cultural ambassadors. The agency's Head of Engagement Lucie Fitton reveals how, from an initial concept, the journey has developed (and continues to develop) in varied and exciting ways.

What arts and cultural activities do young people do? What would they like to do? What motivates them? What might stop them... and how do they hear about creative opportunities? These were some of the questions Royal Opera House Bridge were asking themselves when I met with them at the amazing High House Production Park in early 2014.

What particularly excited me about working with ROH Bridge was their ambition that young people's voices were reflected as much as possible. They genuinely wanted young people to be involved in the decision-making about what to ask, how to ask it and how to share the results – not just to be passive research participants.

Co-production

At The Audience Agency we have lots of experience of managing youth engagement and learning programmes with young people and cultural organizations, so it was great to bring this experience to the project. Many arts practitioners will be used to the concept of co-production or co-curation, but it brought a whole new set of challenges when it came to undertaking a co-produced piece of research. The Bridge

had some very clear research aims, but at the same time we needed young people to challenge and take ownership of these early on in the process.

To be successful, the project depended on me developing relationships with my fellow young researchers over the period of a year, but also enabling the relationship with ROH Bridge to blossom too.

The Bridge team were very much involved in the process and attended workshops and meetings with young people as much as possible, which really helped. Not only did the Programme Manager leading the project get involved but the communications and events staff were active contributors too.

Managing Expectations

The greatest challenge was how to answer some very big questions in what was essentially a small piece of qualitative research. We were very clear that this was not a large quantitative study and it was important to understand throughout that we could never expect to represent all young people in the region.

Another challenge was the geography – covering large and quite rural areas as well as major urban areas. However, it was a big success when I was able to recruit 30

young people from across the region for two packed training and consultation days.

Building Relationships

The success in initial recruitment was greatly helped by the significant amount of time – three months – we invested at the start of the project. This allowed me to build relationships with arts and youth organizations in the region who could help. Some of this developed through face-to-face meetings but there was also lots of phone chats and email conversations with staff and key contacts. These partners really got behind the

'Not only do I feel as if I am improving the availability of arts opportunities for me but also for lots of other people.'

Rachel Bridgefest Ambassador

concept. They really helped spread the word and also had lots to share about the research questions too.

Recruiting a large group was a key success factor. It meant we had a fairly representative sample (male and female, those both into arts and not) to shape the rest of the project.

Over the two days of training and consultation we developed the research aims into some specific questions. The plan was to consult with other young



A Saffron Walden Young Ambassador, working towards Gold Arts Award, leads music-making with younger pupils ©ROH 2015. Photographed by Nick Strugnell



A young leader sharing his views on what arts and culture mean to them at You Ask, We Answer
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Nick Strugnell

people at regional events that summer and so we also provided the team with training on interviewing technique and using social media tools to capture wider information about events. We also worked a lot on building confidence to go and ask other young people about arts and culture.

With the festivals being a focus, the group chose to name the project 'Bridgefest'. Perhaps this was the first time a series of consultation activities has been called a festival, but the name really worked as a way to communicate to stakeholders what we were doing.

Social Media

A core group of young people, who became Bridgefest Ambassadors, took part in delivering the consultation across events ranging from music festivals, youth parliament meetings and college open days. Using the hashtag '#bridgefest' we were able to easily capture all the social media content around each consultation

'This is definitely the first conference I've been to that ended with a freestyle rap summary.'

You Ask We Answer event delegate

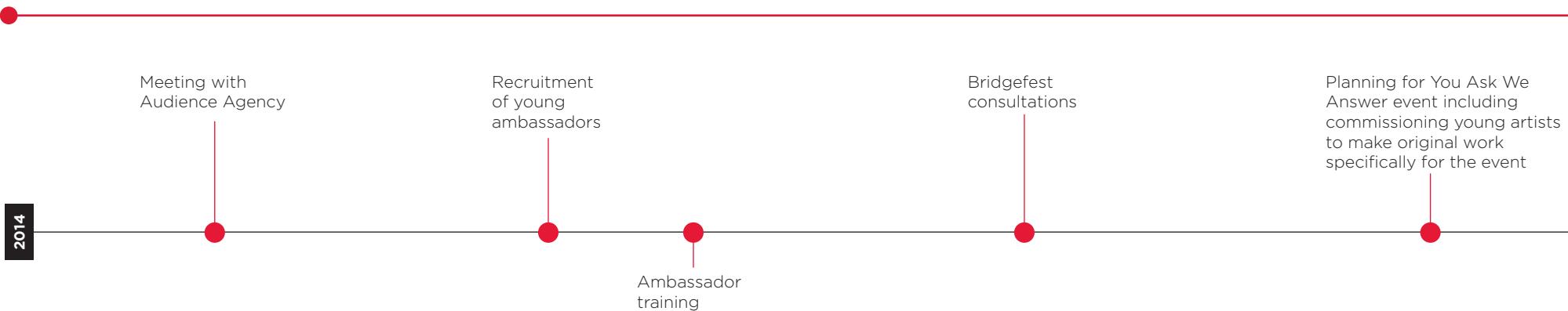
event and compile it using Storify. The stories we created proved to be a brilliant way of communicating Bridgefest to the ROH Bridge team, to other young people and to key stakeholders (storify.com/Bridgefest).

There were definite challenges when it came to data collection and analysis. This was a small project and it was already a major stretch to get to different places and types of events. Ambassadors could only attend events in their own area, which meant they didn't have the opportunity to build their broader consultation skills. Neither was there enough time or budget to engage the Ambassadors very meaningfully in the post analysis and reporting. If we had more resources and were doing this again, I would add in more workshop time to

ensure young people could contribute more to the analysis and dissemination.

The very co-produced nature of this research meant we may not always have been asking the questions in the best way. However, I would say that the layered approach of intensive consultation at the start of the project, followed by the Ambassador-led consultation and the more in-depth and informal conversations I had with Ambassadors at all the Bridgefest events, as well as conversations with regional youth and arts practitioners and ROH Bridge staff, gave a good body of data and a range of perspectives.

The final report contained some useful, specific and practical recommendations – it was published on the Royal Opera House website which meant the young people could very clearly see that their contributions were valued alongside other publications and research. However, perhaps the most exciting and successful part of this project was yet to come.



Related Programmes

Creative Interpretations and Debate

The young people felt that they could add to the report even more by helping explain the findings and process to other organizations in person. So with some additional support from the Bridge we developed the idea into 'You Ask, We Answer'. Working with the Bridgefest ambassadors we planned an event at the Royal Opera House to share the findings of the research and to create a space for young people and arts organizations to meet in person to discuss them. The event included provocative speeches by established young artists, specially commissioned creative interpretations of the research by emerging artists, lots of debates and discussions and musical performances to capture and share all the ideas. Over 70 adults and young people were brought together in the Royal Opera House on the day (storify.com/ROHBridge/you-ask-we-answer).

For me, You Ask We Answer was

successful because rather than a full stop to the project it was an additional research approach that enabled us to debate and build on the initial report in a creative and exciting way. Since the initial programme, Royal Opera House Bridge have continued the research through partner organizations and have developed a simple guide for those wishing to develop their own young cultural leaders' activities.

Another real legacy of the project was a group of young adults who are strong advocates for arts and culture across the region. One of the Bridge Ambassadors was featured in a regional newspaper and others have written blogs for the Royal Opera House site. One of the young artists commissioned for 'You Ask We Answer', Esther Burns, was featured at the Ahead for Culture Conference where she discussed her work with journalist and broadcaster, Kirsty Wark - which in turn led to a number of mentoring opportunities with galleries and agencies in the region.

For me, the project had two key impacts. It has really encouraged me to consider how long-term projects like this need to factor in more time to support relationship building between participants and the commissioning organization once our time as a consultant has ended. It has also enabled me to see how creative events and artist interpretation can add a lot of value to traditional research approaches.

Finally, this project has added to the wide body of research, evaluation and consultation we do with young people at The Audience Agency, so it means, as an organization, we have more knowledge and ideas to share with others we work with through our training, consultancy and research work.

The full consultation report by the Audience Agency is now available to download from the Royal Opera House website.

www.roh.org.uk/learning/royal-opera-house-bridge/report-and-documents

New Young Cultural Leader Programmes

Over the past three years we have co-invested in 12 new young cultural leaders programmes with a range of education and cultural partners. This has supported more than 250 young people to gain leadership skills in the creative and cultural sector. Arts Award achievements feature throughout these programmes, with the Gibberd Gallery Young Curators achieving Arts Award Silver, 20 Music Ambassadors at Saffron Walden County High School achieving Gold Awards and 60 Advisers trained as part of INSPIRE.

Our collective learning from this work will be shared through a new guide to be published in Winter 2015.

www.roh.org.uk/bridge

Bridge partners working with young cultural leaders attend a knowledge share day at Royal Opera House

You Ask We Answer event and the Bridgefest report published

2015

Ahead for Culture ROH Bridge conference where one young artist showcases her original film that premiered at You Ask We Answer

Young Cultural Leaders Guide published

2016

The Cultural Education Challenge

A photograph of a choir of diverse children singing on stage. In the center, a young girl with glasses and a pink bow in her hair is gesturing with her hands while singing. She is wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored dress. Other children are visible in the background, some with microphones around their necks.

Children performing at the
FUSED Festival as part
of Thurrock Trailblazer
©ROH 2015. Photographed
by Brian Slater

How do you approach delivering cultural entitlement across an entire region? Royal Opera House Bridge took up the challenge, with co-investment from the local education authority, participating schools and the Royal Opera House Learning and Participation team in Thurrock. The result was Trailblazer – a programme of creative activities across 21 schools that has sparked a cultural education movement that is now set to flourish.

In 2013, Thurrock Council commissioned Royal Opera House Bridge to produce a feasibility report on the concept of cultural entitlement for children and young people in Thurrock. In 2014, this report resulted in the development of the Thurrock Trailblazer initiative.

Royal Opera House Learning and Participation were asked to design and deliver a programme of arts and cultural learning activities that would help,

- Raise attainment and aspiration for young people growing up in Thurrock.
- Enable Thurrock schools to attract and retain teachers.
- Make arts and culture accessible to all young people growing up in Thurrock.

In its pilot year, Trailblazer worked with 21 schools on a co-created programme of cultural visits, learning activities, professional development and strategy development. The 33 CPD sessions, seven school visits to the Tower of London, six singing workshops, two whole class insets, four artist-making projects, a dance project, five photography projects, a drumming project, seven professional theatre visits and hours of classroom activity, sparked a cultural

education movement in Thurrock schools that is set to flourish in 2016. As Gabrielle Forster-Still, ROH Deputy Head of Learning and Participation in Thurrock, explains, this challenging collaborative initiative proved to be an especially rewarding learning journey for everyone.

A New Approach

For us the challenge meant designing something that could work in the long term but also something that would test new approaches. The Trailblazer model centres around Cultural Ambassadors – teachers from each school who attend creative inspiration days, work with cultural providers and incorporate activities back into their own school with our support. This model relies on real buy-in from school leaders in terms of staff time and trust, a willingness to experiment and share learning from the teachers and, from us, highly responsive support and management.

As a Learning and Participation team, we know how to deliver exciting, diverse and high quality arts projects. With Trailblazer, we were given a different role, where we had to be the catalyst, we had to make things happen but not necessarily be the ones to do it. While it wasn't a

million miles away from what we do and know, it did require a shift in terms of our thinking, our approach. We needed to facilitate, to signpost, to bring lots of different cultural providers together and to connect schools with artists and organizations.

As we developed our confidence in this role it was incredibly helpful to be working closely with the Bridge team. They supported us in some of our thinking, helped us reflect, evaluate and look at the bigger picture. It was not always easy to reconcile these two different approaches to cultural learning

'Thurrock Trailblazer really made the senior leadership of the school see the value of the arts in both raising attainment and recruiting excellent teachers. It is now embedded within our school development plan.'

Thurrock Primary Teacher

– to facilitate and to deliver – but I think we have struck a good balance.

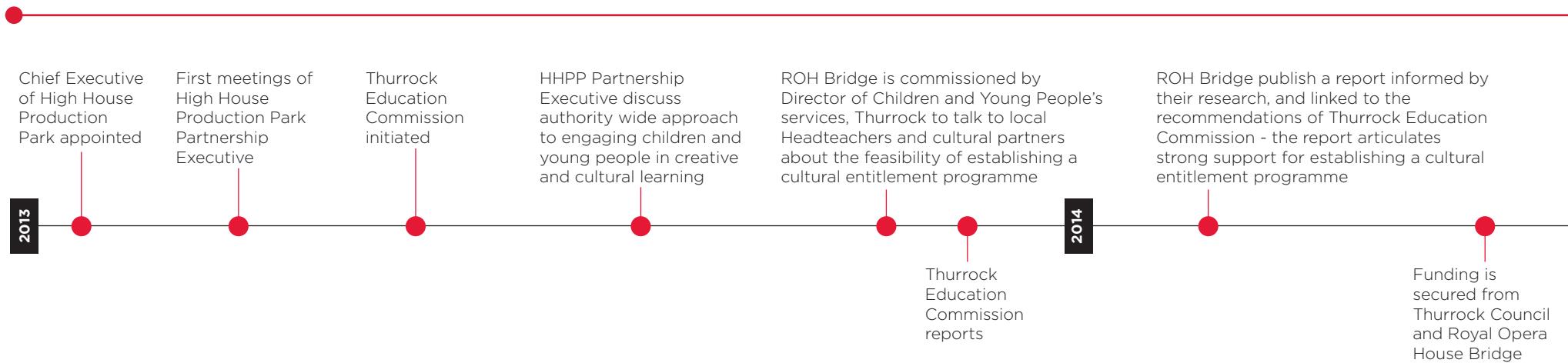
Royal Opera House has been delivering learning programmes in Thurrock since 2007 and schools were used to us delivering a very fixed, top down programme. In this



Pupils in Thurrock discovering dance with the Thurrock Trailblazer programme
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Brian Slater



Children taking part in creative learning as part of Thurrock Trailblazer
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Brian Slater



new model some felt less secure and were waiting for the moment we would reveal the big programme – to tell them the secret of what Trailblazer was all about.

We held our nerve: we persisted with the things we knew would come to fruition later in the year and we kept talking with the teachers about the importance of their active participation in shaping the programme. They trusted us and they saw enough evidence from what was happening to stay engaged. Soon even the most apprehensive became more confident co-creators.

Building Confidence

Another challenge was the FUSED festival that we planned as an end-of-year celebration event. We were quite surprised at how much this seemed to derail some of the schools by making them think that they had to produce an amazing show or production of some kind for the festival. This was never the intention: it was

intended to be a peer-learning experience for children and young people from different schools, but because of their past experience of the Royal Opera House, there was a tangible sense of expectation and therefore pressure.

To address this we provided an artist-led workshop in which teachers could explore ideas and re-imagine their existing strengths and assets. This proved to be a great success, with many gaining confidence and brimming with ideas. The resulting FUSED festival became an amazing, generous exchange of children and young people's work and experience.

The Learning Journey

Learning was built into the programme from the beginning. Rather than gathering evidence at the end of project the evaluation ran in conjunction with the project throughout. The evaluators from WiT worked alongside us, met with teachers and stakeholder regularly and

constantly fed their findings into our process. Using this 'learning history' approach made it possible for us to respond quickly to concerns, to identify things that didn't work and make adjustments and changes during the year, not just to note them down at the end.

Through the evaluation we learnt that while many schools took to the Trailblazer model easily and just ran with it, some found it difficult to integrate it into their existing culture. To address this we introduced creative consultants who were able to provide more tailored advice for schools to integrate the creative activities across the curriculum.

There was a very real sense of change through the programme: teachers who felt unsure about cultural learning grew in confidence and ability, teachers who already had confidence developed new connections with cultural providers, head teachers saw the impact arts and culture can have on school culture and attainment and young

'I felt it's been what we needed to refocus back on the arts in the curriculum... previously in our school the focus had been purely on the academic.'

Thurrock Trailblazer Teacher

people had a raft of new arts participation, making and learning opportunities.

A New Movement

However, much of the big change is about how we go into the second year of the project. We have recruited more schools, there is a much more workable timeline, an online platform to connect and share work and the new Artsmark programme to really extend the whole school impact.

Through the Trailblazer Pathfinder programme I think we have grown as a real community – Royal Opera House, Thurrock Council, schools, students and cultural providers. The journey we have

been on together this year has created a ground swell of ambition and enthusiasm that all the schools in Thurrock are now getting caught up in. It's something that will raise the opportunities for everyone for a long time to come.

www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/thurrock-trailblazer

Related Programmes: Local Cultural Education Partnerships

A key strategic aim for ROH Bridge over the next three years is the establishment of Local Cultural Education Partnerships, beginning in 2015/16 with five new LCEPs in Bedford, Luton, Thurrock, Colchester and Medway. Local Cultural Education Partnerships are an opportunity for key stakeholders in cultural learning across sectors to come together and develop strategic programmes targeted at areas of most need. As a Bridge organization, our role will be to help broker those relationships, create a space for cross-sector dialogues, challenge all partners to raise ambition and the quality of cultural learning and to support this through workforce development, research and co-investment as needed. Contact us to discuss how you can help develop partnerships in your area or register for our newsletter at www.roh.org.uk/bridge

21 schools and 26 cultural champions are recruited for the Thurrock Trailblazer Pathfinder programme

Thurrock Trailblazer Pathfinder programme begins

WiT Learning History interim report

Investment secured for Thurrock Trailblazer 2015/16

Recruitment for Thurrock Trailblazer 2015/16 begins

Pathfinder programme ends

Fused festival

Thurrock Trailblazer 2015/16 begins

WiT Learning History published

The formula for school subscription levels is established

Wit are appointed as external evaluators and begin work on the Learning History of the Pathfinder programme

2015

28 schools and cultural champions and 20 cultural organizations commit to Thurrock Trailblazer 2015/16

2016

Music Hubs: Working Together for SEND Opportunities



Pupils participating in an Aiming Higher performance day at the UK Centre for Carnival Arts with Orchestras Live Photographed Colin Fraser

Working together and connecting up can help organizations share learning openly and effectively. When 11 organizations are all charged with the same vision and the same goals, there's a unique opportunity to share practice and also to make real change happen. Steph Hogger of Festival Bridge shares how Bridge organizations and Music Education Hubs joined forces to commission research into music-making and SEND.

Music is an artform that impacts on everyone's lives in some way. The National Plan for Music Education was published in November 2011 creating a vision where every child aged 5-18 has the opportunity to sing, learn an instrument and perform as part of an ensemble or choir. This is a world where young people's talent is nurtured with clear opportunities for listening and performing. Music Education Hubs were established to take this vision forward - 11 of these are in the East Region.

With 11 organizations charged with similar goals, there seemed to be great opportunity to collaborate on something that everyone shared an interest in. Royal Opera House Bridge and Festival Bridge joined forces to encourage our Music Hub colleagues to invest time, effort and money on a piece of research that would benefit the future planning and practice for all. By pooling resources we knew that we could commission a much wider and deeper piece of research than if we were to work alone. We weren't expecting the call to arms which resulted from our working together.

Finding the right questions

It was challenging to find a theme which all Hubs and Bridges wanted to explore.

Our starting point was around the drop in school music making at KS3. On behalf of the Hubs, the Bridges wrote a brief together around the following question:

What are the local reasons for the reduction in young people's engagement in secondary school music provision? What would an appropriate infrastructure look like that would help strengthen and sustain MEHs engagement with secondary schools over the long-term?

Bedford and Suffolk Music Hubs took part in shortlisting and interviewing, but during the process we realized that Hubs already knew a lot about why young people engage less at secondary school and that they were already responding to this. It wasn't clear how further investigation would add value. Without the active engagement of Hubs in writing the brief, the Bridge Organizations hadn't been able to form the right question.

We regrouped, thought again and Hubs agreed to take a more active role in this second attempt.

The National Plan and the resulting goals for Music Education Hubs aim for access to music for all. However, music making in SEND settings was something Hubs felt had been overlooked. Hubs had the assumption that SEND settings were

delivering music well, with considerable passion, and could see the way music contributed to the primary needs of the young people they work with. Despite knowing very little about music practice in SEND settings, they felt there could be learning from SEND delivery which could strengthen delivery in mainstream schools. They accepted that they had very little evidence to support these assumptions and so a new brief was written for an organization to undertake some action research to explore the following questions:

- Where are young people's primary needs being met through music in SEND

By pooling resources we knew that we could commission a much wider and deeper piece of research than if we were to work alone.

or complex needs schools?

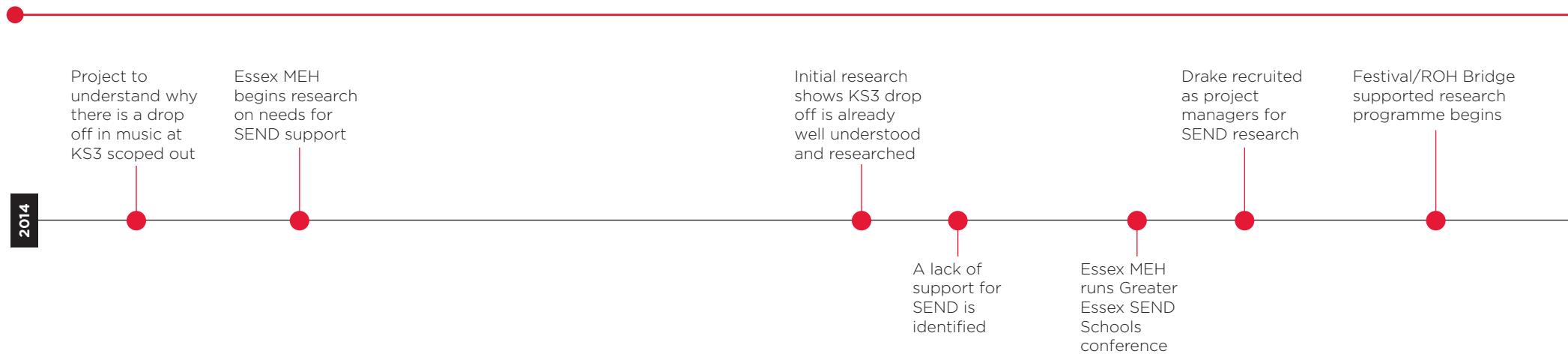
- What does good practice look like and how is it measured and described?
- How does the skillful use of assistive music technologies provide and support access to progressive participatory music activities for pupils with SEND?
- What impact should this learning have on the future delivery of the Music Hubs four core roles?



Making and performing music with Drake Music. Photographed by Gary Day



Exploring SEND provision and opportunities with Drake Music at the Ahead for Culture conference.
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Sim Canetty-Clarke



This time Hubs took a much more active role with Luton Music Hub and Norfolk Music Hub stepping up to the plate to help develop the brief and be part of the interview panel. Drake Music, experts in SEND music making and assistive music technologies were contracted to do the work.

Pooling Resources for Greater Impact

The successful brief was written when all organizations worked together to agree the right question. Hubs and Bridges developed a steering group to ensure that Hubs' interests were fully represented at all stages of setting up the project. The steering group remained throughout the work to support Drake Music to deliver the contract effectively.

The Bridge Organizations provided administrative support for the project and managed the contract with Drake Music.

Although Hubs had an active role to play in helping Drake Music contact SEND

By working together with shared messages and leading by example as a whole region, we could be agents for change.

settings, they also had regular updates which kept them fully abreast of the progress and the learning coming from the research as a whole.

Strategic leadership has been key to the success of this research. Music Hubs attended a Sharing Day which informed the research. They have involved key staff members, teachers and executive board members to build local expertise. Having learned from the first brief, they engaged in initial phone conversations with Drake Music so that their expectations of the programme were made clear at the outset.

All Hubs contributed to the project financially alongside the two Bridges. By pooling eleven small investments, they were able to design a robust action research programme and commission an expert organization who added extra

value to the project because of their experience.

A Clear Strategic Voice

The outcomes of the research will support Music Hubs to develop inclusive business plans for the future that really do offer access to music-making for all children and young people. This will include having identified experts in SEND within individual Hubs who will have a role for communicating a clear offer for special schools.

Having collaborated on this research, there are also outcomes which will rely on Hubs and Bridges continuing to work together to develop skills and capacity to support excellent SEND music education and share practice across the region.

Working together also resulted in a real call to arms. SEND music education doesn't feature effectively in the National Music Education Plan and SEND settings know very little about the support they could

offer. The research recommends that if Hubs and Bridges continue to work together this could be changed. The collaboration between Hubs and Bridges means a very clear strategic voice could come from the East region about the position of SEND music education in national policy. By working together with shared messages and leading by example as a whole region, we could be agents for change.

www.nnfestival.org.uk/festival-bridge
www.drakemusic.org

Related Programmes: Multi-Agency Partnerships

The collaborative approach taken by Music Education Hubs to address an identified need can be compared to other joint initiatives that have been established both regionally and nationally.

For Library Services in the East, the collective challenge was to engage 11-18 year olds with libraries over the summer holidays, while the national Bridge network has been brokering new opportunities for 1,600 young people to gain work experiences in the cultural sector by July 2016.

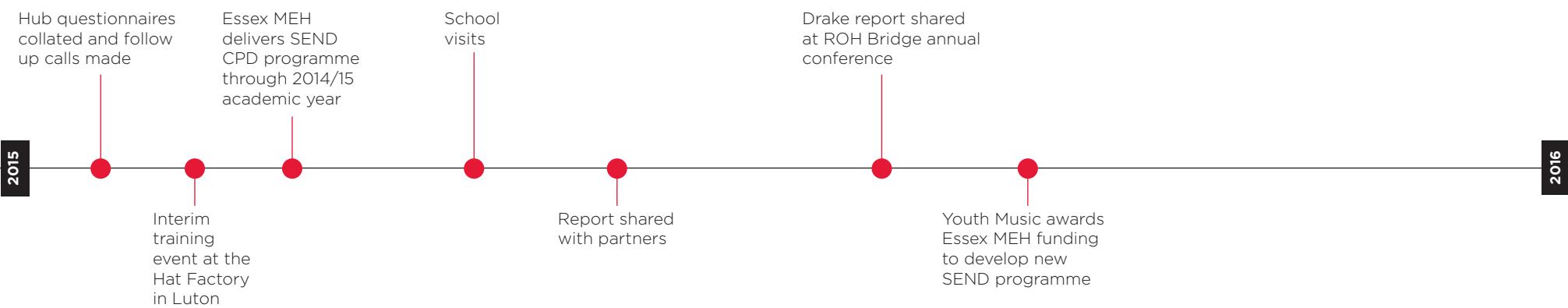
ImagiNation

In summer 2014, 10 library authorities across the East of England delivered ImagiNation, a reading and arts programme for 11-18 year olds, funded by Arts Council England and supported by Bridges. This joint initiative across the library services in the East was

co-produced with young people for young people. ImagiNation continues to be central to libraries engagement with young people in the summer holidays with activity across summer 2015.
www.imaginationeast.org.uk

Creative Employment Programme

In 2013, the national Bridge network took responsibility for the delivery of a key component of the Creative and Cultural Skills' Creative Employment Programme. Working in partnership with Further Education Colleges and cultural partners across England, Bridges continue to support young people to achieve accreditation in key skills and Arts Award while gaining work experience in the creative and cultural industries.
www.ccskills.org.uk/cep



Ahead for Culture: Championing Cultural Learning in Changing Times

The third annual ROH Bridge conference was held in the Linbury Studio Theatre at the Royal Opera House in June 2015. More than 200 leaders in cultural learning from schools, councils, arts and cultural organizations attended the event.





'The Royal Opera House was thrilled to bring together so many prominent leaders in arts and cultural learning and to inspire a whole new generation of leaders.'

Alex Beard CBE Chief Executive



Ahead for Culture images:
©ROH 2015. Photographed by Sim Cannety-Clarke



'It felt very open
and dynamic –
lots of buzz and
conversation.'

Delegate feedback





'Fantastically informative
and beautifully curated.'

Delegate feedback



'The conference made
me reflect on my own
experiences and realise the
impact this has had
on me. I want to create
an impact on others.'

Delegate feedback

Let's Talk

Connect

Keep the conversation going and stay in touch with the ROH Bridge Community online or at our other events.

Twitter: [@ROHBridge](#)

Get email updates:

www.roh.org.uk/bridge

Share

Tell us your story, celebrate your success and share your learning. Be inspired with the ROH Bridge Spotlight:

www.roh.org.uk/bridge/spotlight

Send your story to:

cliff.manning@roh.org.uk

Build

ROH Bridge Programme Managers are available to help you develop your ideas, nurture networks and provide support.

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