

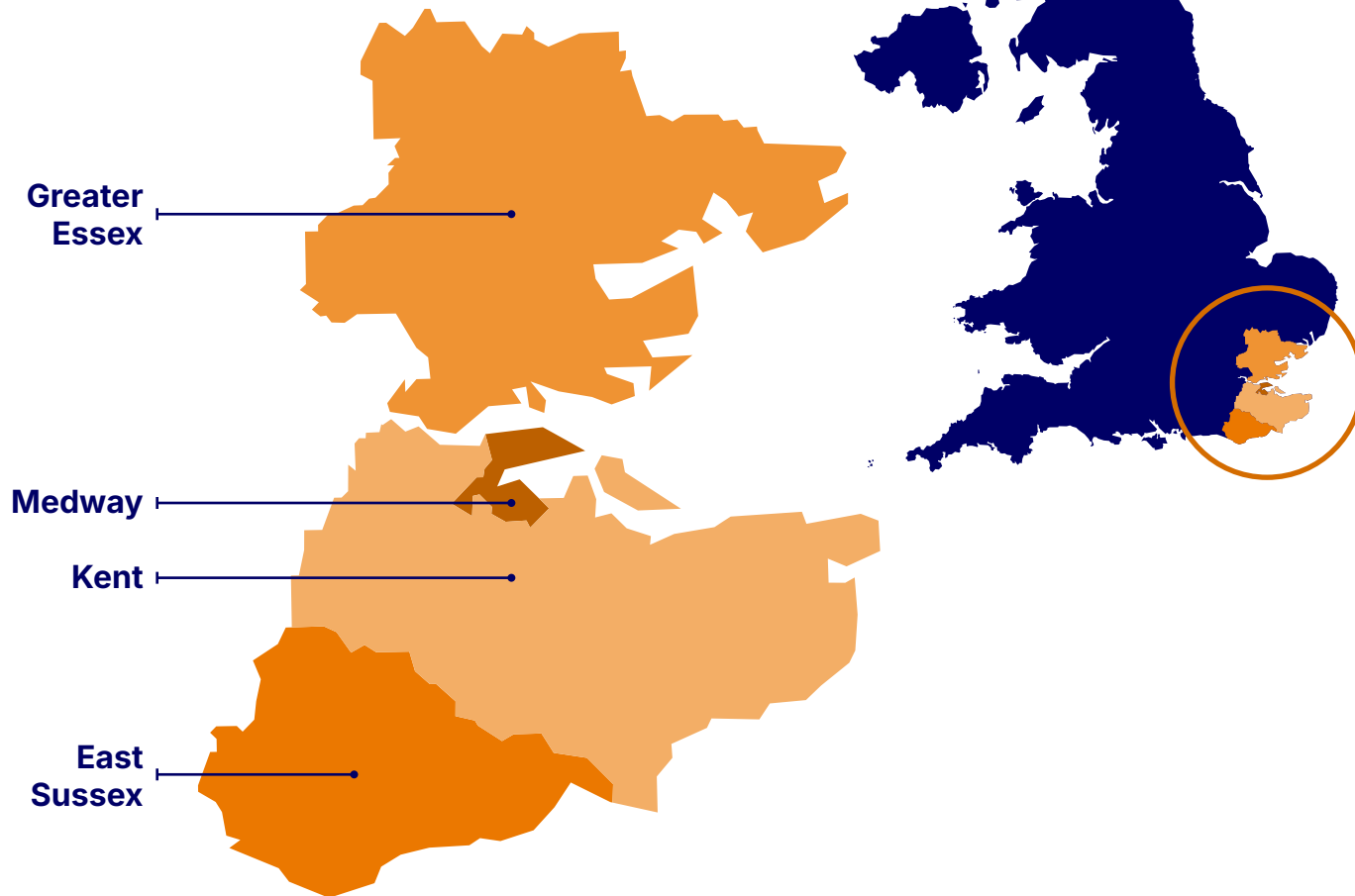


# 10 Years Catalysing Growth 2015 to 2025

**The South East Creative  
Economy Network**

# The South East Creative Economy Network: (SECEN)

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## At a glance: sphere of influence

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SECEN is the Voice, Champion and Connector for the Creative Industries of:

- Greater Essex
- Medway
- Kent
- East Sussex

Attracting investment to boost growth and place-based sector development.

SECEN is a working partnership between local authorities, creative businesses and education bodies. Anyone working within the sector in the region is welcome to join.

## The numbers at a glance

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**10 years**  
of partnership working

**£10m+**  
sector investment secured

**4000**  
new jobs created

**4.5%**  
annual growth rate in  
creative sector employment

## Unlocking Investment to Boost Capacity and Access to Finance

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SECEN activities have supported the creation of over **4,000 new jobs** in the Creative Industries and tourism sectors. This is likely to be an under-representation given the high numbers of self-employed working across the region's Creative Industries.

The Thames Estuary Production Corridor, which was kickstarted by SECEN and the Greater London Authority, has directly contributed to **job creation in the creative sector of the South East (2,000)**, with additional indirect employment generated in the wider tourism, retail, and hospitality sectors.

SECEN has unlocked over £10m investment with a focus on jobs and place-based Creative Industries development. For example:

- **£1.15 million raised by SECEN for the Creative Estuary Programme:** an £8.8 million initiative and the first significant project in Kent and Essex to contribute to delivery of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor's 30-year vision.
- **£1.275 million for the South East Create Growth Programme,** working with Creative

UK's **additional £7 million in grant** funding to boost access to finance for the region's Creative Industries.

- **£1.1 million in funding for the Coastal Catalyst (£900,000) and Talent Accelerator Programme (£200,000),** aimed at helping young people convert their creativity into practical skills and careers.
- **£1.179 million** was secured for England's Creative Coast. This has helped position the South East as a leading cultural destination with distinctive cultural itineraries that showcase the region's distinctive micro-clusters of Creative Industries activity.
- **£5 million in European Funding:** Through initiatives like South East Creative, Cultural and Digital Support Programme (SECCADS), SECEN has secured European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) support to stimulate the growth of creative businesses.

This is investment which would not have landed in the South East without the coordinating, advocacy and development work of SECEN and its partners.

# The South East Creative Economy Network: 10 Years and Counting

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## Driving Creative Industries Growth

The Creative Industries in the South East contribute approximately £4.6 billion to the region's economy and employ over 60,000 people<sup>1</sup>.

Larger than the Creative Industries of Wales and similar in size to Scotland, the South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN) areas of Greater Essex, Kent and Medway and East Sussex are major contributors to the national creative economy, which generates 124.6bn per year.

In real terms, the economic value of the UK Creative Industries was 12% bigger in 2022 than before the COVID pandemic and more than 50% larger than its size in 2010<sup>2</sup>.

This evidence of high and sustained growth indicates that the Creative Industries of the South East are very likely to have grown significantly since the last baseline study in 2016.

SECEN brings together the strengths of the private and public sectors to work collaboratively. It has played a vital role

in attracting investment across a portfolio of projects and programmes which have collectively driven growth and boosted high value employment in the South East Economy:

- **A 4.5% annual growth rate in creative sector employment in the region since 2015**, underpinned by SECEN's work to nurture place-based creative clusters, facilitate enterprise and skills development and drive inward investment in the regional creative ecosystem.
- **A prospectus of place-based creative clusters, enterprise, skills and workspace projects** which are catalysing growth in smaller towns and rural areas, from the South Downs to the Essex marshes.

This includes attracting investment which enhances the enabling conditions for freelancers and micro-enterprises to do business and thrive.

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<sup>1</sup> SECEN Shared Intelligence Report, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> [www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/facts-figures/creative-industries-add-ps124bn-of-value-to-uk](http://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/facts-figures/creative-industries-add-ps124bn-of-value-to-uk)

# World-class Creative Industries

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“From film and fashion to music and advertising, our Creative Industries are truly world-class and play a critical role in helping us deliver on this Government's mission to drive economic growth in all parts of the UK... the Creative Industries are at the heart of the forthcoming Industrial Strategy and will continue to play a key part in this Government's Plan for Change.”

Lisa Nandy,  
Culture Secretary



Studio Go Go,  
Create South East



Alphabetti Spaghetti by Alex Chinneck,  
Create South East

## Catalysing Skills Development and Enterprise

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By supporting young people entering the Creative Industries, SECEN has worked to ensure the long-term sustainability for the sector. Through programmes such as Talent Accelerator, SECEN has initiated specialised skills training, such as in the fields of digital media, performing arts, and music production. The Talent Accelerator programme led to a **15% increase in youth engagement** in the Creative Industries, with a focus on increasing diversity and representation in Creative Industries.

SECEN has also directly unlocked investment to **support over 400 creative businesses**, including grants, training, business advice, networking and showcasing opportunities for creative firms based across the South East. This has enhanced business competence and confidence, catalysed Business to Business (B2B) and Business to Consumer (B2C) activities and helped nurture place-based clusters of Creative Industries activity.

## Generating New Cultural Tourism Opportunities

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SECEN has helped generate fresh new creative narrative for a distinctive fabric of places. This has contributed to a new era of place-based cultural tourism, ignited by the cultural renaissance of the region's high streets and seaside towns.

**England's Creative Coast**, a SECEN-led initiative, achieved a £1.9m in economic impact in the South East during its delivery, directly contributing to the tourism sector's economic value.

# Fostering Sustainable Development

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Investment raised by SECEN has helped ensure culture and the Creative Industries are foundational to the region's long-term sustainable development.

This includes a focus on accessible and inclusive pathways to creative employment, affordable and fit for purpose creative workspace, and activities which embrace the region's diverse talent base.

SECEN has worked to ensure that its portfolio of projects continue to drive long-term economic and cultural benefits for the South East.

This includes support for sustainable practices in the Creative Industries, encouraging the development of eco-friendly creative spaces and low-carbon production methods.



Harold Road Site Visit

# Sector Leadership and Coordination

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SECEN has connected place-based Creative Industries development across the South East.

This is a complex and polycentric region, close to London and made up of many coastal and inland towns and rural areas

Together, these micro-clusters generate a critical mass of Creative Industries activity for the South East. SECEN has secured

partnership which has generated knowledge exchange, built capacity and supported a fabric of sector development opportunities which would not have been possible by working individually.



Hello by Katrina Palmer, England's Creative Coast



Invertebrate by Holly Hendry, England's Creative Coast



Sea Power at Quarterhouse



Talent Accelerator

# Built on Shared Intelligence

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SECEN has fostered a collective approach to research, evidence capture and evaluation, ensuring partners across the region can access data and intelligence to inform investment decisions and unlock funding. SECEN's approach ensures that projects and initiatives are responsive to real-time data, driving meaningful outcomes.

This shared intelligence model has enabled SECEN to present evidence-backed arguments for increased investment in the creative economy. Through continuous data collection and analysis, SECEN ensures that its initiatives are continually refined to maximise impact.

# Joining the Dots

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With ongoing changes in local government structures, such as Regional Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of **Mayoral Strategic Authorities**, SECEN can play a key role in ensuring that Creative Industries remain a priority in regional policy and governance. SECEN's partnership delivery of Create South East along with West

Sussex and Brighton & Hove further cements its role in driving the creative economy forward. As the Government continues to prioritise the Creative Industries as one of its 8 priority sectors in its Strategy for a Modern Economy, SECEN is well-positioned to attract new investments to fuel further growth in Creative Industries across the South East.

# The Context for Growth

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SECEN, established in 2015<sup>3</sup>, serves as the **voice, champion and connector** for the Creative Industries in England's South East. SECEN has been integral in driving cultural and economic development across the region, by fostering partnerships, securing funding, and facilitating the growth of Creative Industries.

Operating as an open and inclusive network, SECEN welcomes partners passionate about advancing the creative economy in the South East. SECEN benefits from a collaborative leadership model with co-chairs representing each of the three areas: Greater Essex, Kent and Medway, and East Sussex. These co-chairs work together with local authority culture officers and sector leaders to ensure balanced, effective representation and shared purpose.

In 2020, SECEN launched its Statement of Intent, directly influencing the emerging Local Industrial Strategy and ensuring that the Creative Industries remain a critical part of the region's future economic development. The SECEN Statement of Intent outlines the

objectives for fostering growth and resilience within the creative economy of the South East. It emphasises promoting inclusive, sustainable Creative Industries, focusing on community engagement, climate action, and environmental sustainability.

The Statement highlights the need for developing creative clusters, increasing workspace availability, and enhancing cultural tourism. Additionally, SECEN works to drive innovation, support creative businesses, and improve access to skills development, with a focus on leveraging the region's unique geographical and cultural assets to foster long-term growth.

The Statement aligns well with Government's commitment to the Creative Industries as a priority sector delivering economic growth (see the sidebar).

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<sup>3</sup> To originally align with the geographic and strategic priorities of the former South East Local Enterprise Partnership area

# A Mission for Growth

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*“Our number one mission is to grow the economy, and our creative industries are a British success story with a big part to play.”*

**Rachel Reeves,  
Chancellor of the Exchequer**



The Government's Industrial Strategy will channel support to 8 growth-driving sectors, including the Creative Industries<sup>4</sup>. This policy commitment is informed by the priorities of the UK Creative Industries Task Force, which calls for a sustained focus on:

- **Jobs of the Future:** developing a skilled workforce in high growth creative sectors where skills gaps are holding back sector growth and competitiveness.
- **R&D and Innovation:** boosting our innovation capacity through interdisciplinary and collaborative development which centres on creativity, intellectual property and the cross-over impact of the Creative Industries for the wider economy.
- **Access to finance:** boosting the investment readiness of the Creative Industries and enhancing the pipeline of funding to secure sector growth.

SECEN focuses on each of these areas as a combined strategic priority.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/news/60-million-boost-for-creative-industries-to-turbocharge-growth](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/60-million-boost-for-creative-industries-to-turbocharge-growth)



De La Warr Pavilion,  
Bexhill After Dark

# Building Lasting Partnerships

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## SECEN is an ecosystem builder.

SECEN's strength lies in its ability to build cross-sector partnerships that amplify the reach and impact of its initiatives. By collaborating with local authorities, cultural institutions, businesses, and educational bodies, SECEN has created a robust support structure for the Creative Industries. This can continue to develop through the devolution process.

## Key Partnerships and Contributions

- **Local Authorities:** SECEN works closely with Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Medway and Greater Essex to ensure alignment between local governance and creative sector development. These partnerships have played a crucial role in delivering region-specific initiatives like the Creative High Streets and Create South East projects.
- **Cultural Institutions:** SECEN partners with cultural organisations to offer shared

resources, expertise, and funding. These partnerships ensure the delivery of high-quality, community-focused cultural programmes. Creative Industries growth is underpinned by a dynamic and diverse ecosystem of freelancers, micro-enterprises and cultural organisations. This SECEN connects a prospectus of brilliant cultural organisations to the wider Creative Industries. As of the 2023-2027 funding period, Arts Council England has designated a total of 139 National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) across Greater Essex, Kent & Medway, and East Sussex. With the coordinating role of SECEN, this ecosystem is securing a sustainable future for the region's creative economy.

- **Private Sector Engagement:** SECEN has built relationships with private sector companies, particularly in the film, music, and digital design industries. Through the Creative Open Workspace Masterplan, SECEN has identified key opportunities for innovation and economic growth, particularly in regions like Purfleet and Thames Gateway.



Talent Accelerator



Forest Tots,  
Create South East

# Place Matters

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“Place matters. The Creative Industries like to cluster. They respond to factors such as the availability of labour and skills, affordable and appropriate workspace, tailored business support and investment, and the quality of place.”

Creative Industries Council,  
Place Matters, 2022

## Micro-clusters and the SECEN Creative Ecosystem

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Over the past decade, the Creative Industries across the SECEN have continued to grow and evolve. This is palpable in the cultural resurgence of coastal towns, the rise of creative micro-clusters, and the step-change infrastructure being introduced across the Thames Estuary Production Corridor.

SECEN has helped **secure investment in places which would otherwise be left behind** across previous rounds of Creative Industries investment which favour larger cities. The towns and smaller cities which make up the SECEN area would, if working individually, struggle for visibility and voice at the national level. These are also places which are assumed to be prosperous as they are located in London's orbit, but which in fact face significant deprivation and are under-leveraged for their growth potential in the UK creative economy.

While the South East is connected to larger London and South East 'super-cluster,' with the highest concentration of Creative Industries in the UK, the region is composed of an ecosystem of micro-clusters for which

the role of SECEN has been formative. Such micro-clusters gain their scale and generate growth through connectivity to each other and to London, as well as to neighbouring clusters such as Brighton. By knitting such clusters into different locations across the South East, they provide pathways to local employment and help animate and revitalise local economies, including high streets.

A 2020 survey by the UK Policy and Evidence Centre for the Creative Industries (PEC)<sup>5</sup> analysed growth plans, innovation activities, and relationships to clusters for creative enterprises. The PEC identified over 700 micro-clusters scattered widely across the UK, including in the South East. The PEC research demonstrates there is no 'one size fits all' approach, that the conditions necessary for a successful sector can flourish in unexpected places that may have been traditionally downplayed or overlooked.

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<sup>5</sup> PEC Report 2020 Creative Industries Radar: Mapping the UK's Creative Clusters and Micro-clusters

SECEN has worked as a catalyst for creative cluster development to nurture micro clusters and, in the Thames Estuary, bootstrap a major cluster:

- **Thames Estuary Production Corridor:**

SECEN's work in the Thames Estuary has been pivotal in establishing a thriving creative cluster focused on film, digital media, and visual arts. The evaluation of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor outlines how SECEN and partners have secured significant investment of over £4.6m from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) across a range of cluster activities, including new infrastructure and place-based cultural planning activities.<sup>6</sup> The Corridor is poised to become a major hub for Creative Industries in the UK, linking London to the creative clusters which are growing across Kent, Medway and Greater Essex.

- **Crowding in investment:** clusters, enterprise and skills. A key contributor to the growth of place-based clusters across the region is SECEN's commitment to securing much needed infrastructure such as affordable workspace. SECEN has also

<sup>6</sup> Thames Estuary Production Corridor – The Case for Investment, 2020

led agendas in skills and enterprise for the regional Creative Industries. This includes a focus on post-pandemic recovery focusing on job creation, business growth, and skills development.

- **Creative High Streets:** SECEN has championed the role Creative Industries can play in revitalising high streets. This report addressed Meanwhile creative production space repurposing vacant retail and office space to models which co-locate creative firms to anchor long-term creative employment in town centres. The Creative High Streets programme was a pioneer in reimagining the future of high streets as part of a wider approach to renewal and diversification. The South East received £250m from Arts Council England, Future High Streets Fund and Towns Fund.<sup>7</sup>

- **Create South East:** In partnership with West Sussex and Brighton & Hove, SECEN has fostered collaboration between these regions, allowing for the development of cross-border creative initiatives which connect micro-clusters. This includes the Create South East programme, which is boosting Creative Industries enterprise support.

<sup>7</sup> Creative High Streets Report 2022, We Made That



Sussex Tweed, Create South East



Resort Studios



Knot Works,  
Create South East



Palladian Media,  
Create South East

- **Creative Connections:** As a place-based network, SECEN plays a critical role in coordinating and adding value to place-based strategy and investment in micro-clusters. Through initiatives such as the Creative South East programme and the South East Creatives (ERDF project), SECEN has directly supported over 400 creative businesses, offering grants, mentorship, and growth opportunities. This has led to increased turnover, market access, and the expansion of these businesses into new sectors, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.
- **Creative spillovers:** The creation of jobs and the stimulation of business growth in the creative sector has a positive impact on the wider economy. As the sector grows, so too do the opportunities in related industries such as technology, construction and tourism, with creative clusters shaping the wider economy. For example,

Creative Coast and the Creative High Streets programmes have highlighted the potential of integrating creative projects into tourism development. SECEN has proved crucial to generating capital and unlocking investment through an alignment of the creative and visitor economy, helping to foster both cultural tourism and sustainable development. As the Government emphasises tourism as a means of revitalising local economies, SECEN's role in shaping the region's cultural landscape becomes even more significant.

As national and regional priorities evolve, SECEN's role in identifying and working with micro clusters outside the larger cities will strengthen the South East's status as a creative hotspot, attract investment, support innovation, and promote cross-sector collaboration. This will ensure the South East's Creative Industries are competitive, sustainable and rooted in place.

# Championing an Inclusive Creative Economy

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SECEN has played a vital role in building a more inclusive creative economy. SECEN has unlocked investment which has generated pathways for talent from different backgrounds to access training, support and access to networks and workspace.

- **Talent development**

Projects kickstarted by SECEN have worked to foster community cohesion, offering a platform for local artists, performers, and entrepreneurs to develop and showcase their talent. Whether through pop-up galleries in local high streets or inclusive workshops for young people, SECEN champions the role of Creative Industries in providing social mobility and access to employment and self-employment. SECEN has played a particularly impactful role in highlighting the development needs of freelancers and micro creative firms.

These make up the majority of the Creative Industries in the South East and can be particularly precarious without support offered by access to networks, enterprise and skills support, and a role to play in local micro clusters.

- **Cultural Wellbeing**

The focus on creativity also has broader wellbeing benefits, promoting mental health, physical health, and social integration. The **Catalyst for Culture programme**, for example, has leveraged cultural activities to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities, particularly in areas facing socio-economic challenges.



**Drop Dead Films,  
Create South East**



**Matt Mackman,  
Create South East**

# 10 years of committed partnership

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Over 10 years of committed partnership, SECEN has catalysed growth across the Creative Industries of Greater Essex, Kent and Medway and East Sussex. It has built a shared purpose across a complex geography, working to connect and aggregate activities.

SECEN has unlocked new investment and worked to ensure investment reaches the places and communities which show most promise. In doing so, SECEN has supported micro-clusters to flourish and, in the Thames Estuary, kickstarted a major global cluster programme.

With devolution comes the opportunity to extend and deepen the role of SECEN, ensuring that we maximise the Creative Industries potential to deliver growth, generate new jobs and drive positive spillover impacts across the economy.

# Sustainable and Responsible Creative Economy

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Environmental sustainability is increasingly recognised as a critical underpinning of the creative economy, and SECEN has been proactive in ensuring that its initiatives align with the Government's Green

Agenda. Through the Thames Estuary Production Corridor and Creative Open Workspace Masterplan, SECEN supports sustainable practices in the Creative Industries, encouraging the development of eco-

friendly creative spaces and low-carbon production methods. Projects like England's Creative Coast and Creative Estuary highlight the connection between sustainable tourism and Creative Industries.

# Evidence-led Investment

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The evidence led approach adopted by SECEN has been essential in shaping the network's projects and outcomes. By compiling and analysing data, SECEN can track the region's Creative Industries development profile, assess gaps, and make informed strategic decisions.



# 10 Years Catalysing Growth 2015 to 2025

**Appendices**



# Appendix 1: Summary of SECEN-Generated Income

SECEN Prospectus	Description	Consortium Partners	Funding	Funding Body
<b>Creative Estuary Programme (2019-2023)</b>	Aims to transform the Thames Estuary into a vibrant hub for creative and cultural industries. It is the first significant project in the Kent and Essex Thames Estuary to contribute to delivery of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor's 30-year vision.	Led by the University of Kent's Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries, on behalf of a consortium of public sector and cultural organisations. They include: the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent and Essex County Councils, the Greater London Authority, 11 local authority areas represented by Greater North Kent and Opportunity South Essex, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, South East Creative Economy Network (SECEN), University of Essex, Locate in Kent and cultural organisations Metal, Cement Fields and High House Production Park Trust.	£8.8 million initiative. <sup>8</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part funded by Cultural Development Fund in 2019</li> <li>• Arts Council England (2023)</li> </ul>
<b>Creative High Streets (2022 – ongoing)</b>	This project aimed to harness the power of the creative and cultural sectors to rejuvenate town centres and drive economic growth.	South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and Arts Council England.	£250 million (national). <sup>9</sup> (See Evidence Base for detailed allocation information.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arts Council England</li> <li>• Future High Streets Fund</li> <li>• Towns Fund</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> Creative Estuary Final Evaluation Report, Hatch 2023

<sup>9</sup> Creative High Streets Report 2022, We Made That

SECEN Prospectus	Description	Consortium Partners	Funding	Funding Body
<b>England's Creative Coast (2018-2021)</b>	England's Creative Coast (ECC) was a collaborative project aimed at enhancing cultural tourism and economic growth across the South East coast of England, encompassing Essex, Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex.	Delivered by Turner Contemporary and Visit Kent. In partnership with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historic Dockyard Chatham, and Southeastern and in partnership with Cement Fields, Creative FolSECEN tone, De La Warr Pavilion, Hastings Contemporary, Metal, Towner Eastbourne, Visit Essex, Experience West Sussex, East Sussex County Council, Kent County Council, Essex County Council and Southend Borough Council</li> </ul>	Total funding £1.179 million. <sup>10</sup> Funding sources included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts Council England's Cultural Destinations programme phase 2 (£500,000)</li> <li>Visit England through the Discover England Fund (£350,000)</li> </ul>	Principally funded by Arts Council England's Cultural Destinations programme phase 2 and Visit England through the Discover England Fund, with support from a number of key investors, including; the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Essex County Council, Visit Essex, Southend Borough Council, Experience West Sussex, The Historic Dockyard Chatham and Southeastern.
<b>South East Creative, Cultural and Digital Support Programme (SECCADS) (2018-2020)</b>	The SECEN-led SECCADS programme aimed to enhance the economic competitiveness of creative, cultural, and digital businesses in the South East through grant funding, business support, and networking opportunities.	Thurrock Council (lead) and partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>East Sussex County Council, Kent County Council, Medway Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, and the University of Essex.</li> </ul>	£5.15 million programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>£2.57 million from the European Regional Development Fund.</li> <li>£1.63 million in private investment.</li> <li>Additional investment from the partner local authorities and the University of Essex.</li> </ul>
<b>Thames Estuary Production Corridor (2018-2019)</b>	A dynamic hub for creative and cultural production.	SECEN was a key partner to the report, alongside the Greater London Authority and London local authorities and private partners.	Over £4.6m	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).</li> <li>Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.</li> </ul>

<sup>10</sup> Decision Report – England's Creative Coast

SECEN Prospectus	Description	Consortium Partners	Funding	Funding Body
<b>South East Create Growth Programme (2022-2025)</b>	Launched in January 2023, this programme offers tailored support high-growth potential creative businesses outside of London to become investment ready in Essex, Kent, and East and West Sussex. Through Creative South East Eligible businesses can apply for grants ranging from £10,000 to £30,000 for innovation projects.	Led by Kent County Council on behalf of the SECEN. Partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SECEN, West Sussex County Council, Brighton &amp; Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council, Essex County Council, Medway Council, Basildon Council, South-East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Screen South, Angels@Essex / University of Essex Innovation Centre Knowledge Gateway, Wired Sussex, Creative UK, Creative Estuary / University of Kent Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries (ICCI)</li> </ul>	£8.275 million. Funding Amount: £1,275 million allocated for South East programme delivery, with an additional £7 million in grant funding available for businesses across six programmes. <sup>11</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Department of Culture, Media and Sport.</li> </ul>
<b>Talent Accelerator (2022)</b>	This programme supports young people aged 5 to 25 in East Sussex, guiding them toward careers in the creative industries. The programme focuses on inspiring youth about creative careers, offering valuable work experience, and fostering collaborations between educational institutions and creative businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devised by SECEN membership</li> <li>De La Warr Pavilion</li> <li>Skills East Sussex</li> <li>Future Skills Sussex</li> <li>Eastbourne Alive</li> <li>East Sussex Careers Hub</li> </ul>	£200,000. <sup>12</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Artswork</li> <li>Coastal Catalyst</li> </ul>
<b>Coastal Catalyst (2022-2024)</b>	Help young people convert their creativity into practical skills and career pathways in the creative sector, especially for those in communities with limited access to these fields.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Led by Future Creators (part of Brighton Dome, Festival and Music)</li> <li>Talent Accelerator (part of De La Warr Pavilion)</li> </ul>	£900,000. <sup>13</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arts Council England, through the Place Partnership project.</li> <li>Coastal Catalyst is further supported by University of Brighton, Careers East Sussex, and the Brighton &amp; Hove Careers Hub.</li> </ul>

<sup>11</sup> Create Growth – Programme Award

<sup>12</sup> eastsussex.gov.uk

<sup>13</sup> DLWP.com

## Appendix 2: The SECEN Evidence Base

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The Table below is a prospectus of key strategic knowledge leadership and partnership projects and programmes activated by SECEN. This summarises a sample of research and evaluation reports which were produced when the programmes were delivered. Some point to the strategic development needs and opportunities for Creative Industries development and investment in the SECEN area. Other documents describe headline outcomes of SECEN-initiated projects and programmes. Together they illustrate the range of activities where SECEN has played a key enabling and development role, driving forward evidence-based approaches to partnership, investment and action across the South East Creative Industries.

# The South East Creative Economy Network: Catalysing Growth through Evidence and Knowledge Leadership

SECEN Prospectus	1. Growing Creative Clusters: Economic Impact & Employment	2. Championing Creative Places: Collaborations, Partnerships & Funding	3. Work Space Availability, Inclusive Employment & Skills Development	4. Growing Cultural Tourism & Environmental Sustainability	5. Shared Intelligence: Driving Innovation through Creativity
<p><b>The SELEP Creative Open Workspace Masterplan and Prospectus</b></p> <p>The Creative Open Workspace Masterplan and Prospectus report, led by SECEN, addressed the need for suitable workspaces to support the growth of the Creative, Cultural, and Digital (CCD) sectors across the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) region.</p>	<p><b>Financial Requirements:</b> The project sought to establish a finance vehicle with an initial target of £5 million to support the development of creative workspaces, thereby stimulating economic growth and employment within the Creative Industries.</p> <p><b>Achieved Outcomes:</b> While the finance vehicle was not realised (it remains an ambition) the project successfully refreshed the SECEN Statement of Intent, which was endorsed by SELEP in December 2021. This document underpinned the successful Create Growth Programme bid, aiming to support the growth of creative clusters. The project also produced an approach to Workspace Planning and in collaboration with Thames Estuary Production Corridor and the Town and Planning Country Association, developed a planning tool kit to expedite workspace.</p>	<p><b>Collaborative Initiatives:</b> SECEN's efforts included developing a refreshed South East Creative Economy Prospectus and a Creative Open Workspace report and toolkit, aiming to support the inclusion of creative workspace in new developments and the re-purposing of under-used buildings as creative workspace.</p> <p><b>Financial Requirements:</b> The project aimed to create cultural planning policy guidance and identify a pipeline of at least nine investment-ready open workspace projects, necessitating collaborative efforts and funding allocations.</p> <p><b>Achieved Outcomes:</b> A draft workspace masterplan was developed to inform decision-making and planning, incorporating refreshed baseline data to support the rationale for creative workspace development.</p>	<p><b>Workspace Development:</b> The report identifies the lack of appropriate workspace as a barrier to growth for the creative sector and proposes the development of open workspaces to support creative microbusinesses.</p> <p><b>Inclusive Employment:</b> By providing suitable workspaces, the initiative aimed to support the diverse employment structures within the Creative Industries, including a significant proportion of freelancers and microbusinesses.</p> <p><b>Achieved Outcomes:</b> The project conducted an options appraisal for developing a workspace toolkit, enhancing understanding of potential approaches to workspace development.</p>	<p><b>Cultural Tourism:</b> The development of creative workspaces contributes to placemaking efforts, enhancing the cultural appeal of regions and potentially boosting cultural tourism.</p> <p><b>Sustainability Considerations:</b> While environmental sustainability is not a primary focus of the report, the adaptive reuse of under-utilized buildings for creative workspaces aligns with sustainable development practices.</p> <p><b>Achieved Outcomes:</b> The project developed a Cultural Opportunity Zones paper, proposing new models to test and predicate funding bids on, potentially contributing to cultural tourism and sustainability.</p>	<p><b>Knowledge Sharing:</b> The report emphasises the importance of shared intelligence in driving innovation, proposing the creation of a toolkit to accelerate the development of open workspace projects.</p> <p><b>Policy Development:</b> The report also suggests the creation of cultural planning policy guidance that can be adopted by local authorities to support the inclusion of creative workspace in new developments and the re-purposing of under-used buildings as creative workspace.</p> <p><b>Achieved Outcomes:</b> The project refreshed baseline data and developed a draft masterplan, contributing to shared intelligence and informing future initiatives within the creative sectors.</p>

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<p><b>England's Creative Coast</b></p> <p>The England's Creative Coast (ECC) initiative was a collaborative project aimed at enhancing cultural tourism and economic growth across the South East coast of England, encompassing Essex, Kent, and East Sussex. Led by Turner Contemporary and Visit Kent, the project received principal funding from Arts Council England's Cultural Destinations programme and Visit England's Discover England Fund.</p>	<p>The ECC initiative led to the commissioning of seven major new artworks, resulting in over 422,000 in-person engagements. This activity generated approximately £1.9 million in economic impact for the region and stimulated £8.4 million in regional economic activity. The project also provided employment opportunities, with 227 individuals working on various aspects of the initiative.</p>	<p>ECC brought together seven major cultural partners and destination management organizations, fostering a collaborative approach to cultural tourism. The project was primarily funded by Arts Council England's Cultural Destinations programme and Visit England through the Discover England Fund. This collective effort aimed to "leverage their power of collective working" to enhance the South East's cultural appeal.</p>	<p>The project engaged 1,146 participants in local engagement work and held 131 events, promoting inclusive employment and skills development within the arts sector. These activities provided "opportunities for skills development and inclusive participation in the arts sector," contributing to the region's creative economy.</p>	<p>By integrating art with the coastal landscape, ECC created a unique outdoor cultural experience that attracted both national and local visitors. The initiative also promoted sustainable tourism practices, encouraging visitors to explore the region responsibly.</p>	<p>The project included a multi-channel marketing strategy, research, training, and shared learning to reach new tourist audiences and maximise engagement. This approach facilitated innovation in promoting the South East coast as a cultural destination, leveraging creativity to drive tourism and economic growth.</p>

## Creative High Streets

This project, in collaboration with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and Arts Council England, aimed to harness the power of the creative and cultural sectors to rejuvenate town centres and drive economic growth.

It involved a wide selection of creative interventions relating to the night-time economy, vacant shops, complex property and land ownership, and heritage assets.

This project helped boost the profile of high streets as a vector for Creative Industries development, including new tools and approaches.

4,600 creative businesses are located within 200m of a high street. 10% of high street businesses operate in the creative and cultural sector.

However, challenges persist, including high vacancy rates in many town centres and a lack of creative workspaces for SMEs and freelancers.

The project highlights the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships to secure the future of creative high streets. Public agencies, landowners, businesses, and community groups are critical in driving placemaking initiatives.

Key funding initiatives which **SECEN helped position the Creative Industries as a key part of the rejuvenation of High Streets:**

**Future High Streets Fund:** £63m allocated across five towns (Newhaven, Chatham, Ramsgate, Dover, and Tilbury).

**Towns Fund:** £120m for at least six town centres, including Hastings, Margate, and Colchester.

People and Places fund:

**Chatham Intra High Street secured** £1.6 million from the Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) to revitalize the area, creating new employment opportunities and cultural programs.

**The Basildon People and Places Programme** secured **£1.28 million from Arts Council England** to support local cultural regeneration.

A major challenge identified in the project is the shortage of affordable creative workspaces. Creative businesses require flexible, low-cost spaces for collaboration and entrepreneurship.

Key initiatives which seek to generate creative opportunity in high streets include:

**Future Foundry (Dover):** Provides business training for young creatives through markets and workshops.

**TOMA Project Space (Southend-on-Sea):** A creative education hub supporting underrepresented communities in the arts.

**Colchester's Creative Workspaces:** New workspace projects funded by the Town Fund and SELEP to support the growth of the digital and creative sectors.

Skills development is also a priority for sector development and provision can be linked to high street renewal.

**Colchester's digital and creative workspace initiative** aims to provide a hub for creative entrepreneurs, supported by Town Fund investment.

Culture is increasingly recognised as a tool for tourism growth and sustainability. High streets must adapt to evolving consumer habits.

Key initiatives:

**Creative-led tourism development:** Promoting the South East's diverse identities and historic sites.

**Sustainable high streets:** Integrating environmental resilience into creative placemaking projects.

Sustainability efforts also include better public transport links and reducing car dependency through urban planning:

**62% of UK adults** believe culture on the high street provides a sense of local pride.

**50% of adults** want to see more cultural experiences in their local high streets.

**75% of Arts Council-funded cultural infrastructure** is within a five-minute walk of a high street.

**Newhaven's £5 million regeneration initiative** repurposed vacant spaces and aimed to create **up to 200 jobs by 2024.**

Innovation is a crucial element in revitalising high streets. The 'test-and-learn' approach championed by SECEN partners allows for low-cost, temporary interventions to gauge effectiveness before scaling projects.

Key examples:

**"Meanwhile activation" projects:** Short-term, experimental creative uses of vacant spaces.

**Flexible lease models:** Supporting creative businesses by allowing turnover-based rents.

**The Creative Hub and Urban Living Room (Newhaven):** A multi-use creative and community space repurposed from a former supermarket.

		<p><b>Colchester Town Fund investment led to new workspace projects,</b> providing opportunities for the growing digital and creative sector.</p>	<p><b>Basildon's Open Lab project</b> turned vacant high street units into creative spaces.</p> <p><b>Newhaven's Creative Hub and Urban Living Room project</b> transformed a disused supermarket into a co-working space, retail area, and community kitchen.</p>		
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# South East Creative, Cultural and Digital Support Programme

The SECEN-led SECCADS programme aimed to enhance the economic competitiveness of creative, cultural, and digital businesses in the South East through funding, business support, and networking opportunities.

**Economic Impact:** The programme engaged 2,090 businesses, significantly exceeding its original target.

**Employment Growth:** SECCADS created an estimated 117.7 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs, with net additional 110.8 jobs projected across the region.

**Business Growth:** 54% of participating businesses saw an increase in turnover, with 41% maintaining stability despite economic disruptions.

**Innovation & Expansion:** Over 150 businesses were supported in introducing new products and services.

The programme provided a **much-needed economic boost**, particularly in the wake of **COVID-19**, which heavily impacted the creative sector.

**Key Highlights:**

SECCADS supported **522 businesses**, with **54%** reporting increased turnover after participation.

Businesses that received grants were significantly more likely to see **employment growth** (54%) than those that did not (27%).

SECCADS is designed as a **collaborative initiative**. Key partners included Thurrock Council (lead), East Sussex County Council, Kent County Council, Medway Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, and the University of Essex.

**Funding Impact:** The programme secured £5.15 million in total funding, including £2.57 million from the European Regional Development Fund and £1.63 million in private investment.

**COVID-19 Adaptation:** Due to lockdowns, SECCADS shifted to fully online support, increasing accessibility and allowing businesses to continue engaging.

**Sustaining High Streets:** SECCADS promoted creative business clusters, enhancing economic activity in key cultural hubs like Margate, FoISECEN

This multi-stakeholder model strengthened regional creative economies and provided businesses with greater access to expertise, funding, and support networks.

SECCADS focused on business incubation, skills training, and inclusive support mechanisms to help creative enterprises grow.

**Business Development:** 522 businesses received in-depth support, exceeding original expectations by 41%.

**Employment Creation:** Businesses that received grants were twice as likely to experience job growth, with 54% of grant recipients reporting increased employment.

**Hard-to-Reach Businesses:** 70% of participants had never engaged with business support before, demonstrating SECCADS' ability to reach underrepresented enterprises.

**Skills Development:** SECCADS offered mentoring, business workshops, and internships, though feedback suggested improvements in linking businesses with interns.

Through targeted **workshops, funding, and mentorship**, SECCADS significantly **enhanced business capabilities and inclusivity** within the South East's creative sector.

SECCADS promoted sustainable business models and creative tourism, aligning with regional environmental and economic recovery plans.

**Cultural Tourism Growth:** The programme invested in high street revitalisation and digital engagement, making cultural businesses more accessible to tourists.

**Environmental Impact:** 35% of businesses reported that SECCADS improved their environmental performance, particularly through digital transformation and remote working initiatives.

**Sustainable Businesses:** Supported enterprises included upcycled fashion brands, sustainable jewellery makers, and eco-conscious product designers.

**Digital Innovation:** Many businesses developed new online platforms, reducing reliance on physical locations and increasing long-term sustainability.

SECCADS played a crucial role in making the South East's creative sector more sustainable, resilient, and attractive to visitors.

The programme encouraged **cross-sector collaboration and digital innovation**, helping businesses future-proof their operations.

**Technology Adoption:** 40% of businesses reported a very positive impact from increased use of digital tools and e-commerce.

**Productivity Gains:** 82% of participants improved business productivity, while 74% enhanced efficiency.

**Long-Term Business Performance:** 84.5% of businesses credited SECCADS with positively influencing their long-term sustainability.

**Hybrid Support Model:** SECCADS successfully blended online and in-person support, a format now considered ideal for the creative sector.

SECCADS facilitated **business innovation**, with 84.5% of participants reporting improvements in long-term business performance.

82% saw increased productivity, and 74% improved business efficiency.

	<p>The programme contributed <b>a net additional 110.8 jobs</b> to the local economy and an estimated <b>£2.5m increase in Gross Value Added (GVA) per year.</b></p>		<p>Internships were identified as a <b>highly valued aspect</b> of the programme, though improvements in linking businesses with interns were suggested for the future.</p> <p>The programme <b>engaged many businesses that had not previously accessed support</b>: 70% had never participated in publicly funded business initiatives before.</p> <p>Equalities and diversity were a priority: a significant proportion of beneficiaries were <b>female-owned businesses</b>, with flexible support offered to meet their needs.</p>		
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<p><b>Creative Estuary</b></p> <p>This major programme, working across the Thames Estuary, aimed to stimulate economic regeneration through creative sector partnership and investment.</p> <p><i>“The Thames Estuary has the potential to be one of the UK’s most significant creative clusters – Creative Estuary is making that vision a reality.”</i></p> <p><i>Creative Estuary Report</i></p>	<p>“Creative Industries contribute over £100 billion to the UK economy annually, with the Thames Estuary positioned as a key area for growth.”</p> <p><b>Creative Industries Investment and Growth</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £4.3M+ invested in Creative Industries in the Thames Estuary</li> <li>• Supported over 500 creative jobs directly.</li> <li>• Helped safeguard 1,000+ existing jobs in the creative and cultural industries.</li> <li>• Freelancer support: Provided business development resources for independent creatives and microbusinesses.</li> <li>• 25,000 sq ft of new creative workspaces developed.</li> <li>• 10,000+ residents engaged in cultural activities.</li> </ul>	<p>The programme aimed to embed culture into local communities, ensuring public participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 10,000 local residents engaged in creative activities through events, workshops, and exhibitions.</li> <li>• Notable project: Tilbury Bridge Walkway of Memories – a community-driven arts installation commemorating Caribbean migration to the UK.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Our vision is to ensure the creative and cultural industries are embedded in the fabric of everyday life along the Thames Estuary.”</i></p> <p><i>Creative Estuary Report</i></p>	<p>The programme focused on revitalising underutilised spaces and enhancing cultural infrastructure.</p> <p><b>Transformative projects</b> included:</p> <p>Creative Estuary programme has delivered on the vision and evidence from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thames Estuary Cultural Production Corridor: A Framework to develop creative workspaces along the Estuary.</li> <li>• High Street Cultural Activation: Repurposed empty retail spaces for creative and cultural use.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Investing in creative placemaking has had a tangible impact, turning forgotten spaces into thriving cultural hubs.”</i></p>	<p><b>Legacy initiatives</b> include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy recommendations for continued investment.</li> <li>• Creative Estuary Knowledge Hub: A platform for ongoing research and collaboration.</li> <li>• Strategic planning to secure future public and private investment.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Creative Estuary is not just a short-term project – it’s a blueprint for sustainable creative sector development.”</i></p>	<p>The Creative Estuary Knowledge Hub was developed as a platform for ongoing research and collaboration, ensuring that insights from funded projects are shared across the sector.</p> <p>Peer learning and networking events were held, allowing creative professionals to share insights on business growth, funding access, and policy recommendations.<sup>14</sup></p> <p><i>“By fostering a culture of shared learning, Creative Estuary has enabled the sector to exchange expertise and drive strategic decision-making.”</i></p> <p><b>Driving Innovation through Creativity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research &amp; Development Support: Creative Estuary provided R&amp;D funding to support experimental projects and digital transformation within the creative sector.</li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> Parliament.uk – Evidence Report from Creative Estuary

	<p>In Phase 2, delivering programme of creative business support packages and grants to the CCIs sectors across Thurrock and Northfleet.</p> <p>Research to unearth the CCIs sector in Dartford and to update our knowledge of the sector in Southend. Resulted in new contacts and strengthening of local networks. Business support and development training event delivered in Southend and Basildon.</p>	<p><b>Partnerships &amp; Collaboration:</b> with 20+ regional partners, including local councils, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation, universities, cultural organisations, and private investors. Key partners included University of Kent, Royal Opera House and Metal Culture. and High House Production Park Trust.</p> <p>In Phase 2, place based partnerships deepen relationships and increase engagement, for example 11 Co-Commission partnerships with Estuary based creative organisations to respond to local towns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-sector partnerships were key in leveraging investment and maximising impact.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Creative Estuary represents a model of regional collaboration, demonstrating how strategic partnerships can drive long-term creative industry growth.”</i></p> <p><b>Cultural Programming &amp; Events</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than 50 public cultural events were delivered, showcasing regional talent.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Workspaces &amp; Creative Hubs</b></p> <p>University of Kent, Chatham Historic Dockyard, and Medway Council came together with Creative Estuary support, and £100K investment, they formed a partnership which resulted in a project at the dockyard. The project will deliver a creative digital hub for students, creative businesses and residents, and visiting companies in the old police house and with a new build studio and garden attached. The Docking Station creative digital hub is on site and will open in 2026.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Programme began to address the lack of affordable creative workspaces in the region.</li> <li>• New workspaces were established in Margate, Southend and Thurrock. Over 25,000 sq ft of creative workspace was developed through the initiative in Phase 1.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Creative Models: Several projects piloted innovative cultural business models, including hybrid creative workspaces and community-led production hubs.</li> <li>• Placemaking through Innovation: The Programme explored how cultural regeneration can drive economic resilience, repurposing underused spaces into dynamic creative centres.</li> </ul> <p><i>“Innovation is at the heart of our mission – Creative Estuary is pioneering new ways for culture to shape place, economy, and community.”</i></p>
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		<p>Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estuary Festival: A multi-location festival attracting over 200,000 visitors.</li> <li>• Community-led performances and exhibitions to celebrate local heritage.</li> </ul> <p><i>"The cultural programming supported by Creative Estuary has demonstrated the power of arts to bring people together and drive local pride."</i></p> <p><b>Funding &amp; Investment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative Estuary received significant financial support from Arts Council England and DCMS, facilitating creative sector growth across the Thames Estuary region.</li> </ul> <p><i>"Over £4.3 million was invested in creative and cultural projects across the Estuary region."</i></p> <p>Funding streams included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural Development Fund (CDF)</li> <li>• Local Growth Fund (LGF)</li> <li>• Private sector and philanthropic contributions.</li> </ul>	<p>In Phase 2, further buildings have been made ready for capital funding in Chatham Medway, Basildon; and, in Northfleet the old Coach House project has secured capital investment pending further favourable business modelling and design work.</p> <p><i>"Creative hubs provide not only space but a network – fostering collaboration, innovation, and economic resilience."</i></p> <p><b>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A priority was to ensure accessibility and representation across creative projects.</li> <li>• 45% of funded projects focused on underrepresented groups.</li> <li>• 30% of creative businesses supported were led by women or people from ethnic minority backgrounds.</li> </ul> <p><i>"True creative innovation happens when diverse voices are included in the conversation."</i></p>		
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<p><b>Coastal Catalyst – Creativity Hubs Delivery Plan</b></p> <p>The Coastal Catalyst programme worked to boost employment opportunities in the creative sector across the Sussex Coastal Corridor (spanning 100 km).</p>	<p>Through this Delivery Plan. SECEN helped initiate targeted intervention to boost employment prospects for young creative talent in coastal areas with particular opportunity challenges.</p> <p>Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility, a key indicator of deprivation, is higher than both the South East average of 18.8% and the national average of 23.8% in many schools within the target areas.</p> <p>Towns such as Hastings, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton, and Peacehaven rank among the most deprived 20% in England.</p> <p>The <b>Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)</b> indicates that at least one ward in each Creativity Hub area is in the bottom 20% nationally.</p>	<p>The <b>Coastal Catalyst Creativity Hubs</b> are designed to provide <b>structured interventions</b> for young people facing barriers to employment. Key collaborations include:</p> <p><b>Talent Accelerator Programme (East Sussex):</b> Supports career pathways into the Creative Industries through work experience, apprenticeships, and skills workshops.</p> <p>Funding sources included support from local authorities, Arts Council England, and education providers. However, SECEN has raised awareness of sustained gaps in funding for sustained long-term employment pathways, especially in Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.</p>	<p>The programme highlights the importance of <b>exposure to creative career pathways</b> in sustaining cultural tourism and economic growth.</p> <p>A participant in the <b>Talent Accelerator Programme</b> noted:</p> <p><i>“Before this, I never knew creative jobs existed near me. Now I want to work in digital arts.”</i></p>	<p>The <b>Coastal Catalyst programme</b> aligns with wider efforts to boost <b>cultural tourism</b> in Sussex. Some key insights include:</p> <p><b>Transport barriers</b> are limiting access to creative and cultural sites, with young people in Newhaven forced to travel to Lewes, Eastbourne, or Brighton for creative education. This affects mobility to work in the cultural sector and for tourists to visit cultural tourism destinations.</p> <p><b>Eco-conscious approaches to tourism development</b> are being encouraged, such as public transport incentives and environmentally sustainable creative events.</p>	<p>The Coastal Catalyst report highlights <b>gaps in data availability</b> related to youth employment in Creative Industries. However, it provides insights into education, skills gaps, and deprivation indicators:</p> <p>The report recommends <b>closer collaboration between local authorities, creative organizations, and educational institutions</b> to bridge gaps in creative career pathways.</p> <p>A <b>stakeholder from the Sussex Learning Network</b> commented:</p> <p><i>“We need to rethink creative careers education – many young people assume creative jobs aren’t for them simply because they’ve never been exposed to them.”</i></p> <p>This underscores the need for increased visibility of creative career pathways through partnerships, mentorships, and employer engagement.</p>

# SECEN Create Growth Programme (CGP)

Based on the **Data Brief for Essex, Kent, Brighton, and Sussex (SECEN)** as provided by Dr. Josh Siepel, August 2022.

The information focuses on identifying creative businesses with scaling potential, the barriers to growth, and other relevant findings in the context of the CGP initiative.

This is an example of SECEN playing a **knowledge leadership** role to develop insight on the Creative Industries development profile in the South East.

**Creative Industries in the SECEN Region:** a strong presence of creative businesses, including advertising, marketing, film, TV, design, and IT & software.

**High-Growth Firms (HGF) Estimates:** Data estimates that around 2,483 businesses in the SECEN region meet the criteria for high-growth potential across various sectors, including over 1,200 in IT & software and 438 in advertising and marketing.

*“The SECEN region hosts a robust creative sector with strong growth potential, particularly in IT & software, design, and media industries.”*

**Employment:** Creative Industries in the SECEN region account for a significant portion of employment, including a large share of freelancers. The programme considers freelancers when assessing growth potential, as many creative businesses rely on flexible workforces.

**Evidence-based Support Networks:** The CGP leverages data and research to understand the needs and dynamics of creative businesses. This enables tailored support from local stakeholders, which helps drive regional placemaking efforts through collaborations and partnerships.

*“Local partnerships are critical for fostering growth in Creative Industries, ensuring that regional strengths are leveraged effectively.”*

**Funding Needs:** The programme identifies that a significant barrier for creative businesses is the lack of access to finance. Businesses that have growth aspirations often face challenges in securing the necessary investment.

**Workspace Accessibility:** there is a growing need for affordable, flexible workspaces that accommodate the specific needs of creative businesses. This is particularly important in areas with higher proportions of freelancers and small firms.

**Inclusive Employment:** Creative Industries in SECEN heavily rely on freelancers, which makes it essential to consider the freelance workforce in the definition of high-growth firms (HGFs). This approach ensures inclusivity and reflects the nature of creative work.

**Skills Development:** A key barrier identified is the lack of managerial skills. Creative businesses with growth aspirations often report a skills gap in leadership and management, hindering their ability to scale.

*“Creative businesses with growth ambitions are often constrained by a lack of managerial expertise, which limits their scaling potential.”*

**Cultural Impact:** the CGP indirectly supports cultural tourism by promoting the growth of creative sectors like music, film, and arts in the region. As creative businesses scale, they contribute to the cultural tourism sector by drawing visitors to the SECEN region.

**Environmental Sustainability:** While the report doesn't explicitly address sustainability, creative businesses can contribute to environmental goals through innovation in sustainable design and production processes.

*“The growth of the creative sector will positively impact the region's cultural and tourism industries, enhancing its overall appeal.”*

**Innovation Support:** The programme drives innovation by identifying businesses with high-growth potential and offering them the necessary support to scale. The use of data, such as the Creative Radar survey, helps assess growth patterns and create tailored interventions for businesses looking to innovate.

**Creative Radar Insights:** The Creative Radar national survey data identifies businesses that have previously experienced growth and those aiming for future growth. This data is vital for generating estimates on the high-growth potential of businesses across different sectors.

*“By leveraging data from the Creative Radar and other regional datasets, the CGP identifies and supports businesses with the greatest innovation and scaling potential.”*

**Barriers to Innovation:** Creative businesses often report barriers like access to finance, which impacts their ability to innovate and grow. The programme focuses on addressing these barriers through tailored financial support and capacity-building efforts.

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<h2 data-bbox="85 248 385 643">The Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC) Case for Investment</h2> <p data-bbox="85 660 398 916">This report outlines a strategic vision to transform the Thames Estuary into a dynamic hub for creative and cultural production. SECEN was a key partner to the report, alongside the Greater London Authority and London local authorities.</p> <p data-bbox="85 933 398 1161">This kickstarted a major investment programme in the region's creative economy, which will generate step change in national sector development and catalyse growth across the SECEN area.</p> <p data-bbox="85 1179 398 1292">To date, <b>over £3m investment</b> has been raised to support Creative Industries development in the Corridor.</p>	<p data-bbox="436 245 750 416"><b>Existing Creative Ecosystem:</b> The Estuary boasts over <b>16,000 creative and cultural production businesses</b>, supporting more than <b>46,000 jobs</b>.</p> <p data-bbox="436 434 750 576"><b>Recent Growth:</b> There has been a <b>37% increase</b> in the number of production businesses across the Estuary over the past five years.</p> <p data-bbox="436 593 750 821"><b>Projected Economic Impact:</b> The TEPC aims to generate over <b>50,000 new jobs</b>, creating the UK's largest concentration of production activity, and contribute an additional <b>£3.7 billion</b> in Gross Value Added (GVA) per annum.</p>	<p data-bbox="786 245 1086 448"><b>Strategic Vision:</b> The TEPC seeks to unite the Estuary's creative assets under a common identity, supporting project development, attracting investment, and fostering partnerships.</p> <p data-bbox="786 466 1086 694"><b>Government Support:</b> The initiative has secured <b>£4.6 million</b> from central government, including <b>£4.3 million</b> for the Creative Estuary programme, emphasizing culture as a catalyst for growth.</p> <p data-bbox="786 711 1086 882"><b>Collaborative Efforts:</b> The TEPC has engaged over <b>200 partners and stakeholders</b> in its development, reflecting a strong commitment to collaborative placemaking</p>	<p data-bbox="1135 245 1435 448"><b>Educational Institutions:</b> The Estuary is home to 63 Higher and Further Education Institutions, many specialising in Creative Industries, providing a talent pipeline for the sector.</p> <p data-bbox="1135 466 1435 636"><b>Skills Development:</b> The TEPC emphasises strategic skills programmes to ensure local talent benefits from new opportunities, fostering inclusive employment.</p> <p data-bbox="1135 654 1435 857"><b>Infrastructure Investments:</b> Over the past decade, more than £200 million has been invested in large-scale production facilities across the Estuary, enhancing workspace availability.</p>	<p data-bbox="1485 245 1794 416"><b>Cultural Tourism Potential:</b> By enhancing the Estuary's creative identity, the TEPC aims to boost tourism, attracting visitors and stimulating the local economy.</p> <p data-bbox="1485 434 1794 662"><b>Sustainable Development:</b> The initiative aligns with broader environmental goals, promoting sustainable practices within the Creative Industries, though specific strategies are not detailed in the provided excerpts.</p>	<p data-bbox="1834 245 2134 448"><b>Knowledge Sharing:</b> The TEPC plans to leverage the collective expertise of its numerous educational and cultural institutions to drive innovation and creativity across the Estuary.</p> <p data-bbox="1834 466 2134 662"><b>Strategic Research:</b> Comprehensive research and consultation have informed the TEPC's vision, ensuring that initiatives are data-driven and tailored to the region's unique strengths.</p>



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<p><b>Creative Opportunity Zones</b></p> <p>SECEN introduced the rationale, concept, and approach for Creative Opportunity Zones as an investable proposition and development model for growing <b>creative micro-clusters</b> in the South East.</p> <p>This represents the network's role in driving evidence-led innovation in sector development, raising awareness of and making the case for strategic investment in the Creative Industries to match the development needs of the sector across a portfolio of distinctive places and micro-clusters.</p>	<p>Research underpinning the Creative Opportunity Zone proposal identifies <b>creative micro-clusters</b> – localised areas with 50 or more creative businesses – as key economic drivers in the South East. This builds from research from the PEC:</p> <p><i>"We propose that micro-clusters are a useful unit of analysis for future policy consideration, particularly as we seek to understand and promote the growth and development of creative clusters."</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Creative PEC 2020</i></p> <p>By supporting creative micro-clusters, the initiative seeks to enhance <b>regional employment</b> and attract <b>investment</b> to Creative Industries outside of metropolitan areas.</p>	<p>SECEN emphasises the role of targeted support and tailored interventions in fostering place-based development. This includes working with local authorities, businesses, and cultural organisations to create Creative Opportunity Zones.</p> <p>By leveraging funding sources and <b>collaborative partnerships</b>, the programme aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen local creative economies</li> <li>• Improve infrastructure and support networks</li> <li>• Develop sustainable creative hubs in non-</li> </ul>	<p>SECEN-led research acknowledges the importance of <b>skills development</b> and the need for tailored interventions to help micro-clusters grow.</p> <p>By investing in <b>affordable workspaces</b>, training programmes, and employment pathways, the initiative seeks to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage talent retention and attraction</li> <li>• Improve diversity and accessibility within the Creative Industries</li> <li>• Support career development in creative fields</li> </ul>	<p>The Creative Opportunity Zone model highlights the <b>potential of cultural tourism in boosting regional economies</b> while promoting environmental sustainability. It suggests that creative clusters can play a crucial role in attracting visitors and driving sustainable economic development.</p> <p>Through creative placemaking and <b>heritage-led initiatives</b>, the Creative Opportunity Zone model aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance visitor experiences</li> <li>• Strengthen regional identity and branding</li> <li>• Support eco-friendly and sustainable cultural initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p>By gathering insights from the <b>Creative Industries Radar</b> and other research sources, the Creative Opportunity Zone model is geared to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify success factors in creative cluster growth</li> <li>• Share best practices among regions</li> <li>• Foster a culture of continuous innovation</li> </ul>

## Catalyst for Culture

Catalyst For Culture, a collaboration between The Marlowe Theatre, Glyndebourne Opera, and the Mercury Theatre, aimed to rejuvenate the performing arts sector across Kent, East Sussex, and Essex following the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Support for Workforce:**

Provided essential opportunities for regional freelancers and artists, aiding in workforce retention during challenging times.

**Economic Revitalisation:**

By facilitating the creation and presentation of new works, the programme stimulated economic activity.

**Overachievement of Targets:**

The programme exceeded all its original targets, demonstrating a robust impact on the regional creative economy.

*"Catalyst For Culture came in on budget, whilst over-achieving against all of its original targets."*

**Innovative Partnerships:**

The collaboration among three major performing arts organisations enabled new models of working and exchange across the region.

**Resource Optimisation:**

Collective efforts enabled substantial in-kind support, mentoring, and administrative efficiencies, maximising the impact of available resources.

**Extended Programme Duration:**

Originally planned for nine months, the program was extended into January 2022 to adapt to the prolonged lockdown, showcasing adaptability and commitment.

*"The partnership was the first of its kind in the region."*

**Talent Development:**

Initiatives like the Cygnet School provided year-long development programmes for young dancers from disadvantaged backgrounds, fostering inclusivity.

**Skills Enhancement:** The programme offered mentoring and training opportunities, enhancing the skills of both employed and freelance creative professionals.

**Youth Engagement:** The Cygnet School engaged twelve 16–21-year-old dancers in its inaugural year, with plans for regional expansion in future iterations.

*"The Marlowe became the national home for Matthew Bourne's New Adventures' new year-long talent development programme for twelve 16–21 year-old dancers from disadvantaged backgrounds."*

**Audience Re-engagement:**

The initiative encouraged audiences to return to live performances, boosting cultural tourism in the region.

**Community Integration:**

Projects like "Feast: Ingredients Of Us" fostered community connections through interactive, participatory events centred around food and memories.

**Geographical Reach:** The combined audience reach of the three main partners covered the entire SELEP region, indicating a broad impact on cultural tourism.

*"The combined audience reach of the three main partners covers the whole SELEP region, with The Marlowe in Kent, The Mercury in Essex and Glyndebourne in East Sussex."*

**Digital Innovation:** The programme explored new digital forms, enhancing the dissemination of performances and reaching wider audiences.

**Knowledge Exchange:**

Collaboration among diverse organisations facilitated the sharing of best practices and innovative approaches in the performing arts sector.

**Programme Adaptation:** The initiative adapted to COVID-19 restrictions by developing industry knowledge in creating and presenting socially distanced performances.

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<h2 data-bbox="91 252 365 352">Talent Accelerator</h2> <p data-bbox="91 373 405 767">Talent Accelerator is a programme initiated by the De La Warr Pavilion (DLWP) to support young people aged 5 to 25 in East Sussex, guiding them toward careers in the Creative Industries. The programme focuses on inspiring youth about creative careers, offering valuable work experience, and fostering collaborations between educational institutions and creative businesses.</p>	<p data-bbox="439 245 759 616">Since its inception in 2022, Talent Accelerator has engaged with over 10,000 children, young people, and employers. The programme facilitated 113 work placements across 23 organisations, totalling 1,500 hours. These efforts aim to retain local talent and stimulate regional economic growth by integrating young individuals into the creative sector.</p>	<p data-bbox="788 245 1099 671">Talent Accelerator has established partnerships with 34 educational institutions and 56 organisations. Notably, it collaborated with Future Creators to launch the Coastal Catalyst project, a two-year initiative supported by £900,000 from Arts Council England. This project seeks to create new employment opportunities and assist young people in entering the creative industries along the Sussex Coastal Corridor.</p>	<p data-bbox="1137 245 1444 644">The programme has been instrumental in developing high-quality work experiences and skills development opportunities. By working closely with cultural organisations, schools, and colleges, Talent Accelerator has helped 11 schools achieve Artsmark recognition, demonstrating a commitment to inclusive employment and nurturing creative skills among young people.</p>	<p data-bbox="1487 245 1794 560">While the primary focus of Talent Accelerator is on youth employment and skills development, its initiatives contribute indirectly to cultural tourism by enriching the local creative landscape. However, specific details regarding environmental sustainability efforts are not highlighted in the available sources.</p>	<p data-bbox="1836 245 2148 472">Talent Accelerator emphasises a coordinated approach to skills development, working with various cultural organisations, Skills East Sussex, the Local Skills Improvement Partnership, and educational institutions.</p> <p data-bbox="1836 496 2148 660">This collaborative framework fosters innovation by aligning educational outcomes with industry needs, thereby driving creativity and adaptability within the region's workforce.</p>

## Main Sources



- SECEN Statement of Intent: South East Creative Economy Network – The South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- SECEN Shared Intelligence Report 2016
- SECEN Create Growth Programme Research and Press Release
- SECEN South East Creatives (ERDF project) summative report, 2021

- SECEN Creative Open Workspace Masterplan Creative Open Workspace Masterplan and Prospectus – The South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Creative Opportunity Zones – see attached latest version of the proposal
- SECEN Creative High Streets report: [https://creativelandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/We-Made-That\\_231\\_SELEP-Creative-high-streets\\_220131.pdf](https://creativelandtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/We-Made-That_231_SELEP-Creative-high-streets_220131.pdf)
- Thames Estuary Production Corridor evaluation: South East Creative Economy Network – The South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- England's Creative Coast evaluation: England's Creative Coast – The South East Local Enterprise Partnership

- Create South East – latest statistics
- Talent Accelerator mid programme evaluation bid – this project is mid-way through development. The Talent Accelerator concept was devised by SECEN membership but this bid is led by Create Music
- Creative Estuary – We Transfer (Evaluation of CDF1 and Creative Estuary Final Evaluation), DCMS Call for Evidence, 2019
- Marlowe Theatre led Pandemic response project – SECEN Catalyst for Culture: Catalyst for Culture – The South East Local Enterprise Partnership

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- Margate Creative Land Trust
- England's Creative Coast
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- Talent Accelerator team

## Page 9

- Sarah Bowrey

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- Forest Tots

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- Rob Ball / Margate Creative Land Trust

## Page 13

- Knot Works
- Palladian Media

## Page 14

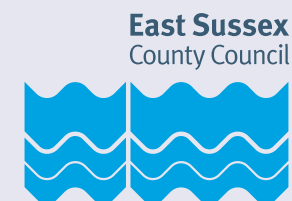
- Drop Dead Films
- Matt Mackman

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- Talent Accelerator team

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