

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**19 January 2023**

### **New Bexley Culture Network invites other organisations to join forces**

A coalition of Bexley-based cultural organisations seeking to develop a wide-ranging cultural programme for the borough's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2025 is calling for other local creative groups to join them in their mission.

The Bexley Culture Network is made up of local 17 cultural organisations with a strong commitment to making positive change across Bexley's neighbourhoods through arts, crafts and culture. It includes community-led organisations, charities, and cultural groups.

The network has kicked off its work by setting out its cultural manifesto – a pledge to work together, share learning and create diverse and inclusive cultural work. They are now inviting other local cultural groups inspired by the manifesto to join with them and take advantage of the many benefits of collaborative working.

Over the coming months, the Bexley Culture Network will meet quarterly to map out a series of high-quality events and activities for 2025 which will celebrate the heritage of the borough, highlighting each of its six town centres. Championing democracy, the group will be chaired by different member organisations on a yearly basis, and will meet quarterly in different cultural venues throughout Bexley.

Adriana Marques, current Chair of the Bexley Culture Network and Peabody's Head of Thamesmead Cultural Strategy, said: "I'm delighted to be launching the Bexley Culture Network alongside our partners, setting out our approach to working together to benefit communities throughout the borough. Coming together in this way enables us to harness our expertise, share resources and make the most of the fantastic creative spirit across the entire borough. The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2025 are a wonderful opportunity for us to show residents from the borough and beyond just what a brilliant place Bexley is. We're really looking forward to getting stuck in and welcoming others on board who share our aspirations and ambition."

Julie Stanning from Bexley Music (LSEAT) said: "The Bexley Culture Network is a great way of bringing cultural organisations together, whatever their specialism. By setting out of a manifesto, we hope to inspire groups across the borough to collaborate with us. There are real benefits from working together towards a common purpose – and the network is a great way of helping individuals and organisations feel value, supported and inspired."

The Cultural Manifesto sets out five key principles:

**Arts, Crafts, and Culture to make a positive change** – by boosting personal confidence and wellbeing, creating connections and understanding within communities, the network will transform the places in which we live.

**Creativity in Bexley** – by working with people, communities, artists, and organisations the network will grow and showcase ambitious arts, craft, local creativity and world class culture.

**Community-led culture** – local people will be empowered to decide on and make culture in their communities. Their contributions to the creative and cultural life in Bexley will be valued.

**Working together** – so that the impact the network has through collaboration is so much greater than working alone.

**Diversity of voice and experience** – by supporting a culture that is diverse and inclusive the network will champion and make visible culture in Bexley so that it is representative of the many voices, identities, experiences of people who live here.

To find out more about the Bexley Culture Network and how to join, contact

[ThamesmeadNow@peabody.org.uk](mailto:ThamesmeadNow@peabody.org.uk)

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### **About Bexley Culture Network**

An informally constituted group, the Bexley Culture Network was set up in 2022 by its founding 17 organisations. Current members of the Bexley Culture Network are:

#### **ArtsTrain**

ArtsTrain is an award-winning creative music project working with young people and music leaders based in Outer and South East London. We work primarily in the boroughs of Bromley, Bexley and Lewisham (but sometimes further afield). We believe all young people should have the chance to create their own music, of any genre, and feel a sense of pride in sharing their work with others.

<https://www.artstrain.org.uk/>

#### **Bexley Music**

Part of London South East Academies Trust. As the lead organisation for the Bexley Music Education Hub, Bexley Music is committed to delivering high-quality music provision for children, young people and the wider community. We work in partnership to provide a comprehensive and diverse range of music opportunities available for all. [www.bexley-music.co.uk](http://www.bexley-music.co.uk)

#### **Bow Arts**

Since 1994 Bow Arts has made creative activity sustainable within our local communities, creating opportunities to work, learn and enjoy affordable, lifelong access to the arts. The Lakeside Centre is a key creative hub in Thamesmead, providing affordable workspace for artists, as well as an early years' nursery, and a café training kitchen. <https://bowarts.org/location/lakeside-centre/>

### **Centrepieces**

Founded in 1999, Centrepieces is a registered charity which helps adults in their mental health recovery through art. The organisation's work centres on an effort to improve the confidence, well-being and self-esteem of people suffering with mental illness, while offering an opportunity to build a social community and promote a better understanding of mental health to the wider public.

[www.centrepieces.org](http://www.centrepieces.org)

### **The Crossness Engines Trust**

Responsible for unique heritage representing an outstanding example of Victorian engineering and a story of health, social and environmental impact that continues to have resonance today. Since its formation, the Trust, largely made up of volunteers, has been dedicated to saving, conserving and developing understanding of the iconic Crossness Pumping Station and sharing its story with wider world. [www.crossness.org.uk](http://www.crossness.org.uk)

### **Erith Town Partnership**

A group of over 25 organisations working in Erith Town Centre. Together the group identifies opportunities for promoting Erith and town-wide collaborative programmes that can draw people to the town centre. This has included ERITH MADE festival - a collaboration with resident group "The Makers", and a recent takeover of the old Argos Unit at Riverside Shopping Centre, turning it into a pop-up cinema.

### **The Exchange in Erith**

A community-owned cultural/social organisation founded to provide Erith's Grade II Old Library - that was designed and built by local people - with a sustainable future. Using the building's heritage to inspire its future, The Exchange focuses on local Craft, Empowerment and Community, inspiring skills, bringing people together and supporting people's ideas for a better future in Erith.

[www.theexchangeerith.com](http://www.theexchangeerith.com)

### **Greenwich Dance**

Greenwich Dance based at The Nest in Thamesmead, exists to change the culture of the business of dance and build stronger dancing communities by embedding artists in the community to unlock and support the creativity of both artists and participants. The result is a sustainable, democratic dance ecology which releases the creativity of local people and artists and supports the two-way interaction between communities, artists and the wider sector. We then use the mechanism of ArtsUnboxed (an online platform we built during the pandemic to tour ideas rather than people) and our podcast Talking Moves, to share our learning and experiences with the wider sector and communities anywhere. [www.greenwichdance.org.uk](http://www.greenwichdance.org.uk), [www.artsunboxed.com](http://www.artsunboxed.com)

### **Lesnes Abbey Woods**

Comprising 88 hectares of ancient woodland, a park and a ruined abbey. Welcoming visitors all year round with a range of events, volunteering opportunities and a community space.

[www.lesnesabbeywoods.org](http://www.lesnesabbeywoods.org)

### **Little Fish Theatre Company**

Little Fish supports underserved young people through the transformative experience of theatre and community arts. Its work is designed to enable young people to question their aspirations and beliefs, empowering them to develop both their social and personal life skills. Participants are inspired to

become cultural consumers or creators, actively shaping a new social & political landscape. As a theatre company and charity, Little Fish is ambitious in building progressive partnerships with emerging artists and local communities to deliver a wide range of applied theatre projects and new touring productions [www.littlefishtheatre.co.uk](http://www.littlefishtheatre.co.uk)

### **London Borough of Bexley**

London Borough of Bexley is a unitary authority providing a wide range of local services to a population of some 250,000 people. The borough has a rich cultural heritage and is home to Bird College, Rose Bruford College and heritage attractions including the Red House Bexleyheath, Lesnes Abbey, Hall Place and Gardens and Danson Mansion. Bexley is a green, safe and friendly place to live, work and raise a family. Our mission is to make Bexley even better.

[www.bexley.gov.uk](http://www.bexley.gov.uk)

### **London College of Performing Arts**

Based in Thamesmead, @londoncollegepa is one of the UK's leading performing arts colleges providing fully-funded, first class training in Acting, Dance and Musical Theatre at sixth form level.

[www.londoncollegeofperformingarts.com](http://www.londoncollegeofperformingarts.com)

### **Peabody**

Peabody is one of the oldest and most well-known housing associations in the UK. We're a not-for-profit organisation, meaning we are guided by the value that our work brings to our communities. Any surplus we make is reinvested into the homes, services and other spaces we own. We are leading the regeneration of Thamesmead, working with a wide range of stakeholders including local people. Our mission is to improve, grow and look after the town for the long term. A diverse cultural strategy is at the heart of our work. [www.ThamesmeadNow.org.uk](http://www.ThamesmeadNow.org.uk)

### **Red House, National Trust**

The only house designed, built and lived in by William Morris, pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement, Red House was the birthplace of this decorative style and haven for the Pre-Raphaelite artists. Open for guided tours. [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/red-house](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/red-house)

### **Rose Bruford College**

Located in the south London suburb of Sidcup, Rose Bruford is a leading higher education institution. Training the next generation of creative professionals in performing, design and technical arts since 1950. <https://www.bruford.ac.uk/>

### **Three Rivers**

Three Rivers is an alliance of local organisations using art to build community in the London Borough of Bexley. We want to create a new way of making culture in Bexley, by empowering local people to make it themselves. <https://threeriversbexley.org/about/>

### **TACO!**

TACO! is an artist-led organisation for research, production, and exchange. TACO! Is engaged with its local context and centers artist practices in the way it works and grows, supporting a dialogue between contemporary art, audiences, community, and place.

[www.taco.org.uk](http://www.taco.org.uk)

