

# Nature Watch Project Brief: Greater Thames Marshes, Nature Improvement Area.



place  
services

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## 1 General information & project overview

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### Project Summary

Essex County Council and Place Services on behalf of the Greater Thames Marshes Nature Improvement Area (NIA) partnership and with support from the Arts Council of England and the Olympic Legacy Interpretation fund is offering a commission for up to £26,500 for the research, design and implementation of a new artwork. The artwork aims to encourage new visitors, enhance understanding and create habitat for the Greater Thames Marshes and the species that inhabit this unique environment, as part of a Nature Watch Point project.

The commission is open to artist and artist collaborations that have practices in land art, exploring environmental issues or inspired by the natural environment (please see full artist criteria below).

Nature Watch Points deliver the Greater Thames Marshes NIA vision for engaging with local communities:

*“Through an inspiring programme of events and activities local communities will understand, appreciate and experience the wildlife on their doorstep and take actions to protect the natural environment in the Greater Thames Marshes NIA”*

Hadleigh Country Park through the creation of an artwork, or series of artworks, aims to enhance the understanding of the environment along this section of the Essex coast.

The project provides a unique opportunity with much of the land within Hadleigh Country Park being designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest\* as it is a haven for around 1,300 species of wildlife including the shrill carder bee, the emerald damselfly and the weevil hunting wasp. The local environment also supports dark-bellied Brent geese.

The works should assist in creating a desirable destination, opening up the location and improving the public's understanding and experience. Links with other associated initiatives should be taken into account during the development of the project, providing a creative programme that will contribute and enhance the identity of Hadleigh Country Park as part of the Nature Improvement Area as a unique and wildlife-rich landscape.

## 2 Background

### **Background NIA**

Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) are Government (Defra) funded initiatives designed to bring partners together to deliver improvements for wildlife, working at a landscape scale by creating "more, bigger, better and connected" habitats. The Greater Thames Marshes NIA is a partnership project led by Thames Estuary Partnership, Essex County Council, Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway, RSPB and the Greater London Authority. The Greater Thames Marshes NIA has 5 core objectives:

1. Evidence-based approach
2. Delivering conservation actions on the ground
3. Commitment to partnership working
4. Improving Communications and Access
5. Building a lasting legacy

Within the existing project, our conservation objectives are:

- Enhancing and managing Open Mosaic Habitat for Thames Terrace Invertebrates
- Creating and restoring wetland habitat for Lapwing, Redshank and Water Voles.

The proposed project is to create an interpretative work of public art that provides a focus for the view across the Thames Terraces in Hadleigh Country Park. The project will involve three local community groups, The Friends of Hadleigh Country Park, Artists at

Hadleigh Old Fire Station and the Hadleigh Farm Local Advisory group. The project's legacy aims to encourage greater understanding and use of this unique environment and the ecology of the area through an artist-led programme of engagement and activity.

The commission is a key deliverable within the Communications and Access objective within the NIA; however there are a number of on-

going activities taking place across the Greater Thames to engage with communities which much should be taken into consideration:

- Wildlife Trusts "discover and learn" Projects
- RSPB People Engagement and field teaching activities on reserves
- Coastal Access Path (North Kent and South Essex) and Maxi-green.
- Parklands funded projects
- Greater Thames Futurescape Community Engagement Officer
- Natural England Access to Nature Programme

Further information on the NIA can be found at the end of this brief.

### **Essex County Council/Place Services**

Essex County Council is committed to enhancing the public realm as part of the continuing drive to improve the quality of life in Essex. An ambitious programme under the banner 'Genius Loci' brought creative-led projects to town centres, schools and infrastructure development throughout Essex.

Essex County Council has continued with its programme of commissioning innovative public art.

The Nature Watch project aims to create an exciting and welcoming experience within Hadleigh Country Park. The programme will see the collaboration between the RSPB, ECC/Place Services, and the Olympic Legacy Team.

The commission for the Nature Watch Point is an exciting opportunity to produce innovative, site-specific artworks and interpretation, informed by the environment and members of the project steering group.

### **Hadleigh Country Park**

Hadleigh is situated in the county of Essex in the East of England. The Park is located on the southern coast of Essex providing spectacular views along the Thames Estuary. The A13 runs through Hadleigh and is the main arterial route into London and to Southend-on-Sea. The local area is made up largely of historic coastal grazing marshes and ancient woodland habitat, sections of which have been designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Hadleigh Country Park is owned and managed by Essex County Council (ECC) and Castle Point Borough Council (CPBC). The Park covers 152 hectares, and contains ancient woodland, coastal grazing marsh and SSSI grassland and scrub habitats. Facilities include a ranger office and an Iron Age round house replica. The Park receives an estimated 125,000 annual visits and has Green Flag status.

### **Olympic Legacy**

In a unique partnership with The Salvation Army, Essex County Council is promoting the Hadleigh Farm and Country Park Olympic Legacy Project (OLP), which seeks to provide mountain bike activities based around the London 2012 Olympic Mountain Bike Course, together with a much broader community and visitor destination offer, as well as capitalizing on the Site's existing visitor facilities. The proposals include new and improved recreational trails and visitor facilities on land at Hadleigh Farm and Hadleigh Country Park, providing opportunities for people to more fully access, enjoy and appreciate the area's natural and historic environment assets. The project is intended to deliver substantial benefits both for the local communities and visitors, and help secure the long term future of Hadleigh Country Park as a valuable green space for communities in Castle Point and throughout South Essex within the Thames Gateway South Essex Green Grid. The project will bring together the heritage of Hadleigh Farm and Country Park alongside the legacy of the Olympic Mountain Bike Course by:

- Retaining and adapting the Olympic Mountain Bike Course for use by the public.
- Improving the wider network of trails and paths for a range of users.
- Delivering projects to protect and enhance the natural and historic environment
- Improving facilities for the community and visitors to the Site and wider area.

Further information on the Olympic Legacy can be found at the end of this brief.

### 3 Project Brief & Objectives

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This is an exciting opportunity to develop a site-specific, environmental artwork that will improve access to and communication about biodiversity within this unique landscape. Place Services is looking to appoint an artist/ artist's collaboration to work with the Greater Thames Marshes Nature Watch Point project in the development of a dynamic and innovative vision for the interpretation and enjoyment of the identified NIA area/s in Essex.

The Nature Improvement Area of Greater Thames Marshes is offering a commission for up to £26,500 for the inspirational design and implementation of an artwork that creatively interprets the distinctive environmental features and invertebrates specific to the area.

The aim of the project is to creatively integrate an artwork into this sensitive environment and enhance the interpretation of the area and its biodiversity, whilst working with the local community to build a lasting relationship with the site. The work should look to improve people's understanding and appreciation of this environment, whether visiting for the first time or on a regular basis, transforming and enhancing people's experience and understanding of the environment and its habitat. The appointed artist will work with local residents to encourage their engagement in the development of the artwork, whilst increasing participation and access to nature within the landscape / at Hadleigh Country Park.

The Nature Watch points are designed to enable wider and deeper engagement with target audiences, with an intention to provide a legacy of access to the natural environment beyond the timescale of the project.

Due to the fragile nature of the site the artwork will be required to respond sensitively to the site and its requirements. The work should enhance the landscape aesthetically

and physically, respect the natural and historic characteristics of the area, and provide additional habitat for invertebrates and small reptiles.

#### Project description:

- To **enhance the understanding and appreciation** of the Greater Thames Marshes environment amongst new visitors and local residents to the area.
- To identify opportunities for **integrating art into the natural environment**, taking into consideration DDA regulations H&S requirements and environmental designations
- To support delivery of key themes, messages, aims and objectives of the Hadleigh Farm and Hadleigh Country Park Legacy Project Interpretive Master plan
- To develop a **holistic programme of activities** with the partners that will incorporate event/s, interpretation, marketing and training.
- The project should look to **increase visitors to the park** that would not normally engage with the countryside.
- To **establish a partnership project** between local Mental Health support providers and Hadleigh Country Park that will act as a pilot for future collaborative programming.
- Assist in the **monitoring and evaluation** of the project.

## 4 Role of the artist

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The role of the artist will be to:

- Design, develop and deliver a minimum of three concept proposals (one of which being selected for fabrication) for a public artworks designed to engage people, create a broader understanding and appreciation of the Greater Thames Marshes NIA conservation objectives and support delivery of key themes, messages, aims and objectives of the Hadleigh Farm and Hadleigh Country Park Legacy Project Interpretive Master plan (ECC, 2012)
- Work with the Nature Watch Point delivery team, Hadleigh Country Park Rangers and other environmental and heritage professionals to achieve the above and encourage new visitors to the park.
- Carefully consider site context in developing the public art proposal, ensuring the works are sensitive to the landscape and environmental interests, and complement and build appreciation of the area.
- Develop and participate in the public consultation process with local groups.
- Contribute to appropriate marketing and promotional activities linked to the public art programme.
- Create and install, or oversee the creation and installation (as appropriate) of the artwork(s) as agreed by NIA, ECC and the Olympic Legacy Team.
- The Nature Watch Point project seeks to increase levels of access to and engagement with the natural environment. The artist

will be required to submit a monitoring report outlining the number of people engaged throughout this project.

- Provide a brief final report describing the outputs of the community engagement programme.

The artist will be expected to attend all appropriate project meetings and to produce drawings or plans necessary for achieving relevant permissions.

### Consultation & Engagement

Consultation with local groups will be an essential part of this project. The artist will be expected to propose methods of engaging with community groups and involving them in the process and also to participate in on-going consultation activities. Consultation, engagement and interpretation activity might include workshops and presentations to a wide variety of local groups, businesses, exhibitions alongside the groups identified above for more targeted programmes of involvement in the project.

A focus of the community programme is the involvement of users of the local mental health support programmes run by Open Arts and Rethink Recovery. Open Arts have supported over 40 people through the Hadleigh Old Fire Station Studio in the past year and there is an ambition for this programme to extend the support they offer to users of this service. Rethink Recovery also offers creative programmes for their users. An additional small, but strategic budget of £1,500 has been allocated for the delivery of a programme to cover practical and logistical costs for the groups or individuals to take part and for a 'Tool Kit' or 'Case Study' style document to be developed with the specialist service providers, forming a legacy for this aspect of the programme. Full support and some training will be provided to the selected artist (depending on prior experience).

## 5 Steering Group

A steering group will work with the artist/s to select the proposal to be worked up to full design stage. The selected proposal should be worked up to a stage where materials and/or equipment for the scheme has been specified, costed and, where appropriate, a manufacturer/contractor identified.

The Steering Group includes:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Public Art Project Manager                | Clare Cleary<br>Essex County Council/Place Services     |
| Spatial Planning and Regeneration Manager | John Meehan<br>Essex County Council                     |
| Nature Watch Point Project Manager        | Jo Sampson (RSPB, Futurescapes Programme)               |
| Senior Consultant, Historic Environment   | Adrian Gasgoyne,<br>Essex County Council/Place Services |
| Senior Consultant, Ecology                | Luke Bristow, Essex County Council/Place Services       |
| Hadleigh Country Park Site Manager        | Andrew Woodhouse<br>Essex County Council                |
| Olympic Legacy Team                       | Robert Anderson,<br>Olympic Legacy Team                 |
| Hadleigh Old Fire Station                 | Duncan Smith<br>Director ACAVA & Local artist           |
| Local Resident                            | Friends of Hadleigh Country Park                        |
| Open Arts                                 | Jo Shenton  |
| Rethink Recovery                          | Sharon Debrick/<br>Denise Murphy                        |
| Natural England                           | Neil Fuller   |

### Project management

The Public Realm team within Place Services will undertake project management responsibilities in collaboration with the Steering Group.

## 6 Budgets and Programme

The Artist/Collective will work on a part-time, self-employed basis commencing in the March 2014. Preliminary designs are to be presented in September 2014 with technical information for the selected artwork proposal to be completed by November 2015 and works installed by March 2015.

The total budget for all elements and costs associated with the programme is £26,500. It is envisaged that this will be allocated in the following way £6,500 for the research and design of the artwork including engagement activities with the three identified groups; up to £20,000 for the fabrication and installation of a permanent artwork/s that meets the outlined requirements. The above includes all costs for design and any material samples required for the design.

| Timeframe   | Activity/Milestone   |
|---|--|
| Feb/March 2014<br>3rd March<br>11 <sup>th</sup> March<br>w/o 17 March | Circulation of brief<br>Deadline submissions<br>Interviews<br>Appoint/s made   |
| April – Sept.<br><br>End Sept<br>November                             | Research, design<br>development and<br>workshops<br>Initial concepts presented<br>Final designs,<br>specifications, costs and<br>approvals/permissions |
| Dec.-Feb. 2015  | Fabrication/construction<br>installation.  |
| March 2015.   | Launch/ Nature Watch   |

### Mentoring Programme

A second, optional element to the project is the involvement with Essex County Council's Artist Mentoring programme. The selected artist for the Nature Improvement Area at Hadleigh Country Park commission will be offered the opportunity to work with an artist at the start of their career who has been selected to be part of Essex's artist mentoring programme. The mentor programme is a separately funded project. Further details regarding this, optional programme will be provided to the commissioned artist.

## 7 Technical & physical requirements

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In developing proposals, the artist will be expected to consider a number of technical and physical considerations, these include:

**Context:** Commissioned works should complement the character of the site and surrounding landscape, and its natural and historic environment.

**Planning:** Commissioned works should take account of any matters arising out of the Planning Permissions and consents that may be required for the site such as liaising with Natural England regarding the areas that have SSSI status.

**Material and structural integrity:** Material and equipment specifications should be provided with details of material's structural integrity. Within the proposed design a sample or prototype of material / equipment (or variant of a standard material/ equipment) should be provided.

Any sample, prototype or variant shall be 'fit for purpose', robustly made and comply with the specifications for the location and shall be submitted to the steering group, together with full technical and dimensional data if requested, to enable both its assessment and the detailing of any adjustments necessary prior to full production.

All material and equipment recommended or specified within the designs shall be fit for purpose and comply with the relevant BS, EN and IEC requirements (if appropriate). The cost of obtaining any necessary approvals shall be included in any price, detailed as a separate item, if necessary.

Attention should be paid to ensuring that the impact of vandalism is minimised through the use of robust materials and design.

**Budget:** Proposed works must not exceed the budget allocation.

**Maintenance:** The work must be designed with a view to keeping maintenance cost implications as low as possible. The artist will be required to provide detailed cost projections for routine maintenance and running costs [inspecting, cleaning, painting, replacement of parts, etc.] of the work as part of their design proposal. Attention should be paid to developing an approach that requires minimum maintenance and in the event of damage is easily repairable at a reasonable cost.

**Health & Safety:** Issues of Health and Safety both in the design proposal and realisation methodology. Works will need to comply with the relevant regulations.

**Methodology for manufacture:** The artist will be required to provide full details of manufacture and costs of installation of the work as part of their design proposal.

In the event of bespoke manufacture by the artist she/he must demonstrate current and appropriate indemnity insurance relevant to the appointed person and to the object/s to be manufactured.

Where it is anticipated that on-site manufacture or installation will be carried out by the artist and/or sub-contractor appointed by them, adequate and appropriate public liability and professional indemnity insurance must be in place. Where appropriate the observation of CDM will be required.

**Promotion:** The Nature Improvement Area, Essex County Council/ Place Services, and Olympic Legacy Team and ACE must be credited on all literature whether printed or digital in relation to the project.

## 8 Selection Criteria

Applicants should be experienced practising visual artists or craftspeople working in any media with a practice focusing on natural environments.

- The appointed artist will be selected on the basis of their track record, suitability of practise and understanding of and sympathy with the brief.
- Applicants should have experience in fulfilling public art commissions, including drawing up proposals, budgets and technical requirements.
- Applicants should have experience of conducting art workshops with the public or they must be prepared to work with an experienced workshop leader in the delivery of the workshops.
- Applicants should have good communication skills, both written and verbal, enabling them to address meetings, write reports, etc.
- Applicants should have good inter-personal skills, enabling them to work effectively with members of the project team, stakeholders and community groups involved.
- Applicants should have good organisational skills, enabling them to organise their time effectively, meet deadlines, etc.
- Applicants should be able to work effectively within a team and on their own.
- Applicants should maintain a comprehensive policy of insurance with a minimum cover per claim of five million pounds.

## 9 Submissions

Selection will be made by an interview process of the short-listed artists. Travel expenses to the interview will be refunded.

Artists will register their interest by submitting the following:

- A written expression of interest, this should explain why you are interested in this commission and your project approach and methodology referencing any community engagement projects you have delivered or collaborated on previously (no more than two sides of A4).
- Visual material (maximum of 10 images) with brief accompanying information (please do not send originals).
- An outline budget proposal for the delivery of the project.
- Current Curriculum Vitae
- Contact details of two referees of similar completed commissions.
- Any additional information i.e. catalogues/ publications. (Please include a S.A.E. for the return of any materials sent).

Email applications are welcome, maximum size per email is 10MB. Please note full applications should be contained in one email and formatted for A4 printing.

### **Submission should be sent to:**

Clare Cleary, Place Services  
County Hall, Chelmsford Essex.  
CM1 1QH  
E: [clare.cleary@essex.gov.uk](mailto:clare.cleary@essex.gov.uk)

### **Application deadline: 3 March**

Interviews will be held on Tuesday 11 March 2014.

## 10 Further Information

### What is a Nature Watch Point?

Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) are pilot schemes funded by the Government to bring key partners together to plan and deliver significant improvements for wildlife and people through:

- Sustainable use of natural resources;
- Restoring and creating wildlife habitats;
- Connecting local sites; and,
- Joining up local action on a landscape scale.
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The Greater Thames Marshes NIA covers over 50,000ha of marshland and estuarine habitat and includes many internationally significant sites for wildlife which are not delivering to their full potential.

For further information visit: <http://greaterthamesmarshes.com>

### The Greater Thames Marshes Nature Improvement Area

The Greater Thames Marshes Nature Improvement Area covers nearly 50,000ha of estuarine marshland in South East England, stretching from East London to Whitstable in Kent and Southend in Essex. It is one of the most important estuaries in Europe for some 300,000 wintering waterfowl and is home to endangered species such as the Water Vole, Shriill Carder Bee, unique invertebrates of the Thames Terrace soils and many farmland birds.

This valuable natural landscape is under pressure from habitat loss and disturbance through growth of developments, roads and other infrastructure; colonisation by invasive species that outcompete native species of flora and fauna, such as mink; and climate change, where sea-level rise will swallow up inter-tidal habitats leading to further loss of this valuable habitat.

The Greater Thames Marshes NIA seeks to protect and enhance this valuable habitat and increase numbers of endangered species and protect existing flora and fauna. Thus this important landscape that is highly protected by national and international legislation is failing to live up to its full potential.

The GTMNIA aims to work with local communities, visitors, businesses and experts to restore this valuable habitat to its former glory. The result will be a vibrant marshes and estuarine landscape where residents, businesses and experts work together for the benefit of wildlife to create a robust natural landscape that can exist alongside development and has greater resistance to the challenges of climate change.<sup>1</sup>

The Thames terrace marshes support a wide variety of invertebrate-rich terrestrial and aquatic habitats. The Shriill Carder Bee, Four-banded Weevil Wasp and Fancy-legged Fly are among some of the charismatic species.

Building on research by the University of East London and recent work of BugLife, the NIA is a unique opportunity to draw together the work of several partners, maximizing their impact and deliver a coherent landscape-scale ecological network for Thames Terrace Invertebrates.

The ambition for the project is to applying a mixture of traditional and experimental techniques, creating and maintaining a 90ha mosaic of suitable habitats such as flower-rich grassland, scrub, and bare ground across. Action is being targeted at 7 sites mainly in South Essex, with a focus on three 'flagship' bumblebee species: Shriill Carder Bee, Brown banded Carder Bee and Red-tailed Carder Bee.

This practical work will be informed by a bespoke monitoring programme, involving a 'citizen science' project focused on rare bumblebees associated with TTI habitats, including a series of workshops educating volunteers on species identification and nest-searching techniques.

### **Objectives Nature Watch Point**

#### *High Level Objectives:*

- *Communications and Access – through a variety of activities and projects we will place local community and stakeholder understanding and participation at the heart of delivery in the NIA*
- *Increased understanding and awareness of the biodiversity value of the Greater Thames Marshes amongst local communities and stakeholders throughout the NIA.*

#### *Detailed Objectives:*

- *To provide new opportunities for hands-on experience of nature by identifying and delivering a "Nature Watch Point" projects – adding value to existing initiatives (6 Nature Watch points will be delivered in total through the NIA programme).*
- *To increase the level of outdoor recreation by NIA residents and improve attitudes of local communities to biodiversity and rural environment year-on-year. This objective will be assessed by the MENE data and NIA survey data.*

*\*A Site of Special Scientific Interest, SSSI, is a conservation designation denoting a protected area in the United Kingdom. SSSIs are the basic building block of site-based nature conservation.*

### **Olympic Legacy (cont.)**

At the heart of the Olympic Legacy proposals are plans to improve and enhance the network of existing paths and trails across Hadleigh Country Park and Hadleigh Farm,

improving access for walkers, cyclists, mountain biking, runners and horse riders.

The trail network will include the adapted Olympic Mountain Bike course. This will be connected to the Country Park and the wider landscape by a network of multiuser trails for walkers and cyclists. New walking trails and enhanced horse riding trails and cross-country running trails, within the Country Park will also be provided.

Improved visitor facilities for the Country Park will be provided at a new purpose built 'Hub' based around Sayers Farm. The Hub will provide a primary gateway to the network of recreational trails for walkers, cyclists and other users. The Hub will also offer a range of local community and business opportunities, including the provision of replacement workshop units.

In outline, the new Hub will include:

- Ranger facilities
- Community space
- Toilets/changing rooms
- Café
- Bike hire/shop.

Within the Hub, The Salvation Army will provide more life skills and employment training opportunities for the people it currently supports, such as adults with learning difficulties, as well as assisting local families experiencing difficulties, all with strong links to the benefits of the natural environment. Outside the Hub there will be: children's play facilities and a cycling skills area. The Iron Age roundhouse reconstruction and memorial garden will be retained.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.gtqkm.org.uk/greater-thames-marshes-nia/>

ECC 2012 Hadleigh Farm and Hadleigh Country Park Interpretive Master Plan



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