



IN-SITE CASE STUDY

September 2015

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Public Art Consultants



Contents Page

Looking for something?

Executive Summary.....3

Introduction.....4

PartnershipWorking.....5

Lead Artist - Mentoring Programme.....6

IN-SITE Commissions.....6

Advisory Panel.....8

Community Engagement.....10

Creative Seminar.....11

Continued Professional Development Programme – Figure Ground.....12

The Commissioned Artists – The Work.....13

Key Achievements.....14

Lesson learned.....16

Recommendations.....18

Conclusion.....21

IN-SITE is funded by the growing places fund.

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Executive Summary

Between January and August 2015 Rochester Riverside and Sun Pier, Chatham, played host to six commissioned artists who created a range of site-specific public artwork for IN-SITE. The overall aim of IN-SITE was to contribute towards a wider framework of commissioning public art so that it becomes part of the regeneration and future development of Medway.

The artists’ work encouraged the visitor to discover and engage with the waterfront before it undergoes change and regeneration. They were also set the challenge to collaborate in pairs, to work with another artist whom they didn’t know and whose work was different to their own.

Stuart Bowditch and Christopher Sacre merged sound and sculpture to focus on sights and sounds; Daisy Farris and Nicola Flower used dance to reinterpret stories and anecdotes; and Jane Pitt and Caitlin Heffernan responded through drawings and sound to the voices of the land and river.

All six artists were supported in this process by Public Art Consultants FrancisKnight, Lead Artist Katayoun Dowlatshahi, the Arts Development and Regeneration Teams at Medway Council, and an Advisory Panel made up of community representatives and locally based organisations.

Over the project period, 36 artists were involved in the commissions, 25 events were held, over 56,000 were reached through online activity and 795 people attended a range of activity from artist-led walks to film screenings, performances, and floor-based drawings and soundings along the riverside pathway.

A mentoring programme ran parallel to the main project, both for the commissioned artists with hands-on advice, and guidance from national established artists such as Michael Pinsky, Heinrich and Palmer, and David Cotterrell. In addition ten artists from the region, looking to improve their practice in the public realm, attended sessions run by artist-led organisation Figure Ground.

The learning from IN-SITE was shared with planners, architects, local authority officers and artists at a Creative Seminar hosted by the School of Music and Fine Art, The University of Kent in July 2015.

This case study recommends that Medway Council develop a legacy for IN-SITE through a phased approach to commissioning artists in the public realm as part of the regeneration plans for Medway. And that this is rolled out across the authority with a robust framework in place, advocated by the Strategic Cultural Partnership. It also recommends that Medway Council develop further projects, which mentor artists and deliver a hands-on approach to professional development, with a focus on reciprocal learning and peer mentoring.

The case study concludes that while there were many challenges in developing public art projects, the commissioning of artists brought fresh ideas and alternative approaches to access, engagement and professional development. The results demonstrate meaningful arts participation, newly formed relationships, and a confidence in how artists can contribute to the regeneration process.

In October 2015, IN-SITE Public Art Project won the Visual Arts category in the Medway Council Culture, Design and Tourism Awards. This was an endorsement on the quality of the commissioning programme and recognition of the benefits and value of working with artists on development sites.

IN-SITE has been funded by Medway Council, The Growing Places Fund, Unlimited, and Arts Council England. With support from Hyde Housing, Ruth Crundwell, Heather Haythornthwaite, the Diocese of Rochester, the University of Kent, the University for the Creative Arts, and volunteers and people of Medway.





Introduction

In September 2014 FrancisKnight were appointed by Medway Council to project manage IN-SITE. Through working closely with officers from the Arts Development and Regeneration Teams, the project's vision was to enable artists to be empowered so they could confidently respond to and initiate opportunities, creating exceptional, exciting, responsive and vibrant art in the public realm.

The project had three strategic priorities:

- To deliver a meaningful Continued Professional Development (CPD) programme for artists and makers within a more sustainable model.
- To increase participation and engagement in the arts by developing new audiences and strengthening partnerships.
- To celebrate diversity and achievement through improved access to the arts for all ages and abilities, providing greater and broader experiences of culture.

Throughout the nine-month programme, artists were encouraged to develop and stretch their creative practice and intellect through the development of temporary site-specific commissions and community engagement. Continuous professional development was key and a lead artist was appointed to support the commissioned artists with a facilitated programme of learning and artist discourse.

In January 2015 six artists were paired to work collaboratively on the project: Stuart Bowditch, Daisy Farris, Nicola Flower, Caitlin Heffernan, Jane Pitt and Christopher Sacre.

Guided by Medway Council's Principal Regeneration Officer three sites were identified for the commissions. These sites were chosen for their unique character and location, being situated within major regeneration areas identified in the newly adopted Rochester Riverside framework and linking both Chatham and Rochester waterfront.

© Mike Snarr



Partnership Working

A strengthened partnership with the Regeneration Team at Medway Council provided invaluable support for the commissioned artists and the IN-SITE programme as a whole. Working closely with the Principal Regeneration Officer for Rochester Riverside provided professional knowledge, guidelines, contacts, sign-posting and problem-solving when dealing with practical issues. Local community groups were also identified who lived in, worked in, or visited the riverside locations.

“The project has developed a new form of engagement, different to the consultation/engagement usually used by regeneration/development teams. Artists are seen as being far more neutral than developers or council officers and so are able to engage more honestly and openly with the community.” Alice Waller, Principal Regeneration Officer

Since the original application Medway Council have also now formed a strategic alliance with Unlimited – a three-year commissioning and support programme for disabled artists delivered by Artsadmin (arts producers and presenters) and Shape (disability-led arts organisation), and funded by the Arts Council England.

Unlimited worked closely with IN-SITE to develop inclusive and accessible support. Their guidance in assisting deaf and disabled artists was greatly appreciated and, through an ongoing dialogue with Unlimited, extra project funding was secured that unlocked support and accessibility for all the public engagement events including the Creative Seminar.

“I found the pairing of artists to be interesting, and challenging: it was a positive push for artists to work with different mediums and in formats which might not outwardly appear to complement one another. I thought that the pairing of Stuart Bowditch and Christopher Sacre, a sound artist and a deaf artist, to be bold, and I was so pleased with the outcome of their work. Their piece was engaging, exciting, and a great way to incorporate access into a public work. I found the public to be captivated by this work, and very happy to participate and contribute, which is always a delight to see.” Sara Dziadik, Programme Coordinator – Arts and Exhibitions – Shape

Lead Artist - Mentoring Programme

In December 2014 Dr Katayoun Dowlatshahi was appointed as Lead Artist for IN-SITE and undertook devising a mentoring programme. Dowlatshahi creates work for public and private commissions and specialises in photography, drawing, architectural glass and time-based media. She has successfully integrated contemporary art into a variety of landscapes, public spaces, regeneration projects and urban environments.

The mentoring programme for IN-SITE provided critical review and reflection, where shared experiences formed the majority of the debate.

“The Lead Artist’s role was two-fold; one task was to create and deliver a bespoke programme of mentoring for artists wishing to work in the public realm, involving other experienced artists and arts professionals. The other task was to support FrancisKnight and Medway Council in creating and delivering a Creative Seminar with a focus on art and regeneration. This was a means of disseminating all the learning outcomes and good practice achieved from the IN-SITE programme within the context of the regeneration of Rochester Riverside and to establish a precedence for embedding future projects and opportunities for artists in such schemes.” Katayoun Dowlatshahi

As a starting point a questionnaire was sent round to the artists to determine their expectations and mentoring needs. A selection of established artists were approached to share their experiences. This was a great opportunity for the commissioned artists to get hands-on consultation from other professional artists who were currently working on live projects. Five sessions were programmed in total and covered:

- Sharing best practice. (Presentation by the IN-SITE commissioned artists.)
- Methodology of collaboration. (Artists Anna Heinrich & Leon Palmer; Judy Adam, curator of the Art South collaborations; and Jacqueline McCormick from Cheshire Dance.)
- Working in the public realm – a view on engagement. (Artists Michael Pinsky and John Newling.)
- Working in the public realm – site, context and scale. (Artists David Cotterrell and Jane Watt.)
- Commissioner / client perspective. (Art consultant Sam Wilkinson; and Carmel Clapson, Council Arts Officer – lead officer from Cheshire West.)

IN-SITE Commissions

The commissions were open call to artists from the South East, with one specific deaf and disabled commission. The commissions ran alongside each other and lasted 9 months, with a 6-month development period and 3 months for install, community participation, and launch.

Their aim was to bring together artists to work collaboratively, across art-forms, on three large-scale temporary public art projects. Throughout the commission the artists were encouraged to be ambitious, take risks, and challenge themselves within their own practice. The new work had to resonate with the identified place and provide memorable experiences for local communities, with a timeframe that included periods for research and development, consultation, creative development, fabrication, installation/production, community participation, documentation, and celebration or unveiling.





Advisory Panel

An advisory panel was formed for IN-SITE made up of individuals who represented local residents, businesses, organisations and also Medway Regeneration Ambassadors (a network of community volunteers who have come together to spread the message of Medway's regeneration ambitions and achievements). The panel provided a local focus whilst bringing together expertise and local knowledge to ensure quality, value and lasting impact for IN-SITE.

“The project had an embryonic and ephemeral quality, being the first of such endeavours concerned with an urban area with new housing and the beginnings of a community in a neglected brownfield dockland site. It was not easy to elicit local community support when the project is about raising a neighbourhood self-awareness in the first instance. The project achieved its intentions to raise a consciousness and make this neighbourhood begin to see its identity by considering its recent past and its distinct characteristics.” Heather Haythornthwaite

In total five meetings took place, with sharing of information, opportunities to meet the commissioned artists, and promotion of all the events and activities.

The panel was made up of:

- FrancisKnight IN-SITE Project Manager.
- Dr Katayoun Dowlatshahi – Lead Artist.
- Lynsey Brogan (Resident Engagement Officer – Hyde Housing, Bellerophon House). Bellerophon House is a sheltered accommodation facility providing 24 hr homecare for its residents. Its location is close to Rochester Riverside and it is one of only a few local residences that occupy the area.
- Heather Haythornthwaite, Regeneration Ambassador, Artist. The role of Regeneration Ambassadors is to communicate accurate information among their peers and the wider community at events and in their everyday lives. They also advise Medway Council on how to communicate effectively with the public about regeneration.
- Ruth Crundwell – A local businesswoman with shops in Rochester High Street, also a member of the Rochester Riverside Roller Skaters who use the Riverside on a regular basis.
- Gabi Mind, Lecturer – University of the Creative Arts – UCA Rochester offers courses in fashion, photography, jewellery, product design, digital animation and photo editing. Their student accommodation is situated on Rochester Riverside.
- Tim Meacham – Lecturer in Fine Art & Partner College Liaison at The School of Music and Fine Art at the University of Kent, and at Kent Business School at The Historic Dockyard, Chatham.
- Alice Waller – Principal Regeneration Project Officer Planning/Regeneration Medway Council.
- Robyn Goldsmith – Education and Outreach Officer – Arts Development Team, Medway Council.
- Sara Dziadik, Programme Coordinator – Arts and Exhibitions – Shape/ Unlimited – Shape work in collaboration with Unlimited (Disability arts organisation) and provided support for artist Christopher Sacre as well as guidance on all access needs as they arose during the IN-SITE project.
- Canon Jean Kerr MA (Director of Mission & Community Engagement and Canon Missioner, Diocese of Rochester)





Community Engagement

Community engagement was an integral part of the IN-SITE commissions, in that artists were expected to involve local community groups in the research phase of the project and the final events and activities. The identified community groups comprised of residents who may not normally engage in the arts or regularly visit the area, but were living near to the sites: The University for the Creative Arts student accommodation, a local roller skating group, a local artist community and visitors to the riverside were directly targeted and included.

“Oooooooze. Revisiting my birth town to see it before it changes and “sound” out the waterside in old Kent words (slappy – gads – crick!) with similarly interested strangers. Good fun. Different perspective on a place I know well. Love the approach.” Maxine Gooding

Creative Seminar

Titled ‘Regeneration and the Role of Public Art’, the Creative Seminar provided a foundation for reflecting on and taking forward achievements from the IN-SITE project, Rochester Riverside, and the public art commissions. It was attended by over 70 developers, planners, local authorities, architects and artists.

Working with the Lead Artist, FrancisKnight developed a programme to include an open discussion surrounding the exploration and development of art in the public realm and creative processes. Chaired by artist David Cotterrell, other key speakers included Senior Board Director from LDA Design, Neil Mattinson, and Tom Littlewood, Director at Ginkgo Projects.

David Cotterrell

David Cotterrell is an installation artist working across diverse media and technologies. His practice is typified by an interest in intersection – whether fleeting encounter or heavily orchestrated event. His works explore the human condition and the breaks or nuances that can lead to a less ambiguous understanding of the

world they inhabit. Encapsulating the roles of programmer, producer and director, his practice has considered the limitations and potential of representations of human behaviour through micro-simulation, macro-planning and mediated representation.

Neil Mattinson

LDA Design is an independent design, environment and sustainability consultancy. Established for over 35 years with a professional team of almost 150 people, they work in the UK and internationally, and equally for the private and public sector.

Their work includes best practice guidance, city visions and strategic masterplans, regeneration strategies and frameworks, development masterplans, sustainability and energy studies, public realm strategies and projects, parks and green infrastructure, design guidance and coding.

Tom Littlewood

Tom founded Ginkgo Projects in 2001 after having led the arts charity Independent Public Arts. Originally a

landscape architect, he broadened his practice to encompass the pioneering concepts of linking cultural planning and placemaking in the mid 1990s. He has wide and grounded experience in generating and leading creative projects that integrate art and creativity as a key element of environmental, architectural and regenerative schemes.

Speakers invited open discussion and facilitated activity to enable the sharing of learning, guidance and advice from professionals working in the public realm. The Seminar generated a forum for reflection and review, as well as distilling key outcomes, drivers, concerns and opportunities.

“There was great positivity about the event and the IN-SITE program, not just from the local authority but from architects, artists and other professionals who attended.”
Katayoun Dowlatshahi

“Gutted to go – great, provocative, educational & inclusive day.”

Jo Verrent Senior Producer for Unlimited

Continued Professional Development Programme – Figure Ground

The Continued Professional Development programme was designed for artists who weren’t successful when applying to IN-SITE but needed back-to-basics guidance and information.

A series of CPD training sessions were managed by Figure Ground, an experienced artist-led organisation working within the public realm. Figure Ground focus on artist development through collaborative practice and engaged debate.

Ten artists benefitted from the programme, with some volunteering to help the IN-SITE commissioned artists with installation of their work.



The Commissioned Artists – The Work

Paired without knowing each other, the six commissioned artists collaborated to produce works that were specific to site and location.

Collaboration 1:

Jane Pitt is an interdisciplinary artist from a visual and live arts background with a particular focus on sound. She often makes work in outdoor and non-arts spaces, enjoying the direct connection this allows with both people and place. Her practice often has a strong public participatory element or connection to a specific group and place.

Caitlin Heffernan is a visual artist working in installation. She has developed over the last 5 years a series of site-specific projects and installations working with historical sites and in different contexts. Her work responds to archival research as well as the unique spaces within a site.

Jane and Caitlin responded to the Rochester Riverside path with OOZE, a series of floor-based topographical drawings and dialect-based ‘topogram’ texts, which speak of the land and water, inspired by their research of the site and the fishing industry. Having found oyster shells discarded across the site (traces of earlier vast common consumption) they discovered that oyster beds had re-seeded in the River Medway. The oyster shell became a fitting symbol linking past, present and future to the contours and flow of the site.

For more information: <https://insiteandsound.wordpress.com>



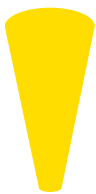
Collaboration 2:

Christopher Sacre is a visual artist specialising in sculpture. He is deaf and uses speech and British Sign Language (BSL) to communicate.

Stuart Bowditch is a recordist, artist and musician specialising in sound. He is particularly interested in sounds that are associated with place, overlooked and overheard noises of the everyday, and highlighting the auditory as a defining factor in how we experience a particular environment.

Christopher and Stuart devised Aperture, which invited the public to explore Rochester Riverside. During their research time, Christopher and Stuart led a series of walks around the Rochester Riverside development site gathering contributions from participants on the sights seen and sounds heard, which informed a detailed map of the site and surrounding area. The Aperture is an ear trumpet and eye lens, one end for listening and one end for looking through. With an accompanying map of 15 locations indicated by yellow place marks, the public were guided to vantage points to explore the site.

For more information: www.sacrebowditch.tumblr.com



Collaboration 3:

Nicola Flower is a visual artist working in textiles and illustration.

Daisy Farris is a dancer and choreographer and has her own dance collective.

She’s Like A FoRest FiRe explores Chatham and Rochester High Streets and the landscape of the River Medway including Sun Pier. Through their research, Nicola and Daisy uncovered stories and anecdotes about a local flamboyant character called Bluebell. With Sun Pier becoming a room in the landscape, they used the medium of dance to produce a film that explored the character’s personal and emotional attachment to the area.

For more information: <http://dfdcollective.co.uk>

“Daisy is an excellent artist to collaborate with, she is very receptive, positive and extremely professional.”

Nicola Flower



Key achievements

Successfully negotiating with the community and forming partnerships was key to the final activities and events for IN-SITE.

All the artists increased participation and engagement with the community through research, discussions, events and activities. This fostered awareness of the IN-SITE programme and the forthcoming regeneration of Rochester Riverside. The artists established alternative ways in which to stimulate dialogue highlighting the beneficial role that art can have within regeneration.

Stuart & Christopher managed to achieve a project that included both of their ideas equally, building a very solid working relationship and also a friendship. They are keen to work together again in the near future.

Daisy & Nicola developed their project and collaboration to achieve much more than either of them anticipated. Being pushed out of their comfort zones introduced a new way of working. Their engagement with the local communities reflected a story at the heart of the community and helped participants and audience to look at the area in a different way.

Jane & Caitlin shared new skills and knowledge to create work that was strong, large-scale and offered a great way of engaging with the local community.

“I was really delighted with the opening celebration event on the Sunday with the roller skaters, families and some of the Hyde Housing residents. It was well attended and everyone walked, cycled, scooted along the site – working with the flow and movement of the shapes, sounding out the words and asking questions and engaging with the work.” Caitlin Heffernan

The partnership working between FrancisKnight and the Lead Artist ensured that the commissioned artists were supported throughout the IN-SITE programme. As the artists were paired, new relationships were formed, both personal and professional. At the early stages of these collaborations anxious conversations were held where FrancisKnight and the Lead Artist’s role was to reassure the artists and build their confidence.

“IN-SITE definitely provided improved access to the arts for all ages and abilities. Elderly and disabled residents (along with some of their grandchildren) were able to experience an arts event that they would never normally have been able to access. The arts project also promoted diversity by having a sound artist and a deaf artist working together and carrying out artist-led walks with the public. It was also good to see different types of artist and artists of different ages working together. The project also brought together different organisations and individuals that are active in the local community, strengthening community partnerships.” Lynsey Brogan, Resident Engagement Officer, Hyde Housing



Lesson learned

FrancisKnight invited feedback from the project team. The following comments relate to the commissioned artists and their direct experience in producing work for the public realm.

Stuart & Christopher learnt that communication and understanding each other’s role was vital. They recognised that it was good to aim and think big even if their original ideas were revised or refined down to a much smaller scale during the creative process. That the support of a project team and a mentoring programme helps smooth the progress of the more technical and bureaucratic aspects of art in the public realm.

Daisy & Nicola reflect similar learning: to make expectations clear to all collaborators both verbally and in contracts. They recognised that equally ambitious ideas need to be counter-balanced with a realistic view of budget, time and resources. That one-to-one moments of engagement are often the most insightful about the community and the site.

“As a practising artist it was refreshing and supportive to be involved in a mentoring programme. In my career I have not previously experienced that level of interest. I found meeting the visiting speakers relevant and exciting. I would have appreciated more time for artistic critique and professional development both of my own practice and our IN-SITE project.” Nicola Flower

“Collaboration is a risk, as you never know how the relationship with the other artist will develop.... And that’s ok!” FrancisKnight

Jane & Caitlin understood from the outset that new collaborations take time to evolve and can have complex time-management issues. Their commission involved a physically challenging installation period, which reinforced their view of balancing ambition with resources. Both artists reflect on these challenges as positives in stretching their practice.

Katayoun Dowlatshahi reflects on the key lessons learnt from the artists and subsequent commissions:

- Learning to negotiate with collaborators and other professionals
- Understanding the hierarchy of communication when working with clients and independent art consultants
- Time management of their own projects and in dealing with other participants
- Improving presentation and communication skills
- Managing basic budgets and proposals
- Realistic consideration of time constraints and limited funds
- Artists can take risks and work outside of their comfort zones
- Artists should be prepared to reconsider changes despite the pressures
- Awareness of disability access and the implementation of such
- Key considerations for putting on a temporary event in a public setting
- The importance being site-specific and in engaging with the community
- Learning that there are diverse ways in which to engage with a site and in delivering a public art project
- Managing personal ambitions and expectations

The project team, including the Advisory Panel and Community Champions, support the wider learning with the following comments:

“It was definitely interesting to be engaging with residents on an arts project rather than on housing management matters. I think that the project may have challenged and encouraged me to think more creatively about community engagement, bringing a creative aspect even to more routine consultations.” Lynsey Brogan, Resident Engagement Officer, Hyde Housing



Recommendations

The following recommendations pick up on the key achievements and lessons learned. Throughout IN-SITE, challenging, questioning and reviewing took place amongst all the project team, including the Advisory Panel and the Community Champions.

- Present IN-SITE to the Medway Cultural Partnership and Regeneration team as a model of good practice for commissioning public art work.
- Develop a set of public art principles to form a quality charter produced by the Arts Development and Regeneration Teams.
- Embed a public art quality charter within the regeneration plans for Medway Council.
- Recognise the value artists can bring to projects in the public realm and advocate for their contribution by Medway Council to developers, architects and residents.
- Advocate for temporary and permanent artwork and the associated value placed on engagement.
- Ensure disability is not a barrier and that individual needs are considered and support is given to make sure everyone is equal and respected.
- Support professional development opportunities and provide artistic support including mentoring, co-mentoring and facilitation of shared practice.
- Establish an advisory panel for each regeneration scheme with a local focus that brings together expertise and knowledge to ensure quality, value and lasting impact.





Conclusion

IN-SITE was a platform for showcasing collaborative working practices with a programme of engaging temporary public art works that animated the sites and communities along Rochester Riverside.

As set out in the original Arts Council application, a mentoring programme provided the professional support and critique to the paired artists and created an environment of debate and discussion where possibilities and opportunities could be harnessed.

An advisory panel made up of local individuals, businesses and organisations shared their expertise and advice, advocating the purpose of the project and increasing its accessibility, awareness and engagement.

“I will always think about public art differently, I did not realise that so much funding, organisation, hours of work etc went on behind the scenes. I think it is a good thing for a community to have public art that they possibly can be involved with especially if there are events to bring people together.” Ruth Crundwell, Rochester Riverside Rollerskaters

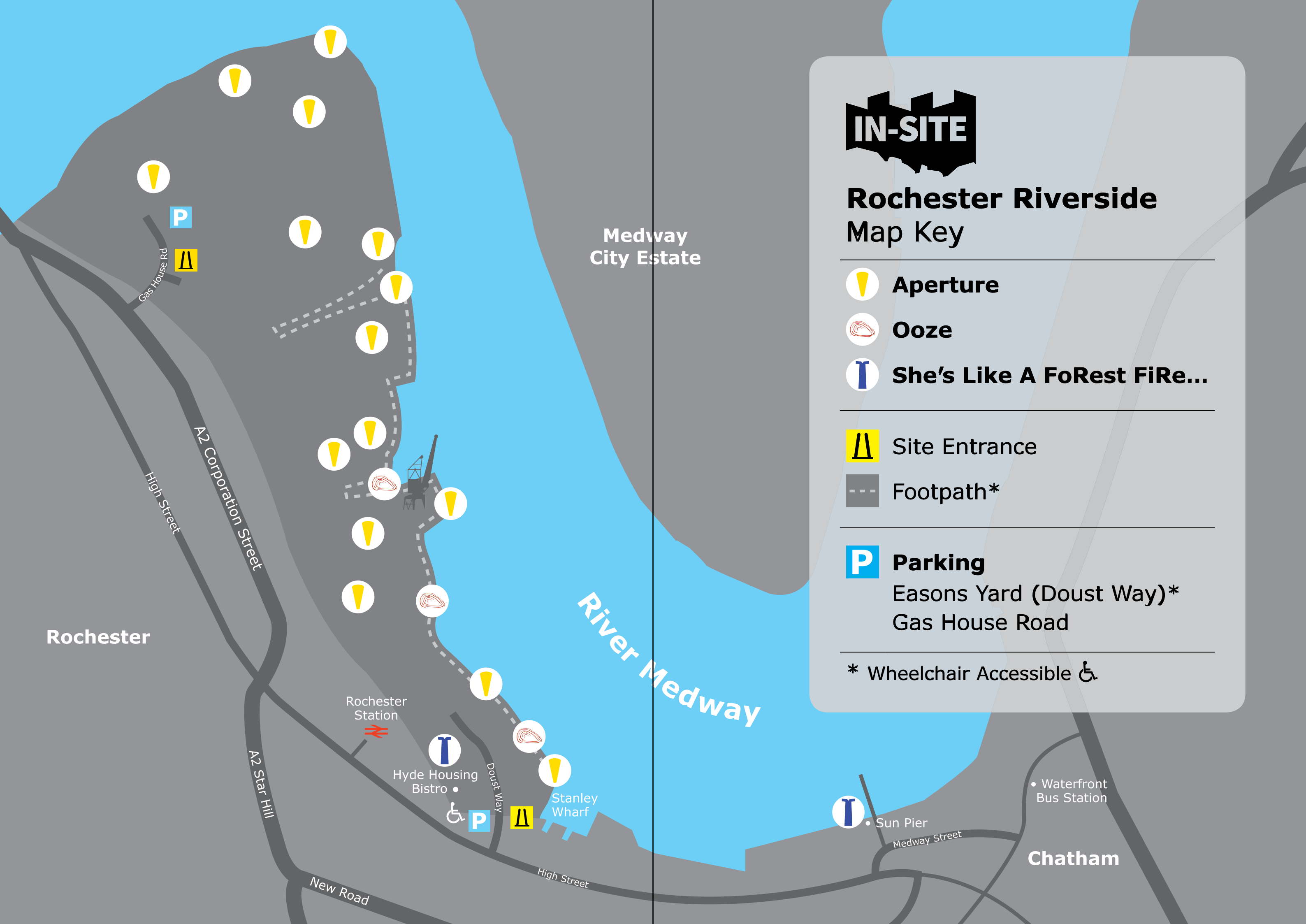
The Creative Seminar re-inforced the debate around the role of an artist in the public realm and highlighted the sharing of best practice in commissioning public art.

Engagement was key to the success of all the artists' commissions. And the participants who took part in the events and activities were generous in contributing stories, observations, and insights into the locations, and enjoyed the artworks as they appeared.








Each artwork was different in scale and visual impact, from gentle playfulness to dramatic performance, but all were equally high quality and embraced the uniqueness of the locations and the differing communities who lived in, worked in, or visited the sites.

It remains to be seen how IN-SITE can be rolled out to continue its good practice for Medway Council, but as the housing and development sectors recover and cultural well-being and public art are included within national planning policies, Medway now has an opportunity to put a framework in place to exploit and embed new ways of commissioning public art.

FrancisKnight is a public art consultancy. Established in 2004, FrancisKnight is run by founders and directors Louise Francis and Laura Knight. They have a combined 40 years experience in the arts. They have built on their reputation as specialist public arts consultants working with artists and clients in the South East region.



Rochester Riverside Map Key

-  **Aperture**
-  **Ooze**
-  **She's Like A FoRest FiRe...**
-  **Site Entrance**
-  **Footpath***
-  **Parking**
Easons Yard (Doust Way)*
Gas House Road
- * Wheelchair Accessible** 

Rochester

Medway
City Estate

River Medway

• Waterfront
Bus Station

Chatham

• Sun Pier

Rochester
Station

Hyde Housing
Bistro •

Stanley
Wharf

Doust Way

A2 Corporation Street

High Street

A2 Star Hill

New Road

High Street

Medway Street

Gas House Rd

