

New Fenland arts and culture project launches thanks to £420,000 in Arts Council funding

The Fenland Place Partnership, a consortium of local arts and cultural organisations, has announced that it has secured more than £400,000 in funding from Arts Council England to launch a new £1m cultural programme across Fenland.

The project will invest in current and future cultural leaders of Fenland through a three-year programme including a multi-arts festival in the summer of 2027. The six-week festival will feature a diverse mix of productions, exhibitions, and events aimed at bringing local people together with professional artists and creative activity to enjoy the thriving cultural heritage of the area.

The project will be coordinated by **Clarion Futures**, the charitable foundation of Clarion Housing Group which owns and manages thousands of homes across Fenland, and delivered by a consortium of local partners including **Fenland District Council**, community-driven arts charity **MarketPlace Arts**, and **20Twenty Productions** which works with children and young people through a range of creative learning, wellbeing and social action projects delivered in schools.

The Fenland Place Partnership has received a £420,000 grant from Arts Council England.
Photo: Amy Fox Photography

The overall aim is to invest in young adults aged 16-30 as future arts leaders, build new networks, and provide skills and training to grow the resilient, confident and ambitious cultural landscape of Fenland. Following the festival, the project will continue into 2028, with additional activities on offer.

The programme's content is being shaped through ongoing community engagement, uniting residents with a diverse mix of local arts and culture organisations to collaborate on a wide range of opportunities for people of all ages.

Financial support has come from a grant of £420,000 from Arts Council England's Place Partnership Fund, which aims to make a step change in cultural and creative opportunity in places. Fenland is one of 54 areas to be designated a priority place by the Arts Council, with the organisation working to develop new opportunities for investment over the past few years to support a growing arts and culture scene.

Additional funding to reach the £1m needed to deliver the project has been provided by Clarion Futures and its delivery partners, with expected sponsorship from local businesses and box office income from events helping to boost finances.

Those participating in the programme will be able to access tailored support provided by Clarion Futures to explore career pathways and find work in the arts and culture sector.

Many arts events are set to come to the district thanks to the programme.

Matt Parsonage, Head of Communities at Clarion Futures, said: "Fenland is an area we've invested in over many years through Clarion Futures, teaming up with a network of fantastic partners to support projects that make a positive difference for local people. Thanks to this funding from Arts Council England, we're excited to build on this work and celebrate the rich cultural heritage of Fenland, providing opportunities for young adults to learn new skills, get involved with events and potentially find a career in this flourishing sector. We're looking forward to working with the community and our partnership of established local cultural organisations to develop plans for the programme, and can't wait to see it take shape over the coming weeks and months."

Hazel Edwards, South East Area Director, Arts Council England, said: "The Arts Council is proud to support the Fenland Place Partnership. This ambitious programme is a brilliant example of how long-term investment can empower communities, develop future cultural leaders, and celebrate creativity. With strong local partnerships and a clear vision for growth, Fenland is building a vibrant cultural future for everyone who lives there. We look forward to seeing the lasting impact this investment will have on young creatives across Fenland."

Steve Barclay, MP for North East Cambridgeshire, said: "Fenland has huge talent within the community and securing funding will help unlock its potential. Following my roundtable and various discussions with Arts Council England and local arts groups, it is welcome that Fenland is receiving this financial support. It is important that rural communities are supported to thrive within their local area rather than the expectation that they travel to the nearest city when transport links often make that difficult. It is welcomed that the Arts Council and Clarion Futures will be working with young people across Fenland to support them to unlock their creative abilities."