

Flatland Projects and Beeching Road Studios – Impact Evaluator

1. Scope:

Flatland, Beeching Road Studios, and Rother District Council are seeking an Impact Evaluator to create a social capital impact assessment and outline economic benefits of the work that they have collaboratively conducted in Bexhill on Sea over the last 5 years. We are looking for someone to show and highlight through an impact study document the reach and success of the delivery of Flatland's oversight of Beeching Road Studios over the last 5 years.

This Impact Study will form the basis of applications for longer term fundraising strategies. The reorganisation of Beeching Road Studios as an organisation and will inform the development of a long-term estates and capital masterplan. The selected person(s) should have a broad understanding of organisations proving the case for organisations applying to enter Arts Council England's National Portfolio, and we ask for the impact evaluation to consider the Let's Create strategy set out by ACE.

Fee: £3000 (freelance fee based on 10 days at £300 per day, as a proposed split: 3 days of stakeholder meetings and data extraction from key stakeholders, 5 days producing report, and 2 days to expand research identifying areas of growth and of best practice)

Time frame:

- Expressions of interest open (EOI) 7th – 28th February 2025
- Reference checks and phone conversations 3rd March 2025
- Work begins 10th March
- Completed late April 2025

Expectation:

- For the consultant to produce an evaluation / narrative-based document (15-20 pages) with a key infographic summary outlining the statistics and impact narratives of BRS in the development of the Bexhill artistic ecology. This document should explain the impact that Flatland and its work at Beeching Road Studios has impacted the local creative economy and skills landscape to align with the organisations next 5 years of growth.
- Meet with stakeholders: Identified colleagues and focus groups.
- Outlining of future growth strategies.
- Identify areas of best practice.
- Capturing success stories.
- Highlight artistic career pathways / career sustainability skills work delivered through partnership place-based working.
- An assessment in alignment to the ACE Let's Create strategy.
- To create an oversight of readiness for long term core operational funds.
- Identify beginnings of local economic impact and explain the community impact of the work which BRS & FLP have delivered in Bexhill and East Sussex beyond.

2. Context

About Flatland:

Flatland Projects is an artist focussed organisation that focusses on commissioning and the development of artists at fragile or critical moments in their careers. Akin to Flatland's artist-led origin (est. 2018) it's programme of exhibitions, studio development opportunities, and community engaged work is based in and leads Beeching Road Studios; a terrace of light industrial units dedicated to developing viable career pathways for the creative industries in Bexhill on Sea. Since 2021 Flatland has been leading Beeching Road Studios in its development as a centre for the development of emerging practices; housing 27 artist studios, arts organisations, and creative commercial businesses to facilitate and build infrastructure for the arts in the ever-changing political and economic landscape of coastal Britain. In 2024/25 Flatland has received significant capital investment from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Levelling Up Partnership, and has also received funds from the East Sussex Skills Fund to ensure new facilities for their skills provision for young people, and marginalised people in our communities whom are underrepresented in the cultural sector to ensure greater equity and viability of sustaining artistic careers in Bexhill-on-Sea.

Flatland's exhibition programme focuses on presenting artists of hyper-local contexts concurrently to hosting international artists in dialogue with one another. Flatland encourages artists to take new risks, and to present their work amongst new discourses within the industrial neighbourhood of Bexhill. Parallel to the exhibitions programme we provide essential development and skills opportunities that offer artists time and space to locate their practice within the artistic ecology of East Sussex; through programmes such as our yearlong studio development programme, and our 6-month young person's studio residency. Flatland is a small team of four people: our Director, Technical team, Head of Artist Development, and Curatorial Assistant. Our team albeit small focus on our critical work which is developed directly for the community which we serve on the Southeast coast of England.

About Beeching Road Studios:

Beeching Road Studios has been established to meet the needs of Bexhill's creative community. Housing several independent creative businesses, non-profit arts organisations, local educational networks and individual artists, this multi-faceted complex serves as a thriving creative hub along the Southeast Coast. Under one roof, the studios combine creative workspaces, an artist research centre, a carpentry workshop, ceramic studio, hospitality outlets, and public cultural space in the gallery.

A spirit of exchange and collaboration continues to fuel this development. Beeching Road Studios actively aims to increase creative opportunities for young people in the area, whilst simultaneously fostering important networks for more established creatives in the Southeast. A series of tailored development programmes are delivered by Flatland Projects on site which equip creatives with specific skillsets to make creative careers a viable option.

The unique makeup of the complex means that creatives from different disciplines and at various stages of their careers are sharing the same space. Emerging practitioners are neighbours with more established artists, generating an enriching habitat for creatives to meet and learn from one another. Having Flatland Projects as a public facing gallery at the core of the complex further extends these connections, opening its doors to local and internationally recognised artists and wider audiences.

Beeching Road Studios is led by Flatland Projects, and has 27 individual artist studios, alongside other cultural and leisure businesses: Common Clay, Do Your Ideas, The Three Legs Brewery & NOVO (Cross fit gym).

From the beginning of this project, Beeching Road stemmed from a desire to best mobilise disused industrial space for the immediate community. In 2018, Rother District Council (RDC) purchased the freehold on six industrial units comprising 1,599 square metres at Beeching Road Industrial Estate in

Bexhill. Grant funding was secured from the Local Growth Fund (LGF) through the Southeast Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to refurbish and re-purpose the buildings.

Wanting to draw upon available expertise and to engage with local interested parties, RDC formed a steering group in 2018 to help shape the vision and aims of the project. This initial group consisted of staff from The De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill 6th Form College, Flatland Projects, ACAVA, Bexhill Contemporary, Cabaret Mechanical Theatre and Fulcrum Learning. In tandem with these early conversations, RDC commissioned creative consultants Always Possible to undertake an Economic Impact and Feasibility Assessment in 2018 which revealed the supreme demand for high-spec, affordable studios and creative workspaces in the area.

Consultation was extended to include Counter Culture, Arts Council England, East Sussex College, East Sussex County Council, University College London and other local stakeholders. After two years of these collective forums, what emerged was a strategic business plan that had the following key objectives at its core:

- To expand the coastal creative offer and maximise opportunity for visual artists in Bexhill.
- To offer tenants a variety of well-conditioned, affordable and secure workspaces.
- To accommodate for a wide range of creative disciplines across fine art, craft, design and digital media.
- To have workshop areas on site for artists to expand their practices and grow their businesses.
- To extend the international reputation of The De La Warr Pavilion to a sister space which champions local artistic practices.
- To provide specialist training and education opportunities on site to students and adults.
- To offer a rich and diverse public programme which attracts a diverse audience of local and national visitors.
- Generate opportunities for collaboration and career development within supportive environments.
- Extend relationships and strengthen ties with other local organisations and civic institutions.

Beeching Road Studios will continue to keep these central aims as directives within the ongoing evolution of the complex.

3. Contract:

The contract will be with Flatland Projects CIC and the value of the contract is £3000 to complete the agreed work. The value of the contract which is inclusive of VAT, and all travel and subsistence will be paid in instalments outlined below:

- 25% value of contract value on commencement of work.
- 50% value of contract paid once stakeholder, and research is completed, and an outlined plan of impact report is agreed.
- 25% value of contract paid on sign off of impact report with Director of Flatland Projects, and Beeching Road Studios Steering Group.

To apply for tender:

Please submit tender request to Ben Urban, Director Flatland Projects at ben.urban@beechingroadstudios.co.uk by 28th February 2025.

Please include with your tender request a copy of your CV, a short covering letter (no longer than 1 side of A4), and two references you would be happy for us to contact to ensure that you have delivered this type of work before.

If anyone would like to arrange an informal telephone conversation please do not hesitate to contact Ben Urban on the above email address to arrange short conversation.