



Undercurrent: Creative commission callout

We are seeking to commission an artist or company to co-produce and co-create work in response to the significant heritage of Lea Marsh and its communities.

Undercurrent

Undercurrent is a new creative programme led by Revoluton Arts. Undercurrent will include commissions, projects and participatory activities across a range of artforms, co-created with communities, creatives and partners along the stretch of the River Lea, from Luton to London.

About Us

Revoluton Arts is a Luton-based arts organisation. We work with artists and communities across a range of art forms and disciplines to produce creative work that promotes positive futures for people and place. We provide support, resource and mentoring to artists and emerging creative practitioners and facilitate pathways for people to engage with creativity, as professional practitioners, participants, and as audience members.

Our creative programme is co-created with communities deeply rooted in Luton and encapsulates the town's activism, warmth, and generosity. Since 2015 our programme has attracted over 180,000 audiences/participants in a range of activities, including large-scale outdoor events, Revoluton Associates commissions for local creatives, residency programme in three areas of Luton, a young people's programme, and support for local creatives to realise their own events and projects.

Find out more at www.revolutonarts.com

Background and context

The Lea Marsh Heritage Zone is one of several significant locations leading heritage-inspired place activation across Luton. Glenn Jenkins (Marsh Farm Outreach) and Lindsey Pugh (Revoluton Arts) have been appointed co-leads for Lea Marsh Heritage Zone, a hugely significant heritage site for Luton. From neolithic beginnings to *Blockers' Seaside*¹, punk gigs to rave collectives - the cultural significance of this location cannot be denied.

Marsh Farm Outreach and Revoluton Arts are based at Leagrave's Marsh House, positioned at the source of the River Lea and the neighbouring suspected neolithic henge², Waulud's Bank. United by their respective histories as party people, Jenkins and Pugh became motivated to document and interpret the related past of this significant location and its historic gatherings

¹ Leagrave Marsh used to be a popular location for Luton hatters on their days off and was consequently known as Blockers' Seaside

² A henge is a prehistoric circular or oval earthen enclosure, dating from around 3000 BC to 2000 BC, during the Neolithic (also known as the new Stone Age) and early Bronze Age. ([What is a Henge? | English Heritage \(english-heritage.org.uk\)](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk))

of people - from the myths and legends of prehistory to punk parties in the location's Nissen hut.

This sparked the ambition for a project to honour Luton's heritage of activism and music sub-cultures and to connect working-class stories along the River Lea - from its source in Leagrave, journeying through Hertfordshire and Enfield, past the Olympic Park in Newham to where it meets the River Thames at the Royal Docks.

Undercurrent research phase

Revoluton has been awarded funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to deliver a research project, from February to June 2024, to uncover and share historical narratives of activism and sub-cultures connected to the river.

Our research themes are threefold:

- The River Lea, its background and stories
- Music sub-cultures
- Activism (creative, bottom-up, collective, communities defining their positive futures)

People and partners along the stretch of the river will be engaged through the sharing of oral histories, individually and within [Creative Assemblies](#), one in Luton and one in London. There will be a public sharing of the research at Marsh House, Leagrave, on Friday 21 June. The research project will culminate in the creation of a digital archive.

The commissioned work is required to respond to research activity specific to Lea Marsh, its heritage, and its communities, as below:

Strand A. The River Lea - its physical character and history

The source, to include the Ancient Monument of Waulud's Bank, and Blockers' Seaside.

Strand B. Thematic focal points

At the Luton end we are exploring three focal points, clustered around Marsh House: Marsh House itself (with origins in Exodus free raves and social action in the 1990s); Luton Urban Radio (with origins in Luton's reggae sound systems in the 1970s); the punk gig in the Nissen Hut (late 1970s) and the punk movement's relevance in combating racism, including the mobilisation of young people in the anti-racist movement.

The brief

Revoluton Arts is seeking to commission an artist or company, to work collaboratively in co-producing new work that is co-created with Luton residents (Lutonians).

Commissioning funds are available for artists from a diverse range of disciplines to create a presentational piece, and to co-create and engage with people within and near to Marsh Farm, Luton.

The commissioned work must respond specifically to Lea Marsh location and its cultural heritage. The outputs of the research phase, February - June 2024, should be used to inform the content and process for co-creation with Lutonians.

We are inviting proposals for the commission of interpretive, site specific or site responsive temporary installation artworks and performance in Lea Marsh, which may include Marsh House.

In keeping with the themes of Undercurrent, we are interested in proposals that work within and to the 2024 dates for the Autumn Equinox (22 September) and Winter Solstice (21 December). The commissioned activity and associated evaluation must complete by the end of January 2025.

The public presentation of the work should attract a total live audience of at least 500.

We are looking for artists with experience of working in the public realm/outdoors and/or in non-traditional venues. Experience of co-creation and engaging with communities is essential, either in the lead up to the presentation, as part of the presentation and/or reflecting the communities and place in the presentation.

Revoluton will lead on the community engagement aspects of the work, but artists must be skilled in the creation of work that has community engagement at its core.

Consideration of weather conditions and accessibility is paramount in proposals.

Theatre makers, dance makers, poets, spoken word artists, sound artists, visual artists, musicians, digital artists, light artists, multi-disciplinary artists are all welcome to apply.

Fees

The total project commission is set at £25,000 (including VAT)

This should include all costs for producing and presenting the work: the artists' travel, accommodation, per diems.

The artistic work created will remain the property of the artist, with agreed permission of use. Source material gathered and created during the Undercurrent research phase will remain the property of Revoluton Arts.

There will be additional modest budget for participation. There will be no additional budgets for production, security, or health and safety.

Artists are welcome to bring match funding and or budget to delivery of the commission. This budget should be in place at the time of submission.

Site visit (pre submission)

We recommend, if possible, artists applying for a commission make a site visit before a proposal is made. Artists may choose to do this without our involvement. Please use the following address, as a guide:

Marsh House, Bramingham Road, Luton LU3 2SR

Alternatively, we will be hosting a site visit on **Tuesday 30 April 2024** to provide more information and give an opportunity to meet the Revoluton producing team. No separate fee payments will be made for attending this. Please email maria@revolutonarts.com if you plan to attend and include details of any access requirements.

For those who cannot attend a site visit in person, we will be hosting an online information session with the Revoluton programme and producing team on **Tuesday 14 May 2024**. Please register your interest for the online information session by emailing maria@revolutonarts.com and include details of any access requirements.

Selection process

The commission proposals will be considered in terms of:

- The strength and quality of the artistic ideas and approaches
- The contribution to the interpretation of the site-specific heritage: the river, its physical character and history; local thematic focal points
- The approach to engaging and co-creating with communities
- Demonstrable experience of co-creation and community engagement in the development and presentation of creative works
- The financial and logistical requirements of delivery

Proposals are expected to be fully achievable within the budget proposed by the artist/s (£25,000 plus any confirmed match).

Commissioning panel

Shortlisted artists will be invited to attend a decision-making panel, comprised of key members of the Revoluton team, including the CEO / Creative Director and Senior Producer, alongside presentation from Marsh Farm Outreach and local residents.

Proposals will be shared with the commissioning panel and will be treated confidentially.

Timeframe 2024/25

Callout goes live w/c 15 April 2024

Site visit Tuesday 30 April 2024, 15.00-16.30

Online information session Tuesday 14 May, 13:00 – 14:00

Deadline for proposals Sunday 2 June 2024, 23.59

Commissioning panel Monday 10 June 2024

Decisions by Friday 14 June 2024

Undercurrent research public sharing Friday 21 June 2024 – the artist/s awarded the commission are required to attend

July – September 2024 planning in partnership with Revoluton

22 September – 21 December 2024 co-creation and presentation

January 2025 completion and evaluation

Co-producing model

The commissioned work will be delivered collaboratively with Revoluton Arts.

Via the Senior Producer, Revoluton Arts will provide:

- Advisory support for the commissioned artist/s
- Producer support for community engagement
- Producer support for permissions on use of the sites
- Producer support for the artistic and event management
- Health and Safety Management expertise
- Marketing and media communications

To Apply

Please submit a proposal covering:

Your suitability; experience of working in the public realm/outdoors and/or in non-traditional venues, with communities, and with heritage interpretation; details of any specific interests you have regarding the histories being explored through Undercurrent; the approaches you'd take to create the work, including how you would work with the oral histories and digital archive materials from the research phase.

A budget to accompany the proposal clearly detailing the co-creation, production, and presentation periods.

Please also include up to 3 links to examples of previous works, and background, as well as 2 referees.

Revoluton Arts will accept the following formats for the proposal:

Written statement that is no more than 3 sides of A4; video submission that is no longer than 5 minutes; audio submission as an MP3 or WAV file, that is no longer than 5 minutes. Please contact us if your access requirements mean that you need longer than 5 minutes.

Please clearly label your files with your name. Please send your submission to:

info@revolutonarts.com

Deadline: 23:59 hrs Sunday 2 June 2024

Please note that successful candidates must have a valid DBS and Public Liability Insurance or be willing to obtain them in advance of commission delivery. For more information contact Maria Shury-Smith, maria@revolutonarts.com