

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

19 October 2006

**Embargoed until 00.01am, Monday 6 November 2006**

## **UNIQUE PROJECT GIVES YOUNG A VOICE IN URBAN REGENERATION**

The **Billboard Project**, a unique project to harness young people's views about the regeneration of the area in which they live, will be unveiled on Wednesday 22 November 2006.

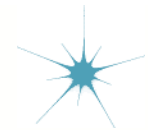
**The Billboard Project**, an initiative from Creative Partnerships, the Government-funded creative learning programme working in 36 of the most deprived areas of England, focuses on a unique resource – a bespoke, architect-designed, shipping container which slides apart to create a multi-media filming studio and exhibition space. This brightly coloured and highly visible tardis-like transformer, brainchild of Futurecity Arts, the UK's leading public arts consultancy, is the first of its kind to be commissioned in the UK.

The Lab will visit schools in Thurrock, Basildon and Southend, providing a media centre for consultation workshops designed to engage young people in the key issues of regeneration and, in the process, help students develop their skills as 'community reporters'.

The resulting films, adverts, slogans and messages will help identify regeneration issues for the local authority and inspire community and business engagement. This ground-breaking work will contribute to the creation of the first national Young People's Manifesto for Urban Development and Regeneration, which will be presented to Government in 2008.

**Sue Lawther, Creative Director, Creative Partnerships Thames Gateway**, says: "Many areas in the UK are experiencing regeneration, but the young, particularly those in deprived areas, are in danger of being ignored when it comes to the consultation process. This project will give young people a voice – a way to express their views about what is happening in the world around them – and make a positive contribution to the development of the area in which they live.

"Billboard will bring the key regeneration and development bodies together with local young people, creating greater local understanding about the changes that will happen, greater ownership and involvement in those changes, and a chance for young people's voices about those changes to be heard by the decision makers."



**Mark Davy, Director, Futurecity Arts** says: "This unique project brings together an innovative team of young architects, engineers and designers influenced by Estuary Essex culture, drawing from *Pimp My Ride*, celebrity, transformer toys and young people's love of 'all things media'.

"This is a 'no waste' project. It offers amenities, skills, ideas, training and access. Packaged using attractive branding and graphics, Billboard aims to provide new ways of participating in an often impenetrable world of consultation and regeneration."

The first area of the UK to participate in the Billboard Project is Thames Gateway – the biggest growth area in Britain and the home of what is widely considered to be the most exciting regeneration project in the world, seeing 120,000 new homes and 180,000 new jobs by 2016.

**Mark Davy** adds: "The web will also play a vital role in the project. The Billboard website will be an interactive repository for the creative work emerging from the Lab, providing the community with a dedicated space for their engagement in regeneration. The site will be a user-friendly one-stop shop for consultation and community engagement. Not only will it feature resources and skills packs to enable anyone in the community to take part in Billboard, it will hold key documents available for public consultation and information from all the key agencies alongside local people's creative responses."

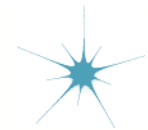
The Billboard Project will launch at Thames Gateway Forum, 22-23 November, at London's Excel Centre, where the Lab will be unveiled for the first time. During the Forum, key members of Thurrock Youth Cabinet will be mentored by a professional production team from Channel 4 Television's 4Talent in the art of programme-making and broadcast journalism, to research and conduct interviews with stakeholders and policy-makers and create filmed output from the event using the production facilities in the Lab.

**James Estill, Senior Producer, 4Talent**, says: "The Billboard Lab is a fantastic resource to enable young people to actively engage in the world of broadcast media and provides a facility for them to produce valuable, high quality content that addresses the issues and concerns from the younger, but equally important, sections of the local community."

The Billboard Project is built around a partnership between Creative Partnerships Thames Gateway, Futurecity Arts, Basildon District Council and Southend and Thurrock Unitary Authorities. Channel 4's 4Talent is the Billboard Project's media partner.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Creative Partnerships** is a Government-funded creative learning programme run by the Arts Council England, working in 36 of the most deprived areas of England. It brokers



relationships between the education, cultural and business sectors to effect positive change in the lives of young people. Since Creative Partnerships has been working in the Thames Gateway area it has introduced over 75 creative practitioners or artists to a total of 31 schools.

[www.creative-partnerships.com](http://www.creative-partnerships.com)

### **Arts Council East**

The Billboard Project is supported by Arts Council England, East and EEDA via their unique shared prospectus. The only one of its kind in the UK, the shared prospectus identifies three common areas for strategic joint investment that will harness the power of the arts and creativity to transform the social, economic and material conditions of local people and communities. Through joint interventions Arts Council England, East and EEDA will empower communities and businesses, maximising their contribution to the regional economy and the sustainable growth of the East of England.

[www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

### **Futurecity Arts**

Set up in 2000, Futurecity Arts has developed a specialist arts-led model of creative industry regeneration; our innovative approach has attracted attention from the private sector, which forms over 90% of our client base. As a result the agency has become uniquely successful at involving a new audience in the wider context of contemporary culture. Many of our projects have substantial educational and community aspects projects built into the proposals. Our cultural strategies have led to a continuous series of public art initiatives from a new bridge commission in London for Thomas Heatherwick, to a new technology project in Brussels for Langlands & Bell. Recent projects include the creation of contemporary art galleries sponsorships for the Royal Academy of Arts, the Chelsea School of Art Alumni and the new Museum of Kinetic Art at Old Spitalfields Market.

[www.futurecityarts.com](http://www.futurecityarts.com)

### **Channel 4 Television's 4Talent**

From the moment it went on air in 1982, Channel 4 has provided a platform for talented people to break through in British television. 4Talent works with young creatives – entry level and established practitioners - and offers and supports a vast array of initiatives to help them realise their career ambitions and grow their skills in broadcast media across multiple platforms.

[www.channel4.com/4talent](http://www.channel4.com/4talent)

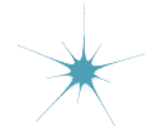
**Thames Gateway Forum**, 22-23 November, at London's Excel Centre, is an award-winning event and the annual meeting place for all those involved with the regeneration of the Thames Gateway and Olympic regions.

[www.thamesgatewayforum.co.uk](http://www.thamesgatewayforum.co.uk)

### **For more information:**

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