

Expression of Interest: Opportunity to operate the historic Compressor House in London's Royal Docks

A unique opportunity to shape a community, digital, cultural, and commercial anchor in London's newest destination – the Royal Docks

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the opportunity

The Royal Docks Team (RDT) is inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) from partner(s) to establish a compelling community, digital, cultural, and commercial vision for the historic Compressor House building. Strategically located in London's well-connected Royal Docks and at the heart of a high growth area, Compressor House is being reimagined as a cornerstone of the Royal Docks' economic and social infrastructure.

This is a rare opportunity for an ambitious, forward-thinking organisation to create a landmark destination that celebrates the Royal Docks' rich heritage, while unlocking its future potential

1.2 The Royal Docks context

The Royal Docks is one of the UK's largest regeneration opportunities, at the centre of an expanding east London region. Once the UK's gateway to world trade, today the Royal Docks is re-emerging as a distinctive new urban quarter, with approximately £5 billion worth of investment planned over the next twenty years.

As the Mayor of London's largest land-led project, the Royal Docks is uniquely positioned within London for housing and economic growth. The area forms the backbone of two major growth priorities, the Royal Docks and Beckton Riverside Opportunity Area and London's only Enterprise Zone, offering significant potential with up to 36,300 new homes and 55,700 new jobs forecast.

Major anchor organisations including Tate & Lyle Sugars, Excel London, London City Airport, and the University of East London (UEL) are all located in the Royal Docks – making it a strategically important economic centre for London. City Hall relocated to the area in 2022, signalling a substantial realignment of the city's cultural, economic, and political centre of gravity eastwards.

The Royal Docks [five-year delivery plan](#) sets out how we intend to work with partners and local communities to restore the area's historic vibrancy and purpose.

1.3 London's Cultural Engine

Inspired by its diverse communities, rich heritage, and iconic landscape, the Royal Docks aims to become 'London's Cultural Engine' – an innovative ideas factory and creative

production centre that will build and nourish a vibrant world-class cultural hub and a local scene for arts, heritage, culture, and creativity that is open to all.

The next five years will see a step change in the area, driven by investment by the GLA and our partners. ExCeL London's extension and ImmerseLDN will be fully operational; new cultural and community venues will open; and an ambitious year-round culture and leisure programme will dramatically enhance the Royal Docks' visibility and vibrancy. This will include the annual At-the-Docks summer programme, the Royal Docks Original Biennale Festival (launching in Autumn 2025), and a new 'On the Royal Docks' water activation programme, which will establish the Royal Docks as London's international centre for water-based arts and events.

The new operator(s) of Compressor House will join a burgeoning cultural ecosystem, including over 100 local cultural and community partners, eight creative workspaces and high-footfall venues/sites such as ImmerseLDN, Silverworks Island and The Cause.

2. The Compressor House Opportunity

2.1. The Vision

We are looking for an operator to bring their own vision that leverages the building's unique character and heritage, bringing the building to life and catalysing on the growing draw of the Royal Docks as a destination.

Key Considerations:

- **Digital Innovation** – Supporting digital inclusion and aligning with *Newham Sparks*, the London Borough of Newham's (LBN) initiative to position the area as a hub for innovators and investors in the data sector.
- **Community Wealth Building** – Contributing to LBN's commitment to fostering local economic growth and opportunity.
- **Good Growth** – Advancing the Mayor of London's vision for sustainable and inclusive economic development.
- **UK Government Funding Outcomes** – Delivering against key priorities outlined in Appendix 1.
- **Digital Sector Growth** – Capitalising on emerging opportunities in Newham's digital sector, including addressing skills gaps in data centres and immersive experiences.
- **Heritage & future-focused placemaking** – Respecting the legacy of Compressor House as one of the few remaining heritage assets in the Royal Docks while also embracing its role as a key part of the Royal Docks Team's (RDT) front of house programme (including display of the Royal Docks' model).

To facilitate the digital ambitions of Compressor House £250,000 has been allocated for the installation of digital infrastructure, subject to a successful Royal Docks Good Growth Fund

application, the second stage of this process, post EOI stage. The preferred partner will be expected to scope, develop and project manage this capital project.

2.2. Likely Focus Areas

It is expected that applicants will focus on the following key areas when shaping their vision to ensure the building achieves its objectives:

- **Commercial:** Develop the commercial offer that provides for a financially sustainable operation generating revenue through activities, external funding, or sponsorships contributing to the building's other primary objectives.
- **Community:** Create a welcoming space for local communities and visitors to spend time, connect and learn.
- **Digital Skills and Training:** linked to the community objective, collaborate with LBN, businesses, local providers, and the community to provide training that equips the local community with skills to benefit from the opportunities in Newham's high-growth digital sector.
- **Culture:** Establish a vibrant cultural destination for example, arts, music, performances, and exhibitions, enriching the cultural fabric of the Royal Docks.
- **Food & Beverage/events offer:** Support place-based activation and attract footfall through food, beverage, and events (subject to necessary consents).

While these are the key areas for a potential operator to focus on, alternative approaches that align with the overarching ambitions of Compressor House will also be considered based on their individual merits.

2.3. Location & Accessibility

Compressor House (post Code E16 2QU) has excellent transport links and located on the northern bank of Royal Albert Dock, adjacent to Royal Albert DLR station (two stops to Elizabeth Line Station Line, under 30 minutes from Farringdon, 20 minutes Stratford) and in close proximity to Newham Council offices. London City Airport is a 22-minute walk.

Other locational benefits include:

- Adjacent to Royal Albert DLR.
- An external landscaped area within the demise that, subject to consents, may be activated, for example tables and chairs serving a café offer.
- The lawns' green open space directly opposite with stunning views of the Docks, Canary Wharf and London City Airport. This may be available for meanwhile activation by the partner/s and if this is a prospect, please indicate on your EOI submission.
- A 7-minute DLR ride or 20-minute walk from Custom House station on the Elizabeth line.
- Footfall from users of the adjacent hotel district that serves Europe's largest business conference facility at Excel London

3. Refurbishment & digital fit-out

3.1. Scope of refurbishment

The building is undergoing a comprehensive refurbishment scheme, funded via the UK Government and secured by LBN and is scheduled for completion in Spring 2025. Key improvements include:

- High-standard refurbishment throughout
- Installation of a café area
- New heating and ventilation system
- Full accessibility
- 13 gender neutral restrooms
- Space for up to 400 attendees









3.2. Digital Fit out and the Royal Docks Good Growth Fund

RDT is harnessing its Good Growth Fund (RD GGF) to secure an operating partner(s) and fund the digital fit out of the building. The digital installation from specification to installation will be expected to be project managed by the preferred operating partner with, subject to a Royal Docks Good Growth Fund Application, a provisional budget of £250,000.

Details of refurbishment scheme

Item	Refurbishment scheme
Roof	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The flat roof covering was replaced in full, including works to the perimeter gutters and renewing flashing to the cornice and included insulation to meet current Building Regulations standards. Appropriate drainage falls gradients incorporated. Downpipes and drainage outlets were cleared. • The Roof is currently not accessible. However a operator may consider bringing forward plans for this space subject to funding and consents. Solar panel Installation, for example, would be encouraged.
Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New ground floor being installed raising event capacity to 400
Mechanical and Electrical Systems (M&Es)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New supply being installed up to 400amps • New external power supply being installed to facilitate events in rear/car park • New lighting and blind system. • New electric heating, ventilation, and extraction system. • Power to “event” area. • External power to car park area.
Mezzanine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully independent and secured mezzanine with meeting room, exhibition room and ancillary offices. • Exhibition room and meeting room may be used for supporting ground floor events. • The current vision proposes the ancillary office spaces leased to the Royal Docks Team. This offers the operator the prospect of an immediate income stream. Should this move forward, expected rental value will be determined through lease negotiations.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully accessible building. • New lift to mezzanine. • New accessible entrance lift. • Secondary ingress/egress at rear (increasing functionality of the ground floor).
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible restroom. • 13 gender neutral rest rooms. • Installation of a café /serving area with back storage facilities. • New kitchen (first fit only, no units nor machines).
Furniture (Ground Floor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ground floor will be leased as provided in the scope of refurbishment.

Item	Refurbishment scheme
Wi-Fi and Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection the responsibility of the operator. Connection is available.
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main’s connection available. Operator responsibility for connection and accounts with provider.
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grid power connection available, 400amps. • External power to car park area being installed. • Power available at “stage/event” (internal) area on western elevation. • Tenant to take responsibility for connection and accounts with provider
Outside Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The demise includes a landscape area immediately in front of the building. That lends itself to activation including tables subject to appropriate consents being obtained. • Car park with capacity for 10 vehicles. • There is a flat lawned area at the front of the building across a road that does not form part of the opportunity. However, should an interested party wish to consider bringing forward meanwhile activation plans for this area this can be discussed.

4. Technical Details

4.1. Building Overview

Compressor House was built in 1914 as cold storage for cargo. The building is a large open rectangular space offering exceptional versatility for various uses. The impressive open hall space has a significant ceiling height (8-9m). Original hoists, rails and winching machinery used to move produce internally are retained.

While it is imagined as one event space, should an operator consider or propose a scheme to subdivide the space, such plans will be evaluated on their individual merits. The installation of less permanent solutions, such as acoustic curtains may provide similar benefits without compromising the advantages of maintaining the attractive, expansive and open layout.

The building is currently undergoing a comprehensive capital works refurbishment programme. Upon becoming fully operational the building will:

- Be in a fully lettable condition at the point of lease signing.
- Feature advanced digital infrastructure as a core component, including event lighting and digital equipment (to be specified and installed).

The preferred operator will project manage all aspects of delivering this advanced digital infrastructure through managing its design and specification (including appointing a

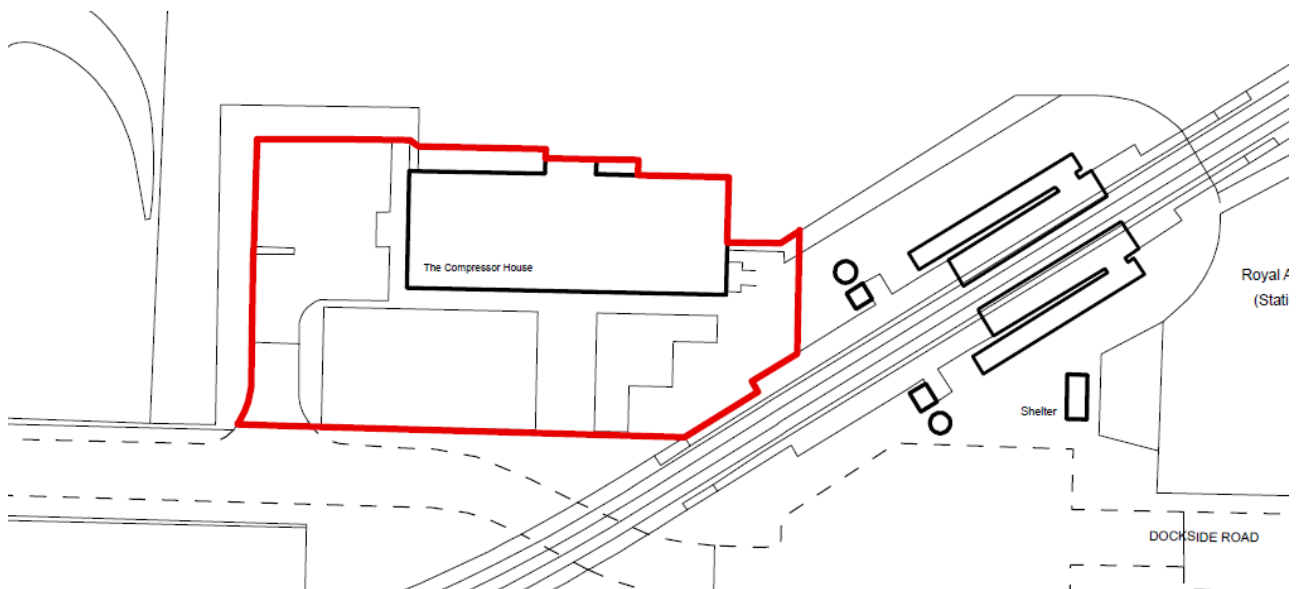
designer, as appropriate), specification, procurement, and installation, ensuring its successful implementation. Cabled data will be installed in the event space (which can then be drawn to areas as required by the future operator) during the current refurbishment scheme including along the at height rails.

A provisional sum of £250,000 (forming part of the part of the Royal Docks Good Growth Fund application) has been allocated to the digital infrastructure scheme and is ringfenced for such purposes. Additional installations and capital items such as the cafe and kitchen fit out (this will be first fix) and event space furniture will form part of the operator contribution. The refurbishment scheme will include a functional lighting system, the digital infrastructure is critical to the building's operation. It is essential for achieving its cultural and community objectives (such as digital skills training) and unlocking its commercial potential.

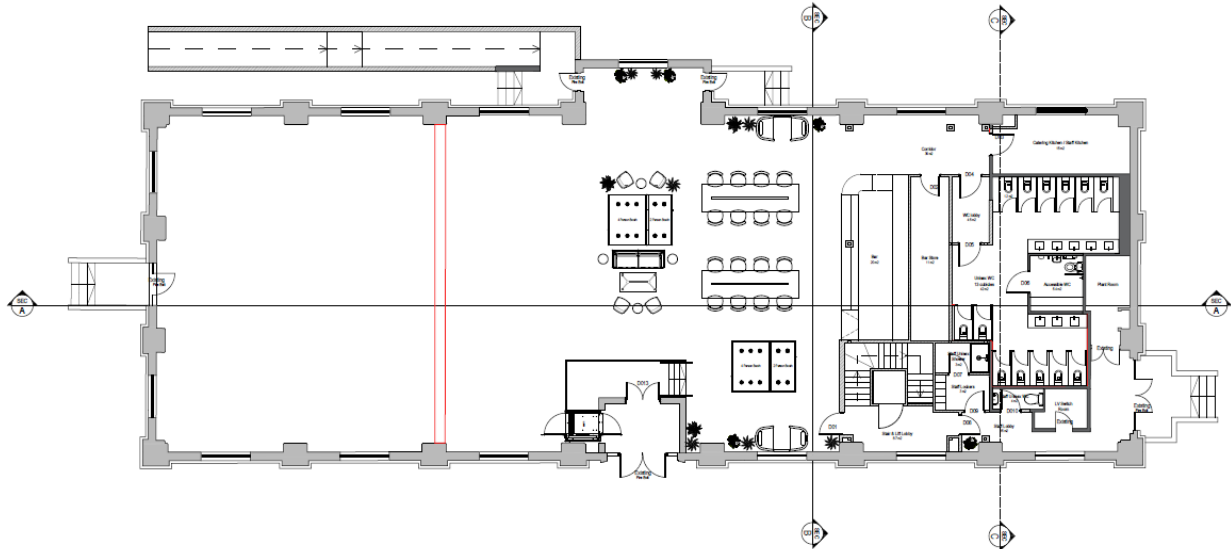
Compressor House is locally listed in Newham, contributing to the architectural and historical character of the area.

Demise

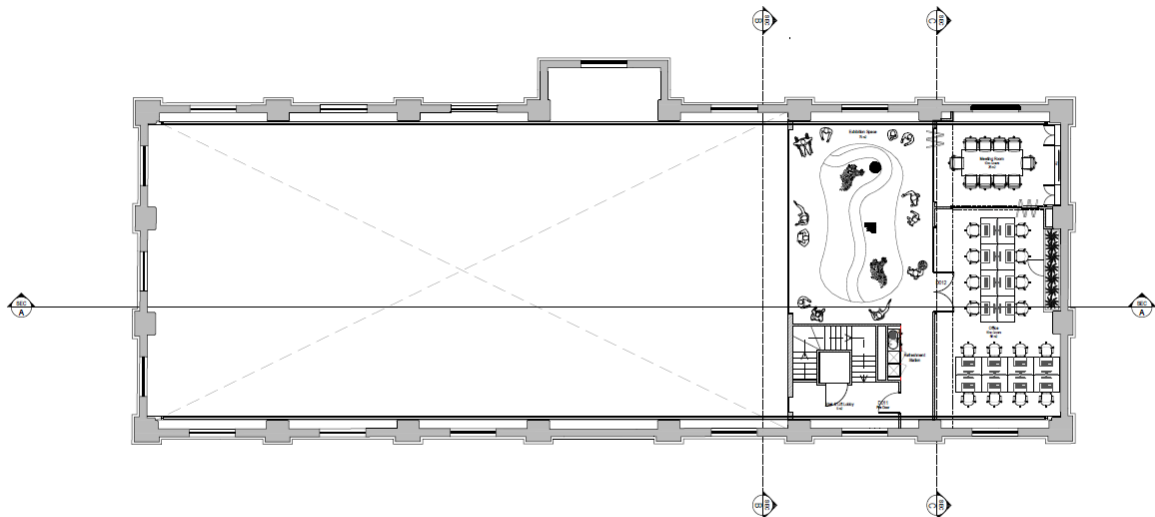
The red line on the drawing below indicates the demise, including the landscaped area to the front of the building. Royal Albert DLR station is to the east of the drawing. The building is indicated by the hard black outline.



The ground floor and mezzanine drawings are indicated below. Furniture is for illustration purposes only.



KEY Proposed Ground Floor
1:200 @ A1



KEY Proposed First Floor
1:200 @ A1

4.2. Planning and Capacity

The current consented scheme is *sui generis*, events space with ancillary offices. The planning can accommodate:

- concerts, music gigs & events

- performance; conferences, business events, workshops
- parties, wedding receptions; and exhibitions

Potential capacities:

- Standing: 400
- Seated at tables: 150 – 200
- Seated as audience: 200-300

There is an opportunity for the preferred operator to broaden the offer subject to securing the appropriate consents.

4.3. Legal, Lease & Financial

The lease will likely consist of:

- A commercial Full Repairing and Insuring (FRI) 10-year lease arrangement and a single partner tenant (lead organisation to be identified in the EOI), likely with a 5-year break clause.
- It is likely that a commercial rent and/or profit share or turnover rent options arrangements will be offered. For information, the current estimated rental value of the building is £50,000p.a. (under review).
- Rent free periods will be considered.

5. Financial Contribution

It is expected that the operator provides a financial contribution to ensure it meets the requirement set out in their vision. For example, for ground floor seating, kitchen fit out and additional lighting to meet their requirements. The level of the matched funding is to be proposed by the operator.

6. Community Wealth Building

[Community Wealth Building](#) is at the heart of the UK Government funded proposals for the building. Applicants should consider how their EOI responds to this inclusive economic approach.

7. Partner Profile

While the profile of a future operator remains flexible it will likely be one of the following:

- An existing operator with a proven business plan that can be easily transferred to Compressor House (an established provider)
- An existing organisation/partnership with a business plan ready (but seeking a building and/or funding)
- A partner(s) with proven knowledge and experience of working within the context of this geography and community.

The opportunity is open to partnership or consortium applications, and such collaborative approaches are highly encouraged. Where a partnership or consortium application is submitted, it must include a clear and coherent structure outlining the lead organisation, roles and responsibilities of each partner, and the proposed management framework.

Expressions of Interest (EOIs) are also welcomed from organisations interested in developing a partnership or consortium application but who have not yet formalised arrangements with prospective partners. The EOI process, including prospective partner engagement activities such as online meetings, may provide opportunities for collaborative discussions that could lead to the formation of partnerships or consortium applications.

Please note that any lease agreement will be offered exclusively to the designated lead organisation.

8. Expression of Interest Submission

8.1. Information to be provided.

Interested parties are invited to submit an EOI (maximum 8 pages, 2000 words, in MS Word (or PDF), font size 12), including the following information:

- Vision (Max 300 words): A compelling vision for Compressor House, outlining your proposed concept and its alignment with the objectives outlined in this EOI.
- Company profile (Max 250 words): A concise overview of your organisation.
- Experience (Max 200 words): Demonstrate your relevant experience in operating similar venues or delivering related services.
- Staff Expertise (Max 250 words): Highlight the expertise of your team and their ability to deliver the project.
- Business Plan and Operating Model: (max 1000 words including projections) A summary business plan outlining your proposed operating model, revenue projections, and financial sustainability. While a full business plan is not expected the high-level summary business plan should include:
 - Headline commentary on market and competitive analysis
 - Basic likely Operations Plan including staffing/ employment levels and Facilities Management Plan.
 - A summary SWOT (Strengths, Weakness Opportunities, Threats) Analysis.
 - 5-year Financial Plan Cash Flow Forecast (yearly summary only).
 - Matched funding details including information on source of funding and details of its allocation.
 - Digital Skills Offer: Proposed digital skills training or initiatives to be offered at Compressor House.
 - A high-level concept for Digital Fitout which should include how this translates in terms of use and achieving the community/ digital training outcomes.

9. Next Steps

This EOI represents the first stage of the selection process. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to participate in further discussions and submit a full GGF application – the means through which the £250,000 capital contribution will be allocated via a Grant Agreement.

It is likely that up to four organisations will be shortlisted and invited to submit more detailed proposals via a full GGF application.

10. Submission

Email your Expression of Interest to: daniel.paullino@london.gov.uk

EOI submission to be received no later than **Monday 24th March 2025 at 10:00am**

Table of key dates

21st Feb 2025	EOI launch
03th - 05th March 2025	Online (anon) Tour of (external) Compressor House, and online briefings – No need to register – please joint link in at time and date as set out below.
13th March 2025	Questions and Responses updated to FAQ
24th March 2025, 10:00am	Deadline for EOI responses.
4th April 2025	Decision on EOI. Invitation to submit full applications.
12th May 2025	Deadline for submission of Stage 2 RD GGF applications.
30th May 2025	Decision on preferred partner.
1st June – 1st July 2025 (proposed)	Lease negotiations (draft lease will be provided to shortlisted operators).
1st July - 31st Aug 2025 (proposed)	Digital installation project.
Sept 2025	Target opening.

Online Meetings 03rd and 05th March 2025

Further information and an opportunity to ask question will be provided a the (anonymous by default) online meetings.

You do not need to register nor advise us of your intention to attend. Simply Please click on the links below at the indicated time. Questions and responses will be added to the FAQ sheet.

Monday 03rd March 10:00am

Microsoft Teams meeting

Join (click or copy onto your browser):

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/364151018311?p=gH3ahnyE8OxjAyGx4h>

Meeting ID: 364 151 018 311

Passcode: yF3vG29D

Wednesday 05th March 16:00

Microsoft Teams meeting [Need help?](#)

Join (click or copy onto your browser):

<https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/364151018311?p=gH3ahnyE8OxjAyGx4h>

Meeting ID: 364 151 018 311

Passcode: yF3vG29D

Appendix 1 - Compressor House Outcomes and Deliverables

Deliverable	To be delivered within 5 years from date of grant agreement	Monitoring approach overview	Information to be collected and shared with the GLA
Community events: number and attendance	40 events	Provider count	No. of events
Numbers of learners supported (by type of support)	1,000	Provider count	No. of people
Numbers of learners achieving an accredited qualification	250	Provider count	No. of people
Increase in uptake of paid work experience placements	20	Evidence of individuals' progression into a volunteering role (e.g. letter from third sector organisation).	No. of people
Number of people sustaining employment for 12, 24 months	12	Provider count	No. of people
Community infrastructure created (by type)	1 newly refurbished building	Agency/provider count	No. of units / m2
Low-cost community space created	250m2	Agency/provider count	No. of units / m2
Number of users	10,000	Sign-in registrations to include indicators for measuring & monitoring equality, diversity & inclusion.	No. of people
Numbers accessing cultural activities through the community asset	10,000	Sign in / registrations	No. of people
Deliverable	To be delivered within 5 years from date of grant agreement	Monitoring approach overview	Information to be collected and shared with the GLA

Involved in the management/running of community asset	25	Number of trustees, staff and volunteers	No. of people
Numbers aware of community asset (derive understanding of wider community awareness of the asset)	50,000	Survey of residents to show awareness levels of community asset	No. of people
Number of activities/events promoting the identity of a place	40	Count of activity by providers/organisers	No. of initiatives
Number of cultural events taking place	40	Count of activity by providers / organisers	No. of initiatives
Numbers of users participating in activity/event promoting the identity of a place	10,000	Sign in / registrations	No. of people
Cultural organisations involving increased numbers of local people	10	Sign in / registrations	No of organisations
Number of people accessing existing culture organisations for the first time	1,000	Sign in / registrations	No. of people
Number of people accessing cultural events in new settings	10,000	Sign in / registrations	No. of people
Other construction skills Supports	20	Evidence supplied by contractor	No. of people