Press Release

Coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the 'Great Flood' of 1953, Create London announces *Breaking Waves*: a series of free events and creative activities raising awareness of rising sea levels and urgent environmental changes in Thames Ward, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Image credit: Preliminary still from 'Flood Barrier' by Catherine Yass.

Often considered the worst natural disaster Britain experienced during the 20th century, the Great Flood of 1953 saw widespread flooding and devastation across East England. *Breaking Waves: A living archive of Thames Ward through the lens of The Great Flood 1953-2023* captures and connects lesser-known stories about life in the riverside community of Thames Ward. Running from August 2023 to May 2024, this ambitious project provides an opportunity to uncover the hidden histories of Barking & Dagenham, while exploring the current social, architectural and environmental issues at stake in the area.

Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and curated and produced by Create London, *Breaking Waves* will include co-designing and commissioning opportunities for residents, local filmmakers, after-school workshops and masterclasses, open air painting classes, bird watching, mudlarking sessions and more. In addition, disappearing histories of life in Thames Ward will be documented with oral histories experts, residents and creative practitioners, giving a voice to those traditionally excluded from historical records.

The project spotlights the history and fate of Creekmouth village in the wake of the flood, erasing 55 Victorian houses and a church built for chemical plant workers. Fast-forward 70 years, the area is once again under huge transformation with a recent environmental study by Climate Central (2021), indicating that east London boroughs are now prone to regular future flooding. Highlighting the inextricable, and sometimes uncomfortable, link between our industrial heritage and the effects of climate change on communities past and present. Working in close collaboration with local community spaces, such as The Wilds at Barking Riverside and the White House in Dagenham, *Breaking Waves* creates

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opportunities for Thames Ward communities to come together. It facilitates people of all ages to learn new skills and investigate connections between natural heritage, industrial landscape and climate crisis to encourage greater care of natural resources and community pride. Valence House Museum will acquire creative outcomes produced from the activities, including documentary and artistic films, new archival footage, and the oral history recordings with residents. These pieces will expand the museum's existing Creekmouth Archive, making the works accessible to the public and ensuring that they are preserved and cared for long-term.

Programme details to be announced in August 2023.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Credit lines
Breaking Waves is presented by Create London and was made possible with funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, with additional support from Arts Council England and Art Fund.

Create London
Create London commissions socially-engaged art, generous architecture and bold infrastructure that is woven into the fabric of everyday life. Our work is driven by a belief that transformative and radical ideas can derive from working long-term within local communities. We bring world-class cultural experiences to areas where it is least expected, providing inclusive moments for individuals to expand their imaginations, foster collective action and support thriving communities. createlondon.org

National Lottery Heritage Fund
Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. Follow @HeritageFundUK on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLotteryHeritageFund. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK. heritagefund.org.uk

Art Fund
Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by Art Partners, donors, trusts and foundations and the 135,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free or discounted entry to over 850 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. The winner of Art Fund Museum of the Year 2023 is The Burrell Collection. artfund.org

Arts Council England
Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued

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and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from the Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. artscouncil.org.uk

Made possible with Heritage Fund

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