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## PRESS RELEASE

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**TITLE: Performing and Production Digital Arts Facility gets the go ahead at North Kent College.**

**CONTENT:** North Kent College welcomed the news that funding from the government's **Getting Building Fund (GBF)** was approved for six more projects in the county late last year. Among the projects approved was North Kent College's '**Performing and Production Digital Arts Facility**' at their Oakfield Lane campus in Dartford, Kent.

The South East Local Enterprise Partnership, which oversees GBF funding, approved the award of £12.3m to the project at North Kent College, recognising the importance of the sector to the local economy. The project will contribute to the Government's Build Back Better initiative to help the recovery of the economy and are set to deliver within 18 months. The new training facilities at North Kent College at the Dartford Campus will bolster the creative sector.

Willmott Dixon Construction Limited have recently broken ground on the project at North Kent College. Adam Worrall, Director, Willmott Dixon London & South region commented: "We are delighted to be working with *North Kent College* to deliver this first-class centre of education for the arts that will offer students the opportunity to develop for years to come. To be able to deliver this scheme with a really focused customer and consultant team is great for the college but also for the Kent economy and local supply chain."

KCC Leader Roger Gough said: "Funding for these six projects had been ring-fenced for some time and I am delighted that, after due diligence, they have been approved by SELEP.

"KCC officers have been heavily involved in assisting the various applicants to put together their business case and I am delighted that their efforts have resulted in the grants being confirmed.

“These projects will help the Kent economy recover as we try to deal with the ongoing effects of the Covid pandemic”.

The North Kent College new build will ensure that provision of industry-leading training facilities for Performance and Production Arts are at the heart of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor. They will enable the College to maintain and develop its established strengths in performing arts and digital design, respond to growing student demand and contribute to the long-term growth of the creative and cultural sector. Specifically, it will involve the construction of a new, high-quality two-storey building containing 2,836 sq m of educational floorspace, including a performance venue, dance studios, music performance spaces, digital design classrooms and workshops.

David Gleed, Chief Executive and Executive Principal, North Kent College commented “We are delighted to receive funding for this vital project which will further enhance the outstanding Arts offer that North Kent College provides. With the Arts as a key focus for both Kent and the Thames Gateway, this development ensures we remain at the forefront of education and training to produce the very best future Arts professionals. We are particularly grateful to both SELEP and Cllr Roger Gough and his KCC colleagues for their continued support and backing.

SELEP Chair Christian Brodie said: “This is a fantastic scheme. We are dedicated to ensuring that the South East’s rich and diverse creative sector – which urgently needs support to combat the effects of the pandemic – is assisted however we can, to survive this current crisis.

“This Performing and Production Digital Arts centre will create a hub for this vital industry in the heart of the South East and is being developed in response to growing student demand. Expansion of the Dartford campus will benefit not only North Kent College’s creative students, but the student body as a whole, and the surrounding area thanks to the creation of more than 100 new jobs.”

**ENDS.**

**Photo (L-R):**

Lindsey O’Malley – Dartford Principal, North Kent College

Lawrence Jenkins – Deputy Chief Executive, North Kent College

Craig Handley - Construction Manager, Willmott Dixon Construction Limited

Chris Lydon – Project Director, North Kent College

John Doran – Facilities Manager, North Kent College

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

Earlier this year, the Government announced the £900 million Getting Building Fund, created to invest in local projects to drive economic growth. SELEP successfully secured the largest value for any LEP area in the UK from the fund, with its £85

million pot across East Sussex, Essex, Kent, Medway, Southend and Thurrock. The money is targeted at areas most affected by the pandemic as well as the sectors that will provide the most support to the economy in the near future by creating jobs, restoring and regenerating town centres and high streets, and attracting local investment.

- In November 2020, SELEP approved £32.4 million in funding for six Kent projects from the Getting Building Fund (GBF). These comprise: [Javelin Way Development](#): the provision of new educational and light industrial facilities, supporting growth of an SME base in Ashford and facilitating building of a new sports complex;
- [Romney Marsh Employment Hub](#): the second stage of a project that provides infrastructure to services and brings forward the remaining five hectares of employment land in Folkestone and Hythe, creating 480 new jobs;
- [Thanet Parkway Railway Station](#): the delivery of a new railway station in East Kent to improve connectivity to these coastal communities;
- [Incubator Facility, Discovery Park, Sandwich](#): the creation of flexible laboratory, write-up and office space for innovative SMEs in Building 500 at Discovery Park;
- [New Performing & Production Digital Arts Facility @ North Kent College](#): the provision of industry-leading training facilities for Performance and Production Arts at the heart of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor; and
- [The Meeting Place Swanley](#): the provision of new business space and homes.

Two GBF projects in Kent and Medway had already secured £4.3 million in funding by SELEP at a previous board meeting: the roll-out of full fibre broadband to remote and rural parts of Kent and Medway to support businesses needing faster connectivity (£2.29 million), and Britton Farm, a new learning and skills hub in a repurposed shopping mall, supporting adults to retrain, upskill and access employment opportunities in Medway (£1.99 million).

This brings the total value of GBF being invested across eight projects in Kent and Medway – including a currently unallocated £323,204 – to £37.3 million. These projects will all contribute to the Government's Build Back Better initiative to help the recovery of the economy and are set to deliver within 18 months.

The overarching objectives of the fund are to drive economic growth, create new jobs and support green recovery. This includes funding to enable:

- town and city centre modernisation through targeted infrastructure investments unleashing their longer-term economic potential;
- investment in physical connectivity to improve the functioning of the local economy;
- investment in innovation ecosystem including through improvements to research and development facilities driving up business productivity;
- improvements to human capital; and
- improving digital connectivity, in order to support economic performance, particularly in more isolated areas.

SELEP has been successfully allocated £85 million Getting Building Fund. This funding must be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.



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