

# Leas Lift: Restoring Folkestone's gem for the community

'Memories of the Lift', a project with Kent Coastal Volunteering



May 2021

Please note: In January 2022 the CIC transferred to become a CIO resulting in the prior Directors becoming Trustees.

## **NL-21-00003 Leas lift: Restoring Folkestone's gem for the community**

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#### **INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT**

Folkestone Leas Lift is a Grade II\* (Historic England No. 1061185) cliff funicular railway situated in the Leas & Bayle Conservation Area in Folkestone. Part of the fabric of Folkestone, it is well loved by the people of Folkestone, many of whom have precious memories of visiting as a child and adult. This was brought home last summer when over 2,500 people responded to a consultation survey about the future of Leas Lift. Their affection for Leas Lift, and memories were deep and moving when we asked them what they valued about it. This is a flavour of their comments:

*"Very happy memories stretching over nearly 70 years"*

*"childhood memories"*

*"It is part of the story of Folkestone and makes Folkestone what it is"*

*"It has always been part of my life when I have been in Folkestone"*

*"It's the town's heritage, it's a beautiful construction, plus being disabled means I can get up to the town quickly and enjoy the views in style!"*

*"I have Achilles tendonitis and I can't take those steps and hill with the kids... I do like the idea of being able to visit it and show the kids what they are missing out on".*

During the development phase of the Leas Lift project the Directors will be sharing the updated plans, and ideas for engaging people with the Leas Lift. The following groups of people have been identified as core and priority audiences:

- **Residents of Folkestone and Hythe District Council** including people who are socially isolated, digitally excluded, deaf, blind, have hearing loss, are deafened, partially sighted, and live with autism, dementia and mobility difficulties.
- **Primary Schools within Folkestone and Hythe District Council**, in particular those where children live in economically deprived households. We have measured this by the proportion of children who have free school meals (eFSM) and identified where it is double the average for England.

- **Uniform groups in Folkestone and Hythe District Council** seeking trips to support their badges. Again, we will target groups in the economically deprived parts of Folkestone.
- **Young people (18 to 24 years)** seeking apprenticeships, studying in Folkestone and at local colleges and Universities in the south-east seeking work experience to make themselves more employable.
- **Adult Special interest and leisure groups** within a 60-minute catchment.
- **Day-trippers** to Folkestone from within a 90-minute catchment.
- **Domestic tourists** staying in serviced and non-serviced accommodation in Folkestone and with Visiting Friends and Relatives.
- **Virtual visitors** – these visitors will access information digitally.

This project is planned for the project's development phase, between June 2022 and May 2023. It is a partnership between Folkestone Leas Lift CIC and Kent Coastal Volunteering (KCV) <https://kcv.org.uk/> working with artist Maureen Jordan. KCV were approached because of their experience of working with isolated people in the area.

KCV's vision "*is a future where Kent's coastal communities improve their quality of life – through the power of volunteering and social action*". KCV support communities across the districts of Folkestone & Hythe, Dover and Thanet. The Folkestone & Hythe Hub is based in Cheriton, close to Leas Lift. Their services, which relate to this project are:

- Promoting collaboration across all sectors for a joined-up approach to resolving community issues
- Delivering community-based projects that contribute to all aspects of health and wellbeing.

During the pandemic KCV secured a grant from Independent Age for the 'Anthology' project which was delivered with members of their Good Neighbours Service (GNS). The purpose of the project was to better understand Lockdown from the viewpoint of KCV's members, particularly the elderly and isolated and equally as important, to inform how KCV can improve services designed to overcome loneliness. Participants were asked to share a memory, short poem or experience during Lockdown, to capture their personal, lived experiences. During December 2020 and January 2021, the GNS team physically distributed creative packs (in some cases, containing a disposable camera) to members of the GNS, which were supported with creative challenges.

Participants were asked to share a memory of their experience during Covid-19. This could be of a view, a pastime or hobby or sustaining family memories in the absence of family gatherings. A screen-printer created screens in order to print the images and some text on to white household tiles, then fired in a kiln to create permanent images. The tiles were chosen to reflect the many DIY projects people undertook (or planned to do) during lockdown and also for their anonymity.

The project manager approached Leas Lift during spring 2021 to ask if KCV could display the resulting exhibition on the building. Memories from the participants will be installed on a black board protecting the windows of the Lower Station during May and will be in place until the autumn. Alongside, an anthology of participant's contributions has been published and a mosaic marking the installation fitted into a niche on the front of the building.

Awareness of this project led to discussions between the Leas Lift Board, KCV's Chief Executive, Kerry Smith and the project manager, Maureen Jordan as to how a similar project could involve isolated people during the consultation phase of this project.

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Leas Lift intend to procure an Interpretation and Activity Planner to develop a 3-year Activity Plan in early 2022. Part of their brief will be to consult with target audiences to develop an interpretation plan which will be developed into an interpretation scheme and on activities to engage the target audiences with the heritage. The purpose of this bespoke piece of work is to engage communities whose voices are normally not heard in such projects.

Leas Lift's Interpretation & Activity Planner, KCV and an artist will work in partnership, building upon the learning from Anthology. We want to use such mediums as old photographs, vintage postcards, physical materials, film and video to engage socially isolated people (e.g. people KCV supports through their driving and befriending services) and the Nepalese Community with Leas Lift in a meaningful way, taking them on a journey as the Lift is brought back into use and sharing their stories. Our aim is to listen to their memories and capture these, working with Maureen Jordan, an experienced project manager and artist. Maureen is an award-winning artist with a career including working with disadvantaged groups in Belfast, 12 years in Arts Council England, including supporting Liverpool's European Capital of Culture year. In 2019 she set up her own live-work space, Bouverie Studio in Folkestone. She often uses reclaimed materials and found objects in her own work (see <https://www.mvjordan.com/about-maureen-jordan/>) and considers oral history and memories to also be 'reclaimed' material.

The 'HOME' project (part of KCV's [Anthology](#)) will act as a model upon which to build a programme of engagement with the Leas Lift restoration.

We anticipate the project running for approximately 6 months from June to November 2022, publicly sharing the work between January and March 2023.

Our target is to work with at least 20 socially isolated people and at least 10 people from the Nepalese community during the 6 months. As ambassadors KCV would be looking to also reach an audience of over 500 including volunteer drivers and befrienders, who may also want to participate as they accompany people to venues to take part in workshops.

### **Recruitment of participants**

KCV will lead on the recruitment of participants. With a database of over 710 volunteer involving organisations (VIO) registered on its platform they will introduce the project to VIOs, using Mailchimp. The content will be agreed in partnership with Leas Lift. Leas Lift will also share it with their contact 'gatekeepers' for maximum reach.

### **Approach to the project**

#### **Briefing Ambassadors**

KCV Folkestone will work with KCV's Folkestone Team, Nepalese Community Workers and KCV's volunteer drivers and befrienders who will act as ambassadors for the project

The Leas Lift Interpretation & Activity Planner will work with the KCV Folkestone & Hythe team to share the history and ambitions of the project. KCV's support will be through Ambassadors raising awareness of the wider project and the memory work being undertaken with participants. Three events will be undertaken with Ambassadors, firstly to brief them from the outset and equip them with materials required to promote; mid-way to monitor progress and a third to celebrate what they have done and brief them about next steps for the project.

#### **Workshops**

The artist will devise and organise a programme of workshops in accessible spaces e.g. in the Folkestone Nepalese Community Centre (due to open in June 2021). The space, which is fully accessible, is sited on the ground floor of Cheriton Library. The team will also approach the Museum, Library and/or other venues where people will feel comfortable.

In advance of the workshops visual material relating to Leas Lift will be collected e.g. vintage postcards, letters, images, film and video. Leas Lift's Heritage Consultant, who will be preparing the Conservation Management Plan may be able to assist with this, along with the Local Studies Librarian. Lynsey Ilett at KCC Libraries, who runs the Local Studies Library and Darran Cowd at Folkestone Museum.

The Workshops will have several purposes:

- **SOCIAL:** people enjoy working with others but the social element is also important in regaining social confidence, discovering commonalities, making plans for the future

- **REMINISCENCE:** visual aids a great stimulus for retrieving memories, appreciating other people’s experiences and stories and ‘being heard’.
- **INFORMATIONAL:** Connection with plans for Leas Lift in the context of a renewing social context, infrastructure; being part of plans for the future, peer learning, volunteering
- **EDUCATIONAL** – History of funicular railways; engineering, oral histories; Folkestone planning.

This phase is also about gathering material for a celebration of this phase of the project and creating potential legacies. This will be agreed with participants and could be:

- An indoor, curated exhibition during spring 2023, as the Round 2 funding application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund is about to be submitted
- An installation, possibly outdoor, temporary, and weather-proofed
- Inspiration for co-curated projects to be delivered through the Activity Plan during the delivery phase, involving different artists, and perhaps contributing to the next Triennial (2024)
- Providing material for the proposed interpretative scheme
- Promotion for the Lift, inspiration for future retail products and involving the rest of the community in the consultation.

A suggested approach is detailed in Table 1 below.

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Pre-planning, R&D	Early 2022	Activity Planner and Artist to lead	Collate existing contacts, community groups and potential partners (eg schools, care homes) and target groups within the community and beyond. Checking venue availability, suitability	Database of contacts
3 Events to induct KCV ambassadors	1. Spring 2022 2. Mid-project 3. End project	Board member Leas Lift Activities group; Activity planner, KCV member, lead artist(s)	Outline of proposed project, scope out the role of Ambassadors, anticipated participants experience, Anthology example, video	Initial engagement of participants from target groups, Ambassadors recruited  Mid-way review, reset if required

What	When	Who	How	Outcomes
			Mid-way review – how’s it going?  Revisit milestones End – celebration and evaluation	Achievements acknowledges, evaluation report
Series of workshops (10?) in accessible venues in both Cheriton and Folkestone	June-Nov 2022	Lead artist/PM  Collaborating artist	Social; reminiscence; information; skills. Material gathering for artistic and interpretive uses	Post Covid recovery; social reintegration; future-facing.
Various pop-up events	June-Nov 2022	KCV Ambassadors FLL representative Artist(s)	Using identified, available, accessible venues to highlight specific aspects of the project: artistic; historical;  Leas Lift future planning	Engagement with project
Artistic outcomes	Jan-March 2023	Artistic Team	Physical exhibition, curated from gathered materials Installation – may be outdoors, building on HOME ‘Merchandise’ design ideas (eg postcard, poster, stickers, badges)? Digital presence	Exhibition, Installation, ideas for next stages
Evaluation	Post-project/end of Development Phase	Evaluation Consultant working with KCV/artist	Tbc – could include feedback meeting of key partners, KCV volunteers, participants	Case study included in Development phase evaluation report.

## Resources

KCV’s fee will be £20K. This will include the costs of the artist(s), Project Manager and materials. The Interpretation & Activity Planners’ fee is included in the project’s main professional fees.

- Two KCV officers (including one Snr Manager) will work to support the co-ordination and work of the Ambassadors (as required by the Leas Lift and the Artistic project) for a period of 6 months.
- Initial Project briefing of 2 x KCV staff by Leas Lift and Artistic Group including the Activities Co-ordinator – setting out role and aims of the Ambassadors and the aim and milestones of the wider project.

- KCV sends email invitation to its Folkestone Volunteers to become Ambassadors for the project.
- KCV Volunteers and staff attend the first of 3 workshops led by the Artistic group (your team), to hear more about the project and to look at how they can get involved themselves. Understanding the role of an Ambassador and how they can promote it to KCV's service users. (Scope the role of the Ambassador: 3As Achievable, Aspirational, Attractive (Fun)).
- KCV to send a couple of physical mail shots to potential participants to introduce the project and the role of the Ambassador team who can tell them more and then connect them up to the workshop programme being run by the Artistic Team.
- Ambassadors actively promoting the project over six months so will likely be identifying participants on an ongoing basis. Potential participants to be directed towards workshops or 'pop-ups' as appropriate (see below).

Alongside this commission, the Interpretation & Activity Planner will be collecting memories from people through pop-up events in Folkestone, working in partnership with schools, care homes, and with charities supporting people who are deaf, have hearing loss, deafened, are blind and partially sighted. The aim is to then engage all of these audiences during the first 18 months of the Delivery Phase (2024/early 2025) through other creative projects, visits, talks, walks and volunteering before the Lift re-opens. We anticipate participants from this project celebrating with us when the Lift re-opens in spring 2025.

