

PRESS RELEASE

Approved for immediate release

Please contact: press@messumswiltshire.com

MESSUMS EAST

We are delighted to announce our plans for MESSUMS EAST, a significant new visual arts and cultural space to be opened in Lowestoft town centre as part of a wider programme of regeneration in Lowestoft.



Opening in Spring 2025, the former Post Office building in London Road North will be refurbished and transformed into a 21st century hub for creativity and, in so doing, will maintain the heritage of this historically important building in the heart of the town. Working with Lowestoft Town Council and internationally renowned sculptor Laurence Edwards to see this project come to fruition, the hub, known as Messums East, will provide a working studio for a long-term revolving residency programme. This will open with Laurence Edwards who will be creating a large-scale bronze landmark sculpture for Lowestoft, casting it at his foundry in East Suffolk. He will work extensively with the community from the new studio at the Post Office to see this realised.



Born and living in Suffolk, Edwards went to school in Leiston and in the early 1980s spent happy years at Lowestoft FE college, where he also met his future wife. He employs local people at his large-scale art foundry in Halesworth where his sculptures are cast before being exhibited around the world.

He comments, “My sculptural life started at Lowestoft College. Lowestoft gave me a chance, accepted and encouraged me to take the first steps of a career. Something I've never forgotten. I can't quite believe that some forty years later, I have the chance to return and work within the community to create something of meaning, something of scale that will hopefully speak of this unique and special place for years to come.”

The Post Office building has the patination of Lowestoft history and Messums East will enable the culture of creativity in this area to be celebrated by bringing an enticing range of exhibitions and events to the town and for the story of the art of the region to be told nationally and internationally. This is in keeping with the building's original purpose as a Post Office, a place where information is received and subsequently communicated far and wide. The hub will offer a social meeting point for an exchange of ideas, and we welcome everyone to share in the journey of its formation.

As well as placing international artists at the centre of Messums East, space will be provided for a spectrum of national and regional artists, together with exhibition spaces, a screening room and a café/ restaurant. In accordance with the concept that buildings survive by adaptability, the venue will provide a platform that will allow creativity to fill the space and to guide its purpose over time. The pyramid of regional, national and international connections will remain central to the programme and its ambition. Sculpture will form a core part of the programme with opportunities to site 'sculpture by the sea' on an annual basis. The hub will provide a platform for creative expression across artistic genre and a meeting point of minds to explore how art as a language is made, interpreted, resolved and shared.

The programme at Messums East will embrace and celebrate all art forms encompassing dance, photography, painting, drawing, ceramics, architecture and more. We will offer a programme of festivals, talks and symposiums based on the successful implementation of this at Messums West (previously Messums Wiltshire) and these will focus on a range of topics central to the world that we live in today. It is our aim that we can use these events to bring people together, to inform our individual thinking around collective decisions and to thus help play our part in using creativity to problem-solve. Appreciation and respect for nature remains central to our agenda and our Active Environmentalism programme will continue at Messums East with a fresh focus on issues important to the region and further afield. Essential to our ethos is the enabling of opportunities for exciting new talent. As part of this, we will continue to support and nurture young artists through our Emerging Talent programme. The act of physical making will also be at the heart of our offer so

visitors can enjoy experiencing the materials and processes embraced by our artists and gain in the rewards creativity can provide.

The programming and residencies commencing in 2025 will thematically orientate around paper, a material which is the touch point for the widest number of artistic practices while also being a nod to the history of the Post Office building. Publications in the form of zines will be created as part of the programme.

Over the coming months we will be engaging with the local community, listening and responding to ideas and conversations to share in our mutual ambition. As part of this process, during the First Light Festival of 17-18 June 2023 which marks the summer solstice weekend in this most easterly town, Laurence Edwards will model portrait heads in wax of people of the town in live sittings. These sessions will take place on Saturday 17 June from 2-4pm and 6-8pm and, on Sunday 18 June, from 11am-1pm. As well as sculptures, conversations will unfold between artist and sitter. Viewers will hear life stories emerge whilst gaining insights into the secrets of making a sculptural likeness in wax. Each two-hour session will be filmed and broadcast live on screens to enable the audience access to the intimate process, watching a head evolve in the sculptor's hands and listening to the conversations taking place. Conversations such as these will form an integral part of the project's formation and it is essential that this communication continues to flow, just as the Post Office building has enabled for so many years. Once completed, there will be the opportunity to display these sculpted heads in the Post Office as part of the evolving narrative of the project.

Furthermore, as part of the First Light Festival weekend, a colossal six-foot bronze head by Laurence Edwards will wash up on the South Beach at Lowestoft. This bronze casting of an ancient head by the sculptor will be bedded into the sand situated on the tideline. It will be exposed at low tide and submerged under the waves when the water is high, being buffeted and coloured by the salt water.





Laurence Edwards, Sketches of Chthonic Head

After time spent in the tideline in June, *Chthonic Head* will travel to its next destination at Messums West before continuing its journey onwards.



Chthonic Head in progress



On Sunday 18 June at 1:35pm, as part of the talks programme of the Festival, Laurence Edwards will be in conversation with Calvin Winner, Head of Collections at Sainsbury Centre, Norwich exploring approaches to sculpture, working in a community and how the coastal location of Lowestoft will inspire his residency there over the next few years. Place and people are at the heart of Edwards practice, and he will discuss examples of his work reflecting this importance including the 26ft Yoxman sculpture situated close to the A12 in his native Suffolk and the 40 portraits of former miners in Doncaster, sculpted from life in two-hour sittings.

'A window into Lowestoft'

Ahead of opening in Spring 2025, when 51 London Road will open as Messums East, creativity is already bubbling at the site of Lowestoft's former Post Office. In keeping with our vision to be a focal point within the town and community, the windows themselves have already been reimagined as curated spaces offering a window into Lowestoft online and a window into the art world for those passing.

The Post Office will re-awaken its earlier purpose of being a conveyer of information in and out of the town. Where once letters and packages came and went, now knowledge and information will move from artist to audience offering an insight into the programme at Messums and a way to bring international focus on artistic activity in the East Coast. The window exhibitions will offer a taste of the art and culture that will be celebrated in the years ahead. They will provide a glimpse into our ethos and the different genre of the arts that we support.

Low-key and thought provoking, the windows will be curated on a 4-month rotation, and we have invited public engagement and involvement in their programming. There will be a number of opportunities for participation as these creative window spaces are designed, conceived and curated.

The first window displays will offer insight into our art and artists, the second will be a presentation by Laurence Edwards. Subsequent displays will include open callouts for artists to have their artwork featured in the window boxes with winning entries offered an exhibition at our Cork Street Gallery, Messums London and with sculptors offered to present work at Messums West in Wiltshire. Further displays will be guest curated and we welcome your thoughts and ideas for the creative agenda you would like to be featured.

Connecting people and places is at the heart of our agenda together with our belief in enabling creative thinkers to have a platform to share their ideas. Messums East will offer a social meeting point for an exchange of ideas, and we welcome everyone, at every stage, to share in the journey

of its formation. The window displays mark the start of this journey while behind the scenes the work is progressing to see the Post Office brought back to life as a 21st century hub of creativity.

We hope that you will share in our journey of bringing the Post Office back to life and celebrating its history and evolution.



London Road, Lowestoft, 1912 (from the collection of A Taylor)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

First Light Festival Events:

Laurence Edwards: Portrait Sculpture Live

First Light Festival

Saturday 17 June, 2-4pm and 6-8pm

Sunday 18 June, 11am-1pm

Messums East ArtHub

Chthonic Head by Laurence Edwards



First Light Festival

Across the weekend

Saturday 17 June – Sunday 18 June

South Beach

Landmarks – Laurence Edwards

First Light Festival

Sunday 18 June, 13:35-14:00

Mediating Sculpture in Public Space

Artist talk in conversation with Calvin Winner, Head of Collections, Sainsbury Centre

Ideas on the Green

A Window into Lowestoft

Start date: July 2023

Messums East

51 London Road North

Lowestoft

PRESS

For further information and press images, please contact: press@messumswiltshire.com

MESSUMS WEST is a leading multi-purpose gallery and arts centre set inside a restored thirteenth-century tithe barn and surrounding buildings with exhibition space, sculpture garden and restaurant.

MESSUMS LONDON is a 2,000 sq ft exhibition space on Cork Street behind the Royal Academy. It hosts a rolling programme of exhibitions for our contemporary artists and is home to our photography department.

ENDS.

Notes to editors

About Messums West

Messums West is a leading multi-purpose gallery and arts centre based in Wiltshire, England. It is a platform for the presentation and discussion of creative expression across artistic genre and a



meeting point for minds to explore how art as problem solving sharpens our insights into today's concerns.

Opened in Autumn 2016 after a two-year restoration project to bring a thirteenth century tithe barn, the largest thatched building in the country, back to life as an exhibition and event space. The gallery's one year anniversary was marked by the opening of the Long Gallery, a former dairy that lies perpendicular to the main barn, and a space to present two-dimensional works of art and objects of scale. The Mess Restaurant was opened in the same year and the exterior courtyard was remodelled in 2020 with sculpture grounds and outside seating.

In 2020 Messums West opened a Membership Programme to help support the ambitious programming in Wiltshire, including international artist residencies, contemporary dance premiers and educational workshops. In the performing arts we have created an international festival for dance and a unique platform '4 by 20' for identifying and supporting emerging choreography. Messums Creative sees the act of physical making, often lacking in a digital world, brought back into focus via our ceramic workshops, which have been running since Summer 2021.

The Active Environmentalism programme aims to build knowledge, ways of seeing and our relationship with the environment. This appreciation and respect for nature underpins our ethos and we support artists whose work considers our natural environment and embrace this to expand our awareness and understanding of issues relevant to today's world. We advocate that looking closely at our natural world, through the lens of our artists, can offer both insight and empathy, and that the spirit of creativity, enquiry and belief in the yet to be discovered can drive the potential for change.

Messums West supports and nurture young artists enabling opportunities through our Emerging Talent programme which champions a new generation of artists who exemplify the quality that runs through our more senior programming at Messums.

Messums West is an independent business run by a team led by Johnathan Messum and maintains a number of galleries supporting the promotion of modern and contemporary arts, including Messums London on Cork Street.

Towns Deal

In 2019, Lowestoft was chosen as one of 100 UK towns to benefit from the Government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund. Each town was invited by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) to develop a proposal for a Towns Deal, with up to £25 million available to bid for.

In 2020, a Town Investment Plan which sets out Lowestoft's ambitions, opportunities and challenges over the next ten years was submitted to the Government as the basis of a £24.9m application to the Towns Fund, focusing on five transformational regeneration projects.

The full funding was provisionally secured in March 2021, in which a Town Deal was agreed in principle with Government, subject to the completion of detailed businesses cases for each of the five projects. These were completed in March 2022 and all five projects received final approval from Government in July 2022.

The five projects are:

- The Station Quarter, which will see both the former Post Office and front of the vacant Lowestoft railway station building fully restored and brought back into full working use.

- The Cultural Quarter, which will see improvements to the Marina Theatre, the redevelopment of the Council's current Customer Services Centre to provide a new cultural facility with associated eatery, and the redevelopment of the former Battery Green multi-storey car park to provide a new leisure offer.
- The Historic Quarter which will focus on the redevelopment and refurbishment of the Town Hall along with enhancing the historic Scores.
- The Seafront Vision which will see the redevelopment of Royal Plain including the Royal Plain fountains, Royal Green and associated public realm to complement the recently refurbished East Point Pavilion.
- The Port Gateway project which will support the development of the Lowestoft Eastern Energy Facility (LEEF) to secure Lowestoft's future as an Operations and Maintenance hub for the offshore renewables sector.

All five projects have now advanced to the design phase and in the coming months, residents, businesses and visitors will be able to view proposed designs and learn more about each project. The Lowestoft Town Investment Plan was developed in partnership with the Lowestoft Place Board, which comprises representatives from public, private and voluntary organisations and is overseen by East Suffolk Council.

About the London Road, Lowestoft High Street Heritage Action Zone

The London Road, Lowestoft High Street Heritage Action Zone (London Road HSHAZ) is a linear strip of approximately 1.5km running from the Surrey Street junction on London Road North to the Carlton Road junction on London Road South in Kirkley, south Lowestoft. The London Road HSHAZ boundary encompasses a significant portion of the South Lowestoft Conservation Area, in the Character Areas of the Harbour, London Road South and the seafront. The London Road HSHAZ boundary includes the key commercial areas of the southern end of the town centre (London Road North), Station Square and London Road South, which contains several Grade II Listed and locally listed buildings.

About High Streets Heritage Action Zones

The High Streets Heritage Action Zones is a £95 million government-funded programme led by Historic England, designed to secure lasting improvements and help breathe new life into our historic high streets for the communities and businesses that use them. Historic England is working with local people and partners to unlock the rich heritage on these high streets, through repair and improvement works as well as arts and cultural programmes, making them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors. <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/regenerating-historic-high-streets/>

About Historic England

We are Historic England, the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment, from beaches and battlefields to parks and pie shops. We protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we've come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories they tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them. Working with communities and specialists we share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so everyone can keep enjoying and looking after the history that surrounds us all. @HistoricEngland