



# **CREATIVE RAMSGATE**

# Who should read this?

Government and regional policymakers in the business, creative and heritage sectors, grant-awarding bodies in the creative and heritage sectors, philanthropic investment fund managers, commercial investors, creative sector entrepreneurs

# Ramsgate – past, present and future

**2019 is a landmark year for Ramsgate with fresh and important recognition of its rich heritage and its exciting future as a developing creative and digital economy hub.**

**As this report demonstrates, Ramsgate's creative sector is nearly three times larger than 10 years ago due mainly to inward migration of businesses. Its range of creative sectors and areas of strength signal a multifaceted digital and creative tech base.**

**Over the past three years Ramsgate has been identified:**

- In the top 8% of conservation areas with creative industries across the UK.
- As a Thames Estuary Production Corridor cultural production area.
- As one of the UK's first Heritage Action Zones funded by Historic England.
- As a hub for the Arts Council England and National Lottery funded £1.5m Pioneering Places scheme.
- For Future High Street and High Street Heritage Action Zone funding from the government.

**As nine of the town's historic landmarks are newly listed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on the advice of Historic England, this Creative Ramsgate Report firmly locates heritage as core to the area's unique identity as a creative and digital cluster.**

## PROJECT TEAM



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**Heritage Lab**  
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**European Union**  
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Development Fund



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# Creative Ramsgate: Executive summary

This report comes at a time when creative and digital economy is at the forefront of national, regional and local policy priorities and agendas.

Kent mirrors the national picture and strong future potential with creative industries generally growing at twice the average rate of the rest of the economy. This positions the creative and digital sector as major drivers for the economy as a whole.

In mapping the creative and digital sector in Ramsgate for the first time, this report aims to provide evidence for a wide-ranging audience, including business, policy, arts, heritage and community organisations, focused on supporting future growth.

There are a number of priorities and funding mechanisms at the national level to support creative industries and their role in giving places strong identities as well as supporting economic and jobs growth. The main framework for these is the Industrial Strategy Creative Industries Sector Deal and the focus includes skills and creative cluster development.

Kent also mirrors the national situation in its concentration of microbusinesses in the sector – 96%, much the same as the UK picture of 94%. This makes scaling-up a key challenge, not least in relation to prime strategic aims to expand exports and increase the UK's global competitiveness. National goals by 2023 include a 50% growth in reported exports from creative industries, along with 600,000 new creative jobs.

Regionally and locally a wide range of research has provided detailed evidence of the success of creative industries and their growth prospects. Thames Estuary

Production Corridor (TEPC) research highlights growth in self-employment and entrepreneurialism alongside strong partnership support for creative and cultural activity across the region, engaging local authorities, arts and community groups and universities.

It was reported in 2018 that over the past five years Thanet stood out in Kent for the largest growth in creative businesses – 82.9% representing 180 more enterprises. These figures from Kent County Council indicated that six of its local authority areas showed growth above the national average.

Strengthening the innovation culture and growth in creative and digital industries

feature prominently in priorities for the Local Industrial Strategy currently being drafted by the South East Local Economic Partnership (SELEP). This emphasis is reflected in Thanet District Council's economic strategy,

focused on building on the momentum in creative sector growth, and signalling Thanet's distinctive identity.

This is the starting point for the research undertaken in the Creative Ramsgate Project, which has set out to understand the diversity of creative and digital businesses, their needs, including for future workspace, and their perspectives on the distinctiveness of the area as a developing cluster.

The partnership for the project has included funders Arts Council England and Locate in Kent, and Heritage Lab CIC as Project Lead in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University as Research Lead. The results would not have been possible without the deep support and engagement of members of Ramsgate's creative and digital sector.

## **Ramsgate's range of creative sectors and areas of strength demonstrate a multifaceted digital and creative tech base**

### Entrepreneurship in a distinctive location

The main methodology for the primary research is a detailed survey gathering quantitative and qualitative data from creative businesses, freelancers and employees.

The online public survey was open for a month at the end of the summer. A total of 228 respondents took part and the results were presented in outline at an interactive workshop in Ramsgate in September in advance of this report.



### The research survey shows:

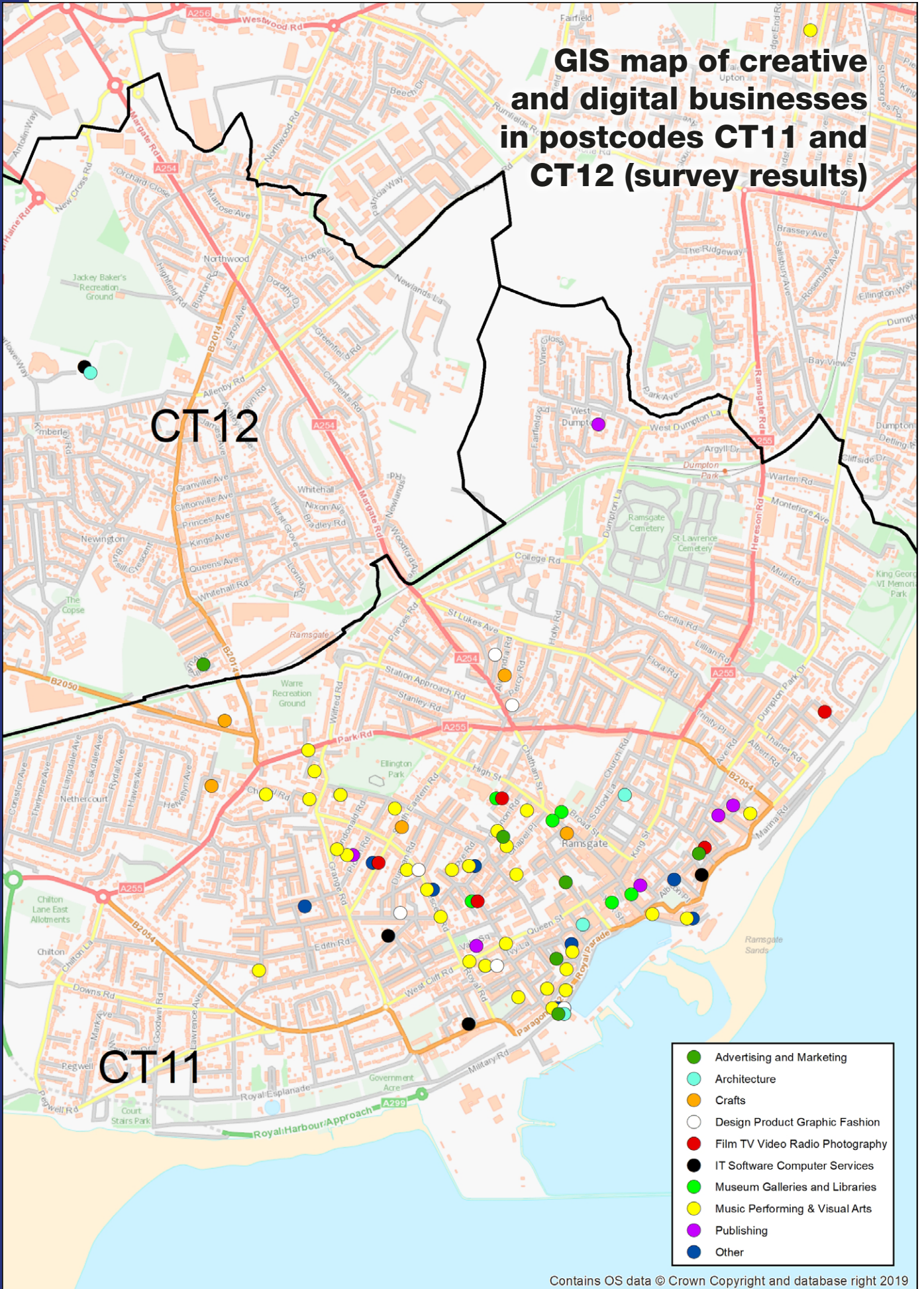
- Ramsgate's creative sector is nearly three times larger than 10 years ago due mainly to inward migration of businesses.
- The vast majority of respondents are in music, performing and visual arts, with film, radio and television the next largest group but less than half the number.
- Other notable groups are in crafts, publishing, advertising and marketing, and design.
- This spread across creative industries signals as much richness in diversity of digital and tech as it does in creative skill sets.
- With the vast majority microbusinesses with 0-9 employees, respondents' emphasis on a welcoming, supportive and networked community signals the role of connections between people and place in building a robust ecosystem.
- The priority needs of investment and business networks along with suitable premises in the Ramsgate area and access to skills and business support and advice indicate a developing ecosystem in need of support to grow further.

**Place and connection are dominant themes in this first research mapping the cluster.**

**The potential for heritage sites to help fulfil the need for suitable business locations aligns with how creatives see Ramsgate's USP as vested significantly in its distinctive history and architecture.**



# GIS map of creative and digital businesses in postcodes CT11 and CT12 (survey results)



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# Introduction

## **Creative and digital economy: national, regional, local**

**The findings of this report sit within the wider context of national, regional and local frameworks and policies with many mutually reinforcing perspectives and strategies.**

Overall it is a powerful picture of significant future potential. Creative industries generally are growing at twice the average rate of the rest of the economy, including in Kent, and serving as a major driver for the economy as a whole.

Nationally, the Industrial Strategy Creative Industries Sector Deal provides a framework and funding, to include support for skills and creative cluster development. It recognises the contributions of creative industries in giving places strong identities as well as supporting economic and jobs growth.<sup>1</sup>

Scale-up is recognised as a major challenge for the sector, with 94% of





Thanet District Council/Visit Thanet

its companies being microbusinesses (10% more than in other sectors) limiting their impact on regional productivity.

Exports and the UK's global competitiveness in the sector are strategic priorities and a new Creative Industries Trade and Investment Board is part of the picture. Aims include by 2023 a 50% increase in reported exports from creative industries and 600,000 new creative jobs.

The national context also includes the first Culture White Paper in 50 years<sup>2</sup>, launched in 2016 and including among its strategies Heritage Action Zones. Ramsgate features on the first list. The aim of the zones is to unlock economic growth through fresh approaches to the historical environment.

The range of activities launched by Historic England working with local partners and volunteers in Ramsgate include research to map the patterns of historical character in the town and archaeological research on Ramsgate's pre-history.<sup>3</sup>

At the regional level, research underpinning the development of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor (TEPC) has been influential in shaping strategy and emphasising the significance and future potential of the creative and cultural sector. A third of employment is identified in the creative and professional sectors with both being among the fastest

Scale-up is recognised as a major challenge for the sector



growing and highest value sectors in the area.

TEPC research points to strong growth in self-employment in the creative and cultural areas, suggesting increased entrepreneurialism and potential for new directions and possibilities.

Creative industries have complex economic and societal significance

It also points to support for creative and cultural activity across the region, with partnership work a core feature, engaging local authorities, arts and community groups and universities.<sup>4</sup>

It identifies strong commercial demand for creative and cultural facilities, particularly work and production space, and suggests this is likely to expand in the future, highlighting the need for suitability and affordability to feature on policy agendas to ensure future growth potential is not put at risk.

Investment in TEPC includes this year's £4.3m Cultural Development Fund award for the three-year 'Creative Estuary' project to develop the area as one of Europe's most integrated and productive creative regions.

Kent County Council highlights partnership work in its commitment to growing the cultural and creative sector through three key approaches – create, innovate and sustain. 'By 2027 Kent will be a confident, vibrant county, where extraordinary cultural activity is available that enriches and





Thanet District Council/Visit Thanet

transforms the lives of everyone.

‘The county is characterised by some notable highlights with emerging companies alongside comparatively small and geographically dispersed creative clusters. In order to fulfil our potential and play a nationally significant role we must build on these to establish greater critical mass and strengthen our collective voice.’<sup>5</sup>

In 2018 the county council reported that creative businesses had grown across all Kent local authorities in the past five years with six showing growth above the national average, and Thanet showing the largest percentage growth (82.9%) amounting to 180 more enterprises.<sup>6</sup>

A higher proportion of Thanet’s businesses were film, TV, video, radio and photography enterprises (17.2%), more than anywhere else in Kent and above the national average of 11.4%, according to the county council’s report.

It added that IT, software and computer services accounted for almost half the creative enterprises in Kent and the largest proportion of creative businesses in all areas. In Thanet the figure was 31.3%, with the next biggest group in music, performing and visual arts (21.9%) and the next largest design: product, graphic and fashion (12.5%). Kent mirrored the national picture, with 96.3% of its creative enterprises being microbusinesses.

The Creative Ramsgate Report comes at a time when the South East Local Economic Partnership (SELEP) is drafting the Local Industrial



Strategy, in which priorities include increasing economic output and job growth as well as building a stronger innovation culture.<sup>7</sup>

Creative and digital industries are highlighted as a key area with potential for growth, along with marine and maritime, life sciences and low carbon technology.

The preponderance of small enterprises emphasises the importance of scale-up issues and investment potential, but skills availability and infrastructure impact on both.

There is also recognition that creative industries have complex economic and societal significance, including their role in driving the cultural and visitor economy.

Locally, growth in the creative sector is core to Thanet District Council's economic strategy, building on already well-established momentum, and stressing the distinctiveness of Thanet as an area. 'Historically an island – and technically still one today – Thanet's close-knit community and DIY sense of opportunity set it apart from the rest.'<sup>8</sup>

In the case of Ramsgate there are a number of key characteristics of its setting and history that distinguish it and emphasise continuity both culturally and architecturally.

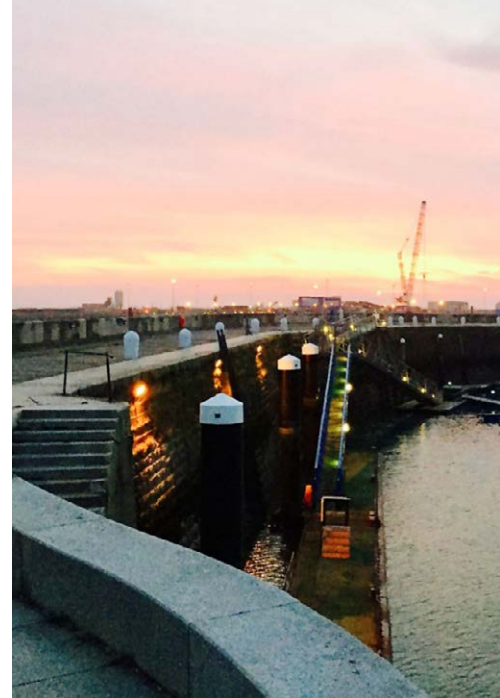
It is the largest conservation area in Kent, featuring the UK's only Royal Harbour with links to its early times as a fishing village until the 16th/17th centuries, a status extended to its attraction as one of the first English sea-bathing resorts by the end of the 18th century.<sup>9</sup>

Its residential core of mainly 18th and early 19th century terraced housing with further 19th and 20th century development beyond presents a relatively compact picture.

Architecturally, Augustus Pugin's association with Ramsgate includes The Grange, the home he designed and built when he moved to Ramsgate in the mid-19th century, and St Augustine's Church. The Pugin and St Augustine Visitor Centre opened in 2017.

As part of the Ramsgate Heritage Action Zone development, the town's historical buildings have received further recognition this year with nine new Grade II listings by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on the advice of Historic England, and a number of relistings, including Ramsgate Fire Station and the former Granville Hotel.<sup>10</sup>

Alongside Ramsgate's maritime and architectural heritage is its rich



# In 2021 Ramsgate celebrates 200 years as the UK's Royal Harbour



Heritage Lab

cultural past featuring authors and artists such as Jane Austen, Wilkie Collins and Vincent Van Gogh.

Its present-day cultural and creative scene features a diverse range of activities and events including music, performance, installation art and festivals, and a growing creative and digital economy across the town and in clusters, including in the Military Road area.

## **Project methodology**

This is the starting point for the research undertaken in the Creative Ramsgate Project as the first mapping of the creative and digital cluster. The project has set out to understand the diversity of creative and digital businesses, their needs, including for future workspace, and their perspectives on the distinctiveness of the area as a developing cluster.

The main methodology for the primary research is a detailed survey gathering quantitative and qualitative data from creative businesses, freelancers and employees. The project team worked together on constructing the survey questions to ensure that business and academic insights were reflected as fully as possible and that questions were framed clearly.

A network cascading approach was adopted, including through social media. Initial contacts were made through the team's networks in the creative and digital community in the Ramsgate area to share advance news of the survey and to prepare respondents to engage with it. A flyer was produced explaining the nature and purpose of the survey and distributed throughout the town and at key points where it would reach the creative community.

The online public survey was open for a month at the end of the summer. A total of 228 respondents took part and the results, which were presented in outline at an interactive workshop in Ramsgate in September, are presented over the following pages.

# Ramsgate's USP

**The largest qualitative component of the survey relates to how creatives view Ramsgate's USP. It is noteworthy that across the responses there are clusters of themes that are repeated sufficiently for analysis to indicate a hierarchy of perspectives.**

**It is clear that the potential for heritage sites to help fulfil the need for suitable business locations aligns with how creatives see Ramsgate's USP as vested significantly in its distinctive history and architecture.**

■ Strong creative community

■ Inspiring coastal living

The first and most powerful cluster offers a clear connection between creative community and place. The most frequently articulated themes defining Ramsgate are the presence of a strong creative/arts community and an inspiring coastal environment and lifestyle.

This result reinforces the sense that people and place are paramount in building an ecosystem for creative businesses to establish themselves and thrive. The emphasis on community is important, stressing the connectedness across creatives. The sense of inspiration highlights the significance of place in stimulating creative outputs.

■ Proximity to London

■ Affordability

■ Natural environment, beauty and harbour

The second most powerful cluster not surprisingly emphasises the proximity to London as well as affordability, including in comparison with London. Affordability is mostly referred to in general terms, although homes and studio/business space are mentioned specifically in a few responses.

Here we clearly have emphasis on the advantages of easy access to London from a much more affordable location. It is interesting that we also see in this cluster further reinforcement of the importance and distinctiveness of place, with responses stressing the natural environment and beauty of Ramsgate, along with the harbour.

**One point to stress from these first two clusters is the extent to which there is a range of attention to the different attributes of Ramsgate as a place combining natural surroundings and specific features such as the harbour, as well as lifestyle opportunities offered by its setting.**

■ Architecture and heritage

■ Welcoming with nurturing networks

■ Excellent transport to London and beyond

The third most powerful cluster of themes supports and expands on those articulated in the first two. In this third cluster, the spotlight falls on architecture and heritage buildings along with Ramsgate being a welcoming and supportive place with good networking opportunities and accessibility and good transport links, particularly to London. The emphasis on architecture and heritage locations adds to the sense of place communicated through other responses to the survey.

The sense of welcome, support and solid networking possibilities elaborates on and underpins the notion of a strong creative/arts community. Confidence in Ramsgate as a base is linked closely to ease of access, especially to the capital.

**Other themes that receive numerous but far fewer mentions are: quiet and calm; history; work/life balance; space for new businesses to move in; close to Margate's creative sector; mature and professional skills and experience; good opportunities for businesses; diversity; great filming and photographic locations; unique; lots of art galleries; family friendly.**

# What creatives say

‘A place to grow,  
explore and be  
curious’

---

**‘I am aware of  
a huge need for  
spaces and no  
solutions at present’**

---

‘Ramsgate has a  
genuine creative  
pulse and allows  
artists freedom to  
try anything’

---

**‘Huge amount of  
very experienced  
big hitters in the  
music industry’**

---

‘Understated,  
multifaceted charm’

‘Wonderful links  
between the natural  
environment and the  
built environment  
– it’s a setting that  
draws people to it’

---

**‘The sea helps  
creative thinking’**

---

‘It’s a unique place  
with a great creative  
heritage’

---

‘A genuine  
seaside town,  
close to London  
yet spiritually and  
creatively apart’

---

**‘It can become a  
creative hub’**





‘Beautiful seaside town teaming with artists and entrepreneurs, people wanting to build their lives here and build Ramsgate back up to its former glory’

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‘The harbour is an amazing centre point’

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**‘Scenery, sunshine, inventive people’**

**‘We are held back by lack of investment and dedicated affordable spaces’**

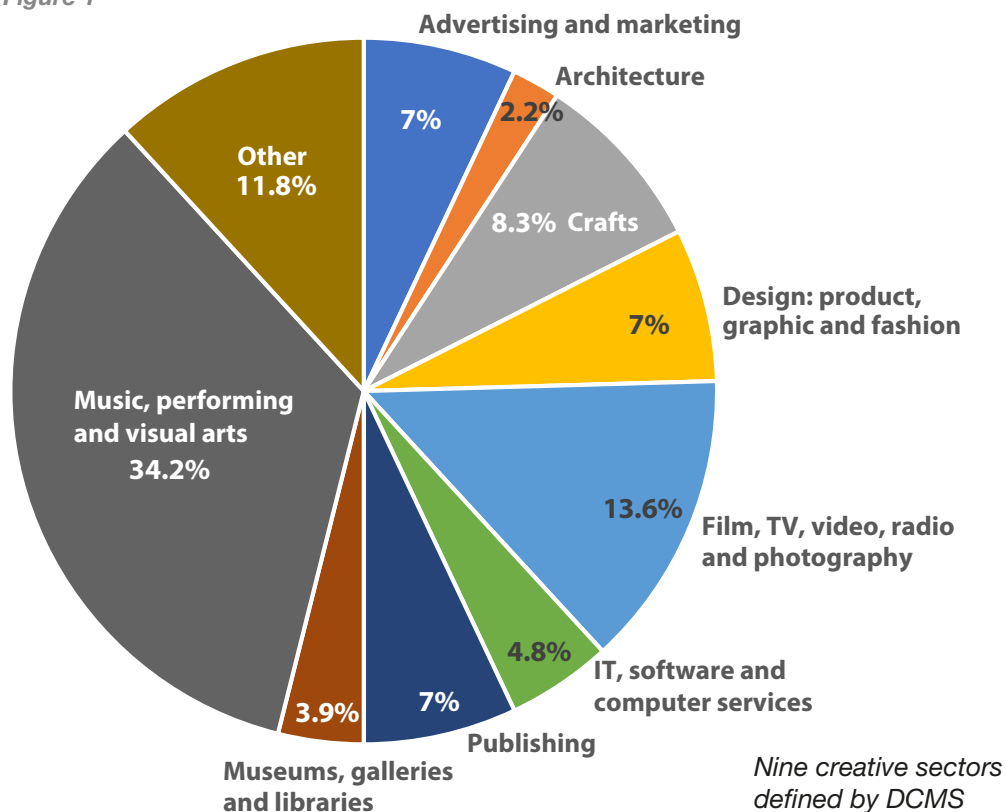
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‘It is a place both ordinary and extraordinary, it has hidden depths and a sense of great opportunity’

# Survey results

## What type of creative/digital business do you work in or operate?

Figure 1



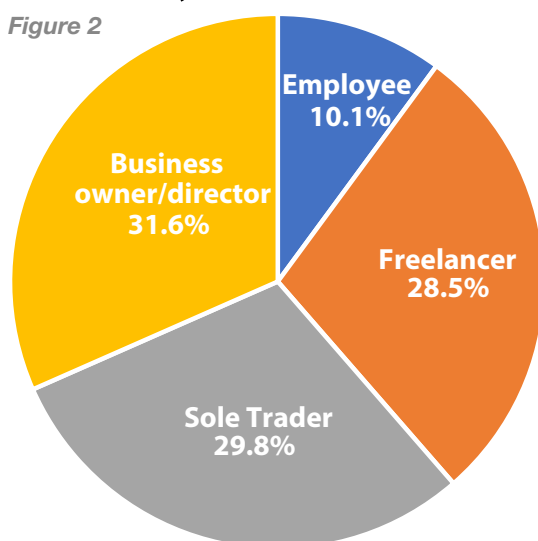
The vast majority of our respondents are in the music, performing and visual arts, with film, radio and television the next largest group but less than half the number. Other notable clusters are in crafts, publishing, advertising and marketing, and design. Small clusters are in: IT and computer services; museums, galleries and libraries.

Not surprisingly a significant number of our respondents identify themselves in the 'other' category, supporting general debate about the problematic nature of the DCMS categories in terms of their limitations in capturing the creative economy in sufficiently granular ways.

Some of these, notably around different areas of design, could be captured under the DCMS categories but it is interesting to note that the respondents want to be specific about the segment of design they work in – for example, landscape design, interior design, set designer.

## What is your role?

Figure 2

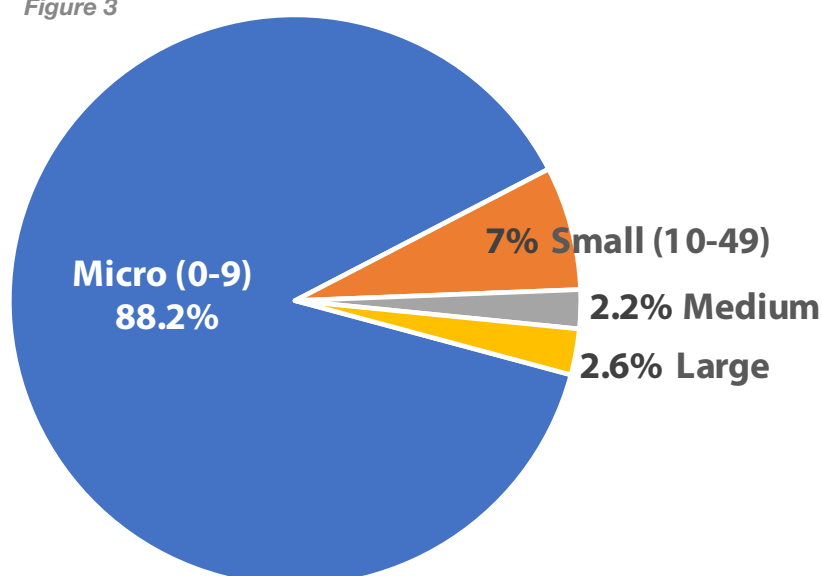


On the roles of respondents, the majority responses are fairly evenly distributed across business owner/director, freelancer and sole trader. Employee respondents are far fewer.

## What is the scale of this business in terms of staff numbers?

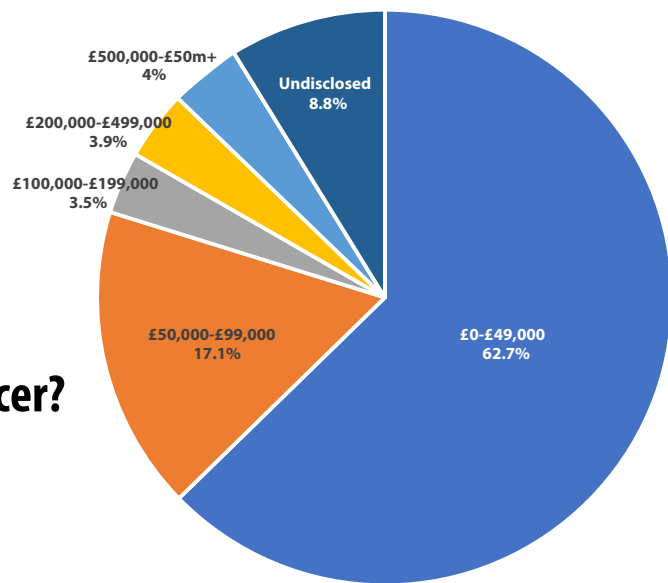
Figure 3

In line with the national picture, the vast majority are microbusinesses with 0-9 employees, with small businesses of between 10 and 49 employees the next most significant. Small numbers are evidenced in medium-sized businesses with 50-249 employees, and large businesses with 250+ employees.



## What is the scale of turnover in the business or your average income if you are an employee or freelancer?

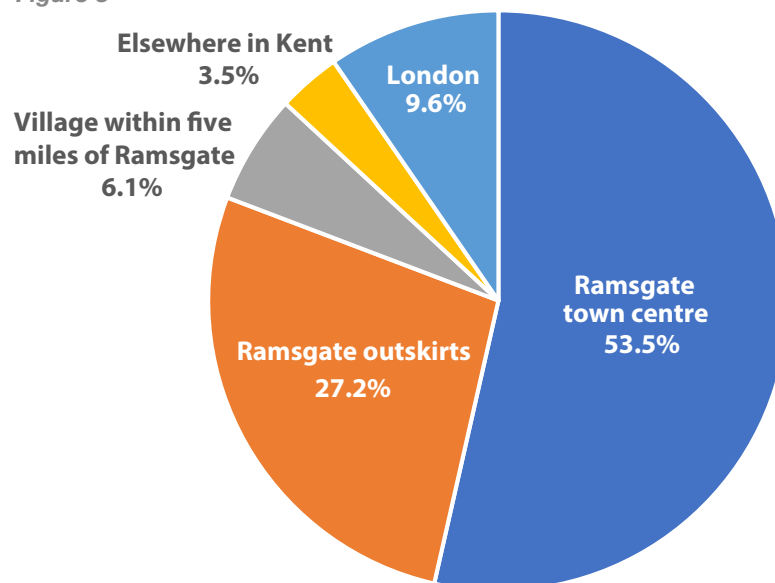
Figure 4



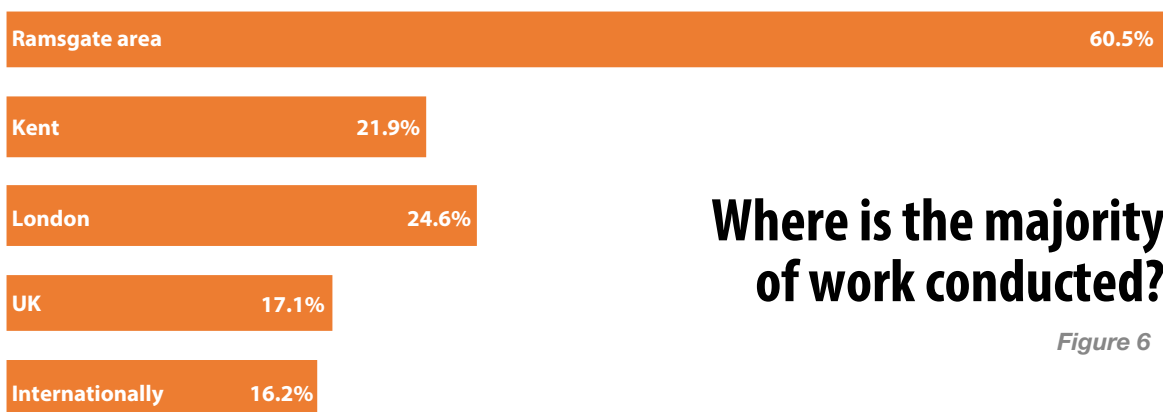
On scale of turnover, the majority are in the £0-49,000 bracket, with a significant number in the £50,000-£99,000 bracket and smaller numbers in the £100,000-£199,000 and £200,000-£499,000 brackets. There are smaller numbers in brackets above that and some respondents did not wish to disclose their scale of turnover.

## Where is the business based – not where you do your work but where the business or you as a sole trader are registered?

Figure 5



In terms of where businesses are registered, the vast majority are in Ramsgate town centre or on the outskirts of Ramsgate, with just under 10% in London.



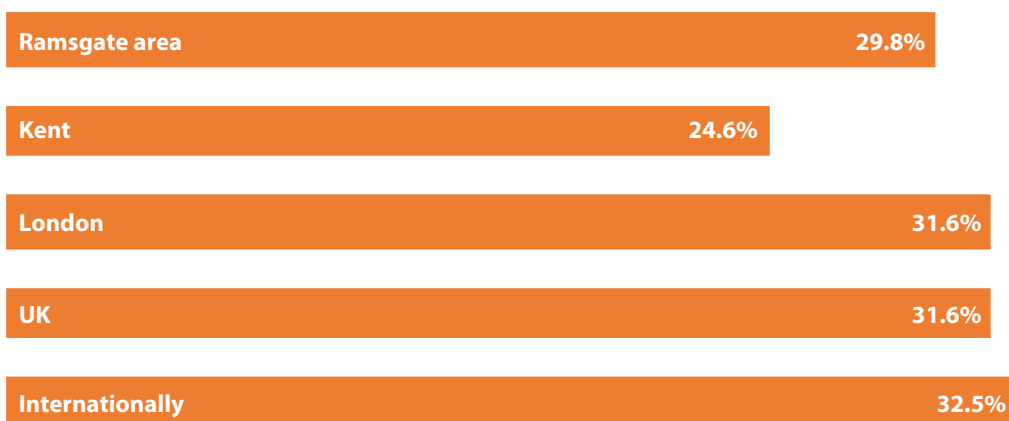
## Where is the majority of work conducted?

Figure 6

Respondents could tick up to two boxes on this question, which showed the largest result in the Ramsgate area, with London and Kent next, and UK and internationally following. The Ramsgate area result would be expected but the UK and international ones perhaps less so. This is another area relevant to inward investment prospects.

## Where are the majority of your clients located?

Figure 7

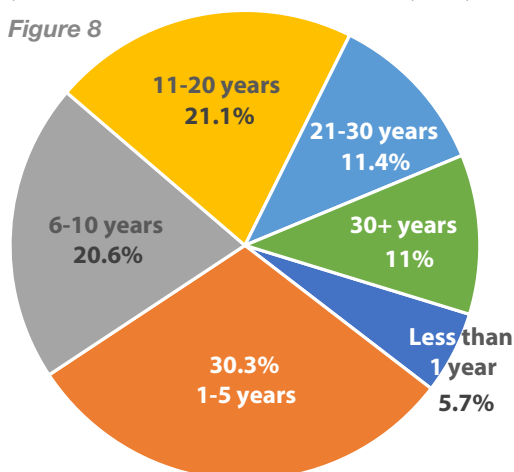


Respondents could tick up to two boxes on this question, which showed biggest and commensurate results across London, UK and international with only slightly less in the Ramsgate area and Kent.



## How long has the business been established or how long have you worked in the industry if you are an employee or freelancer?

Figure 8

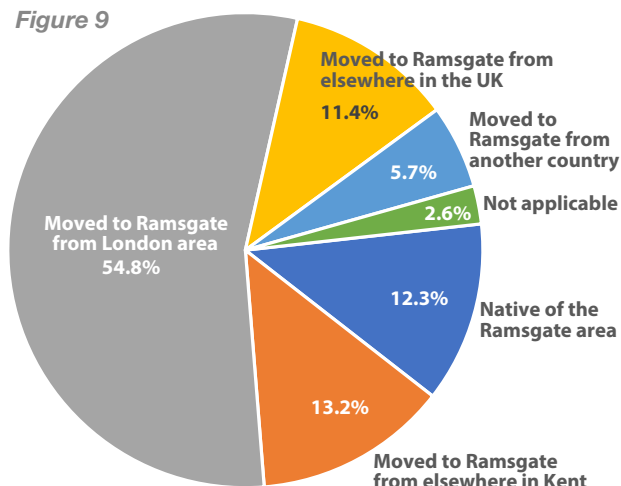


The largest group is in the 1-5 years bracket but with similar sized groups in the 6-10 and 11-20 years brackets. There are also significant numbers in the 21-30 and 30+ years brackets. This is a particularly interesting result in terms of both the depth of experience and maturity of Ramsgate's creative and digital sector in professional terms. It signals a strong base to build on both for further investment and growth and, alongside that, development of new talent which can benefit from this wealth of experience and expertise.

The majority results here are along expected lines. In the lead is move to Ramsgate from London. The rest are mainly those who are native of Ramsgate or moved to Ramsgate from elsewhere in Kent and the UK. A much smaller number moved to Ramsgate from another country. These results are a key finding in terms of the proven attractiveness of Ramsgate against London, and a well-established momentum of businesses moving in this direction, as well as locally-grown enterprises and others moving to Ramsgate from Kent and further afield. This signals a hybrid business community with a mix of local and external influences and approaches which add to the diversity of business culture and networks as well as dynamism.

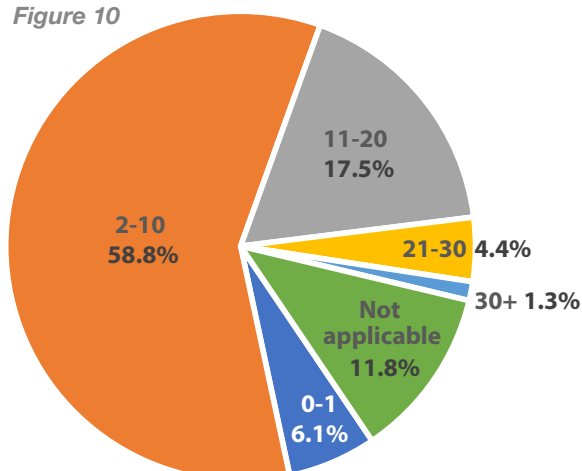
## What is your own most recent geographic background?

Figure 9



## If you moved to the Ramsgate area, how many years ago was that?

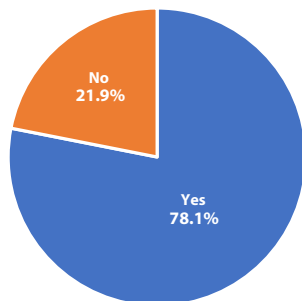
Figure 10



Responses to this question indicate a recent but established trajectory of creative and digital businesses basing themselves in the Ramsgate area, with the majority in the past 2-10 years and a significant group in the past 11-20 years. These findings signal a relatively recent cluster but with some depth in terms of longevity of presence, confirming some stability in terms of business presence which could be another positive indicator for inward investment and further development.

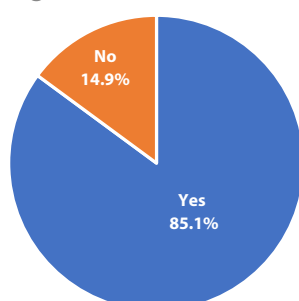
## Do you or the enterprise operate a website?

Figure 11



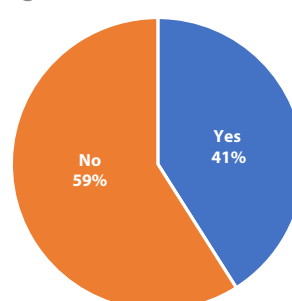
## Do you or the enterprise use social media for business?

Figure 12



## Does the website sell products or services?

Figure 13

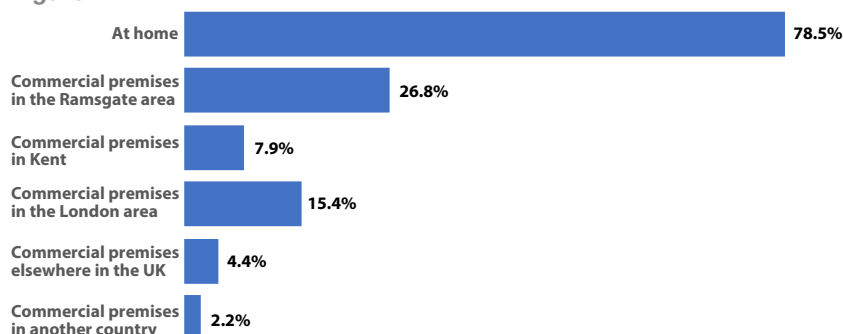


On website and social media use for business, unsurprisingly there is a vast majority already active, but significant pockets where this business development still needs to occur. Fewer than half the businesses use websites to sell products or services, so overall in the online commerce area much more development could take place. This could be seen as a strategic area for business development focus in the immediate future.

Respondents could tick all boxes that applied to them and, not surprisingly, a home base comes out as by far the largest result, with commercial premises in Ramsgate substantially behind and commercial premises in the London area perhaps larger than might have been expected. A small number have commercial premises in another country. These results are in line with the microbusiness dominance, where home-working is a key characteristic.

## Where do you work if you are an employee or freelancer or where are your business premises?

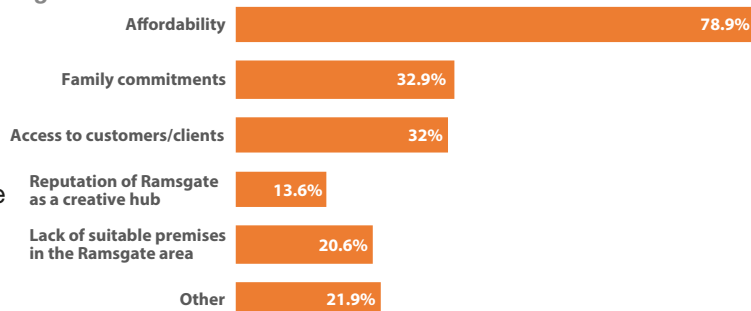
Figure 14



Respondents were asked to tick the two most important boxes here and by far the largest result is affordability, with family commitments and access to customers/clients well behind but equal in weight. Together they are substantial factors. Lack of suitable premises in the Ramsgate area is a significant number. The 'other' category has generated some interesting qualitative data covering areas including: proximity to home; flexibility; access to London, Kent and the continent; lifestyle, health and wellbeing; sea, harbour and fresh air.

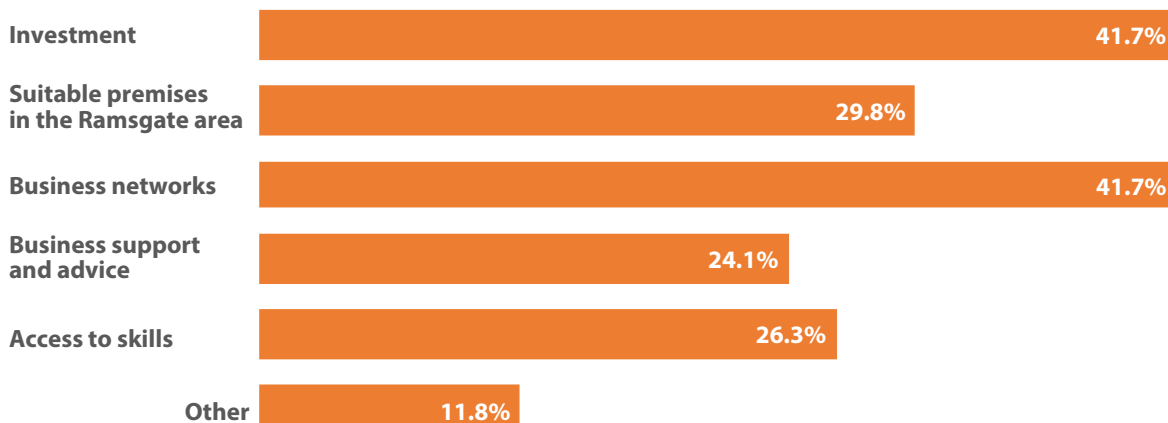
## What are the main reasons for the location?

Figure 15



## What are the most urgent needs for the business?

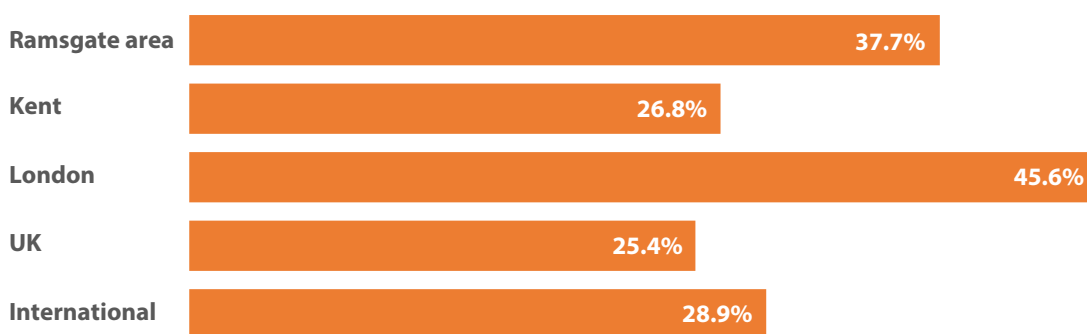
Figure 16



Respondents could tick no more than three boxes here and the two equally largest results are investment and business networks. Suitable premises in the Ramsgate area, access to skills and business support and advice are next. The 'other' category included comments on: local authority support in areas such as planning, clean streets and control of anti-social behaviour; funding support of different kinds; access to communal arts resources; future visioning.

## Where are your main professional networks?

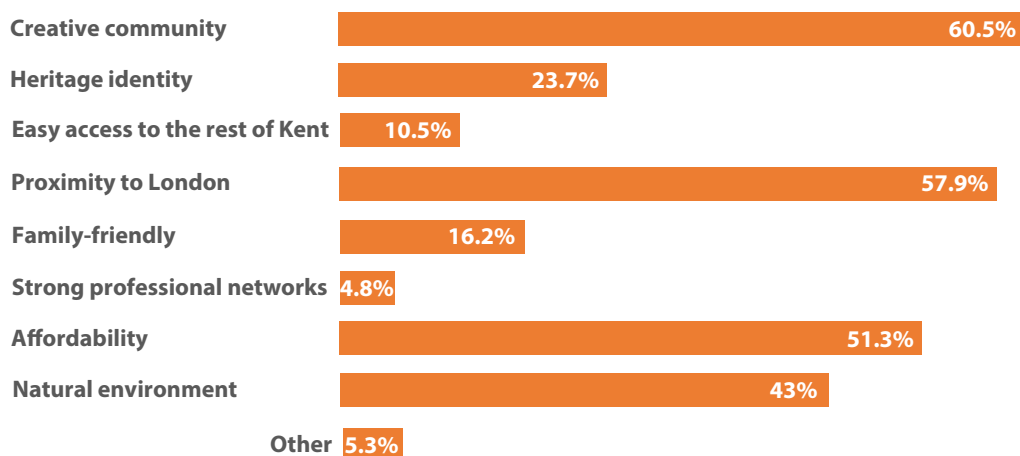
Figure 17



Respondents were asked to tick no more than two boxes here and the largest groups were London and Ramsgate area respectively, with Kent and the UK significant, and international larger than might have been expected. These responses suggest a strong reach of the local businesses in London in particular, but also across the UK and to some extent internationally. This picture offers supporting evidence for further investment and business growth, including nationally and internationally.

## What do you like most about the Ramsgate area as a creative and digital business location?

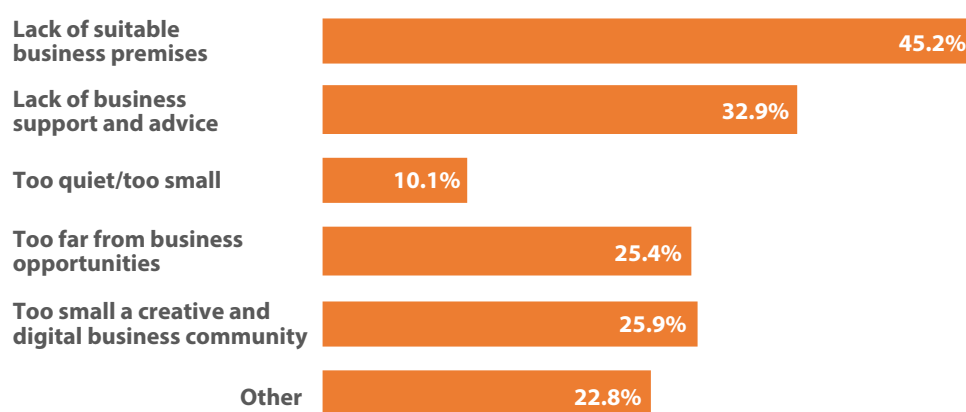
Figure 18



Respondents were asked to tick no more than three boxes. Creative community, proximity to London and affordability are the three largest groups, with natural environment close behind. Heritage identity is significant, with family-friendly and easy access to the rest of Kent following behind. It is notable that strong professional networks is the smallest group, which could indicate that it is a lesser priority in the context of this question or that professional networks extend beyond the Ramsgate area in the main. The 'other' category responses included community, geographical connectivity, home and family.

## What do you like least about the Ramsgate area as a creative and digital business location?

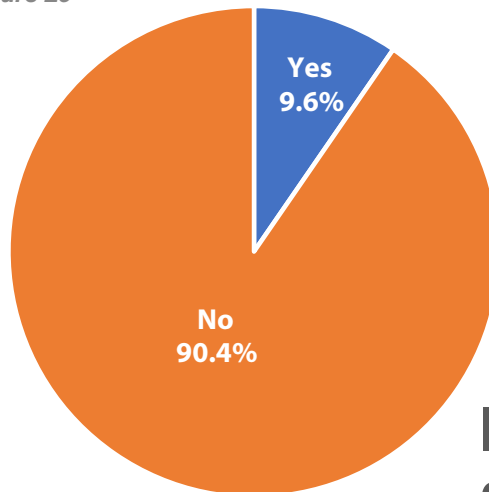
Figure 19



Respondents were asked to tick no more than three boxes. Lack of suitable business premises gains the largest result, followed by lack of business support and advice. Next are too far from business opportunities and too small a creative and digital community at similar levels. A significant number in the 'other' category includes some rich qualitative data. The areas covered include lack of support for the creative and digital sector including grants and infrastructure, such as high-speed wifi, poor appearance of the town due to anti-social behaviour, vandalism, litter and too many empty retail units, and insufficient local authority support.

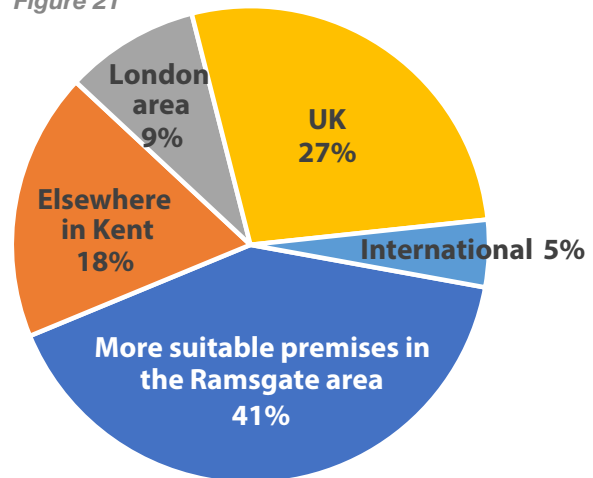
## If you or the business is in the Ramsgate area, do you plan to move in the next 1-3 years?

Figure 20



## If the answer is yes where do you plan to move to?

Figure 21

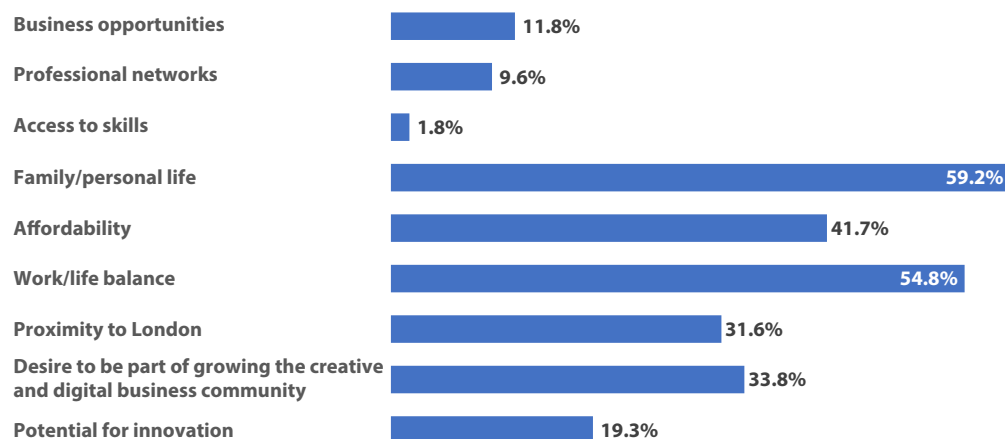


The responses are dramatically weighted towards businesses remaining in Ramsgate. For the small minority who plan to move in the next 1-3 years, the largest number will relocate to more suitable premises in Ramsgate with others moving in the main elsewhere in Kent or the UK.



## Whether you plan to stay in the Ramsgate area or move what are the main reasons?

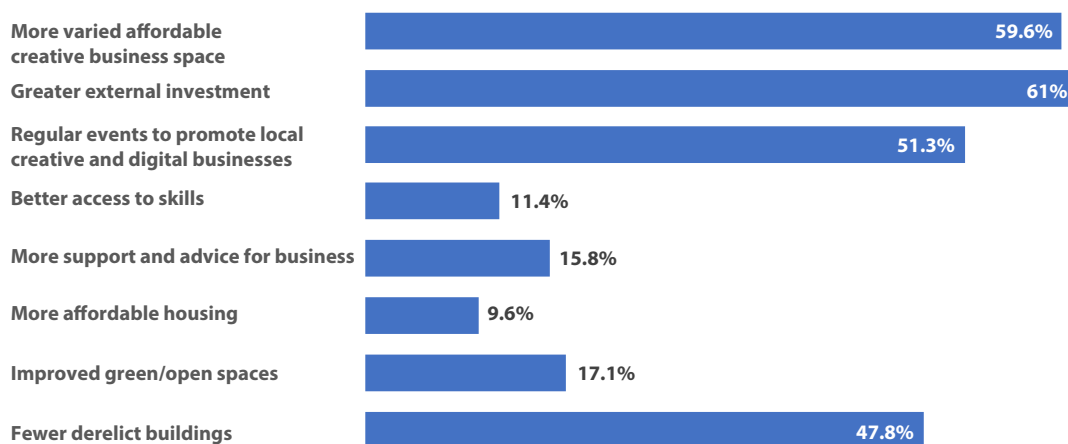
Figure 22



It is interesting and notable that the categories of family/personal life and work/life balance are the strongest results here, followed by affordability, desire to be part of growing the creative and digital business community, and proximity to London. Potential for innovation has significant response, with business opportunities and professional networks less important, and access to skills even less so.

## What additions to Ramsgate would most stimulate the growth of the creative and digital economy?

Figure 23



The strongest responses to what would grow the creative and digital economy in the area emphasise what in part may be connected areas: the need for more varied and affordable creative business space as well as greater external investment. Regular events to promote local creative and digital businesses comes close behind, along with fewer derelict buildings – two areas which are not unrelated to the first priorities of creative business space and more investment. More support and advice for business and improved green/open spaces come some way behind as priorities, and better access to skills and more affordable housing even more so.

# Conclusions

## The major findings of this project are:

- Ramsgate's creative sector is nearly three times larger than 10 years ago due mainly to inward migration of businesses.
- Ramsgate is established as a growing and thriving creative and digital hub which can expand further with investment and suitable available premises
- Its distinctiveness as a creative and digital ecosystem is linked strongly to the key features of its natural and heritage environment, including the harbour and historical architecture
- Music, performing and visual arts have a strong presence and the overall range of activity across DCMS creative industries categories indicates substantial and diverse creative tech
- Attraction is linked to a combination of accessibility, including excellent transport links to London, and an inspiring and affordable coastal setting
- Success is based on a strong and supportive creative community and a setting that stimulates creativity and experimentation
- Global reach with nearly one in three enterprises having clients internationally and a similar proportion having clients in London
- Scope for scale-up and sustainability with the majority of microbusinesses alongside high turnover businesses – 8% over £200,000 and 4% over £500,000
- London mobility factor with more than half having moved to Ramsgate from London and 15% commuting to premises in London
- Deep and varied creative skill sets with nearly half being established for 11 years or more and a further 20% for six to 10 years
- Broad entrepreneurial base with roughly equal distribution across freelancer, sole trader and business owner/director

## Policy recommendations

- Recognise and support Ramsgate as an established creative cluster with significant growth potential
- Identify Ramsgate as a thriving Thames Estuary Production Corridor hub and important partner to Creative Estuary
- Encourage investment to grow the sector and scale-up creative and digital business
- Promote the distinctiveness of Ramsgate as a heritage-infused ecosystem combining creative, architectural and maritime features
- Investigate and address availability of suitable heritage premises to support the expansion of creative enterprises
- Strengthen business networks and increase events aimed at creative and digital enterprises
- Prioritise tailored business advice and support to the creative and digital sector
- Promote the creative identity of Ramsgate to attract new businesses
- Survey further the business and other needs of the creative and digital sector
- Research the skills base and establish mechanisms to address shortages
- Examine further the historical and heritage elements vital to the sustainability and growth of Ramsgate in social and cultural as well as economic terms
- Link restoration and new development to the creative and digital priorities of Ramsgate's economic future

# Case studies

## SPACER

Meltdowns (est. 2004) despite being a company Ltd by shares, was run by the founding artists as a not-for-profit. The organisation formalised its unique financially self-sustaining model in 2017 through a rebrand as **SPACER** and a re-registration of itself as a company Ltd by guarantee and a social enterprise.

SPACER is now a recognised interdisciplinary art studio. Its team explores the purpose and value of sustainable creative practice through researching, experimenting, making and learning. They create artworks as individual artists, as a collective and for other practitioners.

The work exploits traditional and developing technologies, challenging art's relationship with science, business, craft, education and research. SPACER works for and with scientists, business, artists, craftsmen, educators, researchers, and these have included fashion designers, architects, museums, universities, the film and TV industries, retail and beyond.

The vision is driven by the creative practices and values of the immediate community. The team prioritises the term organisation rather than business. Growth is determined by the range and reach of the work attracted – with value recognised in the nature of the challenge, the interest in supporting the work, and the opportunity to develop understanding of new materials and new ways of working.

SPACER is building a new studio. Its interdisciplinary team of artists, architects and engineers are currently developing the concept design, which proposes 800 sq m of space devoted to creativity and education, which in turn will create new jobs and education opportunities. Interdisciplinary spaces will be installed, from sculpture and fabrication facilities, and digital technologies to a community laboratory.

At the heart of this project is both a bronze-casting foundry which SPACER has run for over 15 years, and sustainability. In the face of the climate emergency and the urgency now apparent to change SPACER's approach to the production of artwork (and of course manufacturing in general), it is asking the question – How do we sustain fine art creation in the face of climate change?

SPACER's location in Ramsgate is not significantly impacted by local business activity as its work comes largely from outside the area. The team is very careful in how and where it builds relationships and expends resources.

*[wearespacer.co.uk](http://wearespacer.co.uk)*

SCIENCE\_

PURPOSE\_

ART\_

CRAFT\_

EDUCATION\_

RESEARCH\_



# Screaming Alley

Lara Clifton runs **Screaming Alley**, a Thanet-based arts and performance organisation that uses regular alt-cabaret events in Ramsgate as a core structure from which to seed a variety of community/arts led projects platforming and supporting local and visiting artists, creating training opportunities for local people and offering creative outlets to participants and audiences who might not otherwise engage with the arts.

Since its first cabaret event in February 2018, the organisation has, with funding support from the Arts Council, formed a community dance troupe, ignited a swell of local enthusiasm for presenting and watching new work, identified local people who are interested in learning new skills and partnered with local organisations.

In line with becoming a CIC, Screaming Alley is now looking to roll out a programme of workshops and traineeships in theatre/arts production alongside offering production support to performers for whom alt-cabaret has offered a first stepping stone to becoming an artist.

Screaming Alley flies the flag for alt-cabaret as an art form that welcomes and supports diverse voices and creates accessible spaces in which new work can be experienced. Screaming Alley holds artistic production in high esteem, working with lighting, sound and stage designers at the earliest possible stages of show development.

The thirst for the regular alt-cabaret shows and open-mic events in Ramsgate has been proven in the 100-plus audiences attending each one – audiences diverse in terms of age, social strata and sexual persuasion. The waiting list of local performers and established artists from outside of Thanet is proof of the need for such a space to exist in Thanet.

‘The creative sector in Ramsgate seems (to me) to be made up of individual artists. There is a lot of creative talent, which if better supported in terms of funding and studio/exhibition/rehearsal/performance space could greatly benefit Ramsgate culturally, and in the long term financially.

‘A too commonly held opinion locally is that there is little or no opportunity to do anything creative – that the arts are by and for rich people, but the innovative DIY culture that creative environments can offer are places where diverse voices can be heard.

‘The common thread in discussions with Screaming Alley’s locally-sourced team of workers is that motherhood, taking on caring roles and financial restrictions have prevented them from taking risks with their careers. A career in the arts feels like a privilege they couldn’t afford. It is in response to what we are hearing that we are keen to set out a programme of workshops and traineeships in lighting, stage and sound design, stage management and production.

‘This is with a mind to offering them employment with Screaming Alley, equipping them to work with theatre/arts organisations, and providing the opportunity to take risks and gain an understanding of the process of getting your ideas out into the world, which is as helpful outside of arts culture as within it.’

[www.screamingalley.co.uk](http://www.screamingalley.co.uk)



## Dean Samed

**Dean Samed** started freelancing on a small scale at 14-15 years old for local music event promoters, and as his clients grew so did his creative practice.

The arrival of the Internet allowed him to cater to global markets rather than being dependent on the regional business.

In the first 10 years he was largely working in music (particularly electronic music, drum and bass), producing event flyers, record sleeves, posters, and more.

His illustration practice has now reached a scale where he is one of the most prolific book cover artists globally, notably within the indie publishing scene, and possibly the highest-volume horror book cover artist.

He owns a stock photography platform, licensing stock photos to book cover designers, authors and publishers, and a private training and resource platform for book cover/digital artists.

The central focus of the business has expanded beyond the initial design and digital arts services into greater emphasis on IP from assets and resources. Dean's publishing work will scale down in 2020 to focus on the launch of a new fashion label aimed at young people interested in underground dance music.

Dean has built his business on the basis of his own resources without the need for third-party loans or grants. 'I would like to see more focus on the indigenous and long-established creative sector in Ramsgate rather than creative businesses who are moving here from London which is the tendency right now.

'I believe a major factor is the current zeitgeist of celebrating contemporary art forms as opposed to artisan crafts or more formalist practices. A huge amount of funding goes toward contemporary practices / events / initiatives, which have little impact on those within the lower working classes, be it due to lack of access / understanding or often an inherently elitist environment.

'With regards to infrastructure / buildings / creative resources in Ramsgate, I'm all for it. I believe it's imperative that locals are included in the conversation re our creative economy, and aren't overlooked when the goal of luring creative talent from London is pursued.'

*neo-stock.com*



## Unit 3 Arts School

Donna Fleming launched **Unit 3 Arts School** five years ago, initially just offering children's classes on a Saturday in response to parents' concerns that schools were not offering enough creative opportunities. An additional free stone-carving class grew from one to three days a week using stone donated by Canterbury Cathedral. Other day workshops, including by other local artists, have covered watercolour, spoon carving, lino printing, ceramics and drawing.

'I am an artist, but was a sessional lecturer for eight years at UCA Canterbury. I now offer my teaching to artists, students and ordinary people who think they are not creative. They all mix together to create and Unit 3 has turned into an amazing place of inspiration and freedom. I unblock people, allowing and making it okay to play once again.

'My research over the past 20 years into what creativity is and why we need it has led to a way of teaching that takes the fear away, brings back the creative child and frees the spirit of the person. What I have noticed over the past five years is the difference the workshops have made to confused students, blocked MA students, lonely and depressed people, retired and frail people, people with problems socialising and those that are lost through bereavement.

'The act of creating, freeing a part of themselves, talking to others and seeing what amazing things they can create, has had an amazing effect on them. It's like a haven from the normal way of behaving and thinking.

'The future vision for Unit 3 would be to offer opportunities to many more artists and those people with skills in any area of creativity to teach those skills. There are so few teaching jobs available and many people who want to learn something, who are desperate to be creative. I want to offer the atmosphere and excitement of the art college I went to, but open to everyone.

I want to expand this place of freedom and healing, as a sanctuary from the logical, materialistic world.'



Unit3 plans to expand into bigger premises with outside space.

'I have many ideas for metal forge work, outdoor bigger-scale carving, welding, drawing classes, a space to teach anything creative from dance to meditation, drawing to video. Basically, it's my dream art school that is open to all. I intend to involve more children from foster care and those with behavioural problems. I also want to involve people with mental health issues.

'Ramsgate is full of creative people all with the same problem of renting property for their ideas, and there are some fabulous buildings in Ramsgate. A lot of artists move out of Ramsgate to a rural location, just to get an affordable space. Most buildings large enough for my plans are so industrial that they are astronomical in cost. My idea only works in a town, where there are people, and as the effects of the creative environments reverberate out into the surroundings, that town becomes enriched.'

[www.donnafleming.co.uk](http://www.donnafleming.co.uk)

# Nicholas de Carlo

**Nicholas de Carlo** began in 1993 as a freelance composer, musician, producer and recording engineer. He started with composing, producing and recording music and sound design for theatre, voice showreels for actors/voiceover artists, and music infomercials (corporate videos). This led to music for TV advertising, which rapidly grew internationally and into TV documentaries and feature film work.

Over 20 years he has worked for many major brands, including Saatchi & Saatchi (London, Moscow, Sydney, Istanbul), Sky, Sky Sports News, History Channel, BBC, ITV and RTL, Toyota, KLM, Delta Airlines, BT, and 3 Mobile. He has also been involved in record production/remixes for artists like Tom Jones, Heather Small, Space, Pure Tone, as well as some film trailer work for UK and Swedish films.



In 2015 his focus changed fully to composing and producing records for recording artists, bands, and solo artists, as well as film music and production music in LA. He works with artists including Jungle Brothers, Adamski, Rat, Scabies, Chris Constantinou, and Rude GRL, and music publishers including Schubert Music and Universal.

His central focus has always been music composition and creation and music recording and production, and has evolved with his skills across composition, arranging, producing, mixing, mastering, song writing, performance, and programming, as well as moving locations (London 1993-2006, Berlin 2006-2015, Ramsgate 2015-present).

‘Changes in location bring new stimulation through the different networks of people present, and the locations themselves – a city like Berlin or London or a vibrant coastal harbour town like Ramsgate, for instance, offering a super-rich concentration of well-known successful music artists all in one pub.

‘I am currently urgently seeking workspace. I have always alternated between working from home or a rented studio space, but now I am exclusively working with musicians, bands and artists, a home-based set up is neither suitable nor conducive to growth.

‘The plans are to up the scale and grow the turnover of album, recording production, and music production, to further expand the team, and to develop artists, bringing talent to Ramsgate. It works as a hook because of the seaside/Margate/arty vibe, but a credible studio, arty location (art space, workshops, cafe, bar, venue, rehearsal spaces) is needed urgently.

‘The creative sector in Ramsgate is very healthy and established, offering real creative camaraderie, support, stimulation and inspiration. The community is growing all the time with new arrivals, including DJs, record labels, record producers, engineers, musicians, arrangers, music teachers, but also painters, poets, actors, sculptors, set designers and cabaret and theatre producers.

‘I am only aware of a huge need for spaces and no solutions at present.’

[www.nickdecarlo.com](http://www.nickdecarlo.com)



# Cathy Rogers

**Cathy Rogers** is a visual artist who has worked freelance as a sole trader for 17 years on public commissions and developing her practice.

Her central focus now is on making film work for screenings, installations and exhibitions alongside programming **Analogue Ensemble**, an artist experimental film night in Ramsgate which invites national and international artist filmmakers to show work alongside local artist filmmakers, including workshops and discussion groups.

Analogue Ensemble started as a quarterly/biannual night and has grown to recently completing a one-year programme with Arts Council England funding and support from Whitstable Biennale and University of Kent.

Her future needs are securing a studio space in Ramsgate to develop film work (in analogue film 8mm and 16mm), developing some larger print pieces, setting up a small darkroom and potentially a scheme to share some of her analogue film equipment with others who have a need to use them.

Future aims are to develop Analogue Ensemble and continue to deliver more workshops for young people, spread the love of hands-on analogue filmmaking and host screenings. 'We would love to share a dedicated space to screen films and a project space to invite artists to come and make work.'

Cathy has lived in Ramsgate for five years and over that time has met many artists of all disciplines who are quietly going about their work. 'What is great about Ramsgate is that artists are making, showing and collaborating in spite of the lack of visibility and infrastructure for them to be able to develop sustainable businesses – whatever form that may take.

'We are blessed with fantastic architecture, beautiful seascapes and great transport links but we are held back by lack of investment and dedicated affordable spaces in which to make and show what we can do.'

[www.cathyrogers.co.uk](http://www.cathyrogers.co.uk)

[www.analogueensemble.co.uk](http://www.analogueensemble.co.uk)





## Ramsgate Music Hall

**Ramsgate Music Hall** is a small 130-capacity venue rebuilt from the derelict remains of an old warehouse by a small team and then refitted from the ground up to the highest possible acoustic standards.

It was conceived for the single purpose of attracting the best live music and delivering the highest quality sound, in a stimulating and exciting venue for Kent and beyond.

In 2015 it was awarded 'Britain's Best Small Venue' by NME.

Since its inception, it has attracted some of the greatest, most exciting and prolific artists in contemporary music, including Jarvis Cocker, Neneh Cherry, Sleaford Mods, IDLES, Maverick Sabre, Wire, Four Tet, BEAK>, Sebadoh, and many more.

[www.ramsgatemusichall.com](http://www.ramsgatemusichall.com)

## Arco Barco

**Arco Barco** offers freelance and creative professionals a unique place to work. Located within a large maritime arch in Ramsgate, Arco Barco is a multifunctional communal space offering co-working, recording studios and unique events, all within an inspiring location overlooking Ramsgate Harbour.

Arco Barco consists of a large floor space laid out with shared working areas, a small kitchen and an open plan lounge. At the rear of the arch space there is a staircase leading to a mezzanine where there are permanent work spaces.

Under the mezzanine (back on the main floor) there are two self-contained private studios, one of which is a state-of-the-art studio containing specialist sound and media production facilities, and the other is a 'live' room which can either be used for sound recording or as a private working space.

Since opening its doors in 2015, Arco Barco has helped build a community of co-workers, friends and collaborators.

[www.arcobarco.co.uk](http://www.arcobarco.co.uk)



# Notes

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# Abbreviations

DCMS	Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
CIC	community interest company
GIS	geographic information system
GLA	Greater London Authority
KCC	Kent County Council
SELEP	South East Local Economic Partnership
TEPC	Thames Estuary Production Corridor







# **CREATIVE RAMSGATE**

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