

A Space for Dialogue

A Space for Dialogue was a pilot programme aimed at bringing art-based dialogues into learning programmes around our ‘*Can the Seas Survive Us?*’ exhibition.



We collaborated with a range of communities as part of this exhibition season, drawing on new skills and approaches learned through partnerships with Norfolk and Waveney Mind and Open Edge.

Happisburgh

Happisburgh is widely recognised as a community living with the direct consequences of coastal erosion. Between June and November 2025, the church hall was transformed into a regular pop-up space. One of our Associate Artists ran creative sessions as part of our Seas season, inviting residents to reflect on their personal connections with the sea, their village and the continually changing coastline. Conversations were understandably sensitive, with residents holding a range of opinions on how best to respond. Our Associate Artist developed sessions where participants created *paper amulets*; small folded pieces inspired by traditional objects of protection. Inside they placed thoughts, feelings and experiences on the changes in their village.



To support and inspire, information on amulets from the Sainsbury Centre’s collection was shared (see below), along with prompt material relating to the Sea’s exhibition.



Testimonial

My mother found the opportunity to pause from ongoing practical demands (clearing her house in preparation for demolition) very welcome. The tearoom's focus on issues relating to coastal erosion gave her the impetus to take a break—something she does not usually allow herself to do. She benefitted from the chance to sit and talk with the Mind team and other attendees, sharing problems and difficulties specific to this situation with others who understood, within a safe and supportive space. She also took the opportunity to use the art resources to create her own work, something she enjoys greatly but had not done for many years. My son also enjoyed the workshop a great deal. He undertook a multi-approach project, incorporating poetry, local geography, drawing, and other media to create his own amulets. Again, [the team] were fun, approachable and supportive with him. This process also gave us a valuable opportunity to talk together about the impact of coastal erosion on him. It has also led to a continuing interest in researching and creating artwork in other areas of his studies.

Rights of the River



Rights of the River brought students and older adult river users and activists together to explore dialogues around the River Wensum, and to explore ways of activating and supporting a campaign on the Rights of the River.

Students were first trained in Active Hope dialogue with our partner Mind, working in the Sainsbury Centre in and around our Space for Dialogue.



Together, students and swimmers navigated discussions around the river, exploring and sharing narratives through art. A collective map was created and presented to the City Council in Norwich before the motion for Rights of the River was debated. The motion to afford rights and protections to the river was passed.

'It was wonderful to put all out memories and knowledge together in one place. I really enjoyed hearing the research from

the students. For example, that it was the introduction of public pools which led to a decline in river swimming.'

Testimonials from the Space for Dialogue

'It tuned my response to the exhibition and made me consider more complex issues.'

'It felt like a really safe environment in which to share ideas. It was great to hear other perspectives.'

'The opportunity for dialogue was very open and non threatening. Always interesting how individuals come away with different ideas when exposed to the same exhibition.'