**Metal Boxes Break Out Session**

**SHARE Conference**

This session was led by Colette Bailey, Managing Director at METAL, an arts organisations based in Southend, Liverpool and Peterborough.

METAL run arts based projects and artist residencies that work with schools, artists, communities, heritage sites, and a number of other arts and cultural organisations that often take place in areas of low cultural engagement. Many of the artists that they work with have a practise that is linked or inspired by the surrounding places, environment and areas that they inhabit.

Metal Boxes was a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund with coinvestment from the Royal Opera House Bridge. The project worked with twenty two artists in twenty two schools with over 1000 young people to explore the history and heritage of the Thames Estuary and the nearby railway. This resulted in collective artistic responses which were then exhibited in a culminating exhibition where 600 people attended.

The project began by bringing teachers and artists together for an evening to discuss the project and identify everyone’s expectations. Schools identified key priorities for them and so together Metal were able to match the appropriate artist to the school. Each school and artist together explored this project in completely different ways, looking at different themes that arouse from collective discussion, experience and investigation. The artists worked with the school for 6 weeks and collectively created different outcomes, from; photography exploring the landscape, music exploring the sounds of the railway, songs retelling the story of the artillery in ships, textiles that explored clothing and many more.

In order for more schools to benefit and to develop the legacy of the project, a wooden box was created to store examples of the art work, information about the heritage of the sites and teacher resources for schools to borrow and take into the school. Within the box there is; an ipad that contains examples of the project activity such as song and videos produced, small examples of the artistic responses and teachers resources developed with the schools that give information but also ideas for workshops, activities and classroom delivery. This box is completely free to any school to borrow and is based in Southend where the project originated.