In the UK, clothing has the fourth largest environmental impact after housing, transport and food. The average lifetime for a garment in the UK is just 2.2 years and an estimated £30bn of unused clothing hangs in UK wardrobes and yet we still shop for more. Each year 430,000 tonnes of clothing are disposed of in the UK, while the number of new clothes sold is rising.

The aim of **a:dress** is to raise awareness of the devastating impact of fast fashion on the environment by -

- disseminating clear information in creative, accessible and fun ways
- mounting discussion groups, talks, workshops and performance events, in Folkestone and nationally
- communicating the ways that women are directly and disproportionately impacted by climate crisis
- acknowledging that women are targeted by, and vulnerable to, the fashion industry, ie the emotional 'levers' that encourage women to buy clothes
- communicating the ways that Black and poor communities are disproportionately affected by climate crisis ie those countries that have done the least to create climate crisis are the worst affected
- promoting alternatives to throwing clothes away, such as supporting charity shops, doing repairs and community clothes exchanges.

The focus of **a:dress** is on female consumers, as women are disproportionately affected by fast fashion. For example, the impact of sexism and objectification on women's self- esteem and body image can lead them to be emotionally vulnerable to pressures from the fashion industry. We are committed to engaging with women who regularly buy fast fashion and will set up events for intergenerational dialogue and action.

The **a:dress** Festival will run from 10-16 November 2020 with a pop up shop/gallery in the Brewery Tap and 'outpost' exhibitions in local shop windows along Sandgate Road.

Customised retro garments made by local women and girls will be displayed in these venues, each interpreting a message about fast fashion and the environment.
Ideas generated so far include -

- a felted wool sweater declaring how long it will take to bio-degrade compared to products made from synthetic fibres
- a garment covered in toy planes and ships to demonstrate that the fashion industry is estimated to produce more greenhouses emissions than the amount created by international flights and shipping combined
- a dress featuring the poem 'if a dress could speak', written in the voice of the garment expressing concern about the use of child labour, prison labour, forced labour and bonded labour in the manufacture of clothes
- a 'funereal' dress and veil marking the Rana Plaza and other disasters
- a floor length skirt made from a patchwork of jeans stating that it takes over 15,000 litres of water to grow the cotton to make it
- a crochet shawl with stripes denoting a coloured bar code to display global temperature rises in the past century

Social-distancing permitting, an accompanying programme of events will include 'subversive catwalks' along the Old High Street and in the Town Centre Shopping Centre; customising workshops, a clothes repair cafe and clothes exchanges in Blank Canvas Cafe, Mundella Primary school and Touchbase Centre; a screening of the film 'Riverblue'; clothing make-overs in charity shops in Folkestone, Cheriton & Hythe; and Street Style 'journalism', photographing women in Folkestone and asking them questions like 'How often do you buy clothes?', 'How long do you keep clothes on average?', 'What's a piece of clothing you treasure? And why?' and 'What factors determine where you shop and what clothes you buy?'

With the goal of engendering intergenerational dialogue and action, a diverse group of women from across Folkestone and Hythe has already been assembled, with ages ranging from 19-70.

There is an 'a:dress' Instagram and Facebook and a documentary film will record the preparatory period and Festival, with shorts being uploaded to social media.

The project will be fully, and creatively, evaluated.