

Powys Arts Forum: Art Matters

Notes of the Information/Networking Day

held at Llandewi Village Hall on Saturday 3rd October 2009

1. Cyfle y Greu / Chance to Create –

Introduction by Louise Ingham

Louise commented on the continuing partnership between Powys County Council and Powys Arts Forum and the positive benefits that Chance to Create had provided to artists and craftspeople in the county. She looked forward to further consultation and input from PAF over the second round of European Funding and into the Council's Arts Strategy review.

Report by Lucy Bevan

Lucy circulated the first Cyfle y Greu / Chance to Create News Bulletin which gave details of the grants awarded and recipients of the scheme.

She stressed the importance of feedback on the benefits of the scheme and future needs of artists and craftspeople that could be used to inform planning for the second round of European funding.

Grant Recipients – presentations and discussion, chaired by Philip Freeman

The meeting heard presentations from 3 grant recipients, all of which illustrated the nature of the Cyfle y Greu / Chance to Create funding as ***investment in the arts for economic benefit***.

- Sean Harris, for animation and web development, enabling him to pursue global showcasing of his work and to create a system of workshops for primary schools.
- Benjamin Storch, for purchase of custom made power hammer equipment to aid his work in making forms in metal. His work was resulting in collaborations with industrial techniques of black-smithing and boat building
- Rose Bamford, for an applied arts gallery set up, utilising space in her parents bespoke carpet business premises and working with a local furniture maker in development of a range of shelving and furniture for gallery display.

Points highlighted in following discussions were

- problems of Art not being recognised as a profession in the UK
 - benefits of the creative influence of art to other sectors
 - potential for collaboration of creative art in research and development sector
 - benefits of joined working to both artists and engineers and other practitioners
- the need for education of the public
 - to overcome fear of the arts and visiting galleries
 - to reach children through work in schools
 - to acknowledge Art as a possible career, not to be dismissed
- challenges for the Arts community
 - to say “we are the present heritage”, look after what is now or there will be no heritage for the future
 - to use the right language so that politicians and economists will understand better that Art is an industry deserving investment
 - to encourage mentoring for artists to meet these challenges
- that Art is just art, is ageless, and should not be pigeon-holed into age groups

As there were several other Cyfle y Greu / Chance to Create recipients in the room all were invited to say just a few words about their projects.

2. Powys Arts Forum – Future Plans

2.1 Web Site

Review Section – to have reviews of events of all different genres;
people to submit up and coming events and request reviews of them;
Meet the artist section, done as an interview with the artist
anyone was invited to send in views, comments and pictures;
the site was seen as an opportunity for everyone to become more involved;
there was a need for the site to generate income so adverts would be put on it

2.2 Conference 2010

The day was seen as an opportunity to start off conference ideas;
the proposal for a conference was received with enthusiasm;
it was proposed to bring in one or more speakers from outside, from other areas of the UK,
to learn how they managed their forums and stimulate ideas and discussion

2.3 Arts Month 2011

In turn it was proposed that the conference would generate ideas and plans for the Arts Month and there was a request for members to become involved and help with these events.

3. Arts and Regeneration – Consultation, session led by Hywel Evans

This consultation was being carried out to assess the needs, opportunities and activities that would make sense for Powys for the Rural Development Strategy review being carried out ahead of the business planning for the second round of European funding from 2011. Ideas, needs and proposals were gathered from those present, and Hywel agreed to return a copy to PAF for reference.

Main points to come out of the consultation groups:

- importance of the arts as an industry in its own right
- underlying importance of the arts as a creative influence in all walks of life
- need to sell the arts on an economical basis
- Arts as a regeneration tool
- need for continuation funding, not project based funding
- need for the artists voice to be heard
- need for people to understand what artists do, dispelling the myths and stereotypes
- need for mentoring, advice and training in business skills for artists
- value of artists as mentors to others
- value of exchanges and collaborations between artists from different areas and countries
- need for more places to do and enjoy and exhibit art in the community
- need to bring more art into education
- suggestion of a visual application option for artists
- a request to look at child care needs for artists

4. Website Matters with Rob Picken, developer of both the PAF Website and PCC's Arts Engine

Rob presented a good summary of current websites, their development, working and uses.

- There were now 185 million websites, twice as many as in 2006.
- There was no regulation of the web development industry and this has led to problems to those needing assistance to set up a website.

Rob advised:

- That websites are far more than just marketing tools and can be used to cut costs, manage sales, use skype, etc
- To get advice from a good website company – recommended by word of mouth being the best way to find a trustworthy designer
- To have a site based on a good Content Management System (CMS) and be sure it is not copyright protected
- Ensure you have ownership of the domain registration and control of hosting
- Refer to the objectives in your business plan when designing the site
- Set aside funds to continue to update the site as well as the initial start-up costs
- Understand your customers and how they will use the site, research keywords, research your competitors
- Use a page for each keyword, having lots of pages is fine
- Use good quality images to showcase work, upload large images for people to click on to enlarge, and protect them with watermarks
- Allow time to regularly update the site, writing articles
- Consider different versions of your website for different users – mobile broadband, mobile phones, etc.

Further advice, especially about entries on the Arts Engine, would be available from Rob to those booking on the “Picture It” days, organised through Cyfle y Greu / Chance to Create.

5. Taking it Forward, open questions and discussion

5.1 Meetings

- The problems of the Powys being such a geographically large county meant that artists would have to come together in regional cluster groups
- PAF would assist any groups of artists wishing to set up meetings on a regional basis or on any special topic or, as the voice of the Arts in Powys, to request attendance of representatives at meetings, of for example, ACW, PCC, European funders.

5.2 Contacts

PAF would look into the permissions required to circulate email contacts of artists/members to enable networking. In the mean time the website was there to keep people informed and for people to play an active part in its content, reviews, etc.

5.3 PAF Website – Arts Engine

- The suggestion of a members section on the PAF website was supported and would be followed up.
- People were invited to submit details of any upcoming arts events.
- A reminder was given about the Arts Engine and the opportunity to register with an individual profile page that allowed up to 30 images and on which people could advertise their own events.
- It was important for the two sites to co-ordinate and there were good opportunities for working together and sharing information and databases.

5.4 Mentoring

The value of mentoring for artists and for artists to mentor others was discussed and all agreed that artists should not be expected to undertake such work without being properly paid for it.

5.5 Input from Members

Another reminder was given about the Conference in 2010 and Arts Month planned for 2011 – and the need for input and ideas from members.