

New Horizons for COAST Arts Open Meeting January 2020

Feedback Report

Introduction

A total of 39 people attended our Open Meeting on 31st January 2020 including 5 trustees. We also received 6 apologies from people unable to make the meeting but who want to be kept informed of developments. We were really pleased by the number of people that turned up and helped to make the sessions lively with lots of interesting debates and conversations going on. Participants included individual artists, poets, musicians, filmmakers, local residents and Belfry users, Folk on the Pier, Aylsham Festival, The Puppet Tree, Kingswood, Potty & Folk Festival, Rock the Lobster, Cromer Community Centre, Atrium Cinema Group, Cromer Arts Project, Northrepps Village, Music Matters, Friends of North Lodge Park and North Norfolk Organisation for Visual Artists (NOVA).

The session began with Amanda welcoming people and giving some information about COAST Arts - where we've been and then looking forward to where we are going. All participants were asked to sign a form with name and email so they could be added to our mailing list and a circulation list for this event. This has added a further 28 people to our e-newsletter mailing list.

Everyone was given a copy of a background paper and a questionnaire which people were invited to fill out either individually or in small groups. Lively discussion ensued! At the end of the session people came back together to hear their ideas and be told what would happen next.

This report attempts to summarise the views and comments from a very diverse group of people with lots of interesting comments. 18 questionnaires were completed at the event and 2 completed by people who couldn't attend the event and sent it in afterwards. Attached to this report is the full data from the questionnaires as it is important that some of the ideas aren't lost.

The Questionnaire

In relation to their previous experience of COAST Arts we asked:

1. Was there a stand-out event/festival that you went to? What made it special?
2. What events have you enjoyed over the years?
3. What events have you not enjoyed over the years?
4. Do you think we have offered enough events across all the different types of visual and performing arts? If no, what could we have offered more of?
5. If we could put on one event/workshop on again, what would it be?
6. Do we publicise our events enough? How could we publicise them better?

In relation to our outline future project ideas we asked:

1. What do you find the most appealing and why about our possible developments?
2. Were there any possible developments that you didn't like and if so, what didn't you like about them?
3. Do you have any suggestions on how our ideas could be improved?
4. Thinking about your own ideas, what three things would you like to see COAST Arts develop over the next three years?

5. Are there any towns, villages and venues where you would like to see COAST Arts doing more? What would you like to see us doing there?
6. We want to work in partnership more with individuals and other groups. Can you suggest anyone to us that we could work with?
7. Do you have any plans that we could support or work with you on?

Results from the questionnaire

Events people have enjoyed over the years

People were asked to tell us what events they had enjoyed, if there were any stand-out events and what event should we put on again. These questions were answered in half the questionnaires. A range of events were mentioned including music events - 'come and sing', choir, concerts; and art exhibitions and competition. The workshops mentioned were the 'Bollywood workshop' and the 'Drumming workshop'. 'Poetry and mental health' and the literary teas were mentioned. People mentioned events taking place at The Belfry and at NLP. People also said that they were new to COAST or they weren't sure what events were COAST Arts.

In summary people mentioned the range of events we have organised over the years and there weren't any events that stood out more than others.

Publicity of our events

People were asked whether we publicise our events enough and how could we publicise them more. There were lots of comments made ranging from someone who missed the Bollywood workshop and how did that happen to others thinking the publicity is fine. Inevitably all forms of publicity were mentioned - Facebook, website, Instagram, printed materials, local papers, email mailouts, networking, radio. One group summed it up nicely - 'think it's important to keep using a combination of social media and printed, local free papers, email mailouts etc...'

There was a general view that more publicity is always needed, and that networking and word of mouth could be used more. Getting other organisations to link to our website and vice versa was mentioned as a way of sharing publicity. The suggestion of having a COAST logo on all printed material for events that we are supporting (more about this later). A generic leaflet about COAST Arts was also mentioned that could be put into tourist attractions, information centres, etc...

Our ideas

On the background paper that people were given we identified the ideas that we have been considering and asked people what they found most appealing and why; whether there were any they didn't like and if they had any suggestions on how our ideas could be improved.

The top two ideas were 'Creating opportunities for local artists' and 'Theatre in Cromer'. However, the areas of young people were also mentioned as was the poetry and literary teas. The idea of COAST Arts creating a network, joining people and organisations together, and the development of a COAST Arts logo (like The Arts Council) on supported events literature were all mentioned. People felt this would give us status in the art world.

Ideas that people didn't like were few and far between - the only real comment around this was that there is a problem with showing films in Cromer as there is an excellent, well used cinema in the town already.

Improving our ideas

The main comments for how our ideas could be improved were around developing the ideas more through networking events, talk more to each other and interested parties; talk to young people; holding workshops; having a launch project; having a listings of people with expertise; using COAST Arts as an umbrella body.

Contributing own ideas for development

This question provided the most responses by people and some great ideas were put forward including:

Visual Arts:

- Opportunities for my Belfry kids' art club to be involved - exhibition, launch of a collaborative piece of work, or setting them a design brief for publicity
- Exhibition/Sale space and curated art exhibitions
- Different types of art Pop-up Food as art / sculpture trail / street art / public art / graffiti art / digital art
- Photography, film making, art workshops
- Exploring how art can assist wellbeing and health through workshops
- ACG can support with film booking - need to set up clear and simple arrangements
- History of art/ study of specific artists

Performing Arts:

- Wider variety of music / theatre events
- Monthly folk meeting
- Drumming sessions
- Theatre/improv etc...
- Activities that support creative music making and work by contemporary composers in the programme
- Visual Arts space in North Norfolk

Literature:

- A publication of visiting and local poet's work
- Poetry workshops

General:

- Intergenerational projects
- Family activities
- Reaching out to children / youth, bringing in a younger audience
- Thinking outside the box
- Workshops for individual artists, small groups by connecting with others and getting support with organisation
- Bringing groups together, provide a networking role – putting people in contact with each other
- Variety, cutting edge, contemporary - linking with organisations such as Original Projects or Groundworks

- Linking individuals and groups together - your Arts Umbrella could be an online resource with membership & entry fees. All could contribute events, ask for help, share information etc and could form a valuable information exchange for all involved. Might become self-financing.

Where should we be developing?

This question didn't elicit a huge response. Overstrand was mentioned a few times which could have been indicative of where the meeting took place. Places mentioned were East Ruston, Stalham, and Northrepps. In general, doing more along the coast - on the beach, working with care homes and expanding from the coast perhaps into the Broads area were suggested.

Working in partnership

When asked who COAST Arts could work with a lot of suggestions were made including the participants themselves either as individuals or the organisation they represented. Other individuals and organisations mentioned included:

- Schools
- Care homes
- East Ruston Village Hall
- Stalham Area Business Forum
- Trapeze Arts, North Walsham
- Norwich Cathedral
- Epic and Arts Centre in Norwich
- Library
- Jarrolds
- Museums
- Deep History Coast
- Felbrigg Hall
- Norwich Jazz Club

COAST Arts support

Participants were asked if they had any plans that we could support or work with them on. These range from general plans to quite specific areas where we could support. Consideration will need to be given to each of these and how we can take these forward in our development plans. The plans include:

- To involve young people who work at Kingswood
- Support with setting up workshops in my local area
- Northrepps Pantomime will be looking to stage their production over 3 nights which is an ambitious step. Coast helping to promote would help.
- Possibly a community / Coast Arts music theatre group - workshops leading to a performance
- Folk singing/playing - monthly sessions; happy to hold but need venue
- More joint advertising of film schedules between ACG and Coast
- I would be willing to work with others on setting up an art exhibition
- Reinstating the Cromer Folk Club, encouraging folk musicians
- Monthly poetry sessions at Funky Mackerel
- Cromer Arts Project
- Reviving the Northrepps Village film club

- Anti-clash diary would be useful
- Develop some sort of music playback situation - dedicated listening room, ambient music alongside artwork
- Linking up with library events and using the spaces as venues would be great
- Setting up some sort of playback space for people's recordings of music/works - either on its own or alongside an appropriate exhibition during the Coast Festival

Conclusion and taking forward

There was real enthusiasm at the meeting and since with people getting in contact about how we can develop in the coming months and years and we mustn't lose the momentum. Participants were told that the trustees would bring together a report from the meeting and that this would be discussed at their meeting on 14th February, and decisions made on what to do with the feedback.

From this report we need to agree recommendations and actions. A group has been set up within Mailchimp so that we can keep participants informed on a regular basis of developments including circulating this report to the participants together with information on the decisions made.

Amanda Hensby
Secretary
COAST Arts