**North East Open Studios**

**Annual General Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Date: 29th October 2023**

**Present**

Tony Scott Lynne Scott Val Thomson

Charlie Sim Louise Lemmon Tilly Howie

Mahri Prince Linda Colquhon Ellie Rattenbury

Lynda Rattenbury Judith McRorie Ian McRorie

Hilary Firth Gina Pearson Shona Cammack

John Threlfall David Dawson Kymme Fraser

Carol Ruxton Connie Robertson Hilary Duncan

Helen Jackson Kathleen Cowie Lorna Crawford

Sheila Kerr Nicola Seal Carol Hiles

Jennifer Humphrey Brian Burnett Paula Silvester

Evelyn Shaw Carine Eunson Charles Smith

Paul Lawson Christian Bews Gladys Williams

Nikki Bruce Margaret McDonald Sara Harper

Katherine Rae

**Apologies**

Glynis Knowles Susan Bedford Lindsay Hamilton

Emma Rodenhurst Grant Angela Neilson Fiona Sinclair

Julie McLean Fiona Leask Fiona Duckett

Jill Mackenzie Jude Edgar Vera McKendrick

Lorna Purvis Juliet MacLeod Michelle Will

Pauline Angela Sibbald Roderick Scott

Clare-Louise Battersby Juliet McLeod Lorna Purvis

Vera McKendrick Jude Edgar Moira Johnston

Jill McKenzie Gillian Needham Paul Ritchie

Amy Holden Trina Stark Alison Milne

Ranjit Barr Gerrie Somerville Morag Smith

**Agenda**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 30th October 2022
3. Matters arising and not dealt with later
4. Chairperson’s report including Treasurer’s report; Co-ordinator’s report; Social Media Co-ordinator's report
5. Re-election of Chairperson
6. Re-election of Vice Chairperson; Re-election of Secretary; Re-election of Treasurer; Re-election and election of Committee members
7. Confirm Date of North East Open Studios 2024
8. Any other business.

**1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Lynne welcomed members to the AGM and confirmed the meeting reached the quorum. Lynne said she had received several apologies, and they would be included in the meeting minutes.

1. **Approval of minutes of the AGM held on 30th October 2022**

Lynne asked for approval of the minutes of the 2022 AGM and asked for any amendments. The minutes were approved, and no amendments requested.

1. **Matters Arising**

No matters arising.

1. **Chairperson’s Report including Treasurer’s report; Co-ordinator’s report; Social Media Co-ordinator's report**

Lynne shared the Chairperson’s Report, the full report is available on the NEOS website at https://www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk/about-us/documentation. Lynne spoke about the following key areas:

* The NEOS 2023 committee was keen to work hard and make the 20th year of NEOS successful by focusing on what makes NEOS unique with a key objective to grow its audience despite a volatile economy.
* The committee dealt with escalating costs last year and focused on saving money by requesting quotations from alternative suppliers for book print and signs. Applying for a 10k lottery funding for the NEOS app and website also added to funds.
* The committee carried out a review of the Not-for-Profit status to check if it is still the correct structure for NEOS or whether a change to charitable status would be beneficial. After seeking advice, it was agreed Not-for-Profit is still the best option.
* An independent review of accounts has been put in place to ensure good practice.
* Work has been done to develop relationships with other organisations such as Visit Scotland and NESCol
* Work relating to the NEOS book included a more targeting approach to distribution of the NEOS book with members suggestions, a change of book designer ensured the template is owned by NEOS and a crucial saving of 10k was made by changing printer, designer and integrating the map within the book.
* The advertising and promotional activity for NEOS was shared, highlighting the cost savings on the book allowed for increased advertising and promotion spend, the key component being the STV advertising. Posters and postcards were also printed and distributed to members.
* The new NEOS App generally had great reviews and the App developer said the download and usage statistics for a first year were excellent.
* The existing website was kept running and experienced heavy traffic, a new website will bring more stability and is currently under construction with testing planned early 2024.
* Member Communications included local get togethers specifically to support new members and increased member communications via email.
* The Member Survey Results showed most members met their objectives with a large percentage experiencing increased visitor numbers, including visitors new to NEOS. 70% of members said they would support the STV ad again next year, but only 1% of responses from the visitor survey reporting see the ad and this is something to consider when planning advertising next year. A few members were concerned about the impact and competition from larger venues and the committee will think about how individual studio visits can be encouraged.
* The visitor survey results were shared showing the top reasons for visiting were meeting the makers, buying direct from makers and seeing finished work.

Lynne shared the Treasurer’s Report prepared by Carla Cummins. The full report is available on the NEOS website at https://www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk/about-us/documentation. Lynne spoke about the following key areas:

* The bank balance is currently a healthy 21k and this will allow for funding of the new website, costing 8-10k. The surplus of £10k gives a contingency for next year and there are no plans to increase membership fees for 2024. An analysis of spend confirmed the book is the main spend, followed by advertising and social media.

Lynne shared the Co-ordinator’s Report prepared by Louise Lemmon, the full report is available on the NEOS website at https://www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk/about-us/documentation. Lynne spoke about the list of tasks undertaken by the co-ordinator and shared membership statistics.

Lynne shared details of the work carried out by Louise as the Social Media Co-ordinator and the role of the volunteer social media team. Social media statistics were shared. Lynne spoke about the amount of work involved amounting to approximately 240 hours of work and said this is not sustainable, especially with the change to scheduling options by Meta. Although social media posts for each member will continue, proposed changes for NEOS 2024 include not producing discipline videos, based on the time spent to create repetitive content and their low reach performance. The option to share 3rd party content will also be removed and members will be asked to like and share posts instead of the volunteer committee.

Lynne thanked the NEOS 2023 committee for their hard work and Matt Robinson at Wiccan Brae for website support.

Lynne asked for questions:

A member asked if more photographers can be included, and Lynne said membership is given on a first come first serve basis and suggested he encouraged any photography contacts to take part.

A member asked if individual group members can be searchable on the app and website. This was discussed and the consensus was groups can be large and it would be difficult to list each group participant, also each artist has the option to join and pay as a full member for a separate listing in the book.

The app was discussed with comments that it was handy when travelling, request to keep it simple as it was easy to use and a request to include trails maps. The functionality for visitors to create an individual trail map was shared.

A member said the map inside the book was not useful and the app was easier to use. Lynne said the survey results showed a mixed response to the integrated map without a majority in favour of having the map printed separately. Charley explained the print and labour cost savings gained due to the integrated map.

Lynne said the new website should allow for improved member’s information, such as the ability to upload more than one image.

A member asked if a change to a larger format book can be considered. A discussion highlighted the convenience of the small format, how it can be easily left and displayed at venues, and it is now a recognised format for NEOS.

Members talked about the posters and postcards, and it was agreed, although they were useful at events before books were available, postcards would not be needed next year.

A member said there is still an issue with visitors knowing what NEOS stands for. Lynne said the committee tried hard to put ‘Open Studios’ to the forefront on branding and the STV piece at Deemouth Artist Studios helped to showcase this, but it is something the committee with continue to work on.

A member said it is a large event and area for visitors to cover in a short timescale. The experience of a previous year when NEOS was extended to three weeks was shared; the huge increase in organisational work, lack of visitors by week three and difficulty for members on the outskirts of areas meant it was returned to the eight day event.

A member asked about attracting a younger audience and offering mentoring / studio experience to senior pupils was discussed. Lynne talked about plans to meet with the head of creative studies at NESCol and connecting with Skills Development Scotland and agreed this is something to be developed. The issues with logistics for pupils, PVG certification and other considerations was discussed.

A member asked that the minutes reflect the memberships gratitude to the committee for their work and willingness shown to take feedback.

1. **Re-election of Chairperson**

Lynne said she is happy to remain in the role for NEOS 2024 and confirmed she will resign after next year as the constitution states a chair can remain in the role for a maximum of 3 years. Lynne handed over to Charley for the election. Lynne Staples-Scott was re-elected as chairperson.

1. **Re-election of Vice Chairperson; Re-election of Secretary; Re-election of Treasurer; Re-election and election of Committee members**

Charley Sim was re-elected as Vice Chairperson. Val Thomson was re-elected as Secretary. Carla Cummins was re-elected as Treasurer. Louise Lemmon will remain in the role as co-ordinator

Lynne said Linda Colquhoun, Carol Hiles, Connie Robertson, Paul Lawson, Brian Burnett are happy to continue as committee members for NEOS24. Mahri Prince, Sara Harper and Susie Hunt have resigned from the committee and Lynne thanked them for their hard work and support. Shona Cammack and Tilly Howie have volunteered to join the committee for NEOS 24. The committee members were elected.

1. **Confirm Date of North East Open Studios 2023**

Lynne confirmed the dates for North East Open Studios 2024 as 7th to 15th of September.

1. **AOB**

No further items under AOB