

# North East Open Studios

## Minutes for NEOS AGM, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017

### Agenda:

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of EGM held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2017
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairperson's Report including Aberdeen Festivals
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Exhibitor Fiona Duckett presents her NEOS experience over the years.
7. Co-ordinator's Report
8. Outgoing Committee Members
9. Request for New Committee Members
10. Presentation from Ash Brammer - First Time Exhibitor
11. Constitution and Conditions of Entry discussion and vote
12. Any Other Business

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Ruth thanked everyone for coming to the AGM and said that 20 people had emailed apologies.

List of apologies available on request.

### 2. Minutes of EGM 8<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Ruth read the minutes from the EGM on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and asked for any comments from members. No comments were made. Fiona Duckett proposed the minutes and Hilary Firth seconded.

### 3. Matters arising

Ruth said that the committee had taken consultation regarding the new constitution and this would be discussed later.

### 4. Chairperson's Report

Ruth thanked the committee for their continued support. Ruth said that the NEOS year had started late and the new committee members had to learn quickly. Ruth said that although it

was hard work, the committee brought together a successful NEOS and Ruth thanked Morag McGee for her support as an excellent co-ordinator.

Ruth said that things were overlooked and that the committee is aware that it can be more efficient, and improvements will be made for NEOS 2018.

Ruth said that there are proposed improvements to the website to make it more useful for 2018. The website had been developed by RGU, but specialist areas had been created by a software developer in Glasgow and that Alun Dyson and Morag McGee are planning a meeting with the developer to discuss improvements.

Ruth said that sign-up had been publicised in The Leopard, Artmag, Social Media and via Mailchimp emails. Ruth asked members to open NEOS mailchimp emails in the future.

Ruth reported that there had been a few late requests for entry.

Ruth said that it had taken a large amount of time to pull together data and graphics for the Book and that matching and identifying members payments and following up incomplete entries was also very time consuming.

Ruth thanked Phil Thomson for his design work with the new eye-catching book cover and strong branding carried throughout all promotional material.

Ruth said that NEOS was invited to take part in the Aberdeenshire village area of the Royal Highland Show in July 2017 and that the NEOS area was well received with good feedback from visitors about the high quality of work on show. The organisers have said that due to its success, if NEOS takes part in future events, it will be given a more prominent space closer the front. Ruth thanked those who had taken part, including Elaine Lindsay, Fiona Duckett, Brian Cook Shand and Keith Mellard for helping with set up and transportation. Ruth shared a letter from Sarah Mackie and said that the Royal Highland Show had been a good promotional event for NEOS, including an appearance on TVs Landward.

Ruth spoke about the committee's work with social media campaigns and the project by Gregor McAbery and Val Thomson to keep the social media campaign going over the summer months, rather than focusing on September. Ruth said that she would like to continue promotion over the winter and asked members for any ideas for winter campaigns.

Ruth spoke about the publicity leading up to NEOS including Knock News, Trend, Visit Scotland, Artmag, P&J and local papers and samples were provided for members to see.

Ruth said that there are many advantages for NEOS as part of Aberdeen Festivals including large adverts, a vinyl in Bon Accord Square, pop-ups in prominent places, in addition to promotion on STV online, P&J, Ebook and Aberdeen Festivals Calendar. Ruth said that Aberdeen Festivals is great value and NEOS gains a huge amount from it. Ruth said that the purpose of the survey is to feedback to Aberdeen Festivals so that they can report on whether the funding has supported a successful event.

Ruth said that she is investigating collaborations between NEOS and other festivals in Aberdeenshire.

Ruth said that she is aware that a marketing strategy is required for 2018 and would welcome feedback and ideas.

Ruth said that the key marketing objectives of 2018 are to build on the social media success, to widen the NEOS audience to include a younger demographic, to run an improved and focused advertising campaign and to continue collaboration with Aberdeen Festivals.

Ruth shared comments from the visitors' survey and said that the overriding feedback is that visitors are amazed at number of fantastic artists and makers in the area.

Ruth said that NEOS is in a strong position to move forward and to look forward to its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2018.

## **5. Treasurer's Report**

Alun Dyson provided copies of the 2017 financial report to members.

Alun said that there had been a loss in the previous 3 years, but NEOS is now heading in the right direction.

Alun said that he found some of the treasurer's tasks frustrating and time consuming, that initially he had limited access to bank transaction details and that the information recorded by the website needs improving.

Alun shared that sign-up was made difficult because 70% of the membership joined in the last week and due to lack of detail, time consuming cross referencing and detective work, each transaction had an average processing time of 20 minutes. Alun said that the proposed introduction of a membership secretary from the committee should help in 2018.

Ruth thanked Alun for his work as treasurer.

## **6. Presentation from Fiona Duckett**

Fiona Duckett told the members about her background and passion for her work. Fiona shared her experience as an exhibitor since the inception of NEOS, both as a solo exhibitor and when exhibiting with others. Fiona said that her visitor numbers have increased over the years and shared some of positive experiences from the event. Fiona said that she believes that you get out of NEOS what you are prepared to put in.

Fiona spoke of her NEOS promotion has including, open evenings, demos, posters in local shops, editorial in a local paper, printing and distributing postcards along with NEOS books and hanging up bunting at her venue to give a festival feel.

Fiona said that NEOS books are the lifeblood of the event and distributing to potential visitors is key, along with Facebook and Social media exposure.

Fiona said that NEOS is one of the most effective ways of showcasing work and networking and that members should all be proud of being part of it.

## **7. Co-ordinator's Report**

Morag said the Co-ordinators post has always been a paid role and therefore the membership should be aware of what the co-ordinator has done.

Morag said that she had been the NEOS chair a few years ago and brought knowledge of the NEOS sign up process to the role.

Morag shared how she had managed the website, worked with website developer on any issues and co-ordinated graphic design work. Morag said that she had managed the Gmail account and answered questions at sign up, leading to approximately 40 to 50 hours work during the first week.

Morag reported that the last two weeks of sign-up had been very busing and that 70 to 80 hours had been spent working on the computer during the final 10 days and that there had been 156 emails in the last 48 hours.

Morag explained how she had carried out background checks on entries, with phone numbers, opening times and other items checked, although no changes were made unless the member involved was contacted.

Morag said that she benefited from previous website developments where incorrect image sizes were no longer accepted.

Morag said that she spent time proof reading the Book and that she feels passionate that it should be best it can be.

Morag said that based on her past experience, NEOS 2017 sign up went well, but that NEOS is a progressive event and improvements can be made to take NEOS forward.

Morag said that her full report will be available on the NEOS website.

Ruth thanked Morag for her work.

Ruth said that a huge thank you was needed to Fiona Crosswell and Kerry Marr for their work in distributing the books and to Karen Hadjitofi and Linda Colquhoun for their work on the NEOS map, which has been a great addition to the Book.

## **8. Outgoing Committee Members**

Ruth asked if any committee members wished to step down. No committee members asked to leave the committee. Ruth reported that Rae Osbourne and Liz Lyall had resigned from the committee earlier in the year.

## **9. Request for New Committee Members**

Ruth asked if any members would like to join the committee. No members came forward.

## **10. Presentation from Ash Brammer, First Time Exhibitor**

Ash shared details about his background and his experience of his first NEOS. Ash said that the strong NEOS brand worked well and he congratulated the committee on creating such a successful event with a very limited budget.

Ash said he enjoyed the advantages of being part of the NEOS collective and working with other exhibitors to bring visitors to the area and signposting visitors to other venues.

Ash said his advice to anyone considering NEOS would be to 'just do it', to speak to other NEOS exhibitors in your area, to do it well and to the best of your ability.

Ash said that he had many visitors and enjoyed talking about his work and process and made sales. Ash said he thinks that being part of NEOS is great value for money.

Ash said that the Royal Highland Show was a big opportunity and that people visited his studio because they saw his work at RHS.

Ash said that NEOS was a brilliant event, that he sold more than he had hoped and still has work coming from it.

## **11. Constitution and Conditions of Entry discussion**

Ruth said that the Draft Constitution and Conditions of Entry have been available on the NEOS website for members to review.

Ruth thanked Keith Allardyce and the sub-committee for their work on this.

Ruth said that the documents had not changed hugely, but had been amended to accommodate members who did not hold the NEOS event in their own studios. Galleries are no longer included, unless they are a NEOS venue for an artist or maker.

A member said that the statement that the quorum for a General Meeting is 10% of the membership seemed very low and asked if this is correct. Fiona Duckett responded that this is standard practice and part from the guidelines from ACVO.

Ruth said that traditionally only a small percentage of the membership engage and attend meetings, and if the percentage is increased there may never be enough for a quorum.

Ruth asked the membership to vote for the constitution and all members present voted for the new constitution.

Ruth asked the membership to vote for Conditions of entry and all members present voted for the conditions of entry.

## **12. Any Other Business**

### **Proposed Changes to Fees**

Ruth said that most of the survey responses to the fee changes had been in favour of the changes.

Ruth said that she had received 6 letters objecting to the proposed changes. Letters from Barry Seddon, Vision Photography, Sisters In Stitches, Art in the Buchat and Leask house were read to members.

Ruth read a response from Susie Hunt to the email sent by Barry Seddon, supporting the proposed changes.

Ruth said that the proposed increase to group fees was to redress the balance between single and group memberships fees.

Following a lengthy discussion where some members stated their concerns regarding the increased fees for groups and other members provided reasons why the fees should be increased, Ruth asked members to vote. Five members voted against the proposed increase, all others voted for the increase, therefore the proposed change to fees was passed.

### **Other Business**

Ruth said that the committee are discussing other options for increasing the fee income, including introducing a 'Friends of NEOS' category.

Ruth said the committee are also investigating collaboration with other festivals. Discussions are in progress to showcase NEOS at the Portsoy Boat Festival. This will be organised with a similar procedure to the Royal Highland Show, where members can apply to take part.

A new member requested that more be in place to support new NEOS members. Ruth said that due to the late start and time constraints of NEOS 2107, some things did not happen, but the committee would take this on board for NEOS 2018.

Ruth ended the meeting by thanking all members for taking the time to come to the AGM.