

NEOS AGM Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020 3pm (virtual via Zoom)

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019
3. Matters arising
4. Chairperson's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Co-ordinator's report
7. Request for new committee members including Treasurer and Secretary- constitutionally these posts have to be filled. Fiona is also entering her final year as Chair. Please note the Vice chair does not automatically take over as Chair.
8. Proposals for discussion from the committee- changing "illustrator" category to illustration: multi-media and digital media to become part of mixed media: proposed increase of 5% in fees (Single entry would rise to £142 from £135, Single young person would rise to £79 from £75, Small group entry would rise to £326 from £310, Large group would rise to £426 from £415 and Friend would remain at £5)
9. Any other business
10. Break out rooms for those who wish to socialise.

Fiona began the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. There were 36 attendees including the current committee. She explained how the meeting would run. Given that it was being conducted via Zoom she asked that the attendees remained on mute until they wished to speak and to signal if they wanted to comment or ask a question by raising their hand.

1. Apologies  
Ash Brammer, Erica Brammer, Brian Shand, Clare Bentley, Sheila MacFarlane, Jill Mackenzie, Pat Williams and Charles Smith.
2. Minutes from AGM 2019: Fiona asked if everyone had received and read the minutes from last year's AGM. All confirmed they had.

Minutes proposed by: Louise Lemmon

Minutes seconded by: Mahri Prince

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from last year's minutes.

4. Chairperson's Report  
Well 2020 is year none of us will forget!

**Let's start with the good news.** In case you missed it, North East Open Studios was awarded a QAVS – A Queen's award for Voluntary Services – this is the equivalent of an MBE for organisations and The Monymusk Studio very generously agreed to host the presentation when the Covid rules relaxed enough to allow us to have it, albeit socially distanced! It is a huge honour and something we all of should be very proud of – we say it often but 'We are

all NEOS' and it's a huge pat on the back for everyone who has ever done anything to make this 17 year old event the unique and special event that it is. Well done everyone – and when we are allowed, we definitely need a celebration!

**Sign up** – was in case you've forgotten pre-Covid when Covid was something that was happening in China and as a result of agreeing to limit numbers to 300 the first few days of sign up were manic – a little like the last few days normally are and we never did hit 300, partly we are sure due to the realisation that Covid-19 was something we would have to deal with in the UK too.

As you will all be aware, we then asked you, the members, what you wanted to happen next. It was evenly split between cancel, virtual and go ahead as normal as was possible. So, committee took on the delicate task of negotiating the ever-changing situation and we were immensely relieved that for many of our members NEOS happened relatively normally. We were lucky but we all worked really hard to be in the right place and we managed to be in the right window – maybe a week earlier would have been good but unfortunately our collective crystal balls didn't tell us that!

NEOS is also very grateful to Marie Archer (Aberdeenshire Economic Development Officer) who along with Roz Taylor of Business Gateway created a series of free to NEOS bespoke Zoom sessions specifically designed for NEOS members to help them get started on their digital journey and to encourage them to take the next step. I went to all of them and learnt something at them all. I hope the other attendees found them equally useful. The main reason for organising these was to have you, the members, in a better digital place if NEOS had, had to be totally digital.

### **Social Media**

NEOS started the Social Media Campaign on the 17th of May (on Facebook and Instagram) by using all the images that had been sent in for sign up, in the Sneak Peek videos – unlike last year I didn't do discipline videos, rather I went as alphabetical as was aesthetically possible. On the 27<sup>th</sup> June the individual members' images (those that had agreed to come along on the 2020 roller coaster journey with us!) started being shared. These were posted 3 per day along with the description you created for the book on both Facebook and Instagram. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August we then shared the images again as videos by discipline with the venue number super imposed and if they were online only that was flagged up too. (Worth remembering for the future that these images are potentially going to be seen by well over 5,000 people **and** what you have written about your work). Due to more withdrawals we were left with a week of nothing to share just before NEOS so we re-shared a cropped version 'taste of videos' that were commissioned over 2 years ago of the members taking part this year. For the week of NEOS on Facebook we posted anyone who tagged us, but with a limit of one post per day and on Instagram stories were re-shared and posts reposted.

As I've been talking, I've been sharing the stats for the 3 weeks before NEOS and the week of NEOS. However, you as members could do so much more to spread the word by liking the open Facebook page and regularly sharing what is there. I know it's a lot as I've been the person doing the posting – but just a little bit of effort especially when we are doing the postcodes around you would be fantastic. Facebook lets us know who is sharing and unless

you share it on a private account, we know who it is. If you do share privately just make that post public and then we can see you are doing it.

This year on Social Media we have had two teams of 3 people – one covering Facebook and one covering Instagram working on a rota commenting and thanking people for sharing – if we missed you – we are sorry, but we did try our best! It also meant that Louise and I had to only do it 1 week out of three. An excellent example of how more people prepared to do things makes a huge difference – so thank you, Emma, Isabel, Simona and Fenneke from everyone at NEOS and especially Louise and I!

Facebook now stands at 5,590 people who like us and 5,996 people who follow us just 4 more people and we will be at 6,000! At the end of NEOS 2019 5,193 people followed us so we continue to grow our audience. Instagram now has 2,063 followers.

### **Print Advertising**

Committee is aware that not everyone is on Social Media so NEOS also took print adverts in Trend Magazine and Lifestyle Magazine – sponsoring a £50 prize in each magazine. There was an advert in the P&J and also articles flagging up that NEOS was happening in the P&J. I know my local paper the Banffshire Advertiser had an article too. An online advert was placed in ARTmag as well for the first time as they have not printed this year.

### **The Book**

It was a hard decision to not print the book this year, but just printing the map gave us a physical thing to distribute – thank you to all of those who helped in this from getting the books to the Pick-up Points (PUPS) and to the PUPS themselves for agreeing to help in this way. It was also hugely helpful to have the online map that Simona Hunter did again for us this year and ‘what3words’ helped when it was used properly. There have been 2,400 views of the online map so far this year and last year there 6,300 views in total of the online map.

### **Lessons learned in 2020**

A virus can change everything!

Seriously though – from anecdotal feedback our visitors really missed our book – it is iconic and helps people to navigate our very large area – but it just wasn’t feasible this year and we think everyone understood that.

The online map has proved to be a great tool and some of our members (21) took the huge leap and did the whole event online – we look forward to their feedback and thank them for their efforts. We even for a brief moment trended on Google

### **Website**

Increasingly our website is essential to the smooth running of the event (and the graphs now being shown) show just how much traffic is generated during sign up and the event.

### **Surveys - Member and visitor**

We will of course be inviting all members to take part in our member survey just as soon as we’ve finalised it and we will be sending out the invite to the emails that some of you manage to collect from your visitors. If you didn’t then could you please share the link on your Social media channels and any other way you can think of! In the meantime Alison Craighon who is

also our website coordinator on the committee very nobly stepped forward to do some analysis on last year's (2019) figures – bearing in mind the questions were ones we inherited and hopefully this year we have put a few more questions in there that will help you to get more out of your NEOS from the answers we receive.

### **Thank you**

I'd personally like to thank all my committee – it's been a very strange and hugely demanding year and North East Open Studios would not have happened without you – well done everyone. Alun Dyson is leaving after 4 years of sterling service – and our huge thanks go to him. Erica Brammer and Keith Allardyce had to step down during the year and Fenneke Wolters-Sinke and Hilary Firth have moved on too. Our thanks go to them all for the work that they have done whilst on committee.

As well as committee my thanks go to Phil Thomson who not only did the book this year, but he also took on the job of creating the map using the 'what3words' which worked as long as you followed instructions and got your words using the 'what3words' app!

Also, huge thanks go to Matt Robinson of Wiccans Brae who has continued to monitor and keep us safe online and do as far as I'm concerned magic bits of coding for us when needed.

MMS Almac (our printers) were really helpful at coping with the ever-changing situation and printing the map in record time for us – so thanks to them too.

Any Questions? No questions other than a request to put this presentation on the website. This was agreed.

### 5. Treasurers Report

| <u>Income</u>                | <u>Amount</u>  |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Membership Subs              | £40,900        |
| Other income                 | £50.00         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>£40,950</b> |
| <hr/>                        |                |
| <u>Expenditure*</u>          | <u>Amount</u>  |
| Refunds                      | £29,500        |
| Virtual book and printed map | £7,960         |
| Website                      | £2,070         |
| Event delivery               | £5,330         |
| Committee expenses           | £630           |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>£45,490</b> |

\*October 2019 to End of September 2020

I estimate we have some £3,000 outstanding costs for 2019/20 which includes £2,000 subscription refunds cheques.

We have made an estimated £7,540 loss for the year because of COVID 19 restrictions and the refund provided to members. Our “reserve or emergency pot” should be some £5,400 ready for 2021.

It was asked what the “other income” was from. Alun replied that he had made a complaint to the bank that NEOS holds its account with and they had given NEOS £50 as a goodwill refund. It was also asked why we didn’t keep more of the money that had been paid by members as the member asking the question would have been fine with that. Alun and Fiona both explained that there were a number of members who complained bitterly about the committee even keeping the £30 from each entry and that it was a refund amount that had been agreed at the previous AGM that the committee couldn’t change.

Fiona repeated her gratitude and thanks to Alun for his hard work over the last four years, especially as this year that had been very tough on the treasurer.

#### 6. Co-ordinator Report

For those of you that don’t know, my name is Louise and I’m your coordinator.

For those of you unsure of what the coordinator does, I have jotted down a list of a few responsibilities. Similarly to last year, if you have any queries with regards to any of these things, please feel free to ask me. I won’t talk through the list, but I’ll leave it on the screen and if you need to refer to it in the future, it’s attached to this report.

Coordinator responsibilities:

- All emails in and out of coordinator @ email address
- Assisting members with their applications during sign up
- Maintaining members database throughout sign up
- Organising and numbering database entries
- Proofreading (along with other committee members) of all members entries and catalogue.
- Coordinating between our Map Designers and Graphic Designer
- Editing (in line with Final Database) Members Entries on Wordpress
- Organising Pick Up Points and Book Distribution

Summary of Points for NEOS 2020:

- Membership
- Late/Incomplete Entries
- Out of Area Applications
- Group Applications
- Pick Up Points
- Overview

Full Report:

#### **2020 Membership**

After setting a 300 member limit at last year’s AGM, we had a high number of sign ups within the first week. Of the overall 285 members that signed up, 160 of those signed up in

the first 7 days with 101 of those on the first day. As a comparison to last year, we had 158 members signed up within the first 2 weeks, with 120 signing up in the last week (including 16 members on the last day).

The last week of sign up is usually the busiest, but because we set a limit, we could see that members were keen to make sure they got a spot in the 300.

Usually, at this point, I would do a comparison of members from previous years, but as you will have noticed, this year was not a typical year, so we can't really do a straight comparison of membership.

The membership figures for this year look like this:

**Members Signed Up 285**

Single Members 264

Single Youth Members 4

Small Group 7

Large Group 7

Friends of NEOS 3

**Members as of 03.09.20 285\***

Withdrawn 105\*\*

Friends of NEOS 3

Single Members 168

Single Youth Members 3

Small Group 3

Large Group 4

\*When Member's withdrew, we changed their membership to Friend's of NEOS

\*\* We kept this number separate from our original Friend's of NEOS

**Active Members 2020 178**

Online Only 21

By Appointment/Phone for Details 31

Members Opening Studio 126

**Late/Incomplete Entries**

Due to Covid-19 making an appearance during Sign Up this year, we spent a significant amount of time speaking to members that hadn't completed their entries. We were aware that we had to spend time doing this as it may not have been as simple as forgetting to submit/pay for the entry.

### **Out of Area Applicants**

Originally, we had a few Out Of Area Applicants. There didn't appear to be any issues surrounding the additional paperwork they had to complete. Everyone completed the necessary forms and completed their online entries well within the time scales.

As NEOS 2020 approached, almost all of our Out Of Area applicants had to withdraw or exhibit online, as the travel and/or shared space was not possible.

### **Group Applications**

Similarly with Out Of Area applications, Group applications take a lot more administration. But due to already holding a large majority of our groups' information, we could provide "Grandfather Rights" to our long standing Groups. This meant we could spend more time helping the 'new' groups organise the relevant data we require.

We did not receive any of the usual questions we get surrounding Group Entries this year.

- "My friends and I are thinking about entering as a group to save money"
- "What's the cheapest way to enter NEOS?"
- "If I want to share a venue with someone, does that mean we have to enter as a group?"

We only had 2 group applications that did not provide the relevant information. Both group entries withdrew their application just after sign up.

### **Pick Up Points**

It was extremely helpful to have the "Willing to be a Pick Up Point" tick box on the online entry this year. So many of you ticked the box this year, and we are very grateful for this. It meant we already had a list of people willing to help which cut down the work significantly. The distribution areas were then divided between those that had volunteered.

### **Overview**

Overall, we have still had some very positive feedback this year, and we hope your entire NEOS experience was positive, albeit a very different version of what you might be used to.

We are always eager to evolve and take on board everyone's point of views and ideas. We know that this year may not have followed the 'standard NEOS' but perhaps there are things you have learned or processes that you have implemented that you feel may benefit NEOS as a whole.

If there is anything you feel may help us in the future, or if there are any issues you had out-with the points I have raised above, please feel free to email me at:

[Coordinator@northeastopenstudios.co.uk](mailto:Coordinator@northeastopenstudios.co.uk)

## 7. Request for Committee Members

Fiona started the discussion by saying that two people have volunteered to come onto the committee. Amy Shennan Pates has volunteered to be treasurer.

Proposed: Fiona (Chair)

Seconded: Emma (Vice chair)

Fiona also stated that Lisa Petrie has also offered to be on the committee as Secretary

Proposed: Katya (member)

Seconded: Hilary Firth (member and out-going committee member)

Catriona Yates put her hand up to confirm they would be willing to come on the committee. Clare Terris from Blue Wasp Creative and Jill McKenzie had volunteered before the AGM - Fiona thanked them for volunteering.

## 8. Proposed Changes to Titles and Fees

There are two titles in question are “illustrator” and “multi-media/ digital media/ mixed media”. Firstly is the anomaly of “illustrator”. It is proposed by committee to change this to “Illustration”. All present agreed to this.

Secondly, Fiona stated that the committee felt that multi-media entries could be put into the “Mixed Media” category. What are the thoughts of the membership? There was a general discussion on this. The membership present suggested that digital media is not the same thing as the other two. Digital-media work involves digital/film/sound mostly as performance pieces whereas mixed media is more usually a two-dimensional medium involving paint/other drawing media. Fiona (Chair) suggested that as part of the survey this year we could ask this very question. However, after further discussion it was decided to omit Digital Media and Multi Media and just have Mixed Media. The aim is to streamline the number of categories and make it easier for all. Current committee member Alison suggested we provide a short description of each category before sign up next year to help members. All agreed to this. Fiona said that we would need input from members of all categories to assist with this.

The Committee proposed to the membership that the fees are raised by 5% for sign up next year:

|                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Single Young person | £79 (from £75)   |
| Single Adult        | £142 (from £135) |
| Small group         | £326 (from £310) |
| Large group         | £426 (from £415) |
| Friend              | £5 (same)        |

There was a general discussion on raising the price. While it was acknowledged the vast majority of the money paid by members goes on publishing the book every year we cannot use this strange year as a reason to stop publishing the book altogether. Members present who were open this year stated that everyone they spoke with missed having the book, despite the enhanced map and online book working really well in the circumstances. The book is iconic



and there were comments from members who said that some people thought NEOS wasn't happening because the book was absent. Member (Paula Silvester – Forecourt Art Group) did state that getting the refund allowed her to sell work without having to take a commission, Gillian Needham of CreativeCromar said they felt the map worked well, CreativeCromar members were all online this year, but others said the book needs to be printed. Another member (Hilary Duncan) said it is a visible symbol of the organisation and needs to come back. Member Elaine Lindsay of Something Corny, who has taken part every year, stated that the cost is very low when you look at how much it costs to advertise elsewhere. It is good value for money.

It was asked if more cost effective (cheaper) printing options had been looked at. Fiona said that the book needs longevity so we have to be mindful that a less expensive standard might not hold up so well. Fiona also stated that the cost of paper and inks are not going to get any cheaper, especially with the uncertainty over Brexit. With all these issues in mind she asked the members if they agreed to a rise in prices for next year. No objections. All agreed.

Proposed by: Lillian (member)

Seconded by: Mahri (member)

9. Any other business

Fiona spoke briefly about an incident that happened during NEOS involving one of our members and a member of the public. The incident highlighted the possibility that individual members of the committee could be sued. NEOS does not have insurance. Fiona asked the membership for permission to explore options that would offer protection for NEOS and its committee.

There was a general discussion on public liability insurance and where advice might be forthcoming such as the Business Gateway.

All agreed to Fiona exploring our options.

Rosemary (member) wanted to let the committee know that her venue, a church hall, were very happy with the NEOS guidelines on how to open to the public and be Covid secure. The hall had not been open since the lockdown so this was the first event to be held there.

Ruth (member) also wanted to thank the committee for working hard to get NEOS up and running this year.

10. Break out rooms for those who wish to socialise

Fiona thanked everyone for attending this year and gave everyone the opportunity to “meet” in break out rooms online (not minuted) and closed the meeting.