

## NEOS AGM 2021 Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021 3pm via Zoom

### Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020
3. Matters arising and not dealt with later
4. Chairperson report
5. Treasurer report
6. Co-ordinator report
7. Election of new chair
8. Election of new vice chair
9. Election of new secretary
10. Election of new committee members
11. Website
12. Confirm dates of NEOS 2022
13. AOB
14. Socialise...

### Attendees

Fiona Duckett, Emma Rodenhurst-Grant, Amy Pate, Alison Craigon, Anne Buckle, Brian Burnett, Catriona Yates, Simona Hunter, Isabel Pye, Susan MacInness, Gerrie Sommerville, Paula Sylvester, Linda, Ruth McEvelly, Trina Stark, Lorraine G, Alun Dyson, Pam Dyson, Jane McMillan, Marie Archer, Carol Deadman, Moira Milne, Gerard Stott, Simon, Hilary Firth, Catriona MacKenzie, Iain, Helen Jackson, Jamie Fergusson, Carol Hiles (+3).

Fiona welcomed everyone to the meeting. With enough members present she confirmed that we had the 10% of the membership required to be able to conduct the AGM as per the constitution and she asked all present if they were happy to class "present" at the meeting as being connected via Zoom. All agreed.

#### 1. Apologies

Rod Scott, Margaret MacDonald, Mary Taylor, Jim McEwen, Margaret Preston, Hilary Duncan, Louise Lemmon, Irene Hughes, Juliet Macleod, Nicola Seal, Brian Shand, Val Thomson.

#### 2. Minutes of the NEOS AGM 2020

Fiona asked if everyone had received and read last year's minutes. All agreed. She asked for a proposer and seconder.

Proposer- Alun

Secunder-Brian

### 3. Matter arising and not dealt with later

The only issue not completed from last year's AGM minutes is the issue of insurance for the NEOS committee. Fiona stated that she had started to look into this but it would be for the next committee to continue. No other issues were identified.

### 4. Chairpersons report

Welcome everyone

We did it! - Thankfully North East Open Studios happened as near to normal as it could have, taking in to consideration that we were/are still slowly emerging from a global pandemic – so well done everyone – I know my visitors were extremely pleased to be able to visit again. Sign up was during the second lockdown so I think it is amazing that just over 250 people signed up for NEOS 2021

Social Media - We started sharing posts in earnest on your behalf on 1st April – using the meet the maker images that you had sent in to us. On the 17th of April we started the Sneak Peek videos – still available but this year amalgamated on our You Tube Channel! These ended on the 30th April and then we started sharing individual entries plus with your postcode and venue no and link to the NEOS website. These continued until the 26th August when we posted the discipline videos which ended just before NEOS and then we posted the 'keeping everyone safe' video. During NEOS we tried to share the posts that you tagged us in but there were issues on both Facebook and Instagram as both platforms did not show us everyone who had tagged us. Every year at NEOS time the Facebook family upgrades its service and makes things 'easier' for us – which results every year in things not working properly during NEOS! So, apologies if we missed you, we did our best and most of us were also trying to do our own open studio event!

Things were slightly different this year as we expanded the role of the Social Media teams to include scheduling the posts. We could do this as the new Facebook business Suite allows everyone with roles on the page to post. Had we done this through Hootesuite (the platform we used to use) it would have cost NEOS a lot of money (£300 x7) to be able to have all the people accessing the scheduling. I ran a 'how to evening' via Zoom for everyone on the teams and individual sessions for those who felt they needed a bit more help. Your Social media teams for this year were Instagram – Louise, Simona and Catriona- and Facebook – Myself, Emma, Amy and Isabel. As well as scheduling the post like last year they also took turns in commenting. I'm sure you are all very grateful for their time and efforts on your behalf. Our Facebook likes during NEOS were 6,191 and our Instagram followers were 2,593 (at the same time last year Facebook 5,590 who liked us and Instagram 2,063 people who followed us) the reach on both during the week of North East Open Studios was up 40.2% on Facebook and 63.2% on Instagram. This is amazing testimony to the committee's hard work on your behalf. It could of course be even better if you interacted with your own post and those of the people in your area or the disciplines that you are involved in! I know that social

media is not everything but at the moment it is free for us to access, so it is mad not to be making the most of it.

Just two members shared every single post that we scheduled on your behalf (thank you – you know who you are). Facebook does not let us see if you share the post privately but if it's to do with NEOS we would strongly recommend that you make that share a public share – not only can we then see you have done it, but we can thank you and the more interaction there is around a post the more likely Facebook is to share it to the people that follow/like us.

Do you know that Facebook shows posts to less than 10% of the people who follow/like your page? When there is a big fuss around the post i.e., lots of comments and wows and loves - then the algorithms think it must be really interesting and show it to more people. Ticking (liking the post) does not even register on the algorithms

Most of the increase in followers has been done organically i.e., not paid – we did pay to boost the video on how we were keeping people safe – this reached 4,500 people but we don't know how effective it was.

We think it is important to share everyone's image and description of who is taking part – it is a big task but worth it.

Images – these are so important – start thinking about them now not in January or February. When it comes to the print advertising – we allow the magazines access to all the makers images to choose the ones they feel are most suitable for their readership – so, think about making yours stand out for next year! There are tips on the NEOS website on the members guide page.

Print Advertising - Committee is aware that not everyone is on social media and following a year when lots of people told that NEOS did not take place in 2020, we felt it was important to increase the print advertising. So NEOS also took print adverts in Trend Magazine and Lifestyle Magazine – sponsoring a £50 prize in Lifestyle. There was a four-week countdown campaign in the P&J resulting in a larger ad on the 5th week and an online advert for the virtual P&J paper with a click through to the NEOS website. You also paid for an advert in Artmag online for 8 weeks and in Artwork (physical). My apologies for the words from the chair that appeared in the Ellon Times etc. but I thought I was giving a quote for our local paper The Banffshire Journal and Kyle Ritchie did not correct me!

The Book - It was brilliant to be able to print the book this year. However not as many books were printed as normal because of the uncertainty over what outlets would be happy to take them. We did not distribute to the libraries this year asking members to take to their own to local libraries as some were still click and collect. Feedback from members is always strange on this – some of you tell us you get far too many books and others not enough! A huge thank you to the PUP's or Pick Up Points – these members do an amazing job and mean that most of you don't have too far to go for your books. When NEOS started we all

had to go to Susie Hunt just outside of Inverurie to pick up our allocation, but I'm not sure any of us has storage big enough for 6 plus pallets.

The Online Map - Simona created the online map for NEOS using Google maps again for us this year – this has grown over the last 4 years and thanks to what3words is very accurate. This year Simona added more information for each member, and we have always been able to search using the side bar. Thanks Simona and we are sorry you are leaving us.

Feedback from the visitor and members' survey - I'm sharing word clouds created from the member and visitor survey – the bigger the words the more they were used in comments and our thanks goes to new committee member Anne for creating them. Alison has also shared the results from another couple of questions as graphs. The visitor survey was had a really low participation this year with only 62 visitors taking part the members survey was slightly better with 72 members taking part.

Website - Increasingly our website is essential to the smooth running of the event and the graphs now on screen show just how much traffic is generated during sign up and the event. The Committee feel that we should be talking about a rebuild and it would be interesting to get our feedback on this

Thank you - I'd like to thank all the committee members over the last 5 years that I have worked alongside – you have been amazing. It's been my pleasure and my privilege to be Vice Chair and then Chair of this fantastic co-operative. I always say as a full time creative that NEOS is without doubt the most cost-effective advertising I do but it is so much more than that....

As well as committee my thanks go to Phil Thomson who not only designs the book every year, but also did the map again for NEOS using the 'what3words' which works pretty well with only a few minor hiccups!

Also, huge thanks go to Matt Robinson of Wiccans Brae who has continued to monitor and keep us safe online and has taught me – very patiently about things I never knew I needed to know, but do now – when I can remember them!

Thanks also to MMS Almac our printers who once again stepped up to the mark to help create the book and helped enormously with the distribution.

As you will be aware I have now served my 3 years as Chair and will be resigning – also retiring from committee are Emma Rodenhurst-Grant, Simona Hunter, Isabel Pye and Ursula Thompson and we thank them all for everything they have contributed to making NEOS what it is.

Any Questions? No questions were raised from the report.

## 5. Treasurer report

### Bank Account Update – New Treasurer

NEOS currently banks with the Royal Bank of Scotland and with me taking on the role of treasurer we needed to change the signatories on the account. This was made all the more challenging by the pandemic and the closing of our local RBS branches.

However, after much discussion with RBS on the phone Fiona discovered that they had designated our online account (or no 2 account) as the main bank account for NEOS and we could not get that changed. So, Committee took the decision to add more signatories to the number two account. This has worked well, so that whenever I need to pay someone, from the number 2 account and get approval by email from one of the other signatories for the payment.

We do realise that this is not what is in the constitution as it says we should have a cheque account with 2 signatures. The last time we enquired about moving banks no-one was letting business accounts change bank (the NEOS bank account is designated as a business account albeit not for profit) – this may have changed now as we were trying to move banks during the first lockdown -- and so we were tied to RBS which left us with the only option which was to change the signatories on the account. We do understand that some of the banks operate online “two approval accounts” i.e. someone goes in and sets up the payment and the second person goes in and authorises it.

What we really need from the membership is what they want to happen next – are you happy with the current situation? If not, what would you like to happen next?

## End of year report

My end of year report is now on the NEOS website for you to see. For now I'd like to share my screen to go through the values with you all. So you can see our total income for the year was £37,995.34 and our expenditure was £31,758.43.

The income was primarily made up from our vendors. There was also the RGU grant of £350 which was spent on the Tea-green event.

Our expenditure was spent on the website £1,470.11, event delivery £8,642.32, and the books and maps £19,284. We also had expenditure from refunds £2,012 which were left over from the 2020 event for which the books were not printed.

## 6. Co-ordinators report

(This was read out by Fiona as Louise is unwell at present- we wish her a speedy recovery)

For those of you not familiar with me, my name is Louise and I'm your coordinator.

As in previous years, I have outlined what the coordinator does. I have jotted down a list of a few responsibilities. 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 for 2021:

- 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 2021:

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

Full Report:

2021 Membership

During sign up this year we had 267 registrations. This included 77 in the first day and 160 in the first week. As a direct comparison to sign up in 2020, we had 160 in the first 7 days, with 101 of those on the first day.

After implementing the 300 member limit at the 2019 AGM, our first week of sign up is now the busiest time. Historically, the last week of sign up has been the busiest, but this has now flipped, implying that our members are keen to make sure they get a place in the 300.

When we implemented the 300 limit, we also mentioned we would implement a waiting list system, but this hasn't been required yet.

The membership figures for this year look like this:

Members Signed Up	252*
Single Members	241
Single Youth Members	2

Small Group	5
Large Group	4

\*2 members withdrew after this due to unforeseen circumstances

Friends of NEOS (not included in the total above) 8

New members 48

#### Late/Incomplete Entries

There were only a handful of members with incomplete entries, for example, missing image/venue directions. These members were contacted and all of the information was provided within the first week of April, so no deadlines were disturbed.

#### Out of Area Applicants

We had 3 Out Of Area Applicants this year. All 3 members are long standing NEOS members, so they were aware of the process. There weren't 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.

#### 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.

We did not have any new groups this year.

We also 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?"

#### Pick Up Points

It was extremely helpful to have the "Willing to be a Pick Up Point" tick box on the online entry again 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 had some very positive feedback this year, and we hope your entire NEOS experience was positive.

The only issue we encountered this year was establishing a list of new members. Ordinarily, we use previous databases to do a comparison and mark down who is taking part for the first time. Unfortunately, this isn't always enough (i.e. Name changes may have occurred). To solve this problem we have asked our website team to add a section in the sign up form indicating if the member is taking part in NEOS for the first time. We hope this will help the committee organize all of the additional material needed for new members and that no one is missed.

We are always eager to evolve and take on board everyone's point of views and ideas. If there are things you have learned or processes that you have implemented that you feel may benefit NEOS as a whole, please let us know.

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

Thank you.

### 7. Election of the new Chairperson

Fiona began the process by stating that the NEOS constitution requires that there is a chair, vice chair and secretary to be able to function and continue into the future. Without the election of these roles today the meeting will have to be halted and a special general meeting called.

The assembled committee members and NEOS members present then discussed the issue. Fiona said that NEOS seems to go through cycles where the numbers of volunteers rise and fall every few years. Following the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, for example, all the committee members resigned. It just seems to happen every so often. She stated that she had spoken to Gerrie Sommerville and Gemma Hare and they had volunteered to come onto the committee for next year, although not in the chair or vice chair roles. She suggested we could investigate paying the committee but that would potentially add around £30 per head to membership fees. Other open studios/doors events around the country are organised by companies who take a fee. Fiona continued by saying she did mention this year would be a watershed year at last year's AGM but nobody has come forward. She cannot continue.

Gerrie Sommerville said she had agreed to come onto the committee because she didn't want to see it stop. She also said that she thinks many members would be shocked to find that the survival of NEOS is at risk. Anne Buckle (current committee member) has agreed to take on the map for next year. She stated that she has friends who love art and visiting NEOS venues each year but are not makers themselves. She asked if they could be considered for a role. Fiona stated that committee members don't have to be participants too. It's a small committee and there is a limit to what it can do. We need new, enthusiastic people.



Ruth McEvilly stated that if nobody is willing to step forward today NEOS will have to hold a special general meeting. This could be seen as a shock tactic but Fiona has given five years of her life to help build up the organisation to where it is today and it's time for someone else to step forward. It is telling that, although 77 people asked for a virtual meeting today there aren't 77 people present. There were more people in attendance last year.

Brian Burnett (current committee member) stated that he had been on the committee for a year now and perhaps the ambitions of NEOS have outstripped what it can achieve with such a small group of volunteers. Perhaps the membership should be made more aware of this. Fiona agreed. With the huge rise in use of social media to promote the event and everyone taking part it does take up a large amount of committee time to "do" the social media properly. Ruth McEvilly agreed with Brian's assertion. She suggested that perhaps NEOS might have to reduce the numbers who can take part or do things differently. It's a shame it might have to come to this, after all the hard work that has gone into building it up but the members can't have it both ways. She suggested that the situation needs to be put onto the public Facebook page to make everyone aware.

Marie Archer (from Aberdeenshire Council) stated that NEOS has gone from strength to strength over the last few years. It presents itself as a very professional, co-ordinated event and would be missed by many. Perhaps we should put out a press release to say it might come to an end. That might prompt volunteers to come forward.

Brian Burnett said that he doesn't think it's the case that there aren't people willing to help. He thinks it might be that they think they aren't capable of doing such a professional job. Anne Buckle agreed with Brian that folk might feel daunted by the task. Fiona was asked about the number of hours she specifically (and the committee generally) spend on NEOS tasks each year. Fiona had to present this information during the QAVS process (Queens Award for Voluntary Service). She estimated that the committee as a whole spend around 2054 hours per year organising NEOS. She spends around 10 hours per week on her own duties. Social media time is around 200 hours per year. It has taken a lot of hours over the last 18 years to get to where it is today. There are deadlines, commitments, emails to answer, book to proof read and many other tasks that are or could be shared amongst a group of willing volunteers.

Fiona brought the discussion to a close by stating that the AGM need to agree to the Special general meeting now. All agreed by show of hands. The AGM was brought to a close. No further agenda items were discussed. Fiona stated that she had approached Mannofield Church Hall with regard to having the AGM there before it was decided to hold it via Zoom. They were willing to accommodate us, without refreshments, for this meeting so they should be okay for our Special general meeting. She will contact them to book the room. Anne Buckle also suggested she could ask the university, where she works, if they had space too as a back-up.

Fiona said that we have to give the members 21 days' notice of the meeting and the minutes of this meeting have to be sent out as soon as possible too. Ruth McEvilly added her thanks for the committee's hard work this year.

Fiona brought the AGM to a close by thanking everyone for coming along.