

North East Open Studios
Annual General Meeting Minutes
Meeting Date: 30th October 2022

Present

Bruce Swanson	Ellie Rattenbury	Lynda Rattenbury
Gerrie Sommerville	Fiona Crosswell	Frances Crawford
Mahri Prince	Gerry Stott	Brian Burnett
Karen Hadjitofi	Jamie Ferguson	Lynne Staples-Scott
Val Thomson	Louise Lemmon	Lorraine Gahagan
Alun Dyson	Amy Pates	Lois Carson
Morag Stevenson	Carrie Robertson	Carol Hiles
Carine Eunson	Sheena Farquhar	Pamela Goddard
Sylvia Clement	Diana Vettese	Hilary Firth
Ranjit Barry	Joyce Wyness	Carla Cummins
Willie Primrose	Carol Deadman	Susie Hunt

Apologies

John Threlfall	Ruth McEvelly	Lindsay Hamilton
Mo Barbour	Fiona Hope	Juliet Macleod
Fiona Herd	Paula Silvester	Zoe Robson
Jenny Musker	Michelle Will	Trina Stark
Glynis Knowles	Angela Neilson	Roderick Scott
Judith McCrorie	Helen Forrest	Michelle Hewitt
Fiona Duckett	Rusudana Glonti	Mel Shand
Jenny Watt Colbeck	Hilary Duncan	Elaine Lindsay
Fiona Sinclair	Elizabeth Russell	Jenny Leighton
Moir Milne	Anne Marquiss	Jacqueline Sewell
Alison Milne	Linda Colquhon	Margaret Donald
Tony Scott	Liz Twyman	Susan MacInnes
Patricia Williams	Morag MacCallum	Charley Sim
Morag Smith	Gina Pearson	Irene Hughes

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the SGM held on 7 November 2021
3. Matters arising and not dealt with later
4. Chairperson's report
5. Treasurer's report
6. Co-ordinator's report
7. Social Media Co-ordinator's report
8. A look ahead
9. Re-election of Chairperson
10. Re-election of Vice Chairperson
11. Re-election of Secretary
12. Re-election and election of Committee members
13. Confirm Date of North East Open Studios 2023
14. Any other business

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Lynne welcomed members to the AGM and confirmed there were enough members attending for a quorum. Lynne said she had received a number of apologies and they would be included in the meeting minutes.

2. Approval of minutes of the SGM held on 7 November 2021

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

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising out with agenda items.

4. Chairperson's Report

Lynne said NEOS 2022 started with a new chair and committee and said a big thank you was due to the committee for dealing with a huge learning curve. Lynne said she stated at the beginning of the year that if the committee made NEOS 2022 happen they had done their job. Lynne said NEOS 2022 had been delivered within the context of a cost-of-living crisis and a difficult global situation, the passing of Queen Elizabeth II also had an impact at the beginning of NEOS with around 25% of members impacted by road closures.

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:

New Members: There were 65 new members taking part in NEOS 2022 and the committee wanted to support them with regular communication and opportunities to meet.

Member's Survey in May: A member's survey was sent in May to ask member's what they wanted from NEOS and 112 responses were received. This provided the committee with a list of member's key objectives.

How We Spent Your Monday: A pie chart was shared illustrating how funds were spent in 2022, highlighting the majority of member's fees are spent on the NEOS book as the event's main marketing material. Lynne said committee costs had been minimised by holding most meetings by Zoom.

The NEOS Book: 20,000 books were printed and distributed via members, various events and outlets including the re-opened library service. Each member was given a box of 50 books to distribute following feedback from the May Member's Survey confirming this was the right amount. Lynne thanked the volunteer Pick-Up Points for their help with distributing boxes to members and said there had been issues with the delivery company and the committee will be looking at this issue for next year. Lynne spoke about the challenges faced because of rising paper and print costs, with an initial print quote cost of £20k given in February increasing to £30k in July. Lynne said by slightly changing the paper quality and negotiating with the printer, the cost increase was reduced to £5k.

Social Media: A social media contract was created to pay for a co-ordinator to carry out social media work. It was recognised that it would be a heavy workload to manage with only a few of the new committee having the necessary skills. Volunteer social media teams were still created and supported the co-ordinator. Social media training for member's was organised with Business Gateway, feedback has been good on these sessions and plans are to organise this again for earlier next year.

Advertising: In addition to social media, NEOS was advertised and promoted via traditional print and radio options. Press releases were sent to local and regional press for editorial pieces.

Website Insights: Website statistics were shared highlighting the increasing usage of the NEOS website.

Member Communications: Face-to-face and Zoom Crak n'Blether sessions were organised, emails and newsletters were sent regularly and an internal Facebook page was available for members to share information and ask questions. New Graphics were created and shared with members.

Lynne finished the presentation of the Chairperson's report by thanking the committee for their hard work, Phil Thomson for his work on the NEOS Book and Matt Robinson for his Website support work.

5. Treasurer's Report

Amy shared a summary of the income and expenditure as well as stating the remaining bank balance for NEOS 2022 is £13,137. The Income and Expenditure Report is available on <https://www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk/about-us/documentation>. Lynne said the bank balance is healthy, but funds will be required for key items for NEOS 2023 and this will be raised when discussing future plans.

Lynne said there are plans to have the accounts audited next year, this will be good practice and ensure transparency.

Lynne asked members if they had any questions. No questions were raised.

6. Co-ordinator's Report

Louise shared the co-ordinators report, the full report is available on <https://www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk/about-us/documentation>. Louise spoke about the following key areas:

What do I do?: Detailing her key tasks of sign-up, maintaining membership database, proofreading members entries for book and website, co-ordinating with book designer and location guide team, organising pick-up points and distribution.

Summary of NEOS 2022: including the number and type of members, working with the database, preparing the data for the book, book proof, printing, and distribution. Louise said apart from a few hitches, NEOS 2022 went well with a lot of work and volunteer time required. Louise said the distribution to pick-up points needs improved and will be reviewed next year.

Lynne said the co-ordinators role is a massive job and thanked Louise for work done.

Lynne asked for any questions and there were no questions from members.

7. Social Media Co-ordinator's Report

Louise shared the social media co-ordinators report, the full report is available on <https://www.northeastopenstudios.co.uk/about-us/documentation>. Louise spoke about the following key areas:

What do I do?: Detailing key tasks of agreeing the social media schedule from sign-up in March to the event in September, creating posts for each member, production and posting of discipline reels, analysis and twice yearly report of social media statistics and co-ordinating with social media response teams.

Summary of NEOS 2022: A summary of what happened in NEOS 2022, from transferring information from the member's database, the work involved in scheduling the

daily member's posts on Facebook and Instagram to creating and scheduling the discipline videos. Louise finished her report by sharing the social media insights showing an increase in reach, visits, likes and activity from previous years.

Lynne said the main takeaway was the large increase in social media engagement and thanked Louise for a job well done.

Lynne asked for any questions and there were no questions from members.

8. A Look Ahead

Lynne shared the member's survey results received to date, noting that the majority said that NEOS 2022 met the expectations outlined in the May 2022 survey. Lynne said she appreciated some members were disappointed by their NEOS experience and visitor numbers varied a great deal depending on geography and if venues were out on their own. Feedback for this year was that visitors tended to go where they could see a number of people and cost of fuel may also be a factor in deciding where to visit. Lynne said 73% of members said they would accept an increase to the membership fee of £10 - £20, others said no to an increase or are happy with a higher increase.

Lynne shared the visitor survey results received to date, saying that visitors are mainly from the Grampian area, age group is 55+ and key reasons for visiting are meeting the makers, buying direct from makers and browsing artworks and made items. Visitors also said that improvements could be made to signage to venues, the book layout and they would like more local maps.

Lynne said she can confirm the Committee members for 2023 are Lynne Stapes-Scott, Charley Sim, Val Thomson, Amy Shennan-Pates, Louise Lemmon, Susie Hunt, Mahri Prince, Connie Robertson, Carol Hiles, Sara Harper, Lisa Petrie, Chantal Menneghin. Lynne said she hopes this list will grow over the next few weeks giving NEOS a solid committee base for the coming year.

Lynne said key priorities for 2023 are an updated website, new yellow signs, review of social media plan, introducing a mobile phone app, dealing with escalating book costs and sourcing funding options. Lynne gave further details of these priorities as follows:

Updated Website: Lynne said, with the help of Business Gateway, a draft specification/ tender document has been created. Lynne said the existing website support person has said he is unable to undertake the project and therefore a new website provider will be required. Lynne said it is not feasible to have a new website tested and operational by March 2023 and the plan is to have it ready for 2024 sign-up.

New Signs: Lynne said providing all members with new yellow signs will be a priority for 2023.

Social Media: Lynne said the committee plans to have review the social media strategy for 2023.

Mobile Phone App: Lynne said the committee has carried out some initial research and looked at apps used by other open studio events. Lynne said advice from other events is to maintain printed material and not rely solely on an app. Lynne said an app may help to attract a younger audience to NEOS and include better geographical search options.

Funding options: Lynne said the committee have started looking at the following options:

- Crowdfunding, setting up a JustGiving page and including links to this on promotional material.
- The NEOS book is high quality but taking payment for copies of the book from visitors would not be feasible. Encouraging visitors to go online and donate when they pick up a copy may be an option.
- Lottery Funding. An application has been submitted for Lottery funding of 10k to cover the cost of a new website and mobile phone app.
- An increase to memberships fees may be required to cover escalating paper costs.
- Actively looking for sponsorships & donations. The William Grant Foundation donated £1000 in support of the work NEOS is doing to support artists and communities in the North East of Scotland.

Lynne asked members to contact the committee if they have details of any organisations who can be contacted for possible sponsorship or donations.

Lynne asked for approval from the membership to increase the membership fee by maximum of £20. The membership agreed.

Lynne asked members for any questions:

A member asked if NEOS can advertise the event out with May to September to increase visibility and work more closely with other arts organisations such as the Art Gallery and Theatre. Lynne said there is work to be done to increase visibility and forge relationships with other organisations, a new committee member has a role at Grays School of Art, RGU and hopes this will help. A member said Grays have been approached in the past and it is hard to get them involved.

A member asked about running other NEOS events in addition to the September open studios, perhaps a Christmas event or Christmas Pop Up Shop. Lynne said that additional resource and funding would be needed if additional events are added.

A members suggested that a retired accountant can volunteer instead of paying for an auditor. Lynne said a new committee member is an accountant, but she would question whether it is good practice to audit ourselves, however, the committee are looking to recruit volunteers who have helpful skills and experience and may not be NEOS members.

A member asked why NEOS is in September and after the summer holidays. Louise said that spring and summer are needed for sign-up, to compile and print the book ready for distribution in August.

A member asked if NEOS can be arranged so that it does not clash with other open studio events and open doors event. Lynne said that the committee can look at timing,

but there are always other events happening and NEOS dates should be moved with caution.

A member asked if traditional advertising in publications such as the P&J is effective and should this be stopped so that funds can be used elsewhere. Lynne said feedback in the visitor's survey confirmed a very small handful of visitors had seen the adverts in printed publications. Lynne asked the membership if they agreed that this should be cancelled in 2023 and the membership agreed.

Diana Speed asked about making more use of editorial pieces and volunteered to help the NEOS 2023 committee with this.

Lynne said NEOS is a Not for Profit organisation and some funding is only applicable to organisations with charity status, therefore the business structure of NEOS is proving restrictive when applying for funding and this needs to be reviewed, but in the future.

A member asked about offering paid advertising in the NEOS book. Lynne said that although this sounds easy, from experience, committee members say it is a large volunteer role to contact and find possible advertisers, then follow up with organisations regarding types of adverts, gain commitment and payment.

A member said in previous years they had been able to share events on NEOS social media. Lynne said due to new volunteers covering some of the social media role, there had been an oversight with picking up member's posts this year, but this would be addressed in 2023.

9. Re-election of Chairperson

Lynne said the NEOS Constitution states that a chairperson can remain in post for up to three years and she is happy to remain in the role for NEOS 2023. The members voted for her to remain.

10. Re-election of Vice Chairperson

Lynne asked the members if they are happy for Charley to remain as Vice Chairperson. The members voted for him to remain in post.

11. Re-election of Secretary

Lynne asked the members if they are happy for Val to remain as Secretary. The members voted for her to remain in post.

12. Re-election and Election of Committee Members

Lynne asked the members if they are happy with proposed committee members. The members were happy with election of committee members.

13. Confirm Date of North East Open Studios 2023

Lynne confirmed the dates for North East Open Studios 2023 as 9th to 17th of September.

14. AOB

A member asked if the Yellow Signs will be redesigned. Lynne asked for members to contact the committee with thoughts on this. Members said that the colour should remain the same.

A member asked about availability of the promotional bags used at the Turriff Show. Lynne said members can be provided with graphics if they wanted to order any directly.