

WAYLAND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRUST

TRUSTEES REPORT

In common with many charities affected by the pandemic, it has not been an easy couple of years and, unsurprisingly, we have suffered a lack of income. So much of our activity is community based and relies on grants; the uncertainty of lockdowns and the changes in restrictions made it very difficult to plan or hold activities and to commit to using funding in a given time. This meant being very cautious about applying for money which might have to be paid back. Grants are not as easily come by as they once were either. In addition, we were unable to open the Dragonfly Gallery, losing the income we would normally generate. During the first lockdowns our tenants were on half rents and a couple took the opportunity to retire. Cutting our costs as far as we were able, and business support grants via Breckland have helped. Several of our Parish Partners have continued to make their annual donations which all Parish Partners agreed to when we were formed – quite a commitment and we are very grateful. We obtained a grant from the Norfolk Community Foundation to help towards the cost of a new boiler. An Awards for All grant has enabled us to make some changes to the gallery. Since things began to get back to some sort of normality, we have had many enquiries for office space and now have new tenants. So, we enter 2022 on a more optimistic note.

Our two members of staff worked from home until restrictions were lifted, although Amanda continued to access the office to manage post and issues that could not be dealt with from a distance. It should be on record that we could not have coped as well as we have without the unstinting loyalty and hard work of our Admin Assistant Amanda. She is utterly reliable and successfully worked from home the majority of covid, but also managed to serve the very varied needs of our tenants.

The Gallery was not re-opened until the end of November 2021, mainly due to a number of issues which were covid related. Volunteers were still reluctant to return and be face to face with the public. Many of our former team are older or have health issues, so that was understandable. We put a number of covid safety measures into the gallery and main building. We couldn't man the Gallery with any regularity until we felt it was safe and had new people on board. We finally opened for the excellent Christmas exhibition only to have it cut short due to omicron. We now have a growing band of new and former volunteers so look forward to increasing our opening times, which will include Saturdays. We will always welcome more volunteers!

Our gallery co-ordinator worked from home on regular online exhibitions, increasing the number of artists contributing. She trained as a teacher during the pandemic but did not obtain a post, returning to Wayland House to plan the Christmas exhibition and new 2022 programme, mounting the first in house exhibition for two years in November 2021. However, she was offered a teaching post in early 2022 and left at the end of January. We very much miss her and her talent and enthusiasm. We are currently advertising for a new manager.

The gallery activity funded by Awards For All was held up partly due to covid, and partly due to the wider ongoing issues over supplies and getting work done, but it has been possible to meet most of the plans outlined in the submission. We now have a small kitchenette area making it much easier for making drinks at workshops and for volunteers to offer coffee to visitors. We hope people will use us as a drop in for a coffee and, in good weather, enjoy this in the Sensory Garden. One or two workshops remain outstanding and the grant has a short time left to run. One or two of the planned children's activities had to be cancelled due to covid spikes in the schools. However, we plan to

replace these. We have had a number of very successful adult workshops and have a new programme being developed. Mindfulness is very much a buzz word at the moment after the stresses of the last two years, and we have a series of workshops entitled Sewing for The Soul running at the moment.

We have exciting plans for a Jubilee photographic exhibition. We will be featuring photos from the Coronation and subsequent Jubilees from across Wayland as well as photos showing how life has changed in the area over the last 75 years. We will be launching with a bit of a Jubilee party atmosphere. The exhibition will remain open all of June, though not over the Bank Holiday due to lack of volunteers to man the Gallery. Offers of photos are coming in and we hope to create an archive as a lasting legacy.

Our wonderful garden volunteers continued to work during the last two years to maintain the Sensory Garden, and considerable tidying has been achieved. We attracted new volunteers to the garden team. Rotary planted some roses in memory of Martin Anscombe, who was also a founding trustee of the Partnership, with a small plaque. They have offered to do some additional work such as improving the fencing and creating a welcome sign.

Our biggest issue has been the need for a new boiler and we still have to fund a shortfall not covered by grants. Still seeking extra funds! The delay has been due to some errors and delays by the police in vetting the installer, which is now resolved and we expect work to begin soon.

The car park has severely exercised our patience and ingenuity, with many complaints from the tenants due the spaces being filled by those not associated with the building. One or two local businesses rent a space. Parking permits fail to work and personal approaches to those without permission are often ignored or responded to with aggression. It is especially frustrating for those of our tenants who have clients with mobility issues. We are reluctantly considering a CCTV company, if the police are in agreement. We had the car park wall demolished by a speeding car in the early hours of a Sunday morning. Town CCTV did not work and police did not pursue the incident. Insurance paid out but we had to pay the excess.

The proposed Digital and Creative Media Centre continues to progress significantly; Breckland are conducting feasibility studies and costings profiles. It has a great deal of support from the gaming and digital community. Norfolk County Council, Breckland, The Police, Hethel Innovation, Lotus Cars are among those involved in regular meetings with the Chamber of Commerce and The Partnership to take this forward. It will be an exciting enhancement to the town with many opportunities for leisure and employment in an iconic building.

A recent highlight has been the visit by the High Sheriff to Watton and to Wayland House.

We have a new trustee on board and we would welcome additional enquiries to increase our number. Younger blood would be most welcome!

We look forward to a continued improvement in activity during 2022, with workshops and exhibitions already planned, more tenants in the building and the opportunity to further develop our activities as restrictions ease. We need to rebuild the Representatives group as several former Reps are now less active in their communities. We shall also be revisiting plans put on hold for further Heritage Group projects.

Finally, a huge thank you to the whole team at Wayland House and to the wider community of Wayland for sticking with us and helping us get through such a difficult 2 years.