

WAYLAND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRUST REPORT MAY 2023

It has been a very mixed year. Our main difficulties have been with Barclays Bank, which began last October. They closed our account based on not having sufficient or the right information from us despite being sent all we were asked for. They seemed very reluctant to tell us what they did want. Finally, a direct contact to one of their business directors was the only way we got any sense out of it all, and action taken by Barclays. Meanwhile, we had a period where we couldn't pay wages or bills or receive money. Thankfully they have now re-opened the accounts and removed all restrictions so we are left wondering what it was really all about. We have, in the process, become very aware that across the country an awful lot of trusts, charities and small businesses are being treated in the same way, many completely unable to make any sense of what to do. Several trusts within the Partnership area are having difficulties with Barclays with non-specific requests for information and threats of account closure. Our case for complaint is now with the Financial Ombudsman but we know it will take time to process. We are also in the process of opening an account with another bank as a back up.

The Levelling Up bid for the DCMC was unsuccessful but we are working closely with Norfolk County Council and Breckland officers to continue to push the project forward with some speed. The grant gratefully received from Watton TC is being of great use in this process. NCC and others are very keen to see the project take shape within the next year in order to progress to the next stages and achieve a successful outcome. There are a number of funding stream options being explored and staff sought to assist with the process.

We have a new gallery manager, Jayne Collett. Unfortunately, our previous manager had to take early retirement due to family commitments and we wish her well. We will retain contact as she is keen to tutor some art courses for us in the autumn and winter. Jayne is proving very keen and energetic, as well as popular with customers and staff. She was already working for us on as a tutor and clearly knows the wider Partnership and its aims well, so it made sense to promote her to a more permanent role. She has already recruited additional volunteers and has been making sure Dragonfly is open on a Saturday morning whenever possible.

We have a full programme of exhibitions planned until Christmas. Jayne is responding to demand for specific types of arts and crafts workshops and we will publish more details soon. We would like to remind people that we have a lovely and ever-changing range of locally made art and crafts, all of which can be purchased at very reasonable prices. So when thinking of gifts do consider supporting local talent and at the same time help the Partnership continue to provide this valuable resource and outlet for our community. Our greetings cards are all made by our artists and crafters, are not mass produced, and are inexpensive!

We are installing a new trustee but had to put the process on hold due to the confusion with Barclays. They would not have dealt with yet another change in our details while the mix up was being resolved.

We currently have some office or room space available for hire as we experience the usual turnover of businesses moving on, the most recent being to larger premises.

2022 into 2023 has been a period of getting back on track after the difficulties of covid closures - rebuilding footfall and looking towards being able to plan longer term projects. Our footfall into Dragonfly is increasing, with swapshop increasingly popular. Maybe this is a sign of the times and the greater need for thrift and recycling.

We held a weekly Warm Space or hot spot from January to the end of March. Although it did not appear to attract those in fuel poverty, we could not know this unless told and many people probably would be too proud to admit to that. We felt that the national promotion targeted in this way was possibly a deterrent to some. It might have been better aimed at wider energy saving, which would then have had an overall effect on usage and therefore availability which could have reduced prices. However, we did attract people looking for friendship, for groups to join, and activities; often new to the area or suffering from isolation and loneliness. A Saturday 'bring what you do' has been started by Jane to enable people to sit and chat while making something - or simply chat if they wish. Interest is also growing in our mindfulness workshops with maximum take up at these. Swapshop attracts people who often just want to stay and chat. We offer a coffee or tea and somewhere to just sit whenever the gallery is open. With all this in mind we have been allowed to keep the underspend on the Hot Spots grant in order to continue helping with isolation and other such issues.

The Representatives meetings are back on track and proving increasingly purposeful. We have lost one or two reps from some of the parishes since covid began and are working on recruiting new ones. Many of our partners continue to make the annual grants, or donations, that they signed up to as part of the creation of the Partnership in 1999 and we are very grateful for this regular support.

The Sensory Garden continues to be maintained by volunteers and we are looking into ensuring there are funds for some larger essential maintenance which will need doing shortly. The garden is available to all during Dragonfly opening hours and appreciated by many as a place of relaxation and peace but doesn't in itself earn an income.

Financially we would like to be better, as would many charities at present, so that we could offer more activity and community support. The essential expenses of two new boilers, and some unexpected additional expenses, have been a bit of a drain despite some grant input for them, such as Norfolk Community Foundation and National Lottery Awards For All. Grants are not easy to obtain and very time-consuming to write. However, we recognize that we are not alone in what is a difficult time for many charities and businesses. We appreciate the support we have already been given and look forward to being able to provide a boost for our own and the town economy via the DCMC.

We believe there is an exciting future ahead and look forward to making it happen for the benefit of all of Wayland. We continue to believe strongly that our model of partnership working with town, village parishes and our other partners is in the best interests of Wayland as a whole.