

WAYLAND PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRUST

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCIL FOR APRIL 16TH 2024

Much of our planning and background work has been taken up with the Digital and Creative Media Centre, of which David Dent will give you a fuller account. However, good progress is being made and we know that this will gather momentum significantly in the coming year as we work with our consultants Deyton-Bell on the next stages.

Among our digital improvements are the updating of our website, which is ongoing at the moment. We have a new host as our previous one was retiring. As part of the updates we are also looking to modernize our Partnership logo.

We are pleased we have more engagement with local schools. The secondary Academy is particularly interested in the opportunities which will be presented by the DCMC and is keen to attend Representatives meetings. We recently had an exhibition of the work of the children from Westfield Nursery and Infant School and were extremely impressed with the artistic talent they showed. We had a lot of visits from proud family members and staff, and the school came to the gallery class by class to see what their work looked like on a gallery wall.

Meanwhile we continue to be active as a charity on many fronts for the benefit of the community. We have been holding, and will continue to as long as funds allow, laptop courses for those needing fairly basic skills. We are very grateful to Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council for funding this. The skills gap was highlighted in the survey conducted as part of the DCMC project. We have been holding two sessions a week, one daytime and one evening, which are almost at the end of the second series, and are taking names for a further daytime session to begin in early June. Following from these sessions we plan to create a support group where those on the courses, and others, can drop in for refreshers or help with specific computer tasks. Volunteers with skills to run sessions would be much appreciated.

Our wellbeing work through crafting and the arts continues with workshops in the gallery which have a good take up. The range of arts and crafts undertaken by local people is excellent and shows a lot of local talent. If you haven't visited do come along and support this valuable outlet which is so beneficial for mental health as well as enabling people to express skills. Selling items with us is often the way many artists are able to continue their hobby. These locally made items also make excellent unique gifts and we have a range of unique cards. The gallery always welcomes new volunteers – these can be regular weekly slots, once a month or on call as time permits. Volunteering is an excellent way of meeting new people or adding to a CV. Artists and crafters wishing to run workshops are always welcome too. Ever-conscious that not everyone can afford the costs of crafting, we try to keep the courses as affordable as possible by taking a minimum fee once tutor expenses have been allowed for. Most recently we have held a successful workshop making our bank of sewing machines available to those who may not be able to afford one. More of these sessions are being planned and we are happy to try to meet demand for their use on a drop in basis. Swapshop

continues to be popular as a way of supporting crafting at low cost as well as being one of our contributions to recycling.

Warm Spaces was more successful this year due to the change in remit of the grant, which allowed for extension of existing activities. We felt it was less focused on labelling people as poor and so less of a deterrent to making use of the gallery offer.

Sadly, Amanda left us in February and we have welcomed Nicki as our new admin support officer. She is settling in very well and says she loves the fact that no two days are the same. She has expressed a keen interest in getting to know more about local activities by attending meetings and events to which Partnership representatives are invited.

We also lost Jayne recently, our gallery manager, due to ill health. I am pleased to say she is recovering well, though has a little way to go.

We have been delighted to be able to accommodate the Banking Hub and it is going very well if the number of people in and out of the foyer is anything to go by! Certainly there is plenty of evidence of need.

Grant funding is not easy to obtain, especially with the uncertainties surrounding the building, which affect the types of long term project we can plan. We do have some ongoing grant funds and are always seeking more. We have a heritage project in the planning, which will be submitted to Heritage Lottery once the paperwork is complete. It was suggested by local residents and will collect the oral history of Wayland, which is fast disappearing as our society changes. Myths, legends, ghost stories, memories of those fast-disappearing characters, and more, will be included.

We continue to offer start up and next steps office space as well as rooms to hire for meetings, activities and training courses. There may be concerns by some about renting space in a building earmarked for demolition but be assured that relocating tenants temporarily will be part of the DCMC process, as will be the offer of space in the new build.

The sensory garden is receiving much tlc from our volunteer team, (more always welcome) and is now open once more when the gallery is open. If you don't know it, it is a lovely haven in town designed to support those with dementia, but available to all. It is especially beautiful when the roses bloom.

Finally, as we move into a new era for the Partnership, like all charities we need, and welcome, financial support in the form of grants, sponsorship and donations, and in the hire of our facilities. With help we can do a lot more to support the town and the area.