



BUSINESS AND ARTS – THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

STAY IN TOUCH

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BACKGROUND

Creative Scene is the Arts Council England Creative People and Places programme for North Kirklees, West Yorkshire.

We're working with local people to create a place where people not only participate in the arts, they make them happen; working together with professional artists, arts organisations, and producers. It is all about making art a part of everyday life.

Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair of Arts Council England, recently summed up the value and impact of arts and business partnerships: *"...Any employer has a vested interest in their locality being a rewarding place to live. That is how you attract a talented workforce. But imaginative cultural organisations are themselves agents of regeneration."*

Creative Scene is actively encouraging local businesses, small and large, to connect with the organisation if they are interested in exploring how they can partner on an arts and cultural event or project. It is not just about investing into the community – although that is a powerful reason – it is also about identifying how arts and culture can benefit businesses, staff creativity, workforce skills and motivation - and ultimately make North Kirklees a great place to work and play.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify and connect with local businesses interested in exploring arts and cultural presentation and activity.
- To help us identify spaces and places to present work, engage audiences through outreach activity and market effectively.
- To build awareness of the cultural activity being developed by Creative Scene with potential audiences who may work with, or visit businesses in the area.
- To explore how arts and culture can benefit businesses, staff creativity, workforce skills and motivation - and ultimately make North Kirklees a great place to work and play

THE TARGET AUDIENCE

We aim to work with a diverse bunch of people who reflect the demographics of the area and thus the audiences we are trying to reach.

Businesses we have worked with include small business owners such as café owners through to local shopping outlets such as Batley Outlet Mill. So far, as part of Artist@Work programme in particular, artists have been hosted in two cafes, Aakash Restaurant, The Batley Bulldogs Rugby Club, Dewsbury Market, the Mill Outlet Centre, Batley and at Fox's Biscuit factory.

We have also delivered programmes of work with larger employers in the area including Transpennine and bonprix, an online clothing company.

DELIVERY OF THE ACTIVITY

Over the last 18 months Creative Scene, an Arts Council England project, has been busy sowing the seeds with people and businesses in North Kirklees to create an ambition and aspiration that great art can happen in this area. The power of partnering with businesses large and small to achieve this has been evident.

A number of initiatives developed by Creative Scene have involved the team working locally with businesses to create arts activities and events that fits into the concept of making art a part of everyday life. Examples include the ON TOUR programme which sees pubs and social centres acting as hosts for theatre shows - giving people engaging arts experiences over a pint, as well as the Artist@Work activity where local businesses host an artist in their organisation to work with staff and customers.

OUTCOMES

So far, as part of Artist@Work, artists have been hosted in 2 cafes, Aakash Restaurant, The Batley Bulldogs Rugby Club, Dewsbury Market, the Mill Outlet Centre, Batley and at Fox's Biscuit factory. Each business had their own reasons for getting involved: to try and engage new customers, to raise the profile of their business, to create a positive work environment for their staff - or simply because they wanted to try something new. The most powerful impacts from the partnerships have come when a positive business outcome is achieved alongside a positive art experience.

At The Mill Outlet, Batley the business objective was about increasing the dwell time of customers in the retail environment, and the arts objective was about engaging and promoting arts activities to new people.

Textile artist Cassandra Kilbride began crocheting at The Mill beside a woolly bike she had created for the 2014 Tour de France. The bike provided a talking point for shoppers and as they spoke to Cassandra she engaged them in crafting to create a mural for the centre. The residency was promoted through social media:

"Cassandra's social networking efforts have most definitely brought new customers to The Mill who wouldn't normally come. [...] It has encouraged people to treat The Mill as an experience and for us to exploit the experience economy, so it's not just seen as a shop. It has definitely increased footfall and brought new faces in." – Paula Hamilton, Marketing Manager, The Mill

In early 2015 Andrew, one of Creative Scene's SceneMaker's approached the team with the idea of bringing Opera to Batley. Andrew Marsden works locally at Brearley's Solicitors, is Chair of Batley Business Association and an active SceneMaker - advocates and ambassadors for developing the arts and cultural scene in North Kirklees.

After approaching Opera North, and with the support of the team at Creative Scene, Andrew's idea of bringing Opera to Batley is about to come to life with a performance by Opera North and over 100 local people on 22 March 2016 at the Central Methodist Church in Batley.

The involvement of Batley Business Association in driving the opera idea forward has been key – with members visiting Opera North to scope the idea and getting the opportunity to experience a full opera performance at The Grand Theatre, Leeds. The performance takes place on 22 March 2016.

KEY POINTS FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

- Start by talking to local businesses small and large – each will have their own networks and connections to the community within which they are based.
- Be clear about the benefits of working with an arts organisation – how will it help the business achieve its aims surrounding workforce happiness or widening awareness amongst the local community.
- Identify early on what the core objectives your organisation and the business want to achieve, how you will aim to achieve them and roles and responsibilities in making it a success.
- Be clear on levels of investment and from whom – whether this be time, cash or skills input.
- Local businesses – and business associations – have great networks and want more footfall in their town and so have a vested interest in seeing projects succeed.
- Be aware your project, especially in larger businesses might only be one of many so establish a clear point of connection internally at the business from the start who can help drive the project forward.

For more information contact:

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