

ARTSPACE LIFESPACE AGM DEC 2021

Minutes of the Fourth Annual General Meeting of the members of Artspace Lifespace held: via Zoom on December 2nd 2021 from 17:30-18:30

Trustees Present: Abena Poku, Andrew Evans, Anthony Elliot, Clarissa Ching, Doug Francis, Kara de los Reyes, Martha Mosse, Wim Penhaul

Staff Present: Alice Newton, Ayan Cilmi, Caroline Thake, Jane Hartoch, Kathryn Chiswell Jones, Rosa Martyn

Studio Holders: Ben Anthony, Lucy Haslam, Rhiannon Hall

Apologies: Lucie Akerman (ASEL), Mark Coates (CYN), Rebecca Ryan (Artspace Lifespace),

MINUTES OF MEETING

1. Intro from the Chair

Doug ([00:09](#)):

I can now announce the official business of AGM has started and presume I don't need to introduce the board as we just all introduced ourselves. Apologies from all those that couldn't be present.

2. Minutes from Previous AGM

So I just want to move on to agenda number 2 which is the [minutes of the previous AGM](#) and ask whether those minutes are true and correct record or the previous AGM. And if we can accept them officially.

Verbal acceptance from Trustees and no objections raised.

3. Appointment of charity trustees. Termination of Trustees

Doug ([01:02](#)):

So onto Item 3, the appointment of charity trustees and the termination of trustees Andrew Evans is stepping down. We wish him the best of luck for his new arrival during January. And can you introduce the new people stepping up Kat?

Kathryn ([01:18](#)):

We've taken on three new trustees this year. Abena, Clarissa and Martha all joining us as new trustees all bringing different skills. Clarissa is taking on the role of treasurer from Ryan who stepped down at our last AGM, but he's continued to help us out until we found a new treasurer. The handover is now complete, and Clarissa is doing a fantastic job. So, thank you Clarissa.

Doug ([02:05](#)):

And a sad farewell to Andrew. Thanks for being on the board for the time you have. You've been a great part of the team

Andrew ([02:14](#)):

Pleasure and on the legal side, if there's anything that I can do to continue to support, I'm happy to stay in touch.

4. Presentation of the 2020/2021 Impact Report

Doug ([02:25](#)):

So now we're going to present the 2020-2021 impact report, which is available on the website in the charity section. The design has been created by Rosie Bond and is inspired by the Culture Secretary, celebrating 2 million pounds being allocated to pursuing the idea of a Beatles museum when important grassroots, and current artists are struggling. You can peruse this document at leisure, but we're just going to run through some of the highlights. In 2020 we carried out a series of board strategy meetings which were very fruitful sessions.

Kathryn ([03:12](#)):

It was between March and June 2021. We invited Kara who runs a design organisation called Terralupa to chair, who expertly led the sessions to help us think more organically about how we want to grow as an organization.

Kara ([04:02](#)):

A lot of what we discussed was about resilience and also recognizing that we need to evolve as an organization, but without letting go of our very first principles and why we're here. The sessions bridged an imaginary space of how can we creatively expand our influence and do it sustainably? Especially because of COVID and, the effects of the pandemic. What we highlighted is that we are trying to root down more into what we do within Bristol and maybe explore what else we can do, what skills we have as an organization and how we can help good things happen in our wider community.

Doug ([05:11](#)):

So I'm just going to run through some of these points. We also carried out Island studio holder and member consultations in the summer of 2021 and also had the [open weekend](#), which I believe was a great success?

Kathryn ([05:39](#)):

It was indeed. Hopefully some of you got to see it in person. But for those of you who didn't you can still see the exhibition online. It was really, wonderful to be able to welcome people back in for an exhibition because last year Jane had hung the exhibition and government restrictions meant we had to close the gallery. It was

disappointing when studio holders have put in all this effort and hanging up their work and then we weren't able to show it at all. That was very sad, so this year felt special, being able to see all the work and seeing some new tenants and the work they make in person as well. Thank you to studio holders present for your participation in the open studio events and the studio consultations earlier in the year as well. A big, thank you also to Jane for all her really hard work on making this exhibition look so fantastic. If you didn't get along to the exhibition, it will remain [online](#) for the rest of the year. So, people get to come back to The island at any time and see what happened. Thank you everyone for all your work, your contributions, and to Rosa and Ayan, it was a great exhibition.

Doug ([07:33](#)):

Yes, well done. And the next point is the sculptures showcase at Ashton Court. We are working with a partner called we are from dust to help them bring public art to Ashton Court. That work started in December 2020 during lockdown. It was quite challenging putting in sculptures with all the different restrictions in play, and shipping delays due to Covid but we got there in the end.

Kathryn ([08:35](#)):

The sculptures were enjoyed by people from across Bristol, and the estate was really heavily used during lockdown. So it was lovely for people to have something different and playful to experience. WAFD's last sculptures were put in last summer and we put on an ACE funded showcase event. We were blessed with a lovely summers' day and along with the other sculptures, we got to showcase Luma, the interactive robotic snail sculpture made by air giants which was built inside the mansion during the first lockdown in 2020. It was amazing to be able to bring them back in 2021 when restrictions were just about to lift. With existing restrictions, we were very careful about how we held the event, with bubbles of 30 and we had great feedback. Everybody said it was a lovely, safe event, as well as being lots of fun.

Doug ([09:53](#)):

Amazing. That's one of the things I did get to see at the mansion this year. You've also had artists residencies there, which have been really vital to so many artists to have a place to develop work.

Kathryn ([10:11](#)):

We've had several residencies at The Island and Arts Mansion through 2021. We also had a paid residency / commission for the halt harassment campaign as part of the Inclusion Project at The Vestibules. We have a cargo e-bike, which is on a long-term residency outreaching to Fixx Bikes in Hartcliffe supporting Heart of BS13. We also helped support Show of Strength, bring an outdoor theater show in a COVID safe way to Ashton Court. We helped them write the funding bid, and with residency space throughout and provided support from our staff throughout the event to make it happen. It has been lovely to be able to support theatre which has been just devastated during the pandemic

Doug ([11:50](#)):

The show brought in conventional theatre, highlighted Bristol's history and was very inclusive to families and friends of all ages to enjoy and with a full cast playing the Smyth family and staff through the ages. It was so successful it returned to be part of Bristol open doors in September as well. Amazing.

Kathryn ([12:35](#)):

We carry out an annual survey with our studio holders, the full survey results are contained within the annual impact report. We wanted to find out a bit more about how often people use their studio. Most people say that they use it every few days. What people love the most is the space, that it's creative their studio and other artists in the community. The highest ratio of people using the studio is 14 to 20 hours a week. So it's quite well used. The mixture of the art activity also varies. The survey was sent to circus studio holders, circus members, as well as studio holders. So there's a mixture of respondents. And we wanted to get an idea of the spectrum of work that is made at the Island. The percentage of income that people earn from working the arts is quite interesting, not that many people who hold a studio earn a hundred percent of their income from working in the arts. We wanted to know how people are coping with coronavirus. We asked people whether they're struggling to find an affordable home in Bristol, and there was an overwhelming response that yes, people are struggling to find home in Bristol. Something we talked about in our strategy meeting is the possibilities in the future, to putting down roots, revisiting within space we occupy being an art space and a life space and what that might mean for any future buildings that we were to take on.

Kathryn ([14:58](#)):

Affordability is really important to our users and also the fact that it supports independent art. The following are the ways that people thought that we could most help them. So things that we will look into doing in 2022 are more social media and marketing workshops within our space. And we'll see who we can partner with to try and help us improve our marketing offer, and offer financial management training workshops. These would probably be held online rather than in person and recorded so that people can access them later. Grant application training workshops is also a really key one. ACE arts grants have recently changed.

5. Finance Update from Clarissa / Kathryn

Clarissa ([16:44](#)):

Overall, I think we did quite well last year and apologies, but I wasn't actually around last year. So it's a bit hard for me to comment on the movement between 2019 to 2020. But what I can say is that we have put aside sufficient reserves and we've actually hit our reserve target in line with the policy that we set. So in that sense we are resilient. Obviously, there are things coming up that we need to review for next year and we have it down the pipeline to we reassess whether our reserve policy is

sufficient. We are also improving our financial reporting and resilience, which is why we've brought in someone called Lou, to support our Finance Officer.

Kathryn

These figures are based on our September 2020 year end, because what we're reporting on here is our 2020 financial report. The figures are going to be different in 2021. Whereas in 2020, we had all these grants, and we still had some income from pre pandemic in 2020, our income has reduced, and our level of grants is way reduced. We have got to restructure financially in 2022, and we will be inviting studio holders, to a meeting in January to discuss, having exhausted grant options for now. We were turned down for CRF (Cultural Recovery Funding) which is really a blow because it's taken away that buffer that we had hoped would tide us over so we could apply for other core funding applications. We applied unsuccessfully for two core funding applications earlier this year.

As many of you know, if you were at our, our meetings during the summer, our rent is going up by over 220% this year, which means that if we carry on as normal, the Island is no longer financially sustainable. So next year is going to be another difficult year. We'd like to say thank you to Power to Change, James Perrot (a consultant who supported us with our finance development model and especially to Clarissa who has spent weeks going over spreadsheets and amending things, helping us with our financial reporting as we look at all the different scenarios that might be possible from 2022.

Accounts Adopted:

Copy of the Accounts YE 2020 can be found at <https://artspace.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASLS-Financial-Statements-2020-ID-169221.pdf>

6. The Island going forward. 10 minute open floor. Meeting will be continued in January

Doug ([21:12](#)):

The next point was to have an open floor.

Kara ([21:44](#)):

On the meeting with the studio holders, it would be great to have that as a collaborative meeting to find out if they have any great ideas of how we can help support and help make things possible using the resources we've got.

Doug ([22:08](#)):

I'd like to say well done to the team for having managed such a difficult time as well. It's not the most understanding time for seeing why CYN are jumping the rents up either.

Kathryn ([22:22](#)):

We've had a question about donations, where do donations come from? So we have two regular donators, thank you to our lovely donators, we have two regular donations per month, one of five pound and another of £10. Thank you to those lovely people. It's the first time we've had patrons but it really is a drop in the ocean in meeting the 222% rent increase. I have spent the year looking at options and trying to renegotiate with our landlord about reexploring the deal that we had originally agreed. For those of you who don't know, we were planning on taking on a long lease of the island (25+ years) in return for, Artspace Lifespace carrying out the fundraising to carry out the capital works in the building. We spoke to Arts Council England about the highly competitive grants who said they would support capital works grants if an artist's studios were at risk of closing. We tried to renegotiate a shorter-term lease of 15 years in return for a lower rent in return for us raising capital works funding, but they just wanted the higher rent. So, we are now in a position where we have no choice, but to meet that rent position.

Q. How long is the lease? We have a five-year lease with them.

Q. Why is the rent being increased? They're putting up the rent and charging market rates following a recommendation from an independent survey who calculated the commercially rent that could be expected from the building. In some ways you can't really argue with that. That's what it's commercially valued at. And CYN has said that they need to the income to support their own charity, which they also have a funding gap to fill and their own commercial development happening next door at the courts due to start. So their priority is to bring in as much income as possible from their estates to support the youth work they do. And, unfortunately, they don't see artist studios as being a key partner with the work they do. I know it's really sad. I feel for them as well, because I know the challenges they are facing as an organisation too, but equally I do know we achieve an awful lot within the island and so much brilliant stuff happens. Without the island, it leaves a huge gap in the center of Bristol, and we're going to do all we can to try and protect it.

Clarissa ([25:49](#)):

I also to jump in, I want to highlight that we're doing our very best here to try and make sure that rent on our end remains affordable for our tenants. And obviously any suggestions would be really welcome because obviously it's a difficult time for Artspace, Lifespace, and also for our studio holders. Our current thinking right now is to not to pass on the full shortfall to our studio holders. We want to make that clear to everyone. We are trying to come up with a sustainable solution that still involves fulfilling our charitable objectives of providing affordable event and maker space. If you do have any suggestions on how we can improve cash flow on our end and support our tenants, we are very open to hearing any opinions and any suggestions.

Kathryn ([26:46](#)):

And if anybody's friends with Elon Musk send them my way, that'd be lovely. We have talked in the past about needing a patron. Artspace has always been a kind of underground venue. We don't attract big funders. We've always operated a self-supportive core funding model. And so now we're going to have to face this big shift

of looking for funding to support us. CYN seem to think that we should be able to do so, and we can support their rent increase by getting funding from other places.

Ayan ([27:27](#)):

Q. Would more activity in the venue help?

Kathryn ([27:31](#)):

A. We're only restarting activities in the venue now (from November). In the past income from the venue supported the charity but in recent years, we found that it's actually contributed less than 10k to the charity because as we've professionalized having more security and bar staff and paying our staff decent wages we found that we therefore have less profit. We could potentially put on more events and run a nightclub more evenings, but then that affects our music studio holders. So it's trying to keep that balance of actually doing the work for the people we want to support, which is the artists, rather than it just being a club venue. We are looking at other avenues to raise money, we've just carried out paid consultancy work for Trinity. So we are seeing how we could utilise our staff in other ways to try and raise money for the charity. We are hopefully going to take on units in Cribbs Causeway where we could potentially offer paid workshops so we are looking at how we can actually support our studio holders by connecting you with job opportunities as well.

Kara ([29:41](#)):

Mentioning, we'll be exploring more partnerships also also with other organizations utilising our board. We're quite an active board and we will see how we can creatively form these partnerships so that it might not just be us as an island anymore, but we'll be bridging across with other similar organizations.

Rhiannon ([30:05](#)):

Q. You mean to say The island could operate more like an agency with a cut being given to the Island.

Kathryn ([30:31](#)):

We are looking at taking on empty units and having studio holders to fill the spaces. We are thinking that income from the units could be used to support our island studio holders by directly giving them job opportunities rather than acting as an agent. Though we had thought about operating an online shop. But we are really at the beginning stages of thinking about what might be possible with that.

Ben ([31:20](#)):

I've been to a few exhibitions at The Gallery and it's such a good space. I noticed two heaters went up and if it had, you know, little bit better lighting it would be an even better space. I know it's easy to say and harder to get the money to finance but if the floor was cleaned up (which I know costs a lot of money), it could become a real sort of seat, not a scene, but you know, a gallery in Bristol where people come to. I mean, even to rename it somehow, so it becomes known and more people use it. I know that supersedes the idea of the gallery being for everyone, but you could attract

prestigious artists who want to go there, cause it's such a good space. And you could rejig things a bit around and take a commission. And you know, be a bit hard on the old commissioning. Where you come in at the entrance there, you could put a new sign up over it, rename the gallery, it's not easy to find. In Bridwell street maybe put a new sign up with a memorable name on it.

Kathryn ([32:55](#)):

We are looking at The Gallery and how it could otherwise be used. At the moment we are thinking that we can drive extra income in the gallery by using it as a gallery space just Thursday to Sunday. And also enabling more dance use within the space Monday to Wednesday. But this has already been factored into our financial projections for 2022. Jane is putting in the heaters as it was very cold and we are looking at getting the floor done also because it's long overdue on our maintenance list of to do's. We haven't done commissioning in the past and we don't want to take commissions from our studio holders, but I think it would make sense to do that from if we were to bring the bigger name artists. At the moment, they tend to go to Spike Island, or Arnolfini or Bristol Museum. And I'm open to us needing to rebrand ourselves as a space. As the recent exhibition from Big Jeff showed, really is a fantastic exhibition. I think we're going have to move on to any other business. I would urge anybody who wants to continue talking about the island to join us at a public forum meeting we are going to have in January.

Jane mentioned the access restrictions (no lift) to the Gallery which make it difficult to attract big name artists.

Jane ([35:26](#)):

Can I just say thank you to Ayan for her hard work on the Vestibules , there been some great exhibitions there. And that's a really important space for us as well. It has its challenges working there it's been keeping Ayan busy these last couple of months.

Kathryn ([35:42](#)):

There's an exhibition happening all throughout December - Bristol Art Heist and The Vestibules also had the wonderful Invisible Army exhibition in there. The exhibition space is more of a socially engaged art space than a visual arts space but it is also available as a hireable gallery space. Also thanks to Alice for all her amazing work at Ashton Court Mansion. Ayan and Alice take over from long term members of the team Lucie and Joel who both moved to Cornwall last year. And also we want to say thank you to the wonderful Tina, Ayan also took over the Bookings Coordination and moved back to New Zealand on a sabbatical. I'm very sorry to announce that Tina won't be coming back to the Island and Ayan will be staying on in the role of Bookings Coordinator for The Island and The Vestibules. We also took on Andrea and Clara who will take over as the co-venue managers of the Venue from Lucie now that she's in Cornwall. It's certainly been a year of a lot of change and it has been really challenging. Sending a big thank you to the team and, and our new staff for being brilliant over the last year. And let's hope that 2022 is a better year. Doug,

7. AOB To deal with any matters raised at the meeting.

Doug ([37:49](#)):

Does anyone have any other business?

Anthony ([38:09](#)):

I have a question, but I could ask it another time. Will the Arts Mansion be continuing into next year or is there any agreement about the length of our partnership there?

Kathryn ([38:30](#)):

We have a lease until 2023 and so far there is no indication that that will end currently (we have a 6 month break clause). But I think as we come closer to the end of our leasehold period, there'll be more decisions about what might happen there. At the moment private hire income is supporting our arts program at the mansion over Christmas. So let's hope that there are less restrictions and more events happening in 22.

Rhiannon ([40:17](#)):

I just wanted to say, thanks everyone. And I love being part of the Island and its vibes.

Doug ([40:31](#)):

Well then, I guess I can officially close the space for our AGM. Thanks for participating and coming along everybody. And I look forward to seeing some of you in person, (at the arts mansion interstellar circus drag disco cabaret) which will be amazing after so long.

Kathryn ([40:54](#)):

And if you're looking for something to do before we start, go and check out our lovely impact report. Thank you everybody.