

Zoom Social – Thursday 24th September.

Notes:

Update from Arts Network Sutton (ANS) Chair, Alan Fitter

Alan welcomed everyone, and gave a brief update, highlighting the relaunch of the grants programme, and informing everyone on the call that he, and four other members of the ANS Executive Committee will not be seeking re-election at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting on Thursday 12th November 2020. Thanks go to Alan Fitter, James Davies, Brian Turner, Caterina Loriggio and Jasmine Wilson for all their excellent work in helping to bring ANS to where it is now. Chris Ellis has been co-opted to the committee and intends to stand for the position of Treasurer.

Anyone else interested in standing for election – please contact us at info@ansutton.org to express your interest and receive further information. Anyone wishing to stand for the role of Chair and/or Vice Chair needs to submit a nomination at least two weeks prior to the AGM. Anyone wishing to stand for election to the committee can do so on the night.

Update from Sutton Council. Kelly Saini Badwal, Head of Cultural Services, and Jan Underhill, Assistant Director for Wellbeing

Kelly gave an introduction to her work and background, highlighted some current arts funding opportunities:

[Arts Council England](#)

[Historic England](#)

Since the meeting – Kelly has since been in touch to provide current information on [National Lottery Project Grants](#)

Here are some of the online activities currently provided and supported by Cultural Services:

[Rhymetime and Storytime](#)

[Digital Information Centre](#)

[Learning activities for children and adults](#)

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Kelly gave an overview of [The Locals Diaries](#) lockdown archiving project, and mentioned the ANS/Council '[Home Studio](#)' collaboration. To keep up to date, we are all invited to stay in touch through the [Cultural Events Newsletter](#).

Jan acknowledged that COVID has driven lots of activity online, which creates challenges, and does make some of the borough's arts and culture work more accessible.

Jan thanked ANS for supporting the London Borough of culture bid, Sutton were successful in securing a Cultural Impact Award, which will help put Sutton more firmly on the Greater London Authority (GLA) map. Currently, the award plans are paused and in the next two to three months, discussions will follow regarding timing of events. Some of the program may start in 2022 but cannot go beyond 2023.

We will be working with external artists and local artists, liaising and working with a large number of advisory groups to firm up the projects. Working under the banner of Sutton STEAMs Ahead -science, technology, engineering, arts and maths.

5 main strands

- Lumiere laser show
- Big Bang event
- Science road show - 'lab in a lorry' - Become a scientist for the day (hoping to engage 36,000 school kids in borough)
- Drone
- Legacy sculpture in development

We want to create a legacy for art, culture, and science, these things are intrinsically linked. Sutton's cancer hub is on board. There will be approximately 30 countries represented through the cancer hub, this means increased global attention for Sutton. There are big pharmaceutical and research companies based in the cancer hub. They bring investment to the borough, which in turn is positive for arts and science.

At this point in the proceedings – we took some questions from the group:

What is the time commitment for being on the ANS committee?

Currently the committee meets online monthly, for about a couple of hours. In addition, there will be further ad hoc commitment reviewing grant applications, arranging networking and training events (when circumstances allow). No individual is expected to attend/participate in everything – so as a guesstimate maybe allow for a further two or three hours. Our activities ebb and flow.

How do local creatives get involved in delivering events for the Cultural Impact Award? Is there any funding available for individuals?

ANS and other organisations will continue to liaise with the council and keep members, friends etc updated.

Why does it seem that the focus of the cultural impact award does not include much on arts?

Jan Underhill responds, there is scope for arts, intrinsic link with science. This connection meant the bid theme was recognized as unique by the GLA.

The following questions have been taken away for further discussion and response.

What is the future of the youth art exhibition?

Are there plans for more affordable artists' studios in Sutton?

Are their plans for a creative co-working space?

The group then split into smaller conversations – for some online networking and reflection, and to consider how we can further amplify the arts in our borough. Here is a summary of what was discussed in the various groups:

We talked about the organisations and Artists that are members and how the zoom chat showed the network has a good following and membership. Should we run more of these events for the time being?

We spoke to a representative of the Sutton Women's Centre (SWC), and how ANS funded one of our members to run art workshops and a pop-up gallery at Cryer Arts which tied in with international women's day. This was a successful well attended event, and ANS should shout out about the progress people and organisations have made with their art and workshops.

SWC continues to offer therapeutic art workshops for women and children and have been supported by other grants. Due to lock down SWC have had to look at different ways to let people access their services and support. If SWC has future art plans they can look into funding or advice and guidance from ANS.

We talked about the cultural impact award and the response was positive about the theme of science and there's a concern the programme could become corporate and seek artist and organisations out of the borough rather than source within. Let's work together so that the working groups for the events know what Sutton Artists have to offer, so this can form part of the discussion from the start of the planning. Can ANS be facilitators for this?

What opportunities are there for ANS to support, offer and/or facilitate training in an online environment?

There was feedback from various groups about the need for creative space in the borough – for co-working, production, performance rehearsal, studio space etc. Following on from this, we need to put more effort into the NETWORKING - all agreed more frequent get togethers, socials, so valuable for connecting and collaborating. Venues could be ANS members, The Sound Lounge, CryerArts, Sutton Heritage buildings, and this led to a chat about the benefits of having a creative hub - a creative co-working space. It was also mentioned that pubs aren't always great for introverts, but the online socials are great.

A representative of for Sutton Writers, having looked at the directory, thinks we need more support and participation for writers, so would like to step up and be on the committee for ANS

We had a suggestion that currently, our members directory feels a bit 'top heavy' on visual artists. This online event is great for networking – and how can we encourage more diversification? ANS needs to emphasise that we are a broader network of creatives.

Collaboration - how can the network facilitate more collaboration?

Collaboration section on website?

ANS members slack channel?

Commissions - can the network make more links with those who would commission site-specific work?

Thoughts on the Cultural Impact Award?

Too early to tell, feeling is that it was more STEM less STEAM - i.e. not much room for arts - and that **ANS needs to lobby**, and make sure we present creative ideas to the council, in consultation with the membership.

We reconvened into our much larger group and shared some of the headlines from our smaller conversations. There was a real sense of enthusiasm and energy among the group – thanks so much to everyone who invested their time to listen, speak, and share ideas. The session closed just after 9pm.

What next? The ANS committee will review these notes and see how we can respond positively to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. And we need your help to make this work too. We are first and foremost a network – a place to engage, connect, support and influence. For ANS to support a better future for arts and culture in the borough – we need you. Once you've read these notes – please get in touch with your observations and ideas. We're really pleased with how the event went on September 24th – watch this space for progress, and please stay in touch.