A Feasibility Study Into Presenting
A Major International Visual Arts Event In The South West

Consultants:

Mariam Sharp of CulturalSIX and Ann Jones of Arts Projects and Solutions Ltd
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Executive Summary

Visual Arts South West (VASW) was formed as part of the Contemporary Visual Arts National Network (CVAN) initiated by the Arts Council of England. CVAN were funded as a national consortium of artists, arts professionals and organisations in England dedicated to working together to find new ways to strengthen the visual arts.

Over several years there had been dialogues in various parts of the South West about developing a biennial (or major event) of contemporary visual art. This had included the proposal to bring Manifesta to Cornwall, developing a Bristol Biennial and a potential Biennial for Plymouth. As part of their programme VASW held an open meeting in October 2012 to explore the question of A Biennial for the South West? The views expressed were varied, however at the end of the day, it was agreed that a feasibility study was needed to review the concept.

Mariam Sharp, Director of CulturalSIX and Ann Jones, Director of Arts Projects and Solutions (see Appendix I for biographies) were selected as consultants to develop the feasibility study, which took place between April and August 2013.

The research revealed a need to create a pragmatic shift of focus away from a major event and towards capacity development for the visual arts sector in the South West, while keeping international opportunities in mind. This shift came about through consultation with experts within and beyond the sector and the awareness that capacity needs were a major issue in the South West. In addition to this it was recognised that major events needed to grow from a local impetus and required very large sums of money (e.g. Edinburgh Festival and Hay Festival and Liverpool and Folkestone Biennials). As part of the process of developing the options for the VASW project board, it was clear that there were places within the region that had the ability to deliver ambitious projects. What also became clear was the importance of reflecting VASW’s remit to deliver across the whole region so the preferred option reflected this.

This report makes six recommendations:

1. **Web development**: Increase the impact of the VASW web resources
2. **Creative apprenticeships**: Explore creative apprenticeships and mentoring opportunities in the region
3. **International conversations**: Increase international exchanges across the region
4. **Network knitting**: Knit together the work of the different visual arts networks in the region
5. **Commissioning Fund**: Stimulate and support the ambition that exists within the region
6. **Marketing**: Promote and tell the South West’s story more widely to benefit the visual arts sector
1 Web development

Recognised as being one of the most active websites in the CVAN network, the consultants recommend that this excellent resource is built upon. The size and infrastructure of the South West means that travel is costly in time and money and a significant barrier to networking. The website could provide online networking across the region and beyond, online webinars, streaming of conferences and professional development surgeries. This report proposed that VASW applied to the Nesta and ACE Digital R&D Fund for the Arts.

Recommendations

1.1 Map online resources to signpost content available online for professional development and business resources e.g. Artquest, Horsesmouth, and Skill Up.
1.2 Identify online tools to increase networking across the region, provide activity for international conversations and link the region to international partners.
1.3 Identify partners to work with individuals and organisations online to explore barriers and for example examine online marketing of projects to expand audience reach.
1.4 Identify key research partner/s to create a programme of activities as part of an application to the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts.
1.5 Identify ICT partners to support the development and delivery of the application to the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts and provide project delivery.

2 Creative apprenticeships

Evident in the research was a lack of capacity to deliver ambitious programmes and projects, and particularly the need for entry level posts in the sector.

Recommendations

2.1 Work with partners to identify opportunities to increase apprenticeship programmes across the visual arts sector in the South West.
2.2 Research trusts, foundations and local authorities that could provide match funding for apprenticeships.
2.3 Consult with organisations that have led the apprenticeship programmes such as Tate+, Jerwood Creative Bursaries, Creativeskills, Jobcentre Plus to gain an understanding of the demands of such programmes.
2.4 Consult with Jane Sutherland at Creativeskills in Cornwall, and Kate Danielson to explore apprenticeships and professional development.
2.5 Register with the Creative Skillset’s Skills Investment Fund to assess if there are training opportunities to develop film and media skills for visual arts practitioners.
2.6 As part of future ACE funding, include a sum to support the development of visual arts apprenticeships, possibly in collaboration with Jane Sutherland or Kate Danielson.

3 International conversations

The research showed that practitioners and arts professionals prioritise their time for visiting exhibitions, projects and networking within the region and few regularly travel overseas or even nationally to attend events. Again this was attributed to lack of time and
resources but leads to limited international contact and networks. International awareness and exchange could be developed through the recommendations below.

Recommendations

3.1 Identify potential partners who are in a position to introduce artists, producers and curators from overseas to those working and living in the South West.
3.2 Maintain closer contact with British Council in order to benefit from incoming and outgoing international visits.
3.3 Provide up-to-date information on international opportunities on the VASW website to include funds that support exchange and international residency opportunities.
3.4 Provide support that could nurture ambition and increase applications to funds and residencies from South West practitioners.
3.5 Re-establish VASW’s own bursaries for artists, curators and producers wishing to work internationally.
3.6 Identify online tools to enable wider benefit from international visitors via webinars, live streaming and sharing of new knowledge (see recommendation 1).

4 Network knitting

VASW had initiated more networking in the region although there is still more to be done to connect and structure networking groups to achieve greater cohesiveness and sharing of information. The consultants recommended that VASW work strategically with artists studios’, individual artists, curators and senior managers, to achieve a stronger cultural offer.

Recommendations

4.1 Work with Alias to strengthen networking across artists groups.
4.2 Work with Ross Williams (Krowji) and NFASP to strengthen networking across the studio providers.
4.3 Create a regional network of senior managers of visual arts organisations to share information to benefit programming, marketing and business models across the region.
4.4 Identify online tools that would enable remote networking (see recommendation 1 above).

5 Commissioning Fund

The proposal for a commissioning fund was borne out of initiatives in the region that aimed to deliver projects to attract international recognition. It also reflects that 77% of respondents to the survey wished to see a major event in the region and the clear identification of the Landscape as the key attraction for visitors to the South West. VASW could hold a fund that artists and producers living and working in the South West could bid into. The fund would support projects that shine a spotlight on distinct and special areas of the South West’s landscape. Criteria could encourage cross sector and international partnerships and, where appropriate, build on or co-ordinate with other events in the region.
Recommendations

5.1 VASW discuss with ACE the potential of ring-fenced funds to support a pilot commissioning programme.
5.2 VASW research potential additional funds to support the commissioning programme.
5.3 Explore the Arts Council England’s Creative People and Places Fund.

6 Marketing - Telling the South West’s Story

Discussions with sector professionals outside the region showed that there was more work to do to promote artistic practice in the South West. VASW’s position as ambassador for the region could cultivate relationships and increase the information output about the South West to raise the cultural profile. VASW could work with experts to deliver affordable marketing workshops to practitioners.

Recommendations

6.1 Adopt tools and methods that release time to allow the VASW co-ordinator to build relationships.
6.2 VASW steering group members to actively promote the region.
6.3 VASW to ensure that their website reaches influential individuals and organisations.
6.4 VASW to look for partnership opportunities to provide affordable marketing workshops for the sector.
6.5 Maximise potential from the Audience Finder programme.
6.6 Build relationships with Visit Britain, Tourist Boards and destination management organisations to benefit from their strategies to increase cultural tourism.
6.7 Build potential partnerships with corporate brands rooted in the South West who want to reach an international platform.
6.8 Introduce and implement innovative audience development tools that could be accessed through the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts.
1 Background

Visual Arts South West (VASW) was formed as part of the Contemporary Visual Arts National Network (CVAN) initiated by the Arts Council of England. CVAN were funded as a national consortium of artists, arts professionals and organisations in England dedicated to working together to find new ways to strengthen the visual arts. VASW aimed to raise the level of critical dialogue and engagement across the region in order to support a dynamic and sustainable visual arts sector.

Over several years there had been dialogues in various parts of the South West about developing a biennial (or major event) of contemporary visual art. This had included the proposal to bring Manifesta to Cornwall, developing a Bristol Biennial and a potential Biennial for Plymouth. It had also been proposed that the region work together to develop an event of international ambition. Also suggested was that the sector work together to create an itinerant ‘festival of the region’ that moved every two years.

As part of this VASW held an open meeting in October 2012 to explore the question of A Biennial for the South West? The views expressed were varied, however at the end of the day, it was agreed that a feasibility study was needed to review the concept.
2. **The Brief** (see Appendix II for full brief)

2.1.1 Objectives

- Investigate the strengths and weaknesses of a potential major international visual arts event
- Identify opportunities and threats as presented by the environment
- Identify the resources required to implement the proposal
- Explore the potential for audience engagement for such an event
- Identify the potential for an event to leverage external (i.e non-ACE) funding
- Identify how an event of international ambition can contribute to a struggling arts economy in the region
- Provide information or evidence that we don't already have access to, which might inform persuasive arguments for funding towards either a bespoke international visual arts event, or towards alternative methods to raise the national and international profile of the South West

2.1.2 Criteria

- Economic; whether suitable funding can be found and sustained
- Its potential impact on the existing arts infrastructure in the current economic climate
- The value to be gained from such an event

2.1.3 Aims

- To develop further our understanding of the South West’s current high profile visual arts events
- To investigate the potential for partnerships with local authorities, funders, creative organisations and other potential stakeholders
- To consider what is distinctive and relevant to the region
- To develop a number of options/scenarios for an ‘event’ and to undertake a detailed appraisal of each option, including an assessment of the costs and benefits
- To develop an outline financial plan for the preferred option
- To indicate both the scale of investment required and an estimate of the likely return on the investment

The consultants undertook the research between April and August 2013.

2.2 **Approach to the brief**

The consultants held a preliminary meeting with the client to confirm the parameters of the brief and understand better the breadth of research required to fulfil this study. A range of processes were employed to objectively examine the strengths and weaknesses of presenting a major international visual arts event for the South West. As part of their response to the brief the consultants recommended that the research uncover more clearly the drivers that indicated the need for a major event at that time. Key to understanding the opportunity was to understand the why? Who wanted a major international event? What would a major international event achieve? Who would benefit? The notes from the October meeting revealed that there were lots of ideas about how an event could be approached but the rationale for why and why now were not fully apparent.
2.3 **Methodology**

- Completed SWOT, STEEP and Stakeholder analysis templates
- Created consultee database
- Agreed survey questionnaires
- Identified and agreed relevant research data to inform the study
- Agreed criteria for the research
- Analysis of online surveys
- Desk research and appraisal of existing data
- Interviewed list of stakeholders agreed with VASW
- Compiled options appraisal
- Presented options appraisal and mid-way findings to VASW’s project board,
- Researched preferred model from options
- Agreed format for final report
- Completed consultation
- Presented findings in final report

2.3.1 **STEEP and SWOT Analysis** *(see Appendix III)*

STEEP analysis was a tool used to investigate the impact of the Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental and political factors that would influence a potential project. The SWOT analysis examined the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that could impact projects.

The key factors highlighted in the STEEP analysis pointed to a region of uneven economic distribution with pockets of wealth and of deprivation, a growing ageing population outside urban areas and relatively high youth unemployment. Whilst the IT infrastructure needs improvement in the South West excellent developments between art and technology have been evident.

The region was recognised for having a good spread of industry from high tech aeronautics and design to tourism, food and drink production and a thriving knowledge economy and above all its superb landscapes. Politically there were 36 Conservative, 15 Liberal Democrat and 4 Labour seats across the region after the 2010 general elections. The recession and government policy added to the inequality of distribution of wealth. There were also boundary changes taking place across the region.

The SWOT analysis pointed to the Landscape’s pulling power and offer of a good quality of life as an important strength that attracts experienced cultural practitioners. The weaknesses in the region are its large geographical spread and lack of infrastructure that effects networking. There was also lack of provision of studio and showing spaces for artists and a need to develop audiences.

Opportunities for growth could be achieved through identifying new partners and by drawing attention to the South West’s story within and outside the region. However the threat of diminishing funding for the arts due to a struggling economy needed to be recognised as a challenging context for an already under-resourced sector.

The choice of stakeholder consultees reflected the findings of the STEEP and SWOT analysis. The consultants looked for experts in and outside the sector who would share
learnings and offer new perspectives e.g. Cultural Olympiad producers, Visit Britain, National Trust and Natural England.

2.3.2 Stakeholder Analysis (see Appendix IV)

The stakeholder plan used a matrix with influence and interest as the factors to map against. Four groups were created, partly informed by the SWOT and STEEP processes and also through knowledge of the sector. The four groups were 1) Low in influence but high in interest 2) High in both influence and interest 3) high in influence but low in interest, 4) low in interest and influence. A stakeholder spreadsheet was then created (see attached in Appendix IV) that grouped stakeholders within one of the four categories that determined how the researchers engaged with them.

Group 1 were sent the survey
Group 2 were sent the survey and asked to have a conversation with the consultants
Group 3 were invited to have a conversation with the consultants
Group 4 were sent a general information note

2.3.3 Online Survey (See Appendices V and VI)

The online survey aimed to explore:

- The level of attendance by practitioners and professionals to national and international events
- Dates for upcoming key events within the region
- The criteria that would make an event a success
- The level of interest in staging an event
- What resources were available to make an event a success

Most were open questions, however one question had four options to gauge the level of aspiration in staging a major event in the South West (see Appendix V).

The online survey was sent to VASW project board on the 16th April for agreement and with a few adjustments distributed by email to 142 individuals on 6th of May. The survey was featured in VASW's newsletter on the 7th May and sent to 1500 subscribers and via VASW's twitter account which has over 1300 followers. The survey comprised 8 questions and was accessed online using Smart-Survey and was live for two weeks with a deadline of 20th May 2013. Two reminders were sent by email and twitter prior to the 20th May deadline. As the request for the feasibility study came directly from the sector, all those who attended the open meeting were invited to give their opinions through the survey and some were also interviewed.

Key Online survey findings (see Appendix VI for the raw data)

There were 33 respondents to the survey, which was a low response given the distribution. Using the 1500 subscribers number the response is as low as 2.2%, however using the direct invitation figure of 142 gives a 23% response.

77% wanted to see an event for the region.
16% were somewhat keen.
7% were only a little interested or not interested at all.
The consultants interpreted the high figure of 77% as ambition in the region despite the difficult and changing funding environment.

The majority of people attend regional events rather than travel outside the region, such as the Falmouth Convention, Inside Out and In Between Time. In every case the lack of national and international travel pointed to lack of time, funds and capacity.

Those who did travel outside the region named Liverpool Biennial, Folkestone Triennial and internationally most named were Venice and Documenta. This pointed to individuals attending the well established events rather than harder to reach or emerging events.

Many sited visits to specific galleries and exhibitions mainly in London such as Tate, British Museum, National Gallery and South Bank etc. Frieze was also mentioned by some as a good networking opportunity and a measure of the market. Again attendance at established, tried and tested venues and events show individuals having to chose carefully how they apportion their time and resources.

Reasons for attending were: connecting; being immersed in a particular context; having access to quality work and to learn.

Given the inward focus it was surprising that there was little regional intelligence shared on potential and upcoming key events. This pointed to a need to facilitate cross regional information sharing on programming. It was difficult to map major events and there was little information on significant dates although the Plymouth City of Culture bid in 2017 and the Mayflower Festival also in Plymouth in 2020 were sited.

In survey responses and interviews key comments were recurring

Concerns around lack of sustainability:

*It's a good idea but needs commercial validity*

*I would like to see this happen but only if there is enough money!*

Concerns around funding going to one event to detriment of other activity:

*Economy thing - where is the money coming from - will it take funding away from other things*

*When there is a big focus on something all the resources go to that - everybody needs to be aware of this - Olympiad money impacted on money for other things in terms of G4A's*
Questions around the drivers:

*It would need to know what it is and why it was doing it - a clear strapline that every body understood and signed up to.*

*I also think as many committed/interested voices as possible should be included. As inclusive and non-heirarchical as possible - listen to the smallest voice*

Need for clear leadership:

*Somebody has to curate it otherwise it will be a collection of random events. Somebody with vision and curatorial skills that is respected by arts organisations and artists…. somebody with skill not a celebrity.*

*I think it will need some clear leadership. The SW as a region is prone to lots of discussion, and trying to decide by committee - this will need to be led....Who will a major arts festival benefit?..... What is distinctive about the SW region?*

Drivers from grass roots - artists and local creative networks:

*If it’s not going to create change for ordinary people it will just create work Investing in the community is really important - for instance Grizedale and helping places grow.*

*Should not be (the event) about a whole load of art luvvy’s.*

Concerns around the complexity and unrealistic expectations of collaborative working:

*Over dependence on the word big - what is a big event - lots of people, duration? Not good just because they’re big.*

*Made mistake of running a large project that ran away with itself...lots of stakeholders, lots of learning!*

*Baby steps first to test commitment. If from day one you are wanting big and bold then it will be a struggle.*

*The wider the area the more complicated it will be to get anything off the ground. However highlighting different areas at different times might work.*

### 2.3.4 Stakeholder Interviews

A list of people interviewed are included in Appendix IV (coded 2 and 3) and interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 1hr 10 minutes in length. The interviews used the survey questions as the predominant framework except when there were specialist areas to explore, such as artist studios’ or tourism for example.
2.3.5 Desk Research

Articles and reports that provided background to this study are listed in Appendix IX.

2.3.6 Map major upcoming visual arts events planned for the South West

Knowledge gained from the survey and consultations highlighted only four major events:

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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Plymouth</td>
<td>Mayflower Programme to 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tate St Ives</td>
<td>Summer 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bristol Biennial</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
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<td>Helston Convention</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
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Three concepts were identified in the options appraisal. Discussions leading up to the open meeting in October 2012 referred to the traditional models of a ‘place’ based biennial. This reference was still evident in some responses to the consultation, hence the options 2, 3 and 4 that were put forward to the steering group.

The consultants explored the financial models of the Liverpool Biennial and Folkestone Triennial. Liverpool Biennial was started with a gift from James Moores of £1M and this in large paid for the first Biennial in 1999. The second Biennial in 2002 attracted private funding of £200K and enhanced public funding built on the success established. The overall budget for 2002 was £1.7M rising to a peak of around £4.5M in 2008 Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture. The 2008 budget was dispersed across the year.

The Creative Foundation allocated 'ring-fenced' funds by Roger de Haan (private philanthropist) for the Folkestone Triennial and around £1.5M was given for each of the three editions thus far. A grant of £500K allocated from ACE would support the 2014 edition with a further £200K sought from other sources with an overall target of £2.2M. Further afield Venice Biennale relies on national agencies and commercial galleries whilst Documenta, receives 12M Euros from a mixture of public funding and ticket sales. The experience of the Manifesta bid in Cornwall demonstrated that major investment was difficult to locate. A more easily achievable model would be similar to that employed by Brighton’s Digital Festival where a consortium of organisations worked together on programmed activity drawn together by an umbrella organisation. Organisations across the South West have already proved they are able to work together in a similar way for example in presenting the British Art Shows. The development of a major visual arts event in the South West could develop organically from activity presented by a consortium.
In the October meeting looser definitions of a biennial event were explored that would highlight the distinctiveness of the region, such as an itinerant event moving across the counties. The research showed that ‘landscape’ was strongly considered the most distinct feature of the region, the consultants therefore reflected this as an option for an itinerant event spotlighting the region’s unique and diverse landscape.

The final option was a response to the substantial evidence that lack of capacity was the biggest barrier to international ambition, this finding underpinned the proposal for a capacity building programme.

3.1 Landscape

The diverse coastlines, port cities, large conservation areas, national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty were identified as the region’s USP.

“The South West captures the beauty of English countryside that is difficult to replicate - it’s a chocolate box view of Britain the epitome of what people think the English countryside should be.”

“It has a very strong maritime history - military and otherwise in the fishing ports and two very distinct coastlines - the southern soft coastline and northern rugged angular coastline”

“Landscape of the South West is the USP. Putting things in landscape like Inside Out and No Fit State Circus in an Amphitheater - this emphasises special places and makes routes, journey’s and pilgrimages to see stuff. “

“What’s in SW is hidden talent - it is one of best regions in the UK because of its coastline and special places....positioning SW as something amazing.”

Option 1: To research the structure of a recurring itinerant event that uses the unique and diverse landscapes of the region as its focus

3.2 Place Based

Events would focus on a recurrent event anchored to an existing visual arts hotspot and or marks a significant date or anniversary. Projects would be rooted in ‘place’ and drawing on its socio-political context, involving local arts organisations and reaching a wide audience.

“Urban centres have got something special - they are nearly all ports, or interchange/movement of people - Brunel’s Line…”

“the South West is full of people doing their own thing. A Biennale could add something if it were in the right place, like Bristol that has energy and can draw people from the rest of the region.”

Option 2: To research the feasibility for major event/s in Cornwall to coincide with re-opening of Tate St Ives

Option 3: To research the feasibility for major event/s in Plymouth to coincide with either the City of Culture 2017 or the Mayflower anniversary in 2020
**Option 4:** To research the feasibility of major event/s in Bristol with potential partnerships with Wales and Bath

### 3.3 **Flourish**

Would offer ways to increase capacity and professionalism. This option proposes using funding and partnerships to increase knowledge, skills, potential markets and networks for the region’s arts sector. Building the sector through working with artist studios’, Higher Education, Further Education and the Local Enterprise Partnership networks and arts organisations. VASW would assume a strategic and coordinating role, bringing partnerships together. Ambition could be achieved through innovative working practice to gain the professionalisation of the sector and support excellence.

- supporting and developing artists
- exposure to international arts practice through residencies, incoming and outgoing visits
- audience development
- developing entry level posts through a programme of apprenticeships and internships for young people along with mentoring programmes
- developing a digital media platform to create access to national and international exchange

**Option 5:** To research a model of capacity building that would develop the visual arts sector across the South West

### 3.4 VASW Project Board Decision

On the 20 June 2013 a meeting was held of the Project Board to select the appropriate option to progress. Present at the meeting were:

Grace Davies, Claire Doherty, James Green, Judith Robinson and Tom Trevor, along with consultants Mariam Sharp and Ann Jones.

**Following debate the Project Board opted for Option 5: Flourish.** The decision was reached because it was based upon need, would support grass roots activity and could be co-ordinated by VASW. The option could build upon the agency’s current work with networks as well as offer a role for artist studios’. It was broadly accepted that the solutions and recommendations needed to be steered to structural development rather than thematic projects.

**Option 1:** Landscape was discussed and considered in terms of a possible future initiative. The Board saw this as a fund that individuals, groups or organisations would be able to bid into in order to realise ambitious outdoor projects. The survey identified a request for a commissioning fund and this was also mooted at the open meeting in October, however no major funding vehicle was sited to support it. The consultants have however included the recommendation to identify a commissioning fund as part of Flourish with the aim of nurturing ambition, spot-lighting the distinctiveness of the region’s landscape and encouraging cross sector and cross border collaboration.
It was agreed that a Options 2,3 and 4, the biennale model approach to an event that was location based would be difficult to sustain in today’s economic climate. Liverpool Biennial and Folkestone Triennial had each been established through large donations from a single local philanthropist and as they have grown they have attracted public and private funding. The Board also felt that events such as these would inevitably be led by organisations and it was unclear what role VASW would play in the delivery. Some regional centres were more able to fund and produce ambitious projects and they were already doing great things, in time these could potentially grow in scale and ambition. The project board saw the importance of encouraging connection and capacity more evenly across the region as a catalyst for future developments.

It was felt that Option 5: Flourish could lead to more sustainable growth, developing the excellence and ambition that could lead to enhanced international profile and recognition. Flourish has a strong synergy with VASW’s remit, and current programme.

Once the option was selected discussion led to what success would look like. The following success factors were identified:

- Increased arts led activity
- More artists traveling internationally through exchanges, research programmes or independently
- Skills sharing
- More artist-led groups forming
- More artists working internationally
- Increased support for arts from local government
- Increased audience engagement (numbers and quality of engagement)
- A reputation for excellence
- Increased national press

4 Research development of Flourish

Once the VASW steering committee had agreed upon the option Flourish, the research turned to exploration of funding and partnership opportunities, potential risk, funding options, and potential return on investment.

This research coincided with VASW’s application for funding to Arts Council England. The consultants worked with the co-ordinator to identify opportunities for a sector development programme. VASW already provided CPD and the consultants recommended furthering partnerships to increase opportunities and attract additional funding. Closer collaboration and the development of VASW’s website would potentially relieve administrative time freeing up VASW’s Co-ordinator for strategic work.

What became apparent through the research phase was the heavy reliance of VASW on Arts Council Funding, this highlighted the need for diversified income and increased resilience for VASW. To date VASW had achieved a low match funding from sources other than ACE, however in-kind support represented up to 30% of its resources and in addition to this 25% of income was received from participant contributions. VASW funding for their programme ran to March 2014. In October VASW would apply to ACE Grants for the Arts for support from March 2014 to March 2015. This one year of funding could enable activity
to position VASW so that it could apply to become a National Portfolio Organisation of ACE.

This pilot year (March 2014-15) would provide funds for continued support of the Regional Development Co-ordinator and Web Development. Additional funds would need to be identified for the programme activity and strategic development of VASW. This highlighted the need for research into funding opportunities as part of this option, in particular:

- Digital R&D Fund for the Arts - a partnership between Nesta, ACE and AHRC that could support the VASW web development
- The Creative Employment programme - to explore how apprenticeships might increase capacity
- Creative Skillset’s Skills Investment Fund - to support specific development in film and related media skills
- Esmee Fairbairn Foundation - arts programme
- Clore Duffield Foundation - potential to support website as learning space
- Paul Hamlyn Foundation - programme support
- Creative Europe - new programmes launched in September 2013 with first applications in 2014
- Cultural Destinations Fund - ACE/Visit England
- Creative People and Places - ACE

5 Flourish Programme

5.1 VASW website development

The Need: The South West, a large geographical region that is difficult to travel across due to the disjointed transport infrastructure, created a barrier to development of the visual arts sector. The region was a bureaucratic construct that changed in relation to political influences; which made it very difficult to deliver a region-wide programme. The biggest issue was how to support the visual arts sector in overcoming the geographical barriers that lead to inequality of opportunity and isolation.

The Opportunity: VASW’s key asset was the website; enabling the sharing of knowledge across the region, the ability for individuals and organisations to contribute and update their own information and for interaction via the use of social media. The website held further opportunity for development, for example providing signposting to online resources that could be used for professional development of the sector across the region, or the development of resources addressing the region’s specific needs. There was also a potential to shift much of VASW’s current programme delivery across to the web, enabling a wider reach across the region and increased time for strategic working. Simultaneous broadcasts to support regular networking in addition to physical meetings could increase information exchange and opportunities for co-ordinated programming and marketing. Regular podcasts, interviews, webinars and streaming of conferences could overcome the need for VASW to repeat events in different parts of the region, whilst opening up the opportunity for engagement to many more.
Funding: Details of the fund can be found in the funding options listed in Appendix VII. VASW’s website could be a good match for the aims of the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts. The potential to develop access to the website and the use of online tools to create programme activity that has regional and international reach could benefit the sector.

Identifying a technology partner/s to support the project would be fundamental in bringing sponsorship and funding support to VASW. Likewise identifying professional researchers would also increase VASW’s chance of securing funding to grow its reputation. The consultants recommend that VASW approach Falmouth University College, as the Head of Research Mike Wilson indicated an interest to partner with VASW as the research lead of a bid to the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts. This would strongly meet the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s criteria for an academic researcher being key to a strong bid. From the published information VASW had the ability to meet three of the six fund themes set out in the criteria:

- education and learning: developing interactive education and learning resources for children, teachers, young people, adult learners and arts sector professionals
- user generated content and social media: harnessing the power of the internet and social media to reach audiences and to give them a platform for discussion, participation and creativity
- distribution and exhibition: using digital technologies to deliver artistic experiences and content in new ways through online and place-based environments, including exploring international distribution and exhibition

The Fund’s timetable corresponded to VASW’s schedule and an expression of interest could be submitted as early as September and through into December 2013 (it was recommended that an expression of interest be registered in September). If successful a full application would be submitted by March 2013 if the ACE G4A grant was confirmed.
Further funding partners for this project could be Esmee Fairbairn and Clore Duffield Foundation, as well as current partners across the visual arts in the region and national delivery partners such as Engage, the national association for gallery education, Visual Arts Gallery Association, and The Audience Agency. The potential for this project to inform national CVAN projects and have impact upon other art form networks would increase its fit with the fund.

**Recommendations**

- Mapping of online resources to signpost other content available online for professional development and business resources e.g. Artquest, Horsesmouth, Skill Up
- Identify online tools to enable better networking across the region; create programmes of activity attached to the international conversations and link the region to international partners
- Identify partners to work with individuals and organisations online to explore barriers to audience development and to examine online marketing of projects to expand audience reach
- Identify key research partner/s to create, study and evaluate a programme of activities as part of an application to the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts
- Identify ICT partners to support the development and delivery of the application to the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts

**5.2 Sector skills development through Creative Employment Programme**

*The Need:* It was apparent through the research that a big factor preventing delivery of ambitious activity was due to low capacity within the sector. One effect of this low capacity was information exchange was not delivered, due to lack of time to update websites, mailing lists. Over the last years there was increased collaborative working but even these good intentions were compromised by inequity of capacity when larger and smaller organisations worked together. Research pointed to a lack of human resources that not only prevented activity from happening but also impacted on effectiveness of delivery for audiences and professionals. It was also clear that there were few opportunities for young people to start careers in the visual arts. The consultants saw the opportunity for VASW to provide mentoring programmes.

*The Opportunity:* This led to exploration of the Creative Employment Programme (CEP), led by Creative and Cultural Skills and the Creative Skillset's Skills Investment Programme. Partnership funding could also be found from Apprenticeship Grants for Employers (AGE) and other trusts and foundations. Each apprentice would cost over £8K per year. The CEP offered up to £1.5K for each apprentice and £2.5K for each internship (minimum 30 hrs for 26 weeks). This could be matched by the AGE programme and other programmes such as the Youth Wage Incentive, the remaining shortfall from Trusts and Foundations, and in many cases local authorities. Up to ten apprenticeships/internships could be applied for under these terms for organisations that have not ever taken on an apprentice before. As the apprenticeships need to have at least one year’s employment, it would be important to ensure that the organisations involved had the stability to provide this.
Recommendations

- Work with partners to identify opportunities to increase apprenticeship programmes across the visual arts sector in the South West
- Research trusts, foundations and local authorities that could provide match funding for apprenticeships
- Consult with organisations that have led the apprenticeship programmes such as Tate+, Jerwood Creative Bursaries, Creativeskills and Jobcentre Plus to gain a understanding of the demands of such programmes
- Consult with Jane Sutherland at Creativeskills in Cornwall and Kate Danielson to explore apprenticeships and professional development
- Register with the Creative Skillset’s Skills Investment Fund to assess if there are training opportunities to develop film and media skills for visual arts practitioners
- As part of future ACE funding, include a sum to support visual arts apprenticeships, possibly in collaboration with Jane Sutherland or Kate Danielson

5.3 International conversations

The Need: The research showed that practitioners and arts professionals prioritise their time for visiting exhibitions, projects and networking events within the region, few regularly travel nationally let alone overseas to attend events. This was attributed to lack of time and resources but ultimately led to limited perspectives, international contact and networks. Building awareness of and facilitating national and international exchange opportunities could contribute to the raising of ambition in the region and greater international awareness of the region.

The Opportunity: The research found that there were individuals and organisations in the South West that worked internationally. By strengthening communication with new and existing networks VASW could heighten awareness of international visitors to the region. This could open up opportunities for presentations to the sector in person or streamed online and encourage studio visits by visiting curators.

Whilst the Visual Arts Department of the British Council was aware of the work of some organisations in the South West it was clear that awareness of broader activity across the region was more limited. An initial discussion with Richard Riley of the British Council resulted in him agreeing to receive regular updates and keep the South West arts sector in mind for any incoming or outgoing international visits.

Arts Council England and the British Council offer funding to individual artists through the Artist’s International Development Fund. The fund provided international travel grants of £1-5K to further creative and/or project development. At October 2013 the fund had £750K to disperse. To that date, out of the 97 successful applications only 6 were awarded to South West practitioners (2 combined arts, 2 visual arts, 1 music and 1 theatre); this might have been due to lack of awareness or poor quality of application. Raised awareness of the fund and support for developing applications could improve the outcome for the South West. Many Foreign Embassies in the UK have funds to support cultural exchange or could lever them from their own country’s foreign ministries. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office held up to date lists of Embassies in the UK [http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/what-we-do/protocol/embassies-in-uk/](http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/what-we-do/protocol/embassies-in-uk/). A list of funding opportunities for international exchange is referred to in Appendix VII. VASW had offered travel and curatorial bursaries in the past and 7 out of the 15 bursaries awarded had a direct
international element, so when the funds were relatively easy to access and well advertised take-up appeared to increase. This implies more could be done by VASW to encourage and support application to available funds for international travel. VASW’s website could list funds, videos on the benefits of international exchange, tips on writing successful applications, online funding surgeries, coaching and mentoring to build confidence and ambition. Familiarisation with organisations such as Triangle Arts Trust could raise awareness of outgoing international opportunities for South West artists. An audit of residency opportunities for artists could be made available on VASW’s website (or sign-posting to Artquest). VASW might offer additional clearly branded bursaries that would give artists the chance to develop their work through international exchange.

Recommendations

• Identify potential partners who are in a position to introduce artists, producers and curators from overseas to those working and living in the South West
• Maintain closer contact with British Council in order to benefit from incoming and outgoing international visits
• Provide up-to-date information on international opportunities on the VASW website, to include funds that support exchange and international residency opportunities.
• Provide support that could nurture ambition and increase applications to funds and residencies from South West practitioners
• Re-establish VASW’s own bursaries for artists, curators and producers wishing to work internationally
• Identify online tools to enable wider benefit from international visitors via webinars, live streaming and sharing of new knowledge (see recommendation 1)

5.4 Network knitting

The Need: The South West appeared relatively well networked but often only in local and sub-regional clusters. The geographical expanse and poor transport infrastructure
however was an ongoing barrier to cross regional networking. Greater cohesiveness and information sharing would result in better co-ordinated programmes, more effective cross marketing, smarter working practices and the optimisation of opportunities. The consultants recommended that VASW worked with partners to bring groups together to work more effectively.

The Opportunity: VASW held discussions with Alias with the intention to broker more effective networking for artists across the region. The partnership could increase efficiency for both parties.

VASW had found that the leading organisations were less likely to update event information on the website than smaller organisations. A more collegiate working practice could result in better business models and capacity sharing for example, audience development, fundraising, staff development and governance. Networks such as VAGA, Tate+, Bristol Trio, do exist and staff are often members of more than one. However, there does not seem to be a structure that brings all the senior voices together across the region and without this joined up working would be patchy. Once again such a network can be made possible and less onerous by an online facility provided through VASW.

Initial discussion with Ross Williams of The National Federation of Artists Studio Providers (NFASP) South West group, were positive and a partnership could encourage the growth of online networking amongst artists studios’ across the region. Better networked studios could enable sharing of information, learning and opportunities.

Recommendations

- Work with Alias to strengthen networking across artists groups
- Work with Ross Williams (Krowji) and NFASP to strengthen networking across the studio providers
- Create a regional network of senior managers of visual arts organisations to share information to benefit programming, marketing and business models across the region
- Identify online tools that would enable remote networking (see recommendation 1 above)

5.5 Commissioning Fund

The Need: The proposal for a commissioning fund was borne out of initiatives in the region that aimed to deliver projects to attract international recognition. It also reflects that 77% of respondents to the survey wished to see a major event in the region and the clear identification of the Landscape as the key attraction for visitors to the South West. VASW could hold a fund that artists and producers living and working in the South West could bid into. The fund would support projects that shine a spotlight on distinct and special areas of the South West’s landscape. Criteria could encourage cross sector and international partnerships and, where appropriate, build on or co-ordinate with other events in the region.

The Opportunity: VASW has had a preliminary discussion with Arts Council England SW with view to identifying funds to support a pilot programme that artists and producers living and working in the South West could bid for.
VASW could potentially lead on a consortium bid to the Arts Council England’s Creative People and Places fund to deliver a sustained programme of cultural activity. The entire fund worth £37 million had earmarked £4.5M for the South West and Midlands in the second round which opened in October 2013. This could address needs, and involve all parts of a community in cultural activity and draw upon the uniqueness of place.

Recommendations

- VASW to discuss with ACE the potential of ring-fenced funds to support a pilot commissioning programme
- VASW to research potential additional funds to support the commissioning programme
- Explore the Arts Council of England’s Creative People and Places fund

5.6 Marketing - Telling the South West’s Story

The Need: Discussions with sector professionals external to the region pointed to a lack of knowledge of the sector outside the higher profile galleries and events. Discussions with British Council and Triangle Arts Trust bore this out and pointed to the South West missing out on opportunities, for instance there had not been nominators from the South West for the five annual Triangle Trust international residencies.

Discussions with Visit Britain pointed to the South West being the focus of tourism for its countryside and historic attractions but not so much for its contemporary cultural offer.

Due to lack of capacity organisations have not utilised audience data capture tools that could inform audience development strategies. This prevented organisations from knowing more about their attenders and non-attenders.
The Opportunity: VASW could position itself as an ambassador for the region by freeing up time (as outlined above) for the co-ordinator to cultivate relationships and increase the information output about the South West.

Visit England and the Arts Council England drew up an agreement to increase cultural tourism through the new fund Cultural Destinations. VASW could lead a cross regional consortia bid to this fund, to increase the South West's cultural offer and visibility. This could grow the regions visitor offer outside of the summer months benefitting arts organisations and businesses. Visit Britain is also prioritising the English countryside to international visitors. Keith Beecham of Visit Britain highlighted the South West’s countryside and coastline as a great attraction for international visitors. Further discussion should be taken up with Visit Britain to encourage profiling the region’s contemporary art as well as their promotion of the countryside.

VASW could develop synergies between visual arts organisations and businesses in the South West who would like to increase their international profile.

VASW could also look to working with marketing organisations/experts in the delivery of affordable workshops on promoting business and events for artists, producers and organisations in the region.

At the time of the research The Audience Agency were working with the CVAN network through the Audience Finder programme. The Audience Finder programme supported museums and galleries to collect and share visitor data across the country.

In addition to the Audience Finder programme VASW could promote innovative and creative ways of capturing audience information that might be more tailored to specific projects or organisations. For example working with the artist Dane Watkins in building profiles of individual visitors. Funding for this kind of innovative data capture might be accessed through the Digital R&D fund for the Arts.

Recommendations

- Adopt tools and methods that release time to allow the VASW co-ordinator to build relationships
- VASW steering group members to actively promote the region
- VASW to ensure that their website reaches influential individuals and organisations
- VASW to look for partnership opportunities to provide affordable marketing workshops for the sector
- Maximise potential from the Audience Finder programme
- Build relationships with Visit Britain, Tourist Boards and destination management organisations to benefit from their strategies to increase cultural tourism
- Build potential partnerships with corporate brands rooted in the South West who want to reach an international platform
- Introduce and implement innovative audience development tools that could be accessed through the Digital R&D Fund for the Arts
6 Funding options and return on investment

Appendix IX outlines the Funding options and Return on Investment. The plan summarises funds that are available for the recommended areas of activity, identifies potential partnership funding and outlines the return on investment financially and socially.

7 Risk Analysis

The risk analysis is outlined in Appendix VIII and reviews each of the recommendations, highlights the key challenges in delivering the recommendation and the level of risk in not achieving the recommendation (Low, Medium and High).

8 Summary

Ambition and interest in international engagement and exchange amongst the region’s practitioners and audiences was evident. In the short time Visual Arts South West had been active it had developed networking across the region. The research found opportunity to do more and attract new potential partners from within and outside the South West and through this the region could build its reputation. Stepping up the ambition and increasing the longer term vision for what was possible within the South West would attract greater funds and resources to the region. The development of VASW’s web resource to deliver the Flourish programme could prove to be an innovative way of reaching across a large and predominantly rural region and this alone could attract international attention.

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