

October 2019

Annual Report 2018 to October 2019

Dear fellow supporters of The Oxmarket,

In December 2018 Martyn Bell announced his intention to step down as Chairman as he recognised that the time needed to oversee the Gallery was much greater than he could give the Gallery given his Council and Mayoral commitments. On behalf of the Board I want to thank him for his great contribution as Chairman and we are delighted he remains an active and committed Director. I was elected Chair in February 2019 with a full and exciting agenda. The Board's priorities were reconfirmed as:

- Refurbishing the entrance
- Implementing a fundraising campaign for the refurbishment
- Doubling volunteers
- Continuing with the high profile and profitable Christmas Market
- Taking a pro-active approach to new income streams
- Improving management procedures and data control
- Implementing an active social media strategy and action plan
- Ensuring ongoing strong financial management.

Extensive Senior Management time has been given to improving administration, H&S, exhibitions, revenue and the Gallery's refurbishment plan, along with its capital fundraising campaign. We have made significant progress.

Management

Helen Monckton, (former Administration Manager/Deputy Town Clerk, Chichester City Council) Amanda Kings (previously Managing Director NOA) joined as Directors and Michael Crouch as Treasurer. The Gallery Manager resigned in June and left with our thanks. This gave the Gallery the opportunity to review and restructure. Given market conditions, the changing needs of the Gallery and our artists, and our own ambitious plans, the Board agreed to a new, and more senior position of Gallery Director. Helen Monckton, a Director, successfully applied for the position. Since joining she has upgraded all the processes, contracts and policies, which are so important to the professional running of Oxmarket.

Fiona Gowar, a local artist, joined as a Director. Fiona spearheads the new team of Directors who vet new exhibitors for quality and she is increasingly active with ideas and involvement with artists. Mike Crouch stepped down as Treasurer following his wife's terminal diagnosis. The Board thanked

him for his role and continued interest in the Gallery and gave their sympathies at her passing. Martyn Bell was appointed Acting Treasurer providing continuity.

Darrell Bluestone who has been curating at the Oxmarket for years, was promoted to Exhibition Manager and continues to do a wonderful job. The Board would like to thank him for his dedication and commitment. Our thanks too to Paul Vincent for managing the Print Shop so well.

The Board undertook an audit of the Management's Skills and Data Base, leading to recommendations for improvements. Although we are a very small charity the Management Board is absolutely committed to adopting the Charity Governance Code recommended practice for smaller charities, which is endorsed by the Charities Commission for England and Wales. Rigour and transparency being essential.

The first Volunteers Evening, held in January, to thank and update our volunteers on our strategic plans, along with introducing them to new Directors, was very well attended. Our volunteers really appreciated it and are much valued and an integral part of our team and essential to the smooth running of Oxmarket.

Refurbishment Project

Our plans to move the ancient toilets in the entrance to the back of the Gallery, replace the disabled toilet and opening up of the entrance are underway. Three architects tendered for the "Entrance project" and Cover Storey, a local firm was appointed. Great progress is being made: the architects' drawings are being finalised, as are a detailed timetable and the budget. The works are being planned in two stages. Phase One is scheduled for autumn 2020 and Phase Two in January 2021, with a high-profile artist's exhibition planned to celebrate the official 'Re-Opening' in March 2021.

Capital Campaign for the refurbishment project

The New Homes Bonus of £15,000 awarded in 2018 and the Mayor's Charities' funds raised provide us with an encouraging start to the Capital Campaign. The Board is immensely grateful to have secured the expertise of Sarah Mansell (who was Campaign Director of St Wilfrid's Dreambuilding £16m+ campaign and CFT's £25m+) to work with us on our Capital Campaign at a greatly reduced fee. As a small charity with only one and a half staff, our fundraising focus has to be on targeting Foundations, Trusts and local philanthropists, as we do not have the resource to organise fund raising events.

We retain stable solid financial reserves and do not plan to obtain any loans for the works.

We applied for another New Homes Bonus from Chichester City Council in 2019 for improvements to the mezzanine, so that we can hold community workshops and improve storage. We have been allocated £7,000 and the work will start as soon as we have planning consent. We are most grateful to the City Council.

A new corporate identity was designed by one of our artists - Chris Gibson - to whom we are very grateful and the new identity is being rolled out. Permission has been obtained for a new sign on East Street which will be up soon and hopefully direct more traffic towards us.

Events

During the Festival of Chichester we held a highly successful series of concerts and recitals. Phil Hewitt, Arts Editor at Chichester Observer, gave a fund-raising interview with Kate Mosse, the international author, on his book "*Outrunning the Demons*" which he launched in the Gallery in January, as was Alan Green's book "*Priory Park in 100 Objects*". All proceeds From Phil and Kate's Q&A were generously given to us.

Last year a Christmas Fair was well received and plans for another this year are well advanced; very encouraging we expect to have 28 exhibitors. The Chichester Observer and Chichester Post continue to cover our events and exhibitions, for which we are most grateful.

I am thrilled to announce that Philip Jackson LVO, a sculptor to the Queen and widely considered Britain's greatest living sculptor, will be exhibiting at the Oxmarket next year. This will be a high-profile exhibition and immensely helpful in putting the Oxmarket on the map, as well as great for Chichester to have such an eminent artist exhibiting here.

One of our Trustees, Suzanna Gayford, is very generously providing her NGS garden, Rymans, for a Midsummer's Day private fund-raising event on Sunday 21st June 2020.

Outlook

The Management Board is constantly looking for new and better ways to provide a professional and welcoming Gallery and we work tirelessly with just one and a half staff. Fiona, Sarah, Martyn and Toom Bell, and the Chair, have been providing much appreciated additional volunteer support and we encourage others to consider volunteering too.

The UK high street has seen the highest recorded level of store closures in years. Chichester has seen a great number of shops close and business rates have been cited as being a contributing factor. Despite weak market sentiment and political uncertainty, our stronger, revitalised Board is working hard to ensure the Oxmarket is thriving, professional and becomes a 'must-go-to' venue when visiting Chichester, offering our community and artists an attractive gallery to exhibit at and visit.

The Oxmarket's programme of exhibitions, bookings for 2020 and even 2021 is more exciting than ever. A flower themed exhibition is planned to coincide with the Cathedral's *Festival of Flowers* in 2020 and we have Philip Jackson's three-week exhibition in October to look forward to. Despite the head winds we are looking to the future with enthusiasm and considerable optimism.

Sophie Hull

Chair

The Oxmarket Gallery