



Art at the Heart invites applicants to submit proposals for project ideas.

New initiative boosts local arts groups

In spite of the challenges of the pandemic, Arts Taunton has just launched an exciting new programme offering grant funding to local arts groups keen to develop their own projects.

The programme, called **Art at the Heart**, invites applicants to submit proposals for project ideas. An independent panel then agrees to fund winning applications up to 50% of the project cost to a maximum of £4,000.

The first round of proposals has now been assessed by the panel

which has declared awards to two arts groups for the period 2020/21.

The Bluebirds Theatre Company, based in North Curry, has been granted £2,400 and **GoCreate Taunton** has been awarded £2,200.

The Bluebirds will be deploying their 'Popera House', a custom-

built mobile theatre designed in the style of gypsy caravan, to bring their imaginative reworking of Wagner's Ring Cycle to your doorstep with *The Reduced Ring*.

"Think opera, think pop, add brevity and a heavy dose

of comedy and you get the idea", explains Co-Director Sasha Herriman. *"It's a brilliant opportunity to keep live music and theatre going at a time when the whole world has turned virtual."*

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If you have ideas or would like to get involved – get in touch! You can contact Kit Chapman at hello@artstaunton.co.uk



New initiative boosts local arts groups *continued*



Fellow Co-Director Amy Hardwick adds: "People need the joy that live theatre can offer! And the Popera House allows us to do this in a safe and socially distanced way."

Check out the The Popera House, The Reduced Ring Cycle and other shows including The Empress and The Nightingale on the Bluebirds website www.thebluebirds.org.uk

GoCreateTaunton will be presenting 'Pride in Art', a project promoting the arts to Taunton's LGBTQ+ adult community.

The programme will come in two halves: 'In Isolation' and 'Together'.

GoCreate Co-Director, Liz Hutchin, explains: "Our artists will provide two blocks of 6 monthly sessions guiding participants, developing their skills to create both collaborative and individual hanging banners which will adorn the streets of Taunton for our festival next year."

"These new banners will be par... raising awareness for Pride 2021 and the encouragement to engage in the Taunton Live Festival of the Creative and Performing Arts next year."

Interested members or supporters of Taunton's LGBTQ+ community are invited to email liz@gocreate.org.uk or jenny@gocreate.org.uk for further details of the "Pride in Art" project.



Photos: Popera House

Arts Taunton Founder, Kit Chapman, commented: "Our aim is to make Taunton a vibrant regional destination for the arts. We want to celebrate its diversity and inclusivity across the whole community. This initiative, along with Tyca, our annual young people's festival, and all the other work we are undertaking goes a fair way towards achieving that goal".

If you have ideas or would like to get involved – get in touch! hello@artstaunton.co.uk



Covid-19 inspires Tyca to innovate for the 2020 youth festival

When you are due to build on the success of the previous year's youth festival and you find yourself in the middle of a pandemic, unable to predict what will happen by October, your scheduled date, what do you do?

At Arts Taunton we found ourselves facing that very dilemma. Well, we decided that nothing was going to stop us from delivering a 2020 festival in some form or other for the young people of Taunton and the surrounding areas.

Deborah Baddoo, our Festival Director, has set about creating a series of events which could be



delivered virtually, but could be showcased 'in the flesh' in the autumn, should circumstances allow this. No mean feat to create two parallel and interlinked programmes.

The success of Tyca 2019 inspired us to kick off 2020 with a series of weekly challenges to interpret a given aspect of '2020 – Future Vision'. We invited young people to send in their entries – and the creativity continues to flow. We have admired everything from sculpture, creative make-up, a cut-out cardboard festival gathering to biscuits in the shape of specs, powerful and profound prose and fabulous photography: young people at their best, expressing their opinions about the world's issues at the moment.

The opportunity to showcase their work continues - with the added bonus of cash prizes including a grand overall winner's prize of £100 and the opportunity to have their work displayed publicly.

Alongside these, and running through the summer, we have workshops being delivered



Creative workshops free resource now online

The work we are doing to bring you Tyca 2020 has already started and making a rewarding impact on many young people in the region.

"The workshop was brilliant - it was actually more enjoyable than English or drama lessons at school because he (Jackie Clementines) made it much easier to understand. And fun. Definitely fun! I like the opportunity to ask him questions afterwards."

This was the verdict of one 11-year-old after taking part in the Spoken Word workshop and following question and answer session. And these workshops are now online and being added to weekly. They are free to access and participants can take them at their own pace.



There are two series of workshops available on the new Tyca festival (tycafestival.co.uk) website: Spoken Word and Visual Arts. Both are packed full of exciting challenges, useful insights and fun tasks.

The workshops will be available on the website for as long as people are finding them useful – we hope it is a great legacy of the early soft launch we did to help young people during lockdown. They are completely free and can be used by anyone. So far, we have had individual young people and whole school classes take part; the format is that flexible!

Sign up to the Tyca newsletter for updates on the Tyca Programme 2020 as they come online at tycafestival.co.uk



We welcome our newest trustee – JOHN ABBOTT

The Board of Arts Taunton is delighted to announce the appointment of John Abbott as a director and trustee of the charity.

Since 2013, John has been Principal and Chief Executive of Richard Huish College and is credited with establishing one of the best FE and Sixth Form colleges in the UK. He has lived in Taunton and worked at Huish since 2003.

Previously, John was the Assistant Principal and Faculty Director at the College with responsibility for curriculum and quality. He has worked in education for over 25 years and is passionate about the impact it can have on everybody's lives, especially in young people.



"I am delighted to join the board of Arts Taunton", he says, "as I have seen first-hand the positive influence that the provision and celebration of the arts can have on the quality of lives of all people within a community".

So, it cannot be said that the arts scene for young people in Taunton and its surrounding areas is boring! And nor can it be said that Arts Taunton has not risen to the considerable challenge of offering a range of arts activities to young people who may possibly be bored, or frustrated, or seeking new avenues in which to express themselves during these strange times!

Look out for news of the Tyca festival programme as it unrolls - <https://tycafestival.co.uk>

Julie O'Donnell, Trustee and Chair of the Tyca Sub-group

Contact our festival director at deborah.baddoo@artstaunton.co.uk





Poundbury

Are the principles of a 'Garden Town' being upheld in Taunton?

It's been three years since Taunton was announced as the South-West's first Garden Town, and it's clear that radical change is coming. But why should an arts charity be interested in urban development plans?

What's it got to do with us?

The answer is "everything".

There is no such thing as a successful, thriving community with no arts life. Countless studies have proved how vital the arts are for wellbeing and mental health - and, of course, for a successful economic landscape. Taunton is expanding massively and we must ensure that new communities are not isolated from the life-enhancing opportunities of the arts.

That all sounds perfectly reasonable, but what does it mean in practise?

Firstly, it means engagement. Somerset West and Taunton (SWT) Council has produced an admirable set of documents - the Garden Town Vision Document and the (draft) Design Guides foremost among them. These attempt to set principles and standards for the town's new developments. Arts Taunton has vigorously engaged in the consultation process and we support the aims of these documents.

Secondly, it means campaigning to ensure that the arts are a central part of the expansion plans of the town and that good design is at the forefront. Arts Taunton's successful charrette in October last year, hosted with the Royal Institute of British Architects and SWT, showed how this has been achieved brilliantly in new developments elsewhere in the UK.

Thirdly, it means holding the developers to account. In collaboration with West Monkton Parish Council, we called in experts - the social



Tornagrain, Scotland

policy foundation CREATE STREETS - to analyse one of the biggest development proposals.

Their report on the Framework Plan for Monkton Heathfield is not encouraging. They found missed opportunities and only modest attempts to stick to the Garden Town aims and principles. We are pressing SWT to make radical changes to the Plan and Design Guidance to secure a far better scheme for Taunton Garden Town.

Ultimately, this is about thinking long-term. Charities like Arts Taunton can raise large sums for theatres, youth centres, dance troupes, festivals and art galleries 'till we're blue in the face but it won't make any difference to people's lives if their new housing is poor, streetscape hostile, transport indifferent, schools inadequate and green space compromised.

Tony Laurance & Donald Rice,
Arts Taunton Trustees

But what do you think?

Share your thoughts with us via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram @ArtsTaunton) or by emailing Pam Knight at hello@artstaunton.co.uk



In a time when we have all been forced to be more insular, ArtsTaunton has continued to look outwards

Taunton, like everywhere else, will have its challenges, but we are looking beyond this.

Tyca is focusing on our young people, our grants are supporting exciting new initiatives and our interest in the very environment we live in ensures that arts and culture play their unique role in bringing a quality of life that helps us to look forward to the future.

The ask ...

It's often said small amounts go a long way. This is particularly true about Art at the Heart grants. These grants have offered a huge boost for two of our arts groups at a time when funding has never been more constrained in the sector. So we are asking you, the people of Taunton Deane, to help us reach out to other arts initiatives by making a small donation of any size you feel able.

A little goes a long way when we all do it together

Arts Taunton continues to be grateful to its Founding Funders, Corporate Sponsors and other donors who have stood by us and continued to support our work through the challenges we, with other charities, have had to confront as a consequence of the pandemic. We thank them all.



Be a part of the bigger picture with your donation

You can make a donation via our website at <https://artstaunton.co.uk/donate/>

