



**THIS ITEM IS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

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<b>Title of meeting:</b>	Culture, Leisure and Economic Development Decision Meeting
<b>Subject:</b>	Hotwalls Studios Update: <i>Pause. Reflect. Create</i> Project We Believe Arts Trail Business Support to Hotwalls Studios artists
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	16 October 2020
<b>Report by:</b>	Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services
<b>Wards affected:</b>	St Thomas

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**1 Requested by**

- 1.1 This report was requested by the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development.

**2 Purpose of the report**

- 2.1 To outline to the Cabinet Member the funding secured from Arts Council England Covid-19 Emergency Fund and the use of the funds for the Hotwalls Studios *Pause. Reflect. Create* project.
- 2.2 To update and summarise the involvement and support given by the Hotwalls Studios to the Portsmouth Creates *We Believe* project.
- 2.3 To update and summarise the business support given to the Hotwalls Studios artists at the start and during the nationwide lockdown period.

**3 Pause. Reflect. Create.**

- 3.1 In March 2020, as the Governments national lockdown was put in place creative businesses across the country, including the Hotwalls Studios artists, were thrown into a situation where they were unable to work from their studios to either create work, finish commissioned pieces or create income from visitors. The direct effect of this caused these creative SMEs an immediate halt and in some cases a reduction in income. Through this time the Hotwalls Studios team worked with the artists, internal and external parties to navigate the areas of both business and financial support available to creative practitioners.
- 3.2 As Portsmouth City Council tenants the Hotwalls Studios artists were able to apply for some support through the Councils rent deferral scheme. However as tenants that



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are on short one year leases with monthly rent terms this support unfortunately was not beneficial in most of the studio artists. This is when the Hotwalls Studios team looked outside of the council for further financial support for our artists.

- 3.3 In response to the Covid-19 crisis Arts Council England reallocated their funding support to their Covid-19 Emergency Support Fund announcing £160 million emergency response package to support individuals and organisations across the cultural sector. The Hotwalls Studios team identified this as the best fund to apply to for direct financial support to our artists.
- 3.4 In May a cross service team including the Hotwalls Studios team, Finance Officers and the Cultural Projects and Development Officer developed a successful bid for £15,000 for the *Pause. Reflect. Create* project. The funding allows Portsmouth City Council to fund 21 micro commissions to each Hotwalls Studios artist and purchase a small amount of equipment to be able to display the work in the Round Tower once the project was complete.
- 3.5 The *Pause. Reflect. Create* project aimed to give a small but much needed amount of financial support directly to the Hotwalls Studios artists and to create a body of work, firstly reflecting on the effect of Covid-19 for creative practitioners and secondly a social commentary of effects on Portsmouth through artistic practice.
- 3.6 The project is designed to be shared digitally across the Hotwalls Studios online platforms as the individual pieces of work are created. The digital content varies from artist and specialism but include images, pre-recorded and live videos and artist Q&A sessions.
- 3.7 Currently, the online delivery programme is a quarter of its way through with healthy engagement. The current outcomes from the digital outreach for *Pause. Reflect. Create* have included an increase in saved and shared posts. The average post has had double the usual outreach of similar posts online, and has expanded the audience who generally engage with posts from the Hotwalls Studios. The increase in saved posts is promising for future business prospects for the artists.
- 3.8 Once the project is completed it will culminate in an exhibition both virtually and physically. Initially this exhibition was planned for November 2020 but in light of the changes to social distancing guidelines our revised timetable for this is now March 2021. The body of work will then move to the Portsmouth Museum Service Covid-19 collection creating a legacy for the Hotwalls Studios artists and the City.

## **4 We Believe Arts Trail**

- 4.1 The Hotwalls Studios and the Business Support Team supported Portsmouth Creates to deliver the *We Believe* arts trail project which ran across 6 weeks in August and early September 2020. The project led by Portsmouth Creates, aimed to provide small pots of monetary support to freelance artists that had fallen through the gaps to qualify for financial support from the various Government Covid-19 schemes in place.
- 4.2 Portsmouth Creates developed a successful £12,000 Portsmouth Crowdfunder online campaign, with Portsmouth City Council match funding £5,000 towards the



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final target. This project supported 20 local freelance artists who were granted micro commissions for artwork which became a three part arts trail in parks and open spaces across the City, in Old Portsmouth, Milton and part of Southsea Seafront.

- 4.3 Portsmouth City Council provided over 60 poster cases and 11 entrance to the city poster sites that were empty due to businesses not advertising due to the effects of Covid-19, to display the artwork and advertise the trail. This use of poster cases not only visually improved areas of the City, but was an opportunity for artists to increase their exposure to a wider audience as well as encouraging Portsmouth residents to be active by walking or cycling these trails whilst taking daily exercise.
- 4.4 This project also gave Portsmouth residents that do not usually engage with cultural activities access to artwork across their City. The artwork will become part of the Portsmouth museum Covid-19 collection as a legacy and commentary on life in Portsmouth during the pandemic.
- 4.5 There are initial plans for the Hotwalls Studios to support the project further by housing an exhibition of the artwork at an event in The Round Tower making it accessible for those that were unable to visit the trails. The artworks currently can be viewed at the *We Create* market events held at Handley's Corner every second weekend of each month through until December 2020

## **5 Business Support to Hotwalls Studio artists in response to the Covid-19 Crisis.**

- 5.1 As the Covid-19 Crisis unfolded and the impact on SMEs across Portsmouth started to become clear the Hotwalls Studios team worked closely and sought advice from the Economic Development team to navigate and understand the level of support available to creative businesses. With a wealth of information coming through on a daily basis and often conflicting as the response to the pandemic grew it was important for the Hotwalls Studios Development Manager to support the studio artists looking at what the best support schemes were.
- 5.2 As the Hotwalls Studios units are registered as separate business in individual units we identified that they qualified for the Governments Small Business Grant scheme. We guided 12 of the studio artists to apply for this support fund all of which were successful in receiving this grant.
- 5.3 This scheme meant that 11 of the Hotwalls Studios spaces retained tenants throughout out the lockdown and supported the reopening of studios as social distancing guidelines eased.
- 5.4 Unfortunately, 3 artists made the decision to leave the Hotwalls Studios over this period and we have now interviewed and will welcome 3 new artists for these studios which will be filled from mid October 2020.



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5.5 Utilising our relationships through Shaping Portsmouth, University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth Creates, Creative Network South and the Studios Providers Network South , the Hotwalls Studios team will continue to research funding streams available to our artists, supporting them where needed , and offering as many opportunities as possible to build resilience into their business models .

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Signed by  
**Stephen Baily**  
**Director of Culture, Leisure and Regulatory Services**

**Appendices:** None

**Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972**

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location

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Signed by:  
**Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Economic Development**