



Arts & Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes

TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT

YEAR ENDED 5th April 2021

The trustees present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 5 April 2021

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

AHA-MK:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
Charity Number:	1158874
Principal Office:	Acorn House, 351 Midsummer Boulevard, Milton Keynes, MK9 3HP
Trustees at 5/4/21	Francesca Skelton (Chair) Emma Courtney (Vice Chair) Laura Keen (Honorary Treasurer) Amanda Farr Kay Greenhalgh (resigned May 2020) Rob Gifford Laxman Kastala Victoria Mayes Hannah Olarewaju Yvonne Owuor

Financial

S Green FMAAT, Accountant and Member of the Association of Accounting Technicians, was the independent examiner for 2020/21. Based on his examination, no matter has come to his attention.

The Honorary Treasurer, Laura Keen, is a qualified Chartered Accountant.

Bank: Metro Bank, 44-46, Midsummer Arcade, Midsummer Blvd, Milton Keynes MK9 3BB

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Arts & Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It is governed by its constitution dated July 2014, with an amendment February 2018 and January 2020.

A full list of the trustees is provided above. The maximum number of trustees is ten and the minimum is five. Trustees are recruited through an open call, AHA-MK contacts and membership; their appointment is confirmed at the Annual General Meeting. Trustees met four times a year as a board 2020/21: 20 May; 23 September; 1 December 2020, 18 March 2021. The AGM 2019/20 was held on January 21 2021.

Staff

Elizabeth Howard was on a freelance contract as a Programme and Partnerships Manager for AHA-MK. In July 2020 Elizabeth became the first employee for AHA-MK when she was given a part-time employment contract for 4 days a week. The trustees would like to thank Elizabeth for her hard

work and her passionate advocacy for culture, cultural education and cultural inclusion. She has worked with great commitment to manage the major strands of our work: 1) Cultural Advocacy 2) Cultural Inclusion and Diversity 3) MAKE, the MK Cultural Education Partnership 4) Support of AHA-MK members. She fundraises, builds networks and partnerships, and seeks new opportunities to promote culture in Milton Keynes.

Risk

The Board of Trustees review the areas of risk that may affect the organisation.

OBJECTIVES

The Objects of AHA-MK are:

To promote the arts and heritage for the benefit of the public in Milton Keynes in particular but not exclusively by supporting and representing the arts and heritage sector through promotion, representation and development and by working in partnership with other like-minded organisations to achieve joint goals that further the CIO's charitable purposes.

AHA-MK champions the rich heritage and creative future of Milton Keynes.

AHA-MK is also the lead partner for **MAKE, the Milton Keynes Cultural Education Partnership**, with its vision to work together to nourish and support the creative skills and cultural wellbeing of Milton Keynes children and young people. This is part of a national movement of Cultural Education Partnerships to deliver creative thinking at the heart of education.

The Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit is at the forefront of our work (section 17 of the Charity Act 2011). The trustees comply with their duty to have due regard to the charity commission's public benefit guidance when exercising powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant.

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision: Milton Keynes as an international cultural destination

Mission: As the unified, independent voice for Milton Keynes culture, AHA-MK is a cultural leader and pioneering, place-making partnership. We work collaboratively and strategically through our members and partners to position culture as a catalyst for Milton Keynes to be an outstanding and inspiring place to live, work and visit.

Values

- **Creative:** perceiving the world in new ways, imagining and innovating.
- **Outward-looking:** championing the role and impact of Milton Keynes culture across the local, regional, national and international strategic context and seeking inspiration and best practice from all sectors.
- **Collaborative:** working together we are greater than the sum of our parts, driving forward the cultural future of Milton Keynes.
- **Empowering:** we are fiercely supportive of our members and invest in nurturing and sharing knowledge, skills and confidence to innovate and develop the sector.
- **Entrepreneurial:** we invest in the ideas, assets and skills within and beyond our membership towards solving common challenges and shared goals.
- **Committed to Excellence and Equality:** excellence as the driving force of everything we do and deliver; equality in its widest sense, as we strive for inclusion and diversity to ensure our Milton Keynes cultural sector is representative of our community.

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

1) Advocacy 2) Milton Keynes Cultural Inclusion and Diversity Programme of Change 3) MAKE, the MK Cultural Education Partnership 4) Supporting AHA-MK Members

With the first lockdown in March 2020 the period covered by this report, 5th April 2020 to April 5th 2021, was severely impacted by Covid-19 with many AHA-MK members having to close venues, furlough staff, cancel contracts, and find ways of sustaining their businesses and cultural offer.

AHA-MK quickly adopted Zoom to maintain its collaborative work. This included: Advocacy for Culture; AHA-MK Forums; AHA-MK Member Meetings; the launch of our Rethinking Cultural Inclusion and Diversity Report; the Inclusion Consultation Group and related online meetings; MAKE (MK Cultural Education Partnership) Executive and Partnership Meetings. The biggest AHA-MK cultural offer was the summer Big MAKE project.

The determination and creativity of the arts and heritage sector has been impressiver, finding new ways to offer cultural opportunities for engagement through the digital platform.

1) Cultural Advocacy

AHA-MK advocates for the social, health and wellbeing, and economic value that culture and creativity bring to those living, learning, working and playing in Milton Keynes to the Milton Keynes Council, stakeholders and decision makers.

- Advocacy for **Cultural Inclusion and Diversity** is central to the work of AHA-MK. After an intensive period of research investigating inclusion and diversity in the arts and heritage sector 2019/20, AHA-MK wrote up the findings and launched the report *Rethinking Inclusion and Diversity: A Call to Action for Milton Keynes* in November 2020. To take forward the Action Plan of a Programme of Change, in October 2020 we were awarded a large strategic grant of £90k from MK Community Foundation for a two-year programme to develop our work as a bridge organisation that links the cultural sector to diverse communities. Milton Keynes Council also awarded funding to take forward a cultural traineeship and apprenticeship programme.



Artswork, based in Southampton, is the ACE bridge organisation to support the development of local CEPs in the South East region (currently 13). Our thanks to Ruth Taylor, Strategic Manager at Artswork, for her consistent invaluable support, and to Milton Keynes Council for the funding for 2020/21, which has enabled Milton Keynes to continue to be part of this national network of CEPs, and to develop the MAKE, the MK CEP. And finally our continued thanks to Jill Stansfield, who gives generously of her time as independent Chair of MAKE.

- AHA-MK is a member of **SEMLEP Creative and Cultures Industries Group Meeting** where cultural colleagues in the region share issues, achievements and challenges and advocate for culture at the heart of placemaking and growth and for its impact on the economy and quality of life of this key strategic region.
- Our Arts & Heritage Alliance Milton Keynes consistently acts as a collective advocate for culture as a driver of the economy, health and wellbeing and transferable skills.
 - When Covid-19 hit the UK in spring 2020, AHA-MK collated information from its members to produce a report to demonstrate the impact the pandemic had on the MK cultural sector.
 - AHA-MK meets regularly with a group of cultural leaders running the large venues: Bletchley Park, MK Arts Centre, MK Gallery, Milton Keynes Museum, MK Theatre, The Stables and The Parks Trust. A letter was sent to Milton Keynes Council leaders and MPs outlining the impact of Covid-10 on cultural businesses and the sector generally. Council Leader Cllr Peter Marland wrote expressing his support. We are grateful for the support of Milton Keynes Council and of the DCMS Culture Recovery Fund, distributed by Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.
 - AHA-MK gave extensive feedback to the MK2050 Strategy to advocate 1) that culture must be one of the Big Seven Ambitions for Milton Keynes in 2050 as it is central to future placemaking and to Milton Keynes being a creative, cultural and competitive city. 2) that creative and cultural education is essential to develop creative thinking and transferable skills. Our advocacy included a presentation to the Council Cabinet when the draft strategy was discussed. Both Monica Ferguson, Chief Executive of The Stables, and the AHA-MK Chair addressed the meeting.

We were delighted that the final **MK2050 Strategy** published January 2021 stated:

Big Ambition 2: *Make Milton Keynes a LEADING GREEN AND CULTURAL city - by global standards.*

Big Ambition 6: *Offer better opportunities for everyone TO LEARN and develop their skills.*

Chapter 8, Healthy and Creative Places, it states:

We aim to provide better creative and cultural education in schools so that we build the creative thinking and skills that will help our future workers adapt to new challenges. As automation in the workplaces increases, creativity will become even more important in future job roles. (Page 68)

MAKE, our MK Cultural Education Partnership is specifically referenced on page 88.

Taking forward the research and report, AHA-MK consistently advocates cultural inclusion and diversity. Chapter 8, Healthy and Creative Places also states: *We will use the recommendations from a recent report by MK Arts and Heritage Alliance to make sure that everyone feels able to engage in the city's cultural offer.*

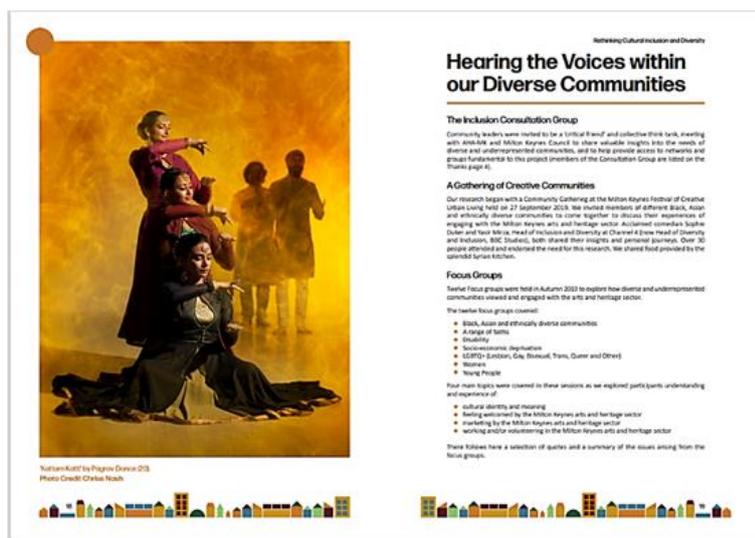
2) Milton Keynes Cultural Inclusion and Diversity Programme of Change

Commissioned and Supported Programmes and Projects:

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY ACTION PLAN September 2020

After an intensive period of research investigating inclusion and diversity in the arts and heritage sector 2019/20 AHA-MK wrote up the findings and launched the report *Rethinking Inclusion and Diversity: A Call to Action for Milton Keynes* in November 2020. Our key recommendation was that a commitment to inclusion and diversity should be a core strategic ambition of each cultural organisation, regardless of capacity: this is central to survival. Moving from a project-by-project approach to delivering inclusion and diversity throughout an organisation will lead to sustainable change. Realising this ambition to be enabled by organisations working together to share training, expertise, networks, challenges, successes, all leading to best practice, and to support smaller voluntary providers to develop strategies for inclusion. Other recommendations were made around the following areas: a) Training b) Recruitment c) Engagement d) Communication e) Sustainability.

Using these recommendations, AHA-MK developed two successful funding applications to 1) MK Community Foundation and 2) Milton Keynes Council to develop its work in this area.



Our main achievements in this area between April 2020 and April 2021 are as follows:

Development of AHA-MK's Cultural Inclusion Consultation Group.

After many months of searching for representation from the LGBTQ+ community, we secured Alice Boland-Rhodes as a member of the Cultural Inclusion Consultation Group. In January we recruited Jessica Butler as a young person for the group and we are working to recruit two more young people.

Linking the Sector to Diverse Communities to develop relationships and collaboration

In October 2020 AHA-MK linked Cowper and Newton's Amazing Grace commemoration project to local black community groups. The community groups have shown great interest in becoming involved in this work. In December 2020 we organised a Zoom meeting to link diverse communities with the We Are MK Too exhibition at MK Museum. Over 30 representatives from different community groups attended. They spoke to Museum Director Bill Griffiths about their ideas for the upcoming exhibition.

In February 2021 we linked Inter-Action MK with different diverse communities for its Cook Club/Book Club. As a result, the Cook Club featured 3 MK-based guest chefs from different cultural backgrounds, including Chinese, Punjabi, and Caribbean.

Promoting Inclusion and Diversity through Communications and Events

In October 2020 AHA-MK developed Inclusion and Diversity section in its newsletter to highlight initiatives. AHA-MK's newsletter is emailed to over 300 people (including arts and heritage organisations and those from diverse communities) on a monthly basis.

In November 2020 AHA-MK officially launched its report: *Rethinking Inclusion and Diversity: A Call to Action for Milton Keynes*. 135 tickets were booked for this online event, with 103 people tuning in on the evening. Abid Hussain, Director of Diversity at Arts Council England, was the special guest speaker. The audience included representatives of many different communities as well as arts and heritage practitioners. There was a breakout room session where communities and cultural organisations could meet. It was a very participatory session, with singers and story tellers from different backgrounds, representative speakers from various diverse communities and a Bollywood hand dance flash mob with Sanjeev Jimmy broadcasting live all the way from India.

In December 2020 AHA-MK delivered a Forum on post-Covid recovery for the cultural sector, *Strategies for Recovery*, with inclusion and diversity as one of 3 strands. Alan Lane from Slung Low Theatre Company in Leeds shared his experience of running a venue and producing art that engages the working class and immigrant community where the company operates from in Holbeck, Leeds. That same month AHA-MK was invited to present the process and findings of its Rethinking Cultural Inclusion and Diversity report to Arts Council England South East Team. We shared the plans for future work. This was received very well by the ACE team.

In March 2021 we began working with Shenley Brook End School and Hazeley Academy to deliver a Diversity Symposium in May 2021. AHA-MK planned to deliver a section on cultural inclusion and diversity at this symposium. We linked the organisers to different cultural organisations (such as Cowper and Newton's Amazing Grace Commemorations) that are working towards projects that use local stories to promote inclusion and diversity in the curriculum.

Also in March, AHA-MK presented at SEMLEP Creative and Cultural Industries Group. We shared the findings of our report and future plans. We called for inclusion and diversity to be a rolling action on the group's agenda, and for the group to establish an action team to take inclusion priorities forward. The group includes representatives from regional organisations, covering Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, and Buckinghamshire.

Making Strategic Change

In January 2021 we launched a city-wide Cultural Inclusion manifesto for AHA-MK members. Members have responded positively and promised to take the pledges that they feel they can fulfil in the short term and write them into their organisational strategies for the months ahead. One member has said it will print and frame the manifesto and hang it in the venue's entry hall.

In March 2021 AHA-MK launched a draft of a new business plan with trustees with Cultural Inclusion and Diversity as one of its major strands of its operation. MAKE (the MK Cultural Education Partnership led by AHA-MK) has incorporated Inclusion and Diversity into its 3-year strategy, and this will influence priorities and actions going forward.

We would like to thank: our AHA-MK members for working together on this journey of Cultural Inclusion; our Inclusion and Diversity Consultation Group for their consistent engagement, enthusiasm and support; all those who continued to engage with our sector so positively despite

this challenging first year of Covid; and Gamiel Yafai, MD of Diversity Marketplace who has been a constant support on this journey giving generously of his time advising, challenging and guiding.

3) MAKE, the Milton Keynes Cultural Education Partnership



Working in partnership to enhance the lives of children and young people in Milton Keynes through outstanding and inclusive cultural education and creative enrichment.

MAKE's priorities are as follows:

- Exploring, Discovering and Enabling Creativity
- Happier and Healthier Young People
- Careers, Skills and Opportunities

We are very grateful to Milton Keynes Council for awarding AHA-MK £15,000 in April 2020 to manage and develop MAKE.

Main achievements for MAKE, April 2020-April 2021

New MAKE Strategy, 2021-2023

In autumn 2020 MAKE developed a new strategy which was published in spring 2021. (<https://aha-mk.org/make-cultural-education-strategy-2021-2024/>). In summary, this sets out MAKE's commitment to:

- Build capacity to create a well financially-resourced CEP, that has a strong sense of partnership working, and a brand name that is recognisable to all schools, arts and heritage organisations, and children and young people in Milton Keynes.
- Develop partnerships to strengthen capacity for cost-effective cultural education projects and services in Milton Keynes that engage citywide cross sector stakeholders and achieve shared objectives.
- Deliver a systematic, realistic programme that meets MAKE's aims and priorities for children and young people, promotes partnership working, and advocates for the network.
- Support schools, teachers and the arts and heritage sector to create better pathways for communication; help teachers and schools to feel more confident and resourced to deliver high quality cultural education; and develop a sector with well-staffed learning teams.

Launching the MAKE Brand and Logo

The MAKE brand was softly launched in April 2020, and officially launched at our symposium *Arts in the Right Place* in October 2020 (see below for more information). Since the launch, MAKE members have used the logo on their websites and strategically mentioned the partnership in funding applications. The MAKE story was approved by the MAKE partnership in January/February 2021 and now appears on the MAKE webpage. MAKE worked with videographer Willie Robb and students from Shenley Brook End School, Brooklands Farm Primary, and Two-Mile Ash to create a video that features on the webpage alongside the MAKE story. AHA-MK staff and trustees use the MAKE logo in their email signatures. <http://aha-mk.org/develop/make/>

The Big MAKE



While Covid put a halt to most of MAKE's in person programme delivery, we responded to 2020's first national lockdown, by launching The Big MAKE. 13 schools and over 600 children and young people responded to celebrate creativity in all forms, shared via social media. An optional Big MAKE fundraiser also invited children and young people to sell their creations; do a sponsored 'MAKE'; or set a fundraising challenge.

It raised £1,296. 120 Quest Boxes containing story-making activities for Year 6 pupils were commissioned to explore the theme of 'transition' through creative writing. Designed by artist Jonny Clapham, these were distributed to pupils unable to return to school due to Covid-19.

Developing Inclusion and Diversity in the Network

Through The Big MAKE we worked with DREAMSAI, the Indian community-led organisation that delivered care packages to those in need during the pandemic. The schools involved in The Big MAKE represent a wide range of different ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. We met with the local Artsmark schools to discuss how MAKE can help them deliver the Artsmark Quality Principle #4 'Ensuring a positive and inclusive experience'. Our Schools Connect Programme (a drama-based programme that encourages healthy expression of emotion and includes CPD for teachers) is working with special needs school, Slated Row. AHA-MK's recent funding for the progression of its inclusion and diversity work will be strategically linked to the work of MAKE.

MAKE Fundraising and Development Group

A group of five MAKE organisations worked with fundraising consultants Adapt for Arts to develop the partnership. After a successful bid to Milton Keynes Council, the group worked on a successful application to Arts Council England to support The Big MAKE, and contributed to the successful application made to MK Community Foundation for cultural inclusion and diversity. A plan to develop future bids was also written. Feedback from the group showed that knowledge of fundraising was increased and their skills had been developed. This will contribute greatly to the ongoing success of the partnership. Adapt for Arts presented at the MAKE partnership meeting in October and delivered a final report in December 2020. Significant learning from this process was that a group like this needs to understand how their own organisations will benefit from partnership working.

MAKE Cultural Education Symposium

In October 2020 MAKE and the Leadership and Training Centre at Shenley Brook End School organised a very successful online cultural education symposium called *Arts in the Right Place*. The symposium was aimed at an audience of teachers, heads, governors, artists and arts and heritage organisations. Michael Bracey, Chief Executive of Milton Keynes Council opened the event. Over 60 people attended, 34 of which were teachers, which was an impressive outcome. This demonstrated the need for events, where people come together and share ideas about cultural education. There were many calls for another symposium that could take place in person when the Covid pandemic has passed.



Image: MOTUS Dance

MAKE created a booklet which featured information about the cultural education offers from 22 different arts and heritage organisations, and distributed it to all attendees. The booklet now sits on the MAKE webpage. After the symposium, Shenley Brook End School expressed a keen interest to become more heavily involved in the strategic delivery of MAKE. Our Artswork colleagues (Artswork is the South East Bridge organisation that supports the cultural education partnerships) were very positive about the event, and said it could be used as a blueprint for other CEPs to promote and advocate cultural education in their areas.

Ongoing Partnerships and Engagement:

As well as managing quarterly MAKE Partnership meetings and MAKE Executive meetings, our School Relationship Manager held individual and group networking meetings with over 30 teachers around Milton Keynes. These sessions have not only informed teachers about MAKE and cultural education locally, but also encouraged partnership working between schools regarding their Artsmark progress.

MAKE worked closely with Cowper and Newton Museum to gain understanding of what is needed for the educational aspect of its Amazing Grace commemorations in 2022. With Cowper and Newton, MAKE created and distributed a survey to teachers (with 14 replies) to determine what the need was and what teachers would be interested in sharing with pupils.

In a generous show of partnership working, the City Discovery Centre offered 2 days of videographer Willie Robb's time to develop a video for the MAKE story with students from 3 schools across MK. CDC had employed Willie Robb for another project funded by the DCMS Culture Recovery Fund, distributed through The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and shared this time with MAKE.

The AHA-MK Programme and Partnerships Manager was invited to join the National Leadership Training Programme for Cultural Education Partnerships. This nationwide programme funded by the Arts Council brings together CEP leads in order to discuss different ways of working and encourage mutual learning. This is both extending the knowledge, contacts and networks of the Programme and Partnerships Manager, which is valuable for the both the local, regional and national advocacy so important to place cultural education and creative thinking back at the heart of the school curriculum.

MAKE worked with The Music Hub to understand how both organisations can work together in stronger partnership. They organised a very productive and informative meeting with the Isle of Wight CEP and Music Hub to discuss different models of how CEPs and Hubs work together. Together we met with the Milton Keynes Council councillors holding the portfolio for culture, education and youth services in February 2021 to influence the city-wide impact cultural education can have in MK. This resulted in increased commitment to and understanding of MAKE from Milton Keynes Council.

MAKE has developed a newsletter which is published twice a term. The first two were published in the Autumn term of 2020. It features information about MAKE and cultural education in Milton Keynes.



MAKE programmes taking place in schools and MK College had to be halted April 2020 to April 2021

Young Creatives With the closure and ongoing uncertainty, MK College and the Young Creative students were disappointed to have to suspend the work with Cohort 2 of Young Creatives May 2020. It was hoped to resume this earlier but as time went on the logistical challenges and priorities for the College necessitated delaying the restart until the next financial year 2021/22.

Image: Cohort 1 at MK Gallery

Artis were working with teachers on the Schools Connect programme but this too had to be delayed.

4. Supporting AHA-MK Members and building networks

AHA-MK provides professional development and networking platforms to develop the impact of the arts and heritage sector to the benefit of the public. Our aim is also to build connections and relationships to support the cultural sector and open doors for new opportunities.

AHA-MK Forums 2020/21 on Zoom in this Covid-19 year

AHA-MK curates 4 Forums each year. Forums are opened up to members and wider stakeholders to build the conversation around how to ensure we are building a thriving and inclusive cultural and creative Milton Keynes. AHA-MK quickly adapted to Zoom for these gatherings and in this time of relative isolation, it was good to see so many members and new contacts attend. One of the advantages of Zoom, as we all learnt this year, is how easy it is to introduce speakers from far and wide.

- On the 10th June we focused on the very relevant issue of **Health and Wellbeing in the Arts and Heritage Sector**. Hayley Youell from the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance was the keynote speaker, and joined our meeting from her home in Barnsley.
- The theme for the 16th September was **Cultural Education and Creative Thinking**. Igniting creative thinking in schools goes through cultural education inspires new generations of Milton Keynes Citizens who can equip the city with the progressive skills it needs to move forward.
- The 9th December 2020 AHA-MK Forum was **Strategies for Recovery**. Speakers included Alan Lane from the Slung Low Theatre in Leeds who shared how they engaged with their local community.
- The 3rd of March 2021 *Marketing and Reconnecting to Audiences*.

Member meetings 2019/20

Member only meetings are held to discuss city wide strategies and initiatives, and member and business issues for our sector alliance

Online AHA-MK Newsletter and AHA-MK Twitter Account

AHA-MK sends out a monthly online newsletter, inviting members to share news of developments, successes, challenges, opportunities for professional development and good practice with their colleagues and key interested parties.

Our Alliance runs the Facebook page for MAKE to promote and celebrate cultural education and opportunities for children and young people and schools.