

A Young Arts project supported by the Art Society Gravesend

Background

In the spring The Arts Society Gravesend were asked to support a community project - focusing on using Art as a way to involve community in thinking about the environment, and the impact of anti social behaviour such as littering, vandalism and graffiti have on the area where they live, with the aim of getting young people and their families involved and caring about the area.

The project has been focused on a foot tunnel under the railway line in Gravesend. It is a route that many families and young people take to get to school and also to the river front. The tunnel and its surrounding area suffers from graffiti, fly tipping, and anti-social behaviour. Last summer with the support of Gravesham Borough Council, network rail and some local businesses, the local community painted a mural in the tunnel and tidied up the surrounding area - the mural has not been vandalised

This year the focus has been on running a workshop with children from a near by school (Chantry Community Academy) encouraging the children to reflect on the issues and respond using art by making bunting and then to run an event to involve the wider community - tidy up the site, plant a few flowers and display the children's work and so on.

We felt that working with groups of children and young people was something that was worthwhile, is in line with the aims and objectives of the Arts Society and therefore was something worthy of support

While we provided funding there was a lot of support from other local businesses and local community groups and indeed individual local residents most of which was in kind: resources, supporting the workshop, planning, delivery, and so on. Gr@nd and Chantry Community Academy were the main partnership for the project - they gave time and materials. The two businesses nearest to the tunnel - Monkey and the Buddha Emporium of Art and the local Honda garage are supporting the project by donating resource etc. (both last year and this). Network Rail are supporting the project and agreed for the project to use the tunnel and the surrounding area, and to clean and paint the tunnel. However the tunnel wall and ceiling is in a poor state - so this will need to be a longer term goal.

The workshop

As funding was limited it was agreed that a morning workshop would be held involving 30 Year 6 children - as many of these children would be using the tunnel to get to school from September.

After an introduction the children walked to the tunnel where some thought provoking questions and quotes for the children to reflect about were on display. Back at school the children discussed what they had seen and were asked questions such as 'How do you feel about the tunnel?' 'What would you change?' etc. Then they designed and painted the pieces of wood to make some bunting to hang at the tunnel.

Community Event

The next step is to run the community event by the end of August (which is being called the gardening Project). Local businesses, the Council and other community groups will be supporting the project. The plan is to work on a small area, opposite the Mural first, with the bunting hung above the railings. Hopefully with further sponsors and workshops it will eventually be possible to cover the whole area.

The project leader has said that the support from the Arts Society Gravesend was invaluable. She said ' it is a seed of kindness that has been planted in Gravesend.'

We are already starting to think about how to extend the project for next year.