

Appendix information We Are Commoners!

About Craftspace

Craftspace is a craft development organisation based in Birmingham. It is a curator, creative producer and researcher devising commissioning opportunities and projects which actively demonstrate the progressive role of makers and craft in civil society. Our programme is underpinned by socially engaged, participatory, collaborative and co-created approaches to engaging communities through the arts. Building cultural, social and human capital is a key driver of our work. www.craftspace.co.uk

Commons Background

The Commons are life-sustaining or life-enhancing resources and services that have not been divided up and assigned a monetary value in the global economy but instead are shared - according to evolving arrangements and agreements - among members of a community or group. They range from the air we breathe, pollination provided by bees, land that provides food for gathering, sharing, cultivating and dwelling rather than selling, to libraries, public parks, pavements we walk along, and on to childcare, care for the elderly and words of comfort given freely and willingly rather than at an hourly rate.

In 'Mapping the New Commons' Charlotte Hess suggests that divergent disciplines, political interests, and geographical regions are increasingly finding the term 'commons' crucial in addressing issues of social dilemmas, degradation, and sustainability of a wide variety of shared resources.

Historian Peter Linebaugh has popularised the term 'commoning' which in modern times is about activating the power of social cooperation to get things done. Commons Animator Julie Ristau describes how "the act of commoning draws on a network of relationships made under the expectation that we will each take care of one another and with a shared understanding that some things belong to all of us—which is the essence of the commons itself. The practice of commoning demonstrates a shift in thinking from the prevailing ethic of "you're on your own" to "we're in this together." Commoning is also a way to tap into the hidden chamber within our imaginations, which harbors vivid images of different ways to live."

At a time when local authorities are forced to make cuts in provision and lack resource to manage publicly owned assets, being able to understand, advocate for and re-frame the intrinsic value of commonly owned cultural, heritage other assets to thriving commons neighbourhoods is vital and urgent. Participating and collaborating in commons thinking to create new knowledge can equip people to reimagine stewardship of commonly owned resources and tap into, support and connect emergent forms of commoning as part of developing local strategies to counter the creep and threat of new forms of enclosure. The ability to think in a Commons way is an important skill for rebuilding political, community and personal resilience.

Craft can join the campaign to make a powerful commentary on what society stands to gain from acting to protect and reclaim our global commons.

Through existing work, new commissions and the lens of craft, making and materials - makers can become commons 'animateurs' to highlight the issues, contribute their thought leadership and participate in a call to action.

Reference information about the commons

Types of commons

Useful intro, plus good short video introduction to knowledge commons:

<https://www.iasc-commons.org/commons-types/>

Commons Thinking by Justin Kenrick – chapter from the Handbook of Sustainability Literacy, ed. Arran Stibbe (2009)

Freely accessible online:

http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/5737/Commons-Thinking.pdf

Article by Leila Dawney: Commoning and the production of common worlds
p33-35 of the issue available at:

<http://www.losquaderno.professionaldreamers.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/losquaderno30.pdf>

Article by Max Haiven: Creativity and the Commons

<https://www.stirtoaction.com/article/creativity-and-the-commons>

Article by Amy Twigger Holroyd: Why it's important to be open

<http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk/articles/why-its-important-to-be-open/>

Mapping Activism

As part of the exhibition development we are working on mapping the extent and nature of local and national community based activism taking place around the theme of the commons and commons-thinking. For example, community led allotment activism, social farms and gardens, community building and, but not limited to, community run shops, libraries and parks. It is our intention to feature the results of our research in the exhibition in some way. There are opportunities to connect commissioned artists with activists, to support research and development for new work.

We have begun a call for expressions of interest, which is ongoing. If you would be interested in engaging with any of these people/groups to inform a commission, please include this in your brief proposal.

So far responses have included these individuals and groups:

Andrew Darke, Gloucestershire

Andrew's 'commoning' includes extensive and deep collaborations with different groups of people not based around any sort of financial exchange. He sees community power as the only way in which we can adapt and change the political system which is killing the earth.

Andrew works as an artist himself and has recently come to see his work as essentially both activism and 'commoning'. This is largely within the artists group PLACE: www.p-l-a-c-e.org PLACE is a group of artists / initiators with a particular concern for landscape quality.

Andrew is currently working to set up a community based live / work agricultural project on land which will be held as a commons in trust in perpetuity. He also gave considerable support to Yorkley Court Community Farm (YCCF) until its eviction in 2016. Andrew also works with Extinction Rebellion Forest of Dean – they plan to set up a Peoples' Assembly to help their local Council respond properly to the fact of its declaration last December of a Climate Emergency.

Michael Dunwell, Chepstow

Michael was involved in the early formation of Transition Town groups in the Forest of Dean and now supports Extinction Rebellion and various local energy and food activities.

He now mainly writes, in particular about Commons history and theory. He has reviewed David Bollier's forthcoming book 'Fair, Free and Alive'.

Corinna Spurway, Exeter

Corinna and her husband have set up the Little Free Library in their front garden. The books, (housed in a small cupboard on a stand) are available for anyone to take or borrow. Users can also add books. They have themed weekends and a very active Facebook page.

An example of quiet activism this library is part of a world movement, "Little Free Library is a non-profit organization that inspires a love of reading, builds community, and sparks creativity by fostering neighbourhood book exchanges around the world." <https://littlefreelibrary.org/> It began in America and there are now more than 90,000 registered Little Free Library book-sharing boxes in 91 countries worldwide.

Edible Mach 'If you eat, you're in'

Edible Mach Maethlon is a community-led project that grows edible crops around Machynlleth, Wales. Connecting people with local food, sustainability and engaging skill development. Volunteers are the backbone of Edible Mach Maethlon, designing, building and maintaining edible sites around Machynlleth. With 14 sites around the town free for all to harvest and enjoy, edible gardening has well and truly landed in Machynlleth.

They garden in the town's public spaces: library, train station, fire station, park, police station & common land on the housing estate. The group grow that food that anyone can pick. The 14 sites are maintained by volunteers, who also provide cooking workshops. www.machmaethlon.org/edible-mach

Interwoven Productions CIC

Interwoven Productions are specialists in Creative Placemaking in Exeter; they support artists of quality in participatory, place-led practice. They have developed a technique for place-led, community-building activity, the Squilometre; that is designed to operate in a hyper-local way within one square kilometre.

The technique animates a community to creatively celebrate its own place and everything that comprises that place in an ongoing series of community-led projects, each nominated by them. A Squilometre operates in perpetual community motion through the pay-it-forward donation of one street project to the next. The technique is entirely transferable to any other place, urban or rural.

www.interwovenproductions.com

Friends of Hardie Park

Friends of Hardie Park is a movement of local people who rescued an underused local authority owned park in Essex from neglect, anti-social behaviour and vandalism. They operate a community stewardship arrangement where they don't take responsibility for the park; that is left to the Council, but they add value and seek to improve the park in whatever way we can.

They are a grassroots community group started entirely by local people. The Friends host events, run a café and community centre within the park. They also run various projects which are help to shape the community into the future.

www.friendsofhardiepark.co.uk

Daily Thread

Daily Thread run textile sessions at a community textile space in Birmingham. The volunteer run sessions that are low cost; sharing skills, helping/teaching/inspiring each other. They promote making and repairing as environmentally sustainable alternative and occasionally run craftivism workshops, themes have included climate chaos/extinction rebellion, save the bees, pro-cycling, body/image/self-confidence vs fast fashion, amongst others. www.oldprintworks.org/daily-thread

Further examples of themes/organisations

Details of themes / organisations from our mapping research which could be engaged with/researched to inform commissioned work:

Phytology and the Bethnal Green Nature Reserve <https://phytology.org.uk>

Phytology is an artist led project exploring use, value, resilience and function of wilderness within urban ecosystems.

Groundswell <http://groundswell.org.uk>

Groundswell is a registered charity, which exists to enable people experiencing homelessness to take more control of their lives, have a greater influence on services and have a full role in our community.

Friends of the Earth – Climate Change Action events

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/climate-change/groundswell-climate-action-events>

Our local groups in England, Wales and Northern Ireland Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland has local groups – and affiliated groups – in around 150 neighbourhoods. That makes us the largest grassroots environmental campaigning community in the UK. These groups are run by thousands of volunteers from all backgrounds, including teachers, nurses, lawyers, students, grandparents and more. They bring people together to improve their local environment, and see off unjust proposals.

Pocket Parks <http://bit.ly/30I0IMn>

DCLG is supporting 87 communities to establish Pocket Parks, small areas of inviting public space where people can enjoy relief from the hustle and bustle of city streets. Established in 2016 with support from DCLG

Rethinking Parks Fund – NESTA <http://bit.ly/RethinkingParks>

Eight projects that are trialling new ways of running parks more sustainably: The projects involve communities and their local councils working together to make the most of vital community resources by forming parks foundations, nurturing and building networks of friends groups and generating new income streams through renewable energy and links with local businesses.

Community Catalysts www.communitycatalysts.co.uk

Community Catalysts is a Social Enterprise and Community Interest Company working across the UK to try to make sure that people who need care and support to live their lives can get help in ways, times and places that suit them, with real choice of attractive local options. We are a small group of energetic people who believe passionately in the power of people to effect social change. We work hard to harness the talents and imaginations of people in communities and organisations to provide imaginative solutions to complex social issues.

Coin Street Community Builders <http://coinstreet.org/>

We are a social enterprise and our aim is to make our neighbourhood a great place to live, work in, and visit. We have transformed a largely derelict 13 acre site into a thriving mixed use neighbourhood by creating new co-operative homes; shops, galleries, restaurants, cafes and bars; a park and riverside walkway; sports facilities; by organising festivals and events; and by providing childcare, family support, training and employment opportunities. Income is generated from a variety of sources including the hire of retail and catering spaces, exhibition, event and conference spaces.

Creative Land Trust www.creativelandtrust.org

The Creative Land Trust secures long-term affordable space for artists and creatives. We are a new independent social enterprise and our team is led by a steering group with arts, studio provision, property and finance expertise. Our work is currently supported by the Mayor of London, Arts Council England, Bloomberg Philanthropies and Outset Contemporary Art Fund.

Yves Blais, Project Director yves@creativelandtrust.org

The Land Trust <https://thelandtrust.org.uk>

We are an established national land management charity that provides cost effective

solutions for sustainably managed open space and green infrastructure for community benefit, having positive impacts on the economy, environment and society. We work with both the commercial and public sectors, helping them solve challenges for land in their ownership.

National Community Land Trust Network www.communitylandtrusts.org.uk

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are a form of community-led housing, set up and run by ordinary people to develop and manage homes as well as other assets important to that community, like community enterprises, food growing or workspaces. CLTs act as long-term stewards of housing, ensuring that it remains genuinely affordable, based on what people actually earn in their area, not just for now but for every future occupier. There are now over 320 Community Land Trusts in England and Wales, and the sector has grown six-fold in the last six years.

The National CLT Network is the official charity supporting Community Land Trusts in England and Wales. The National CLT Network provides funding, resources, training and advice for CLTs and work with Government, local authorities, lenders and funders to establish the best conditions for CLTs to grow and flourish.

Granby4Streets CIC www.granby4streetsclt.co.uk

Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust wants to create a thriving, vibrant mixed community, building on the existing creativity, energy and commitment within the community, where people from all walks of life can live, work and play.

Social Farms and Gardens www.farmgarden.org.uk

Social Farms & Gardens is the name of the new organisation created following the merger of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens and Care Farming UK in April 2018.

Community Land Advisory Service www.communitylandadvice.org.uk

Project managed by Social Farms and Gardens

CLAS is an impartial, collaborative service aiming to increase community access to land across the UK. It helps communities and land managers gain satisfactory agreements on access to land by providing guidance on technical lease agreements and related issues.

CLAS has been developed to help combat the lack of available land for community gardening and associated green space activities. It offers both hands-on help and online information resources to both landowners and community organisations.

Groundworks www.groundwork.org.uk

Groundwork is a charity working to transform lives in the UK's most disadvantaged communities. We're passionate about creating a future where every neighbourhood is vibrant and green, every community is strong and able to shape its own destiny and no-one is held back by their background or circumstances. We help people gain confidence and skills, get into training and work, protect and improve green spaces, lead more active lives and overcome significant challenges such as poverty, isolation, low skills and poor health.

Blackhorse Workshop www.blackhorseworkshop.co.uk/

Blackhorse Workshop is a public space dedicated to making and mending, just half an hour from the centre of London. We offer open access to a fully equipped wood and metal workshop. Our mission is 'to become a socially pioneering world class centre for making'.

Transition Network <https://transitionnetwork.org/>

A movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world.

Centre for Alternative Technology www.cat.org.uk

Based in Machynlleth, which is the first town in Wales to declare a climate emergency, CAT is an educational charity dedicated to researching and communicating positive solutions for environmental change.

Repair Cafés <https://repaircafe.org/en/>

Repair Cafés are free meeting places and they're all about repairing things (together). In the place where a Repair Café is located, you'll find tools and materials to help you make any repairs you need. On clothes, furniture, electrical appliances, bicycles, crockery, appliances, toys, et cetera. You'll also find expert volunteers, with repair skills in all kinds of fields.

Visitors bring their broken items from home. Together with the specialists they start making their repairs in the Repair Café. It's an ongoing learning process. If you have nothing to repair, you can enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. Or you can lend a hand with someone else's repair job. You can also get inspired at the reading table – by leafing through books on repairs and DIY. There are over 1.500 Repair Cafés worldwide.

Men's Sheds <https://menssheds.org.uk/>

Men's Sheds are community spaces for men to connect, converse and create. The activities are often similar to those of garden sheds, but for groups of men to enjoy together. They help reduce loneliness and isolation, but most importantly, they're fun.

Makerspaces www.gov.uk/government/publications/libraries-and-makerspaces/libraries-and-makerspaces

A makerspace is a physical location where people gather to co-create, share resources and knowledge, work on projects, network, and build. They help intermediate and advanced users develop their skills and creativity, particularly inspiring younger generations to engage with the STEM agenda - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (or STEAM as it is now sometimes becoming referred to, by also including the Arts). Their activity promotes development of high-end technology skills needed for prosperity and social mobility. Makerspaces in libraries featured strongly in the UK Digital Strategy in recognition of their value and impact.

Library of Things www.libraryofthings.co.uk

Why buy when you can borrow? Borrow useful things for your home, projects & adventures.

A small group of local people invite Library of Things to town, and find a community space to host it. They invite their friends and neighbours pledge money to a crowdfunding campaign to get it started. Then, hundreds of local people join as borrowers, event participants and volunteers.

"We were 3 close friends when we started Library of Things. We tested the idea for 2 years+ in our South London neighbourhood, inspired by similar ventures in Berlin & Toronto. We put in 000s of hours between us, unpaid, because we saw how powerful it was when neighbours became friends & local spaces became home. When a shared collection of high quality Things unlocked experiences for everyone."

Library of Things Ltd is a social enterprise in line with the definition set out by the Social Enterprise Mark.