

## Creative Congleton Report for the Partnership AGM September 2015

Creative Congleton are pleased to announce that they have elected a new chair, Vince Cutcliffe and a new vice chair, Stewart Haliday.

The Arts has once again gone from strength to strength this year with a stronger cultural offer from various factions, demonstrating that Congleton is a hive of creativity.

The Electric Picture House has augmented their programme of exhibitions, theatre and music this past year, with extra events such as Hidden Places, Oxjam (in October), exhibitions by local, national and international artists.

In addition we had a greater involvement in The Food and Drink Festival with the creation of the Festival Fringe, this added a new dimension to the festival with art and craft stalls, an exhibiton and livemusic. It helped to better integrate Mill Street and Cross Street into the general proceedings bringing more people down into the area and thus also getting a larger audience for Congleton Sustainability Group Green Zone.

Hidden Places, in conjunction with Congleton Community Projects, a day of theatre in hidden places in the town, helped to increase audience numbers and introduce more people to Congleton. On an educational level we were able to show Congleton High and Eaton Bank students the progression from High School to University to professional acting. On a community level we managed to get the high school drama students out of the school environment to perform their drama pieces, whilst demonstrating to local audiences the talent which is around. This project will be repeated next year.

Also through Hidden Places we have strengthened our ties with Manchester Metropolitan University and we are at the moment exploring the possibility of offering various placements to the students through their outreach programme.

The Electric Picture House is recognised as a centre for the arts, both nationally and internationally, through our work with a variety of artists from the local area and beyond, with students, with local community groups and of course with Congleton Partnership. Examples of partnership working within Congleton Partnership, are our work with Congleton In Bloom, Congleton Sustainability Group's recent Open Evening here, Congleton Community Projects being based here for the past three years who we help out with many projects and now Vince from Jazz and Blues Festival has joined us, using a space in Jo's office.

As for the coming year we will be going from strength to strength with various projects in the pipeline.

7<sup>th</sup> October at 7.30pm Then Leap – a theatre performance developed in conjunction with The Lowry, Salford.

24<sup>th</sup> October Between Us We Know Everything – in partnership with Cheshire Rural Touring Arts, Axis Arts Centre-there will be a film unit in a van in the pedestrian inviting people to do a short piece

to camera stating a fact that you know, to create a visual encyclopaedia on the internet. This will be followed at a later date by a screening of the film at The Electric Picture House. On the same day we will be hosting Oxfam, an evening of live music to raise money for Oxfam.

The Electric Picture House looks forward to more partnership working in the coming year.

#### CONGLETON JAZZ AND BLUES (CJAB)

This year was the 6th Congleton Jazz and Blues festival, each year the organisers have made special efforts to keep the event vibrant and as far as possible local. This year we were fortunate to have substantial support from graphic designers AD Profile. There is no doubt that the aim of the event is to bring people into venues in town with excellent local and regional jazz and blues music, and we think we spiced people's interest with the fantastic rebranding job that AD Profile did for the festival.

The most important feature of this festival is our town, we want to continue to breathe life and fun in our lovely town. We think we make a contribution to that, along with other in town events, we manage to make the event work with a simple business model, and a lot of work from our key team members. From anecdotal evidence we think we have gained a good reputation as an event from the people who come along to CJAB, the venues and the artists who play at the event. We look forward to continued support from our key sponsors, alongside this support we are investigating different ways to run the festival in order to keep the non-profit making event financially viable. The team are already working next year's CJAB!

The next CJAB based music festival in the calendar will be Congleton Unplugged on the weekend of March 4,5,6 2016. It has the same overall aim as CJAB and is diarised for the end of winter, to blow away a few cobwebs and get people into town during an otherwise very quiet time of year. Unplugged is a much smaller event based around a more acoustic music offering, it is an antidote to the brasher Jazz and Blues Festival.