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2019

Made in Leicestershire Research Consultancy, Stage 3 Report



Image: Leicester printmaker Kiran Ravilious

Report of the research undertaken by Ruth Singer on Made in Leicestershire networks and market development February 2018 - July 2019.

Introduction

This research project began in February 2018 with Ruth Singer taking on the consultancy role with a brief to explore the potential of the Made in Leicestershire brand for market growth and networking.

The research has been based on the concept of Made in Leicestershire developing into some form of artist / makers membership group, either independent or supported by local authorities or as a marketing brand in its own right, or simply activity which may be possible within existing services without formation of a membership group.

Previously Made in Leicestershire was mainly a directory, printed and online, with some exhibition activity in the past, managed by Creative Leicestershire. It was created for promotional purposes and was not a membership group.

Phase I research included

- Review of 2017 survey of artists and makers carried out by Ruth Singer
- Analysis of current situation regarding membership organisations covering Leicestershire
- Analysis of locality-based membership organisations in other places
- Analysis of directories, websites and trails produced to market artists in localities
- Creation of resources including
 - **Review of published research**
 - List of **shops, galleries, public sector organisations** and other potential **partners**
 - List of **arts organisations** based in Leicestershire

Full details can be found in the [Stage I](#) report

Phase 2 has included

- Exhibition
- Face to face meetings with organisations
- Artist networking events
- Focus groups and one-to-one meetings with artists

Full details can be found in the [Stage 2 report](#)

Phase 3 has focussed on

- creating recommendations
- testing some activity with funding support from Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants, including
 - a fee-paid peer mentoring programme
 - networking with a small charge
 - a printed publication for advocacy
 - free-hosted experimental online directory

This is analysed in full in this report.

The key findings of the whole project are:

- Desire and interest in relaunching Made in Leicestershire or similar programme
- Strong need for **networking** opportunities across the county and specific sectors
- **Public facing marketing** required to promote existing activity
- Desire for **retail & exhibition** opportunities
- Interest in local **market development, including partnerships**
- Lack of cohesion of the sector, with no **central venue** or organisation providing support, information or networking (except Creative Leicestershire)
- No specific group for **craft makers** in Leicestershire or East Midlands
- Artists and makers are willing to **pay a small amount towards networks** and professional development opportunities
- This research did not touch on professional development needs apart from a little in relation to the Arts Council England funded extension which is covered later. The 2017 survey showed a real need for training and development.

Purpose - who / what is Made in Leicestershire for?

Ruth Singer approached this research with the initial question of who a new *Made in Leicestershire* network would be for and how it might best serve their needs.

The purpose of Made in Leicestershire has been discussed and debated at networking meetings and in one-to-one discussions with organisations and at artist consultation meetings. The former incarnation of Made in Leicestershire was a directory and website which included any artists who wished to be included, as well as galleries and events such as open studios. Research shows that this resource was most valued by organisations for sourcing artists to run workshops, for craft fairs, stock shops and occasionally for exhibitions or commissioning artwork. There continues to be a need for these organisations to find out who is working locally. For them, locality is very important, and also the type of work the artists can deliver (eg services such as workshops or schools activity) is more important than retail.

From anecdotal conversations with artists, it seems that the directory and website were of limited effectiveness in promoting their work or services beyond local authorities and some organisations. Little productive traffic was generated by Made in Leicestershire to artist websites. For artists, the promotion of their work is paramount and is what they all ask for. However, through networking and discussions it has become clear that many artists find it hard to define to whom they need to promote their work which makes it difficult to be specific on a target audience for Made in Leicestershire which would work for artists.

It is very clear that market development is needed, as there is a general feeling of limited market (see TACIT exhibition feedback) within the county and few suitable venues for some artists to showcase and sell their work. This is particularly an issue for the fine craft sector who might have shown work in the former City Gallery in Leicester but are now unable to find suitable venues in the county for their work, and instead mainly sell and show their work outside the county.

A number of the organisations consulted through the research process stated they would like to or even have a remit to support and develop local artists. A Made in Leicestershire network would be well placed to work in partnership with organisations to support this remit or activity through collaboration on many of the activities proposed throughout this report.

Made in Leicestershire possible future organisational structures

The remainder of this report is structured to show how the needs of artists could be addressed through activity in three possible models of activity. These models have been developed throughout the research process as the most viable or likely structures for the future of Made in Leicestershire.

These models are

- A. Activity by local authority within existing services or small-scale artist-led activity, low budget, low impact recommendations
- B. A *Made in Leicestershire* network with paid membership. This model is based around a non-selected artist group where the artists pay a membership fee in return for specific services and activity. This could be run by an administrator. The proposed activity is low-budget and small scale but could be increased should budgets and membership be willing. This is outlined in more detail on page 7 with a summary on page 25.
- C. One or more specialist artist-led groups including a proposed County Craft Guild which is outlined in more detail on pages 8 and 26. It is also possible that this activity could instead be provided through Leicester Society of Artists with some development and support and reach a broader network of artists. This is further discussed on page 9.

Made in Leicestershire Network

This model most closely resembles the previous Made in Leicestershire directory and website in that it is self-selecting and open to all visual artists. This would most likely consist of the smaller businesses, craft makers who sell in local shops, galleries and craft fairs and those starting out and wanting to build their businesses in the local area. It might also be suitable for those running public workshops who wish to reach new local audiences. It would be difficult for this network to also support fine artists and nationally-exhibiting artists who have different needs and are less interested in the local market.

We estimate there might be 100 potential members who would be willing to pay a small membership fee for £20-40, giving an income of £2-4000 per year. Further funding would be needed to pay an administrator to manage the online presence, take membership fees, generate newsletters and manage social media.

Membership benefits might include

- Opportunities bulletin generated by Creative Leicestershire
- Inclusion in basic website
- Public-facing newsletter and social media (including workshops)
- 1 or 2 networking events annually, organised by members

County Guild

This concept is based on research in Stage One looking at county groups and guilds in the UK, and on previous personal research carried out by Ruth Singer & Catherine Rogers.

- Membership of 50+ selected makers paying £100+ annual fee
- Focus on contemporary craft makers with criteria agreed by founding members / committee
- Comprehensive website including directory
- Pop-up exhibitions and events with professional curation
- Paid co-ordinator & administrator
- Active and engaged membership taking on key roles (some paid where time commitment or knowledge is above general roles)
- Focus on marketing to buyers and galleries to generate sales
- Extensive marketing and PR activity with paid specialist expertise to support
- Funding to be sourced from Arts Council England, membership fees, private sponsorship and fundraising activities run by the group (percentage of sales etc)

Leicester Society of Artists

LSA is a long-standing artist-led group with a focus on exhibiting members work at New Walk Museum annually and has been in operation since 1882. The group has about 150 members covering Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and in recent years has actively increased and broadened membership to include contemporary fine art and high-end craft. The society committee & membership may be interested in developing to support the needs of artists outlined in this report. The society already has

- Established profile and reputation
- Organisational structures & committee
- Website with artist directory
- Exhibition venue arrangements
- Newsletter and social media

and would be well-placed to support a large number of artists.

Membership

The potential membership criteria of any new Made in Leicestershire network has been one of the most complex issues discussed in meetings and networking events. The wide range of types of artist / maker and models of practice have made this very complex.

Previously Made in Leicestershire covered : Craft (textiles, jewellery, glass, ceramics), Fine art (Painting, drawing, print, sculpture and photography), Interiors and furniture, Galleries & Open studio events. The *Selected* category was added later to focus on those making work to a higher professional standard, but this was divisive and problematic to administer.

If we take networking event attendance and survey completion as a guide, we have a very broad potential membership which could lead to the same weaknesses as the previous membership structure.

Membership by selection is covered in the survey; a limited, selected membership is proving popular with most responses marking a limited directory as 'More Professional' (44%) and 'Showcasing the Best' (33%) or 'Something to Aspire to' (21%). Some think it would be 'Limited' (25%) or 'Excluding and Cliquey' (26%).

80% of respondents would be willing to pay under £40 annual fee (45% under £20).

Recommendations

Although selected membership has considerable benefits to the members, it is more difficult and time-consuming to administer. We have considered a number of different options including different levels of membership but this would generate a considerable administration and complexity of service delivery. Two different organisations (Made in Leicestershire network and a county guild) with different aims resolves this problem to an extent.

Made in Leicestershire Network

The Made in Leicestershire network should be self-selecting through a membership fee but open to anyone to join. There may need to be a limit on membership numbers to avoid it becoming too large to effectively serve its membership and dilute the message. Open membership will lead to a variation in quality and professionalism but selection makes the network much more complex to administer.

More established artists may find the Made in Leicestershire network not really suitable or relevant to their needs, which means the network does not have the high-level, marketable businesses among its membership. This is based on conversations with these artists through the research process. Most chose not to engage with the networking activity at all, and some chose not to return as the make up

of the network was not relevant to their work (being mainly the emerging and non-professional artists).

Either one must accept that these higher profile artists will not be involved, or there needs to be incentives for them to engage with the network. This may mean reduced or free membership based on selection criteria, paid roles such as mentoring or curating exhibitions, sub-groups such as peer mentoring or significant marketing promotion. However, may prove just as divisive as the Selected membership of the previous Made in Leicestershire.

County Guild

A county guild or selected group could run alongside a Made in Leicestershire network and mop up the higher level, more established artists for whom the network is not relevant. Leicester Society of Artists already has a good number of established artists within its membership and may well continue to expand its remit to include more makers.

A craft-specific guild for the county or region has been on the agenda as a potential development over the last few years, since Ruth Singer ran the group Ornamentum, consisting of 10 contemporary craft makers from Leicestershire and Rutland. Ornamentum worked with Creative Leicestershire in 2015 towards growing Ornamentum into a county guild. The group has since disbanded, however, there is strong interest in a craft-oriented guild for Leicestershire and potentially for the East Midlands and beyond. This would fill a gap in existing provision more effectively than a wider visual arts group which would overlap with Leicester Society of Artists. A smaller guild with a more defined remit could be easier to market, fund and develop than one with a broader scope.

Addressing the needs of artists

This section explores in detail some of the key issues raised in the research project and recommendations of how to meet these needs within the rough outline structure of the 3 models of activity proposed above.

Leicestershire and local promotion

The Made in Leicestershire brand and name was discussed at focus groups, networking and in individual meetings. There was no consensus on the effectiveness of the name or brand to reflect artists and makers. The name does not include Rutland which is problematic, although Rutland has its own successful and recognised Open Studio programme. Made in Leicestershire as a brand is not strong enough at present to have national impact for creative business tourism, though it has potential. Without a major venue to showcase or sell artwork in the county, we lack a focus or centre of brand promotion. The county suffers from the lack of distinctive creative product or heritage on which to build a makers brand (in comparison to Sheffield metalwork or Nottingham lace). There is potential to build a Made in Leicestershire brand around manufacturing heritage but considerable work is needed to bring this together in a cohesive and marketable way. Made in the Midlands might be a stronger brand and encourage collaboration with other counties.

The locality is particularly relevant and important to the organisations such as councils and independent shops and galleries. It is less relevant to artists and makers, though this varies depending on whether they exhibit and sell locally or nationally - many of the more successful / higher profile artists don't exhibit much in the county.

In the 2019 survey, artists rated local market and locality relevance to their practice, giving an average score of 5.2 out of 10. The survey also shows that 60% take part in local craft and art fairs, 55% showing in local galleries (which will have gone down with the closure of Cank St Gallery) and 44% selling in local shops. The majority of those not engaging with county selling / showcasing opportunities are believed to be those who do not feel there are suitable venues or events, based on conversations with artists. This cannot easily be addressed as a new gallery is not an option covered by the scope of this report. Market development activity therefore should focus on developing existing opportunities to reach the widest audience and promoting the quality of work available in Leicestershire.

Recommendations

1. Within existing services / artist-led activity

- Promote #madeinleicestershire online, encouraging artists and organisations to use the hashtag
- PR support for events and activity
- Collaboration between events / programmes / activity eg council support

2. Made in Leicestershire Network

- Commission a new Made in Leicestershire logo, produce printed publicity and circulate panel to shops where products are sold and to galleries to showcase in exhibitions
- Present group stands at events such as print fairs, craft fairs and other events in the county

3. County Guild or group

- Commission bespoke Leicestershire products for retail through partner organisations & shops. The 2019 survey identified 38 makers interested in this.

Directory or publication

The effectiveness of a directory and / or printed publication has been discussed in detail through the research process. Printed directories are very expensive to produce and will date quickly. Quality of images supplied is also a major issue. Within the current project we have produced an example mini printed directory alongside an outline report of this research. A number of area-based groups do produce printed directories but these are mostly in the form of trails of open studios and artists shops in tourist areas, which is not appropriate for Leicestershire & Rutland. Open Studio brochures, although time-limited, can still serve as a useful directory of artist contacts beyond the date of the event. Getting the publication to the right audiences would be challenging and again expensive; simply producing it is not enough and it needs to be widely circulated. This research has produced a spreadsheet of artist organisations with publications and directories which can be found on the Creative Leicestershire website.

A printed directory is not recommended unless substantial budgets for print and particularly for distribution are available. If local authorities want a comprehensive directory of artists and the types of services they offer, then funding should be sought.

Recommendations

Online directories or listings are much more cost effective, and with considered marketing support could prove very effective. A pilot online listing has been developed during this project which is now online. This consists of a [Pinterest](#) board of selected Leicestershire artists and makers with images and links to the artists website. This has been compiled by Ruth Singer and includes many of those who have engaged with Made in Leicestershire services and networking, some WebinArt participants and others who Ruth is aware of. Only those with websites, good images or a professional online presence (eg Instagram for emerging artists) have been included. There is no cost to hosting this listing, but maintenance, development and marketing will have future costs.

The trial directory Pinterest board does not cover services or activity eg workshops, retail locations, educational practice, consultancy etc. This should be taken into account when considering future development.

This could be developed to include separate boards covering

- artists who run educational events or workshops in general
- specific events coming up per quarter such as workshops (will need updating regularly)
- exhibitions in the county and beyond showing the breadth of member activity (as above)
- direct links to online shops of artists which have them
- galleries or other relevant organisations

A Made in Leicestershire network as proposed may not have the budget for a bespoke website so a Pinterest board or a simple online listing with links may be more appropriate. A county guild or major artist group should create a bespoke website where each artist has their own page with details of their work and any services. There are a number of different models of artist directories online with [Craft Scotland](#) leading the way in usability, design and content (and budget).

Partnerships and collaborations

A significant feature in the responses from both artists and organisations is the lack of cohesion and co-ordination across the two counties in the arts. Arts organisations are attempting to address this in the city through initiatives like Leicester Art Week, but this is not intended to support and promote artists, rather is organisation-led to promote their activity to new audiences. Artist-led or focused organisations such as studios are good at promoting their own members; Leicester Print Workshop does an excellent job at creating opportunities and marketing through exhibitions, group attendance at fairs and through their new print fair, as do StudionAme artists in Leicester city and beyond as well as many other smaller groups active locally.

The many public and independent arts organisations and universities as well as local authorities could all have a role to play in supporting artists through projects and partnerships. Any future Made in Leicestershire network should consider partnerships and collaborations as important for future growth.

Recommendations

A quarterly or twice-yearly meeting of representatives of arts organisations and societies and networks could foster collaboration, some partnership working and improved communications within the sector, as well as create the potential for joint marketing initiatives and visibility of artists activity. A Made in Leicestershire network as proposed in this report may not have the capacity or authority to provide an over-arching structure to bring organisations together but could provide the impetus to make this happen, and contribute the voice of the local artists to the discussion.

Communications

A key weakness in the promotion of Leicestershire & Rutland artists and makers is the lack of public-facing communications sharing the work and activities of artists to a wider interested audience.

Consultation with local art buyers revealed that they struggled to find out what exhibitions and events were happening locally. Individuals and groups may have mailing lists and social media followers but there is no one central source of such information. Creative Leicestershire e-bulletin is created to share artist opportunities across the creative sectors and is not designed to cater for art buyers. Many artists in Leicestershire rely on running workshops to generate a significant portion of their income. Promoting these workshops to a wider audience would be beneficial to the artists and help create a sustainable income for many. This is covered in more detail on p17.

Exhibitions and events such as talks and demonstrations at galleries are also in need of wider promotion to reach potential buyers. Many artists and makers struggle with marketing their own work; few have mailing lists / use them to full advantage and tend to rely on sporadic social media. Confidence in promotional activity is lacking such as sending press releases to local and national press, contacting local radio. Collaborative promotion through a group would be more productive and successful for many artists. Issues are lack of knowledge, time, contacts, experience and confidence in this type of marketing.

Recommendations

1. Within existing services / artist-led activity

- Promote #madeinleicestershire online, encouraging artists and organisations to use the hashtag
- PR support for events and activity
- Collaboration between events / programmes / activity eg council support
- Place Marketing could include one or two events or activities per month in their communications

2. Made in Leicestershire Network

- Public-focussed monthly email newsletter with selected events
- Strategic social media activity
- Pinterest board for artists to share their events / exhibitions
- Press activity, particularly developing partnerships with local press and radio

3. County Guild or group

- Dedicated marketing and communications strategy with paid support including ideas outlined above

Supporting workshop activity

Many artists rely on running workshops for the general public to generate a significant part of their income.

This was researched in the 2017 report:

“Freelance or employed teaching is a significant income stream for many creatives. In this survey 52% (of 100) were involved in teaching and over 90% of this is related to their own work. Teaching adults either informally (promoting and booking courses independently) or through organisations is the most common and the majority takes place within Leicestershire (79%). There is a high proportion of teaching which is self-organised and this is mostly with adults (81%) and community groups (33%).”

The research also showed that teaching / workshops was also a key area of potential growth which they wished to develop. In the 2019 survey, 57% (59 people) expressed an interest in hiring workshop spaces.

Recommendations

1. Within existing services / artist-led activity

- Creation and promotion of venues / rooms suitable for artists to hire by the day to run workshops. These should be accessible, affordable (Under £50 a day) and suitable for messy activities including painting and clay - no carpet, wipeable tables, large sink, good lighting).

2. Made in Leicestershire Network

- Shared promotion of workshops and activities such as *Make it in Leicestershire* quarterly joint leaflet (could also work as artist-led project with financial contributions)
- Promotion of events through existing and improved marketing such as dedicated mailing list for workshops and events in the county

3. County Guild or group

- Activities as outlined above with paid marketing support
- MiL own venue with hireable workshop spaces with facilities as below and some equipment or materials available (see [Long Eaton Art Room](#) for suggested model)

Exhibitions

By far the most significant request from artists is for exhibition opportunities including:

- Hireable spaces for showing work independently
- Group exhibitions in established venues
- Open exhibitions

Exhibiting locally is a key aim and desire for emerging artists. There is a perceived lack of opportunity for this in the county particularly highlighted by the closure of Cank St Gallery in Leicester (June 2019) where a number of local artists regularly showed and sold work. Further research would be required to establish if small, local exhibitions and local events are really financially productive and achieve many of the marketing aims desired by artists, as the anecdotal evidence is that they may not be.

In the 2019 survey, just 55% of respondents show their work regularly in Leicestershire or Rutland galleries. 44% sell in shops in the county and 50% sell at craft fairs locally. This leaves a high proportion of artists not showcasing their work in the county, for a number of different reasons - lack of suitable venue, unsuitable work, lack of desire, work is shown elsewhere.

Group & touring exhibitions, even on a small scale, could be effective if marketed correctly. Made in Leicestershire worked with LCB to create TACIT exhibition in September 2018 with the aim of 'Showing that modern, contemporary craft is thriving in Leicestershire and that exceptional, unexpected and innovative work is being produced' and bringing artists together to begin to create a sense of community. This is evaluated in the [Stage 2 report](#). Most of the artists in this exhibition rarely exhibit in the county and instead work with specialist galleries nationally and internationally.

- Exhibitor feedback showed the exhibition achieved its aims.
- 75% of exhibitors think there aren't suitable galleries or shops for their work in the county.
- Most makers don't feel very connected to the Leicestershire maker community but all felt that this exhibition made them feel more involved.

Different options have been considered during the research process and discussed at networking events, focus groups and in the 2019 survey. The survey showed that 62% felt that Made in Leicestershire should be running its own exhibitions and selling events while half that felt the Made in Leicestershire network should only promote existing activity rather than generate it themselves. Small showcases in a variety of different (council-run or independent) venues and spaces was also discussed in networking and focus groups and was felt to be potentially exciting but it requires significant investment.

Recommendations

1. Within existing services

- Annual / biannual selected exhibition in venues including SOCK Loughborough, county museums or libraries. This needs to be supported by marketing activity.

2. Made in Leicestershire network

- Themed selling showcases in local and regional venues or touring, created in partnership with venues or other organisations (see TACIT exhibition for example). This would need additional funding as it is not costed in the core activity of this network, though could be artist-led with participation fee to cover some costs.

3. County Guild

- Curated annual / regular exhibition in professional gallery
- Pop-up shops
- Showcases in key venues and non-traditional spaces (eg offices)
- Craft Open alongside existing open exhibitions, specifically New Walk Museum.

Open studios

Although open studios and open house events exist in pockets across the two counties, there is no single overarching organisation for this and limited opportunities in Leicester /Leicestershire. Should a Made in Leicestershire network develop, open studio trails should be on the agenda, however it does not fit into the models suggested in this report. Open studios are recognised as excellent ways of marketing and selling direct to customers.

Recommendations

Artists in Leicester and Leicestershire should be encouraged to join Rutland Open Studios and hopefully area groupings will emerge which would enable local trails to develop and the scheme to develop across the two counties.

Networking

Part of this research project has been focussed on networking for artists and how best to support this. Several events have been trialled during the project with very mixed results. Events in Leicester are best attended, though the research shows that many want meetings very local to them. A group in Loughborough was also trialled and there was a good level of interest. The attendance at free networking events is very varied, mainly made up of emerging or small scale businesses, often online or part-time, who are not members of professional bodies or artist groups. Some attendees were from outside the county and some were hobbyists or other creatives such as writers for whom the content was not relevant. More established professional artists do not usually attend open networking events; but a good number attended the TACIT exhibition networking, including many of the exhibitors. Broad, open-to-all networking events show the variety of practice but also means they are less useful to all as there is little in common between the attendees.

Local networks exist throughout the county, either focussed on area or type of work (eg West End Creatives in Leicester).

LCB Depot are willing to host monthly networking sessions for artists and other venues / organisations around the county have expressed interest in doing so.

Recommendations

Focussed networking would be much more effective. Smaller groups with common ground (type of practice or locality) would be more useful to most.

Our networking events were focussed on consultation and talking about Made in Leicestershire. Future events should have a theme or speaker, or be simply social.

Facilitated events and supported networking (with a host or organiser) are more effective and preferred by most potential attendees. Attendees are willing to pay a small amount towards this; the 2019 peer mentoring programme evaluation shows that one third want to pay £3-5 to cover room hire costs only with no speaker or facilitator, while 45% would be willing to pay £12-18 if a speaker or facilitator ran the session.

1. Within existing services

- Venues could schedule open, broad networking events and provide minimal support with a room and / or refreshments or provide speaker, gallery tour or other activity in house
- Online networking such as Facebook groups should be set up

2. Made in Leicestershire network

- Annual membership fee to include 1 or 2 networking events per year, or more if desired by members (with fees arranged accordingly). These should include speaker and / or facilitator

3. County Guild

- Bespoke networking events for members including partnerships with other organisations to broaden reach

Peer Mentoring

In summer 2019, Creative Leicestershire applied for additional funding to support professional development activities for Made in Leicestershire networks from Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grants. The offer has focussed around establishing peer mentoring groups for visual artists and makers from across the county with a small fee, to test the market. The programme started with peer mentoring training delivered by Ruth Singer with follow up sessions for two groups consisting of emerging makers and more established makers with facilitation provided by Ruth. The participants have also had access to professional photography advice and had portraits taken at the training session for free. All participants were also eligible to apply for a small professional development bursary towards training, learning or mentoring. The second part of the programme was a professional development and networking day bringing together artists with organisations, and with presentations from working professionals about key aspects of making a living.

- 18 people attended for the Peer Mentoring training and photography session
- 17 portraits photos were taken
- 8 applied for the bursaries (and all were awarded)
- 5 attended the emerging makers peer mentoring meeting
- 6 attended the established artists peer mentoring meeting
- 19 attended the Networking and professional development day (25 had booked)

Evaluation of all aspects of the programme has taken place and shows a majority found the programmes useful and productive. Peer mentoring has been particularly effective and most wished to continue meeting independently, and were happy to pay a small amount for this if it were supported by an organisation in the future.

Recommendations

Established peer mentoring groups could (and probably will) continue informally without organisational input but more could be developed.

1. Within existing services

Venues could host peer mentoring groups through free provision of rooms / refreshments. These would need to be developed in partnership with artists who could invite their colleagues.

Provide training in peer mentoring (Ruth Singer can deliver this training)

2. Made in Leicestershire network

Establish peer mentoring groups for all members if wished, including offering peer mentoring training.

3. County Guild

Establish peer mentoring groups for all members, including offering peer mentoring training.

Co-ordination of networking, peer mentoring and professional development

Professional development needs were investigated by Creative Leicestershire and Ruth Singer in the 2017 research and anecdotally through conversations at networking and peer mentoring events.

There is a clear lack of access to professional development activity within the artist community in Leicestershire and Rutland. Provision is occasional (Creative Leicestershire funding training 2019) or for emerging makers only (WebinArt). Leicester Print Workshop is leading the way with technique-specific professional development in the county but outside of this there is little to access. The 2017 research showed that 40% had not attended any training in the last couple of years for a variety of access reasons including being unaware of opportunities (though they existed at the time provided by Creative Leicestershire and others).

Recommendations

A strategy for creating and supporting sustainable professional development (including focussed networking, peer mentoring and training) be created. This should involve all organisations with a remit to support local artists and be partnership-led.

Ruth Singer is keen to develop this area of work as a freelancer and will explore the potential to deliver some of this through artists' own contributions, as well as through any group which may be formed as a result of this report. There is also a need for investment in this area from organisations and local authorities.

Summary of Actions & Recommendations

I. Within existing services

- Annual / biannual selected Made in Leicestershire exhibition in venues including SOCK Loughborough, county museums or libraries. This needs to be supported by marketing activity.
- Promote #madeinleicestershire online, encouraging artists and organisations to use the hashtag
- PR support for events and activity
- Collaboration between events / programmes / activity eg council support
- Promotion and limited development of Pinterest boards as directory
- Venues could schedule open, broad networking events and provide minimal support with a room and / or refreshments or provide speaker, gallery tour or other activity in house
- Artists in Leicester and Leicestershire should be encouraged to join Rutland Open Studios and hopefully area groupings will emerge which would enable local trails to develop and the scheme to develop across the two counties.
- Creation and promotion of venues / rooms suitable for artists to hire by the day to run workshops. These should be accessible, affordable (under £50 a day) and suitable for messy activities including painting and clay - no carpet, wipeable tables, large sink, good lighting).
- Venues could host peer mentoring groups through free provision of rooms / refreshments. These would need to be developed in partnership with artists who could invite their colleagues.
- Provide training in peer mentoring (Ruth Singer can deliver this training)
- Commission professional development support / networks / peer mentoring facilitation including providing free venues

Summary of Actions & Recommendations

2. Made in Leicestershire network

- The Made in Leicestershire network should be self-selecting through a membership fee but open to anyone to join.
- Expand Pinterest boards or establish online listing / directory
- Commission a new Made in Leicestershire logo, produce printed publicity and circulate panel to shops where products are sold and to galleries to showcase in exhibitions
- Present group stands at events such as print fairs, craft fairs and other events in the county
- Themed selling showcases in local and regional venues or touring, created in partnership with venues or other organisations (see TACIT exhibition for example). This would need additional funding as it is not costed in the core activity of this network, though could be artist-led with participation fee to cover some costs.
- Shared promotion of workshops and activities such as *Make it in Leicestershire* quarterly joint leaflet (could also work as artist-led project with financial contributions)
- Promotion of events through existing and improved marketing such as dedicated mailing list for workshops and events in the county
- Establish peer mentoring groups for all members if wished, including offering peer mentoring training.
- Annual membership fee to include 1 or 2 networking events per year, or more if desired by members (with fees arranged accordingly). These should include speaker and / or facilitator

Summary of Actions & Recommendations

3. County Guild

- A county guild or selected group could run alongside a Made in Leicestershire network and mop up the higher level, more established artists for whom the network is not relevant. Leicester Society of Artists already has a good number of established artists within its membership and may well continue to expand its remit to include more makers.
- Curated annual / regular exhibition in professional gallery
- Pop-up shops
- Showcases in key venues and non-traditional spaces (eg offices)
- Potential for Craft Open exhibition alongside existing open exhibitions, specifically New Walk Museum.
- Promotion of events through existing and improved marketing such as dedicated mailing list for workshops and events in the county
- Shared promotion of workshops and activities such as *Make it in Leicestershire* quarterly joint leaflet (could also work as artist-led project with financial contributions)
- Commission bespoke Leicestershire products for retail through partner organisations & shops. The 2019 survey identified 38 makers interested in this.
- Bespoke website with online directory, search facility and services highlighted
- Bespoke networking events for members including partnerships with other organisations to broaden reach
- Paid marketing support / specialist
- MiL own venue with hireable workshop spaces with facilities as below and some equipment or materials available (see [Long Eaton Art Room](#) for suggested model)
- Establish peer mentoring groups for all members, including offering peer mentoring training.

Other issues to consider

There is potential for further research into Midlands-wide collaboration for artist-led groups

There is potential to commission further research into links with manufacturing heritage and with current manufacturing and artisan businesses in the county (but outside of the scope of this report).

CVAN research into artist ecology in the Midlands is due in late October. This will have useful data for future planning for Made in Leicestershire