

Recruiting our new Arts Programme Manager

Background

Goole Town Council is a large, third tier local authority which manages a number of facilities for the benefit of the town, a significant one of which is Junction. This multi award-winning venue serves several roles, housing the office base for Town Council staff, a separately managed café bar and several rooms available for hire or for internal use. Its major role though is as a live arts and cinema venue.

Opened in 2009, this architect-designed building has a comfortable and very flexible 165 seat auditorium, equipped to a high level and with cinema-standard digital projection facilities. It is a lively, busy and much loved facility for the town which enjoys a very high level of loyalty locally. In many ways, Junction punches above its weight and has been very active in a number of regional arts initiatives over the years.

Junction is a Tier 1 National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) of Arts Council England, with all the benefits and responsibilities of that status.

For clarity, Junction is the name of the venue and a well-recognised brand but is not an organisation. Junction is owned by Goole Town Council and managed by council staff.

The new APM will lead a small, committed and very enthusiastic team in delivering a high quality, relevant and attractive arts programme for the town and wider communities, both inside the building and in the town at large.

Programme and Outreach

Before lockdown, Junction offered a busy schedule of live events and cinema together with a programme of evening workshops, mostly for children and young people. This amounted to some 100 live events, both amateur hires and our own professional programme, 170 film screenings and 200 workshop sessions a year. Visual art exhibitions are also mounted each summer.

The professional live event programme has previously been a classic arts centre mixture of small scale touring theatre, music of various genres, dance, family shows and some comedy, taking advantage of the extremely flexible nature of the auditorium which allows for a variety of seating set ups. One large commission, funded by our NPO award, normally takes place each year but this is currently suspended for 2020/21. Two brochure seasons are programmed each year, from February to June and September to December. Cinema is an important offer year round and the programme also features event cinema, such as National Theatre Live and other one-off screenings throughout the year.

The venue is also very well used by a variety of local amateur arts groups, including dance schools, community choirs and theatre groups. In a typical year, some six weeks of the programme is given over to these hires.

When and to what extent it will be possible to return to the previous programming format is currently unknown. The content and delivery of the programme is likely to be very different for the short to medium term. Social distancing restrictions currently mean re-opening the auditorium for conventional live events or film is not viable and our workshop groups have been meeting online since April.

Junction's outreach, education and engagement programme has always been central to our offer. We currently have 3 youth theatre groups (covering different age brackets from 5 to 18), our School of Rock for young musicians, Tuesday Night Music Club for adult musicians and a cross generational ukulele group, all meeting once a week.

We are active in the delivery of Arts Award and work closely with Goole schools and Goole Youth Action. Our annual TakeOver Festival is, we think, unique in giving programming time, support and funding to a different local primary school each year, for them to organise their own two week arts festival at Junction. Again, the nature of this is likely to change as long as social distancing measures remain in force.

Junction is an active and founding member of the Small Venues Network, a consortium of arts venues across the North. We are also a key member of the East Riding Cultural Education Partnership and a member of the UKCA and Film Hub North.

The pandemic is likely to affect the whole nature of Junction's programme and mean that new ways of working will be needed in the short term at least. While some progress has been made in this regard, the imminent retirement of the current postholder has made further planning difficult and it has been recognised that it will be a key role of the new postholder to devise and carry out their own plans. While it will be a challenge to re-build Junction's programme and audiences during and post-Covid, it is also a time of new possibilities and new opportunities for the right candidate.

Governance and Staffing

The post of Arts Programme Manager is a senior full time role within the Town Council. The ultimate management body is Goole Town Council itself, made up of 17 elected councillors, 12 of whom are independent, 4 Labour and 1 Liberal Democrat. Full council meetings are held monthly, as are meetings of the Policy and Resources Committee and all members sit on these. There is a Personnel sub group of members and an Environmental Task Force, made up of staff and members.

The Town Council is independent of any other council and is a legal entity. It can disburse its funds only within the town boundary.

A schematic of all staff within the council is available on the Goole Town Council website, showing line manager responsibilities. The APM is the line manager for the following posts:

1. Senior Administrative Assistant, who deals with ticketing and box office, room hires, staff rotas, some general Council administration, some front of house duties and is in turn line manager for the box office and casual staff who are employed as building supervisors and front of house managers as well as the team of volunteers who assist with running events.
2. Youth and Community Arts Co-ordinator. This is our full time education and outreach post, managing all aspects of the workshop programme that takes place within the building and other activities in the town at large. Responsible for delivering our Arts Award and Arts Mark KPIs, the TakeOver Festival and other work in school and community settings, the postholder is also joint Child Protection Officer with the APM.

3. Marketing Officer. Also a full time post, the Marketing Officer deals with all marketing and publicity for the events programme at Junction, including print and broadcast media, social media, brochure and print production and also leads on management of the box office system – we currently use Ticketsolve.

In such a small organisation, it is expected that all staff will at some point contribute to other tasks, such as staffing events and helping with room hires.

Funding

The Arts and Leisure department of the Town Council operated with an income budget of over £290,000 in 2019/20. The majority of this was generated by Junction, through ticket sales for live events and cinema plus room and facility hires.

Arts Council NPO funding of some £70,000 per year is a very significant part of this income, used to support the live event and workshop programme. The current funding agreement with the Arts Council was due to run until March 2022 but this has been extended for one year because of the Covid crisis.

The East Riding of Yorkshire Council, the principal local authority, has long supported the programme at around £5,000 a year on a project by project basis.

Other grant funding is actively pursued during any year, usually on a project basis.

Goole Town Council, as employer of the arts team and owner of the building, is the most significant funder but earned income is the largest contributor to the venue's finances, amounting to some 65% of income last year.

Recruitment Timetable

After more than 25 years of working with Goole Town Council and having been the driving force behind the creation of Junction and its manager since opening, the current postholder is due to take early retirement as of 5 April 2021.

As the postholder is Designated Premises Supervisor, the new APM will need to be in position for 6 April 2021 so that regulated entertainment can continue. However, it is anticipated that a handover period with the outgoing postholder will be beneficial and while details of this will be agreed with the successful candidate, it may be envisaged that full time employment will commence in late February or early March 2021.

In person and Covid secure interviews for shortlisted candidates will be held at Junction on 10 November. We expect to offer the post, subject to references, within a week of interviews and agree a start date soon after.

Please see the Job Profile for further detail of the application process and timetable.

The Future Vision for Junction

The new APM will bring their own vision and strategies to achieving the venue's mission, which is:

The purpose of Junction is to provide the widest possible access to the best possible arts activities and to develop our audiences using partnership approaches wherever the opportunity arises.

Through this, the building, its facilities and its programme aim to achieve sustainable increases in the cultural and economic offer of Goole and in this way, to contribute to the artistic, social, educational and recreational development of the town and the surrounding region.

We certainly aspire to being included in the next Arts Council National Portfolio, which will run from 2023, so the vision for the future of Junction must chime with their new 10 year strategy, Let's Create. The application process for the new NPO round is expected to open in autumn 2021.

There are many strengths to build on: loyal audiences, a varied and high quality programme, excellent community and youth engagement work, good relationships with a variety of local arts organisations and a high level of connection with the regional arts sector. Crucially, one of the venues' strongest points, often remarked on by customers and visiting performers alike, is the professionalism and friendliness of all staff and this has won Junction an important place in the heart of our local communities, as well as the cultural landscape of the East Riding.

There are also areas for improvement: audiences for some professional shows can be low and more challenging artistic content therefore difficult to promote. Our current Creative Case for Diversity rating is Met and our ambition is to improve this. There is an ongoing commitment to improving the environmental footprint of the building and its activities and to reducing our carbon emissions.

Income generation is crucial to meet budgets. In 2019/20, Junction's earned income was around 65% of departmental expenditure. Arts Council and local authority support are earmarked for the arts programme so the cinema programme is required to be profit making.

In these highly uncertain times, a date for the return of audiences to conventional events and film screenings is currently unknown. A candidate's vision for the delivery of a high quality and relevant arts programme which pursues the venue's goals both during and post Covid will be of key importance in the recruitment of the APM.

There is, therefore, broad scope for the new postholder to continue Junction's success, with a lengthy familiarisation period before the next NPO application is due.

If you would like an informal conversation about this role, please contact the existing postholder, Charlie Studdy at charlie.gtc@btconnect.com who will then arrange a phone conversation. Any such conversation will be treated confidentially and will not inform the selection process.

We look forward to receiving your application.