

Engage Liverpool CIC – VENT! Liverpool Air Quality Festival

Public Forum – Saturday 5th March, Coffee & Fandisha - Minutes

Welcome from Gerry Proctor

Prof. Andy Morse, University of Liverpool

Andy spoke of being approached in October 2015, and immediately thought of working with artists, though had previous struggles trying to work with artists in the past. The key driver of the partnership was elevating communication / awareness in the public, with public opinion being able to sway politicians in the decision making process. In many ways art and artists represent the missing link between scientists and the public, the arts can bridge the gap, for scientists are not necessarily the best at communication. Interesting how much work was undertaken in a short period of time and just how good the final outcomes were, visually diverse, all looking very good.

Annual attributable deaths of 239 / 2440 life years lost – 1 in 20 deaths for those over 25 years of age. Invisible, silent killer.

GP - Introduction of participating artists.

Julieann O'Malley: Occlusion

Julieann cited the usual big process of ideas, from poly tunnels to projections, maps to globes upon her head, yet narrowed channels down to breathing from a cloud. Learned how to get things done in a rapid fashion in Liverpool as a performance artist.

Pamela Sullivan: A Warning

Pamela referenced her usual incredibly complicated big ideas of 100 pieces, then 50, 20 and settling for 15 cocoons of bathbomb bi-carbonate of soda / citric acid shielding wire skeletons, with the connotation of planetary wear, aspects of use, landfill, methane release (planet and local impacts), with an overarching message of if we do not look after the planet, were all going to end up as skeletons. Pamela noted the Council's Arts Officer was not keen on anything hanging, notably through degradation / disintegration being part of the design. With 1 week of dry weather following installation, little to no impact was noted on the cocoons, thereupon a change in weather and the cocoons took a battering, with clumps falling off many cocoons, with The Strand being a notable success of degradation.

Tristan Brady-Jacobs: Liverpool Glorms

Tristan referenced the process artists go through in second guessing and beating themselves up over channeling idea's down. Particularly pleasing were the results given timescales involved, with a successful arts council bid, Engage management and administration behind VENT! being particularly thorough. Scientists and artists have very similar ways of examining topics and themes, with intense bouts of working. Tristan stated he was caught between propaganda and street art, and once the theme was settled, it was a pleasure to be out on the streets performing, for its good at conveying information in different ways without committing to explicit messages, rather leading and taking the topic into people's faces. Glorms – we are ALL Glorms, and all complicit in the degradation of our local environment, air pollution and planet. They represent a cool and interesting way to stimulate debate, through being startling, strange and weird.

Charlotte Weatherstone: Iris

The desire was for a large scale wall installation, big and positive to look at for the public. Starting out as a sketch, it moved on with a scientific partner, with research undertaken to convey a simple message via elements of vegetation to indicate air quality impacts as to how people travel throughout the city. The process was lengthy, with the installation remaining for around one year, it will be interesting to note changes over this period, when Charlotte records and documents changes once a month.

GP > Andy Morse – How will the science be touched upon by this? Samples will be taken to see what the installation has trapped air pollutant wise towards the end of its year.

GP - Discussion

GP - Will the University be interested in the public response?

GP - Liverpool Echo coverage resulted in the usual, awful horrid comments – but good to receive coverage.

Pamela - Many people are talking about Vent, lots of discussion.

GP – Air Quality featured in the BBC NW Tonight News, with a focus on Manchester – can we get that clip and add it to the Engage website?

GP conscious people are present who wish to contribute to a wider debate on the topic of Air Quality, with fascinating feedback being received from the [Eco-Hubs Merseyside](#) representatives around the public in general knowing air pollution is present, yet it remains difficult to do something to counter it.

Debate concentrated in Guardian articles of travel within London and travel into London by different commuting / transport modes. Low level Ozone was cited as being a particular worry, barely covered in national media, but present locally, especially in summer.

Eco-Hubs Merseyside highlighted how ClientEarth (Alan Andrews) are the legal body taking the Government to task via European legislation, with numerous deadlines passed, thanks in part to DEFRA having little idea on how to overcome the situation, highlighted by offering a £450k prize for devising a plan to appease European Courts. The question was asked how can one fine non-compliant local authorities?

Phil Winston highlighted the state of cycling in Liverpool and its inability to reduce air pollution (stuck at 1.5-1.8% despite CityBike injection). Comparison to our core city rivals in receipt of 'Ambition Grant Funding' (Manchester £42m, Leeds £40m, Birmingham £39m, Bristol £27m, Newcastle £18m etc). Liverpool's £10m bid failed at the first hurdle, unfinanced and unsupported through shortcomings in business acumen. Question of CityBike future with no cycle lanes was raised, (asked by many across the UK). Everything thrown at cycling but the kitchen sink (training, Bikeability, hubs, bikes to work, showers and more) with the kitchen sink being bike lanes. DfT will progress cities already delivering infrastructure and results.

GP - TBJ idea of 'Festival of Environmental Art'? Was VENT! a one off? Can we go further and forward with VENT! Where and how do we go from here? Do we broaden VENT! How will it work, funding will not work on fresh air (!!). Focus upon Air Quality, move to Climate Change – is there a risk of losing momentum. What would the challenge be like to represent the differing impacts Liverpool is subjected to?

TBJ - European Environmental Art Festivals (Paris notable), but not here in the UK.

GP – What other issues remain about the art brand of VENT! What other environmental subjects do we need to think about?

Idea of streaming all artists work on one webpage.

MINUTES COURTESY OF PHILLIP WINSTON – they are not an official account of the Forum.