

# Destination Maidenhead:

## Boomtown & Bohemia through Artisan Business

(Or 'How Maidenhead High Street can get its art in gear')

**“There’s no point in regurgitating. We know the challenges that Maidenhead is facing and we know where we hope to be in the future. What we want to talk about is the changing landscape of our High Street, the development of a new local economy and the quiet army of artists and makers who have been here all along, but didn’t understand their value or where they fit in. Until now.”**

**ART  
ON THE  
STREET**  
MAIDENHEAD

By Marie-Anne Leonard  
On behalf of Art on the Street CIC 2012

# About Art on the Street CIC

## Who we are:

Marie Leonard, Harriet Brittain, Stephanie Gay, Steph James & our newest member, Carly Kenny. We come from diverse professional backgrounds that cross over in a love for our town and the arts. Art on the Street operates on a voluntary basis but very much as a business, channelling any available revenue into less profitable arts projects and events.

## What We Do:

- Hold two events per year that have increased in size each time from 2009. The last event saw over 200 artists, performers, musicians and creatives showcasing and selling in Maidenhead Town Centre, giving the town a festival feeling, creating the 'feel good factor' and, as always, substantially increasing High Street footfall.
- Keep in constant contact with a huge network of artists & creatives, fielding information, tenders, briefs and exhibition opportunities. We also create our own projects and opportunities for artists to participate in. At the time of writing, our network reaches over 1500 artists and is increasing with every new project.
- Art on the Street are the official sponsors of the Berkshire Artists Network (a community of over 230 Berkshire-based artists) and is the only Community Interest Company to hold an elected membership to the Fine Art Trade Guild – a professional body that represents the fine art industry.
- Adopted a 'marketing sponsor' in Claires Court Schools, allowing us to increase our press audience reach into West London, Oxfordshire and the further reaches of Buckinghamshire.
- Advise and support the local arts community on business issues with an arts-specific agenda, offering help and support and directing artists to the correct organisations.

## Our Achievements:

- Six events since 2009. The last open-air art fair was on 12<sup>th</sup> May & took over 200 people to execute. The 7<sup>th</sup> is scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012
- The Portas Bid for Maidenhead was driven by Art on the Street. Although unsuccessful on its first application, the process drove the creative communities to structure a continued programme of activities & projects in new areas, such as vintage, antiques and fashion, as well as increasing momentum for Arts & Crafts.
- Pop-Up Gallery at Unit 30 Nicholsons Centre
- Pop-Up Shop at Unit 23 Nicholsons Centre, manned by artists & selling locally produced artwork opened on 8<sup>th</sup> June
- Regularly changing exhibitions in The Rendezvous Café in the Town Hall
- A fundraising exercise allowing an Art on the Street artist to affordably exhibit in the gallery at Norden Farm.



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## Before The Buzz Can Begin

The challenges facing Maidenhead Town Centre in the pursuit of a 'hands-on' artisan economy and the desired 'Arts USP' are:

- A general misunderstanding of creative businesses by banks, commercial services organisations, landlords and the public, restricting the speed at which they can grow
- A lack of small, affordable working spaces in which to move when their business outgrows the 'kitchen table'
- The need for a focused area for artists/artisan businesses so that they don't stand alone. The 'Bohemian/Artists Quarter' that operates with great success, but often grows organically out of low-rent, low perceived value areas.
- A general reluctance of high street landlords/agents to engage with community projects.

## The Basics of Birthing a Bohemian Boomtown

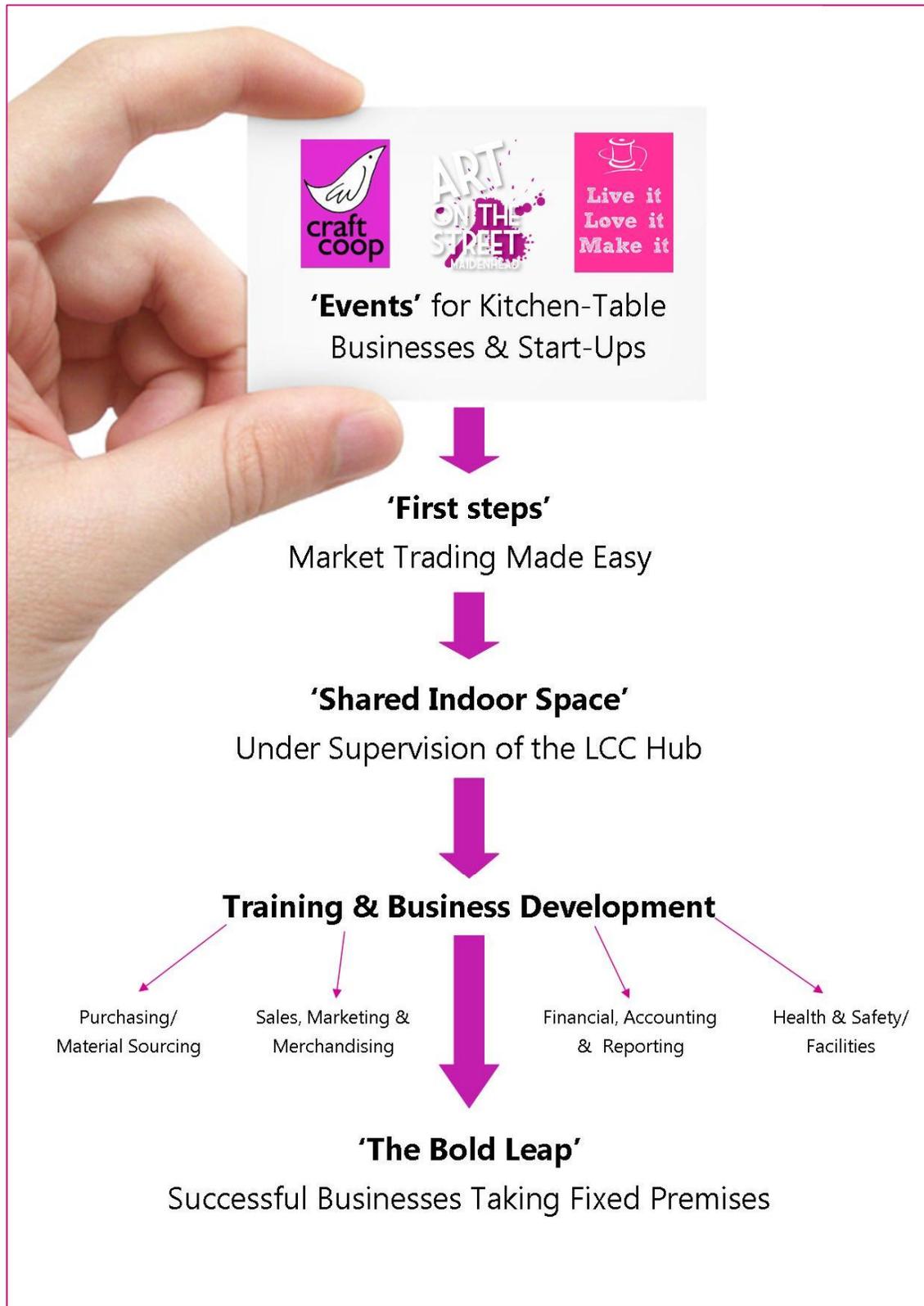
Art on the Street recommends the creation of The 'Locate-Create-Connect Hub' (probably a centrally located vacant premises), that has three clear purposes:

- **Locate**  
To find spaces for visual arts projects and affordable premises in which new creative businesses can work, sell, develop and grow.
- **Create**  
To implement a programme of events and projects with a view to presenting Maidenhead as a champion of the arts and an appealing place to live, work and visit.
- **Connect**  
To forge links with artists, makers, artisans and the community as well as established arts, heritage and culture representatives and organisations to deliver a holistic, united, challenging and well-defined and executed arts programme.

The LCC Hub should work closely with the MTP, property management agents, developers, landlords, the local authority, amongst others to enable a new artisan-driven economic landscape for the High Street.



# Breeding the New Businesses



# Break Down Barriers, Build New Bridges

The function of the LCC Hub and A mixture of practical recommendations to stimulate the creation of Maidenhead's own 'Bohemian Quarter':

- Permanent places of market trading with fixed, visually appealing market stalls that can be rented
- Negotiations with landlords and agents to allow short-term start-up rental deals on long-term vacant units for artists/artisans
- Business rates assistance in the start-up rental period for local artists/artisans. Extended further to CIC or charitable businesses.
- Acknowledging and stating that all activities from the LCC Hub sit under the remit of 'Public Art & Heritage', thereby allowing the local authority to channel S106 developer contributions into the LCC Hubs continued programme of arts delivery.
- Empty spaces support - local authority to enforce shop front clean up with best practice guidelines for agents and landlords including a requirement for artists to provide designs for shop wraps (where premises cannot be occupied) or use shop fronts to visually enrich the High Street. (shop-walk projects, projected art, light and shadow work, the speaking building concept, shop-front puppet-shows)
- A budget and support for temporary one-off art events to reinforce the message (e.g. the small doors pop-up, walls due for demolition, use of projectors and lighting for bold installations, skinny alley project), under the umbrella of Public Art & Heritage.
- Support for Town Centre Open Studios Weeks, where creatives occupy available empty spaces and turn them into collaborative working studios, allowing residents and visitors to see artists/artisans/designers/makers at work and understand their value to Maidenhead. This, in the run-up to Art on the Street event could create a 'Hay-On-Wye' style must-visit event for the arts which has nationwide potential.
- Signage. Fixed and permanent statements of support directing to and introducing visitors and residents to the new arts & heritage championed High Street.
- Media Partnerships and continuing to work hand-in-hand with MTP and Enjoy Maidenhead to foster local awareness and participation and create a new 'clicks and bricks' culture with existing businesses.



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## Artists in Residence Programme

It is our understanding that there are several empty town centre premises that are owned by the local authority. We propose that the authority via the LCC Hub put out to tender the opportunity for a group of cross-discipline artists/artisans to be Town Centre Artists in Residence. For this they will receive no salary, but will be granted a centrally located large working space for a fixed period of time at no cost whatsoever. They will also be obliged to open their working space during the Town Centre Open Studios period and assist the team at the LCC Hub in promoting the arts USP in Maidenhead where required.

## Artistic Interventions – Low Cost, High Value

To follow are some examples of basic ideas (temporary and permanent) that can be executed locally.



Other concepts include:

- Using the current locked cases in the town centre for week long 'Mini Exhibitions'
- Talking to Landlords about replacing their external letterboxes (for High Street Flats) with more attractive versions of the same
- Shopwalks, where one artist uses as many vacant spaces as possible to exhibit a body of work, then tours visitors around the pieces, sharing their story.
- Coverings. Like the BT OpenBox concept, where artists of different disciplines create unusual coverings for objects that are already in place on the High Street. E.g. Knitted bollard covers, removable vinyl mouths for bins etc.

## Further information

For find out more about Art on the Street as an organisation, its projects, events and vision for the future please contact:

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