Michele Gregson, NSEAD General Secretary

Statement for the APPG for Art, craft and design education 2nd June 2020

All in all, this Spring, NSEAD has been more active, with higher profile and working at faster pace than ever. We published a statement - an NSEAD promise to support our community, provide information and press Government for answers, that remains as written at the beginning of the outbreak:

I am proud to say that the organisation has risen to the challenge on all fronts, We have continued to fulfil our usual commitments to members and our constitutional mission, taking much of this work online - full service has been maintained In addition to our Covid-19 response

We have harnessed the energy and reach and expertise of the community and brought that to bear on our Covid-19 response

We have worked alongside a range of education stakeholders to represent the views of teachers and learners, advising Ofqual on arrangements for Centre assessments, meeting with the DFE, providing expert input and analysis of the arrangements to relax school closures. Last week we met with Gavin Williamson and our TUC colleagues to agree that a collective task force to work together to advise Government policy and guidance for education settings. NSEAD are the only organisation with an expert and specialist perspective on the place of art education at that table. Really important work, that we are uniquely placed to do.

Lots of work to influence government decisions, and ensure that teachers are recognised and defended. The work teachers are doing in classrooms, studios and remotely online is amazing. At this time of national emergency, they are undertaking a critical role on the front line. There are so many challenges ahead and all those involved in art ed and cultural sector need to be supported.

Our response to that need has been centred in being useful, being kind, and generous, tapping into what our community can offer. Essentially, sharing good stuff, information that can be trusted, and creating spaces for expression and share. Over the last three months, We have developed a range of advice and guidance and resources to support art educators, and families - launching #NSEADcreate to pull together remote learning case studies, links and materials. There has been a tsunami of material, quite overwhelming. We have used our community of partners and specialists to make useful recommendations that can be trusted.

In the autumn, we will be offering a platform to share online exhibitions of student work that should have been exhibited in schools. Within that will be work produced as part of the Life After Lockdown project, which has been developed by a group of NSEAD members. This is a fantastic project that offers a space for young people to share their experiences, hopes and fears through their artwork. NSEAD is proud to support this member led iniative.

It very much resonates with the question asked by our patron B&R, ‘How do you want the world to change after this?’ This is a question that we will be taking to our annual conference at the end of June. Reimagined as a series of online conversations exploring themes of Voices, value and the visual arts. Online over an extended weekend, a relaxed programme, all sessions free, majority open to non members, opening up the debate about what education could be in the future - this is a once in a generation opportunity to transform education for the better.

Bob will be talking to a panel of young people about their vision for the future - lots of thought provoking conversations, details on our website, full and final programme will go out to members tomorrow. Hope you can join us.

I’ve used the word community a lot - because at a time where we are isolated and physically distant, it is more important than ever. The art ed community that the APPG brings together is diverse, coming from all areas, all sectors, all phases. Cetainly in NSEAD there are as many ideas as there are members. Sometimes we agree, sometimes there is passionate debate and difference. We share in common three things however: we are all educators, we are all learners - and we all believe passionately in the power of art, craft and design to make the world a better place.

That belief is being tested now, as never before. The challenge for us all is to keep the power and joy of learning in our subject alive, to support each other in frightening and uncertain times. Teachers across the UK are stepping up, staying on the front line to care for the needs of our children and young people when they and their families need it most. Teachers are rising to the challenge of maintaining education in a transformed landscape – embracing the change, responding and learning at a rapid pace. But it’s far from over, in many ways the real work is only just beginning. And that is a question I would leave you with - what part wil this APPG play?