

RSA Networks Open Space Event Report

7TH April – Chichester

Opening the Conversation

Introduction

The South Central, Chichester and Portsmouth Local Events Group arranged the Open Space Event in Chichester on the evening of the 7th April. The event was held in the Council House as guests of the Mayor of Chichester. This report aims to condense the many points raised during the evening into something, which can be used to frame further discussions about strategy for region.

The central question

How can the RSA Fellows' network contribute to local communities and serve as a catalyst for positive social progress?

Fellow Engagement in the networks

In regions the Fellowship is assumed to be very supportive of the RSA and its activities, but largely as passive members. Until now the opportunities of meeting other Fellows have centred around regional events or lectures and events at RSA John Adams Street. The discussions around the issue of engagement in the RSA Networks projects were based around opportunities, interests and challenges.

OPPORTUNITIES

TALENT AND DIVERSITY

The talent and diversity of expertise within the Fellowship. Niche resources for project development and mentorship.

SUPPORT

The support for societal innovation and improvement through RSA

COLLECTIVE STRENGTH

The collective strength of networking across disciplines and regions as well as more focused efforts within smaller communities.

RSA BRAND

The strength of the RSA brand to serve as platform for local initiatives.

FELLOWSHIP AND TRUST

Use the regional network to create an enhanced sense of Fellowship and trust through collective achievement.

FELLOW INTERESTS

INITIATING ACTIVITIES

Fellows wish to initiate activities themselves.

KNOWING OTHER FELLOWS

Meeting and understanding the expertise and interests of other local Fellows and Fellows more widely.

MORE LOCAL EVENTS

More events specifically set up for networking.

A desire for more frequency of networking opportunities, and with perhaps less formality.

COMMUNICATION

Improved or new methods of communication.

SPACES

New and a better variety of spaces to facilitate new Fellow-to-Fellow activities.

CHALLENGES

LOW PUBLIC PROFILE OF RSA REGIONALLY

RSA's current low profile in general awareness terms is seen as a challenge. It was felt that the society's profile was higher in the past when there were national exams etc.

TECHNOLOGY GAP

The new networking opportunities, which are created through new online participation, are currently closed to many due to the technology knowledge gap.

WELCOME AND VALUE

Making Fellows feel welcome in networks and valued for their contribution.

SIZE OF THE REGIONS

Size of the regions makes the current schedule of events too dispersed for many Fellows, and makes follow-up more difficult.

MANAGING IDEAS

Once activated Fellows will expect some framework of feedback, connection and support.

LIMITED VOLUNTEER TIME

The time available to the RSA committees is limited, although committed RSA members they are volunteers and often have many demands on their time.

IMAGINATIVE ENGAGEMENT METHODS

Finding imaginative ways to stimulate and energize all Fellows to participate in the Networks project, including retired members, will be challenging. Ensuring positive approaches and methodologies rather than being high-handed or prescriptive was seen as important.

EMPOWERING FELLOWS

Encouraging/empowering Fellow initiatives while maintaining some sort of moderation e.g. straying into political areas.

IDEAS FROM THE EVENING

SMALL GROUPS

A framework to encourage and support the formation of smaller groups in the region - either focused on local community issues or focusing interest.

EXPERTISE BANK

Local groups of Fellows pledging time to aid local organisations with specific expertise needs.

RECYCLING AUDIT

Recycling audit to establish the best local practice and to encourage Fellow engagement where appropriate expertise exists.

YOUNG FELLOWSHIP

A young Fellowship, perhaps through an associate Fellowship scheme for younger people or in partnership with student unions –ambassadors or mentors.

ACTIVISM

Develop framework for participation on lobbying activities for local issues without straying into political territory. e.g. Graylingwell Hospital in Chichester

HOUSING DESIGN FORUM

New housing design forum to discuss local challenges – start the conversation.

ANNUAL REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Annual RSA Convention/Symposium in the local area (or across regions) to showcase existing work and encourage greater participation.

OPEN MIC EVENTS

Open mic events for Fellows to introduce their work, passions and expertise to other Fellows.

LOCAL SPECIFIC ISSUES

RECYCLING

Developing a greater consistency available to domestic consumers in the local authorities.

WORK OPPORTUNITIES

Job Opportunities for young people – the effect of low income on finding housing.

ELDERLY CARE

Lack of affordable or suitable care for elderly.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Housing development and housing design

PRISONERS

Improvement in the treatment of prisoners.

MENTAL HEALTH

Support programs which work preventatively and anticipatorily on mental health issues.

YOUNG PEOPLE

Positive engagement of young people who are dropping through society's nets.

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

Encouraging pro-social behaviours, community service projects, which encourage people to feel safer and included e.g. reducing litter, graffiti removal

INFRASTRUCTURE

Housing, diversity, transport, education, youth engagement and participation all encompassed by the need for infrastructure.

NOTE

These were the issues mentioned during the course of the evening and does not attempt to list the many opportunities locally for positive development and assistance.

NEXT STEPS?

Communicate discussions to all the Fellows in the Regions – possibly get further feedback via a survey (survey monkey) to develop a realistic feel for the number of Fellows who wish to be active.

Encourage new groups (LEGS and others) and set up pilots to test feasibility.

Brainstorm further ideas for imaginative network events?

Invite participation by invitation where possible?

Discuss communication and support methods with RSA regional co-ordinator?

Arrange an event with other regions to discuss and co-ordinate efforts?

Consider how we can contribute personally?

Follow up the ideas expressed on the evening and see if those interests can be developed further?

Encourage further Fellow research in communities to establish needs?

Audit regional committee commitments, time and interests?

Look at ways to reduce the administration burden on the Regional Committees?

Actively encourage Fellows to register and participate on the Networks platform?

Register of Fellows offering events (big or small) and define a way to co-ordinate?

THANKS

A huge thank you to everyone who came to the evening and contributed so generously to the discussions. In particular we would like to thank the Mayor of Chichester (Councillor Ray Brown) for giving the RSA The Council House for the evening, Matthew Taylor for coming from London to introduce the evening and Laura Bunt for her attendance and continued support of the Regional Committee's efforts to explore new ways of enhancing Fellowship through the Networks project.

EVENT FEEDBACK

Following the event, Fellows present were invited to complete a brief feedback/evaluation, rating the event on a scale of 1-5, where 1= terrible and 5= great. In total, 16 evaluation forms were completed, and the following information was gathered:

Q1 Did you get enough/the right information about this event in advance?

Score: 3 (x1 person), 4 (x2), 5 (x13)

Q2 Was the event well signposted?

Score: 2 (x1), 3 (x1), 4 (x3), 5 (x11)

Q3 Was the link with the RSA, its purpose and/or its Manifesto Challenges clear enough?

Score: 3 (x3), 4 (x4), 5 (x9)

Q4 Was the format right?

Score: 3 (x2), 4 (x2), 5 (x12)

Q5 Was the event good value?

Score: 3 (x1), 4 (x2), 5 (x13)

Q6 Did you enjoy it?

Score: 3 (x1), 4 (x3), 5 (x12)

(Optional question) What would you have done to improve this event?

- ✓ It was outside my comfort zone - but enjoyable
- ✓ Matthew Taylor could have taken questions
- ✓ We could have provided a list of attendees and backgrounds
- ✓ I went with an open mind but without much expectation. In the end I came away being enthused and refreshed by the open and wide ranging discussion