

## **HOW TO HAVE A GREAT BUCKS ART WEEKS**

**Bucks Art Weeks** is the largest visual arts event in Buckinghamshire and one of the biggest in the country. It is popular, well-established and vibrant and is a fantastic opportunity for you to promote yourself and your work to the local community. We've had upwards of **48,000** visits per year made by the public and, with more and more people shunning the high street in favour of buying wonderful, hand crafted pieces or works of art from local artists and makers, Bucks Art Weeks is an extraordinarily great way to get your name "**out there**".

Whether you're a newcomer or need a refresher on good practice, we've put together this guide to help you have a great Bucks Art Weeks. We've collated the thoughts of experienced artists and makers and have incorporated their pearls of wisdom into the following methods, hints and tips.

**If there is only one piece of "magic wand" advice that you take away from this guide then it's this:**

**The members who put the most in, in terms of additional publicity and enthusiasm, get the most out in terms of visitors and sales.**

We also know that it's a ripple effect. The more years you do **Bucks Art Weeks**, the more people get to know you and will recommend you to others.

### **What does a successful Art Weeks mean to you?**

It's definitely worth spending a little time thinking about what success means to you as this can really help to shape your event. Do you want lots of visitors or maybe a small, but very well targeted number of people who are genuinely interested in your work and techniques? Whatever it is, it's worth having a goal to work towards.

### **Shout about yourself and your work!**

Even if we do say so ourselves, we have a great committee of exceptionally passionate and enthusiastic volunteers who live and breathe **Bucks Art Weeks** and work tirelessly to promote the event producing marketing material like the printed directory, the website, local PR, social media, signs and flyers. BUT, with the very best will in the world, we cannot individually promote hundreds of artists and makers and 200+ venues. SO please **ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND GET STUCK IN**. We have some great ideas to help you - but always please make sure that you include the **Bucks Art Weeks** logo at the top in all your publicity. You can download the logo **HERE**.

### TOP TIPS FOR HAVING A SUCCESSFUL BUCKS ART WEEKS

- 1) Get the registration process right
- 2) Good signage is everything
- 3) Your flyers with details of your event
- 4) Consider leaflet and flyer dropping in your local area
- 5) Get active on social media
- 6) Join (or create!) an Art Trail
- 7) Be cautious with “paid for” advertising
- 8) Write a press release
- 9) Get good pictures of you and your work
- 10) Issue personal invitations
- 11) Hold a private view
- 12) Have a market stall
- 13) Recommend others
- 14) Make a good first impression
- 15) Get a mentor
- 16) Seriously consider insurance
- 17) Give us your feedback
- 18) Give us your visitors’ feedback

#### 1 Get the registration process right

Make sure you complete your registration by the deadline of January 31<sup>st</sup>. Take your time to fill out the form and double check that all the details including address, postcode, dates, opening times etc. are correct. If you’re entering with a group make sure all details are consistent and tally with the group if you are entering as individuals. You will also need good quality, punchy image(s), with strong colour, that will stand out on the page and website.

Sharing a venue with at least one other person working in a different field can often help to increase visitors as two or more different interests are covered.

#### 2) Good signage is everything

You need to make it as easy as possible for visitors to find you. **We cannot stress enough that well placed and sufficient road signs make a huge difference to the success of your event.** Put up signs and arrows from all the closest main routes.

The large yellow boards should be in position a ***week*** before Bucks Art Weeks starts to create awareness and interest (even if you are only open the second week). The arrows should then be fixed in place early on the day of opening. **Don’t forget to put your directory number on the sticker provided and affix it to your yellow boards.**

- Fix yellow boards to metal or wooden posts (from DIY stores)
- Hammer into the ground (***before*** a road junction, rather than ***at*** the junction)
- Place sensibly and be aware that the council or neighbours may mow a grass verge and remove your signage.
- Do not fix to street furniture e.g. road signs or lampposts
- Follow all the signs ***yourself*** to make sure that, if you were a visitor in a car, you would be able to see all of the signs and reach your venue
- Road safety is paramount – make sure your signs do not obscure other road signs or limit visibility for road users

- Check daily that all of your signs are still in place and safe and secure
- **At the end: Remember to remove all signs and arrows promptly on the last evening of the final day of your Bucks Art Weeks (please take care of signs, they are expensive to produce and can be reused year after year).**

### **3) Your flyers**

We create a flyer each year to promote the event that will be distributed to you when you collect your directories. This is to be used when you wish to leaflet your area, remind potential customers when the event is taking place and is a good alternative to hand to those that express interest in the event but, perhaps, don't warrant the more comprehensive directory. Alternatively, if you choose to make your own flyer, ALWAYS use the [Bucks Art Weeks](#) logo which is available [HERE](#).

### **4) Leaflet and flyer "dropping"**

Leaflet and directory "dropping" in your local area comes highly recommended as a way of increasing your visitor numbers. Some groups allocate particular roads to share the workload. Good places to put directories and flyers include:

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|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| • Dentists' and doctors' waiting rooms | • Scouts                                                                                                   |
| • Local places of work                 | • Dogs' training classes                                                                                   |
| • Hairdressers and beauty salons       | • Day or evening classes                                                                                   |
| • Cafes and bars                       | • Craft fairs and fetes                                                                                    |
| • Galleries                            | • Local library                                                                                            |
| • Hotel reception areas                | • Tourist information centre – you can see if they will let you do a display with you or your Group's work |
| • Shops                                |                                                                                                            |
| • Churches                             |                                                                                                            |
| • Schools                              |                                                                                                            |

As well as leaflet dropping yourself, there are companies that can do it *for* you but, obviously, they will charge. **Check in advance when they can do it** and how much they will charge. It is best NOT to go inside another publication as the leaflets often just get thrown away. Do shop around but some of the companies include Door to Door, Sure 2 Door, Post Office, Abracadabra, Buckinghamshire Distribution etc.

### **5) Get active on Social Media – be nice and share!**

It's mostly free and we know that Facebook and Twitter really drives interest and visitors. Please **LIKE** the main Bucks Art Weeks pages and, when you can, share and like our posts and tweets. Just make sure you include "#BucksArtWeeks" somewhere in text and we will share some of yours too. We're nice like that 😊

We're also now on Instagram - @bucksartweeksofficial - please tag us in your posts! Use #bucksartweeks, too when you're on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)

### **6) Join an Art Trail**

Creating or joining an Art Trail is a great way to encourage people to visit a few studios in your area which in turn helps everyone to get more visitors. Check the website <https://www.bucksartweeks.org.uk/open-studios/trails> or contact Kairen Bradford, our VIG Co-ordinator, to see if there's already an Art Trail in your area. If there is, ask how you can be put on. If not, why not set up your own? You can use the website to contact the artists closest to you. If you do create an art trail, email it as a PDF to Kairen at [admin@bucksartweeks.org.uk](mailto:admin@bucksartweeks.org.uk) and it will be added to the main web site and to all the other art trail entries.

## **7) Be cautious of “paid for” advertising**

As a general rule we have found spending money on print advertising to be less effective than other forms of marketing as it is hard to measure its effectiveness. If you choose to advertise in local magazines and newsletters then please check exactly who the publication goes to, how many and what types of people and when it will be distributed. Please DOWNLOAD and use the [Bucks Art Weeks](#) logo in any advertisements.

Please be super cautious of the publications that flatter you by saying they’ve selected you to take part in one of their features and then ask for payment. This is usually a huge waste of time and money which could be better spent on other marketing activities. As a general rule, if they ask for payment to include you in an editorial feature, just say no.

If you need any advice on advertising please contact [admin@bucksartweeks.org.uk](mailto:admin@bucksartweeks.org.uk) or 07950 732 117.

## **8) Write a press release**

We will be sending press releases to local newspapers, magazine and newsletters but there’s nothing stopping you contacting them directly, too. Local parish and village magazines are a brilliant way of publicising your own individual event. Bear in mind though that some magazines will work at least one month (or more) in advance of publication. You can click on the [press release template here](#) to download and create your own press release. If you need any advice or help with this then please contact our marketing person Ruth Buckingham on [Ruth@kandu-marketing.co.uk](mailto:Ruth@kandu-marketing.co.uk) or call her on 07972 559 607.

## **9) Get good pictures of your work**

Take some good quality photography for publicity purposes. A lovely shot of you working in your studio (cheesy grins ARE allowed as are thoughtful, concentration faces), a shot of you with some visitors and a lovely high quality shot of your wonderful works of art. And please make them high resolution (not grainy photos of photos with the washing up in the background!)

## **10) Personal invitations to visit your open studio**

Collecting names, addresses and emails of visitors each year, and anywhere else you exhibit, and then emailing or posting personal invitations to them works particularly well and is a great way for them to spread the word with their family and friends. Many of our successful participants highly recommend this as a key way of getting more visitors and sales.

## **11) Consider holding a private view**

A private view is an official opening to your event when you invite friends, family, neighbours as well as the local community and perhaps local MPs and Councillors to have refreshments and chat about your work. (If you’re having wine, definitely invite the committee 😊)

## **12) Market Stalls**

Get in touch with your inner Del Boy and see if you can get a temporary market stall for early June. You can ask as many artists and makers in your area to help and attend. Market stalls are a fantastic way of talking to local people, hand out directories and flyers as well as details of Art Trails. Make sure you do a good display with posters and banners.

### 13) Spread the joy by recommending others

We have a great community of artists and makers so, during the event, when visitors are finishing at your venue, why not recommend other venues that are local? This is a great way to spread the word and if you do it for other people, they will do it for you (see Art Trails).

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### 14 Managing your event – first impression really do count

So your Art Weeks is all set up and ready to receive visitors. Make sure you give people an excellent experience – and they will love to spread the word!

- Make sure your studio/venue makes a good first impression and looks professional.
- Make it as easy as possible for visitors by making them welcome, with clear signage, details of where to park and how to find the entrance to your venue - and a friendly greeting when they come in!
- If at all possible and it's safe to do so, leave any doors open with clear arrows showing people where to go to.
- Have everything clearly priced.
- Have new material to show and demonstrate – this is particularly important for repeat visitors.
- Don't expect to leave the studio if you have promised your presence. You will barely get a loo break or food!
- Be open when you are supposed to be open. Venues that are closed when they have said they will be open, create a bad impression for the whole event.
- If appropriate have sketchbooks, source material and work in progress.
- Always have a book for making notes.
- Please keep any enthusiastic pets and or children under control.
- Cold drinks on hot days are very welcome. Bear in mind that if you are busy with catering you are leaving your work unattended. **Please be aware that unless you are *selling* catering for a charitable donation you will need to be licensed.**
- Keep a tally of the number of visitors and build up a bank of visitors' contact details by asking them to sign a visitor book. You can then send out e-mail invites to previous visitors and over time build up a loyal group of repeat visitors.
- Ask them how they found out about the event and let them know about other local venues they might want to visit.

### 15) Mentoring

If you're a newcomer and feel, after reading this, that you still need help or advice, the committee are always on hand to give you all the help you'll need. Call Kairen Bradford, our Co-ordinator and she will be able to put you in touch with a committee member who can help. Don't worry in silence – ask and we'll be happy to help!

### 16) Let's talk about insurance

Okay so it's not the most riveting of subjects BUT it's incredibly important. **Public Liability Insurance, in case a visitor is injured whilst at your venue for example, is not a legal obligation but you should seriously consider how you would meet the legal and compensation costs of any claim brought against you.**

If you do not have cover you can contact the British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA) which is a not for profit Trade Association for insurance brokers. The number is 0870 950 1790 (ordinary BT rates and conditions apply) and is open 9-5pm. They will be happy to speak to anybody who is looking for insurance or a specialist insurance broker.

Although we are not allowed to recommend them, we are aware of many artists taking insurance via a subscription to a-n Magazine online which includes free public liability cover at £36. But please do check this is relevant for you, shop around and check all the details to make sure that you have adequate cover for your needs. You can also find a list of other companies that offer insurance for artists here

<http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/resources/practicaladvice/adviceartists/insurance.php>

### 17) We need your feedback!

After the event, please complete and return your **Evaluation Form** which you will receive by email! This feedback and your total visitor numbers helps us to improve **Bucks Art Weeks** next year.

### 18) Visitor Prize Draw Cards

**These are also really important and the winner will receive a voucher of £100 to spend at a venue at next year's event – and that venue might be yours! The best way to get these filled out and returned is to leave them in a prominent place at your event with a supply of pens and a box to put them in when complete.**

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## TIMELINE

### **APRIL**

- Collect Bucks Art Weeks flyers (an email notice goes out from VIG to indicate where to collect them from) and distribute. It's never too early to start getting the word out in your local community.
- If you would like to, create a personalised flyer for your own event.

- Write a press release and issue to Parish Magazines (do check the deadline with your area as some may have earlier deadlines).

### EARLY MAY

- Collect directories, posters, arrows and road signs. We will let you know your collection point, dates and times. Directories and Road Signs are available for collection.

### MAY / EARLY JUNE

- Send press releases to local press and radio stations and don't forget online media too.
- Put up posters

### 1 WEEK TO GO

- Put out large yellow Bucks Art Weeks signs and posters, without arrows, to create general awareness of the event – we know that signs are one of the most important marketing tools.
- Top up local libraries, shops, waiting rooms etc. with listings and put up any remaining posters.

### THE DAY BEFORE

- Either the evening before, or on the morning of your first day (before you are open but not too far in advance or you might have people turning up when you've got your PJs on...) put up the arrows and the road sign boards to direct visitors to your studio or exhibition.

### DURING THE EVENT

- Regularly check that the arrows and signs are still in place
- Encourage feedback from all your visitors via the prize draw card

### DAY AFTER THE EVENT

- Take down all signs, posters and arrows and store for next year. If you are not participating next year please return signs and arrows to the VIG Co-ordinator.

### THE WEEK AFTER THE EVENT

- Please complete your participant Evaluation Form and put all your Visitor Prize Draw Cards in an envelope and send to our P.O. Box. This feedback is really important to us and helps us to plan and improve next year's event. Completing this feedback is useful to monitor your experience while it's still fresh in your mind. For example, how visitor numbers vary on different days and times. This may help you decide if you want to change your opening days or times next year. It can go by in a blur so it helps to log your impressions while they're fresh!

Don't forget to **ask** if you have any queries – and **GOOD LUCK!**