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SUN PIER HOUSE IS A NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION, WORKING TO SUPPORT ARTISTS AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN MEDWAY.

Founders, Heather Burgess and Ed Gransden, were initially looking to base a one-off event on the Old High Street Intra. Little did they know that ten years later they would still be situated along Sun Pier, having converted three commercial buildings into Sun Pier House comprised of 24 open studios, gallery, café and community space which hosts multiple events, workshops and community gatherings throughout the year.

Heather said: "Being situated in the Intra area is great for Sun Pier House. We are surrounded by creatives from a vast range of art genres which contributes greatly to the range of activities available at our premises.

"Having our large car park on the premises is one of the strongest assets to our business. It allows easy access to customers, including school trips and our artist tenants, as well as enabling us to hold outside events such as our Art Flea Fairs. Although, we aren't easily visible from the main high street, meaning we don't get a great amount of footfall, most of our custom comes from word of mouth and our great presence on social media.

"The aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the new support programme put in place through the HSHAZ scheme has brought the community on the Intra together. There is now a community of business owners that talk to each other ensuring a secure network in the area where we help each other, with a common interest to bring custom into the area and pull together to rejuvenate the Old High Street Intra.

"The refurbishment work funded by the HSHAZ cultural programme has transformed the look of the High Street, with some shop fronts having been improved and notably Chatham House which has benefitted from a fantastic exterior makeover. This type of work benefits all of the businesses on the High Street as it gives a more positive atmosphere to the area from first glance, contributing to rebuilding the area's reputation as the creative and vibrant place that it is, now the exterior is beginning to match the vibe of the place.

"Along with the refurbishment works I feel as though the HSHAZ programme has helped promote more of a buzz around the Old High Street Intra and its events which again helps drive the success of all the businesses that are involved. The feeling of connection with the council through the promotion efforts is great and has certainly enhanced footfall.



"I would assume that most hospitality-based organisations are struggling due to rising costs at the moment. We have taken the decision to focus more on our event days rather than keeping our café and gallery open all week as the number of customers we were getting wasn't viable for us to keep that open.

"Our new £733,000 renovation and extension project, 'Lift Off', will hopefully alleviate these issues as we are working on the installation of a lift to ensure access to all to our facilities. The project will also be improving our community rooms, transforming our meeting room into four new studio units and also an extension utilising the undercroft of the building to create workshop spaces and a new community room, The Creation Space, that will enable messy outdoor art projects.

"All 24 of our current studios are let by artists of all kinds and we have a waiting list for other individuals to base themselves from our new studio units. Tiller and Wheel, the other organisation we've founded, will now be based from the renovated undercroft workshop to act as a barge restoration space ideally positioned along the river.

"We are confident with the model of our organisation at present, especially once the renovation works are complete. We must continue to rely on funding from organisations such as Arts Council and National Lottery to ensure that we can continue to provide the standard of art workshops and events that we have been proud to offer recently. 2023's Intra Spring was a resounding success which was funded through grants commissioned by the cultural consortium."


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