



Copeland Art Project – background info

Three islands lie off the coast of County Down, the Copeland Islands, one of which, Lighthouse Island is managed by members of the Copeland Bird Observatory group (CBO) all of whom are volunteers - www.the.cbo.org.uk/ All the islands are important for wildlife, especially seabirds, and this is the main focus CBOs work – recording and monitoring visiting bird species. Another important aspect however, is receiving visitors, to explain the work of CBO, and to allow the public access to appreciate the natural beauty of the island. In order to further raise awareness of the islands, and the conservation work on Lighthouse Island, the CBO have organised an arts project, generously supported by Ards and North Down Borough Council.

The Copeland Arts Project (CAP) will provide an opportunity for 12 artists to spend a weekend visiting and exploring the island and to use this unusual setting as inspiration for producing art work in their own creative medium. Participating artists will be able to work individually and or collectively, while making new contacts and exchanging ideas with fellow artists and CBO staff. All will be encouraged to enter a work, capturing an aspect of the distinctive character of the island, into a public exhibition which will tour local venues throughout the summer. The exhibition will help inform the public about the conservation importance of the local coastline, raise the profile of local artists and hopefully, attract more visitors, increasing income and support for CBOs work.

The island art weekend will start on the evening of Friday 27th May, catching the boat across from Donaghadee Harbour returning on Sunday 29th May at 4pm. In the event of bad weather the visit will be postponed until a later date.

Islands have provided a source of inspiration and sanctuary for aesthetes and artists, and for those seeking spiritual enlightenment, meditation and introspection, for centuries. The secluded character of an island, exposed to the full force of the elements, and cut off from the mainland, intensifies feelings of isolation and insecurity, but allows a closeness to nature rarely felt in modern life. It is hoped that the artists will relax and enjoy the experience and respond to, and engage with, the islands ‘spirit of place,’ maybe ‘trying out’ new ideas in their work.

Participating artists will become members of CBO for the year and therefore be able to make return visits to enjoy the island further. The cost of accommodation and basic foodstuffs will be covered by the project but artists will need to provide their own art materials. Accommodation in the old lighthouse buildings is basic but comfortable. There are four dorms so sleeping arrangements will be in shared rooms and there are two flushing

toilets, one with a spectacular view. The kitchen has a number of cookers and plenty of cooking / eating utensils. The large Common Room has comfortable chairs and a large open fire. The building is robust, being originally a coastguard property, and benefits from a new roof installed last year, but some of the conveniences of modern life (e.g. showers or a bath) will be lacking and each artist will need to be prepared to live communally, sharing the basic facilities.

The group of twelve participants would ideally comprise a range of artists i.e. one or two maybe from each of the following disciplines – painter (watercolour / oil or acrylic, crayon / pencil, musician, composer, poet, creative writer (possibly a local journalist), story teller, ceramicist, photographer, video, sound, drama, printmaker, environmental 3D and stone carver.

We would see the artists benefitting from:

- 1) Being involved in a collaborative project, one in which they will be able to discuss and exchange ideas, sharing their thoughts and experiences, and jointly exhibiting their work with CBO
- 2) Enjoying the creative come spiritual experience of being isolated on a secluded island, echoing the creative work of past isolated monastic communities and of artists (e.g. Paul Henry).
- 3) Developing a sense of place and a greater connection with the natural environment, and the species present on an island, which has international conservation status
- 4) An opportunity to promote their work to a wider, and perhaps, new audience, benefitting from exposure from the publicity and the exhibition
- 5) The opportunity to network and create stronger bonds with fellow local artists
- 6) Membership of the CBO and an opportunity to return to the island in the future to develop their ideas further and or support ongoing conservation activity
- 7) Greater knowledge and awareness of the special qualities of the Ards and Down coastline

If you would like to apply please complete the application form and return it to gajones755@gmail.com by Friday 6th May. Any further enquiries – please contact Geoff Jones on 07925 175872 or via e mail. We shall let you know the following week whether you have been successful and provide you with an itinerary and final arrangements for the island residential.

