

## **'Crescent Arts is a vibrant creative hub rooted in Scarborough'**

- *Crescent Arts vision statement 2020*

What first struck me was the use of the word rooted.

Rooted, typically used to hark to a sense of being anchored - embedded, I started thinking about this through the lens of a tree: the roots of a tree.

Tree roots work to anchor a tree into place, interweaving into and with the land, spinning complex webs, keeping it in place. But more than this, the crucial function played by the roots is to locate and draw from the nutrients and water found within the soil. The energy located then travels up the tree, through a layer of **sapwood** to feed and give shape to the tree - it's bark, branches, buds, leaves. The particular nature of the nutrients found within the soil, dictating the form and structure.

The vision for Crescent Arts going forward talks to this metaphor, where **Crescent Arts is the tree**, a tree in a forest, **and Scarborough is the soil**.

The programme starts with the place, with the people. Scarborough's cultural, environmental, social heritage, its assets, ambition, its gaps. These are the nutrients in the soil that combine to create the structure and shape of the tree and from here strong branches grow, branches of values underpinning all of the work that follows.

Yet as with trees, there is a two directional flow of energy here.

This takes us to the fresh green leaves that spring from the branches. The leaves, each different in shape, become the public offer: that which attracts (bird, bees, humans). The product of long winters, of listening, of thought.

These leaves, as well as receiving, generate their own energy: energy which then travels downwards via a layer called **phloem**. Energy which supports the tree to grow, new branches, leaves, and crucially, to support the roots to explore further - locating new nutrients, and, along the way: intercepting and developing relationships with the roots of others.

The process of the leaves talks of a programme which seeks to support skills to grow, offer opportunities and give space for collaborations to form, in a way that is in itself generative. The roots spreading speaks of a process of embedding further over time, and of partnerships - those already forged - offering with them opportunities for residences, space, exhibitions as is already planned - and those underway.

Then to the autumn leaves:

a vital part of the cycle: for when they fall, rich in nutrients, they work to feed and nourish the soil: This is the legacy of a programme that seeks to invest in people and place, and with it providing a new rich layer of nutrients to the land, to Scarborough:

A layer that then goes on to feed the roots, in a way that is forever cyclical.

To complete this metaphor - and what seems particularly poignant is that there exists a thin layer between the **sapwood** and **phloem** - known as **cambium**, Latin for *exchange*. The cambium works to process the energy coming down from the leaves, and up from the roots into new wood and new bark, thus growing the structure. As long as the cambium remains intact, the exchange, the tree continues to thrive, to grow.

The cambium here, the exchange, is that between arts - artists - people - place - which is at the core of the proposed programme.

An exchange, through which new energy is produced.

### **Questions:**

*What nutrients do you locate in the soil of Scarborough?*

*What leaves do you think Crescent Arts should grow?*