

REPORT TO EVENTS AND TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE KNUTSFORD MUSIC FESTIVAL 2021



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Meeting Date 11th January 2021
Agenda Item 11
Prepared by Events Officer

1.0 BACKGROUND

Knutsford Music Festival was launched in 2017 as a platform for celebrating local talent. The fourth year of the festival was due to be held on 12th – 14th June 2020, however the festival was postponed and eventually cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The committee has previously resolved that the 2021 festival be held 11th – 13th June 2021, with plans for the 2020 festival transferred across to the 2021 event. This will include re-booking of contractors and musicians who had been booked to supply services or perform at the event for the 2021 event.

2.0 2021 EVENT PLAN

Following the cancellation of the 2020 festival, the committee agreed to transfer the plans for the 2020 event over to 2021. This included keeping as much of the line-up which had been arranged for both Folk at the Theatre and Music on the Moor in place as possible to offer those artists a platform to still perform at our festival. These artists will be contacted again with the 2021 dates to ascertain availability and those who are available will be re-booked, with vacant performance slots filled by new local musicians for Music on the Moor and any vacant slots at the folk nights to be filled by Mark Radcliffe. It is at present still unknown whether Kate Rusby will return as our headliner as talks are still ongoing, however a replacement headliner is in mind if Kate is unavailable.

Folk at the Theatre will take place across all three nights of the festival as a staple part of the event programme. It is suggested a larger venue be booked for these nights as it is unlikely that social distancing requirements at the time will allow for the full 100-person capacity in the theatre to be filled without gaps, and therefore socially distancing households will greatly reduce the available capacity in this venue. St John's Church and The Courthouse could form suitable alternative venues due to the larger spaces available to socially distance an audience of 100. The event name can be modified to offer clarity that these events will be held in an alternative venue.

Music on the Moor will be held on the afternoon of Saturday 12th June as it has traditionally been held since its inception in 2018. The session will be family friendly and feature a line-up of local musicians, workshops and any other appropriate entertainment. Food and drink vendors had been booked for the 2020 event; this would be explored for the 2021 festival to see whether this would be appropriate within the wider plan for the event. These vendors could be booked closer to the event when a clearer image of the situation would be available. The session typically runs from 12-4pm on the day. The use of a large portion of the Moor for the event means that it would be simple to spread out aspects of this event so there is not any overcrowding at any point on the land. Workshops which can be Covid-

19 compliant will be explored as alternatives to previously used craft and drumming workshops which involve multiple people touching materials.

Due to the complications of Covid-19 and outdoor events generally being deemed safer, it is proposed that a 2nd event similar to Music on the Moor could be organised for the Sunday afternoon of the festival which would be more community focused, offering local youth orchestras, young musicians and community bands a chance to perform on stage. This session would focus more on highlighting talent within other areas of our community, in particular young musicians, and could also feature some interactive workshops which could even focus on local groups or businesses (such as demonstrations).

Other 'headline' event ideas will be explored, including bringing back the Blues night which has been popular previously but may not be possible in 2021 due to social distancing requirements (this event typically works best in a smaller and more intimate venue). Other evening event ideas can be explored, subject to being Covid-19 compliant. The Events Officer will be discussing the idea of putting on one or two smaller events in Longridge, with the suggestion being that some music related workshops could be put on at either The Welcome or on the Longridge playground for families to enjoy and to bring this area of town into the festival to expand the reach of the event outside the town centre. The festival could also support a charity once again, feedback suggests an arts related (ideally music) charity would be more appropriate due to the nature of the event; a support event such as the planned busk for 2020 could be held to help raise funds for this cause.

The fringe festival will return to the event, with local businesses invited to join in by booking local musicians to perform in their venues. Some businesses may not be able to accommodate this due to social distancing requirements within their own premises, so venues with available outdoor or larger spaces may be specifically targeted for this. A programme detailing all events taking place within the festival will be put together as usual to promote both our headline and the fringe events.

3.0 MUSIC FESTIVAL WORKING GROUP

The Music Festival working group was established to provide direction during the foundation years of the event. Since 2017 the working group has guided the event and helped to establish many of the events which now form the staple of the festival.

With the event now established with a clear formula for success, it is suggested that the committee not reappoint the working group. The working group's main involvement in recent years has been a brainstorming meeting and it is proposed that in place of the working group an open meeting for all interested members be held with the Events Officer in January each year where members can present and discuss ideas of what they would like to see at the festival that year. This ensures members continue to have an opportunity to set the overall direction of the event prior to the committee approving the event plan and enable the Events Officer to then explore the viability of ideas discussed and feedback plans for the festival to the committee as they are mapped out.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

It is recommended that the committee approves the plans for the 2021 festival as outlined and notes that the detailed programme will evolve to comply with the government guidance on such events in force at the time.