

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



Report Reference E-20-11
Meeting Date 15th March 2021
Agenda Item 9
Prepared by Events Officer

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The committee agreed to plan for the fourth year of Knutsford Music Festival to be held in the summer, with dates set for 11th – 13th June. The festival would be a smaller version of the normal event which would allow for social distancing and other coronavirus safety measures to be put into place to keep the event safe, including limited audience capacities and fewer events over the festival weekend.

The Events Officer has made some preliminary arrangements for the festival prior to the announcement from the government setting out the roadmap out of lockdown. The roadmap will allow the festival to go ahead on the planned weekend with limitations on capacity allowing for 1,000 people or 50% capacity in indoor venues and 4,000 or 50% capacity in outdoor venues. The roadmap hopes to abolish the need for limitations on social contact around 21st June, which would allow events to proceed with no capacity limitations.

2.0 2021 FESTIVAL

The committee agreed dates for the festival as 11th-13th June 2021 following the cancellation of the 2020 festival. This report outlines possible options for the festival considering the government's roadmap out of lockdown which may impact possible event delivery.

2.1 JUNE FESTIVAL

The Events Officer has made some preliminary plans for the festival to proceed as planned in June. Plans for Folk at the Theatre have been discussed with festival partner Mark Radcliffe and plans have been made for the three folk nights to be held in St John's Church which can better accommodate a larger audience with social distancing; due to venue availability these nights would be held on 10th – 12th June, and the festival would be extended by one day to run from 10th – 13th June overall. Mark Radcliffe has organised two artists for the Saturday night (12th June) and is sourcing artists for the other nights. Unfortunately, last year's main headliner, Kate Rusby, has declined for the 2021 but will consider joining the 2022 line-up.

Some plans for Music on the Moor to be held on the afternoon of Saturday 12th June have been made including booking of musicians and exploring possible covid-19 safe musical workshops. Other plans for the festival include booking musicians to perform in the town centre streets to bring music to the town and encourage footfall to the town.

Should the festival proceed in June as planned the folk events may have a limited capacity with a need

to social distance households and the capacity of the venue is currently being confirmed. The Events Officer has also been exploring the possibility of livestreaming the events to private platforms online so that the events could take on a hybrid format where a limited capacity audience can attend in person and other attendees can purchase tickets to view the events online at home so a wider audience can attend; this also offers an option for those who may still be uncomfortable to attend an in-person event to enjoy the festival at home.

Music on the Moor would proceed as normal on Saturday 12th June with the usual attendance level of several hundred people expected and within the allowed capacity levels.

2.2 POSTPONEMENT

The government's roadmap out of lockdown suggests that restrictions on social interactions could be lifted from 21st June subject to review of restrictions easing. This lifting of restrictions would allow the indoor festival events to proceed with larger capacity. The committee could consider postponing the festival to after 21st June to later in the summer or the early autumn.

Postponing the festival may result in artists who are available currently being unavailable on new dates as bookings for other festivals and events have increased. Availability of other integral festival partners including Bailey Audio Ltd and Mark Radcliffe could also not be guaranteed, as well as other contractors involved in the event, and this could affect delivery of the festival on new dates including being unable to host some festival events. The easing of lockdown restrictions is subject to review and as such there is no guarantee restrictions will be lifted entirely on 21st June and any postponed dates could potentially fall under the same restrictions as the original festival dates should timelines for restrictions easing change.

Currently no funds from the festival budget have been committed and postponing the festival would not incur any cancellation fees.

3.0 CHARITY SUPPORT

In 2020 the festival working group decided to fundraise for an important cause during the festival, with The Christie Charity selected as the cause. An optional donation was added to online ticket sales and a fundraising session was planned for during the festival weekend. A total £83 was donated to the charity from online ticket sales prior to the cancellation of the event.

The Events Officer has researched options for potential charities for the festival to support in the future, with a focus on arts and specifically music to better align with the event's nature. There are a number of local charities working within Cheshire East which focus on offering music therapy and musical opportunities for children and elderly people which would hugely benefit from local fundraising. The Love Music Trust are a Cheshire East based charity which aims to change children's lives through music, by running workshops in schools which introduces children to playing musical instruments with a focus on those who have not had this opportunity before. The charity utilises local funding to offer opportunities for children to take what they have learned further through group and individual lessons and ensembles to nurture musical interest. This offers children who may not have the opportunity to learn how to play a musical instrument in private lessons a chance to develop a musical interest.

Should the committee opt to support this cause in the 2021 festival, an optional donation would be

available through online ticket sales and donations could be collected at festival events in buckets at ticket tables.

4.0 DECISION REQUIRED

- 4.1 The committee should consider whether the festival should take place from 10th – 13th June 2021 as planned or whether to postpone the event to later in the year.
- 4.2 The committee should consider whether to support The Love Music Trust with fundraising in the 2021 festival.