

## CHATTERIS MUSIC SOCIETY NEWS LETTER

August 2021

We hope this newsletter finds you all well and enjoying the increasing freedoms afforded with the gradual but steady continuation of the lifting of Covid 19 restrictions.

The Committee met, as planned, on 26th July 2021 - our first meeting since 10th August last year. Inevitably after such a long break there were more questions than answers and a second Committee Meeting was held on 16th August to address some of these. Not only are we having to deal with restarting our concert programme in the aftermath of Covid restrictions, in common with the entertainments industry in general, but we also have specific issues with both our Grand Piano and regular concert venue to contend with.

A recent inspection of the Piano revealed that it had come through the periods of 'lockdown' without any unexpected or significant deterioration. However the slow but relentless worsening of its condition is still sadly much in evidence internally.

Our piano specialists, 1066 pianos, have advised the fitting of a piano heater/climate control system in order to stabilize the climatic conditions within the piano as a first step in reducing/stopping mould/mildew growth. We know of other similar situations where this remedial action has been quite effective. A climate control system (recommended) would cost £875 + VAT to buy and fit. A cheaper system would be piano heaters (x2) which we could fit underneath ourselves for about £150 and would go most of the way to doing much the same job. But unfortunately not quite as effectively!

The Committee have also agreed that no restoration work should be carried out to the Piano until some climate control device is fitted. There is no point in spending any money on refurbishment only to allow the process of deterioration to repeat if no degree of climate control is achieved. The search for grant funding is ongoing and we are currently renewing our application to the Local Authority.

Another source of difficulty with these devices is that they both require mains electricity. We understand the Parish Church may have issues with an electrical appliance left on 24/7 in the Church because of a perceived possible fire risk. This is one of a number of things we wish to

discuss with the Parish Church authorities but to date there has still been no response to our request to the Vicar for a meeting! We are pursuing this matter.

Turning to the question of when we resume our concerts it is probably fair to say that everyone would like that to happen as soon as possible....BUT.....

- We are concerned about audience confidence. Even though it is now legal would you be happy coming to a concert which wasn't able to be socially distanced? We have to ask this question because we can't afford to run concerts without a fair degree of certainty that we will get a full audience. It is vitally important that you let us know your thoughts on this please. We don't want to risk running any more concerts at a financial loss.

- At the current time the Parish Church does not anticipate lifting all restrictions on audience/congregation numbers until some way into 2022. The current limit is 100 people which for CMS concerts will include performers, organisers etc. and may be in force for most of the rest of this year depending on the future impact of Covid and its variants.

We have looked at the suitability of other local venues for our concerts both in and outside Chatteris in response to the recently notified large increase of hire costs for Chatteris Parish Church. We have identified some local venues which would allow us to have a full audience this Autumn and also some acts which could easily be moved to other venues (for instance Hatstand; The Opera Dudes and The Wyton Band) who would all not be dependant on our Piano or the Church Organ.

Ideally Chatteris Parish Church is, for many people and for many reasons, the natural and obvious venue for our concerts. What we have to decide as a Music Society is how much increase we are prepared to pay for concert tickets in order to continue funding concerts at the Parish Church? Perhaps another factor to consider alongside this, and one which affects finance, is how we fund our proposed Piano restoration in the event we are unable to obtain any outside help in grants and donations. That also could lead to more increase in ticket prices.

The Committee have agreed that membership fees should again be waived for the current year 2021 and we will review the matter again in April 2022. There will be no fees charged for new members joining CMS up to April 2022.

Our next Committee meeting is scheduled for 14th September 2021 by which time we hope to have made progress on all the issues currently confronting us!

The CMS Committee