



# **LOWER WINDRUSH CHORAL SOCIETY**

## **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT For the period 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021**

The Trustees are pleased to present their report together with the financial statements of the charity for the year ending 31 August 2021. This report is to be presented at the Annual General Meeting to be held on Monday 29 November 2021.

## Section A: Reference and administration details

**Charity name:** Lower Windrush Choral Society

**Registered charity number:** 1152661

**Charity's principal address:** 5 Chalcroft Close  
Ducklington  
OX29 7TP

**Trustees who have managed the charity during the year:**

Trustee name	Office (if any)
Diana Gordon	Joint Chairman
Jane Chapman	Joint Chairman
Bellanne Lethbridge	Secretary
Theresa Rees	Treasurer
Jonathan Harvey	
Jennifer Insch	
Jennifer Macdonald	
Terence McNamara	Music Director
Phillip Morton	
Christopher Sawyers	

## Section B: Structure, governance and management

**Governing document:** Constitution of Lower Windrush Choral Society, March 2013

**How the charity is constituted:** As an Association

**Trustee selection method:** Election by members at the Annual General Meeting

## Section C: Objectives and activities

**Objects of the Society set out in its constitution:**

The charity's objects are:

- (1) to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects by any means the trustees see fit, including through the presentation of public concerts and recitals;
- (2) to further such charitable purpose or purposes as the trustees in their absolute discretion shall think fit but in particular through the making of grants and donations.

**Main activities undertaken for the public benefit in relation to these objects:**

Our main activity is the performance and promotion of choral music. In planning the Society's activities, the Trustees have complied with the duty under section 4 of the 2006 Charities Act to have due regard to guidance on public benefit published by the Charity Commission. During the year, the Society's Officers undertook a comprehensive review to ensure that the subscription charges and music provision were affordable to all, including those of modest means. Following the year-end, their recommendations were approved by the Trustees as a whole, and the new provisions are now being publicised.

## Section D: Achievements and performance

**Concerts and performances**

The widespread impact of Coronavirus prevented the Society holding any public concerts or performances in the year under review.

## Management matters

Throughout 2020-21, the shifting health statistics, and changing Government regulations, made planning extremely difficult. For a long time, even after many Covid-19 restrictions were eased, it seemed that amateur choirs were being particularly singled out for strict treatment. Furthermore, even had the rules allowed choir rehearsals, many suitable venues (including Witney Congregational Church, which the choir intended to adopt as its rehearsal base) were closed to 'outsiders'. It was therefore a year of trying to make the most of the few opportunities offered. For the majority of the choir year, this was largely confined to online Zoom rehearsals (for details, see below), and for these the Trustees were delighted to reinstate the Music Director's previous contract, in a slightly modified form, to replace the retainer-style one that he had moved to earlier in the Covid-19 pandemic.

From early in 2021, although some avenues were explored, it became clear that re-starting in-person rehearsals was unlikely to happen before September. However, recognising that the move to Witney was likely to aid recruitment, the Trustees set up a sub-committee to capitalise on this in preparation for when the choir could sing together again. The sub-committee devised and distributed a small 'flyer' which, in combination with the continuing success of the Society's website, resulted in an encouraging 13 enquiries by end of August, eight of whom joined the choir. A refinement of the website's search engine optimisation has improved the Google rankings for search combinations such as 'Witney' and 'choral society' or 'Witney' and 'choir'.

After restrictions finally eased more fully in June, the Trustees learnt that Witney Congregational Church would re-open to non-church events from September, and so the Trustees were able to begin planning in earnest for in-person rehearsals to resume. With a previous health & safety assessment having been completed in 2020, Officers visited the Church again to discuss specific Covid-19 precautions, especially ventilation. Covid-19 guidelines for choir-members were then drawn up and circulated.

At the AGM in December 2020, the then-Committee all agreed to continue to serve for another year. Not only would it have been difficult to recruit new people at such a time, but the presence of experienced members through the turbulent months ahead was enormously helpful to communication and decision-making over this period, and the Co-Chairmen much appreciated their support. The Trustees are, however, keen to encourage the presence of some new faces round the committee table, now that circumstances make that much easier.

## Other achievements and activities

Following a survey of members in November, the Trustees agreed to start Zoom rehearsals in January. Expectations were mixed, but there was considerable willingness to give it a try. The Society purchased a Zoom professional licence for the purpose, and our Music Director chose *Captain Noah and His Floating Zoo* by Joseph Horowitz (words by Michael Flanders) as the vehicle to engage and entertain the choir in this new rehearsing format. Attendances were not quite as high as at normal rehearsals, but a high proportion of members became regular attendees, and it is probably fair to say that the venture was much more successful than expected.

Over the months, the repertoire for the Zoom rehearsals was extended to include some other shorter pieces with a 'watery' theme, with the hope of performing them at a concert early in October. That plan was abandoned when it became clear that member turnout for such a concert would not be reliably high enough, or consistent across voice-parts, and prevailing Covid-19 conditions began to make it seem doubtful that a reasonable audience would be attracted. As some compensation, a garden party/open rehearsal was later held (early in choir year 2021/22), at which *Captain Noah* was performed *al fresco*, and to which members were encouraged to bring family or friends to provide a small audience.

The choir also worked on the Vivaldi *Gloria* in Zoom rehearsals, in the hope of performing it in the autumn of 2021.

Over the summer of 2021, four 'garden sings' were organised, for groups of up to 30. Two were focused on *Captain Noah* and the other two on the Vivaldi *Gloria* and, for the latter, the choir was fortunate again to have the presence of Quentin Hayes to give some advice and tips. The Trustees extend their thanks to the Gordons and the Mortons for the use of their gardens for these events.

Once the Zoom rehearsals started, these became the main means of maintaining the cohesion of the choir. Prior to that, social interaction had been confined to very occasional outdoor events, when allowed (as reported in the 2019-20 Trustees' Report), a Christmas Zoom quiz, and informal social 'get-togethers' within some voice-parts, also on Zoom.

Membership numbers in the main choir were hard to gauge as we did not make any subscription charges for the year ending August 2021. There were in the region of 40 people who were still maintaining contact (and in many cases continuing to make donations to the Society) in the year (2020 – between 45 and 47 members). The chamber choir did not operate in the year (2020 – 19 members).

The Trustees would like to record, once again, their grateful thanks to our brilliant Music Director, Terry McNamara. We were familiar with his formidable skills leading us through 'normal' rehearsals and concerts, but the energy, enthusiasm and humour that he managed to inject into Zoom rehearsals - a difficult task as the communication is almost entirely one-way – were a revelation, and quite simply 'made' the sessions.

Normally, at this point in the Report, the Trustees would also thank members of the Society and their family-members who had helped with some of the jobs involved in running the weekly cycle of rehearsals and the putting-on of concerts during the year but, this time, they have not had the chance to help in those ways. What many have done, however, is to express to the Trustees their appreciation for the work going on behind the scenes to keep the Society together – whether it was reading copious Covid-19 regulations, conducting risk assessments, researching venues, learning how to set up and record Zoom rehearsals, or arranging the outdoor events – and the Trustees have much valued that support.

# Section E: Financial review

## LOWER WINDRUSH CHORAL SOCIETY

### RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

FOR THE YEAR 1 SEPTEMBER 2020 TO 31 AUGUST 2021

#### Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted		2020-2021 Restricted		TOTAL		2019-2020 TOTAL	
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts	Payments	Receipts
<b>Receipts</b>								
Members' subscriptions (note 1)		-		-		-		6,038
Donations received - non-concert (note 1)		3,330		-		3,330		225
Gift Aid reclaimed		650		-		650		962
Easyfundraising, GiveAsYou Live and Amazon Smile income		146		-		146		186
Raffles - net income		-		-		-		79
<b>Concerts:</b>								
Concert ticket sales		-		-		-		1,108
Concert programme income		-		-		-		105
Concert - bar/refreshment income		-		-		-		624
Concert - donations & sponsorship to Society		-		-		-		848
Concert - gift aid reclaimed on donations		-		-		-		141
Concert - grants restricted (note 2)		-		-		-		375
<b>Payments</b>								
<b>Rehearsals:</b>								
Professional fees & expenses	3,480				3,480			6,105
Rehearsal venue hire		-		-		-		600
Music hire/purchase - net cost after members' payments (note 3)	164				164			-
<b>Concerts:</b>								
MD, soloists & instrumentalists - fees, expenses, gifts, scores		-		-		-		2,973
Venue costs		-		-		-		165
Programme costs		-		-		-		85
Bar/refreshment costs		-		-		-		289
Performing Rights Society fees (note 4)	37			-	37			36
Publicity		-		-		-		129
Cancellation insurance		-		-		-		132
Miscellaneous expenses		-		-		-		-
<b>Other expenses:</b>								
Administrative expenses	181			-	181			74
Website fees (note 5)	133			-	133			154
Making Music subscription	140			-	140			140
Insurance (excl cancellation cover for concerts)	43			-	43			43
Social expenses		-		-		-		220
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>4,126</b>		<b>-</b>		<b>4,126</b>		<b>10,690</b>
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>4,178</b>		<b>-</b>		<b>4,178</b>		<b>11,146</b>	
<b>(DEFICIT) FOR THE YEAR</b>		<b>(52)</b>		<b>-</b>		<b>(52)</b>		<b>(456)</b>

#### Notes:

- As the society operated mainly on-line through zoom, no subscriptions were levied for the year. Some members continued to pay, and these amounts were treated as donations received. The costs for the zoom licence are shown in administrative expenses
- The grant was received from West Oxfordshire District council in 2019 for the planned Bach concert. This concert was cancelled due to coronavirus but the council have agreed that it should be held against a future concert only (not general running expenses). For this reason it was treated as a restricted fund
- Music was purchased at the year end which will be paid for by members in the following year.
- PRS relates to Christmas concert in November 2019
- The previous year included the remaining 3 months of the old website.

#### Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

	£	£	£	£
Net reserves at beginning of year	8,495	375	8,870	9,326
Result for year	(52)	-	(52)	(456)
<b>Net reserves as at 31 August 2021 / (2020)</b>	<b>8,443</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>8,818</b>	<b>8,870</b>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>				
<b>Assets</b>				
Cash in hand	-	-	-	-
Barclays Bank account	8,443	375	8,818	8,870
<b>AVAILABLE ASSETS</b>	<b>8,443</b>	<b>375</b>	<b>8,818</b>	<b>8,870</b>

### Commentary on financial statement:

The Trustees are very grateful to all those individuals and companies who have made donations to the Society during the year. Their contributions have made a dramatic difference to the overall picture at the year-end.

As indicated above, the coronavirus pandemic has again had a significant impact on the operation of the Society. Our members have been hugely generous and most of them continued to pay their membership fees after we had ceased singing in March last year, even though they were receiving nothing for their money at the time and had been invited to stop contributing. The introduction of Zoom rehearsals in January this year and the few outdoor rehearsals we managed in the summer encouraged further donations from members. This was much appreciated, and continuing to receive this income has been very helpful in maintaining the healthy balance at the year-end. It is in many ways astonishing that the Society could emerge from the last financial year with a deficit on the year of just £52.

Since the year-end, we have re-commenced rehearsals in our new venue at the Congregational Church in Witney which is more expensive than the school hall we previously utilised. In anticipation of the increased cost-base in 2021/22, the Trustees decided to increase membership subscriptions from September 2021 to £144 p.a. This was the first increase since September 2017.

The reserves at the year-end mean we can continue to press ahead with our plans for concerts in the Autumn and Spring without worrying too much about funding them.

### Reserves

The unrestricted reserve comprises the main choir fund and the separate fund designated by the Trustees for the chamber choir. They believe that it is appropriate to maintain the distinction between the two to assist in planning for any future chamber choir activities.

	Main choir	Chamber choir	Total unrestricted funds
Balance 1 September 2020	7,964	531	8,495
Net concerts	(37)		(37)
Net non-concert	(15)		(15)
Balance 31 August 2020	7,912	531	8,443

As noted above the restricted fund (£375) comprises the unused grant from West Oxfordshire District Council.

All reserves are held in the bank account.

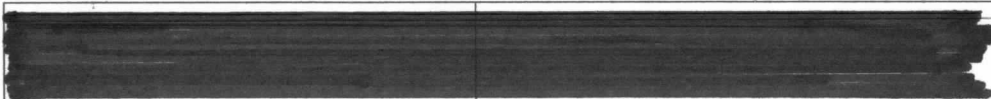
### Reserves policy:

The policy of the Trustees is to maintain such a level of reserves as will ensure the long-term viability of the Society and enable it to continue to fulfil its objects for the foreseeable future. Over recent years, reserves have been successfully built up to cover approximately six months of non-concert related expenditure together with a significant contribution towards the costs of the next major event. This approach is felt by the Trustees to fulfil their stated policy.

## Section F: Declaration

The Trustees declare that they have approved the Trustees' report above.

### Signed on behalf of the charity's Trustees:

Signatures		
Name	Jane Chapman	Diana Gordon
Position	Co-Chairman	Co-Chairman
Date	9 November 2021	