



Registered Charity 1167590

Annual Report 2024

Presented at the AGM on 12 January 2025

Wychavon Festival of Brass



Registered Charity 1167590

Annual Report and Accounts For the year ending 31 December 2024

President

Cllr Mrs D. Raphael

Trustees

Dr Val Trim (Chair/ Contest Sec)
Mr Mike Pawson (Festival Sec/Stewarding)
Mr Iain Willis (Treasurer-retired/Youth)
Mr Simon Dowdeswell (Logistics)
Mr Oliver Wilson (Social Media)
Miss Sarah Timms (Programme Advertisements)

Committee Members

Mr David Bolton (Treasurer)
Mrs Ali Bolton (Traders)
Mr Martyn Pattinson
Mrs Annabelle Pattinson

Contact Details: Email secretary@festivalofbrass.co.uk

Chairman's Report

The Wychavon Annual Entertainment Contest held on November 2nd 2024 proved to be the most successful yet in terms of the number of competing bands, the quality of the music played and the overall efficiency of the running of the day. The consistency of delivery of the WFB contest remains one of its key attractions to all concerned.

All committee members remained healthy (!) and executed their tasks throughout the day with cool efficiency and great good humour. The care taken in planning the event paid off and there were no major upsets or last-minute problems.

All the adjudicators, assistants, prize givers, percussion suppliers et al functioned well. All volunteers did well and efficiently once they were familiar with their roles.

New arrangements were made in several areas this year and our thanks go to Craig Pitcher, TDMS Sports Centre Manager for his generous consideration and support of our Contest. Firstly, Craig made numerous helpful suggestions regarding the management of car parking and enlisted several Sixth formers to supervise parking on Contest Day. The pupils were excellent and took their role very seriously and, under Craig's watchful eye, ensured that cars were parked efficiently and with care. To aid transport from those car parks at the far end of the school, a minibus shuttle service was provided, a service that proved popular with bandsmen and women. Craig was also instrumental in providing helpers for setting up and taking down the performance halls on Friday and Saturday respectively. The result of this this, together with better organisation and liaison with the drapery company ensured much improved, and less tiring, use of the Committee's time. Our thanks, too, go to those people from various bands who volunteered to help on one or both of the days.

The traders' marquee (wonderfully renamed The Vendor Village for 2024) was especially successful and the addition of flooring and lighting encouraged some traders to extend their stay beyond their contracted hours. The space vacated by them was soon occupied by happy banders enjoying this social opportunity. Consideration needs to be given to the entry point for the Band Reception—the orientation of the entrance this year proved a handicap, but this will be easily addressed in 2025. WFB thanks The Fleece for its continued support in helping to facilitate this success and WFB hopes to build on this in 2025.

Less successful were the catering arrangements. One vendor dropped out without notice and another only a few days prior to the Contest. The result was poor service for both bands and visitors to our event. This issue has already been addressed for 2025.

An initiative to provide youth training and a fund-raising concert in conjunction with the Foden's Band is well underway. A provisional date in May has been agreed for the project and it will be held at Bromsgrove School. Final preparations are on hold until the outcome of an Arts Council Grant application is known (late Jan 2025)

In summary, the areas identified for consideration in 2024 were:

- Review of car parking arrangements (successfully addressed)
- Recruitment (encouraging progress)
- Relationship with BBE (amenable but unresolved—they have had some internal problems)
- Youth work (Foden's project pending)

I thank all our helpers and volunteers who helped at the contest and especially our photographers from the Vale of Evesham Camera Club for their fantastic efforts across a very long day! I would like to extend our warmest thanks to Diana and Rob Raphael for their constancy and affectionate support.

Needless to say, WFB extends its thanks to all of our sponsors that have supported us unstintingly. Special thanks go to the Elmley Foundation without which this contest could not function, and to Nigel Smith of the Fleece. The constancy of Evesham Town Council's support over many years is both essential and greatly appreciated as is the renewed interest in our event that Worcestershire District Council has shown us recently. Such support gives us a limited degree of flexibility in acquiring equipment and services that enhance and sustain our event. In the brass band world at least, I am proud that the Wychavon Festival of Brass is held in high esteem.

I would like to thank and compliment the WFB team for all that they do unstintingly throughout the year in preparation for this contest. I would like to thank all members of the team--- Iain as Treasurer (now moving over to run the Foden's project), Sarah for being persuaded to take on the role of selling advertising for our programme, Oli for keeping our profile cheerfully high and extending our reach and Simon who does a lot of backbreaking work managing the stock of equipment we have, often on his own and out of sight! No one appreciates all your efforts more than I do.

The WFB team is small but effective. Recruitment remains a key issue despite advertisements through social media and by direct appeal to bands and their membership both at the contest and via email and the press. However, such a small team relies on everyone being present to ensure the event functions well. Happily, 2024 saw a surge in recruitment to the committee and we welcomed David and Ali Bolton to our ranks as Treasurer and Trader Manager respectively. Their excellent contributions have already been felt. Following the competition, I was delighted to be approached by Martyn and Annabelle Pattinson who expressed a desire to join us. We welcome them formally tonight.

But: it is with a great deal of sadness that we see the retirement of our great friend and colleague, Mike Pawson tonight. Ever the gentleman, he has proven to be the most dedicated of committee members and Trustee, being utterly reliable in the pursuit of his work and precise in his delivery of it and, often, a steadying hand on the tiller when needed. Thank you, Mike.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish him all health and happiness for the future. We shall all miss him.

Contest Secretary's Report

By the end of January 2024 31 bands had entered the WFB Contest. This remarkable start was followed by a bumper entry across the next few months until close of entries was called in late June— In total 67 bands entered across all sections and of these, 13 entered a higher section. Although on paper, 80 performances were theoretically possible, in actual fact the venue only has a capacity for 70. Due to withdrawals 69 performances took place with all remaining bands getting a spot. Payment of entry fees was prompt.

Many more bands are using Audio/Visual presentations combined with band choreography, and thus require a non-playing person to operate the equipment. The rule change which allowed a Compere and/or Audio-Visual operator proved popular with bands. Some issues arose about the source

material used for visual presentations, but a slight rule change will, we hope, clarify and protect WFB from the consequences of unauthorised use of commercial imagery.

On a happy note, ticket sales were the highest ever at 400. By comparison, ticket sales in 2012/13 stood at around two dozen. There is no room for complacency however – our success depends on the maintenance of the high standards we have set ourselves and the deep respect we show all those that attend, support and play at our contest.

Val Trim
Chair and Contest Sec

Festival Reports

Stewarding 2024

This year I started the recruiting process by visiting some local bands to speak to the players directly rather than emailing the band secretaries. This produced several new volunteers, and there are a few more local bands that could be approached in this way before next year's event.

I sent out emails to 160 people who had previously volunteered or had expressed an interest at some time in the past. Eventually, in total after a second email, 69 people had not replied, 25 were unavailable but will help in the future, and 51 were able to help on the day. This was almost enough to cover all the required positions. The shortfall was made up by some volunteers being willing to do more than one session.

From the start of the day there were problems for bands, as the M5 motorway was closed from early morning, following a fatal accident. Luckily, in one section, the second scheduled band was already on site, so they agreed to perform first, to allow the missing band more time to arrive. The problems continued during the day, but with the cooperation of the bands and adjudicators, changes to the order of play and the repositioning of the comfort breaks meant that all bands were able to perform in all the sections for which they had entered. Having two spare changing rooms (one for sections C and 1, and one for sections 2, 3, & 4) allowed us to accommodate all the bands who played out of sequence without disrupting the flow through the other changing rooms.

The new arrangement of Band Reception worked reasonably well, but a reconfiguration for next year, and small changes in the staffing of this area, should make next year's event work even more smoothly.

I would like to express my thanks to all those who helped to steward on the day, which made the contest run well, as usual.

Mike Pawson
Stewarding & Festival Secretary.

Social Media Report 2024

The year has seen further considerable growth of our reach on social media. We have a long established and very active Facebook account and, after discussions, we launched our new Instagram page in October 2024 in the run up to the contest. We made much better use of both Facebook and Instagram to build interest before the contest, with ticket sales boosted by advertisements on these platforms. We also made very effective use of social media on the day of the contest itself to engage with the bands, spectators, supporters and those following the contest from afar.

Facebook: This was used again a great deal during the 2024 contest, to share news, updates, images and results. In the 90-day period either side of the contest day, we had 463.9k views to our page, peaking at an incredible 199k views on the contest day itself! There were 33700 page visits (up from 32600 in 2023, up from 9775 in 2022) in this period, of which 24.2k (up from 20800 in 2023, 7168 in 2022) were on the contest day itself. We now have 2492 likes/followers to our Facebook page, of which 10% are outside the UK.

Instagram: This was used for the first time this year. We launched in the run up to the contest, and gained 241 Instagram followers - a mix of band pages and players/supporters of bands. We used Instagram frequently during the 2024 contest, to share news, updates, images and results. In the 90-day period either side of the contest day, we had 3.7k views to the fledgling Instagram page, over that time, peaking at 1847 views on the contest day itself. Instagram will continue to grow as a platform and appeals to a different demographic from Facebook - whilst still being managed from one platform: Meta Business Suite.

Twitter/X: 867 followers, but despite best efforts, it has been impossible to regain access to the account. It has been agreed by the committee not to pursue access to X.

For the future: we will continue to develop and grow our new Instagram account. We have a range of photographs and information to share throughout the year and we will use the opportunities to keep engagement up all year round.

A positive presence online for the Wychavon Festival of Brass this year!

Oli Wilson
Social Media Manager

Trade Stands/Vendor Village Report

This year we welcomed seven traders to the festival, with six located in the Vendor Village marquee attached to band reception, and one located in the foyer outside the first section hall. Feedback from vendors was positive with a number having confirmed their intention to return in 2025. Many of the companies we contacted this year were already committed to attending contests elsewhere in the country and were unable to attend, some of these have already booked space at the festival in 2025. The budget for the 2024 festival projected an income of £1000 from trade stands and advertising. We exceeded this target, bringing in a total of £1340, of which £810 came from trade stands.

For the 2025 festival we should consider separate marquees for traders and band reception, maximising the amount of usable space. Traders would appreciate the Wi-Fi password being available to support them in being able to take card payments more easily and, if possible, parking for traders being allocated closer to the Vendor Village to support them in packing away more efficiently at the end of the trading period.

Ali Bolton
Traders' Manager

Programme adverts

For the WFB 2025 Programme advertisements, we were able to secure a total of £530.00 in sales. We had increased the rates this year from last by £25 for each advert type. We also did not offer any discounted rates for an advert and trade stall. Information on the trade stalls can be found in a separate report.

We also included adverts/branding in the programme at no additional charge for The Fleece Inn, Raphaels, New Moon, and The Elmley Foundation, who all provide funding/donations to the Festival.

When sourcing businesses to advertise in the programme, we researched a range of different interest areas such as brass band associations from across the country, conductors' association, percussion hire, music publishers, event organisers, uniform suppliers, media platforms and instrument providers.

Next year we would like to have the same approach but widen the search and enquiries. Targeting championship section bands/organisers who are putting on events may prove beneficial, as they may have the means to fund an advertising campaign. In the same vein, targeting organisers of events that do not already have a consistent audience may prove advantageous, in that they are more in need of attracting attention and custom. A point of feedback from one response was that the price was quite high, but I do not think if we reduced it there would be much noticeable change in take up.

A suggestion for next year would be to offer a bundle of adverts for 3 years at a reduced cost. We could also offer to advertise elsewhere, such as the website and social media.

Sarah Timms
Advertising Manager

Logistics report

The scheduling and planning for setting up on the Friday before the contest was much improved from previous years.

- Programmes were ready and banded in required quantities.
- Trophies and certificates had been ordered, collected and were already on-site
- Vacuum cleaners were collected and already on-site
- The creation of two carpet laying teams and tool kits were much more effective, with the help of the hired sixth formers.
- The Sixth form recruits were a very welcome addition to the team for setting up and taking down on the Saturday after the contest. Can't thank them enough!

Packing away after the contest

The storage of the property that WFB owns (carpets, banners etc) was greatly improved by the addition of extra help from sixth form recruits. Enabling us sort and pack away more effectively.

A new storage rack was installed in the storage container. Carpets now labelled for each hall and stored on separate levels of the rack. Therefore, less pressure applied to the rolls. Consideration to replace the carpets used in the sports hall should be made as part of our continuous investment programme.

The traders' marquee was especially successful and thanks to The Fleece for its continued support in helping to facilitate this.

Signs were easier to put out this year with them already being on-site.

The addition of the large WFB logo banner as backdrops, in two halls were a great addition.

A large display unit in the gym was a new addition by the adjudicators desk to help reduce cold air from the spectators' entrance door.

Simon Dowdeswell
Logistics Manager

Treasurer's report – Year ended 31 December 2024

I took over the role as Treasurer of the Charity during September 2024, however this report covers the whole of the financial year ended 31 December 2024. I would like to thank Iain Willis for all his efforts as Treasurer prior to my tenure – and for leaving the finances of the Charity in such a way that allowed our handover to be completed with ease.

2024 Grant and Sponsorship Income

We are extremely grateful once again to our grant providers and sponsors who provide both cash and sponsorship-in-kind to allow the Festival to continue for the long term. Thanks to the effort of the Committee, some of our grant support is now committed over a multi-year period, allowing the Committee some visibility over the financial outlook of the Charity for the next few years.

2024 Festival performance

The 2024 Festival of Brass represented a significant financial improvement from the 2023 Festival but it continues to require grant and sponsorship income in order to operate. In part, the financial improvement is a reflection of the fact that all five sections ran in 2024 (the second section did not run in 2023) and therefore a full quota of Festival entry fees was received from bands. Additionally, with 400 adult tickets being sold in advance and on the day, ticket income was far in excess of previous years. Tickets for under 16s remain free of charge.

Significant focus by two dedicated members of the Committee on trade stand and programme advertising sales paid off, with levels of income returning to match historic highs.

The Committee had decided following the 2023 Festival that the practicalities of administering paid car parking more than outweighed the additional income generated and therefore the on-site car parking was once again free for 2024. This loss of revenue was offset via improvements in other areas.

Charity reserves

One of our key partners has suggested that the Charity should have the long term aim of increasing its reserves to two times the annual cost of operating the Festival. This is to take into account unexpected events (such as the COVID pandemic) which could result in the unfortunate outcome of the Festival incurring all of its running costs but also having to refund entry fees to brass bands, for ticket sales, etc. In reality, such an extreme outcome is considered unlikely as many of the Festival's costs can be mitigated, at least in part.

At the forthcoming AGM it will be proposed that the Charity adopts a new reserves policy of building reserves to one times the annual gross cost of operating the Festival – i.e. based on the 2024 Festival this would result in a reserves requirement of £24,000. Once this threshold is met, the reserves policy should be monitored and revisited as appropriate¹.

¹ One option that the Committee could consider at that time is maintaining reserves at two times unmitigable costs to reflect the realities of the Festival's cost base.

Looking forward

Notwithstanding the desire to increase the Charity's reserves to ensure its long-term success, The Wychavon Festival of Brass is in a good position to continue to operate the Festival in 2025 and beyond.

The ever-present challenges for the Festival are both to maintain its pipeline of grant and sponsorship income, and to control its essential expenses as the cost base continues to rise. The Committee is well aware of the need to make prudent financial decisions, reaching considered agreements with suppliers that allow the Festival to be both financially successful and attract brass bands from around the United Kingdom and beyond.

David Bolton
Treasurer

Wychavon Festival of Brass

Registered charity 1167590

Year ended 31 December 2024 – Statement of Financial Affairs

Contest account

	2024 Actual £	2024 Budget £	2023 Actual £
Income			
Donations and grants	10,250	4,500	7,025
Ticket sales	4,385	3,700	3,350
Trade stands and adverts	1,340	1,000	365
Car parking	-	-	956
Contest entry fees	13,615	12,000	10,226
2023 contest	835	-	-
Total	30,426	21,200	21,922
Expenditure			
Contest prizes	5,900	7,000	4,900
Premises hire	2,000	2,000	1,500
Percussion	4,440	4,500	4,147
Adjudicators	1,853	1,900	1,842
Carpets	108	1,000	451
Music stand banners	-	600	-
Music stands	-	600	585
Advertising	180	500	480
Programme booklets	455	450	385
Trophies	906	700	1,217
Signage	248	500	1,013
Roll up banners	215	200	-
Insurance premium	436	450	425
Hire of drapes/audio	2,911	2,800	2,771
Car parking expenses	-	-	300
First Aid cover	550	600	600
Admin expenses	1,561	-	-
Sundry	2,063	2,000	2,354
Total	23,827	25,800	22,969
Surplus/deficit	6,599	(4,600)	(1,046)
Bank balance at 1 January 2024	9,755		
Bank balance at 31 December 2024	16,353		

Youth Project account

	2024 Actual £	2024 Budget £	2023 Actual £
Surplus/deficit	-	-	-
Bank balance at 1 January 2024	4,018		
Bank balance at 31 December 2024	4,018		

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Wychavon Festival of Brass

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the Wychavon Festival of Brass (the Charity) for the year ended 31 December 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ('the Act').

I report in respect of my examination of the Charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the Charity as required by section 130 of the Act; or
2. the accounts do not accord with those records.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Name: Mike Pinder

Relevant professional qualification or membership of professional bodies (if any): Chartered Management Accountant (CIMA)

Address: 18 Begonia Gardens, St Helens, WA9 4FT

Date: 1/4/2025