

Crossings Community Group Chair's Annual Report 2020 - 2021

2020 started really well when our successful application for two years funding from the People's Health Trust for the Crossings Ensemble Project finally came into operation in February that year.

The other good news was that at the beginning of February we became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, (CIO). In view of the increased administration work involved with both these changes Janet Cresswell was appointed as Project Co-ordinator, and started at the beginning of March.

Unfortunately March saw the first Covid 19 lockdown starting and the ensuing restrictions on activities throughout the rest of 2020 and up to the current time have made it extremely difficult to maintain any level of activity. Zoom, Facebook and WhatsApp have helped with meetings, tutorials and other communications but meeting in reality, as opposed to digitally, was only possible for a few weeks in the summer and early autumn.

We have continued to offer support to our members when needed and letters of support were written on behalf of two members applying for asylum here.

Organisational Structure

As a CIO we now have a board of Trustees which should comprise of a Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer, plus two other trustees with additional sub-committees as needed. However the positions of Treasurer and Secretary are presently vacant, former holders having stepped down, although they continue as Trustees. Fortunately Janet has incorporated these duties into her role as Project Co-ordinator while we continue to advertise for replacements.

Funding

After a financially difficult 2019 we managed to survive until People's Health Trust grant, for the Crossings Ensemble Project, started in February. So far there has been a considerable underspend due to the restriction of activities and we are in negotiation with the PHT as to the best way to resolve this issue either by extending the time scale of the grant, or using the underspend on other ways of take the Crossings Ensemble Project forward.

In August we received an Awards for All grant specifically to help with additional costs incurred by the Covid 19 pandemic, and in October a small grant from the Community Foundation to work with members to create a concert.

Donations

Over the last year we have received a donation from Spotlight who organised an ongoing online fundraiser - Crossover Covers Album, which initially raised £???, and generated interviews about the project with BBC Radio Newcastle, and music

magazines NARC and NE Volume. Many thanks to Ben and Jordan of Spotlight for this initiative. Other donations were a guitar, DJ decks and a keyboard. Two guitars were repaired free of charge, and future upkeep offered, by Brian who has a guitar shop in Newcastle.

Impact of Covid 19

Three planned spring events had to be cancelled. These were an Ethno-England session, a dance session and a fund-raising concert at the Summerhill Pavilion. All regular Monday night sessions were cancelled and in the meantime our tutors did their best to provide sessions using WhatsApp with varying degrees of success. Committee meetings were held via Zoom. In July restriction were eased a little and Fred organised socially distanced percussion sessions at the bandstand in Exhibition Park. These provided a very welcome opportunity for some of our members to get together again and make music.

Our normal venue, Cobalt, remained closed but in September, when groups of six were allowed to meet indoors we resumed our activities at The Comfrey Project in Gateshead. This was more accessible to Gateshead members but less so for Newcastle members. Classes could not overlap and all sessions were run in accordance with Covid safe precautions but it was wonderful to be able to get back with some degree of normality. Unfortunately two more lockdowns have followed from November so this was very short lived.

Throughout the pandemic we have attempted to maintain contact with members through phone calls, emails and WhatsApp groups. Most recently there have been weekly songwriting sessions and social get togethers via Zoom but not many members have joined these, partly due to technical difficulties. In truth they do not really compensate for the lack of physical social contact which is so important to many of our members.

Choir

Until lockdown in March, Fred Phethean continued to lead the choir, and following that he posted several tutorials on WhatsApp. Unfortunately choirs were still not allowed to sing when restrictions were eased in September.

Guitar Group

Patrick Reay provided online tutorials but there was very little feedback and overall did not seem to be very successful. However when sessions started at The Comfrey Project they attracted a regular group of learners and Patrick reported that teaching was easier due to better lighting conditions.

Violin Group

During lockdown Frankie Archer held online tutorials and resumed actual regularly attended sessions in September until the second lockdown. Since then the group has kept in touch using WhatsApp both for 1:1 tuition and group chats which has been very helpful for them.

Percussion

This group, which had run very successfully at Cobalt, reconvened in Exhibition Park for a few weeks in the summer, and then again at The Comfrey Project. Due to restrictions on numbers this session had to be held outside but as the weather cooled and evenings got dark earlier it became no longer practical.

Training

Kahina Mediant initiated an online training course in Cultural Competency run by Connected Voices which has been helpful and thought provoking. We would like to continue on an annual basis but with more emphasis on arts and culture in the future, and less on health and social care.

Various free courses in safeguarding are being accessed by Trustees as this is an important part of the running of a charity.

The Future

Going forward we are focussing on keeping in touch with members and planning for resuming regular sessions as soon as this becomes possible. As Cobalt will be unavailable until September we are looking at other possibilities such as St Vincent de Paul in Byker, and also continuing at The Comfrey Project. The aim of creating a Crossings Ensemble continues, and running different sessions at two different venues, with regular whole group get togethers, could help to advance our ultimate aim for all the groups to learn some musical pieces which they will then play and perform together.

Recruitment of more regular participants is an important aim which has had to be put on hold but once we are back to normal our strategy will be to spread the word through visits to other relevant organisations, using social media, leaflets in other languages and performance. We will also be asking present, past and possible future members how we can improve what we offer and better fulfil their needs.

We are planning to run an event as soon as restrictions allow, which will involve groups working with and supporting refugees and asylum seekers and other cultural groups. This will include taster sessions with our tutors, performances and food.

Funding from Awards for All has enabled us to employ a digital company to create a new and greatly improved website. Janet and Jonny have been advising on this with feedback from the Committee and we hope it will be available online in the very near future.

Kahina Meziant is working on an innovative website called Our Soundscape which will enable members to download music of particular significance to them together

with a few sentences explaining why those particular tracks are important. This will eventually create a unique soundscape of music from the many cultures and countries encompassed within the Crossings community.

Thanks

Lastly I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has helped us keep going during through this very difficult year, in particular our tutors Fred Phethean, Patrick Reay and Frankie Archer, and volunteer tutors Jonny McAeavy and Vanessa Cope who are also trustees.

Thanks to Janet Cresswell our Project Co-ordinator for her excellent work keeping on top of the ever increasing administration work, including book-keeping, liaising with funders and applying for additional funding. Also to Kahina Meziant for her many thoughtful suggestions and initiatives such as organising a very successful session at the Cumberland Arms in January.

Thanks to Nihal Rubenduz, our former Treasurer, who continues to support us as a trustee and and similarly to our former Secretary, Jonny McAeavy. Jim Robertson continues to be a very committed supporter of CCG and a great source of help and advice in organisational matters. On a practical level he has, whenever possible, attended both online meetings and actual sessions.

Finally a big thank you to all the members who, in these difficult times, have continued to contribute their music, their culture and their friendship in whatever way has been possible. Without them there would be no Crossings Community Group.

Louise Wellington
Chair

Unaudited Financial Statements for the Year ended 31st December 2020

For

Crossings Community Group CIO

Income Statement
For the year ended 31st December 2020

(Note: year 1 accounts so no comparison with previous year)

	£
Grant Income	21,768
Donations	169
Loan	500
Staff costs	(8,510)
Project costs	(955)
Governance costs	(696)
 SURPLUS	 <u>12,276</u>

Balance Sheet
31st December 2020

	2020	
	£	
FIXED ASSETS	0	
CURRENT ASSETS	12,377	*bank
CREDITORS	(500)	
LIABILITIES	0	
NET ASSETS	<u>11,877</u>	
RESERVES	<u>11,877</u>	

*bank. Balance shown as of 31st December 2020. Balance at 31st December 2019 was £101