



Entered on the Register of Charities on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Registered Charity: 1189871

Charitable Incorporated Organisation - **“Lancaster & District Schools’ Singing Festival”**

Financial year: 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

## **2024 Trustee’s Annual Report & Accounts**

### **Objectives of the charity**

To educate the public in the art and science of music and in particular in choral singing for school children through their participation in the Lancaster & District Schools’ singing festival, its affiliated choirs, competitions and related musical events. The Charity works in close partnership with the Lancashire Music Hub (LMH) to achieve its objectives.

### **Background to the Singing Festival Charity**

The Lancaster & District Schools’ Singing Festival (LDSSF) started over 75 years ago, with a legacy bequeathal for the festival to use the Ashton Hall at Lancaster Town Hall for one week a year. In 2014 community music organisation, More Music engaged with the festival to develop the event alongside the Lancashire Music Hub as part of their on-going development of a countywide vocal strategy. The Hub began a rejuvenation of both the organisational and artistic elements of the festival using the existing committee of a local schoolteacher, a primary Head and a schools music coordinator alongside the Hub’s Singing Lead, the Strategy Co-ordinator, professional musicians and the team at More Music.

Over a period of five years, the festival team changed the LDSSF model to reflect current best practice: clarifying and streamlining committee roles; creating teacher training opportunities; providing digital resource packs; recording tracks and performing with a live band and school workshops. After the event schools provide feedback digitally, helping to shape the future of the festival; both in its musical content and organisation.

Since 2016, there has been a significant increase in the number of schools and children engaging with the festival. The schools involved represent the diverse geographical and social groups within our area; from small rural schools, to large, challenging, urban primaries. There is also participation of SEND students from a specialist school within the community. The festival also seeks to feature performances from local KS4 and KS5 soloists in the intervals, which gives the children an aspirational insight into the potential future development of their instrument or voice.

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2023	2024
KS1	569	502	572	634	470	590	475
KS2	591	601	711	845	950	977	944
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1160</b>	<b>1103</b>	<b>1283</b>	<b>1479</b>	<b>1420</b>	<b>1567</b>	<b>1419</b>

### *2020 activities*

Due to COVID pandemic the 2020 Lancaster & District Schools' Singing Festival (LDSSF) was cancelled. Although it was not possible to hold a singing Festival in March, many of the schools and individual children from participating schools took part in a Virtual Big Sing in June 2020, with materials (warm-ups, rehearsal and instruction videos) made available for free on YouTube in advance.

### *2021 activities*

Given the ongoing COVID restrictions in 2021 preventing large gatherings or singing events, the charity trustees worked closely with the Lancashire Music Hub, and supported their initiative to develop instructional videos, songs, warm-ups and vocal games on the LMS YouTube channel at no cost to schools or individuals. The trustees actively promoted the LMH "Jump Up and Join In" project to all the primary schools in their area.

### *2022 "Music in Me" project*

The LDSSF organising committee worked with the LMH Singing Strategy Group to develop virtual "Big Sing" opportunities for 2022 as COVID guidance meant in-person large singing performances were still limited. The festival also continued to engage with the Lancaster Town Hall team to continue the legacy of using the Ashton Hall for the festival, and they booked dates for March 2023.

Schools were offered the chance to be involved with the "Music in Me 2022" project which provided each school with a selection of songs, warm-ups, teaching notes, curriculum links for both KS1 and KS2, and a workshop visit from Debbie Pilkington or Emma Williams.

### *2023 Singing Festival: 20 – 24 March*

After a three-year break the singing festival returned to the Ashton Hall at Lancaster Town Hall, with over 1500 local school children from 37 primary schools participating in the concerts. The programmes included newly composed pieces, pops songs and songs from around the world. The theme for KS1 was "Wonderful World" and the theme for KS2 was "We're All in This Together".

The festival was bequeathed the use the Ashton Hall for one week a year to promote singing in schools over 70 years ago (2018 was the 70<sup>th</sup> year concert). The festival trustees engaged with Lancaster City Council and have secured a commitment from them that the festival may continue to use the Ashton Hall for one week a year with no hire fee, however, the festival is required to pay for the council staff fees for the week.

### ***2024 Singing Festival: 18 – 22 March "Olympic theme"***

34 schools participated in the 2024 festival, with 11 participating in both KS1 and KS2 concerts. The team received very positive feedback on the festival – with teachers very much onboard with everything. There was no negative feedback from schools regarding the change in the registration fee payment and ticket prices. In addition to the usual schools

participating there were schools from Garstang and Cumbria who had registered via the LMH website. Indeed, the festival is now getting approached by schools on the Yorkshire border who wish to participate in the 2025 festival.

#### Selection of feedback on the 2024 festival

##### **Bolton-le-Sands**

*"The Lancaster and District Schools' Singing Festival is a highlight of the school calendar as it is a memorable and valuable opportunity for children across our local community to unite together in music, movement and song. Watching the children beam and shine as they sing their hearts out is truly magical and listening to parents (and staff) talk about how they remember attending when they were at school makes it worthwhile. Thank you to all those involved for keeping a long-standing tradition alive!"*

##### **Caton Primary**

*"Thank you for a brilliant experience for the children and me!! We loved the song choices, had so much fun in rehearsals and found you totally inspirational. The whole experience was wonderful, and we can't wait to take part once again."*

##### **Cawthorne's Endowed**

*"Thank you so much. The children are shattered today but loved being part of it. I've had lots of parents who said how good it was and how well they did, some even wanted it to be longer!"*

##### **Mossgate Primary**

*"I just wanted to say thank you for the wonderful joy your festival brings."*

*I volunteer with Mossgate Primary and was at the Ashton Hall on Thursday and Friday. Absolutely amazing performances! The energy, enthusiasm and encouragement your team have and give to the children is amazing!*

*Such an important experience for children, coming together to sing. The confidence it gives them to sing in front of an audience. The pride they feel afterwards. Thank you!*

*My son will be in Yr2 in 2025, so I'll have the joy of experiencing it all as a parent."*

#### Financial Review

The trustees mindful of the economic environment, looked at their charging for school registration and tickets and came up with revisions; Schools were to be charged a flat fee for all resources/CPD/school workshops per Key Stage of £100 for schools registering over 40 children or £75 for schools registering up to 40 children. There were a couple of small schools registering less than 20 children who were offered a discounted fee of £50; tickets were raised to £4 and £2 for children of school age and below, and schools were offered a £100 travel subsidy per Key Stage concert. Lancashire Music Hub (LMH) continued to provide financial support via the payment for the recording of the resources and through payment of 50% of Emma's time for Key Stage 2 workshops, and the payment of the Ashton Hall staff. Going forward the LMH support will be limited to the payment of recording and production of the resources.

In addition, the trustees looked at opportunities to leverage in-kind support from local professionals and gained financial benefits from the design and development of a festival website, the design and production of the programmes at significantly reduced rates and through Debbie Pilkington and Emma Williams giving their time for concerts for free; Emma

Williams preparing and uploading social media content and no van hire for decorating the hall. Nicky Crosley who had previously worked for LMH retired and her festival administration role was taken on by Linda Frankland who is employed on a self-employed basis by the festival.

Trustees have been provided with the separate Income and Expenditure overview which forms the basis for the Annual Accounts return. The festival has placed the majority of its funds in a savings account £8000, leaving nearly £3000 (£2,961.76) in the current account.

As of September 2024, Emma Williams' role with LMH has changed and she will now just provide the development and production of big sing resources to the music service. Emma will be contracted by the festival on a self-employed basis to lead the KS2 workshops and concerts.

### **Structure, governance and management**

The LDSSF singing festival is run by a very small organising committee – 4 people (three of whom are trustees of the charity – Mr Paul Bowden, Mrs Debra Pilkington and Mrs Nicky Crosley and the Vocal Lead of the Lancashire Music Hub, Mrs Emma Williams). During 2024 Nicky Crosley supported Mrs Linda Frankland taking over the administrative role and supporting the organising committee. The focus of the committee is the development and delivery of a high standard singing festival which is inclusive for diverse geographical and social groups within our area.

In addition, the charity has two more trustees – Mrs Sarah Griffiths and Mrs Elizabeth Wheildon, who review the overall annual plans and provide valuable comments.

As of October 2024, two more trustees are being appointed – Mr Daniel Wood (teacher) and Mr Nick Haughton (teacher), and it is hoped that the new trustees will be active members of the organising committee.

The Festival ensure that all trustees who have direct contact with children have DBS certification. Emma Williams, Paul Bowden, Daniel Wood and Nick Haughton are employees of Lancashire County Council and have their accreditation via LCC; the festival will be financing a full enhanced DBS certificate for Debbie Pilkington now she has retired from teaching and also for Libby Wheildon and Sarah Griffiths who as Trustees act as front-on-house support during the Festival.

### **Administrative Information**

Lancaster & District Schools' Singing Festival is registered at Slyne-with-Hest, St. Lukes CE Primary School, Shady Lane, Slyne, Lancaster LA2 6JL. Since COVID trustee meetings are held via zoom meetings with full trustee attendance:

- 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023 (proposed changes to the financial arrangements for the festival).
- 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023 (review and approval of 2023 Annual Trustee Report and Accounts for the Charity Commission; Noting the letter from Lancaster City Council regarding the ongoing use of the Ashton Hall for one week per year; update on engagement for the 2024 Festival; proposal for new self-employed administrative role).
- 4 March 2024 (Approval of Debbie Pilkington and Emma Williams' invoices; update on the preparations for the 2024 festival).

- 2 July 2024 (Update and review of the 2024 festival; financial update; update on LMH; proposals for 2025 festival; nominations of new Trustees).
- 15 October 2024 (review and approval of the 2024 LDSSF Annual Accounts and Trustee Report; update on the plans for the 2025 festival).
- The Charity Trustees are as follows:
  - a) Debra Pilkington
  - b) Paul Bowden (Chair)
  - c) Sarah Griffiths
  - d) Elizabeth Wheildon
  - e) Daniel Wood
  - f) Nick Haughton
- Nicky Crosley retired as a Trustee in October 2024.
- Administrator: Linda Frankland
- Musical Advisor and KS2 conductor – Emma Williams

**The 2024 Annual Trustee Report was approved at the zoom meeting on 15 October 2024**

**2024 LANCASTER & DISTRICT SCHOOLS' SINGING FESTIVAL - INCOME AND EXPENDITURE**

Festival bank account August 2023 (post 2023 festival project)		£8,558.27	
		<b>£8,558.27</b>	
	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>INCOME</b>
School registration fees			£3,500.00
Ticket sales (£4 per ticket)			£4,123.00
Retiring collection			£981.89
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>			<b>£8,604.89</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
<b>BAND FEES: Mon 8.00 - 11.30 and 6.30 - 8pm (4.5 hrs); Tues 9.30 - 11.30 and 6.30 to 8.15pm (4); Wed 9.30 - 11.30 and 6.30 - 8.15pm (4); Thurs 9.30 - 11.30 and 6.30 - 8pm (3.5); Fri 9.30 - 11.30 and 1 - 2.15pm (5) total of 21 hours</b>			
Ben McCabe - 21 hours @ £35	£735.00		
Brent Forbes (bass) - 21 hours at £35	£735.00		
Ian Gray (Keyboard) - 21 hours @ £35	£735.00	<b>£2,205.00</b>	
Festival concert programmes production		£234.00	
PA equipment (Ben Farmer equip & set up)		£350.00	
Sound engineer Harriet North 22 hours at £12.50		£275.00	
Website hosting, Microsoft 365 Licence, Annual domain reg		£288.52	
Tiered seating £315 + VAT - LCC		£378.00	
Lighting (working with Dukes Theatre)		£0.00	
Performing Rights Association - cost for festival		£93.25	
<b>KS1: Debbie Pilkington delivery of 16 x 1 hr workshops and 2 x 3 hr concert rehearsals @ £33.00 per hour</b>	£627.00		
KS1: Debbie Pilkington travel: 110 miles at 45p per mile	£49.50		
Parking for Rehearsals (DP)	£8.00		
Concert expenses (DP): Flags, Confetti Cannons & Flowers	£158.48		
Expenses: Wine, Gift bags for band, Easter Eggs for performers	£55.93	<b>£898.91</b>	
<b>KS2: Emma Williams delivering .... workshops of which ... are covered by LMS and 10 charged to the festival £33 per hour</b>	£330.00		
KS2 Emma Williams travel 126 miles at 0.45p	£56.70		
<b>Emma Williams concert week fees - Tuesday, Wednesday (£99) and Friday £165</b>	£264.00		
Emma Williams - expenses: Envelopes & postages	£16.95	<b>£667.65</b>	
<b>Linda Frankland project management for concert</b> Preparation November 2023 - March 2024 Meetings, administration and set up of Ashton Hall 15/3/24 18.5 hours @ £15	£277.50		
<b>Linda Frankland - Concert week</b> Monday 18th March - Friday 22nd March 28.5 hours @ £15	£427.50		
<b>Linda Frankland - post concert week</b> Administration of ticket returns from schools, collections and banking - 3 hours @ £15	£45.00		
Linda Frankland Parking during festival week - 3 x £4 and 2 x £3	£18.00		
Sundries: Tea, Coffee, Milk, Bottles of Water, Buckets	£43.07	<b>£811.07</b>	
		<b>£6,201.40</b>	<b>£8,604.89</b>

**OTHER COSTS/HOURS CHARGED TO LMH ?**

LCC staffing for Concert Week	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£0.00</b>

Festival bank account August 2024 closing Balance (post 2024 concert)	
Current Account	£2,961.76
Savings Account	£8,011.62
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,973.38</b>