



# **Chester Festival Chorus**

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Meeting to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> June at 2145 in Hamilton Street Methodist Church

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### **AGENDA**

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Chairman's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Constitution changes (none)
5. Election of Office Bearers
6. New Musical Director
7. A.O.B
8. Closure

**CHESTER FESTIVAL CHORUS**  
**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
9 June 2024 at Hamilton St Church  
16.35 onwards

**1. Apologies for absence:**

Andy Ashton, Chris Green, Ann McCarthy and Vicky Simons

**2. Minutes and matters arising from the previous meeting:** nothing issuing.

**3. Chairman's report:** previously circulated. Noted that Andy's message is one of optimism and hope for the future, but that the choir's financial situation must be secured and, principally, that means selling tickets. Margaret Newman added that it's also pertinent to remember that CFC's raison d'être is to produce uplifting musical experiences and for the choir to continue to play an important role in Chester's choral tradition.

In summary, Andy expressed gratitude to all for their continued support of CFC, including Ellie for outstanding music directorship and sticking with us, Graham for excellent accompaniment, choir for happily and enthusiastically coming back each year and committee members for hard work behind the scenes.

**4. Treasurer's report:** also previously circulated. In addition to his report, Jon added that despite extra outlay for auditions, CFC's finances are on an even keel. However, as things stand, we cannot continue to hire Storyhouse because of overall cost constraints (NCO actually incurred a loss last year). So, if we are to put on ambitious programmes each summer, we have to ensure as full a house as possible and we can only do this through selling tickets. Jon said if each member of the choir sold just 3 tickets, we would reach an audience of 200 and derive an income of £3,600.

**5. Election of a committee (present incumbents standing for re-election)**

**Chairman:** Andy Ashton

**Treasurer:** Jon Saunby

**Publicity/programmes/minutes/deputy chair:** Chris Green

**Administration:** Margaret Newman

**Venue bookings and stage management:** Caroline Thorne

**Librarian/printing:** Rhiannon Jones

**Odd jobs/deputy minutes-taker:** Diane Rooney

Proposed: Helen Crich

Seconded: Linda Curran

**6. Any other business:** nothing raised and the meeting closed at 16.45.

## Chairman's Statement for AGM 2025 Chester Festival Chorus 16/6/25

Barack Obama once said "I know how to save the planet, but I don't know how to save the planet and get re-elected"

Similarly, it is difficult in a small choir to perform the music you like and still remain solvent.

Early last year we made the conscious decision to run in two years cycles of a non-Orchestra and then an Orchestra concert. Last year's concert, requiring only Piano and two pianists, made a surplus as we could perform in the low-cost venue of Wesley. What a concert that was! The stripped back 4 hand accompaniment of the Brahms Requiem on the piano allowed the beauty of the music to shine through, and the audience was stunned by Rory's Glimpse of the Light. Perfect Festival Chorus. High-quality music both within the mainstream of the repertoire and exploring new avenues as well.

The year before that we performed at Storyhouse with Northern Chamber Orchestra. For that we paid some of the fixed costs and NCO and Storyhouse shared the risk on ticket sales. It made a loss, but we did not have to bear any of it.

The year before that we sang "Music all around me" in St Werburghs, a stunning acapella concert of music through the ages; in production terms very low risk: no orchestra, low cost venue.

Pre covid, our two concerts in Storyhouse were part of the Chester Music Festival and underwritten by Storyhouse. Our concert with ETO was underwritten by ETO, and we were guests at the Verdi Requiem.

This year, as we all know, we are performing the Mozart Requiem with an Orchestra and also a fully orchestrated version of the glimpse of the light. It is thus, financially, our most ambitious concert since we sang the Sea Symphony in Chester Cathedral in 2017. The coffers are charged, we have a sound plan but as with all ambitious projects, there is a slight accompanying jangle of nerves.

It's not easy putting on the music you want, but it's a team effort and I am grateful as ever for my highly effective committee.

Jon Saunby, keeping us financially straight, submitting the forms to the charities commission and HMRC, and for an endless supply of weak jokes

Rhiannon for organising the music

Margaret for communication with the choir

Chris running the website and ticket sales site

Caroline finding venues and staging (and the dreaded Gift Aid) and looking after Insta and Facebook

Diane doing the minutes and making the programme

And all of them for putting up with my inability to remember the date or time of the next meeting.

They do a phenomenal amount of work in the background, and I would like to thank them all.

I'd also like to thank Graham Eccles for accompanying us so beautifully: I really enjoy his playing. I'm also amazed that he always knows exactly where we are!

This year is also significant for being the last year that we will have Ellie Slorach as our musical director. Ellie was highly recommended and has more than fulfilled that recommendation. Right from the start she made the role her own. I think we were all impressed by the clarity of her concept of what sound she wanted us to make for the audience and her ability to describe that to us. Her actual conducting is also such a delight: So crisp and so expressive. "Look at me, I will give you everything you need". Back of house, too, Ellie is fantastic to work with, negotiating through the intrigues of the local music scene finding us amazing soloists and orchestras. But all good things must come to an end. We always knew that Ellie's meteoric career would one day find her

too busy to fit us in, and that has come to pass. And so we will, after this concert, say farewell and be proud to have known her.

This has, of course, given us some additional work to do to appoint a new musical director. An advert was devised and placed in the Association of British choral directors website. We had 12 applicants who were shortlisted by the committee against a person specification on the basis of their CV. On the basis of the shortlisting, three candidates were called to audition with the choir on the 9th of June. At the time of writing, we do not know which of these has been appointed, but by the time of the AGM, we should be able to announce this. I can tell you that any one of the three would make a fine musical director.

So at the AGM we will have one week ago, the publicity machine is in full swing and we must all re-double our efforts to make sure as many people as possible come to hear us, as well as making sure that on the night we produce the best quality concert we possibly can.

I would to end by thanking you all. As Pete Postlethwaite's Danny says in the film Brassed Off "I thought that music mattered, but does it bo\*\*\*\*ks, not compared to how people matter"

No people no choir. Other choirs struggle for membership, we have a waiting list. I think that says a lot. Thank you for being the great bunch of people you are.

Andy

Andy Ashton  
Chair  
Chester Festival Chorus

## **Chester Festival Chorus - Treasurer's Report, year ending 31 March 2025**

Aside from the musical success of last year's concert I am very happy to report that it was also a financial success. It was our stated aim last year to build our capital levels in order to support a more adventurous program in future years, and we achieved that, finishing the season with a surplus of around £1900.

The key drivers behind this surplus were:

- Carefully controlled costs and budget with subs set according to our expected costs and revenue;
- Healthy ticket sales, with an audience of approximately 113;
- Some very generous sponsorship from our fellow Chorus members – to whom we are extremely grateful - covering costs such as venue, soloists, royalties, music hire & printing.

The surplus from Summer 2024 enabled us to plan a more ambitious and expensive orchestral concert for Summer 2025, and we have set our budget for 2025 with an aim to breaking even over the 2 years.

In order to do this, we need to sell more tickets than last year – we are hopeful that the appeal of being accompanied by a professional orchestra will attract larger numbers – but, as always and at the risk of over-repetition, we are reliant on all of our members to sell tickets and help publicise the concert.

Whilst singing Rory's piece has offered us all a glimpse of the light, I hope the above has given a glimpse of the ledger!

Jonathan Saunby – Treasurer

21 May 2025

**Chester Festival Chorus**  
**Balance Sheet as at 31 March**

	Note	31/03/25 £	31/03/24 £
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>		-	-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Stock		-	-
Debtors & Prepayments	5	764	263
Cash at bank and in hand		8,651	8,150
<b>Total assets</b>		<b>9,415</b>	<b>8,413</b>
Creditors & accruals	5	100	-
Deferred Income	5	1,870	2,908
<b>Total liabilities</b>		<b>1,970</b>	<b>2,908</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>7,445</b>	<b>5,505</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>		<b>7,445</b>	<b>5,505</b>

**Chester Festival Chorus**  
**Statement of Financial Activities**  
**(incorporating an income and expenditure account)**  
**12 months ended 31 March**

	Note	2025 £	2024 £
<b>INCOME FROM:</b>			
Donations and legacies	1	1,567	1,299
Charitable activities	2	5,470	3,200
Investment income		-	-
<b>Total Income</b>		<b>7,036</b>	<b>4,499</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE ON:</b>			
Charitable activities	3	5,096	4,793
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>5,096</b>	<b>4,793</b>
<b>NET MOVEMENT IN FUNDS</b>		<b>1,940</b>	<b>(295)</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS</b>			
Total funds brought forward		5,505	5,800
Net surplus / (deficit) from charitable activities and donations	4	1,940	(295)
<b>Total funds carried forward</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7,445</b>	<b>5,505</b>

## Notes to the accounts

	2025 £	2024 £
<b>1 DONATIONS AND LEGACIES</b>		
Gift Aid	555	1,019
Sponsorship from chorus members	906	280
Other	105	
	<u>1,567</u>	<u>1,299</u>
<b>2 INCOME FROM CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES</b>		
Subscriptions	3,536	3,200
Ticket / programme sales	1,934	-
	<u>5,470</u>	<u>3,200</u>
<b>3 EXPENDITURE ON CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES</b>		
Payments to Music Director and accompanists (concerts / rehearsals)	2,895	2,386
Payments to Music Director and accompanists (auditions)	-	860
Rehearsal / concert venue costs	681	218
Music Purchase, hire, printing costs & sundries	262	729
Additional artists / royalties	930	327
Support costs (Making Music subscription, Insurance, and website)	328	273
	<u>5,096</u>	<u>4,793</u>
<b>4 Funds carried forward</b>		£
<b>Total funds as at 31 March 2023</b>	5,505	5,800
Surplus / (Deficit) from concerts	1,385	(454)
Gift aid for Summer 2024, and 2022/2023 concerts	555	1,019
Audition costs	-	(860)
<b>Total funds as at 31 March 2024</b>	<u>7,445</u>	<u>5,505</u>
<b>5 Prepayments and Accruals</b>	£	£
Subscriptions / sponsorship for Summer concert received in Feb / March (prior financial year)	1,870	2,908
Costs paid in Jan / Feb relating to summer concert (Making music subscription and deposit for rehearsal venue / orchestra)	764	263
Royalties due for 2024 performance	100	0