

LEEDS PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

Minutes of the Trustees' Meeting

WEDNESDAY 23rd September 2020,

held at 7.00pm using ZOOM

Present

Ruth Shann, (RS) CHAIR	Philip Ratcliffe, (PR) Secretary	Andrew Straton, (AS) Treasurer
Jill Foalks, (JF) Membership Manager	David Lunn, (DL) Concert Manager	Penny Dean, (PD) Marketing Manager
Rosemary O'Dea, (ROD) Tour Manager	Roger Shirley, (RSS) Music Programme Manager	Dr Tom Chilton (TC) Income Generation Manager
Rowena Herbert, (RH) Trustee without Portfolio	Lewis Hemingway (LH) Trustee without Portfolio	
Joseph Judge (JJ) Chorus Master		

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded from Charlotte Mulliner and Cllr Jane Dowson.

2 LOSS OF ST GEORGE'S AND POTENTIAL ARRANGEMENTS;

The Chair introduced the discussions around the shocking loss of St George's as our rehearsal venue on a Thursday evening.

Rev Eve Ridgeway, (on the Ministerial Staff at St George's) who broke the news late in the afternoon on Wednesday 16th September by phone to PD had provided a more detailed follow up email expressing their regret, and the reasons behind the decision. This had been shared with all Trustees and is attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

RSS sought further information regarding decisions, and whether there were any contractual issues arising from the cancellation. JF indicated in response that because of the Covid19 situation, a general long-term booking had not been made for this season. Such a booking which would give liability to the Philharmonic Society if rehearsals were cancelled and therefore that each rehearsal was being booked on an individual basis.

The first "in person rehearsal" had taken place on 10th September successfully, but once the "Rule of 6" had been introduced on the weekend of 12/13th September, the guidance on the ability of arts groups to rehearse was not clear. The guidance was not finally clarified until

the late afternoon on Wednesday 16th September, where such organisations were added as exemptions to the “Rule of 6”.

From the communications with St George’s it is clear that they need the church space for their ministry on a Thursday evening. The Church centre has previously hosted student events on a Thursday, but it is thought that the centre is not as Covid secure as the church, given its low ceiling heights and smaller volume spaces.

The Board expressed its disappointment and distress over the manner in which the notification of the loss of the church had been notified, but were grateful that St George’s were helping facilitate an alternative venue, and had indicated a potential return to the church in September 2021.

ACTION:

Write to St George’s expressing concern and disappointment but understanding the circumstances, and continuing to work with them over ensuring a return from September 2021. (RS/PR/JF)

2b ALTERNATIVE VENUES:

Rev Eve Ridgeway indicated in her communications that the St George’s sister church (St Augustine’s Wrangthorne) could potentially accommodate the Phil for rehearsals. Contact was made with the Church warden at Wrangthorne and a visit was undertaken by PR/JF/PD and DL on the morning of Monday 21st September. From Wrangthorne the Vicar, Rev Adrian and the Church Warden were in attendance.

The space available and the volume of the church is greater than that at St George’s. Social distances of 2m can be achieved in church pews and as a result could accommodate over 30 singers.

There is an electric piano and pipe organ available but the lighting and lack of Wi-Fi could be an issue. These potential issues could not be resolved before any potential test rehearsal could take place. The main issue with Wrangthorne is the location and its lack on parking. About 12 cars could be accommodated within the grounds of the church and the adjacent church hall, but there would be the need for Members to also use on street parking spaces, or the small car park adjacent to the shops at Hyde Park Corner.

Overall, it was considered that test rehearsals in Wrangthorne would be a useful way of determining the appropriateness of the facility and offering Choirs B and C an “in-person” rehearsal. It was decided that 2 rehearsals would be offered. One each to Choir B and C. These would also be recorded for viewing by Choir A and other Members through the web-site. It was recognised that it would not be possible to live stream the rehearsal given the lack of Wi-Fi connection.

ACTION:

Liaise with Wrangthorne regarding rehearsals to be held on 1st and 8th October, and offering rehearsals to these Members of Choirs B and C.

2c FURTHER ADDITIONAL VENUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Following the release of the news concerning the loss of St George’s to Members a number of additional potential rehearsal venues had been suggested:

St Paul’s, Ireland Wood; St Bartholomew’s, Armley; St Andrew’s, Roundhay; St Edmund’s Roundhay; St Chard’s, Headingley; Joseph’s Well; Pudsey Civic Centre; Leeds Town Hall, Leeds College of Music; St George’s Centre; Blenheim Baptist; Left Bank Centre; Medical School, Leeds University.

The Board considered that the consideration possible venue for future rehearsals during the rest of this Season could not be rushed as there was a lot of work necessary to determine availability, Covid compliance and undertaking appropriate risk assessments.

2d REMAINING ON ZOOM:

It was acknowledged that some Members dislike Zoom rehearsals or cannot join the sessions. However, in the current circumstances they are a really useful way of ensuring continued engagement with the community of the Phil.

It was noted that JJ would not be able to deliver a rehearsal on 15th October as he would be away.

Given the uncertainties regarding Covid and the significant potential for further restrictions to be introduced during October, it is considered prudent, that having tested Wrangthorne in person, rehearsals will revert to Zoom for the remainder of the Term.

This will be reviewed on a regular basis with the hope that we can ensure appropriate in person rehearsals in the New Year.

DECIDED: to remain on Zoom until the end of the year after returning in October .

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: ACTION POINTS

ANNEX TO MINUTES OF TRUSTEES MEETING 23rd September 2020

Minutes item	Action	Current Status	Owner
2A	Write to St George's expressing concern and disappointment but understanding the circumstances, and continuing to work with them over ensuring a return from September 2021. (RS/PR/JF)		RS/PR/JF
2B	Liaise with Wrangthorne regarding rehearsals to be held in October and offering rehearsals to these Members of Choirs B and C.		JF

APPENDIX 2:

Test of Email from Rev Eve Ridgeway dated 22nd September 2020

“Firstly I want to apologise for this situation that has arisen due to Covid 19 and the short notice you received about this change from us; I'm really sorry we've had to give you this news and I completely understand that you feel let down. We greatly value our long term relationship with Leeds Philharmonic Chorus.

We as a church, as well as so many other communities and groups, have had to respond quickly to the ever changing guidance (both government and Church of England specifically) that shapes how we can currently operate and so have needed to review (in a short time frame) how we use our spaces and bookings across St. George's church building, the St. George's Centre and St. Augustine's Wrangthorn, which is our sister church and with whom we are in partnership.

Last week in my conversation with Penny I shared that, due to changing number allowances/capacity in our building and the spaces we need for different parts of our ministry and bookings, St. George's will be in need of the church building again on Thursday evenings in term time (from 24th Sept). I realise this won't have been what she expected our conversation to be about, and it's difficult as we all navigate the changing circumstances. However, we recognise the long relationship we've had in being able to host Leeds Phil, and we wanted to be able to provide a solution to offer rehearsal space that is available immediately, as we are aware that so many choirs want to get back and sing, even while socially distanced and in smaller numbers.

I explained that our sister church St Augustine's Wrangthorn (LS6 1BJ) is available and willing to continue their booking, with space to socially distance in the church etc for Covid secure smaller rehearsals (and has larger capacity for the future). They are part of the wider St. George's team and their Priest in Charge is also part time Associate Rector of St. George's alongside myself as full time. I'm glad you have been able to visit this week.

I apologise for not following that phone conversation in writing to all of you; I hope this clarifies things for you. Our intention is to enable you to continue to rehearse during the rapidly changing circumstances and unknowns of the coming year.

In terms of the use of St. George's church building, it is highly likely that the rest of this academic year will be impacted by Covid 19 restrictions and so the St George's church building will probably not be available on Thursday nights. However, having been in contact with St. Augustine's Wrangthorn, and Adrian who you met this week, I know they are really happy to support you during this time of Covid 19 further restrictions and make their space available to you as you make arrangements with them if you decide to proceed.

If you were keen to explore a different night of the week in St. George's building, we could certainly explore that possibility, likely beginning no earlier than January 2021. This would include revisiting the booking agreement and hire fee based on an increase in cleaning and staff costs in light of new Covid 19 secure venue guidance. In September 2021 we'd love to be in a position to welcome you back; obviously we, like all venues, are having to keep things under constant review as restrictions change, but we greatly value our long term relationship with you.

I hope this is helpful for your trustees meeting this week."