

Brass Bands England

CEO Report for the AGM

Year ending 31 March 2023

Operational activity

2022-23 was the most productive, most eventful and, arguably, the finest year in the history of Brass Bands England.

2022 European Brass Band Championships

Most notably, BBE hosted the 2022 European Brass Band Festival which took place in Birmingham in April and May. The event was an immense success. Ticket sales exceeded 'break-even' levels and we received overwhelming critical acclaim from participants, audience members and sponsors. The festival also included an outside stage on which multiple concerts took place over four days, with the high-profile advertising that supported it reaching thousands of members of the public, most of whom had never been exposed to brass band music previously.

2022 Brass Band Conference

The 2022 Brass Band Conference was held at The Life Centre in Sale on Saturday 22 October. This was a hybrid event with in-person workshops, talks and presentations in addition to options to watch on live-stream. The feedback from attendees was positive, with highlight presentations from Ian Bousfield, Sean Chandler and the BBE Brass Foundations team. All the session recordings are now available on the members' resources on the BBE website.

2022 Brass in Concert Festival

BBE and Brass in Concert signed a partnership agreement, for BBE to provide support for this prestige event. The 2022 event, supported by BBE staff, was held on Saturday 19 November at Sage Gateshead, and unanimously declared a great success. The event also included a successful education event on the Friday featuring 250 elementary players from local primary schools, along with players from the National Youth Brass Band of Great Britain, led by Helen Minshall of the BBE Brass Foundations team.

Following on from this success, a new service agreement for the delivery of the Brass in Concert Festival has been proposed, for the next event which will be held on 17-18 November at Sage Gateshead.

2023 Royal Northern College of Music Brass Band Festival

BBE was prominent throughout this prestigious event, held in January. Sarah Baumann and myself gave a presentation on the content of BBE's 2023-26 business plan to an engaged audience, which was again well received.

2023 National Youth Brass Band Championships

The National Youth Championships of Great Britain (Youth Champs) saw further progress at the 2023 event, with 38 youth bands comprising approximately 1,300 young people. This was a record for recent years, demonstrating excellent recovery post-COVID. Once again, the artistic levels were very high and although the three-section format appears to be working very well for the moment it will always be under review.

Projects

Brass Foundations Programme

Our Brass Foundations education programme, led by a team of five experienced Youth Development Brass Specialists, continues to provide help and guidance for bands, as well as forming new partnerships with cultural organisations, schools and Music Education Hubs.

One of the core aims of this programme is diversifying the brass band sector as part of our 'Challenge 2030' goal for brass bands to better reflect the communities that they operate in. Direct feedback, collected from projects involving nearly 2,000 participants, evidenced that:

- 100% felt that the children and young people involved were enthused about brass playing.
- 88% were happier and had an overall improved mood.
- 47% had committed to joining an ensemble, to continue playing.

Individual follow-ups continued, to track the progression of individual children continuing their playing and the progress of new ensembles.

The increased 2023-2026 funding offer from Arts Council England, announced in November 2022, means that Brass Foundations will become part of the BBE's core activity, meaning increased youth provision and more opportunities to open banding to the full diversity of our communities and greater sustainability and relevance for participants and audiences.

Staff

There were several new staff appointments made during 2022-2023. In late 2021, a new position of Fundraising Manager was created to support BBE and its members. Following Pam Johnson's retirement from the position a year later, Beth Currie (now Beth Lambert), was appointed to this key role and is responsible for fundraising training, as well as advice

and guidance in addition to writing cases for support and making grant applications on behalf of BBE member bands.

Safeguarding Officer, Sam Fisher, left BBE during 2022-23 to further his career as a professional musician. Elizabeth Smith, an experienced industry professional, was appointed to the role in early 2023 and is now delivering BBE's BandSafe training to members and handling all safeguarding queries.

In preparation for the start of the new round of ACE funding in April 2023, the senior management team carried out a comprehensive reconstruction of the staff structure to reflect the rapid growth of the organisation over the past three years.

A staff wellbeing survey was introduced in January 2023 and a programme of staff benefits has been introduced to enhance the current salary sacrifice scheme in place. These include Cycle to Work Scheme, charity worker discounts and reduced-price technology equipment.

Relationship and Partnership Development Manager Alex Parker was on paternity leave from December 2022 (and we congratulate Alex and Lauren on the safe and healthy arrival of baby daughter Mirren!). Education and Development Manager, Sarah Baumann, was due to go on maternity leave in April 2023, but went into labour prematurely at the end of March. Baby son, Otis, arrived safe and sound and we congratulate Sarah and husband Peter on their new arrival.

A staff and trustee awayday was held in Barnsley in February 2023, at which the new plans for staffing and activity for the 2023-26 round of funding were revealed to staff and trustees, and future aspirations for the organisation were analysed.

Safeguarding and Bandsafe

During 2022, the delivery of the Bandsafe programme continued online and 666 members were trained during the year. A new contract has been agreed with the NSPCC to accredit this programme and BBE plans to increase the delivery and uptake of this scheme during the coming months and years. For more information follow this link:

<https://www.bbe.org.uk/BandSafe>

Child Performance Licensing

The Welsh BOPA has been renewed and extended to include other musical groups. The Department for Education has also indicated that the current agreement will be extended to other musical groups through partners including Making Music and EFDDS. This represents an exciting opportunity for BBE to extend its Safeguarding training and further grow its revenue and membership.

Making Music UK Partnership

Detailed discussions continue to provide MMUK members with access to BBE's BOPA. Further progress imminent.

Brass Band Archive

The Brass Band Archive opened on the weekend of 4-5 March and will run until 23 April at Heritage Quay, Huddersfield University. The Archive opened with a free special celebratory exhibition: 'Brass Bands: History and Culture' and featured archive material, memorabilia, trophies, scores and photographs, many of which were displayed for the first time.

Finally, I would like to thank the BBE staff team for their outstanding performance during the year as well as their remarkable commitment, largely to events like the European Championships and the Youth Champs, which could only achieve what they did by everyone going the extra mile when needed, but especially to meeting the daily needs of our members.

BBE is also fortunate to have a board that supports and challenges in equal measure. While the staff team makes a living by focussing on delivering BBE's business plan, we should also recognise that the trustees are all volunteers and give their time and considerable expertise freely, for the benefit of brass bands across the country. We all owe them a great debt of gratitude.

Kenny Crookston**Chief Executive Officer, Brass Bands England****October 2023**