

Brass Bands England
Minutes of the AGM
Year ending 31 March 2023

UNAPPROVED Minutes of the Brass Bands England
Annual General Meeting 2022/23

Held online on Zoom
Tuesday 17 October 2023 at 6.00pm

Attendees:

Sheila Allen, Rosie Banham, Sarah Baumann, Paul Beaumont, Charlotte Birch, Don Collins, Kenny Crookston, Clair Donnelly, Verity Flood, Iwan Fox, Abi Grocock, Len Hampson, Julie Hoggarth, Vicki Howarth, Mike Kilroy, Beth Lambert, Sarah Nerfal, Shaun Oliver, Alex Parker, Bev Shephard, Elizabeth Smith, Nigel Stevens, Jane Stewart, Reuben Tandler, Mike Walsh, Sara Webb, Kevin Whitaker, Jess Wilson.

BBE Chair Mike Kilroy welcomed everyone to the 2023 AGM.

1. Apologies for absence

Darren West (Hammonds Band)
Carole Bimson (Longridge Band)

2. Minutes of the previous AGM dated 18 October 2023

The unapproved minutes had been previously circulated to members and made available on the website.

Proposed by Len Hampson
Seconded by Nigel Stevens*(see point of order raised during the questions)

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. To receive the Report of the Management Committee and the Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023

Chair's Report: Mike Kilroy

During 2022-2023, BBE has enjoyed the most active and successful year since its formation (previously British Federation of Brass Bands) in 1968. Membership numbers have increased steadily, strategic partnerships have grown and strengthened. The proactive relationships with music hubs, government departments and NGOs have, in consequence, seen BBE grow in stature, visibility and influence. This aligns well with BBE's primary aim of supporting brass bands to become more robust and sustainable, and to be better appreciated by others outside of our immediate cultural sphere.

Membership

The impact of expanded operational activities and capacity has seen membership continue to grow steadily, despite issues created by the pandemic. At the end of March 2023, BBE membership stood at 503 organisations, comprising 568 bands, which contain in the region of 17,000 individuals. This constitutes a significant rise over the past three years since the organisational restructure in 2017-2018. The increased membership year on year is demonstrated as follows:

- End March 2018: 181 Member Organisations
- End March 2020: 392 Member Organisations
- End March 2021: 439 Member Organisations
- End March 2022: 470 Member Organisations
- End March 2023: 503 Member Organisations

This reflects the excellence of the staffing team we have in place today.

Members working group

We established a Members' Working Group in February this year, and it was created to encourage more proactive engagement with BBE and to ensure that the members voices are heard. The first quarterly meeting of this group took place in February and members were encouraged to contribute to the group's and BBE's future strategy. It's important that members have more of a say.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees continues to support the operational team in their work and has strengthened significantly in terms of diversity and skill set over the past 12 months or so. A new Trustees Code of Conduct has been developed during 2022/23 and will be adopted upon completion during 2023/24.

BBE Treasurer, Marie Bedford announced that she had taken the difficult decision to step down from her role. Marie has guided BBE to the excellent financial position we are in now through her experience and expertise, but the role has taken more time than she expected. Marie has been a joy to work with. She has been a consummate professional whilst challenging in the right way. BBE Trustee, Paul Beaumont, who has an excellent record in corporate business and finance, has taken over the role of BBE Treasurer, supported by BBE's finance team led by Bev Shephard.

Arts Council England

BBE's relationship with ACE is excellent. During the past year BBE has enjoyed the benefit of significant funding. Firstly in April 2022 £116,000 was provided for the European Brass Band Festival community stage in Birmingham. BBE's bid for 2023-26 ACE funding was submitted on 16 May 2022 and in early November we were delighted to be informed that BBE had been confirmed as one of the Arts Council's Investment Principal Support Organisations or 'IPSO'. IPSOs sit within the Arts Council's National Portfolio, a core group of organisations recognised as of national importance to arts and culture. A new funding period began in April 2023 and will run to the end of March 2026, and it sees BBE gaining £405,809 per year funding support for its work supporting bands, an increase on its previous support of £210,809 per year.

In conclusion this year has seen further significant progress made. The trustees are delighted with and extremely proud of the organisation's exceptional performance over the past delivering outstanding support and substantial benefits to the brass band community on a truly national basis. The staff and trustees at BBE sincerely hope that even more brass bands, individuals and associated organisations will engage with the organisation now and in the coming years to help BBE and the brass band sector to become further recognised as an important and vital contributor to art and culture in this country.

CEO Report – Kenny Crookston

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 last year, 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 was proposed and is now in place 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 I 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 in which they operate. 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 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, with support from the Backstage Trust, 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.

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 to provide MMUK members with access to BBE's BOPA has resulted in this now being put in place.

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.

Treasurer's Report: Paul Beaumont

The last financial year was both challenging and very successful for BBE.

During the financial year we exceeded 500 member organisations, at the end of March 2023 we had 503 member organisations representing 568 bands and around 17,000 individuals. However, the lasting effects of the pandemic on Bands resulted in a challenging environment for BBE services such as BandSafe (our safeguarding training) and the BBE Project Management service. That said, we have been applauded many times for the support that we gave Bands during these difficult times including the Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport and many member bands. I am pleased to say that, with member bands activities returning to pre pandemic levels, our BandSafe and Project Management services have returned to the expected, budgeted level, in the current (23-24) financial year.

Looking at the Accounts prepared by Gibson Booth, our "independent examiners", which is charity speak for accountants.

Revenues for the year stood at £554,446, consisting of £525,092 of grants and donations, including membership fees, and £29,354 from our trading activities. Our key funder remained the Arts Council England, contributing £374,909 in total, membership subscriptions totalled £54,532.

Our expenditure for the year was £615,446, the largest contributor to this figure being salaries and associated costs of £315,561; this figure also includes several project costs including staffing for Unibrass, the Brass Band Archive and other various projects, events and workshops undertaken during the year and also the costs associated with BandSafe, Project Management Services and Fundraising Services.

In total our expenditure during the financial year exceeded our income by £66,593 – reported as a loss on the P&L which was funded from reserves. To explain this a little more; following on from a very strong 21-22 financial year where we closed the year with a good amount of surplus funds, we took the decision to spend £36k of these funds on various projects and a further £30k keeping the Brass Foundations delivery team in place prior to us knowing the outcome of the 23 – 26 ACE funding round.

BBE cash flow remains strong; at the end of March 2023 cash in the bank remained a healthy £114,033.

Unrestricted Reserves, the amount of money set aside to cover the costs of closure of the operation, should it be required, stood at £66,857. This is less than is advised by the Charity Commission’s guidelines so the shortfall will be made up over the subsequent five financial years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our independent examiners Gibson Booth for preparing the year end accounts and advice during the year and would like to thank our inhouse finance team, led by the amazing Bev Shephard, one of the most knowledgeable and talented charity sector finance managers I have ever met, for their expertise and tenacity in keeping BBE on track financially for another year.

To accept the Management Accounts to the year end 31 March 2023:

Proposer: Shaun Oliver

Secunder: Charlotte Birch

5. Appointment of Trustees:

Trustees are elected for a period of 3 years and BBE’s constitution means about a third have to step down every 3 years, but they can put themselves forward for re-election.

To elect Mike Walsh (existing)

To elect Nigel Stevens (existing)

To elect Saphran Ali (co-opted in 2022 with a specialism in youth education)

Voting took place using an online form by eligible voters.

Two Proxy forms had been submitted in advance requiring the Chair to vote on their behalf as per their instructions.

The Management Report & Accounts were voted as accepted unanimously.

Mike Walsh, Nigel Stevens and Saphran Ali were all voted onto the Board unanimously. Mike congratulated them and thanked them for their brilliant contribution to the Board.

Mike announced that long-standing trustee Shirley Woodward would be stepping down this year after decades of exemplary service. As a board and a team we would like to thank Shirley for everything she's done for BBE and banding in general over the years. She is an exceptional person who has contributed so much, and we are very grateful for her time, expertise, experience and wisdom. Shirley is probably not leaving straight away; the reason will be covered later on.

6. Any Other Business

Youth Trustees

BBE is looking to take on some Youth Trustees given the work we do with young people to have some representation on the Board. Advertising has begun to recruit or receive names of those who might be suitable or who might be able to contribute.

Kenny explained that this new initiative was announced at the Conference last week and is a huge step forward not just for BBE but for brass bands in general, to give young people an important role in determining the future strategy of BBE and brass banding. This has been facilitated by funding from ACE and is a major part of that strategy. For anyone who is interested, or if you know someone suitable aged 18-25 see the careers section of the BBE website at bbe.org.uk for more information, how to apply and to find out about the commitment we're looking for. The closing date is 20 November.

Mike added that it is also part of BBE's succession planning for continuity into the future, so including people from an early age who can grow with the Board and hear their opinion is very important.

7. Questions

Don Collins (Youth Brass 2000)

Don explained that his band has been very fortunate in representing England in 8 out of 10 of the last European Brass Band Championships. For any youth band this is the biggest expense they will ever have. It costs Youth Brass 2000 around £20K pa. Whilst it's a great honour he thought youth bands need to be supported, not necessarily just financially. They may not qualify for grants when the event is outside England/Great Britain. He asked if more help was available for any youth bands that are asked to represent their country.

Mike agreed with his comments. However, BBE is not an awarding body. The money BBE gets is based on the business plan submitted to ACE showing the projects we're investing in, upon which we must report back.

Mike agreed this needs to be taken this seriously, also for senior bands representing England in this competition. What we do about it isn't clear and needs a lot of discussion. If we could organise between all members to contribute that would be good.

Kenny added that whilst he wished BBE could support every band representing England at any event it's simply just not possible.

Don suggested that the application for funding could include something for any youth band representing the country abroad.

Kenny responded that ACE do this indirectly. 23% of BBE's budget goes on youth work, which is over half the money we get from the Arts Council, which is a massive commitment.

For every band that represents England at the Europeans BBE offers a free fundraising service. Whilst it can't guarantee success there has been some. It also gives a package of marketing and logistics which is a big step forward from what we've been able to do in the past. BBE would love to be able to do more and we are trying our hardest.

Don asked how the board felt about the safety of taking part in the Palanga Europeans given that it is near a war zone. Mike responded that it was a matter of personal choice, BBE couldn't advise. EBBC's remit is to push banding into other European countries, and it has been long-awaited.

Don added that all BBE do – training, safeguarding and events etc he loves it and couldn't support it more. The way it's moved on in the last half a dozen years or so is incredible. BBE does a great job.

Nigel Stevens, BBE Trustee and delegate for England to the EBBA and also a member of the European executive who's had the privilege of going to Palanga twice recently to help with preparations offered to have an offline conversation with Don about safety and the financial side of it. From visits to Palanga is geographically in a part of Lithuania that is away from troubles. The appetite for it to go ahead there is enormous, but it is at the discretion of bands to do their own risk assessments.

Jane Stewart asked a question about whether there is a European grant body – is it possible for BBE to lobby for European money on behalf of youth bands each year?

Julie Hoggarth asked what the Arts Council's view is on this in terms of project grants. Would this come under the remit of 'Creative Country'?

Kenny admitted they BBE hadn't explored the European opportunities so much, but with Beth Lambert as BBE's Fundraising Manager we might be able to explore these.

Drum and Brass

"Does BBE have plans to develop dedicated progression routes for players (learners) in brass bands"?

Kenny said that the Brass Foundations team are about putting in place the foundations of brass band culture and community and encouraging bands to adopt best practice and can show case studies of such bands. The Brass Foundations team have been excellent in that

regard with the bands they've worked with. He suggested Drum and Brass get in contact with Brass Foundations. There are examples there of how bands have built their own pathways which can be replicated.

Mike agreed and added that we have the Youth Leader course, youth resources available on the website and courses such as governance training. We can never do enough, which is for discussion in future board meetings and awaydays. We look at who needs it, the desirability, feasibility and the viability of it.

***Point of Order**

It was drawn to the attention of the Chair that the vote to accept the minutes of meeting had been seconded by someone who wasn't eligible to vote. An alternative seconder was requested, and Jane Stewart obliged.

4barsrest – Iwan Fox

Iwan asked a question about the £66,815 unrestricted funds set aside mentioned in the treasurer's report that was said to be less than advised by the charity commission and asked what steps are being taken to bring it up to an advised level and would it impact any of the work planned for 2023-26?

Paul responded that the amount of unrestricted money held for contingency in the unlikely event that BBE had to close, according to the charity commission BBE is short. It is difficult to calculate how short as the charity commission don't specify a percentage of turnover that is needed, they only have recommendations. BBE's view is that we are probably £20K short. However, BBE keeps expanding, so the amount needed in reserves also grows. The Board made the decision that over the next 5 years a conservative amount will be added to reserves every year, of approximately £15k per annum. This will not impact any of the projects BBE has committed to and will be funded by additional surplus profit that we weren't expecting on day one. Paul said this was do-able for BBE, but that it was difficult to say how much it will be next year or the year after. He pointed out that the money is still accessible if needed for any core projects as is the case with the full c£66.5K. BBE wouldn't want to do this but could do if need be and would not be stopped by our accountants even if they weren't keen. To be clear our view is that the c£66.5K should stay in the reserves and that we hope to add to it from surplus income over the next few years. Adding to reserves will not affect any core projects whatsoever.

Iwan asked a further question about the £30K mentioned earlier from a surplus from essential funding that has been used for Brass Foundations, which has been a huge success, and whether it is now ringfenced for 2023-26 for Brass Foundations, so that additional funding won't have to be sought for the next period.

Paul responded that all the core and new projects are within the budget and funded. Last year was a particularly strong year on funding and revenue generation which left us with a surplus, which is not wanted for a not-for-profit organisation. After adding approximately £15k to reserves and with the £66.5K in excess, a decision was taken to fund other projects

with the £36K. Once we were sure about the new ACE funding £30K was used to keep on the Brass Foundations team. Paul was unable to say whether excess funds will be generated over the coming year, but if so an amount would be added to reserves.

Iwan referred a question to Kenny about BBE's intention to take on Youth Trustees. He asked what their legal requirements would be given the extensive and far-reaching responsibilities set out by the charity commission, particularly financial if anything goes wrong. Do they have the same role as trustees that have been voted on to the Board or are they a separate category for if anything goes wrong so they wouldn't be responsible for the debts?

Kenny responded that they would be full board positions with full board responsibility. They will also receive a lot of support as they grow into the role, and mentoring. There are a lot of highly skilled and experienced board members in good position to do this. We have considered every aspect of this and if someone is serious about the board they have to be serious about it themselves. Our view was that this was the best way to do it.

Iwan added that as part of the welcoming of people aged 18 to 25 they need to be made fully aware of their legal and financial responsibilities and will this be part of engagement process?

Kenny said that they will be recruited in the same way as any other position in BBE and the Board will have the final say in the appointments. If they are suitable they will be in full possession of all the facts and responsibilities at the time.

Mike added that they will be insured against liabilities, which are restricted to £1.

Iwan commented that there is a stigma involved with being a trustee of a failing organisation which could affect their credit rating in future.

Iwan's last question required clarification of the difference between 568 bands and 503 organisations. Mike explained that of the 503 organisations some of them have multiple bands within them. The 568 includes the other bands included in organisations such as Amersham. Each organisation's membership is an amount which then reduces for subsequent bands that form part of it being charged at a discount rate. Half for the second, a quarter for the second band etc.

8. Close of Business

Mike thanked everyone for attending. BBE is a membership organisation, which in essence is owned by the members. Even though we have the members' forum, all opinions and proactive engagement is valued and encouraged.

The meeting closed at 7.15pm