

### Calne Choral Choir News - Issue 3

We have still to see the results of the easing of COVID-19 lockdown, but we know a start has to be made. Those elements that affect the economy most are top of the list, while the Government struggles with plans to open those activities that involve larger groups. Our choir comes into that category. These activities have now come closer to the top of the debate pile, but there is no clear direction.

Making Music, to which Calne Choral belongs, is the body that represents groups in the wider music world. It has been active in pushing for music to be given earlier attention by the Government. The argument is that music is part of the Community “glue” and an antidote to the mental health concerns that the lockdown has created. In combination with other performing arts groups, that argument has raised the profile.

Last week the Culture Secretary opened up the possibility of outdoor events and said:

*“And while those outdoor performances get underway, we will be working with the public health experts to carefully pilot a number of indoor performances – from the London Symphony Orchestra at St Luke’s, to Butlins – to work out how we can confidently usher socially-distanced audiences indoors as soon as possible. At the same time, we’re funding scientific studies to help us understand and mitigate some specific public health risks, like the impact of singing, wind and brass instruments on transmission.”*

Even then, the requirements on outdoor events were difficult for more than a handful of performers. Later guidance from the Department of Culture developed that further with this statement as part of the wider guidance.

*“Non-professionals should currently not engage in singing or playing wind and brass instruments with other people given these activities pose a potentially higher risk of transmission and whilst research is ongoing. DCMS has commissioned further scientific studies to be carried out to develop robust scientific data for these activities. Existing and emerging evidence will be analysed to assist the development of policy and guidelines.”*

Those of us with experience of Government methods will worry about what “*further scientific studies to be carried out to develop robust scientific data*” could mean in terms of when we might get any idea of the way forward. Lost in the long grass is ever a concern! I have written to my MP asking for his help in ensuring that those studies are enacted speedily and progress reports are given.

I know many of you are looking forward to returning to singing, but while there is now light at the end of the tunnel, it remains a small speck!

