

25th August 2020 - Latest COVID-19 news for Calne Choral Society members

As summer drifts to a close, the likelihood of us being able to restart the choir soon also seems to be drifting away. Our hoped for restart in September now seems too optimistic. We are waiting for Government guidance on singing indoors - at least singing in groups of more than a few.

There was a report on BBC News last week on the study by Bristol University into potential aerosol effects of singing. This is part of the work the Government commissioned into singing effects, but it is only at an interim stage and hasn't been examined externally.

As a Making Music member, we are waiting for their guidance following discussions with Government and this is the latest information they have put out.

Making Music warmly welcomes the update published by DCMS to their performing arts guidance for England on 13 August. While there are still special (important and appropriate) caveats relating to amateur music activity, the outright ban has been removed. Choirs, bands and orchestras are now able to meet again for rehearsals, provided that social distancing of 2m can be maintained at all times and certain other conditions are met.

Social interaction is still to be minimised and kept to a maximum of 6 people from different households, but groups can now meet to rehearse in a larger number than that. The guidance is a little ambiguous, and we are seeking clarification on the maximum people allowable. Gatherings of more than 30 are against the law on private premises, but groups of 30 – and even more, if organised by a registered charity or company – are now allowed to come together, provided certain measures are in place and the venue is Covid-19 secure.

This is not a return to the level and manner of activity pre-Covid-19, and quite rightly so, as the pandemic clearly still hasn't played out. But this guidance update is exactly what we have been asking for, in that it enables leisure-time music groups to consult their members, assess the risks associated with their activity and put in place those mitigating measures which will make most of a difference in their particular circumstances. We understand this is a vote of confidence in the ability of self-governed community music groups to regulate their own activity in line with government guidance and we know that groups will rise to this challenge very well. Making Music, of course, will be on hand to help and our template risk assessment and guidance will be available very shortly to assist members.

While they are being positive, 2m social distancing is not realistic for larger groups such as ours, even if we are a charity. That alone will stop us and they are being polite about the ambiguity! Having read the latest Government guidance, I'm not sure what it's saying either! We also have to work with the Marden House leaders, who have their own obligations to meet. They are waiting for guidance on singing groups such as ours as well.

Keep watching this space, as we shall need your help at some point to find out how many of you will want to return as soon as we are allowed to. If a few want to return, we can work with that and iron out the wrinkles rather than worry about how long before we can restart with 60+.

Stay Safe

David