

## **BEWDLEY FESTIVAL LIMITED**

### **Report for Bewdley Town Council**

#### **At the Heart of Bewdley for over 30 Years.**

It is my pleasure to present our report to the Town Council for the year ending the 31 December 2020.

Bewdley Festival's overall aim is to:

"Bring the best into Bewdley and to bring the best out of Bewdley".

This normally involves hosting high quality art events for the enjoyment of local people in our beautiful town. We all know that 2020 has been anything but a normal year.

For the first time since Bewdley Festival was incorporated in May 1989, as a non-profit making charity, we were unable to hold our festival in October due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It has had a devastating effect on the arts whether it be performers, support teams without which events cannot take place, venues and audiences who gain so much enjoyment from attending "live" events.

Before the country went into lockdown in March, we were able to hold our annual Youth Festival events. In January we were proud to hold the Youth Music Showcase in conjunction with the Bewdley Mayor's Charities. As well as raising £450 for charity, the event continued to demonstrate the tremendous talent that we have in our town. At the end of February, the popular Wyre Forest Young Musician of the Year competition was held, which again was a great success.

Also, in February we welcomed crime writer Ann Cleeves to St. George's Hall. Ann gave us a fascinating insight the life of an author, how "Vera" made it onto our television screens and the background to the Shetland series. She spoke about her new book "The Long Call" which is also being adapted for television.

The only other events we were able to hold in 2020 was the screening of the Frida Kahlo film and our gallery exhibition. Both events were held in October between lockdowns. With social distancing in place a good audience were still able to enjoy a very informative film about Kahlo's work, her focus on self-portraits and the extraordinary symbolism she used in her paintings. Our art exhibition which included work by local members of the RBSA (Royal Birmingham Society of Artists) was enjoyed by the visitors to the gallery.

Before lockdown our organising committee, Bewdley Festival Society Committee, had worked hard to put a full programme of events in place for October 2020. Following the need to postpone we are now hopeful that we can put this programme on in October 2021.

Since the start of the pandemic the focus of the trustees and our festival organising committee has been on protecting the future of festival as much as we possibly can. Keeping

our audiences, volunteers, employees and artists safe whilst working to government guidelines has been our main priority. This has been difficult with the constantly changing situation and challenges that a pandemic brings. I am very grateful for the support I have received from members of the committee and the trustees.

In last 12 months we have been working on establishing our Bewdley Community Arts Foundation. This represents the next exciting stage of our vision. We remain fully committed to the arts and ensuring our community receives the benefits that artistic events can bring. Taking part in creative activities is widely recognised as having a positive effect on many areas of life. Throughout its existence, Bewdley Festival has aspired to support the arts in Bewdley and the Wyre Forest by investing in various projects, both large and small scale. Our aim is to launch the Foundation in the Spring.

Thank you to our sponsors who have continued to support our work with young people. These include Bewdley Town Council, The Elmley Foundation, Helen Mackaness Trust, Roger and Douglas Trust and St. George's Hall. Thank you to Bewdley School and the town's community for supporting the events we have been able to hold and especially to the young people who each time rise to the challenges that we put in front of them. Meaningful engagement with young people and their parents is essential to the long-term development of our charity.

I am pleased to report that our financial position is still strong and that we are confident that Festival has a bright future. Our priorities for 2021 are:

- To get our events up and running again when it is safe to do so. Our roots music events will be on the 24th & 25th September. Festival will be held from 8<sup>th</sup> October to the 17<sup>th</sup> October.
- To launch our Foundation and make a difference to people's lives by helping them take part in the arts.
- To protect our finances so that festival has a sustainable future.

I would encourage you go to our improved website (<https://bewdleyfestival.org.uk/>) which has a wealth information about festival. I am sure you will find it both interesting and informative.

Thank you all for your continuing support.

Mr Trevor Price  
(Chair, Festival Society Committee and a trustee of Bewdley Festival Ltd).

Dated: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021