

Redland Green Community Chorus – Annual Report and Accounts 2010/11 for Annual General Meeting 31 October 2011

Chair's report

The vision of the Redland Green Community Chorus since its inception by founder Helen Bilkey (former Head of Music, Redland Green School) has been to provide a vibrant, enjoyable and musically rewarding opportunity for community members to sing together whether student, parent, staff member or local resident. The chorus seeks to be inclusive to all such members and therefore does not hold auditions and includes a diverse range of musical styles in its repertoire. In addition, membership fees are not applied to students or those experiencing genuine financial hardship.

At the time of the last AGM, the chorus had reached a significant milestone in its development. It had become well established with a membership of some 70 to 80 members and had experienced success both locally in the Only Choirs Allowed competition and further afield in the Albert Hall, taking part in the massed choir premiere performance of Karl Jenkins' Gloria. In the wake of the news that Helen Bilkey was moving on, the chorus had an important decision to make about its future. The membership of the chorus voted in unison to make every effort to continue post Helen's departure and as such the committee were given a three fold mandate in July 2010:

- To appoint a new musical director
- To establish a programme of local concerts, providing the chorus with regular opportunities to perform in public
- To find ways of making the chorus financially sustainable

I am pleased to report that the committee rose admirably to this challenge and have worked tirelessly to make substantial progress against these three objectives. Following an appointment process, the chorus was delighted to welcome our new musical director Emma Goddard in January of this year. Emma joined the chorus with significant musical credentials already to her name and has established her own rapport with the chorus.

The chorus has established a regular programme of local concerts, hosting its own Autumn and Summer concerts in St Albans Church Westbury Park and participating in the Redland Green School Christmas Concert and more recently in the Gathering Voices Festival, performing at St George's Brandon Hill. This has been coupled with other events such as the recording in the Abbey Road studios in the summer and singing at the summer 'Pimms evening', organised by the Friends of Redland Green School.

The committee has worked hard on producing a viable financial model for the chorus, not least given the concern of some members about liability. The surplus built up over the last year now gives the chorus the freedom to plan future events (e.g. booking concert venues and purchasing music) without significant constraints and this is a positive step forward. The chorus is extremely grateful for its partnership with Redland Green School which continues to be an important ingredient in the viability and success of the chorus.

Developing a sustainable chorus has also meant beginning to formalise some aspects of organisational life, including taking public liability insurance, establishing a risk register and initiating the development of a policy on safeguarding children and young people. The musical director and pianist are both CRB checked as are some members of the committee, including the chair. The committee continues to consider the health and safety of members and take action where necessary to manage risk. The website has developed under the expert steer of Nick Plant over the last 12 months and is the key vehicle for both internal and external communication.

The chorus remains committed to being open and inclusive in its membership whilst taking steps to actively promote the chorus to RGS students and male members. The recent friends and family evening and the Gathering Voices Festival were useful opportunities to promote the chorus to potential recruits. There have been a number of new members this term which has been an encouraging development.

I would particularly like to commend my fellow committee members to you and thank them for their work over the past 18 months – Nick Plant, Lynn Thomas, Kate Hughes and Andree Osborne. Brenda Holley has left the committee and the chorus since the last AGM and we thank her too and Judy Malone sadly passed away in the summer of this year. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Jonny Saunders for his personal contribution to sustaining the chorus in between musical directors last autumn and for his often invisible but very valuable work in helping to act as a bridge between the chorus and the school.

As I step down from my role as chair of the committee, I feel confident that the chorus will go from strength to strength and that the life of the school, the community and we as individuals will be enriched as a result.

Treasurer's report (September 2010 – August 2011)

<u>INCOME</u>	£
Income carried forward 09/10	1529.00
Subscription fees – Autumn/Spring/Summer Terms 10/11	3,525.00
Music (misc)/folders sales	990.60
Receipts from concert ticket/programme sales	1,427.90
Sales of tickets for Abbey Road recording	364.50
Misc income – Donation/profit from sale of refreshments	130.10
<u>GRAND TOTAL – income</u>	<u>7,967.10</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	£
Public liability Insurance	102.22
Music Director & Pianist fees	2,632.00
Purchase of music/folders	1,618.76
Concert expenditure (2 concerts)	2,482.40
Abbey Road recording	364.50
<u>GRAND TOTAL – expenditure</u>	<u>7,199.88</u>
<u>BALANCE 10/11</u>	<u>767.22</u>

Constitutional matters

We adopted our first constitution at the inaugural AGM on 12 July 2010, without any initial amendments to the proposed text tabled by the shadow committee at the time. It was however agreed that a number of refinements should be investigated. They are:-

- Inserting an object associated **with encouraging positive school/student/relationships around singing**: in practice we have worked hard on this despite its omission from the text;
- Refining the wording of clause 8 on **equal opportunities** to reflect better the Equality Act 2010: in practice we believe we comply with this despite its omission from the text;
- Excluding **undisclosed bankrupts** from committee membership: in practice this is not a high risk and we don't expect anyone in this status to be elected;
- Providing for **continuity of service of committee officers** beyond a year whilst avoiding excessive periods of service: in practice the committee is being rejuvenated whilst preserving continuity;
- **Liabilities of individual members**: in practice, the constitution largely limits the liabilities of individual members: as an unincorporated body, the choir's liabilities are generally borne by your elected committee members and officers, not the general membership, though actions we have taken include taking out public liability insurance and establishing a risk register.
- **Charitable status**: this would open the door to a number of benefits, including enhanced capacity for fundraising, and enabling us to claim Gift Aid against members' voluntary contributions.

The final two are the most significant of these six issues, but require more work to research and draft than we have had the capacity to pursue so far. We decided to avoid two rounds of changes but instead to tackle both major and minor amendments "in one fell swoop". This will move us straight from an "unincorporated association" to an incorporated body with limited liability and charitable status. Proposals will be drafted and brought to a Special General Meeting within the next six months. We therefore invite members to approve this plan and await further news.