

Update to Abergavenny Town Council From Black Mountain Jazz

Last year, the Town Council agreed funding of £4,000 a year (2021, 2022 and 2023) to support Black Mountain Jazz (BMJ) in developing its youth and community programmes. This short report updates on progress made.

2021 saw the second year of the pandemic and BMJ's annual festival again mainly restricted to virtual productions - although five live gigs were arranged - two at the Melville and three in a local barn.

The better news is that 2022 sees the club programme returning, with its live gig at the Melville on 20th April. A full club programme is currently being put together and acts are being booked.

As a consequence of the 2021 festival programme, BMJ now has its own house band - BMJ Collective. This is comprised of younger musicians who have mainly graduated from RWCMD in recent years and led by drummer Alex Goodyear.

BMJ Collective is also involved in club and festival programming, introducing new ideas and exciting acts. Other discussions with BMJ Collective members are leading to their involvement in other activities, including workshops - for both the young and not so young.

There have also been discussions with BMJ Collective members about developing a regular BMJ Katz - a big band for 10 to 18/19-year-olds, based broadly on directions taken by the Abergavenny-based Koolkatz (1996 to 2005).

This year, there are plans for two wall2wall Jazz Festivals - one in July and the other in November. It is intended that both festivals will include a free-access community day on the Sunday, with plenty of live music and other activities. The July festival will include a Fest Supper at the Angel.

'Virtual' is not being abandoned and lessons learned over the last two years are being embraced. It is likely that part of the second set at the April 20th club night gig will also be live streamed - this will be a pilot exercise and the possibility of attracting some advertising income will be explored.

We are also looking at the options for developing our own YouTube channel and making good use of the excellent videos produced over the last two years. This also offers income opportunities to be explored.

In January of this year we received support from GAVO to fund two mentors to guide us through the process of setting up a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), which would offer many benefits. We are now reaching the stage of submitting our constitution and associated papers to the Charity Commission.

Our contact with GAVO has reaped other benefits and recently we have been working with a group of University of South Wales students, who - for a module in their masters degree - are producing a marketing strategy for BMJ. This looks at all aspects of marketing, with an emphasis on 'reaching out via the Internet'. This will be particularly useful in developing our 'virtual' activities.

Mike Skilton

4th April 2022