

Update to Abergavenny Town Council From Black Mountain Jazz CIO

In 2021, 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. In April 2022 we submitted a report to Council, highlighting activities up to that date and planned programmes - this second report updates on progress made since then.

The pandemic continued in 2021 and BMJ's annual festival was 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 saw a fuller club programme return, with seven monthly live gigs at the Melville during the year. The 2023 club programme continues the return to normal, with three live monthly gigs to date and a further seven booked. There is no monthly gig in September as this is the scheduled month for our wall2wall Jazz Festival.

In February, Black Mountain Jazz co-produced with the Borough Theatre the 'Women in Jazz in Wales' production (at the Borough Theatre). This unique performance, funded by the Jazz Archwilwyr Explorers project, was a celebration featuring an exciting all-female line up of leading Welsh jazz musicians.

The 2022 wall2wall Jazz Festival was a successful three-day event, which featured five top acts. The workshops catered for a variety of interests, including gospel singing and youth activities. In particular, we launched BMJazz Katz - a proposed big band for those aged 11 to 19 years which we aim to develop as an integral BMJ activity.

The 2023, the wall2wall Jazz Festival will be from Friday 29th September to Sunday 1st October at the Melville Centre, which has very much become our home. The programme is still being developed but it will, as usual, include a free-access community day on the Sunday.

'Diversity' is becoming important for both club and festival programmes. Various regular workshops are being developed and these will also be part of the festival programme. There are also discussions about involving other local groups in the wall2wall Jazz Festival and, although at an early stage, the possibilities are exciting.

It is worth noting that all events are well attended and on occasions 'sold out'. It is also noticeable that there are many 'new faces' and a growing interest in BMJ programmes from all age groups.

We have now completed our formation as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and registered with the Charity Commission. As well as potential matched funding possibilities, this has encouraged us to look at our organisational structure. We currently have a small board of trustees and a number of strategy groups are being developed to consider specific issues - such as funding, programming and youth activities. This has encouraged more people to get involved in managing BMJ and ensuring that its future is not dependent on just a small handful of volunteers.

The current Town Council grant comes to an end this year and we would like to take this opportunity to ask that further support is considered, which will be put to good use in developing our programmes and ongoing objectives.

Mike Skilton

Black Mountain Jazz CIO

Charity No: 1199013

4th April 2023