



COMHALTAS

THE LIVING TRADITION

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COMHALTAS – CORONAVIRUS

Communication No. 22

Tig maith mór as moill bheag. Often great good comes from a short delay. We have seen the light at the end of the tunnel. We are now ready for the first tentative steps into the new world. You will not be alone. As during the crisis, we will support each other and share the most up-to-date information with you. **Is i dteannta a chéile is fearr sinn.** Unity is strength. **Ní tréad caora.** One sheep is not a flock! **Ronan O' Brien has been designated as your contact/support person. He is contactable at ronan@comhaltas.ie and 062 61122.**

Last March, the Ardchomhairle designated and mandated the Buanchoiste to guide the movement through the devastating crisis which is COVID-19. The Buanchoiste now wishes to express their appreciation to all those in Comhaltas who did such valiant, exceptional and creative things in such difficult circumstances, as chronicled in our **Communications**. This was a source of great encouragement and inspiration to the Buanchoiste.

On the 30th June, the Buanchoiste had a meeting to consider the most up-to-date position, based on official guidelines and restrictions. We give hereunder our best informed response for your consideration and appraisal.

With the Government guidelines and restrictions becoming clearer and relaxed, we can now consider commencement of some activities and the conditions and restrictions that should apply.

- **CLASSES:** Some classes have already started. Based on the relaxation of some restrictions, it would seem that classes, if required, could recommence. However, guidelines and restrictions must be strictly adhered to including social distancing, sanitisation, signage, etc. Size of premises, etc. will have a bearing on local decisions. A Covid-19 Comhaltas Education module has been made available.
- **TIONÓL/ARDCHOMHAIRLE:** It would seem, given the number of people involved, that such an event in September would be unlikely. Perhaps the TIONÓL and GRADAM AN CHOMHALTAIS could be held with an Ardchomhairle meeting in, say, March 2021. In the meantime, an online meeting of the Ardchomhairle will be held at the appropriate time to agree a final decision.
- **CONGRESS:** It seems unlikely, unless there is a huge improvement in the situation, that the cancelled 2020 Congress could be held this year. It is recommended that the 2021 Congress could include the business of 2020, including the motions already ratified by the Standing Orders/Ardchomhairle.

- **MEMBERSHIP/AGMs:** We hope to send out [Packs](#) at an early date so that preparations – with whatever local conditions require – could be made for AGMs as usual, which by the required date – or as near as possible – should be workable.
- **TTCT:** The 2020 TTCT Course will not now be held. However, it is expected that aligned to the 2021 Course there will be a number of preparatory courses – perhaps one for each Province.
- **CONCERT TOURS:** These will all be held on hold in the current crisis as Tours at present would be impossible.
- **DRAW 2020:** Given the loss of opportunity to sell tickets during the crisis, it is recommended that the Draw scheduled for December will now be extended to Congress 2021.

It is also recommended that the 20% of proceeds to be returned to Head Office will now remain with the selling units.

The 2021 Draw will revert to the original date and conditions.

- **CULTÚRLANN:** All staff are now back at the Cultúrlann. They are providing a full service and working towards a degree of normality for the movement – ‘the new normal’.
- While observing all official guidelines and restrictions, our [CULTURAL CENTRES](#) will now slowly and cautiously consider re-opening prospects and possibilities.
- As the Bardic and Ard-Ollamh Awards could not proceed this year, it is recommended that those selected would receive their awards at Fleadh 2021.
- **FINANCE** The 2019 Accounts will show a deficit of €58,000. The legal fees relating to Cultural Centres’ applications to the Department for capital grants were borne by the Ardchomhairle.

During the crisis, the Department has been helpful in making instalments of our annual grant available. We have had an on-line meeting with the Department and a further general meeting with other clients.

Due to cancellations and other reasons, income for the last four months has been non-existent. This will also be the case over the coming months. On the other hand, some planned expenditures did not materialise. It is too early to predict what the final outcome will be.

We have engaged regularly with the Department on the financial impact on Comhaltas relating to the extraordinary and unprecedented economic circumstances which now prevail.

We must also be ever-conscious of what the economic future of the State may hold for Comhaltas. This is being monitored closely.

We are also fortunate that we have no capital loans to service and we have attractive insurance cover for the whole movement in Ireland and the UK.

Our biggest asset is the thousands of volunteers who keep the wheels turning. This is exceptional. It is our guarantee of success in the future no matter how daunting.

- **TREOIR** Issue No.2 has now been published. It is focused on **ATHNUACHAN** – Renewal. The ‘exhortations’, coupled with historical examples of survival, hopefully feed into a positive and determined response by our members to unprecedented challenges ahead. Our commitment to putting our shoulder to the wheel is also communicated to decision-makers and others. Over 2,000 TREOIR have been posted to public representatives, church leaders, media, Irish Embassies worldwide, etc.

TREOIR has been – or is in progress – distributed to branches via County Boards. It is hoped that all will go the extra mile to keep the lines of communication open with our vast membership. TREOIR has a readership of 35,000.

- **VIRTUAL FLEADH** Following the cancellation of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, we have engaged with TG4 to provide a Virtual Fleadh from the 6th to the 9th August. Each programme will be 90 minutes duration. The contract for this has been awarded to Power Productions. We were asked to nominate a Comhaltas liaison person and Kieran Hanrahan has agreed to fill this role with assistance from Jim McAllister and Siobhán Ní Chonaráin.

The Director General of TG4 has also indicated that he hopes, finance permitting, the Provincial Fleadhanna, in addition to Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann, could be covered in 2021.

- **SCOIL ÉIGSE** As the Scoil Éigse could not be held this year, Kieran Hanrahan and his team are actively pursuing the idea of a Virtual Scoil Éigse.

Proposed plans for Scoil Éigse 2020 – Online.

Monday 3rd August – Thursday 6th August.

Classes – Recitals – Club Éigse.

Classes – It is proposed to organise online daily classes via Zoom from Monday to Thursday with a 60 minutes duration (this duration can be discussed and confirmed).

Class sizes will be determined through consultation with some of the senior tutors.

A series of afternoon recitals, 30 minute duration featuring a number of tutors each day (pre recorded).

It is suggested to run Club Éigse nightly at 8pm for one hour duration, featuring a group of tutors with the tune selections pre-announced to the participants. (These selections can be pre-recorded in Cultúrlann na hÉireann for later transmission).

Giorraíonn beirt bóthar. Two shorten the Road. Imagine what thousands can do! This is the potential of Comhaltas as was evident during the crisis. **Níl tuile dá mhéad nach dtránn.** No matter how great the flood, it will subside. This is our positive motivation.

Foighne leigheas seanghalair. Patience is the best treatment for an old complaint.

Patience we have in abundance.

AR AGHAIDH LEIS AN gCEOL!

Is mise, le mór-mheas,

