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downloaded 23 November 2020

Issued 21 July 2020

Cardiff Music Board statement on the impact of Covid-19

Council Leader and Chair of the Cardiff Music Board, Cllr Huw Thomas said: “Welsh Government legislation means that live music events can’t currently take place either indoors or outdoors, but the members of the Music Board are united in their desire to help bring live music back to the city as quickly as possible, once the rules are relaxed. There are many reasons for that – clearly there’s a huge cultural value in having music in our lives, but live music is also an essential part of Cardiff’s cultural and night-time economy.

“Prior to Covid-19 our plans were to integrate music into every aspect of the city – now, with the jobs and incomes of people and companies in the music industry at risk, we face a new set of challenges.

“The Music Board’s work to deliver on our music city aspirations and implement the recommendations in the Sound Diplomacy Music Strategy report will continue and productive conversations are being had on areas as diverse as busking regulations and mapping opportunities for music education in Cardiff, but the reality is that the challenges faced by the music sector in the wake of Covid-19 mean progress will not be easy.

“Our key focus at this time has to be finding ways to support the recovery of Cardiff’s music sector – a sector which has been hit incredibly heavily by the pandemic and the lockdown regulations necessarily put in place to protect public health.

“As we move out of lockdown, the council’s plans for a Safer Cardiff include creating ‘spill out zones’, new spaces in the city centre for cafés and restaurants to extend their business into – the grounds of Cardiff Castle have also been opened up as a free public square.

“If people can safely enjoy live music in these spaces it gives them another reason to spend time in the city centre and support the city’s economy, however without changes or clarifications to the current nationwide rules on live music events then moving forward with these plans is not possible.

“All members of the Music Board, myself included, want live music, whether that’s busking or at more managed events, to play the significant role it could in the council’s wider plan to protect jobs, create a buzz in the city again and create a safe, welcoming environment that encourages people back into the city centre.

“The board are ready to work through these plans, so that when the time comes and the public health situation allows, we can once again welcome live music back to Cardiff and we would welcome further clarity on how and when that could happen.”

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downloaded 23 November 2020

Issued 30 September 2020

Music board warns of ‘serious consequences’ of Covid-19 for future of live music in Cardiff

Chair of the Cardiff Music Board, Cardiff Council Leader, Cllr Huw Thomas said: “While we appreciate the support already provided by Welsh Government, the scale of the issues facing the live music sector are massive. Venues are willing to play their part in stopping the spread of Covid-19 but with live music events still not permitted in Wales, new rules limiting opening hours and the forthcoming end to the UK Government furlough scheme there is a very real risk some live music venues, and the jobs they support could disappear, with serious consequences for the city’s economy, opportunities for talent, and for future of live music in Cardiff.”

“It’s really important to emphasise that this is not just about culture or entertainment – of course that’s important in its own right, but this goes even wider than that - prior to lockdown live music created 70% of the jobs, and £45.6 million of the income in the music sector in Cardiff. This is about real jobs, real people and real economic impact.”

“Today, as Cardiff City Hall is lit red in solidarity with the live events industry, Cardiff Music Board is calling on the UK Government to provide the vital financial support the live music sector needs to survive.”

Music Board Member, and Cardiff Council Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Cllr Peter Bradbury said: “With exciting plans for the development of a music signature event for Cardiff, and work being carried out in a whole range of areas, from music friendly regulations to talent development and infrastructure projects, progress towards our long-term goal of integrating music into every aspect of the city’s structure has been made. That work continues, but through no fault of their own, the city’s music venues and the thousands of people in Cardiff whose livelihoods depend on them are suffering. If we want music to be part of our future, further support is now urgently needed.”

As a member of the Cardiff Music Board, and Chief Executive of iconic Womanby Street venue Clwb Ifor Bach, Guto Brychan has first-hand experience of the impact that Covid-19 restrictions are having on the live music industry. He said: “Since the beginning of lockdown we have been unable to trade. Live music and club events - our core activities - are not allowed and currently there is no indication of when they might resume.

“We tried opening as a pub once the restrictions were relaxed but the imposition of the 10pm curfew on the hospitality industry made it impossible to continue without losing more money.”

“Ours was a viable industry before lockdown, one that made a substantial contribution to the UK economy. It will be again when this crisis is over - we just need adequate support to survive in the interim.

“Without it we risk irreparable damage to our cultural landscape; tens of thousands of jobs will be lost, artists and performers will leave the industry and we will lose the venues and festivals that have staged our events for generations.”

Cllr Thomas added: “We believe that if more support is offered through this tough period, the live music sector can continue to grow and thrive in Cardiff. That’s what we want to see – that’s what the Music Board as a whole want to see and I hope the industry voices we on the Music Board are hearing loud and clear are also being heard elsewhere.”

Under the Welsh Government’s Cultural Recovery Fund, music venues; recording and rehearsal studios; Heritage organisations and historic attractions; accredited museums and archive services; libraries; events and their technical support suppliers; independent cinemas and the publishing sector have already been able to bid for a share of £18.5 million. In addition to this Freelancers working in the cultural and creative sectors in Wales will be able to apply for their share of a £7m fund which opens on Monday.

The Welsh Government allocated more than £400,000 of funding to 22 grassroots music businesses across Wales. Further details are available here - <https://gov.wales/support-grassroots-music-venues-wales>