Wessex Folk Festival Mission Statement

Introduction

The Wessex Folk Festival is a not-for-profit, free festival held in and around the historic harbour of Weymouth - lending to it a unique and charming maritime feel. The festival is self funding and run by amateur enthusiasts.

It is designed to be a family orientated weekend of music, song and dance - drawing significantly on the large pool of local musicians and dancers that perform in Dorset. Our aim is to encourage and promote live performance in the community.

Our specific aims are:

- to encourage, promote and support live performance, especially that which is rooted in the cultural traditions and heritage of the area
- to bring together the community of music and dance enthusiasts from around the local area in a weekend celebration
- to showcase emerging professional folk musicians
- to foster the local community spirit by providing a family friendly and enjoyable weekend.
- to provide a platform for young people to play music to an audience
- to celebrate the culture and heritage of the area, acknowledging significant figures such as Thomas Hardy.
- To support local voluntary organisations by using their services or providing opportunities for them to be involved in the festival.

Economic Benefits to Weymouth

It is estimated that several thousand people visit the festival over the two days, enjoying the music, using the local cafes, pubs and street stalls and making donations.

Enthusiasts are drawn from further afield, who holiday in Weymouth specifically to visit the festival. In 2023, the Wessex Folk Festival Website received over 30,000 visits during April, May and June 2023.
Some 20 Morris dance sides attend the festival. Each side has about 15 people including partners. Some local sides visit for the day but others from further afield stay at local guest houses or caravan/camping sites.

Culture, Art and Community Benefits

The festival draws local musicians/dancers and their families to Weymouth. We encourage young people to engage in music and to try their hand at performing. As all good festivals do, it provides a celebratory atmosphere where old friends and families can meet and enjoy the day together. This is hard to articulate - but so important to the social well-being of a community. Festivals such as this are important.

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The festival brings a carnival atmosphere to the area - enhancing the experience for casual visitors and their impressions of Weymouth. This cannot be measured - but along with all the other attractions through the summer that the town offers, it adds to the visitor experience for people holidaying at that time.

A recent feature is the emergence of Portland Port as a stopping point for cruise ships. For visitors from the ships, Hope Square is their first entry point to Weymouth. Experience tells us that they love the festival.

Cost of Organising and Running the Festival

There are fixed costs which must be paid to deliver the festival:

- Professional Security staff
- On site, professionally qualified first aid team
- Public liability insurance
- Stage infrastructure, PA, benches and additional refuse facilities
- Portable toilets
- Off-site car parking for performers and traders
- Street Closure licence costs and associated costs such as barriers and signs

Conclusion

Festivals such as this are very fragile. They rely on financial and other support from sponsors and the generosity of the general public over the weekend, together with fund raising throughout the year.
Festivals require an enormous amount of work and planning throughout the year and a lot of voluntary help over the weekend. The budget is very vulnerable to issues such as bad weather. The individual Committee members are personally liable for all costs.

Wessex Folk Festival has been running for over 20 years. We believe it adds greatly to the vibrancy and well-being of Weymouth. Our mission is to keep the festival alive, happy and thriving for the future.