



## **VAN Web Briefing Focus on Festivals**

There are literally hundreds of festivals these days and many are very successful, delivering a diverse range of arts and music, dance & song to an ever-expanding audience. Organising a festival (or event) is demanding, but the more planning and thought you put in the better the event on the day. The following lists some of the things to consider, but you may also want to gather information and expertise on business planning, trading and charitable status, marketing and public relations and employment and volunteering.

### **Planning**

Festivals require forward planning. For big events, the lead in time should be at least a year and often festival organisers start planning next year's festival before the current year's festival has taken place. Allocate enough time and enlist a team who has the time and energy to make it happen. Draw up a comprehensive budget and plan, read up on project management issues and seek advice on programming.

### **What kind of event?**

There are many different types of festivals, from children's fun days to opera in the park. Many festivals fill a niche in the arts and entertainment market, and knowing who your audience is, is the first step to success. Many established festivals concentrate on a single type of arts activity or interest. Being all things to all people may make it extremely difficult to market your event and attract committed support. Try to focus on one theme, interest or activity.

Planning involves:

- Identifying the nature of the event;
- Identifying a site;
- Preparing documents for licensing;
- Identifying and involving partners and supporters;
- Raising funds;
- Booking attractions and events;
- Involving sponsors and advertisers;
- Recruiting volunteers;
- Planning publicity and advertising

### **Public Entertainment Licence**

Most festivals need some kind of Public Entertainment Licence. Public Entertainment Licences are issued by Local Authorities. They will need to know your plans regarding health & safety, environmental health, crowd control, noise and disturbance, pollution. Local Authorities often link festivals with large raves and large crowds and application forms are often designed for larger events - bear this in mind and don't be scared off!

Be warned - Local Authority charges for this licence vary considerably e.g. quoted charges for 2 similar events in 2 different parts of the country were £500 and £20,000. Within the Act and the guidelines set out by the Government, Local Authorities have enormous flexibility depending on their local circumstances. Licensing laws are now being reviewed and it is hoped that new regulations will standardise costs.

## **Risk assessment**

Assessing risks to visitors, employees, volunteers and suppliers is a fundamental step in obtaining your PEL license as well as making sure you comply with Health and Safety Legislation (see below). In assessing risk remember to consider all aspects of your festival and work thoroughly through all eventualities in all situations. Risk assessment involves:

- i. identifying 'hazards'
- ii. identifying who might be harmed and how
- iii. deciding whether existing precautions are adequate or not
- iv. recording your findings
- v. regularly reviewing and revising your assessment

A 'hazard' is anything that has the potential to cause harm:

- i. Access to the site
- ii. Crowd management issues
- iii. Structures
- iv. Barriers
- v. Lighting and other equipment
- vi. Machinery used onsite
- vii. Electricity
- viii. Catering facilities
- ix. Vehicle access to the site

Decide on the level of risk associated with each hazard and look at what steps you can take to minimize the risks. Your risk assessment will be examined in detail when you apply for your PEL.

## **Health & Safety**

As the organiser of a festival/ event you have a 'duty of care' for everyone involved, from start to finish. Health and Safety legislation is very wide in scope and you are required to undertake a systematic general examination of 'work activity', for festivals this means all activity on the site. In addition to the steps outlined in risk situation is complex.

## **Funding**

Your festival/event may attract public and private funding. Contact your local authority to begin with (and find out what your area's local priorities are e.g. emphasis at the moment tends to be on social inclusion and re-generation), and your arts council or regional arts board in England (be aware of the mission statement or key aim of your local Regional Arts Board/Artscouncil before you set about filling in applications).

You might also consider Twin Towns committees (again, find out about these from your local authority) and Lottery funding, particularly the 'Awards for All' grant scheme (contact telephone: 0845 600 2040) if your turnover is less than £15,000. [www.awardsforall.org](http://www.awardsforall.org) and the Lottery National Touring Programme. Many promoters can look at co-ordinating a tour for an artist from this fund but will need to provide at least three venues (four if one is London). This could help small festivals to afford the more expensive artists.

Festivals present many opportunities for sponsorship. If you are looking to obtain sponsorship, consider the needs of the sponsor first and what you can offer to satisfy their needs. Be creative in considering ways of offering sponsors exposure and advertising opportunities, it is possible to raise considerable funding without making your festival look like the ad festooned pitch of world cup football!

## **Children and Youth Culture at Festivals**

Issues: Safety on site; Activities; Care arrangements; Entertainment

Issues surrounding children at events have been covered in a number of publications by the AFO. Contact details see below.

Government definition of 'Youth' is 13-19. Reaching this age group can be a tricky. Consider:

- Subtle marketing to this age group (who may not want to take part in 'young people's' events, because it just ain't cool)
- Integrating young people's events and activities into the festival as a whole instead of putting them on the fringe
- Involving young people in planning events and activities
- Researching entertainment and activities by talking to young people, going to venues and keeping an ear to the ground (if you can hear it over MTV?)

Physical events like dancing are often more popular than sitting in concerts, both at workshop and performance level. It may also help that some of these events are unstructured rather than formal.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers often organise and then also run many festivals. There have been some steps, not only in AFO, to bring up NVQ's and/or other training qualifications for volunteer stewards at festivals.

Volunteers deserve to be treated with respect and given work that is satisfying and interesting. You may want to develop a volunteer policy, setting out your agreement, a description of their involvement, how they claim for expenses, or what conditions are placed on any gifts, such as free tickets. For more information on volunteering good practice, contact your local volunteer bureau, or check out the National Centre for Volunteering website, [www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk) for excellent information on volunteering good practice.

## **Disabled People**

There is little excuse for poorly designed access to events and the DDA 1995 brought in a clear set of guidelines. See VAN's Briefings 10, 44 and 45 on the VAN website for more information.

## **'temporary everything?'**

Festivals always need signs, catering, plumbing, toilets, electricity, water etc. on a temporary basis. The Association of Festival Organisers holds an annual Conference whose agendas often discuss such issues. The Event and Safety Guide (HSE), the International Event Guide and AFO/AOIFE courses in event planning and management offer assistance.

## **The right image**

Promoting your festival through good design is an important issue not to be overlooked. Consider how your marketing material looks to the public, and what sort of material you are going to use. There is a preconception that using commercial designers is very expensive. However, it is not as expensive as one would think, and the benefits in improved publicity leading to better tickets sales are clear.

## **The Press**

The Press can be a very useful way to get more audiences to our events. (see VANS Briefing 11. Get into Print - working with the Press.) And don't forget to tell your RAB and Arts Council about your organisation and events. Check their newsletter deadlines.

## **Town based vs. Green Filed Site Festivals**

Towns can struggle with the influx of crowds. Think carefully about 'whose town is it?' Don't just parachute in and do what is necessary to make the festival successful and then leave without consultation and involvement of local people. Consider how as organiser you will accommodate the needs of the visitors without disenfranchising the local people. Try to get all parties who may be involved on your side - promote the value of the event to them e.g. local people, local traders, police and local authorities. Build a good local base and identify the people who are likely to be on your side is a good starting point. Including other festival organisers from the same area might also be helpful - could save you from re-inventing the wheel and help you find out more about local venues, town halls, pubs and churches.

Churches can often be a good venue because they don't need entertainment licences and often don't have fire limits, BUT your duty of care still stands and the church should be treated as though it has a licence and a fire limit and all the necessary precautions applied.

Involvement in the Local Authorities Arts Forum and links with your local authority (or whatever name it goes under) is highly recommended - in order to understand the community and the types of arts forms available in that community before setting out on isolated plans. Get a copy of the local development plan to find out how you might fit into it. Many local authorities are re-organising themselves into 'Cabinets' - and it is likely that at least one member of this style of local government will be responsible for arts and events - make sure you know who this is in your area.

Country/Green Field Site - equipment hiring, licensing and related matters can be more complicated in these venues, though an empty field can have advantages over coping with places filled with buildings! But you have to lay in power, water, drainage etc, all of which are expensive - hence the often wide gap between costs of attending a green field site as opposed to town festivals. Security - green field sites also need lots of fencing in order to secure it and make sure ticketing systems work.

## **Patrons schemes**

i.e. links with local business. There are some businesses that stand to benefit from a festival in the area immediately. There are others who will benefit later on and they should all be contacted and encouraged to at least put adverts in programmes. Many businesses are not keen to hand over cash to festival organisers but quite often are able to provide services free of charge, which should feature in the festival budget. Involve them, keep them in touch and send them copies of your newsletters and publicity

## **Dance Groups**

Dance Groups attending festivals are often big and take up a lot of room at concerts. Do you give them free or reduced price tickets. Its advisable to have someone on you team who understands the needs of dance teams - or seek advice.

## VAT

Registered for VAT? Most businesses with an annual turnover of £52,000 should be. If the turnover of your festival reaches this then you should be too. Contact your local customs and Excise team on Freephone 0800 595 000 (Most charities that are funded mainly by grants do not need to be registered but do check up on this too.)

## Fireworks

The Guild of Pyrotechnic Operators (GFPO) aims to improve professionalism through training and improved working practices and to reduce accidents. [www.gfpo.org.uk](http://www.gfpo.org.uk)

## Artists from Europe

Bringing artists from overseas is an attractive option for festivals. Offering an opportunity for people to see and hear the arts from other cultures is often the way into different kinds of music for many people. It can be simple if you go through the right process. Contact the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) and acquire overseas Labour Service Documents which give you a pretty good outline of how it all works. T: 0114 259 3710 [ents.ols@dfee.gov.uk](mailto:ents.ols@dfee.gov.uk)

## Foot & Mouth

Foot & Mouth has been very bruising for many festivals/events this year though the negative impact has not been as well publicised as the destruction it has caused to the Farming Industry. The list of cancelled events and the knock-on effect of this throughout the Arts/Events Industry will be considerable. Fortunately the situation in Ireland has not been quite as bad. Nevertheless, ensure that all relevant authorities are aware of the hardships imposed by the F & M crisis and keep AFO and AOIFE informed of what events are taking place, postponed or cancelled so they can lobby on your behalf

## MORE INFORMATION

### **AFO - Association of Festival Organisers (England, Scotland, Wales)**

[www.mrscasey.co.uk/afo/](http://www.mrscasey.co.uk/afo/)

**T: 01296 394411 E: [afo@mrscasey.co.uk](mailto:afo@mrscasey.co.uk)**

Representing the interests of over 150 Festivals and 350,000 participants attending a wide range of music, dance and song festivals. Offers an annual conference, one-day courses in event planning and management, newsletter and website. Recommends the Insurance scheme for Festival and Event Liability developed by AOIFE and PJT Insurance of Dublin. Join AFO and get special rates. Links with overseas festivals/organisers

AFO is researching into all areas of festival organising and is currently looking for expenses paid volunteer researchers. Contact them if you're interested.

PRS licences have been retained at 2% of door takings for a third year as a result of AFO negotiation.

### **AOIFE - Association of Irish Festival Events**

[www.aoifeonline.com](http://www.aoifeonline.com) (lists over 350 Irish festivals and events )

**T: 00-353-402-32732 E: [aoifeireland@eircom.net](mailto:aoifeireland@eircom.net)**

- AOIFE, the 'Voice of Irish Festivals' is an umbrella organisation for festival/event organisers in Ireland - North and South.

- over 400 festival members
- seminars and workshops
- advice and information service
- publications including a Yearbook, a newsletter "Shenanigans", over 60 reference
- guidelines for festivals (available on their website)

### **British Federation of Festivals**

**[www.festivals.demon.co.uk/](http://www.festivals.demon.co.uk/)** -

represents the interests of the Amateur Festival Movement

### **British Arts Festivals Association**

**[www.artsfestivals.co.uk](http://www.artsfestivals.co.uk)**

calendar, directory and map for over 100 arts festivals across the UK

### **Direct Roots - comprehensive guide to folk and roots**

**[www.direct-roots.com](http://www.direct-roots.com)**

**[info@direct-roots.com](mailto:info@direct-roots.com) T: 01296 394411**

A directory/resource book for the folk, roots and acoustic music world. It contains thousands of verified free entries and detailed resources in England, Ireland, Wales, Scotland and Europe.

### **Festival Network**

**[www.festivalnet.com](http://www.festivalnet.com)**

an online newsletter providing articles of interest to those involved in the event and festivals industry.

### **Health and Safety**

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) [www.open.gov.uk/hse/hsehome.html](http://www.open.gov.uk/hse/hsehome.html)

advice : 08701 545500 for;

publications: 01787 881165 [www.hsebooks.co.uk](http://www.hsebooks.co.uk)

Managing Crowds Safely - This guide takes into account the lessons learnt from the Roskilde tragedy

The Event Safety Guide, contains the essentials of health and safety, HSE Books and good book sellers.

'5 Steps to Risk Assessment' - in the HSE Event Safety Guide

### **SCOTLAND**

National Association of Youth Orchestras has the Festival of British Youth Orchestras in August, The Traditional Music and Song Association's branches have annual festivals.

The TMSA compiles a listing brochure of these festivals and others in Scotland.

The voluntary arts has a large input to the Edinburgh Festival See the festival paper 'Three Weeks' which is basically run on voluntary effort yet is very highly regarded!

### **The Festival of British Youth Orchestras**

This is 22nd and biggest ever Festival of British Youth Orchestras which will take place in Edinburgh and Glasgow from Saturday 11 August - Sunday 2 September 2001 where around

2000 young musicians will take part in an array of concerts. Dates are filling up fast for 2002 and even beyond but there are still spaces. If your orchestra would like to take part please contact Carol Main, National Association of Youth Orchestras T: 0131 539 1087

For more information on the above or anything else to do with Festivals in Scotland please contact Fiona Campbell at Voluntary Arts Scotland, T: 0131 220 4466  
[info@vascotland.org.uk](mailto:info@vascotland.org.uk)

WALES

Gwyl y Porthmyn/The Drovers Festival in Lampeter, Ceredigion, has an excellent website at: [www.droversartsfestival.co.uk](http://www.droversartsfestival.co.uk) - and the National Eisteddfod has an absolutely superb one.

Much of the material about other festivals is at present very scattered.

The umbrella organisation for arts festivals in Wales is Gwyliau Cymru/Festivals of Wales, and although this organisation is at the moment going through a period of reorganisation, you can still get lists of their member festivals from recent issues of the guide they produce each year. A number of festivals, though, including some of the bigger ones, are not members of GC/FoW.

Other festivals include:

Sesiwn Fawr; Llangollen International Eisteddfod; Gwyl Gwerin y Cnapan; Hay-on-Wye Literature Festival

Betsan Williams is both marketing officer of Yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol and a member of the board of Gwyliau Cymru/Festivals of Wales. She may well be able to help you. Her e-mail address is [betsan@eisteddfod.org.uk](mailto:betsan@eisteddfod.org.uk).

Contact Voluntary Arts Wales for more help and information, T: 01938 556 455