

It has been a great pleasure to be Chair of the Eisteddfod since August last year and I am looking forward to a fantastic week in July, which Camilla will talk to us about shortly.

Over the last 8 months the Board and the team of staff have made lots of progress despite many challenges along the way. Recovery from Covid within the creative arts is still ongoing and this has combined with the cost of living crisis which is impacting on us all. The war in Ukraine continues unabated and community disharmony is a theme in many countries at the moment. This makes the work of the International Eisteddfod more important and more relevant than ever. Our programme this year will include a concert to remember the fallen of Srebrenica and Ukraine, bringing together massed choirs and delivering a message of hope. The return of the Parade of Nations will once again bring colour, excitement and a symbol of unity to Llangollen.

We know that we have much to do. You will already be aware that we have been working to update the way volunteers, staff and the Board communicate and work together. We are delighted to have Alix with us as our new Volunteers Coordinator. Our programme of Zoom meetings focusing on the delivery of the Eisteddfod has already started and we have more planned in the coming months. Newsletters are being sent out regularly and a programme of activity outside of the Eisteddfod is being planned. Camilla will speak more about our work to ensure the committee structure is supporting the needs of committee members and ensuring smooth planning and delivery.

We are also working on ways to support and promote the Welsh language. I love living in a bilingual country and enjoy the richness this brings to our lives. This is something for celebration and a unique selling point for visitors from the UK and abroad. Rhys Davies has been working on a Welsh Language Policy and you will see more activity coming in the next few months to ensure that the Maes has a strong sense of place.

As I am sure you are all aware, we have been subject to some intense interest around the issue of the Motto. The Board responded to concerns raised by Welsh colleagues but it is clear that Motto is held in great affection by many of our stakeholders. The message and intent of the Motto has never been questioned or in doubt. The Board are grateful for the contributions from Members and people around Wales regarding the Motto. There have been strong arguments both for retaining it and for commissioning current Bards to produce a new work. As you will have seen in the statement that we sent out to everyone recently we have concluded that we should continue to use the Motto with the English translation alongside it.

We mentioned last August that we would be reviewing the Articles. This work is being led by Chris and Karl. They have undertaken some consultation and have carried out lots of research. They will be convening a small working group immediately after this year's Eisteddfod to bring all the comments and research together in order to write draft Articles for the Membership to consider.

We are also starting work on Trustee recruitment and hope to put out an advertisement as soon as we have concluded our skills gaps analysis and finalised the recruitment documents. Hopefully we will have interest from existing Members and Volunteers.

As well as recently welcoming Alix, we are also delighted to have been joined by Ceri as our new Head of Marketing & Communications. Arts marketing continues to move at a fast pace; the way we attract audiences now is very different from just a few years ago. Ceri has been busy putting together a marketing plan that will cut through for both our existing audiences and attract new people to our wonderful event. However, some traditional marketing tools are still very powerful and we will be grateful for your support in sharing

posters and flyers when they arrive in the next couple of weeks. And, of course, word of mouth remains one of the most powerful ways to engage with people so please tell everyone and anyone that you meet about the Eisteddfod.

In concluding my comments for this AGM, I would like to offer huge thanks to all of you for supporting the Eisteddfod. The dedication and commitment of so many people is inspiring and is a wonderful reflection of our message of peace and the coming together of communities. I would also like to thank the wonderful Board Members who bring an enormous amount of knowledge, skills and expertise to the Eisteddfod. And finally, massive thanks to Camilla and the staff team who it is an absolute pleasure to work with. They always go above and beyond the call of duty and they working exceptionally hard to ensure that we will deliver an exciting and dynamic Eisteddfod that will live in people's memories for years to come.