

ADVICE FOR PIPERS AND PIPE BANDS DURING COVID

INFORMATION ON THE VIRUS

1. Experiments with orchestral wind instruments (not bagpipes) have shown that instruments can produce aerosols in the range of sizes that can carry the COVID-19 virus. These aerosols can also stay airborne for long periods of time, and different instruments produced different amounts.
2. Playing a wind instrument (bagpipes) involves deep breathing, sometimes forceful exhalation, and possible aerosolization of the mucus in the mouth and nose, along with secretions from deeper airway structures lung-ways. Aerosols can hang in the air for extended periods of time and can be very infectious.
3. This article from a Scottish virologist is very informative - The link is also on the Branch Facebook page. <https://bagpipe.news/2020/07/03/covid-19-the-game-changer/>

GOVERNMENT ADVICE

4. At all times, it's important to maintain social distancing from people you do not live with to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. You should only have close contact with people outside of your household if you are in a support bubble with them.
5. You should only meet people you do not live with in 3 types of groups:
 - you can continue to meet in any outdoor space in a group of up to 6 people from different households
 - single adult households – in other words adults who live alone or with dependent children only – can continue to form an exclusive 'support bubble' with one other household
 - you can also meet in a group of 2 households (anyone in your support bubble counts as one household), in any location – public or private, indoors or outdoors. This does not need to be the same household each time.
6. It's against the law for gatherings of more than 30 people to take place in private homes (including gardens and other outdoor spaces), or in a public outdoors space, unless planned by an organisation in compliance with COVID-19 secure guidance. Businesses and venues following COVID-19 secure guidelines can host larger groups. This is also the case for events in public outdoor spaces that are organised by businesses, charitable or political organisations, and public bodies, provided they take reasonable steps to mitigate the risk of transmission, in line with COVID-19 secure guidance and including completion of a risk assessment. Employers have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety.
7. Public Health England, when asked for guidance by Reading Scottish Pipe Band gave the following advice: "*Non-professionals should currently not engage in singing or playing wind and brass instruments with other people given these activities pose a potentially higher risk of transmission and whilst research is ongoing.* I would therefore urge you to refrain from offering practice sessions to your Youth Band members, as they would not be classed as professionals in the performing arts, and therefore should not return to activities of playing their instruments in a group setting, much the same as a non-professional choir cannot practice or perform together at this time."

PIPE BAND PRACTICE OPTIONS - BRANCH ADVICE

8. Online Practicing. As many bands have doubtless discovered, the vagaries of the internet can be frustrating. The least worst option using Zoom or similar, appears to be for one person to play the tune, and all others to mute their microphones and play along in their own home. The merits are that it is inclusive for all players, including those with health issues, and no travel time is involved. Also , your mistakes are only heard by yourself (until it is your turn to be the lead!). The drawbacks are of not playing together and being unable to combine pipe and drum corps.
9. Outdoor practice: Although professional musicians may do so with 3m distancing, Public Health England have stated that non professional musicians and choirs may not yet return to group practising.
10. Indoor Practice: Not for pipers, even on practice chanters.
11. Drummers may meet outdoors in groups of up to 6 or indoors as per Para 5 above
12. As the situation changes, this advice will be updated

COVID RISK ASSESSMENTS - FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

13. In the hopes that meeting with mitigation may become possible in the future, bands may wish to prepare themselves by looking at template COVID-19 Risk Assessments (RAs). See the Royal College of Music's website.
<https://www.rcm.ac.uk/media/Phase%203%20Risk%20Assessment.pdf>
14. These RAs, while not all applicable, repeatedly stress the need for strict hygiene measures eg wiping down surfaces, door handles, frequent cleaning of toilet areas and limiting personal contact in communal and practice areas.
15. An RA must also consider any individuals who may be in a higher risk category or are shielding a family member.

MITIGATION MEASURES - FOR FUTURE REFERENCE

16. specific piper mitigating measures should include
 - the maintenance of good social distancing.
 - avoiding close face to face positions
 - self tuning drones to avoid subjecting others to airstreams from drones
 - cleaning own instruments frequently, especially the blowstick and mouthpiece
 - don't use other peoples instruments,
 - don't empty out water traps in public places