

Lakeland Sinfonia Concert Society

Annual General Meeting



Wednesday 10th September 2025, Castle Green Hotel, Kendal

In Attendance: John Pollard (Chair), Pam Grant, Fay Sweet, Katharine Carter, Charles Fox, Sarah Watson, Julian Cann, Wendy Cann, David Edmundson, Peter Freyhan, Anne Sweet, Stephen Threlfall, Clive Walkley, Jo Wood, John Wood

Apologies: Martin Hughes, Stephen Cvijanovic, Bridget Starling, Wendy Jones, Pam Redman, Sue Armstrong, Judith Cochrane, Elizabeth Howe, Catherine Lodge, Martin and Janet Thompson

1. Welcome and Introductions

John Pollard welcomed members and trustees to the Lakeland Sinfonia CIO's AGM.

2. Annual Report

The Annual Report and Accounts for 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025 were previously circulated. The report covers what was a very successful season, except that audience numbers were too low. The objectives of the Lakeland Sinfonia CIO are threefold: to operate the Lakeland Sinfonia orchestra as long as viable, to bring classical music to the South Lakeland area and to fulfil an educational role by promoting classical music to young people.

3. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of the Annual Accounts

John reported that the 2024/25 season saw an overall deficit of around £21K, although there are still funds in the bank. Funding for the season included a £48.9K grant from the Arts Council for an eight-concert series (six of these were administered by the Royal Northern Sinfonia, at £6K/concert)

Looking forward to the 2025/26 season, Arts Council England has paused grant applications due to technical issues. It anticipates accepting applications from 22nd September, but its eight-week process will prevent Lakeland Sinfonia from receiving a decision until after the first two concerts. John also reported on the orchestra tax relief scheme, which is available via HMRC Corporation Tax returns and enables orchestras to reclaim a percentage of the cost of laying on concerts (excluding actual performance costs). Lakeland Sinfonia CIO anticipates making a claim for 80% of allowable expenses, valued at around £6-7K/year, with back claims possible for the last two seasons. This funding source will reduce the impact if the Arts Council application is unsuccessful.

Acceptance of the annual report and accounts for 2024/25 was proposed by Charles Fox, seconded by Julian Cann, and agreed by all present.

These will now be submitted to the Charity Commission.

4. Appointment of the Independent Financial Examiner

As a CIO, Lakeland Sinfonia needs to appoint an independent financial examiner annually to review the accounts. John proposed retaining the services of Jenny Marshall of Mitchinsons Accountants, who has held the role for several years.

Acceptance was proposed by John Pollard, seconded by Pam Grant, and unanimously agreed to by those present.

5. Trustee Retirement and Appointments

All trustees for Lakeland Sinfonia are appointed annually, with various changes noted on page two of the annual report. During the 2024/25 financial year, Charles Fox and Sarah Watson have stepped down from their roles. John Pollard, Pam Grant, and Stephen Cvijanovic wish to remain in post, with Katharine Carter, Fay Sweet and Bridget Starling nominated as new trustees.

These appointments were proposed by Charles Fox, seconded by Jo Wood, and accepted by all present.

6. Artistic Report and Forward Look

Fay has been appointed as the Artists' Secretary and presented the artistic review. She supports Martin Hughes in his role as Artistic Director – his knowledge and dedication are particularly helpful for the orchestra. Fay reported that the Lakeland Sinfonia orchestra delivered four concerts during the 2024/25 season, including two in Westmorland Hall, one in Kendal Parish Church, and one in Kendal Town Hall. There were also four Live & Local chamber music recitals, including one in the Town Hall (string trio) and three in the Old Laundry Theatre in Windermere (bassoon, cello, and violin/keyboard). The overall series made a wide variety of music available to both the general public and the Lakeland Sinfonia members. However, attendance was lower than anticipated in some instances.

Lakeland Sinfonia continued its Youth Ambassador scheme, offering front-of-house experience for sixth formers, with Mima, who is now studying at the Royal Scottish Academy, also attending some rehearsals.

A pilot education project brought three sessions (two with a string trio, one with bassoon) to one Kendal primary school (Castle Park). The sessions were held with the same group of children to help them become comfortable with the players and learn that music is accessible to them.

The Arts Council grant for the 2024/25 season was intended to deliver eight orchestral concerts and outreach activities. As such, it covered the two Lakeland Sinfonia Westmorland Hall concerts, the pilot education project, and six concerts contracted to and organised by Royal Northern Sinfonia. This variation of the longstanding partnership between Lakeland Sinfonia and Royal Northern was agreed to transfer responsibility and reduce the Lakeland Sinfonia CIO's financial turnover and liabilities.

Looking forwards to the 2025/26 season, the attractive brochure highlights an exciting and varied programme. The four Lakeland Sinfonia orchestra concerts (venues as last season) include some old favourites (to attract audiences) alongside some lesser-known works by Ruth Gipps, Finzi, Pärt and Louise Farrenc. The performers include old friends (Wyn Davies, Martin Roscoe and Bradley Creswick) and Lakeland Sinfonia's first female conductor, Anna Castro Grinstein, who has a connection with Scottish Opera. The piano for the first concert will be a Yamaha, which they are supplying free of charge.

The five Live & Local events include three featuring the orchestra's principal wind players, each with a string trio. The recitals also include a performance by Martin Hughes and a winter-themed concert of baroque music.

Fay indicated the intention to expand the education project to at least two schools (ideally 4-5, depending on funding), with 3-4 sessions each.

7. Any Other Business / General Discussion

Steve and others requested clarification about the Arts Council grant. John clarified that the deal between Lakeland Sinfonia CIO (LS) and Royal Northern Sinfonia (RNS) for organising six orchestral concerts was agreed by James Thomas (RNS) and the Arts Council, with LS paying the agreed orchestra fee of £6K per concert after each event. This was a one-off

arrangement for the 2024/25 season due to the timing of the agreement and Arts Council application. LS's Arts Council grant application for the 2025/26 season will be for Lakeland Sinfonia activities only, including the four orchestra concerts, the five Live & Local recitals and the education project.

The question of players' fees was raised. John clarified that LS comprises professional players, who are paid fees at appropriate levels, and some talented amateurs, who are paid appropriate expenses.

Charles requested additional information about the education project and the funding required. Fay explained that the project was based on a partnership with Apollo Music Projects, a London-based music education charity. It holds six sessions in each school plus two orchestra concerts, giving children extensive exposure to classical music. LS's pilot was three sessions in one school. For an ongoing project, the ideal proposal would increase the number of sessions per school (to four) and the number of schools involved, giving each group of children more time to learn about classical music and hear different instruments so they feel that the music belongs to them. The target is also organising an orchestral concert during school hours, with several schools invited. The project will need to grow organically, as only five players were involved in the pilot. More players will need training to ensure the project belongs to the orchestra and the region.

Regarding funding, the pilot cost around £1.6K (3 sessions). The 2025/26 budget is for two schools (£2K each), with core funding used if necessary. If patrons were found to support the project by matching that segment of the Arts Council bid, then more schools could be included. Fay has been involved with the Apollo project for 20 years, and some of the players involved are also music teachers. Schools find it hard to deliver music in the national curriculum, so this project helps them fulfil this need. A teacher is present during every session, and the school was very involved during the pilot project (including requesting another visit).

John agreed to circulate Fay's project report by email, which provides more details.

David asked about publicity and noted that the brochure was not posted. John explained that postage had become too expensive, particularly as 20% were returned last year. However, an email had been sent with details, and a link to the brochure was available on the website. It was suggested that details for next season should be sent out much earlier, with brochures available to give out at events during the summer, including Lake District Music. It was also emphasised that email reminders about concerts should be sent earlier and more frequently.

Pam noted that the concerts were publicised in various places, including Cumbria Life and the Westmorland Gazette, as well as via emails and social media.

John thanked everyone for attending and contributing through suggestions and feedback.

Signed

Dated