

## REVIEW 2015

### Introduction

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The Traditional Music Forum (TMF) is the collective voice for traditional music in Scotland. In doing so TMF aims to be

- Valuable – an effective representative of traditional music organisations in Scotland.
- Visible – and available, a first point of contact;
- Vocal – a credible and authoritative advocate for traditional music;

TMF carried out this review to get insight into how effective TMF is being as a collective voice and in meetings these core aims. We therefore wanted to know what members, non members and past members of TMF thought about:

- What we do – are we doing the right things?
- How effective we are at doing what we currently do
- How visible are we?
- What could we be doing better?
- What are we not doing which we should be?
- Being a member – what do members value about TMF?
- Why they are not a member – what are we missing

The Survey was carried out online via Survey Monkey and was open for 6 weeks from 30 November until 15 December 2015. It was advertised widely via the newsletter, Facebook and Twitter and via direct emails to Members, past members and those who have attended Trad talk events (176 addresses).

## What we have learnt from this

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This section gives a summary of the results received and from this what we have learnt. The remainder of the sections present the results in detail. Whilst we are happy with the quality of the contributions, due to the numbers received this survey gives broadly qualitative information which is indicative rather than definitive.

### Who responded?

The survey got 78 responses. 50 of those were current members of TMF, 3 were lapsed members and the remainder had never been a member. Of the members there was a good spread from across our membership – with responses from all over Scotland and from all different kinds of member. There was dominance from those involved with community music which is reflective generally of TMF membership.

### Being Valuable: Views on Effectiveness of TMF

The survey showed that, across all respondents, the services and activities of TMF were seen as effective if not highly effective. Some key strengths did however emerge which were backed up by open comments from members when they were asked why they joined TMF and the benefits of TMF membership:

**Advocacy and Lobbying:** representing the interests of the traditional music sector, building relationships in the policy environment, being a key resource for decision makers,

*“I believe it's important to have a central body that is lobbying/advocating on behalf of traditional music”*  
*“I joined to be part of a core group of similar organisations to ensure a louder voice in decisions and initiatives affecting our music in the community”*

**Raising the profile of traditional music:** advocacy activities and also through communications

*“Gives voice to traditional music on the national stage.”*  
*“I joined to support the collaborative efforts to raise the profile of traditional music in Scotland, particular its value in community settings”*

### Networking and Supporting

*“Been excellent for bringing people together”*  
*“Great to have network for advice and help”*  
*“...to enable us to make better connections, particularly important as we work well out with the Central belt.”*

Members were asked if TMF was meeting expectations and 69% of members responding said it was meeting expectation with 20% saying it was exceeding expectation.

*“I think that TMF achieves a lot from a small team. The links and influence with policy at national level exceed expectation”*

We did however want to know what were not doing, or could be doing better. Respondents felt were not as effective at commissioning new research to help the traditional music sector and specific comments were left about this.

*“Not sure if I see a great deal of evidence of new research being commissioned or supported by TMF. On occasion, yes, but not on-going as far as I can see.”*

*“New research is crucial, for practitioners, but also as a lobbying tool. However, it should have practical applications.”*

Members also left some good insights into what we could be doing better:

*“More lobbying of local authorities to increase their involvement with traditional music. In particular target LA's with low or no trad music in their schools.”*

*“Trad Talks are possibly a bit hit and miss - partly depending on who turns up, or the topics which are being covered not being relevant to us?”*

*“More local forums would be great but appreciate that that may just not be possible.”*

*“More direct benefits for members. More sense of what it means to be a member”.*

*“More targeted/systematic collection of what's going on in the scene information.”*

We did specifically ask members what they thought about the membership fee of £20. Whilst most thought this was about right, there was a suggestion that individual members have a slightly lower rate than organisational members.

*“Probably a little lower for individuals.”*

*“It is way cheaper than many other organisational memberships”*

*“For an organisation £20 is too cheap (maybe £50?), however about right for an individual”*

## **Being Visible: Profile of TMF**

Being visible is a key aim of TMF so we asked specifically how visible the profile of TMF is across the wider arts and policy making sectors. Overall respondents to this question (48 out of 78) perceived the TMF as being visible. However, the majority – 65% - perceive TMF as slightly visible with only 15% perceiving TMF as highly visible.

*“The TMF is not as yet visible in a more public sense, and it is maybe as much up to its members to promote it as it is the TMF's responsibility to promote the music - the one will benefit the other”*

*“Small is beautiful - but easily overlooked. I hope the TRACS partnership will help with the profile of traditional arts generally.”*

*“Perhaps some means of expanding the Forum's visibility amongst the wider public, to raise their awareness of the sheer size of TMF and its 80-plus members.”*

## **Being Vocal: How we communicate**

TMF uses various means to communicate with members, contacts and interested parties. These include the website, Facebook, Twitter, the newsletter and direct communications with members.

### **Website**

65% of respondents had accessed the website. Whilst they rated it as being useful and representing the work of TMF well they did have some good insights around how to improve the website. They thought the

site needed more sound clips and videos and more links to other resources as well as information on what the forum is doing currently. They also thought the design was a little cluttered or old fashioned. It needs to be more 'bold and lively'. There were also comments about the TMF website within TRACS being somewhat confusing to viewers.

*"Could probably state more clearly in the 'About' section that TMF is part of TRACS, one of three forums etc, as to the uninformed user, the top banner could be a mite confusing."*

## **Facebook and Twitter**

This seemed to be less well used by respondents. Just 40% respondents to the question claimed to follow TMF on Facebook and only 25% of respondents followed on Twitter. Whilst the respondents who do use social media find the TMF posts informative (63%) and useful (43%), some (23%) said that social media was not relevant to them.

*"We get the info we need from website and newsletter"*

## **Newsletter**

The monthly newsletter of TMF is sent to over 700 subscribers and this survey was promoted within this. 36 of the 78 respondents to the survey subscribed to the newsletter. **62%** of the newsletter subscribers said they always opened and read the newsletter. **19%** sometimes did and **19%** never did.

Those who did open the newsletter they gave good feedback about improving it. Respondents found the formatting of it difficult to read, that the design could be improved upon and that it could perhaps be a little long.

*"Always full of content but sometimes it can feel a bit jumbled or overwhelming."*

*"Should be brief! There is so much on our screens these days"*

*"I've noticed the appearance has improved recently, would like more photos, links to music, featured performances etc"*

## **Communications with members only**

We also communicate directly with members using email to send out members specific briefings from time to time. We asked members if we were getting it right with the volume of emails. 89% (31 of the 35 members who responded) said we did indeed 'get it right'. 6% (2) said we did not communicate enough by email.

Members rated the content of our emails highly and seemed to particularly welcome information on talks and events, funding and our updates on meetings with Creative Scotland and other policy makers. We also asked what kinds of information members would particularly like to receive:

*"Sharing good practice between organisers of events from folk clubs to festivals and other relevant events."*

*"I note that TMF members include institutions of further and higher education. It would be good to know what they're up to (none of the above list really covers this) and how they see their role in the wider scene"*

*"Minutes of meetings (or a link to)"*

*"More direct voices from across the sector. More about funding."*

## **And finally**

The TMF thank all respondents for their insights. We have already made changes to the newsletter and the website is a continual work in progress. Knowing that our network is seen as a valuable and valued advocate is reassuring as are the ideas around developing our activities, our visibility and our communications.