

## Covid 19 Protocol Discussion Document

The NEC of the Irish Pipe Band Association is of the view that the Covid 19 crisis will impact on all our lives for at least the next 12 months and even the next 24 months or more. We are therefore tasked with how do we ,as an association, cater for our members and how do individual bands and solo players pursue their hobby in safety and within national health guidelines.

1. What are the questions that pipe bands need to ask themselves before choosing to resume or not to resume activities ?
2. What are the risks that pipe bands can and should mitigate against if they choose to continue with activities ?

### Our main areas of activity are :

1. Band contest
2. Band practices
3. Solo contests
4. Band recitals and parades
5. AGMs and NEC meetings
6. Band fund-raising

The IPBA is NOT a health-care provider and therefore has no expertise in the field of health care . It is therefore, the stated policy of the IPBA , that all members of our association **should at ALL times adhere to the advice of the public health authority in Ireland (HSE) and the National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHET)** established to deal with the Covid 19 crisis.

What is provided in this document is **a summary of what is deemed at this point in time ( August 2020) the best available advice from NPHET and from the global scientific and health community-** all of which has been currently published in the public domain and can therefore be fact-checked. This document also proposes to give members some guidance on best practice for the resumption of practices and performances.

Our advice to our member bands and individuals is to always err on the side of caution. Do not take risks with your own health or with the health of your band members. Do not disregard the internationally-agreed best scientific advice currently available.

### Facts as we now know them

- Covid 19 is a new virus which is very, very contagious- much more so than the common flu .
- Covid 19 can be fatal. Particularly so for people with underlying health conditions but also for perfectly healthy people with NO previous health issues.
- Covid 19 can be carried and spread by people with NO symptoms .

- Covid19 can be spread through the air and through the touching of contaminated surfaces. Current scientific evidence is beginning to suggest that airborne infection is the most common type of infection but that is not the same as saying that people cannot become infected through touching contaminated surfaces. It does suggest though that groups such as pipe bands , brass bands and choirs need to be extra careful when practicing or performing. When Covid 19 is spread through the air , it is via by miniscule moisture droplets so small that they are invisible to the naked eye. These droplets are referred to as 'aerosols' . This fact needs also to be noted by, people who shout or talk loudly, etc.
- Young and old are vulnerable to Covid 19.
- Although a person may not have any symptoms , he or she can be responsible for spreading the virus to a loved one or to someone more vulnerable who can die from it. This places a responsibility on everyone to be careful and to follow health guidelines.
- Current evidence suggests that many people who survive severe Covid 19 may have life-long health issues and reduced life expectancy.

### **Band Practice Considerations**

- Each band is advised to carry out its own risk assessment exercise before resuming activities. **See below.**
- Each band is advised to appoint a Covid-19 officer.
- Each band should keep a register of each player present at each practice, for subsequent contact tracing if deemed necessary.
- Bands might consider reducing the number and frequency of their practices .
- Bands might consider limiting the number of players at each practice. (Group practice)
- One to one or group practices online could be considered where possible
- Hand sanitizers should be used by all players before entering the practice room.
- 2m Spacing should be adhered to within the practice room
- No practicing around a table
- Use music stands 2m metres apart if working from music scores/settings
- Chanter only in enclosed rooms - no pipes
- Band Pipe Practice should only take place in PE Hall type facilities with 2 metre distancing and good ventilation.
- Bands should not form circles with the Bass drummer in the middle when practicing as this may expose the bass drummer to increased risk of infection.
- Pipers with water traps that need to be regularly emptied need to have individual receptacles to empty into and which are well spaced away from each other. Each player needs to clean his/her own water receptacle with a solution similar to Milton or with bleach at the end of each practice.
- Pipers and drummers must not swop instruments when practicing or performing.
- Pipe Majors / Instructors should not use the instruments or reeds of other players for tuning or testing.
- Where local surges of the virus become identified , all practice activity should be suspended for a minimum of 2 weeks.

- Band tuning personnel should wear face masks when tuning drones for other players.
- Bands need to have consideration for members with underlying health conditions who choose, for health reasons, to suspend their activity with the band until the health situation improves or until a vaccine is found. These members should not be punished in any way by a band as apart from being morally reprehensible, such action would clearly constitute victimisation and discrimination under the law and would leave the band open to prosecution.

### **Pipe Maintenance Considerations**

- Pipers using water traps should use Milton or some similar product after each practice session.
- All tubing within blowpipes and pipe bags needs to be cleaned after each practice or performance. (Milton, etc.)
- Blow pipes and chanters should be wiped down after practice with a suitable sterilizing agent.
- PMs should not mouth-blow the reeds of other players.

### **Pipe Majors of lower grade bands**

Where adjustments, testing of instrument or changes of reeds, etc. are required, PM's might consider the following system:

1. Take each player's pipes home in turn.
2. A PM should use his/her own blowpipe when testing a player's bagpipe.
3. Complete whatever maintenance is necessary at home.
4. Use Milton or other suitable disinfectant on all parts and in water traps
5. Keep the player's pipes for a minimum of 5 days and then return them to the player.

### **Pipe Band Contests- Proposal for 2021**

*It should be borne in mind that the following changes are being proposed to allow contests to take place at all in 2021. **The virus will not have gone away.***

*We would all hope that by the summer of 2022, a vaccine will have been found and that the virus will be very much subdued.*

### **In the meantime, we propose the following arrangements for contests:**

- Bands will not march in to a circle formation from a starting line
- Bands will form themselves into a semi-circle with drummers either in the centre or on a slightly raised platform behind the pipers. Bands will only commence to play when they have fully formed into a semi-circle facing the adjudicators. Playing requirements will not change in any way and a band will continue to be adjudicated from the first beat of the first roll.
- Adjudicators will remain at 10 metre distance in front of the band performing
- No March past will take place at the end of the competition.
- Only one drumming and one piping representative from each participating band will present for the results.

- Bands may compete and then depart for home before the prize-giving. This would minimise the risk of infection.
- Results will be broadcast live on Twitter and where possible a live video feed of the contest and the results will be provided on social media.
- **No physical solo contests** will take place in 2021 or before September 2022.
- The IPBA will explore the possibility of organising online solo competitions for players over the coming winter.

### **Pipe Band Risk Assessment Exercise**

- Has the band appointed a Covid-19 officer who has particular responsibility for managing risks connected to the virus ?
- What type of space is available for practices ?
- How practical is it to ensure social distancing at practice ?
- Would there be a local school hall or PE gymnasium available for band practice
- Is the adequate hand-sanitizer available in the practice space ?
- Are any band members considered to be in the most vulnerable groups of people in relation to Covid-19 ?
- Has the band adequate signage in the practice space with Covid-19 advice and spacing information ?
- Have all members been advised **NOT to attend practice** if suffering any of the known symptoms of Covid-19.
- What steps do we need to take to ensure proper hygiene is maintained for bagpipes and practice chanters.
- How often does the band need to practice ?

### **Symptoms of Covid-19**

- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- High temperature
- Breathing difficulties
- Loss of taste
- Loss of smell
- Fever or chills
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhoea