

Copy of initial email of 4 April 2022 - by way of basic explanation

Folk Dancers - and a few others.

Over the past week or so, I have been updating an idea for increasing the membership base of local folk dance clubs and raising money for Ukraine.

The targets are

- a large amount of publicity for folk dance
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- increased club membership
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- raising £10,000 or more - of which I would contribute up to £5000.

Several of you have commented on early drafts.

The first 'public' draft is now available from the link below - it should open as a pdf file.

<http://seered.co.uk/ukrainedance.pdf>

Comments (and offers of participation!) welcome. As several people have pointed out already (by way of a statement of the obvious?) this will require a large amount of work - and I'm not doing all of it.

It will take you a while to read through. Apologies for the length - I used to write Government research proposals and reports.

Please feel free to distribute the link - the pdf itself may change, but the link should always be the latest version. Or download and circulate the pdf itself, as you prefer.

The scheme as outlined may be a non-starter - or it might be the catalyst for a different approach, but with similar objectives.

Folk dance organisers and dancers. **Fourth draft 6 April 2022.**

Folk dance clubs and Ukraine – increasing membership and raising money.

I have been discussing an idea with a few dancers locally - centred upon organising a major push to get more people participating in folk dance. The hope is to piggyback publicity centred upon raising money to help Ukraine and (as an aside) to provide an English dance focus for any Ukrainian refugees around Exeter.

Note that whilst the primary focus for the proposed publicity might appear to be raising funds for humanitarian relief (and this might not much appeal to the many people who believe that 'charity begins at home'), **the principal aim is to obtain an influx of new dancers to local clubs.**

In effect, the approach is centred upon utilising the aftermath of war to obtain substantial free publicity for folk clubs. Local dance clubs, callers, musicians and

dance halls (and any other venues) would nevertheless be expected to give their services for free - again as a part of the overall publicity.

The risk from Covid seems reasonably stable - despite cases locally having shown a marked (short term?) increase. People are now 'living with the virus'. Therefore, mid summer might be a suitable time for any event(s), when Covid cases may have much reduced.

Most folk dance clubs need more members. Small clubs are at risk of closure. Some clubs are running at 40 to 60% of pre-Covid levels. Some of this fall-off would have been expected over two years anyway. By way of historical perspective, twenty years ago [Sidford](#) used to attract 60 to 80 dancers each week. Pre-Covid, numbers were 18 to 24. Post Covid they have been as low as 8 to 10. Other local clubs have seen similar declines - yet a few have fared much better. Fifteen years ago, Exeter Ceilidhs used to attract up to 130 dancers, [a similar event](#) now attracts 30 to 50.

Household incomes will become squeezed in 2022/3, leading perhaps to reduced attendances. Hall fees, including heating costs, will increase.

Proven ways of getting new people to dances are:

- in a group who already know each other - so people don't feel they are the 'odd one out'
- personal introduction - bring a friend along - so at least newcomers know one person in the hall.
- linking dance to some other social event - a wedding for example - where lots of people dance because it is expected of them - but then they go home and forget about it, maybe because they are not offered the opportunity to continue to participate.

Ukraine will be headline news for weeks if not months and humanitarian aid will probably be required for years. Initial responses within GB, both of money and goods, have shown the willingness of local communities to contribute.

So, to address the decline of folk clubs in Devon:

Organise a weekend (or several weekends) of folk dance events to encourage a sizeable number of new people to try folk dance.

Elements as follows.

Centred on appealing and large dance hall(s) - [Willand](#) would be one preferred location because it is large enough, has good ventilation (provided that the windows are used intelligently), and it has side-rooms that could be used for small ad-hoc workshops (how to swing and polka properly, as taught by me!). It also has adequate car parking and good access from M5/Exeter. [The Kenn Centre](#) is another large venue a few miles outside Exeter.

All bands, callers, venues and organisers would give their services for free. Major food stores would be invited to contribute goods as part of the publicity drive (cheap publicity for them).

As well as English Folk Dance, there would be opportunities for newcomers to view and participate in (say) Irish Set dance and American Square dance (I'd volunteer to be in both display teams!). Expert dancers would do a simple and a hectic dance (in Irish dance, the Merchant Set and [Ballyvourney Jig set](#) for example) and then each dancer would be partnered with a newcomer, thus forming two sets and the dances would be repeated. A similar idea worked well at [Chippenham festival](#) a few years ago, but sadly has not been repeated.

The best way to show newcomers what fun dance can be is to partner them with someone competent. Indeed, folk dance is such good exercise, it has been suggested that it should be available on the NHS – [as indeed are some fitness classes!](#)

Bear in mind also that some Ukrainian refugees coming to the UK (most of them women and children?) may already be dancers - I can still remember some display teams at Sidmouth back in the days of the International Festival.

All door money and raffle money etc would be donated to DEC (Disasters Emergency Committee), for example, - this would form the major plank of publicity, piggybacking on the current crisis **to enable far greater (and free) publicity for folk dance than could be generated by advertising isolated dance event(s).** Also, as part of my contribution, I would offer to double the total sum raised from individual attendees (not including corporate/commercial contributions or any raffle proceeds) - to a maximum of (say) £5000. The maximum I would match from any one person would be £50, so if 100 individuals each gave £50, or 200 gave £25 each (to include entrance fees), that would reach the £5000 limit. This would be an incentive for attendees to open their wallets - if only to make me open mine.

The sum(s) raised would be trivial in the big scheme of things, but large in the context of local folk clubs - **as indeed could be the publicity for folk dance.** By way of illustration, many years ago, a local folk dance club took out a small display advertisement in a local paper, seeking new members. It cost them £60 and (predictably) achieved nothing. Publicity arranged for the proposed event could well cover half a page of several local papers - and for free, because it would be in the form of news articles, using copy I would provide to journalists.

Apparently, 500 refugees are expected in Devon.

One man has bought a house for a family - a mother and three sons

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-60954187>

She is one of the lucky ones - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-60977889>

The aims would include:

- to raise money for DEC or the Red Cross, for example
- to attract fifty or more people to try folk dancing at special 'Ukraine fund-raising evenings' and for many of them to become regular attendees in the local area.
- to raise the profile of folk dancing locally, via publicity centred on these special events
- to provide a focus for any Ukrainian refugee dancers locally (and their host families?) for the next few years.
- to increase the number of local folk and ceilidh dancers to a level that would support weekly Saturday dances of 50 to 60 people, maybe alternating between ceilidhs at Kenn and dances at Willand during September to May each year..

Clarification of objectives: what would constitute 'valid' events. Added 5 April 2022.

As originally outlined (see email above) one of the principal objectives is to much increase the number of local folk dancers. To be a valid event, any dance should include for a sizeable number (c 50% and preferably more than 15 in number) of (1) UK citizens who are not folk dancers and (2) Ukrainian refugees. For example, attendees might comprise host families, refugees and their friends/neighbours or other local people who might become regular folk dancers.

A dance event would not qualify for 'subsidy' if attendees are mostly or wholly existing UK folk dancers, even if the event was aimed at fund raising and/or included a small number of new dancers – it would not meet the criteria of potentially adding a large number of new dancers to events in the local area. Each event will be judged on its merits!

Additional 'match funding'. Added 5 April 2022.

One person has offered anonymously to 'match' any contribution that I may make under the scheme as outlined. I am uncertain if she understood when making her offer that this could be a commitment up to £5000. Neither her offer, nor any similar offers, will be considered legally binding!

Added 6 April 2022.

Event(s) would take probably six weeks to organise. Originally I proposed these for June/July.

However it has been pointed out to me that **this proposed timing is wrong.**

Holding events in June or July gives far too long between these events and the start of folk club dance programmes in September – any new people will by then have 'moved on' and also probably forgotten anything they learned. So the only sensible

time is in late August or early September - any 'special' fund-raising events would then be followed almost immediately by the start of regular club dances. The downside to this timing is that by late August, the world as a whole may have moved on from the Ukrainian war.

Who now remembers Sarajevo, where 10,000 died when it was [besieged and shelled for four years, 30 years ago?](#) Both Sarajevo and Ukraine will ultimately become footnotes in history.

There is also the ever-present risk that [special events can be a complete flop!](#)

Essential elements would include:

- Booking hall(s) - preferably FOC for two evenings and maybe an afternoon.
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- Organizing food - via supermarket and farm donations preferably. (hog roast in the car park?)
- Newspaper publicity - articles would need preparing (I could do these). **You would get far more free publicity by linking a folk dance club to the refugee problem than you would with an article on folk dance alone - even if you could persuade newspapers to publish it. The decline of small local clubs - folk dance, whist, bridge, table tennis, etc, is, in itself, simply not newsworthy.**
- **Television and radio publicity** - either on local news or via small (permanent) clips on BBC website, for example:
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-bristol-60737278>
- Better YouTube videos showing the fun of folk dance locally are required. Willand (for example) might need to organise this. There are plenty of Irish Set videos available, and some for American Square. There are some of Exeter Ceilidhs, pre Covid.
- Internet publicity - I would do some of this, but not on Facebook, Meet-me or Twitter, none of which I use or understand. This comprises about 1% of the necessary preparation in any case.
- Organising good quality bands with callers who are good with newcomers.
- In addition, trying to get every existing dancer to 'bring along a friend' - someone who might be persuaded to try folk dancing.
- Other.....involve the Ukrainian Centre in Exeter?

This event in New York was apparently organised in a week, but it didn't require newcomers.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-europe-60760303>

Politics and money laundering.

The war in Ukraine has focussed attention on the long-standing position of the UK as a leading money-laundering centre.

Boris is making the most of the UK's military contribution - this from 4 April 2022.

<https://twitter.com/BorisJohnson/status/1510899736882163716>

He somehow omitted to mention money laundering, which has facilitated Putin and similar people to hide their wealth. Worldwide money laundering is measured in trillions of dollars - aid in mere billions.

This article mentions nearby Weston Super Mare in Somerset.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10481065/Flat-West-Country-takeaway-home-761-Chinese-firms-money-laundering-fears-mount.html>

"Billions of pounds has been laundered in Britain in recent years by Russian criminals, leading London to be dubbed Londograd by fraud experts."

This email/pdf may be circulated but please note I am primarily interested in supporting events within about 30 miles of Sidmouth/Exeter. My primary aim is to try and encourage more people, and especially younger people, to participate regularly at local folk dance clubs - and before any more of them close down!

Overall objective.

Ideally I would like to see the number of regular folk dance attendees around the Exeter area increase to a level that would support weekly Saturday dances of 50 to 70 people during September to May. Alternate weeks could be [ceilidhs at Kenn](#) and dances at [Willand](#), for example. In addition, the existing series of [Irish Set](#) and [French dances](#) might also become better attended.

Dr Stephen J Wozniak
Sidmouth

stevewozniak42 (AT) hotmail.com