

Traditional Music in Scotland 2015-16

Census of traditional music learning in community settings

1. Introduction

The Traditional Music Forum (TMF) is a network of 95 music organisations and individuals supporting Scotland's vibrant traditional music community. We include clubs, festivals, community music projects, academic institutions, promoters, agents, publishers, tutors, performers and labels among our members; we represent a broad sweep of diverse activity and thousands of musicians, enthusiasts, activists, participants and listeners across Scotland. The TMF advocates for traditional music having its place at the heart of Scottish life and works to promote the widest possible access to it. We are a key resource for information and advice on traditional music for Creative Scotland and other public bodies. Alongside this the TMF supports traditional music delivery through provision of information, advice, training, mentoring and bespoke projects with members and collaborators.

In 2012 the TMF gathered some information from 20 of its member organisations and found that over **9000** people of all ages were learning traditional music in the community. Since then no other comprehensive data has been gathered by TMF or others. This is important baseline data for several reasons:

- a) Such data is needed for further research
- b) The data offers important feedback to contributors, giving a wider picture of what is happening across Scotland.
- c) The TMF, funders and local authorities can use the data to inform funding decisions and target support in kind.

This census captured data on where people were learning traditional music, the formats for this, kinds of instruments, numbers of volunteers and tutors, the costs involved and the challenges faced. Organisations submitted information for the year covering autumn 2015 to autumn 2016.

1.1 How the data was gathered

An online questionnaire was hosted via Survey Monkey. A copy of the questions can be found [here](#). The survey was distributed directly to 183 organisations across Scotland, many of whom were members of TMF. It was also promoted online via TMF social networks, the TMF newsletter, Edinburgh Folk Club Newsletter, Twitter and networks such as the National Association of Accordion and Fiddle Clubs, Association of Gaelic Choirs and HITS (Heads of Instrumental Teaching in Schools).

2. Findings

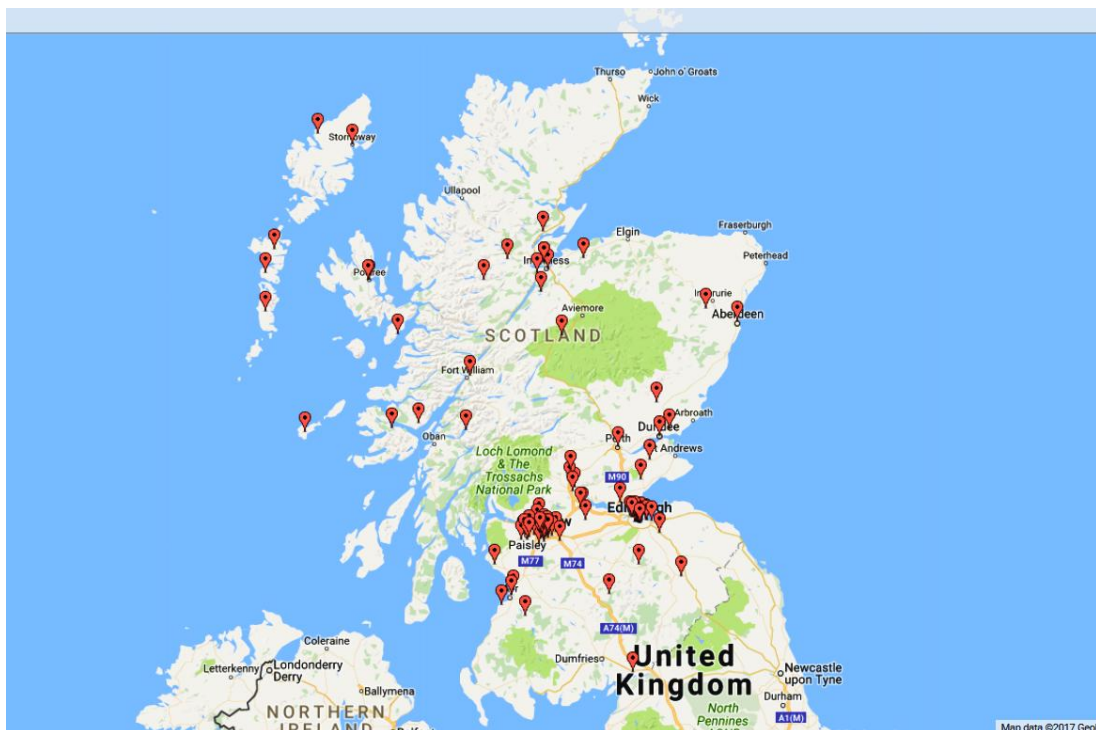
Responses were received from a total of **64** respondents. This represents a response rate of 35% of those approached. Of these 64, there were 55 fully completed responses representing 30% of the 183 organisations contacted. Those who did not fully complete the questionnaire did however give key data on the numbers taking part (63 responded) and the kind of tuition and instruments offered. One respondent just returned narrative information about developing provision.

A list of the participating organisations can be found in the appendix. Across these organisations, **23,198** people are learning traditional music. **17,240** are **under 18** and **5,958 over 18**. The split between the number of young people and adults reflects the organisations who returned data. For example, Fèisean nan Gàidheal caters overwhelmingly for young people, recording 12,192 young people and just 38 adults.

2.1 Geographical spread of organisations

There was a good geographical spread of responses with inevitable clustering in the main centres of population.

Figure 1: Map showing location of survey respondents



Whilst there is a spread from Annan to Harris, we received no responses from Orkney and Shetland or other areas such as Argyll, Mull, Islay and Skye, and most of Dumfries and Galloway.

2.2 Instruments being learnt

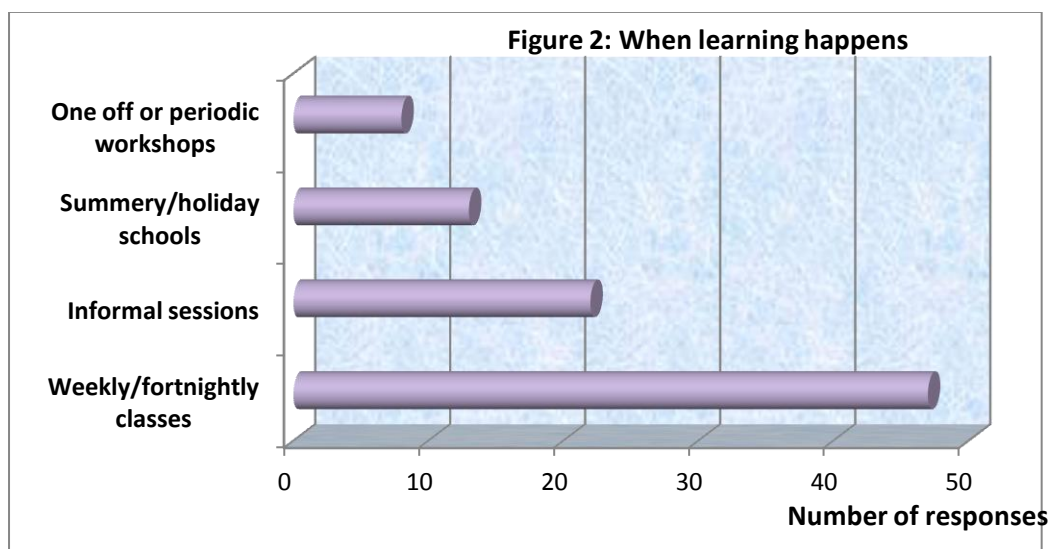
Table 1 shows in detail the spread of instruments and singing offered by respondents. 27 different instruments are represented. A few organisations only offer one, for example, Nairn Gaelic Choir concentrate on singing and Davidson’s Mains Pipe Band concentrate on learning the pipes. However, most organisations offered more than one instrument with some catering for a wide range. For example, Horsecross Arts in Perth deliver classes in fiddle, accordion, small pipes, highland pipes, whistles, guitar, ukulele, cello, piano, keyboard, small group singing, drumming, percussion and choir singing. Across the respondents the most commonly offered opportunities were fiddle, small group singing, accordion, highland pipes, drumming, guitar, whistles and choir.

Table 1: Instruments on offer		
Answers	Percentage	No of responses
Fiddle	50.0%	29
Small group singing	48.3%	28
Accordion (piano & button)	37.9%	22
Highland pipes	37.9%	22
Drumming	37.9%	22
Guitar	36.2%	21
Whistles	32.8%	19
Choir	32.8%	19
Solo singing	24.1%	14
Small pipes	22.4%	13
Cello	19.0%	11
Ukulele	19.0%	11
Keyboard	19.0%	11
Clarsach	15.5%	9
Piano	15.5%	9
Percussion	13.8%	8
Group Work/mixed instrument	12.1%	7
Mandolin	8.6%	5
Banjo	5.2%	3
Flute	3.4%	2
Song/tune writing	3.4%	2
Bodhran	3.4%	2
Double Bass	3.4%	2
Harmonica	1.7%	1
Ceilidh Band	1.7%	1
Concertina	1.7%	1
Chanter	1.7%	1

2.3 When it happens

Community learning takes place in evenings and weekends and over weeks in school holiday times such as Easter, summer and October breaks. Again, many organisations offer more than one kind of opportunity such as weekly classes, weekend workshops and holiday courses.

Figure 2 shows that much of the learning happens in weekly classes. A few respondents recorded a fortnightly class and this is included here. Alongside this many consolidate learning through informal music sessions in settings such as pubs. Such events are often less accessible to beginners and novice musicians. Many organisations run dedicated weeks alongside weekly sessions and some also offer one-off workshops, perhaps aligned to an event or when a particular tutor is available.



2.4 How it is delivered

The survey shows that organisations deliver learning and teaching in different formats (**Table 2**). Some offer only one format, but most offer more than one. It is not surprising that group tuition is the most common. Traditional music is a communal and social activity, based on learning from and with others. Informal music sessions are valued as a learning tool as well as a socially enjoyable experience. Group classes also provide a more cost-effective means of delivering tuition, as well as a supportive environment for learners. One-to-one tuition does feature, and it was interesting to note one respondent offering Skype lessons. This method may grow further as internet speeds improve in rural areas, and could expand learning opportunities in an affordable way.

Table 2: Method of delivery		
	Percentage	No of Responses
Tuition with a group	91.4%	53
Informal music session	46.6%	27
One to one tuition	32.8%	19
Internet lessons	1.7%	1

2.5 The people involved

The data show that the vast majority of the provision is delivered by volunteers (**Table 3**). Alongside this many of the organisations also employ sessional paid tutors. One of the largest organisation returning data was Fèisean Nan Gàidheal with 662 sessional paid tutors. This is in comparison to an organisation such as Stockbridge Pipe Band or Tìree High School Music Club where all delivery is by volunteers. A small number of organisations have salaried staff with many in support roles such as the administration, management and fundraising. Fèis Rois is a large provider of learning to people of all ages. They have just a handful of salaried staff yet record 395 sessional tutors supporting delivery of Fèis weekends and weekly classes to over 3000 people.

Table 3: People involved in delivery of learning/tutoring		
	Percentage	No of responses
Volunteers	70.2%	40
Sessional paid tutors	50.9%	29
Salaried staff	28.1%	16
Peer tutoring	1.8%	1

2.6 Volunteer roles

Whilst some respondents had paid staff in administrative roles, many do not and we wanted to find out the extent to which volunteers are involved in making traditional music in communities happen. **2,149 volunteers** are involved in a variety of roles. Being a tutor is the most common role for volunteers, they also contribute to the governance of organisations and do essential tasks which making workshops and classes happen. This includes fundraising, running events, catering and helping to sign people into classes.

Table 4: Roles and numbers of volunteers	
Role	Numbers
Tutors	564
General volunteers who get things done	1166
Board/committee members	359
Other	60
Total	2149

2.7 Cost of running community learning

Organisations were generous in sharing information on the cost of delivering their activities. A few managed with little or indeed no income, but the majority had to do some fundraising and some had quite large budgets which reflected the extent of their programmes. Total costs were **£ 1,381,583** across the 58 respondents to this question. With 23,198 people participating in these organisations this gives an average delivery cost of **£60 per person**. Given that one individual hourly lesson can cost in the region of £25, this represents good value for money as participants benefit from many hours if not weeks of tuition over the year and a diversity of experience.

The funds are raised from a range of sources (**Table 5**) with the most significant being from participants themselves via participation fees.

Grant income is also important. Whilst Creative Scotland is listed as a significant funder, this is mainly due to Fèis Rois and Fèisean nan Gàidheal recording a large amount of funding from this source. This is also the case for Local Authority funding. If we remove Fèis Rois from this, local authority income accounts for only £17,000.

Whilst a lesser amount the 'other' figure is still important, 'other' key sources of income include a wide variety of sources such as performances, merchandise, busking, tune book sales, gift aid and sponsorship. This aligned with fundraising from events was often a key source or only source of income for organisations such as pipe bands and choirs.

Table 5: Where the money comes from	Amount
Fees/charging	£598593
Grant from creative Scotland	£334575
Grant from local authority	£246481
Grant from charitable Foundation	£85169
Fundraising events including raffles, ceilidhs etc.	£74821
Other	£41944

2.8 Challenges

Participants were asked what challenges they face in delivering traditional music in the community. All of the challenges described concern maintaining the sustainability of the various organisations and groups: access to premises, finding and retaining tutors, accessing funding, attracting and retaining members, and involving young people in mixed-age activities.

Venue

“Our main challenge is uncertainty about increasing venue costs from City of Edinburgh Council and the lack of availability of other venues at a reasonable cost. It would help if there was a greater commitment to make available resources which would otherwise sit empty (e.g. schools, both Council run and private) available for community use”.

“Space to play. The village hall is not ideal and even that has been closed for repairs for 8 months.”

“Finding accommodation - we can operate in the short term in community centres, church halls etc but for the project to grow we need somewhere to store instruments and sound equipment, run the admin side, provide a meeting and social place, an identity etc so that we can take on tutors and expand our activities.”

Fragility of supply of tutors

“Mostly unavailability of tutors from time to time.”

“My only concern is that the tutor is self-employed and has no benefits, paid holidays etc. If a job came up in a private school offering job security it would be difficult to turn down. Considering how successful this organisation has become, this would be a great loss to the community.”

“Getting tutors can be tricky for weekend events. More trained volunteers to lead sessions would be helpful.”

“Finding like-minded able tutors to stand in when illness occurs.”

Finding money

“Maintaining adequate funding in the face of rising costs. Given the limited scope to increase fees while trying to attract new members & retain existing ones, more income via grant support would help”

“Decreasing financial resources from local authority to enable provision of transport from outlying areas to our rehearsals”

“Running costs for going to competitions and buying new uniforms. More easy forms to fill in for funding would help”

“Uncertainty over long term funding. We are also responsible for the care of an important printed music collection so it's one long round of searching for money - but it's worth it.”

“There is no budget for instruments, so pupils share one between many, maybe six.”

“We lost our Creative Scotland grant a few years ago and we survive on our tuition fees. While we are able to support our junior classes to some extent, our budget is very tight and we dare not

commit to an outreach programme that may impact on our core purpose. Still, we refuse to give up, and we continue to explore possible funding opportunities.”

“Grants evaporated on us two years ago. Since then one paid part-time administrator plus two Board volunteers (with over-full-time jobs elsewhere) have done everything out of fees charged to parents. This can't be sustained”

Attracting new members

“Continuing to recruit new members - too many other distractions & demands.”

“Sometimes, we are challenged with getting info to the right places to let people know which courses etc we offer. Target Marketing is what has been done before, we don't always have the direct contacts to help advertise specialist courses like, flute, whistle guitar etc.”

“Recruiting male singers willing to sing in Gaelic (even with phonetic instruction and "by ear" tuition to help non-readers and non-Gaelic speakers). Only national solution is the promotion of male singing in schools - especially in Gaelic speaking areas and encouragement to Gaelic speakers to continue singing after leaving the Gaeltacht. There seems to be lack of encouragement for singing by men; anyone "musical" seems encouraged only to play instruments, thereby denying common people a heritage of song. Our local publicity efforts are constant but we are competing with easier, more mainstream choirs for very limited number of male singers.”

Getting and keeping volunteers

“Turnover of board members.”

“Getting appropriate skill sets on the board.”

“Succession planning, e.g. getting existing board members to take on main roles, especially the chair. There is just one person running regular classes and a very small team (3) helping with the annual weekend workshop.”

Finding younger players: comments relate to groups for all ages rather than those specifically targeted at young people

“Encouraging young people from outlying communities to attend rehearsals and classes in a central location”.

“Attracting, and keeping young musicians involved”

“Main problem is getting younger people interested. Most of our members are between 60 and 90 years old. It would be great to get a younger age group of audiences too. Not sure how we can achieve this.”

3.0 Conclusions (consider summarising this in bullet points?)

This snapshot of activity from 64 organisations records 23,198 people involved in learning traditional music in community settings. This is a significant number and includes 17,240 young people under the age of 18.

There is a diversity of learning opportunities and many organisations offer a wide range of options for learners. 27 different instruments are being offered – from the established traditional instruments such as fiddle and accordion through to banjo, ukulele, and percussion. Singing also features, as do opportunities to play in group sessions or ceilidh bands. The formats of activities vary from one to one tuition and group tuition to informal sessions.

Traditional music is being learnt and played in communities across Scotland, from Harris to Annan with inevitable concentrations in and around Edinburgh and Glasgow. No returns were sent from mainland Argyll & Bute, Orkney or Shetland. This does not mean learning is not happening in these locations. There is for example an active traditional music scene in Orkney. The lack of returns from Argyll & Bute may reflect less opportunities being available across this predominantly rural area. Further research is needed in order to confirm this.

Over 2,140 volunteers are involved, from tutoring through to fundraising and governance. Learning in community settings is often intergenerational, which brings additional benefits for individuals and communities. The dependence on volunteers can also be precarious, however, as organisations record challenges in getting and keeping volunteers.

The average cost of delivering this learning is £60 per person. This represents excellent value for money given that one lesson alone can cost £25. For this average cost, learners often have access to a wide range of learning opportunities and expertise, and receive many hours if not weeks of tuition.

Organisations need to raise income to deliver this learning. The most common sources of income are fees. Organisations are creative in raising funds through a range of entrepreneurial activities such as performances, merchandise, busking, tune book sales, gift aid and sponsorship. If the data from one large organisation is excluded, the grant income from local authorities is very low (circa £16,000). Many record challenges in raising funds through grant income. This poses challenges for sustainability of provision and also in keeping costs down to ensure access for all who wish to take part. Sustainability of provision is the key challenge for organisations going forward, from availability of venues, finding volunteers, availability of tutors, raising income and attracting younger players into adult groups.

This survey has gathered an informative body of data on the transmission of traditional music in community settings. However, it does not represent the full extent of this activity, and ongoing research is needed in order to build on and track changes in the data over time. It is clear from this study, however, that many individuals are engaged in learning and sharing traditional music at a local level, providing employment, and contributing to the lives of their communities.

APPENDIX - Responding organisations

Angus Folk	James Gillespie's High School
Atomaig Piseag	Kingussie sessions at the Topsy Laird
Ayrshire Fiddle Orchestra	Lochaber Schools Pipe Band
Blackford Fiddle Group	Lochs Gaelic Choir
Ceolas Uibhist	Lothian Gaelic Choir
City of Inverness Youth Pipe Band	Merlin Academy of Traditional Music
City of Glasgow Council	Nairn Gaelic Choir
Còisir Dhùn Èideann (Gaelic Choir of Edinburgh)	Portree Gaelic Choir
Còisir Ghàidhlig Chàrlabhaigh	Rainbow Tribe / Spectrum
Coisir Ghàidhlig an Eilein Mhuilich	Renfrewshire Council
Corrina Hewat	Riddell Fiddles
Davidson's Mains & District Pipe Band	Riverside Music Project
Dundee Strathspey and Reel Society	Ross & Cromarty Pipes & Drums School
Dunfermline Strathspey & Reel Society	Sabhal Mòr Ostaig
East of Scotland Traditional Song Group	Sangstream
Edinburgh Highland Reel & Strathspey Society	Scots Music Group
Edinburgh University Folk Society	Scottish Culture and Traditions
Edinburgh Youth Gaitherin	Seasang
Fèis Rois	SongTribe
Fèisean Nan Gàidheal	Southside Singaround
Fife Council	St Crispin's Special School
FluteFling	Stirling Gaelic Choir/ Còisir Ghàidhlig Shriughlea
Forthview Primary School	Stockbridge Pipe band
Friends of Wighton	TAMIL (Traditional Arts and Music in Lanarkshire)
Fun Fiddle	Taynuilt Gaelic Choir
Glasgow Fiddle Workshop	The Clarsach Society & Edinburgh International Harp Festival
Great Glen Piping	The Gaitherin
Hands Up for Trad	The Liltin' Lassies
High Life Highland	The Scottish Fiddle Orchestra
Highland Council Instrumental Service	The Spurtle Ceilidh Band
Highland Young Musicians	Tiree High School Music Club
Horsecross Arts	
Isle of Skye Pipe Band	