

Ideas on hybrid LBC

Background

London Barndance has now run virtually via Zoom for 12 months. As the roadmap for opening up from the Covid virus continues, we anticipate a rapidly changing environment but where some possibility of limited in-person dancing may take place.

The current (14/4/2021) government plans for England are:

- Before May 17, upto 6 people can meet outside, socially distanced
- After May 17, “most legal restrictions on meeting others outdoors will be lifted - although gatherings of over 30 people will remain illegal. Indoors, the Rule of 6 or 2 households will apply”.
- After June 21, “the government hopes to be in a position to remove all legal limits on social contact”.

All these dates and actions are subject to review.

Thus LBC on May 8th will continue as a Zoom event; however LBC on June 12th has the possibility of small-to-medium sized groups meeting. It is unclear what the rules will be about physical contact, masks, etc. The July 10th event should have a reasonable chance of some groups getting together.

LBC breakout discussions 10/4/21

We setup the LBC interval breakout rooms based on geography with a suggestion that folk join their “local” room and discuss possibilities for “hybrid LBC” - some combination of Zoom plus small to medium groups meeting physically.

General points

- One or two people may be in a position to organise medium sized (≤ 30) groups but in general, people are too distant from each other and the kit required to provide a useful hybrid experience is beyond most dancers.
- Getting together physically is only worthwhile if people really can dance together; especially true for people who live alone.
- Several people thought hosting a few friends (6-10) in back gardens might work.
- The concept of “dance bubbles” was raised where folk are prepared to dance with anyone in their “bubble”. Similarly, solo people might consider a “dance buddy”.
- If people are travelling to a hybrid event, the event needs to last longer and have more dances to be worthwhile. Possibly have a “local continuation” event after LBC if music and a caller are available.
- Dances should be carefully chosen to limit social interaction. For example, the group in Melbourne are choosing dances where you swing only your partner.
- Dances also need to work both for individuals and couples on Zoom and for small groups that are physically together. Even more planning for our callers!
- The band and caller are likely to be able to get together for an event; a great combination would be somewhere where there could also be a few real dancers.
- LBC will not mandate “entry rules” such as proof of vaccination / covid passports/ etc.

- Whatever the government rules on any given day, some people will be more cautious than others about “social contact”.
- Each event over the next few months, may have very different rules and possibilities. Everything will be decided at the last minute and be very weather dependent. Investing any significant expense in hiring venues or marquees is probably not worth it.

Geographic points

- There were 11 LBC breakout rooms (including Americas, Scandi and Francophone). North, West & Yorkshire only had 5 participants so no groupings look possible other than amongst friends.
- East included Cambridge and St Albans members who thought back-garden parties of 6-12 might work.
- South included a clique around Brighton that might organise a physical meet-up.
- Manchester had 11 participants and has a possible “bigger back garden” venue.
- Midlands has a few coteries based around Alcester, Birmingham and Great Alne. The breakout room had 17 participants.
- London breakout had ~25 people with various ideas for both smaller “back garden groups” and larger groups, either in a public space using “silent disco equipment”, or using the car parks of halls, or park locations.
- The Americas have all the same issues as us but the distances are bigger!

Ideas and comments from initial document - 28 April 2021

Thanks to everyone who has contributed ideas!

1. The Melbourne (Australia) group have run at least 10 outside events in a local park with 20-30 attendees (they are at least 3 months ahead of the UK in progressing out of lockdown). The park has a covered barbecue area with a smooth, paved area. Dances have been Saturday or Sunday, 5pm - 7pm with a pizza order at 6pm. Music has all been from recordings using an app for Android called Musicolet, which can stop at the end of each tune; local callers. From one of John's announcements:

“BYO everything (drinks, thermos, cups, tea bags, masks, sanitizer). Masks should be worn and hands should be sanitized between dances. Dances have again been chosen so that the only swings are with your own partner, so the type of swing can be agreed with your partner before each dance. There is no charge.”

John has donated his list of 147 contra dances with partner-only swings. It is on our website at <https://www.barndance.org/dances/> . Many thanks, John!

With Australia now moving into winter they are hoping to move indoors:

“We aim to resume 1-per-month dances in the hall with live music from Sunday 2 May. We need at least 30 dancers to cover usual costs, but we will start with the (free) house band just in case numbers are low. Our various Scottish, English and Welsh groups have resumed. Their halls have number limits, must sanitize hands between dances, masks now optional, have sign-in procedures, seat cleaning afterwards, usually no supper. Our hall will let us have supper, QR code sign in, less

fussy about seat cleaning. We will strongly encourage hand sanitizing between dances. I also think we will continue with no-neighbour-swings for some months.“

2. Definite possibility for an outdoor event of 6 - 30 people at Great Alne, close to Alcester. Would need to agree attendance in advance.
3. Definite possibility of big back garden event for ~ 12 people, south of Manchester, with local caller.
4. Definite possibility of back garden event for 12-15 people in St Albans.
5. Interest in a live event centered around Lancaster University.
6. A couple of responses saying they already have 6 people meeting in a garden, dancing socially distanced, with a hope these numbers can expand.
7. We have a hall in West London that we are using in a Covid-secure manner for band rehearsals and hopefully live broadcast. Perhaps this can be extended to some dancers as rules change?
8. Extremely valid comment saying that even if numbers that can meet improves, what happens to social distancing rules? Firm agreement that live events are only worthwhile if we can actually dance with other people. Also:

“What is ‘dancing socially distanced’ to you? If everyone was to be 2m apart from everyone else at all times, then I can’t think of many ECD or contra dances that are still possible - the timings of doing much bigger figures don’t work, and you’d need a really massive garden! I think most people mean ‘dancing with a bit more distance and definitely not touching or swinging’ and some people mean ‘with masks’ and sometimes ‘with gloves’ and sometimes ‘no face to face moves’. Would be interested in what combination you’ve settled on!”

I would love to hear people's thoughts on this comment.

9. Fascinating comment from Brighton:

“We are exploring rope dancing and have written some dances. It is an interesting format as it gives good connection and weight between the dancers without physical contact. It also increases the distance between dancers and defines that distance. Of course it is not contra and it does require ropes. “

10. Another from the Lichfield area:

“One idea might be to broadcast music separately from the caller, then groups with callers could call any contra to their own group to the music, without worrying about fitting calls to music or to different sized groups, but those who don't have callers can receive both streams.”

11. There's a "UK Contra Dance" group on Facebook if people want to join a discussion there.

Moving Forward

We are eager to promote a discussion on hybrid LBC possibilities. Please email home@barndance.org with comments, ideas and suggestions. We will continue to update this document with input.

Many thanks,

Jane & Andrew