

# REPORT

## BELL RINGING

### FUTURE VISION – 26.04.2023



**CLIENT** Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

**PROJECT** Increasing bell ringing awareness, appreciation & participation.

**DOCUMENT** **Future Vision**

**DATE** 26.04.2023

**DISTRIBUTION**

|                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| Simon Linford  | CCCB       |
| Elva Ainsworth | CCCB       |
| Al Salehian    | Yellowyoyo |
| Amanda Wright  | Yellowyoyo |
| Steve Mark     | Yellowyoyo |
| Bryan Wright   | Yellowyoyo |

**AUTHOR** Bryan Wright

## **BELL RINGING FUTURE VISION - Engaging and retaining the Next Generation**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

There were several key phrases that were memorable from the Ringing 2030 document.

“The pipeline needs strengthening.”

“We need a steady supply of people wanting to learn.”

“What will members of the Young Change Ringers Association want ringing to be like when they are in charge?”

All the previous documents which discuss the future of ringing emphasise how it is crucial to attract a younger cohort whilst neither alienating the existing older one, nor putting off other target demographics. They also complained about the organisation of, and communication throughout the community from the Council down to the towers and back up again.

What we are really aiming to do is address the current demographic imbalance as identified in various surveys, and this means not only attracting young ringers but *younger* ringers. It is the 20-50 age group that is missing in so many places. Then we need a bigger continuous pipeline of young ringers coming in at the bottom. This proposal has particularly focused on young as in youth but strategies for attracting the parent generation will also be developed.

The latter issue we have not overly concentrated on in this document as it is not in our brief, but it is obviously key to making sure that the vision is successfully implemented. To make the vision contained in this document a reality internal structures, processes and procedures and their leadership will need the necessary development. We also need to illustrate to both the younger audience and your existing cohort that bell ringing is changing to prove authenticity and attract the new audience you desire. We have extensive experience of working with organisations on these components and would be delighted to assist in any way we can.

A comment made by a few people is that it comes across in this report that all ringing is bad, old fashioned, and everyone needs to change. This is not the case – there are plenty of places where what we have now is already in line with the future vision. What we need to do is raise the level of those places where the reality is falling short.

We agree with the current consensus that to ensure a consistent eager supply of younger, committed ringers the vision for the future of bell ringing and change ringing should emphasise engaging younger generations. In a rapidly evolving world, bell ringing and change ringing must embrace a fresh, exciting vision that combines tradition with innovation to attract a new generation of ringers.



We have set out below what we believe should be the objectives of building the future vision of bell ringing and how that vision might manifest itself. By nature, this needs to be an empirical process at this stage and therefore this document is meant to inspire discussion prior to being refined.

You will notice that there is no overt mention of the church in this report. This is deliberate as it is not considered necessary to use the relationship with the church as a marketing hook for new audiences. Church people will find bell ringing anyway – this is trying to attract people that the church does not reach or who might initially be put off by the association.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

We have set a list of key objectives which seem to embrace all the key issues that we have gathered from previous initiatives such as,

- The brief for this project,
- Ringing 2030,
- Council Review Action Group,
- The University of Reading creative brief in 2014 / Resound – one of the brief submissions,
- Summary points from the action groups in October 2022,
- The Discovery Workshop,
- Subsequent conversations, particularly with Simon Linford and Elva Ainsworth.
- Recent posts in Ringing Forums.

The 'Discovery Workshop' was a day hosted by the Yellowyoyo team when a group of ringers with broad experience (Simon Linford, Katie Lane, Andrea Kelso, Elva Ainsworth, and Tristan Lockheart) were encouraged to explore various aspects of ringing to help the Yellowyoyo team understand the issues we face. In participating in the workgroup, the team drew on the feedback of a number of consultation sessions with a wider group of around 30 ringers who had considered the brief.

Our thoughts on what should be the key objectives are as follows and are meant to inspire discussion,

### 1. Clarity of brand vision, positioning, and key messaging

There seems to be a consensus that this is missing and needs to be confirmed as soon as possible so that there is a rationale to all activity which is bought in to by the existing bell ringing cohort whilst exciting the target market of younger bell ringers.

### 2. Refresh the brand strategy and the brand identity and create brand pillars to help focus marketing

We have agreed that the new perception for bell ringing is described by the following words,

- a. Adventurous
- b. Welcoming
- c. Dynamic
- d. Logical
- e. Traditional
- f. Unique

It would be ideal to re-set the brand strategy and identity of bell ringing to better reflect this new perception. Furthermore, we could create brand pillars from the perception words to help focus marketing and promotional activity.

These six words were developed during the Discovery Workshop. Some of them might appear contradictory but these are all facets of ringing that may appeal to different people, and which can be used in marketing ringing in different ways and contexts, some more so than others. It is not intended that these words or concepts would all be used together.



**3. Consistent communications led by a new Communications Strategy**

This should happen across all the communication channels relevant for both the existing cohort and the new target audience.

**4. Embrace Modernity**

Embracing modernity and leveraging available technologies can make bell ringing more adventurous and dynamic, engaging a younger cohort effectively.

Computer based environments developed during lockdown have already shown how the ringing community can embrace technology.

**5. Develop collaborations with education, and youth groups**

By fostering connections with educational institutions and youth organisations you would aim to create a dynamic and inclusive community that inspires a key Gen Z cohort to become passionate advocates for bell ringing.

**6. Mentorship, Curiosity, and Adventure**

Build in support for all ages and a sense of curiosity and adventure that is key to attracting, maintaining, and retaining a younger cohort.

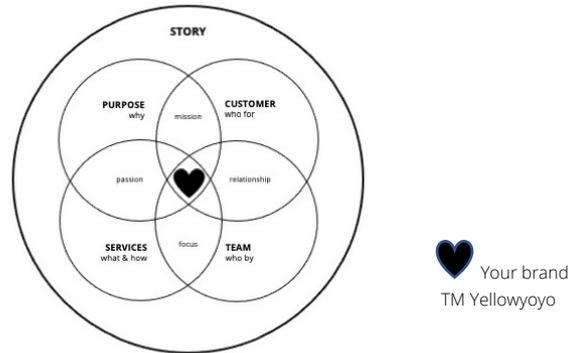
**7. Set KPIs to measure success with developing the existing and new cohorts**

Essential to measure progress and success.

The concept of setting 'Key Performance Indicators' in ringing may sound overly corporate, but the Council is working on a ringing survey which will enable us to track over time whether recruitment is successful and whether the demographic profile is changing. Having solid data will also make it easy to put together funding bids should that be desirable in the future.



## OBJECTIVE 1 - CLARITY OF BRAND VISION, POSITIONING & KEY MESSAGING



The key elements for any brand are shown above alongside how they interconnect with each other. We use the elements to create a Positioning Framework. Our first thoughts on this are shown below,

### Positioning Framework

#### Story

This is leverage that creates strong emotional attachment to Bell Ringing – for further discussion.

#### Purpose - Why

We want to ensure that bell ringing and change ringing continue to thrive and develop and so we exist to support, inspire, motivate, and sustain a growing enthusiastic, committed community of bell ringers and their families who wish to discover the delights of quality bell ringing and give them both the opportunity and confidence to thrive and flourish as a team, a community and in society.

#### Services - What

We aspire to be the world's leading bell ringing advocate and educator, through our quality training, pioneering practises, excellent standards, new dynamic technology, and the outstanding, welcoming, respectful expertise of our team.

#### Customer - Who for

We support anyone interested in the unique aspects of bells and bell ringing, by helping them to develop their expertise and confidence whether that be quality bell ringing, bell maintenance, the logical nature of change ringing, the traditions of bell ringing history or just generally being part of the bell ringing community and helping by being advocates for its adventurous nature.

#### Team - Who by

We have a highly motivated, experienced, approachable, and compassionate cohort of active bell ringers, teachers and ringing leaders who provide multi-skilled support both face to face, through our tower training, workshops, and webinars and through our unique technology. We are driven by our values – Commitment, Discovery, Quality and Teamwork.

Who is 'we' in this context? 'We' means all of ringing as an activity, so in comparison with other activities such as rock climbing or brass banding. So in driving forward this project the Central Council is acting on behalf of all ringers, not considering the branding of itself. In the eyes of the target of the advertising, the organisational structure doesn't matter – the potential recruit is being recruiting by ringing generally.



## Brand Messaging

### Key External Messages

1. We are the current committed custodians of a tradition that is 400 years old in the UK which has brought pleasure and solace to generations of people who are either ringers or beneficiaries of the joyous sound of the world's biggest musical instrument.
2. We are committed to continually grow the numbers of new ringers, particularly younger ringers, so that they can discover the adventurous and dynamic nature of ringing particularly its unique teamwork.
3. We have a team of welcoming ringing teachers who really enjoy introducing the new younger generation to the all-round physical and mental exercise that is bell ringing.
4. We are exploring numerous ways of introducing new practices and technologies into the teaching of ringing to complement the 'hands-on' experience in bell towers with the chance to practice at any time in any place.
5. We are absolutely driven towards keeping quality bell ringing and change ringing relevant to modern society, whether secular or religious, and to emphasise its physical, technical, social, and musical benefits to participants.



## OBJECTIVE 2 - REFRESH THE BRAND STRATEGY AND IDENTITY AND CREATE BRAND PILLARS

Our primary aims are as follows,

- Focus on communicating to, enticing, and retaining a continuous flow of young people into the bell ringing community,
- Acknowledging and celebrating the effort, participation, and achievements of the current cohort,
- Develop a much improved 2-way communication process that links all levels of ringers.

Refreshing the brand strategy and identity for bell ringing, creating a new strapline which excites both the new and the existing cohorts, and developing a suite of new promotional collateral templates for use by all towers and communities in bell ringing would go a long way to helping to support all the bullets above.

|  |
|--|
| As previously stated, what we are really aiming to do is address the current demographic imbalance as identified in various surveys, and this means not only attracting young ringers but <i>younger</i> ringers – replacing the “missing generation” which either learned and gave up or never learned in the first place. Then we need a bigger continuous pipeline of young ringers coming in at the bottom without putting off older groups. |
|--|

### Refresh the brand strategy and identity

We believe that a new brand strategy for bell ringing and change ringing should concentrate on effectively communicating the adventurous, welcoming, dynamic, and logical aspects of the activity (utilising the key agreed perception words from the Discovery Workshop) while emphasising its inclusivity, heritage, health benefits, and links to music, mathematics, and logical thinking.

|  |
|--|
| Note that we have been using the phrase ‘bell ringing and change ringing’ to describe our activity to an external audience. We are not using the word church as previously noted. This phrase will include handbell ringing, ringing in secular towers, even chiming. Of course, there are other forms of bell ringing as well but that shouldn’t impact on how we market ourselves. |
|  |

We can demonstrate the inclusivity of ringing, but more work needs to be done on ringing actually being inclusive of gender and race. Ringing is good at being inclusive of age and sexuality, good at gender its recruitment (but not in opportunity) but is currently very poor with race – there are very few examples of BAME ringers.

The strategy should attract a younger cohort without alienating older, experienced ringers, and engage with relevant institutions and social media platforms.

The following main headings describe how this vision might manifest itself.

#### a. Brand Identity & Collateral

- Develop a unique and memorable brand identity for bell ringing, including a logo, colour scheme, typography, and brand collateral that reflect the adventurous, welcoming, dynamic, and logical nature of the activity.
- Craft a compelling brand story that highlights the heritage, inclusive community, health benefits, and intellectual aspects of bell ringing, appealing to both younger and older generations. This would form part of the positioning framework above.
- Apply the clear, concise, and engaging messaging developed above that communicates the brand story and key aspects of bell ringing across all marketing materials, such as brochures, posters, websites, and social media content.

#### b. Digital and Social Media Presence

- Establish a strong online presence by creating a more user-friendly, engaging, and informative website that showcases the brand identity and messaging and provides resources for both newcomers and experienced ringers. This would be a landing page for all those searching for ‘bell ringing’ providing a quick route through to



learning to ring. Content for existing ringers mustn't clutter the external message. (e.g. <https://www.rscm.org.uk/> )

- b. Utilise popular social media platforms, especially TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, to share compelling content that showcases the excitement, skill, and camaraderie of bell ringing, and engages younger audiences. See below for more thoughts on this.
- c. Collaborate with popular influencers, youth ambassadors, and online communities to increase brand visibility and appeal to a wider audience, particularly Gen Z.

#### c. Community Engagement and Events

- a. Organise and promote community events, workshops, and performances that highlight the inclusive nature of bell ringing, engage diverse audiences, and showcase the newly agreed core values.
- b. Partner with relevant institutions, such as schools, universities, and youth organisations, to host joint events that highlight the benefits of bell ringing and create opportunities for long-term engagement. See below for more thoughts on this.

#### d. Consistency and Evolution

- a. Ensure consistency in the application of the brand identity, messaging, and visual elements across all communication channels and marketing materials. See Communications Strategy and Consistency below.
- b. Regularly review and update the brand strategy to keep it fresh, relevant, and in line with the evolving needs and preferences of the target audience.
- c. Collect feedback from the bell ringing community and track the success of marketing campaigns and initiatives to inform future brand strategy decisions.

The new brand strategy should effectively engage and attract younger cohorts, maintain the interest of experienced ringers, and foster long-lasting connections with relevant institutions and audiences.

Taking this one stage further would be to consider creating Brand Pillars which act as focal points around which all marketing and promotional activity is developed.

### **Create Brand Pillars to focus promotion**

We have chosen the first four perception words of Adventurous, Welcoming, Dynamic and Logical as the brand pillars and have considered potential, relevant marketing / promotional activities under each pillar as examples of what is possible.

#### **ADVENTUROUS**

Although most ringers get away from feeling ringing is any kind of adventure after a while, many new ringers think of it as such. The learning process, finding new towers in the middle of nowhere, going inside hidden parts of cathedrals, exploring new call changes or methods – it was an adventure for all of us at some point. ART's "50 Ringing Things" plays on this sense of adventure in ringing. Hence this makes it a good brand pillar to attract new ringers.

#### **a. Adventure-themed video series:**

- a. Storyboarding and Production: Develop engaging storylines for each video, focusing on the adventurous aspects of bell ringing. Many ringers post such videos on social media anyway – they just need the story creating.
- b. Unique Locations: Feature a diverse range of unique, interesting, or historic bell towers from around the world to showcase the variety and beauty of these buildings and the adventure of getting to them.
- c. Video Series Promotion: Promote the adventure-themed video series on social media platforms using targeted hashtags, paid advertisements, and collaborations with appropriate influencers to reach a wider audience.



- d. User-Generated Content: Encourage young ringers to create and share their own adventure-themed videos, using a dedicated hashtag or by participating in video challenges or contests.

**b. Adventure-based challenges:**

- a. Challenge Design: Develop a series of adventure-based challenges tailored to different skill levels and age groups, such as tower climbs, ringing marathons, or treasure hunts involving multiple bell towers.
- b. Event Promotion: Advertise the challenges through social media, local media, and partnerships with schools, universities, and youth organizations to attract a diverse range of participants.
- c. Online Platform: Create an online platform where participants can register for challenges, track their progress, and share their experiences with others, fostering a sense of community and friendly competition. This could be based on ART's popular "50 Ringing Things."
- d. Recognition and Rewards: Celebrate the achievements of challenge participants by offering rewards, certificates, or badges, and featuring their stories on social media and other promotional materials.

**c. Testimonials:**

- a. Story Collection: Gather stories from young ringers who have exciting ringing adventures to share, focusing on their personal experiences, challenges, and achievements.
- b. Multimedia Formats: Share these testimonials in various formats, such as written stories, video interviews, or photo essays, to cater to different audience preferences and platforms.
- c. Featured Stories: Highlight selected testimonials on the website, social media accounts, and newsletters, showcasing the adventures and personal growth that bell ringing offers.
- d. Ambassador Program: Establish an ambassador program that encourages young ringers to share their adventurous experiences with their peers, promoting bell ringing as an exciting and rewarding activity.

Under the Adventurous pillar, we can effectively communicate the excitement and unique experiences bell ringing has to offer, sparking curiosity and attracting a younger cohort to join the community.

**WELCOMING**

**a. Community service initiatives:**

- a. Charity Events: Organise and promote charity bell ringing events, where participants can raise funds for local or global causes, demonstrating the welcoming side of the activity.
- b. Special Occasions: Encourage newer bell ringers to volunteer their time and skills for ringing during special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, or community celebrations, emphasising the positive impact on the community.
- c. Community Outreach: Partner with local non-profit or charity organisations to support community-based initiatives, showcasing how bell ringing can contribute to the well-being of the community.
- d. Promotion and Recognition: Share stories, images, and videos from community service initiatives on social media platforms, newsletters, and the website to raise awareness and inspire others to get involved.

**b. Intergenerational connections:**

|   |
|---|
| One of the valuable characteristics of ringing is the way in which different generations can mix in the same band as equals. Young ringers can benefit in life from the confidence gained from being respected by much older people as a result of them gaining ringing expertise quickly. They can also gain early leadership experience which will help with CVs etc. |
|   |



- a. Mentorship Programs: Develop and promote mentorship programs that connect young and experienced ringers, fostering supportive and friendly relationships that encourage personal growth and skill development towards quality bell ringing. See below for more thoughts on this. The Young Change Ringers Association intends to set up such a programme and this should be encouraged and supported - young ringers are mentored by older young ringers, and those mentors in turn have support from older ringers.
- b. Testimonials: Collect and share stories from both young and experienced ringers about their experiences with the intergenerational connections they have in ringing, highlighting the benefits of these relationships.
- c. Recognition: Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of mentors and their mentees, showcasing the positive impact of intergenerational connections on the bell ringing community.

**c. Inclusivity campaigns:**

- a. Representation: Ensure that marketing materials, such as images, videos, and stories, represent the diverse backgrounds and experiences of bell ringers, reflecting the inclusivity of the community.
- b. Inclusive Language: Use inclusive language in all communications and promotional materials, emphasising the welcoming nature of the bell ringing community.
- c. Accessibility Initiatives: Develop and promote initiatives that aim to make bell ringing more accessible to people of all abilities and backgrounds, showcasing the ringing family's commitment to inclusivity. Ringing needs to be "for all faiths and none", breaking the perception that ringing is just about the church. The growing number of secular towers can help with this.

|   |
|---|
| We will need to get across either here or under Welcoming, the way in which ringing helps those who struggle to be accepted or struggle socially. Ringing enables people to be part of a team without social pressure. "The great thing about ringing is that I can spend the whole evening with my parents and not have to talk to them" |
| Ringling is quite a safe place for the socially disadvantaged – we are used to them, and some of their characteristics actually make them very good and loyal ringers.  |

- d. Social Media Campaigns: Launch social media campaigns that highlight the diverse and inclusive nature of the bell ringing community, encouraging members to share their stories and experiences using dedicated hashtags or by participating in themed challenges.

|  |
|--|
| This cannot be done fully until ringing has actually achieved more diversity than it currently has. We would not be selling the truth. We will need strategies for improving diversity and representation of minorities. |
|  |

Under the Welcoming pillar, we can effectively demonstrate the positive impact of bell ringing on individuals and communities, fostering a sense of connection, and inclusivity.

**DYNAMIC**

**a. High-energy content:**

- a. Content Creation: Develop a variety of high-energy content, including fast-paced videos, animated graphics, and live performances that capture the dynamic nature of bell ringing and appeal to a younger audience.
- b. Creative Techniques: Utilise creative techniques, such as time-lapse, slow motion, or drone footage, to showcase the energy and excitement of bell ringing from different perspectives.
- c. Social Media Sharing: Distribute high-energy content across social media platforms, using targeted hashtags, paid advertisements, and collaborations with influencers to increase visibility and engagement.



- d. User-Generated Content: Encourage young ringers to create and share their own dynamic content on social media, using a dedicated hashtag or participating in challenges and contests to inspire others.

**b. Interactive events:**

- a. Event Design: Plan and organise a range of interactive events, such as hands-on workshops, ringing competitions, and public performances that showcase the dynamic aspects of bell ringing and engage young participants.
- b. Partnerships: Collaborate with schools, universities, and youth organisations to host interactive events, ensuring a diverse audience and fostering long-term relationships with these institutions.
- c. Event Promotion: Advertise interactive events on social media, local media, and through partnerships to attract a wide range of participants and create buzz around the dynamic nature of bell ringing.
- d. Follow-Up Engagement: Maintain contact with event attendees through email, social media, or messaging apps, encouraging them to continue their bell ringing journey and share their experiences with others.

**c. Youth ambassadors:**

- a. Ambassador Selection: Identify enthusiastic and passionate young ringers to serve as ambassadors, representing the dynamic aspects of bell ringing and inspiring their peers to get involved.
- b. Training and Support: Provide ambassadors with training and resources to effectively share their experiences, passion, and enthusiasm for bell ringing with their peers, both online and offline.
- c. Ambassador-Led Initiatives: Encourage youth ambassadors to develop and lead initiatives, such as school presentations, social media campaigns, or local events, that highlight the dynamic nature of bell ringing.
- d. Recognition and Rewards: Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of youth ambassadors, showcasing their impact and offering incentives, such as exclusive merchandise, event invitations, or mentorship opportunities.

Under the Dynamic pillar, we can effectively communicate the energy and excitement of bell ringing, inspiring curiosity.

**LOGICAL**

**a. Educational content:**

- a. Content Creation: Develop a variety of educational content, such as articles, infographics, videos, and interactive quizzes, that illustrate the connections between bell ringing, mathematics, engineering, logical thinking, and problem-solving.
- b. Expert Contributions: Collaborate with experts in mathematics, logic, and problem-solving to create engaging and accurate content that showcases the intellectual aspects of bell ringing.
- c. Social Media Sharing: Distribute educational content across social media platforms and the organisation's website, using targeted hashtags, paid advertisements, and collaborations to increase visibility and engagement.
- d. User-Generated Content: Encourage young ringers to create and share their own logical content on social media, using a dedicated hashtag or participating in challenges and contests to inspire others.

**b. Collaborations with schools: (see more ideas below)**

- a. Curriculum Integration: Work with schools and universities to incorporate bell ringing into relevant curricula, such as mathematics, music, or history, highlighting its logical and mathematical aspects.
- b. Guest Lectures and Workshops: Offer guest lectures, workshops, and hands-on demonstrations at educational institutions to introduce students to the logical aspects of bell ringing and spark their interest in the activity.
- c. Extracurricular Activities: Partner with schools and universities to establish bell ringing clubs and societies, creating opportunities for students to learn, practice, and connect with like-minded peers.



- d. Faculty Engagement: Involve educators in the promotion of bell ringing by providing them with resources and training to integrate the activity into their teaching.

**c. Skill development:**

- a. Event Design: Plan and organise workshops, seminars, and events that focus on the development of logical thinking and problem-solving skills through bell ringing, tailored specifically for young people interested in these areas.
- b. Expert Facilitation: Engage experts in mathematics, logic, and problem-solving to facilitate skill development events, ensuring participants receive accurate and engaging instruction.
- c. Event Promotion: Advertise skill development events on social media, local media, and through partnerships to attract a wide range of participants interested in honing their logical skills.
- d. Progress Tracking and Recognition: Implement methods for participants to track their progress in developing logical skills through bell ringing, and acknowledge their achievements through certificates, badges, or other forms of recognition.

Under the Logical pillar, we can effectively demonstrate the intellectual benefits of bell ringing, attracting a younger cohort with an interest in mathematics, logic, and problem-solving to join the community.

As it said at the start of this section, Yellowyoyo has chosen the first four perception words of Adventurous, Welcoming, Dynamic and Logical as the brand pillars on which to focus marketing and promotional activities, at least in the short term. The ideas above under each word are examples of what is possible. The final two brand pillars of Teamwork and Unique will still feature in more general marketing and branding literature. They are still important features of what makes ringing such a rich activity, but marketing campaigns are always better if they focus on simple messages, and there are more than enough messages in the four chosen pillars.



### OBJECTIVE 3 - COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND CONSISTENCY

There are two parts to a communication strategy,

- The key Brand Messaging across those channels
- The Channel Strategy

The brand messaging will be dealt with under the positioning framework above.

The channel strategy highlights the key channels across which the messaging is deployed both to the existing audience and as promotion to the target audience. This will be a mixture of social channels, particularly channels like Tik Tok and YouTube, which are extremely visual and will bring a required zest and needed visual exposure to any promotion activity. Ways we could employ social media could be as follows, (see further ideas under 5. Develop collaborations with education and youth organisations).

#### Social Media and Influencer Strategy

To effectively leverage social media platforms, particularly TikTok, to reach and engage Gen Z, we could implement the following,

##### a. TikTok Campaigns:

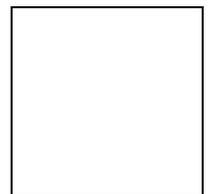
- Content Creation: Develop a series of short, engaging TikTok videos that showcase various aspects of bell ringing, such as the excitement of learning, the skill involved in performing, and the camaraderie among ringers.

Someone like Tom Scott (Youtuber) is someone who would be great to cover and show a bellringing journey. Another case study is Anna Lapwood, who has made the organ seem really cool. We don't need top expensive influencers.

- Hashtags and Challenges: Create unique hashtags and challenges related to bell ringing that encourage users to create and share their own content, generating buzz and interest around the activity.
- Influencer Collaborations: Identify and partner with popular TikTok influencers who align with the values and goals of the bell ringing community. Collaborate on content creation, challenges, and promotional campaigns to increase visibility and appeal to a wider audience.
- Consistent Posting: Maintain a regular posting schedule to keep followers engaged and increase the chances of content going viral.

Ringling may never be completely mainstream although we should be able to get to the point that all those likely to be attracted to it will find out about it. At the moment it is highly unlikely that they will, with potential recruits really only found by family, friends, and chance contacts.

What is important through the social media strategy is that young people in particular are not embarrassed by being bell ringers and are comfortable sharing it with their friends, just like someone who goes bouldering, sailing, playing an instrument, etc is. Ringing should be interesting, a bit different, something that is respected and just ever so slightly inaccessible.



b.

##### Digital Storytelling

- Personal Stories: Encourage young ringers to share their personal experiences and achievements on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat, using photos, videos, and written content.
- Educational Content: Inspire young ringers to create educational content that explains the basics of bell ringing, its history, or its connections to music and mathematics.
- Behind-the-Scenes Access: Invite young ringers to share behind-the-scenes footage of bell ringing events, workshops, or practices, giving their peers a glimpse into the world of bell ringing.



- d. Collaborative Projects: Organise collaborative social media projects, such as virtual performances or online competitions, where young ringers can showcase their skills, the quality of their ringing, and connect with their peers.

Young bellringers are already adopting mobile platforms such as YouTube and BeReal for this so this should definitely be encouraged, sharing failure as well as success. Maybe this could even be integrated into BellBoard.

### Online Community Building

- a. Social Media Groups: Create and manage social media groups or forums dedicated to young bell ringers, providing a platform for them to share experiences, ask questions, and offer support.
- b. Networking Opportunities: Use social media to facilitate connections between young ringers, experienced mentors, and other bell ringing enthusiasts, creating a supportive and enthusiastic network. This will build on the existing work of the YCRA which can connect young ringers across boundaries.
- c. Recognition and Rewards: Use social media to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of young ringers, fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment within the community.

By implementing these strategies, we can create a robust social media presence that attracts and engages Gen Z, inspiring them to become active participants in the bell ringing community.

### d. Live Streaming

- a. Live Workshops and Events: Utilise platforms like Twitch or Facebook Live to host live-streamed workshops, performances, and Q&A sessions, enabling young people to actively participate in events and interact with the bell ringing community in real-time.
- b. Virtual Practice Sessions: Organise live-streamed group practice sessions that enable participants to receive instant feedback and guidance from experienced ringers or instructors, fostering a sense of teamwork and collaboration.

### e. Internal communications

The other key channel is that through which any ringer can communicate throughout their bell ringing community and up or down the ringing community hierarchy. There is a real need for the communication through the levels of hierarchy within ringing to be improved as is stated in several reports provided to us by the Central Council. The Ringing Forums have tried to do this and have gained some traction, but it is difficult to replace Facebook as the default, with Bellringers having 6000 members.

Standardising the preferred communications channels would help to control and monitor communications and ensure issues are listened to and dealt with the speed they require.



## **OBJECTIVE 4 - EMBRACING MODERNITY**

Embracing modernity and leveraging available technologies can make bell ringing more inclusive, accessible, adventurous, and dynamic, engaging a younger cohort effectively. Here are some thoughts that consider comments made in the discovery workshop, subsequent conversations and from further research.

### **a. Virtual Reality (VR)**

- a. VR Ringing Simulators: Develop virtual reality ringing simulators that provide an immersive experience for learning and practicing bell ringing techniques. These simulators can be accessible through VR headsets, making the learning process more engaging and interactive for younger participants.
- b. Virtual Tours: Offer virtual tours of historic bell towers and notable ringing sites through VR technology, allowing users to explore and learn about these locations from the comfort of their homes.
- c. Online Competitions: Host virtual bell ringing competitions using VR technology, connecting participants from around the world and fostering a sense of community and excitement.

### **b. Augmented Reality (AR)**

- a. AR Learning Apps: Create augmented reality mobile apps that overlay visual aids and guides onto the real world, helping beginners learn and practice bell ringing techniques. This may seem like a big budget development, but skills may exist within the ringing community.
- b. Interactive Educational Content: Develop AR-enabled educational materials, such as books or posters, that provide interactive and engaging learning experiences for younger enthusiasts.
- c. Gamification: Integrate AR elements into bell ringing practice sessions, creating games or challenges that encourage skill development and keep younger ringers engaged and motivated. The Central Council's proposed striking app is a first stage in this.

### **c. Mobile Applications**

- a. Learning Apps: Design mobile apps that provide instructional content, practice exercises, and progress tracking for bell ringing techniques, catering to younger learners who prefer to learn through digital platforms.
- b. Social Networking: Develop a dedicated mobile app or utilise existing social media platforms to connect young bell ringers, allowing them to share their achievements, experiences, and ringing-related content.

### **d. Use of live video feeds**

- a. Enhanced Inclusivity and Accessibility: By live-streaming bell ringing performances and providing screens inside the church and feeds outside, more people will be able to experience and appreciate the art of bell ringing. This increased accessibility will make the activity more inclusive, allowing those who may have mobility challenges or other limitations to experience bell ringing performances without needing to physically enter the bell tower. It will also make more people appreciate the skill involved.
- b. Increased Community Engagement: Offering live video feeds of bell ringing performances will encourage greater community involvement by making the performances more visible and accessible to the public. This increased exposure can spark curiosity and interest in the local community, drawing more people to engage with the church and learn about the cultural and historical significance of bell ringing.
- c. Fostering Greater Interest and Participation: Providing live video of bell ringing performances can inspire more people to learn about and try their hand at bell ringing. By showcasing the excitement, skill, and teamwork involved in the activity, these live videos can act as a powerful tool for recruitment, attracting a diverse range of new participants, including younger cohorts.
- d. Enhanced Educational Opportunities: Live videos of bell ringing performances offer an opportunity for individuals to learn about the intricacies of the art form, even if they are not physically present in the bell tower. This can serve as an educational tool for schools, universities, and community organisations, providing a valuable resource for learning about the history, mathematics, and music theory involved in bell ringing. Teachers and instructors can incorporate these live videos into their lesson plans or utilise them in workshops, helping students to better understand and appreciate the complexities of this unique art form.



## **OBJECTIVE 5 - DEVELOP COLLABORATIONS WITH EDUCATION AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS**

One of the principal aims of creating the future vision for bell ringing is to attract and retain a new younger cohort of ringers. By directly fostering connections with educational institutions and youth organisations whilst utilising platforms like TikTok, you would aim to create a dynamic and inclusive community that inspires Gen Z to become passionate advocates for bell ringing.

There would be several key components to achieving the vision each with a particular emphasis on engaging and retaining a younger audience,

### **Schools and Universities**

To create a sustainable pipeline of new younger ringers for bell ringing, we can develop the following strategies with educational partnerships,

#### **a. School Collaborations:**

- a. Curriculum Integration: The Central Council's development of cross curriculum school lesson plans should be developed further and rolled out. These lesson plans and activities incorporate bell ringing into music, history, mathematics, and other subjects right across the curriculum. These resources should highlight the cultural, artistic, and scientific aspects of bell ringing.
- b. Guest Lectures: Invite experienced bell ringers to give presentations at schools, sharing their passion, expertise, and the benefits of participating in this unique activity.
- c. Workshops: Organise hands-on workshops for students using mobile belfries where they can learn the basics of bell ringing, try out different techniques, and discover the connections to other subjects, such as mathematics and music.
- d. Field Trips: Arrange visits to local bell towers where students can witness the art of bell ringing in action, meet experienced ringers, and participate in demonstrations. The National Ringing Centre will be an important focus for sharing ringing with school children as it is a Churches Conservation Trust goal to use the Northampton site as a heritage learning destination.

#### **b. University Connections:**

- a. Establish new clubs and societies: Reach out to university administrators and student organisations to facilitate the creation of bell ringing clubs and societies, providing resources, guidance, and support. Perhaps get help in doing this by collaborating with existing societies in other universities.
- b. Campus Events: Help university societies to organise regular bell ringing events on campus, such as workshops and performances, allowing interested students to engage with the activity and connect with their peers.
- c. Bell Ringing Alumni Network: Create an alumni network of former university bell ringers who can mentor and support current students and encourage new ringers to join.

We think the principal way in which we can support the existing university societies, and also university ringers where there is a lack of critical mass to form a society, is to link them up with an overarching universities society, and this work is in progress.

University societies already have alumni networks in that ringers tend to remain and identify with their university societies for the rest of the lives, but more effort in encouraging mentorship could bear dividends.

#### **c. Scholarships and Internships:**

- a. Financial Support: Offer financial support for young ringers to cover tuition fees, travel expenses, or other costs associated with their bell ringing education and training, and in particular the expanding range of residential courses. Some associations already do this.



- b. Mentoring Programme: Pair scholarship and internship recipients with experienced ringers who can provide guidance, encouragement, and networking opportunities throughout their development. (See further information below under Mentorship Programme in 6. Mentorship, Curiosity and Adventure)

By forging strong relationships with schools and universities, we can ensure a steady influx of younger ringers who are enthusiastic about bell ringing, creating a sustainable and vibrant community.

### **Youth Organisations and Community Groups**

To effectively engage with youth organisations and community groups, we can implement the following strategies,

#### **a. Youth Group Partnerships:**

- a. Initial Outreach: Identify and connect with local youth organisations, such as Scouts, Guides, Boys and Girls Clubs, and community centres, presenting the benefits and excitement of bell ringing as an activity.
- b. Tailored Programs: Develop customised lesson plans, workshops, and activities that cater to the specific age groups, interests, and goals of each youth organisation.
- c. Ringer Mentors: Assign experienced ringers to work with youth groups, providing guidance, support, and hands-on training during workshops and events. (See mentoring programme below)
- d. Group Visits: Organise group visits to bell towers, allowing youth organisation members to witness bell ringing first hand, participate in interactive demonstrations, and learn about the history and mechanics of the tower.
- e. Collaborative Events: Encourage youth organisations to collaborate on joint bell ringing events or challenges, fostering a sense of camaraderie and friendly competition among participants.

All of this is currently done - it's just not done on any great scale because of lack of budget and lack of volunteer resource. It's all logical stuff - it just needs funding. Developing youth group partnerships would probably be 1 FTE.

#### **b. Community Events and Demonstrations:**

- a. Local Fairs and Festivals: Expand the participation in community events by setting up an interactive bell ringing booth, stall, or mobile belfry where attendees can learn about the activity, try their hand at ringing, and witness live performances by skilled ringers. The Mobile Belfries Trust, which owns/operates mobile belfries could move from reactive attendance at events to proactively targeting events, provided budget was available.
- b. Public Demonstrations: Organise public bell ringing demonstrations at prominent locations using mobile belfries, such as parks or town squares, allowing passers-by to experience the excitement and skill involved in the art.
- c. Open Tower Days: Encourage towers to host "Open Tower Days", inviting community members to explore the tower, learn about its history, and participate in bell ringing workshops. Such open days have proved to be a successful way of recruiting. New marketing materials can be supplied to support such activities.
- d. Community Partnerships: Collaborate with other community organisations, such as historical societies, libraries, or local government, to create joint events and initiatives that promote bell ringing and its cultural significance.
- e. Media Coverage: Seek local media coverage, such as newspaper articles, radio interviews, or TV segments, to raise awareness about bell ringing events and encourage community involvement.

By engaging with youth organisations and participating in community outreach initiatives, we can spark interest in bell ringing among younger generations and create a strong, supportive network.



## **OBJECTIVE 6 - MENTORSHIP, CURIOSITY AND ADVENTURE**

### **Mentorship Programme**

To establish an effective mentorship programme, we could consider the following,

#### **a. Pairing Young Ringers with Seasoned Mentors:**

- a. **Mentor Recruitment:** Reach out to experienced ringers within the community and invite them to participate in the mentorship program, explaining the benefits and rewards of guiding young ringers.
- b. **Mentor Training:** Provide training sessions for mentors to ensure they are well-equipped to offer guidance, encouragement, and valuable insights to their mentees. Training should cover effective communication, teaching techniques, and best practices for working with young people.
- c. **Matching Process:** Develop a system for pairing young ringers with seasoned mentors based on factors such as skill level, interests, and availability. This can be done through questionnaires, interviews, or observation during practice sessions.
- d. **Ongoing Support:** Create a structure for regular check-ins between mentors and mentees to track progress, address concerns, and facilitate communication.
- e. **Mentor Recognition:** Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of mentors through social media, events, or awards, fostering a sense of pride and commitment within the community.

### **Curiosity & adventure**

To inspire a sense of adventure and curiosity in young ringers, we can develop the following initiatives,

- a. Possibly arrange opportunities for young ringers to experience ringing in other countries including those which ring with a different style, i.e. Italy.
- b. Expand on the RWNYS to ensure that young ringers everywhere can take part in friendly competitions, sharing skills, enjoyment and learning from each other.
- c. Expand on the ART awards to enable more young ringers to participate in and receive awards for participation and skill development.
- d. Provide opportunities for young ringers to visit new and interesting towers.



## **OBJECTIVE 7 - SET KPIs**

We need to effectively measure progress and success and therefore need to set effective Key Performance Indicators.

Suggested KPIs might be as follows,

1. Total number of active ringers
2. Number of new ringers trained to a certain level
3. Number of new ringers with a mentor
4. Number of mentor volunteers
5. Number of bell ringing teachers
6. Number of new ringers at each level of proficiency

The Council's Volunteering and Leadership Workgroup is developing and shortly piloting its ringing survey which will provide the basis against which to track this information. It is not asking questions about mentors as they don't exist, but the intention is for the survey to be run regularly to measure trends.



### 3. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

#### THE REALITY

This vision for the future of bell ringing and change ringing needs to be one that excites, engages, and retains younger ringers while nurturing them as influencers within their age group. It needs to emphasise the adventurous, welcoming, dynamic, and logical nature of the activity, focusing on inclusivity, heritage, health benefits, and the links to music and mathematics.

However, organisations that try and target a younger audience without making changes to the way the organisation acts and is perceived rarely achieve their aims. It is not enough to say that you want to attract younger people, you need to be seen as having made real changes internally and how you are now relevant to young people.

Whilst we can collectively create excellent messaging and initiatives targeting young people, we also need to think about creating content and messaging that talks about the changes to the organisation, the modernisation of the bell ringing community/organisation etc. This may well be difficult given the generally conservative nature of the organisation, but without internal change how will you be able to relate to a younger audience?

#### INFLUENCERS, CHAMPIONS, AND AMBASSADORS

On a general note, it would be good to find leaders with whom the younger cohort will resonate. Are there any famous people who are into bell ringing. We have searched and Wikipedia will present a list that includes Ed Balls, Jo Brand, Timmy Mallet, Maggie Philbin and Alan Titchmarsh, none of whom are exactly influencers. However, the current bell ringing community may well know of people who might be more suitable.

We also should look for a young **champion** for our new younger cohort. Someone who represents the cohort and that your intended audience would look up to and resonate with. Every organisation needs a champion who is going to represent it in the way that it wants to be perceived by the audience. If we want to attract younger people, it would be beneficial to appoint a leader/spokesperson that can talk passionately and enthusiastically about bell ringing in a way that suits all the words chosen in your perception list and who will engage the younger audience.

#### TARGETED PR

In addition to the initiatives, we have detailed in this document, we might want to consider some targeted press coverage if there is an interesting 'hook' to a story. This should not be to the usual 'older' publications/websites but to younger outlets such as Young Musicians Unite, Young Musicians Project, BBC Music Magazine etc. Targeted and strategic editorial PR is still a powerful tool.

#### BUY-IN AND ROAD MAP

We have been told that a 'roadmap' is required by July 2023.

Therefore, we need to agree,

1. The elements of the vision that are a priority,
2. How to distil the contents of this vision so that it can be presented in a compelling way that enables you to obtain the required buy-in of your current audience of bell ringers,
3. The action plan for implementation of the vision,
4. How ringing's organisation needs to change to support the vision.
5. How that can be implemented in parallel with implementing the vision.