

# Briefing Note

**Title:** Slammin' 2019 and Finsbury Park Rectification Works  
**For** Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel – 5<sup>th</sup> November  
**From** Sarah Jones, Events & Partnerships Manager

## Introduction

- The Friends of Finsbury Park have raised concerns in an email to the Chair regarding issues arising from the Slammin' Events managed festivals that took place in Finsbury Park in September 2019.
- Concerns raised are around the high noise levels experienced, and damage to the park.
- For events to take place in Finsbury Park there are two very clear and separate processes for event organisers to follow in order to operate in the Park: park hire and the licensing of regulated activity.
- The Panel are asked to note that although this briefing paper provides an overview on the noise levels emitted from the events this year, and the reasons why this occurred, the noise levels are set and monitored through the licencing process and are therefore outside the purview of the Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel. If the Friends of Finsbury Park or any other group or individual want to raise concerns around any aspect of the event licence, then they would need to do this through the formal licencing process.
- This briefing paper provides an overview on the music festivals – Hospitality & Abode - that took place over the weekend of the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2019. And provide some background and answers to the points raised by the Friends.

## Event Overview

Slammin' Events has hosted music festivals in Finsbury Park for the past five years. For two of those years (2017 & 2018) they have also hosted a two-day music festival in June, in addition to their September events.

The events are drum 'n' bass festivals, contained within the Bandstand Field area of Finsbury Park. The event space consists of 6/7 tents, with various DJs playing throughout the day. 12,500 tickets are sold for each event day.

There are two process involved in allowing the events to take place:

- **Park Hire:** This is overseen by the Outdoor Events Policy with the Council hiring a space within the park to the organiser to use to host their event. Through this process the Council have a duty to oversee the event activity, ensuring park users and residents are protected from any potential impacts that the event may bring to the area. It is also through this process that the plans are put in place to protect the park infrastructure as much as possible, from any damage caused by the event.
- **Premises Licence:** This is overseen by the Licensing Act 2013 and is a statutory process that oversees the provision of regulated activity including the selling of alcohol, the provision of live music etc. It is through this process that specific conditions are set within the Licence, that the Licence holder must operate within, including noise limits. There are currently three Premises Licences issued to promoters to offer licensable activity in Finsbury Park. These licences are independent of one another and specific to the relevant licence holder. They are not all subject to automatic changes to the conditions because one of the three licenses has been reviewed and changes made to that licence.

## 2019 Noise Issues

The following information is provided for 'information purposes only' the issue relating to noise are a matter for the statutory Licensing process and fall under the remit of the Licensing Sub Committee. There is in place a formal Licensing Review Process and complaints about noise would be dealt with via this process.

The September events were held using the Slammin' Events Premises Licence. This was issued to Slammin' Events in 2015 and lasts until September 2025.

Noise levels set within the Licence vary according to the background levels and are set at residential sensitive receptor points. Sound levels from the events should not exceed the background level by more than 15dB when measured as a 15 minute LAeq.

The event organiser is responsible for monitoring and will employ an independent noise consultancy contractor who has experience with providing noise management for music festivals. Council noise officers are also on hand to monitor noise levels at complainants' properties.

In previous years the Slammin' managed event have receive a maximum of 15 complaints in total, across the two days.

This year, the level of complaints was unprecedented for this event, and included:

- 44 complaints made to the advertised complaints line, based onsite during the two days of the event -
  - 6 on Saturday
  - 38 on Sunday
- 73 complaints made directly to the Council

As the large number of complaints started to be received on Sunday, discussions took place between the onsite noise engineer and Licensing Officer to see what could be done to reduce the bass, as this appeared to be the main source of the complaints. Two of the dance tents had the bass reduced and subsequently stopped earlier than intended. The sound engineer explained that the pattern of complaints shifted as was expected due to the wind shift. This meant that Rowley Gardens became the most critical location.

With Sunday's wind shift complaints were anticipated from the N/NE of the site which was largely what happened due to the direction of the wind. Interestingly there were a number of complaints that were in excess of 1km, some 3km+ from the venue on Sunday.

Whilst events on Sundays can always be expected to generate more complaint for a variety of reasons, the level of complaints was disappointing even though the noise levels set in the current premises licence were not breached at any time.

The number of complaints received could also have been exacerbated due to residents expecting the conditions under which this event operated, to be inline with those of the Live Nation Licence such as the finishing time on Sunday. For the Slammin' event this was 10pm, but for Live Nation it is 9.30pm.

Discussion have been had with the licence holder relating to the level of complaints received on the day, the possibility of reviewing the licence in order to update the background noise levels and introduce relevant bass monitoring conditions. The Noise Environment Health Officer – Responsible Authority has requested that the Premises Licence holder apply for a Variation to bring their Licence

in line with that of Live Nation, and if they do not within the next three months, a consideration will be given to a Review by the Noise EHO – Responsible Authority.

## **Rectification Works**

One of the main risks of allowing events to take place in an outdoor arena is the weather. Weather is the only thing that cannot be influenced or changed, although planning for all types of weather is a necessity when using a park.

Council officers work with the event organiser to ensure that appropriate ground protection is used, although if heavy rainfall happens during an event or during the build and break which impacts the ground conditions, it is highly likely some form of damage will occur.

London has experienced higher levels of rain since the end of September, than usually anticipated.

Rain fell overnight of the 21/22 September. Although this didn't have a significant affect on the ground for the event to take place on Sunday, it continued to rain heavily on the following Monday and all during the week the event infrastructure was being taken down and moved off site.

A planned programme of works has been commissioned, but because of the rainfall experienced throughout October, the ground on and around the Bandstand Field is far too saturated for restoration vehicles such as tractors to access without churning the ground even further.

Once the rain stops and we experience a few dry days for the sitting water to soak away, the contractor will commence ground works. These are expected to take approximately one week, and will involve the following:

- Harrowing: levelling the ground - flattening ruts, dips and depressions
- Verti-draining: decompaction of ground - letting in air and water out
- Top dressing: 300 tonnes of 70/30 mix of soil and sand
- Over seeding: using a deep rooted, hard-wearing seed variety
- Application of slow release fertiliser: to assist germination of seed and early growth
- Use of tractor with specialist implements

If the right conditions are experienced, it is anticipated that the works together with the increased time between major events, will allow for a deeper rooted and harder wearing sward to form so even when the grass coverage has been worn down by the increased footfall during the June/July events, the root has established enough to re-grow as soon as the rain starts to fall.

Risks which could affect the success of the planned works again come back to the weather: too wet, too soon after the seed has been sown and there's a chance it could be washed away; too dry or too cold and the seed won't germinate.

The area where restoration works will take place will be tapped off to deter people traversing across the ground, with notices put up informing people of the works.

## **Future Proposals**

The proposed Finsbury Park major event season for 2020 is currently out to stakeholder notification and they do not include any events in September 2020.

The proposals seek to reduce the number of events in the park and contain them all to within one concentrated, concerted period. This approach will reduce the level of income received but allow the park to generate enough income for its basic maintenance, enhanced staffing levels and a

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reasonable level of investment within the park each year. The future investments will focus on creating a safer park and responding to the investment priorities set as part of the recent public consultation about the park.

Event	Dates 2020	Daily capacity	Licence Holder / Organiser
Community Festival weekend	26 – 28 June (3 days)	45k	Live Nation / Festival Republic
Wireless Festival weekend	3 – 5 July (3 days)	45k	
TBC	10 OR 11 July (1 day)	45k	

### New for 2020

- The major event season in Finsbury Park will be contained to a four-week period (inc build and break) during late June/ early July
- There will be no other 'major' music festivals taking place within Finsbury Park in 2020
- A reduction in the number of major events across the events season for 2020 will result in three weeks shorter occupancy period of build and break days in the park (2020: 24 / 2019: 44)
- Less chance of damage occurring to the grass and paths, and emissions from event vehicles cut by two thirds– one load in / one load out rather than three
- Focusing events into these four weeks will ensure public usage of the areas can increase and the grass condition can be improved to reduce the intensity and severity of any damage to the grass areas during events
- Removes events that take place in the wetter months and thus significantly reducing the potential for damage
- With Steel Yard not going ahead, the park would be free of events during the May half-term school holiday