

# Major events on the Common – again!



The holding of big commercial music events on Clapham Common has been a matter of growing contention locally in recent years. In the October issue (440) of this Newsletter, we wrote about the controversy surrounding major events on the Common last summer.

Lambeth Council, which owns and has responsibility for the Common, argues that the events provide important income to maintain and fund improvements, adding that they are beneficial for nearby businesses. Many local people resent the disruption (crowds, noise and anti-social behaviour) and the exclusion of regular users from a substantial area of the Common during the events, including rigging and derigging, and afterwards to ‘repair’ the grass and impacted soil damaged by the heavy traffic and structures placed upon them.

The Council finally accepted, after two disastrous seasons, that Winterville would not be allowed to return to the ‘events site’ off North Side, which had suffered an immense amount of damage. It was agreed that Winterville would only be allowed to return if the operators occupied the hardstanding off The Avenue, a site that has so far proved unattractive. Lambeth remains keen, however, to encourage music festivals during the summer, and is understood to have entered into a conditional contract with events promoter Festival Republic to organise and mount multiple events over several years into the future.

In 2021 Lambeth applied to Defra for consent under Commons legislation for last year’s music festival, but too late for the application to be determined. Readers will be well aware that the events took place anyway, even though 470 objections were lodged. On 2 February the Council submitted a new application for a festival in August 2022, and public notices to this effect were posted on 4 February.

Those who submitted representations last year should have had an email from the Planning Inspectorate setting out what has been decided with regard to last year’s undetermined application, and how the application will be dealt with. A Planning Inspector has been appointed to review the 2021 application and representations, with a view to deciding whether or not the Council’s application should have been approved. This email also indicates that the Inspector intends to hold a Public Local Inquiry in May/June 2022 to consider the newly submitted application, thereby allowing sufficient time to make a relevant decision to determine whether the music festival planned for August can proceed. It is proposed that the site will be enclosed for 18 days from 16 August to 3 September.

**If this application is approved by Defra it will pave the way for the multi-year programme of music festivals the Council has already agreed in principle with Festival Republic.** Furthermore, the festival season is likely to be extended in the future, which will intensify the damage to this c. 20-acre portion of the Common **and the public will be denied access for longer periods as a result.**

The Society remains very concerned about the damage to the Common caused by these large events, and the enclosure of a large area of open meadow for weeks at a time, both for the events and to recondition the area, and it intends to present these concerns at the Inquiry. **However, so little time has been allowed for objections!**

Lambeth's application to Defra was only submitted on 2 February, as previously stated, and just a month has been allowed to write in. **It is vital that members write to the Planning Inspectorate with your concerns, stating why you think these big events are a bad idea and how they have affected your enjoyment of the Common.**

Comments need to be submitted by email on or before Friday 4 March, referencing 'Clapham Common Article 12 Application',  
to: [commonlandcasework@planninginspectorate.gov.uk](mailto:commonlandcasework@planninginspectorate.gov.uk).

The Society is taking legal advice on this matter. It is hoped that this is something our membership is prepared to support, in principle and financially, and that some of you will also be prepared to come and express your views at the May/June Public Local Inquiry.

Watch this space for developments.

***Report and photograph by Mark Leffler***

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