

GUNNERSBURY PARK FESTIVALS 2022

RESIDENTS ARE REASONABLE YET THE CIC REMAINS TONE DEAF TO LOCALS' EXPERIENCES AND VIEWS

Numerous problems persist at many festivals but one festival, and one issue at that festival, dominated this year's experiences: Waterworks and the extreme noise disturbance it caused. Second came Gunnersbury Live with complaints about noise levels from people living over two miles away.

WATERWORKS

This was by far the worst festival for noise. Complaints were about:

- **the booming bass which**
 - rattled windows and doors
 - bounced off buildings which meant many residents received it from two directions
 - brought more complaints than any other festival, including from other boroughs
- **noise levels**
 - the assertion, including afterwards, that the decibel level was not exceeded was widely disbelieved and it is unlikely that residents will believe it in relation to future festivals
- **spread of the sound**
 - reached residents in roads several miles away to the south and east of the park, in W12, Ravenscourt Park, LBH&F, south of Kew Green
- **denial of noise disturbance by the organisers**
 - the response from festival organisers that they could hear nothing in roads from which residents had complained was disrespectful and wholly unbelievable.

GUNNERSBURY LIVE!

It is only with the hindsight of Waterworks that it is possible to assess Gunnersbury Live! as less disruptive than Waterworks. At the time, it brought very strong complaints similar to those listed above:

- the booming bass causing vibrations
- unbearably loud noise levels
- being unable to have windows open in the heat of August
- crowds dominating a local community
- swearing and, in particular, "the Fword" being broadcast into homes including those of families with young children who had not been exposed to the word before.

SECRET CINEMA

There were very few complaints about the Secret Cinema. However, one complaint was poorly handled. Some local residents were disturbed long after the end of performances by bright lights sweeping across the park and into homes. When the complaint was passed, saying it was "laser lights", because that is what they seemed to be, the response was that there were no laser lights in the show. This was insulting residents' who cannot be expected to know the type of lighting being used. The organiser should have apologised for the fact that lights (of whatever type) were sweeping across the park and shining into houses outside festival hours - and promised to ensure it didn't happen again - rather than split hairs about the type of lights being used. Back chatting, playing games with words, is not appropriate.

FACTS ABOUT NOISE

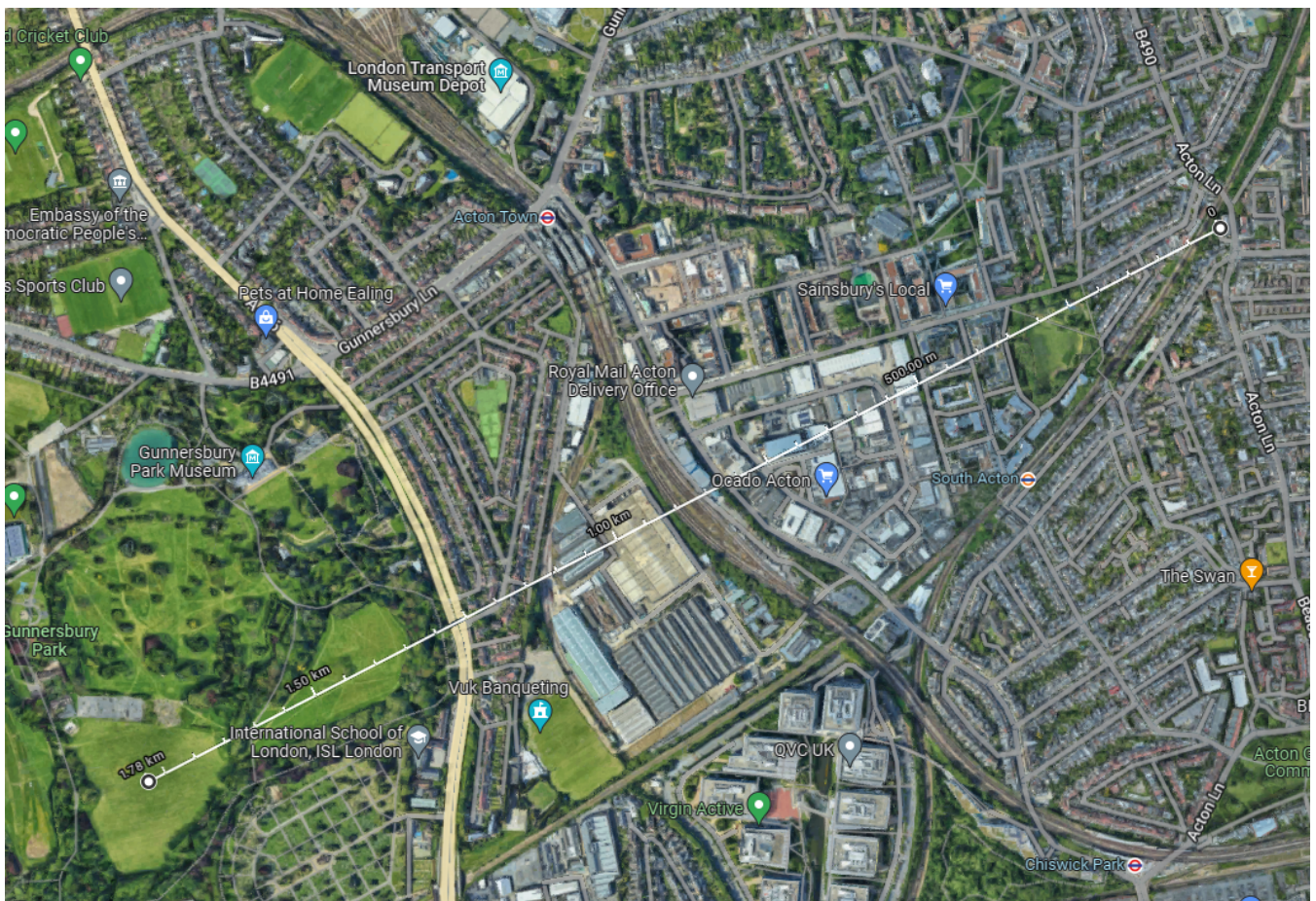
Interestingly, one resident with experience of organising music festivals contacted me after the Gunnersbury Live! events and corrected misinformation about noise provided by the organiser during a pre-festival briefing. This related to the non-explanation of the sound system to be used – deemed too complicated to explain to residents and councillors – and the implication that the sound would be contained within the festival site. This was nonsense, as the flow of complaints, and the resident’s report, proved. The resident with experience of organising music festivals recorded decibel levels of 70dbA in Acton Lane, over two miles away. His report follows (blue font). It is extremely informative and enlightening.

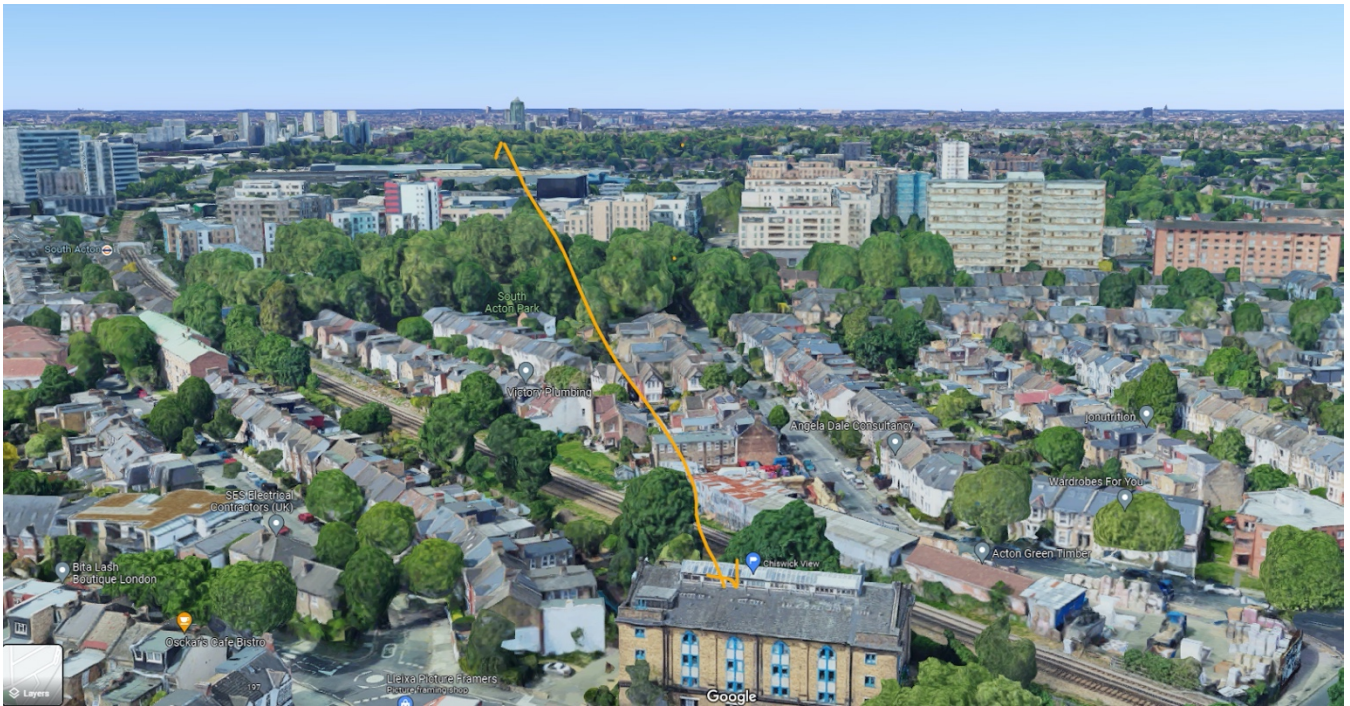
FEEDBACK FROM GUNNERSBURY LIVE! EVENTS 20-21 AUGUST 2022

Dropbox: https://www.dropbox.com/s/ux3zfc7xodufthh/PXL_20220821_203320771.LS.mp4?dl=0

The link above is to an audio sample showing noise levels on Sunday, 21st August 2022 from Acton Lane, W4 towards the end of the set nearing 10pm. Please play it on a laptop at full volume or through speakers at a reasonable volume; place your hands on the device/near the speakers to feel the bass in a similar way to how it feels in the box of your home. This night time recording was the first time you can hear the crowd (see diagram below for the effect of night on noise), you can also hear the variation due to wind and other factors. Towards the end you will hear how persistently loud it can be. This was not the loudest bass recorded (over 70dbA) but is the best overall clip for a sampling of all aspects of the noise. Watch the entire clip for the full variation from piping bass, to crowd, to shouting, to long-held chords.

The two maps below show the distance between the recording site and the festival site





CLEARLY SOMETHING WENT WRONG

- From all the feedback it is clear that sound escaped from the event at an intolerable level over a wide area. Attempts to ignore this by citing local decibel readings taken at the event would be disingenuous at best.
- Clearly this was as bad or worse than previous events, leading to the conclusion that previous lessons have not been learned.
- Clearly any attempts to 'focus' sound into the events failed, and it seems unlikely that these were tested in advance.
- Clearly there was no pro-active management at the event to act on feedback and real-time data.
- Clearly time or day, and style of music, were not adequately considered.
- Clearly, the event timing, duration, and sound-level requirement (if set) did not adequately account for the largely residential surrounding area.
- It is important to understand that loudness is not the same thing as measuring decibels.

OVERBEARING

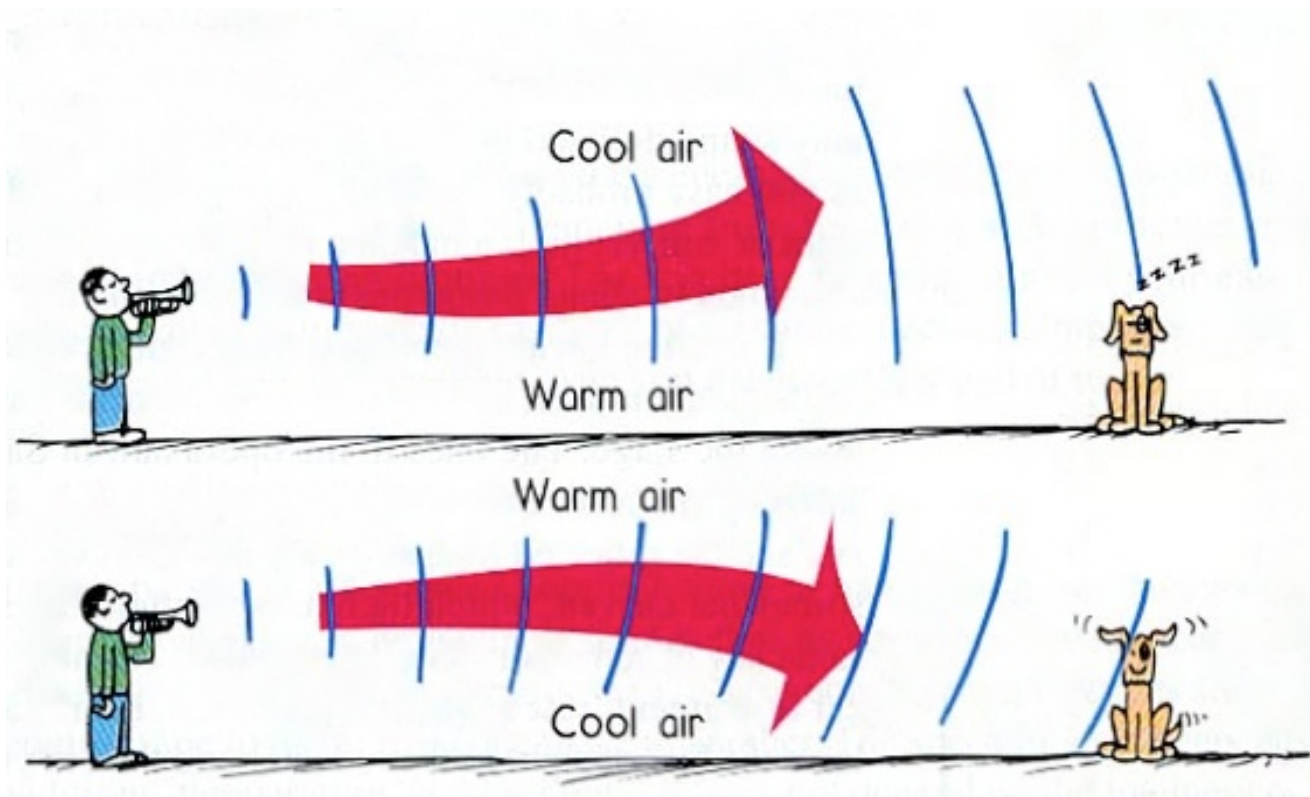
- An entire weekend of unavoidable sound.
- There's no means of escape: closing windows is ineffective, and unhealthy given the outside temperatures.
- The sound is almost continuous until past 10pm, and even when there are gaps between sets there is no respite as one's brain is anticipating and resenting the inevitable restart.
- There is a right to peaceful enjoyment of one's home. The noise from this event unreasonably and substantially interferes with the use or enjoyment of our homes.
- In the 'box' of your home/flat, the bass has a thumping/vibration effect, it fills the space and your head as if you were in a box with someone beating the outside. It feels like it collects the bass sound. Bass noises, like impact noises, are intrusive and a nuisance.
- Gunnersbury events are not the only events or onerous noises impacting residents. So don't calculate effect as if it is. "X weekends out of the year" must be thought of in the round. (I can hear bass from an Acton event right now...much quieter but still have to close my windows and can feel the bass.)
- Bass frequencies penetrate through walls and windows better than higher frequencies.

WHAT RESTRICTIONS WERE IN PLACE AND HOW WERE THEY MEASURED?

- Acoustics is a topic that cannot be dealt with by setting some peak decibel restrictions at ground level near the event.
- The perceived loudness and actual sound level depend on many factors, such as the style of music, speaker/AV setup, weather, wind, and time of day play a part.
- Was there a sound management plan?
- What measurements were taken at what frequency, from what locations around the surrounding area?
- And how were these used during the event?
- And how will they be evaluated following the event to feedback into the next?

WHY DOES MUSIC SOUND LOUDER AT NIGHT?

- Sound can appear 'louder' at night because the ambient sound level (background noise) may reduce, therefore increasing the relative level of the new noise. This is an impact that is not captured adequately on a sound level meter reading peak volumes but is important to humans. Consequently, a noise that is inaudible during the day can appear quite loud at night due to the reduction in ambient/background noise levels.
- If a noise is sudden, unexpected, odd (a new type of sound), or contrasting to the background noise expectation, it can be disturbing.
- There is a phenomenon called refraction that affects the direction of sound propagation. During the day, the sound bends away from the ground; during the night, it bends towards the ground. Hence at night you have additional "sound" reaching you, making it louder. **This is not a perceived effect because there is less other noise around - the sound IS actually louder.**



- So, when considering loudness, events that can affect residential areas at night need to factor in the perceived loudness and actual sound-level changes – otherwise the effect for residents is “it got louder and louder right up until the end”.

EVENT ORGANISERS & THE STRUCTURE OF A SET

- Music sets often have a structure and like to have peaks in them that are often associated with peaks in volume
- Sound engineers on-site, and organisers, may well bend the rules until they get a slap on the wrist at events to heighten the effect for the event attendees. This can lead to peak levels being exceeded, but also to sound leaking in a way that has not been tested before the event.
- Management can blame producers, who can in-turn blame engineers on site for turning it up.
- Sound levels work on a logarithmic scale - a 10db increase is a DOUBLING of the perceived sound level. Whilst we want to control peak and sustained levels in the event to protect hearing for attendees, we are looking for other comparisons for sound leaking beyond that to the relative levels compared to normal, and disturbing levels. The levels I recorded in my home of a consistent 63dbA+ - about the same as my shaver or washing machine in the same room as me EXCEPT, unlike those white-noise type sounds, the music is rhythmic, bass/vibration heavy, and utterly intrusive as we are not accustomed to it. It is therefore perceived as a nuisance, and it is difficult for your brain to ignore it or escape it. If your normal background level is say 45dbA from road noise etc, then this sudden and out of context sound that is almost 100x louder can actually be shocking.
- 3db is also an important measure: Every 3dB change represents a doubling or halving of sound energy. This has an important role to play if someone says "it's only xdb over/more" ... if the noise level increases by 3dB(A), this doubles the amount of the noise and reduces the recommended amount of exposure time allowed by half.
- So, 10db increase is double the apparent perceived loudness, but 3db is double the power.
- Event organisers for certain genres tend to try to enhance the bass sounds - it has been shown that attendees respond to the feel of the bass as well as its loudness. This can result in the bass leaking massively into the wider context. This is partly because we perceive higher frequencies as louder, therefore for the event organisers to really pump the bass requires it to be at a relatively higher sound level.

“JUST LEAVE FOR THE WEEKEND”

- Either comes from a position of privilege or lack of empathy.
- One may need to work.
- Not everyone can afford to go to the country.
- Not everyone is healthy enough to go too far from home or for too long.
- One may be trying to obtain necessary rest from working nights, or a stressful week, month, year or like all of us - few years.
- Suggesting that one leaves to escape it is tacit acknowledgment that the noise is overbearing and unacceptable.

“DECIBEL METERS ON PHONES DO NOT WORK”

- The fact that residents are using them to record noise, to try and show you how the overbearing sound level FEELS, is feedback and evidence that should not be dismissed.
- Whilst the absolute measurement from such devices may not be calibrated/accurate, the RELATIVE level it shows from the normal is meaningful data and evidence. To dismiss this shows a lack of rigour and understanding of the subject matter.
- My measurements taken with a calibrated dedicated sound level meter do not disagree widely with those readings I've seen from phones - but more importantly they show a meaningful difference from the normal acceptable background levels that residents expect.

- DB meters on phones empower people to investigate and respond to sound disturbance issues, they are not scientific equipment. So, take their feedback with that context but it cannot be ignored.
- NB some apps on some devices can achieve sufficient accuracy for absolute sound level measurements.

“THERE WASN'T THAT MUCH FEEDBACK / THERE WEREN'T THAT MANY COMPLAINTS”

- Beyond a complaints line with a wrong number, and which rang-through to nothing a lot of the time, **what quantitative and qualitative mechanisms were in place to capture feedback?**
- How do the data from these complaints chart over the last few seasons of events?
- What automated quantitative data is there? Eg please provide locations and synchronised decibel meter readings from a 3km radius from the event for the weekend, along with the related data captured during pre-event testing (where you would have set the standard for the event organisers to achieve during the events).

MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOLOGY

- A feeling of not being considered, or being helpless, contributes negatively to mental health
- Peaceful enjoyment of one's home contributes positively to mental health. Sometimes this is the only thing some people have to look forward to in a world that only appears to be getting more stressful and more worrying.
- Being able to plan a weekend around possible issues helps to mitigate stress – no such warnings were issued here.
- No feedback mechanisms appear to be in place to capture real-time or post-event information relating to the effect on the community's health from such experiences.
- A feeling of being ignored, and one's community leaders riding roughshod leads to disenfranchisement, reduction in engagement, support and feedback.

MANAGEMENT

- Local residents were largely unaware of these events (we had no warning of potential noise pollution).
- There appears to be no means to provide quantitative or qualitative feedback during the event - only a means to complain in an unstructured way.
- Taking over an entire weekend is obviously going to be troublesome, and clearly does not consider the local community.
- There appears to be no pro-active management at the event or in the wider community to deal with issues – not by capturing feedback, but by dealing with issues in real time. Again, an obvious mistake and unprofessional.
- Complaints are all well and good, but act retrospectively – except even here, lessons from previous years appear to have been lost.
- It is too easy to push accountability down the chain - but ultimately it resides at the top.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Put in place quantitative and qualitative feedback during and after, and over a wide area.
- Act during the event.
- Test in advance over a wide area. Test with realistic music. Publish results and event limits in a pre-event plan.
- Don't ignore subjective feedback, it is evidence too.
- Measure dbA levels at positions in events, at nearby streets, then key locations from previous feedback at various levels to add to human feedback.

- Alter levels to account for night time, and limit for various frequencies as well as whole spectrum.
- Treat in-event, near-event, and wider area limits separately.
- No whole weekends.
- Latest 6pm Sunday.
- No soundcheck before midday.
- It's the perceived loudness that matters in terms of disturbance.
- Financial penalties for event organiser non-compliance. Levels at all distances must be met with headroom.
- "15" minute levels are inadequate. Suddenly peaks like bass lines are disturbing. Check how continuous sounds are reported so they do not sneak around limits.
- Develop all plans based on perceived loudness with the priority being the health and wellbeing of residents.
- Don't ignore vibrations, high-rises, the need to open windows, flats facing only one direction, and mental health.
- If you are hosting your location's largest event: you need to be there!

END OF RESIDENT'S REPORT ON FACTS ABOUT NOISE

FEEDBACK

LICENSING AND ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS NEEDED

- **Noise measurements:** LBH licensing and enforcement teams must revisit the way noise is measured. It is clear, from Waterworks and Gunnersbury Live!, that measuring decibels is not enough. Low frequency noise has an extremely damaging effect yet it is not recognised as a measurement. This must change - before festivals are held in 2023.
- **Limit the hours:** Waterworks' noise disturbance began during the morning and continued till the end with no reprieve. It is unacceptable for all day festivals to occur in residential areas.
- **Public meeting with residents:** LBH licensing and enforcement departments must understand the effects of decisions on residents and others, beyond reading emails and responding to them. A face-to-face meeting is long overdue and must now take place.
- **Map showing the spread of noise complaints:** LBH licensing and enforcement must produce a map showing the locations from which noise complaints were received and must share this with councillors who received complaints to ensure that the map conveys the full picture, before it is published.
- **Mitigation:** Firm arrangements must be made to minimise disturbance; punitive sanctions must be imposed on the CIC and on festival organisers for breaches.
- **Complaints line:** This must be fully staffed during festivals with staff taking calls separately from those responding to complaints; it is unacceptable for residents' calls not to be answered or to land on an answering machine.
- **Listen to feedback:** For too long, licensing and enforcement have looked at comments from residents and councillors as reactionary and exaggerated rather than measured and factual; this has resulted in a major loss of trust and respect in licensing and enforcement processes before and after licences are considered.
- **Licensing process needs to be reformed:** The process that led to the CIC having a blanket licence that gives it the freedom to hold events without ever again needing to apply for a licence was a travesty. It was clear that every effort was being made to ensure the licence was granted; local residents' views about, in particular, noise were disregarded. There was no challenge of assertions made by the CIC's representative, assertions which were patently untrue, but cleverly on a subject they did not expect

officers and panel members to know about. There was little interest in adjusting terms to ensure that residents' and communities' views were taken into account. The CIC's wishes were to be fulfilled. Residents have little, if any, faith that their concerns will ever be given a fair hearing. The policy seems to be to defend the CIC, not to set up robust checks and investigations. The licensing process needs serious review particularly as enforcement is ineffective.

CONSULTATIONS, BRIEFINGS AND FEEDBACK MEETINGS

Sadly, consultation, briefing and feedback meetings have continued to be about going through the motions, not genuinely seeking then responding to residents' concerns and experiences. The briefing given by Festival Republic was extremely poor. The presenters appeared not to understand to whom they were presenting – residents and local groups – and instead appeared to be re-using their pitch to the Gunnersbury Park CIC, an entirely different proposition. Surely The Event Umbrella and the CIC should be responsible for briefing Festival Republic on the purpose of the meeting, who would be attending and the local issues that needed to be addressed – and ensuring that the brief is met (including by intervening during the presentation, if necessary). Residents felt insulted, taken for fools and treated as if they had no knowledge of their own local area and no understanding of the issues. These meetings amplified locals' views that the CIC isn't interested enough in its local communities to want its festival organisers to be well-regarded by residents.

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS DURING FESTIVALS

- **One number, one email address:** Commenting and complaining should be easy to do, not fraught with confusion. With a different email address and phone number for each festival, and with inconsistent leaflet deliveries, residents were not clear about who to email or phone, with some residents complaining to Festival Republic about Waterworks. Others hadn't received leaflets and didn't know who to contact so they contacted their local MP. There should be one phone number and one email address for all festivals, diverted to and monitored by the festival organiser. This would also show that the CIC is genuinely keen for residents' views to be heard.
- **Leaflets must be issued for every large event, they must be accurate and publicised:** The leaflet issued by Waterworks gave wrong information; it was not corrected with a follow up leaflet. If this were to happen again – if a leaflet is found to be wrong – a new leaflet must be issued immediately with a prominent note on it explaining that it is an update, correcting an error. For every significant event, an informative leaflet must be distributed to residents in an agreed catchment area, and the contact details widely publicised through our local media. Residents are increasingly annoyed that this remains such a problem given all the lessons that should have been learned from previous events. Clearly, every event will have its own ways of conveying information but the CIC and The Event Umbrella must set minimum requirements, including the date by which pre-event information should be given to residents and the local media. It should be a condition that each event organiser must comply with this important aspect of community and neighbourly relations. Residents are becoming increasingly intolerant of inefficiencies and being disregarded and disrespected.
- **More staff needed to take complaints:** The LBH noise line was not fully staffed. Some residents said the number rang and rang with no chance to leave a message. The Festival Republic email address and phone number also didn't work or, when it was answered, only one person had been allocated the task who, understandably, couldn't

stay by the phone without a break. Even when the person was beside the phone, it was clear that more than one person was needed. The CIC must require festival organisers to provide more staff for this important service, as being unable to leave a comment meant many residents felt even more resentful about the impact on them of the festival.

- **Don't play the numbers game:** Inadequate systems can't be trusted. When residents hear at debriefs that few complaints were received, their trust in the organisers and the CIC falls even lower. They know they weren't able to get through, or couldn't leave messages, and that claims of a small number of complaints is false. Playing the numbers game is not a winning strategy in relation to winning support in the community. Indeed, there was huge frustration when this ploy was used this year. If festival organisers and the CIC want to build trust they must not play games with residents.
- **LBH enforcement officer confirms high volume of complaints about Waterworks:** Responding to a resident, LBH enforcement revealed, "lessons have been learnt to ensure that sufficient checks are undertaken so as this does not occur in future. Further to this and in some mitigation on the night in question; I am sure that you will be aware that there were a high volume of complaints for Officers to field and respond to effectively during the event ..."

LOOS

Loos should not still be an issue. The same lessons have still not been learned.

- **Never on Gunnersbury Park Garden Estate (GPGE) land:** Despite all previous comments and conclusions, this year the CIC yet again tried to force a bank of portable loos on to Gunnersbury Park Garden Estate (GPGE) residents. This time it was because TfL refused to have portable loos on their land – just as we had refused to have them on GPGE land. No amount of pleading will ever change this; the GPGE does not want and will not tolerate portable loos here. Experiences from the year when they were foisted on residents has hardened their opinions; they will not change their minds.
- **TfL refused to have portable loos on its land and closed its loos:** TfL wisely and based on experience, refused to have portable loos on its land and closed its loos inside Acton Town station. This is a strong message to all festival organisers and to the CIC and The Event Umbrella. Just as with the GPGE, TfL will not tolerate the behaviour and effects associated with Festival-goers using their loos or loos on their land. These are public loos which should be open to be used by people travelling generally; closing them during festivals denies others the right to use these public loos causing great inconvenience for passengers. The CIC and festival organisers must, in advance, identify other locations for portable loos.
- **Many more festival loos are needed and in appropriate locations:** Portable loos are essential; they should be on land that does not impact on residents or businesses. A large bank of portable loos should be installed immediately outside Gunnersbury Park, or just inside the gates, so that festival-goers know they have only a short walk to them.
- **Publicise the locations of festival loos:** Much more could be done to publicise where the public loos will be so that all festival-goers know, when booking tickets and shortly before the festival, what the limitations are and where the loos will be. Information should include the fact that local cafés/restaurants are only available to customers and not to festival-goers just passing by on their way to or from the festival.

- **Signs directing people to loos need to be improved:** Signs were wholly inadequate; for one festival, they spun round in the breeze so they could not be seen by people walking to the festival; marshals were not aware enough to notice and turn them round. Signs should be much larger and more prominent; should be checked regularly; and marshals should continuously explain, as festival-goers are arriving and leaving, that loos are available and where they are.
- **Cafés and restaurants should not be expected to provide loos for festival-goers:** In some cases, café/restaurant owners will allow festival-goers to use their loos if they buy something. Otherwise, why should a business provide the loo, loo paper, soap, water, hand dryer and cleaning for services that should be provided by festival organisers?
- **Marshals must prevent use of alleys, landings, stairwells as loos:** Numerous festival-goers attempted to use the alleys, stairwells and landings of flats above shops as loos, as happened during the first Lovebox festival in 2018. Reasons for going into these areas were increasingly absurd including one saying she had been told the balcony upstairs was a short cut to the festival. Marshals are needed at the bottom of all three stairwells, preventing festival-goers from using this private land as loos. It is disgusting for residents to have puddles of urine and possibly worse outside their front doors, and to have to walk through urine and worse to get to and from their homes. In one case, a father had to pick up his child and carry her upstairs to avoid the puddles of urine at the bottom and on the stairs. I stood outside one of these alleys and prevented numerous people from going upstairs. I was told that my presence had reduced the number of people going into a local cafe/restaurant asking to use their loo. Marshalling in these spots works.
- **Marshals must prevent use of roads as loos:** One resident's private CCTV camera recorded festival-goers using her garden gate as a loo; it captures others urinating against her front wall. This happened outside other residents' houses. A shop owner has records of his waste bin in Ridgeway Drive being used as a screen enabling festival-goers to urinate out of sight. Almost all businesses that back onto Ridgeway Drive are food businesses where health and safety are crucial issues. It is beyond unacceptable that festival-goers consider these spots to be outdoor lavatories and this must be prevented.

MARSHALS

- **Better marshals:** Marshals at this year's festivals were far less well-briefed than they should be. Many did not know the basics (directions, locations of loos) and were often silent, doing nothing to direct people to festivals. This was a significant step backwards. Marshals must be robust and well-trained and know they will be supported if they take strong action. Anyone can stand in a hi-vis jacket and do nothing or act feebly. We need active, engaged and robust marshals who are capable of being firm and informative.
- **More marshals:** Many more marshals are needed and should be in the following locations for all festivals:
 - **Outside Acton Town tube station:** At least two marshals, all the time, who should continuously point out directions; explain where the loos are; move people along.
 - **Outside the entrance to TfL's land:** At least two marshals, all the time, blocking the way into TfL land; continuously explaining the route, directing people towards Gunnersbury Park and explaining where the loos are.

- **Outside the gate to the first staircase and at the bottom of the central staircase and side staircase in Princes Avenue to flats above shops:** One marshal all the time in each of the three locations, ensuring that only residents of flats are allowed to the stairs and upstairs. They must be alert to chancers claiming to live, or be visiting friends/family, upstairs.
- **Along the top of Princes Avenue:** At least two marshals all the time, discouraging festival-goers from walking down Princes Avenue and using Ridgeway Drive and other roads as loos, etc.
- **Along Princes Avenue outside Ridgeway Drive:** At least two, one at each entrance, dissuading festival-goers from walking along Ridgeway Drive.
- **Along Gunnersbury Avenue outside Ridgeway Drive, The Ridgeway, Park Place Drive at the top, Park Place Drive at the bottom, Princes Avenue:** At least one marshal at each road entrance, dissuading festival-goers from walking along these roads (to avoid them being used as loos, etc).
- **Relief marshals:** Clearly marshals will need breaks so there must be many more marshals, so they are able to take over and give other marshals a break, to ensure that no location is ever without a marshal.

COMMUNITY LIAISON – THE CIC’S RESPONSIBILITY

There was no community liaison – with local groups, shops, cafés and restaurants along Gunnersbury Lane and The Pavement Popes Lane – in advance of Waterworks. This lack of interest in the local community must not be allowed to happen again. As I have recommended before:

- **The CIC should employ a community liaison officer:** This important task should be the responsibility of the CIC, not left to each festival organiser or other third party to pick up on or not. Making this role a permanent one, provided by the CIC to each festival, should mean there is some continuity of relationships; that contact lists are maintained not started as if from scratch every year; and that lessons to be learned and already learned are recorded and remembered from one festival to the next. It isn’t necessarily a full-time role (depending on how many festivals/large events being organised); it could be part of another role. The point is, it is too important to be left to festival organisers.
- **Fundamental not a last minute add-on:** The role of the community liaison officer is fundamental to the organisation of any event and will help to rebuild trust. It is not a last-minute task to be done as a sop to residents, local groups, local businesses. Leaving it till the day or week, or even month, before the event is disrespectful of the impact these festivals have on the community and disrespectful of the community.

SILVER TONGUED AND TONE DEAF

The CIC continues to be criticised by residents. There is no trust in its ability to manage festivals and other events with the local community in mind. Residents and their representatives have had enough of silver-tongued explanations, and listening to seemingly plausible reasoning, only to find they are baseless and full of empty promises. Five years of disappointment have turned off even those who thought, after Lovebox, that it should be given another chance.

- **Respect residents’ experiences:** Announcing, bullishly, the return of Waterworks before the CIC had held a debrief session on this year’s festival amplified its insensitive approach. This festival had by far the worst noise impact of any held in Gunnersbury

Park; residents had not been given a chance to discuss the experience from their point of view before its return was announced locally and posted on the Waterworks website. It was the equivalent of sticking two fingers up at residents.

- **Self-interest:** Funding messages on leaflets about festivals shifted the tone from community-minded information to self-interested domination. Residents understand the need to raise revenue; that is not in doubt. Nor, significantly, is the mood locally that there shouldn't be any large events. The issues are far more nuanced and about how large, how long, how often as well as reducing the amount of park taken up by events, and the length of time areas of the park are out of bounds to locals. The CIC seems not to realise that residents are fair-minded and realistic – but have been pushed beyond their tolerance limits.
- **Festival organisers also disguise and deny:** This policy – of attempting to smooth-talk, disguise and deny – seems to have permeated festival organisers. It doesn't work and should be abandoned. Festival organisers need to see their impact on the local community from the viewpoint of the local community.
- **Cancel culture:** When I relayed a point to the CIC about the impact of festivals on some older local residents, I was asked how many had complained and whether they had sent recordings of the impacts on them. The implication was that as they hadn't complained in the required way, and hadn't sent any evidence, the problems didn't exist. I explained that many of them, in their 80s and 90s, weren't on email, and nor did they have mobile phones on which they could record noise or take photographs. The fact that they couldn't behave as the CIC wanted didn't mean their experiences weren't real. They and their views should not be cancelled just because they were relayed through a third party; that is the only way they can communicate with the CIC.

DRUGS AND DRUG TESTING – ZERO TOLERANCE DOES NOT WORK

As before, nitrous oxide canisters and balloons littered the GPGE confirming that festival-goers are bound to use drugs. The BBC documentary about corrupt guards taking drugs into Lovebox continues to be referred to by residents but seems not to have made an impact on the CIC or festival organisers. It powerfully busts the myth that zero tolerance is possible. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p07n0nlr/festival-drugs-meet-the-dealers-series-1-2-the-corrupt-guards>

I urge, as I have done before, the CIC to require all its festival organisers to contract the services of The Loop (<https://wearetheloop.org>) so that festival-goers who either arrive with drugs, or buy them within the festival, have a chance to check the quality and safety of drugs being traded inside or outside the festival. Every effort must be put into ensuring there are no drug-related deaths or illness at a festival in Gunnersbury Park.

The excuse given by Festival Republic, that there are some arguments that testing at festivals encourages people to take drugs, is out of date and unsubstantiated. The key question is what peer reviewed evidence can Festival Republic produce from anywhere in the world which suggests drug checking encourages or increases drug use or drug-related harm? In contrast, in 50 years of drug checking around the world, no-one has identified even one paper that has found that to be the case. By contrast, the evidence base for drug checking gets stronger all the time, with the Loop now having around 10 published peer reviewed academic papers that show that not only does drug checking reduce drug-related *harm* at festivals it attends, drug checking actually reduces drug *use*. I can provide the research if wished.

COMMENTS MADE BY OTHERS

Residents' comments on Waterworks

"The noise level on Saturday in the Chiswick area is **totally** unacceptable. Bass tones are being heard miles away, rattling buildings fixtures and fittings. It's hard to believe the council has signed off on this level of disturbance for so many thousands of people." Grove Park, near Chiswick House

"The thumping bass sound was very pervasive throughout the day yesterday, both in the street and inside the house. It was commented on adversely not just by my wife (she and I may be considered to be 'of a certain age') but by our 30-year-old son who was staying with us. Living in a built-up area, we accept there will be a certain amount of extraneous musical noise. Granted that one hasn't asked for it at all, some of it is less uncomfortable to have to hear than other kinds. Possibly one of the most disagreeable kinds is the sort of pervasive bass sound isolated from any other musical context (though the music itself was also audible in short bursts) that we had yesterday, played over a period of about 12 hours."

"We recently had <https://www.pubintheparkuk.com/chiswick> which was very close by in comparison and that festival caused much less disturbance to us indoors compared to the type of "boom boom boom" coming from the festival at Gunnersbury Park which is much further away. This leads me to suspect that the frequency of the sound also has an impact and not only the decibels, but I will leave that to the experts to investigate. With regards to your statement about the decibel levels ... that does not help me at all. The thumping bass from your event is still loud, penetrating and very annoying. Turn it down please."

"The fact that Ealing and Hounslow have lost control over the CIC beast of their own creation says it all. The Park is still public property and ultimately the responsibility of the two local authorities, but they have given CIC the right to terrorise our community as they see fit. Frankly, I don't care if the company goes bust or not. However, I suspect that this is a fiction peddled by the company and that they did not make their full company accounts available for inspection when making this argument. It is up to the company to take out the appropriate insurance to cover the eventuality of surprise cancellations. It also begs the question whether CIC should be dealing with companies in such a financially precarious position."

"'Waterworks' was an entirely appropriate name for this function, given the number of participants who openly urinated along Gunnersbury Lane, in the service roads of the Gunnersbury Park Garden Estate and in the front gardens of private houses. I myself witnessed two of these incidents at first hand on the Saturday evening and I have spoken to one resident who found human excrement in his garden on Sunday morning. Another told me that she thought that the noise coming from her back garden late at night was that of a pair of mating foxes, but the next morning she found used condoms on her lawn."

"That's quite astonishing as the sound is blasting away at the moment and I have seen a guy outside ... with some monitoring equipment. I've also just walked down Chiswick High Road from Cambridge Road North to Gunnersbury Station and the noise is audible all the way along the south side of street. For this event the sound is bouncing around between buildings quite a lot, I can only suggest that you try measuring the noise level where there gaps in the streetscene between buildings such as in Power Road outside the Clayton Hotel." In response to a denial from the festival organisers that there was any noise in Cambridge Road North.

“The noise was loud in Thorney Hedge Road and Silver Crescent, especially where it was funnelled through gaps between houses and, for those living on the east side of Silver Crescent, where it was bounced back off the buildings in the Chiswick Business Park.”

“It’s only 1pm and already there are people urinating in the side streets from Acton station to the Gunnersbury park. There are no stewards directing people away and when we did find a steward to talk to, he said they were short staffed and we should talk to the police as the stewards would not intervene. We rang the community liaison line and was told the issue was already logged. If the issue has been logged why is there nothing being done about it? . How many complaints have to be made before some action is taken?”

“The noise from the Waterworks festival has been completely unacceptable in Chiswick this weekend. I am a resident in Grove Park, Burnaby Gardens, and it’s so bad we’ve had to keep the windows closed all day to try and mute it. Residents were earlier walking up and down the street trying to find the ‘house party’ the noise was emanating from - it was so loud they thought it was actually *in* the street. As we’re quite some distance away from the site it must be incredibly loud. The bass reverberation is particularly bad through the walls and floors.”

“I live in Fairlawn Ave and am writing to share my concerns about the noise once again this weekend from Gunnersbury Park. It has been intolerable all summer and yesterday even with all doors and windows closed the pounding bass noise is just terrible. Please can allowing these events for so many weekends each summer be reconsidered. I’m some distance away and it’s terrible. The houses closer must be finding it beyond terrible.”

“I rang the residents’ helpline manned by Waterworks’ representatives several times and at least one noise reading was taken outside my house last Saturday. However, it is irrelevant if it is within agreed decibel levels – even if that is correct – and many residents doubt the veracity of any readings and monitoring by people employed by the event organisers and by any members of the Council’s noise monitoring team.” Gunnersbury Park Garden Estate

“I would like to complain about the noise from the park, especially at this time of the night. It's 22:30, I live in the Kew Green area (near Mortlake Road), which is miles away from Gunnersbury Park and the noise even here is considerable, the bass vibrations as well. I cannot imagine what it is for the people living nearby. It is also highly inappropriate in the current period of mourning. It's really bad taste for the event to go ahead. I would like to ask Hounslow to reconsider future events such as this one, because of the unacceptable noise levels.”

“I live in Chiswick and I can hear the thump, thumb of bass from the event at Gunnersbury Park. It's ridiculous I can hear it from my home. This needs to be addressed. I hate to think what it's like for people living nearby.” Grove Park resident.

“I live in the Gunnersbury garden estate - a lovely quiet neighbourhood with little to no through traffic, mainly just residents. Not the past couple of weekends though - not only do you want to kill us with air pollution but why not have a crack at noise pollution? The last two weekends have been unbearably noisy with the drone of Jungle music blaring from Gunnersbury Park, it's AWFUL - who allows these events? Noise aside, we have to put up with droves of drunk and drugged people cutting through our neighbourhood to get to Acton Town station, stopping to urinate and whatever else they're doing in people's front gardens and our small parks (I have one in front of my house) whilst chucking their rubbish everywhere. I have seen this first hand whilst walking, fortunately not on my property as I'm so angry about everything I would

probably be in a cell now. The last couple of weekends our neighbourhood has also become an Uber pick up area for people leaving the events... it just goes on and on.”

“I am a resident of Pumping Station Road, Chiswick W4 2SN where the sound from your event is audible, annoying and disruptive.”

“I am writing to raise a concern about the level of noise from today's event at Gunnersbury Park. Whilst I completely understand the rationale for not cancelling the event at such short notice, the level of noise is completely excessive. We live next to Gunnersbury station and it is incredibly loud from here. This is quite unpleasant to listen to, makes settling babies/children for bed almost impossible, and cannot be adhering to the recommended decibel level for noise exposure for those closer to/ working at the event.“

“I live in Chiswick Village in an east facing one bedroomed flat with double glazing. This evening, after going into central London where there was a very peaceful, somber and respectful mood, I arrived home via the tube at approximately 7.45pm. As I walked from the tube station I was struck by the level of noise coming from Gunnersbury Park. The noise has continued since and can be heard over the sound of the television. Chiswick Village is very close to Strand on the Green and noise levels should not be at a level of being heard here ... It is now 10pm and the constant thumping of drums and techno music is of a level I have not experienced before (I have all my windows shut). I sincerely hope that you will not be back in West London ever again and can see that, in previous years Waterworks has had huge levels of complaints so it seems that you continue to have no consideration whatsoever about the negative impact you have on local areas.”

“I found the noise from Waterworks this time as disruptive and impactful as Gunnersbury Live! I heard the noise from it in my home (with all windows shut) and my garden all day long and until it ended at 10.30pm. As the event went on the music seemed to get louder and louder, although when I rang the residents' line the Waterworks representative I spoke to insisted they hadn't increased the volume and that it was within 'decibel levels agreed by the Council license' blab, blab, blab.”

“It was deafening! It shouldn't be allowed.”

“Clearly they take no notice of noise monitoring equipment The 1st of the 2 concerts about a month ago was horrendously loud.”

“Anyone else counting down the minutes until the Waterworks 'music' festival ends? How do these things get the go-ahead in the first place. All of the poor Wild Beings in Gunnersbury Park having to make sense of the intense noise must be so stressful for them”

“It's 12 midday until 10:30 p.m. tonight. The music from this festival Shakes my apartment at Kew Bridge.”

“It's much louder than the thing we had two weeks ago. Can hear the melodies. Thorney Hedge Road”

“What, they had melodies!. We just got BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM.”

“At least I now know what that dreadful din is!”

“I can hear loud music in North Sheen. Surely it can't be the same thing. it's very annoying.”

“Seems to have impacted the whole area - dunno what set up they have, but the bass was still audible with double glazing and with the industrial grade ear plugs! I’ve heard some loud music set ups, only thing I can compare to was having to set up camp at Glastonbury about 20 feet from one of the main reggae tents.” Grove Park resident

“According to the council, some of us were "hit" worse than others depending on how the sound travelled, near the A4 was very bad. The sound limit needs to be reduced, or these events stopped. As a regular park user, I find that it spoils my enjoyment of the park having these high, solid fences blocking the park, as soon as one event finishes, another one is being set up.”

“I’m not affected by the sound- my sympathies to those of you that are - but I get really pi\$\$ed off that so much of the park has to be closed off for weeks before and after the event. It’s meant to be a green space for everybody. We pay for it. To then be denied access to it is infuriating”

“The appalling thumping base notes from your mindless “music” being pumped out constantly all day is slowly driving me crazy! The volume has appreciably increased in the last hour - I suppose you think you can get away with it now as it is nearing the end of the festival – and it is ricocheting off the block of flats and the end of my road, Burnaby Crescent W4 3LH, so we are now getting two for the price of one. 20.55 hours and the volume has just gone up another notch so we can now hear some of the other higher pitched instruments. What right do you have to inflict this torture on local residents?”

“All I can say is that clearly the ‘permitted noise’ levels for these concerts are far too high and do not take into account the repetitive beat and base that penetrates our homes.”

“As far as I am aware, we were not provided with any contact details (phone line, e-mail) for organisers of the Waterworks Festival should we wish to register a complaint regarding the noise levels during the time the event is being held. I would like to register a formal complaint regarding the unacceptable noise levels for this event that is, yet again, extremely disruptive to the local community. The address residents@waterworksfestival.co.uk could only be used prior to 5th September. Those providing a venue for all the events that are now being held in Gunnersbury Park are turning living next to a park from being a pleasure into a nightmare.”

“Noise is far too loud even though all our door / windows are closed we can hear the Music too loud. Public crossing throwing rubbish in the front, I have cleaned many times. We live on main road. Council should be more responsible - for what they are organising - disturbing with music throughout the summer - we have put with this unpleasant noise and disturbances all summer. People sitting on our wall and making noises, which is unacceptable. If we have music in garden neighbours have problems and complain. Council is very quick to act - when they want to fine residents & take them to court. This is injustice to local residents. Local council should come and stay and see what local people are suffering.”

“Other festival/live music events are respectful of the surrounding neighbourhoods, and are welcomed by the community. Shame on your attitude.”

“I’m emailing to let you know that the bass from your event today has been really disturbing. I live at Strand on the Green which is just under 2 miles away from Gunnersbury Park. I have acoustic glass installed in my windows yet I can still hear and am disturbed by the bass. I’m not a kill joy but please would you turn the bass down?”

“Living by chiswick bridge I can't quite believe the noise coming from Gunnersbury Park. It's invasive and totally unnecessary. One Of the reasons for playing music in a venue, be it inside, or in a stadium is it's designed to contain and minimise noise disruption. To have an evening without planes is a rare treat spoiled by the constant repetition of hard base. I think poor decisions have been made and you need to think about how you can minimise the noise going into the next festival season!”

“Horrendous booming base all day and I gather until at least 10.30pm. Not been able to go outside. And it is pretty loud inside too. Driving me nuts. The Council should not allow this to happen. It must be appalling for people who live right next to the Park if it is so bad this far into Chiswick.” Barrowgate Road

“I would like to make a complaint about the noise produced by the Waterworks Festival in Gunnersbury Park today. I live in Grove Park and am able to hear thumping music. This noise has been audible all afternoon and I am still able to hear it now at 7.30pm. I am shocked that the noise is loud enough to travel as far as Grove Park and surely this is an indication that the level of noise from the Waterworks Festival is completely unacceptable. I noticed that the festival ends at 10.30pm tonight. Please reduce the noise levels.”

“I can hear it in every part of my house. I reside some distance away. The boom beat and the shouting into microphone is excessive. It doesn't appear you're controlling the decibels as it goes up and down from loud to louder .”

“I'm writing to bring to your attention the misuse of Gunnersbury Park for profit and the severe effect on residents' mental health and wellbeing which council approved extreme noise level events have inflicted. The Gunnersbury Live Events and other festivals who have been issued commercial event licences at the park this year have consistently been delivering over 70dB inside local residents homes every second weekend this summer. Children cannot sleep or study. Adults cannot work or relax. Multiple complaints to the Hounslow and Ealing councils have been fruitless and have been ignored. Instead the attached leaflet outlining the profits the park is making was send as a response stating clearly that money are more important than local young families' wellbeing, which is frankly disgusting. With some acts screaming curses it is hard for us to know what to explain to children! Young people have many options for festivals outside residential areas, we on the other hand have nowhere else to go. Not only can we not enjoy our own homes or gardens with extremely loud techno music blasting from 10 am to 12 at night (louder than our TVs despite double glazing), but we cannot use Gunnersbury Park as well as drunk and disorderly people are now everywhere during and after the event. To top this, tickets are now required for entry into this public space. Wild life is also negatively affected by noise and pollution. Do note that the organisers did not answer phones yesterday nor did the councils respond to the following complaints Hounslow reference:911091 and previously 908456 and Ealing:199628. I am attaching a video recording of the dB levels as well as the disgusting brochure the councils are using to silence residents' valid complaints about this horrid extreme noise torture. In short Gunnersbury Park is too small for large commercial events with extreme noise pollution.”

Residents' comments on Gunnersbury Live!

“The noise has been unbearable, the bass has been vibrating my apartment for the past ten hours, I've not even been able to have the window open due to the noise. This shows no respect/care for residents well-being. Drum and bass events should not be held in such a residential area, the noise is truly distressing for both myself and my dogs. To have this all

day on a Sunday is very out of order. I am very concerned about the same situation happening for the upcoming festival in September.”

“The use of the 'f' word as well as the intensity of noise for the past 8+ hours in a residential neighbourhood with young children is unacceptable. That's the first time my young children have been exposed to that kind of foul language and further, this was being broadcast into our home, whilst trying they were trying to sleep. I hope you recognise this as a significant issue for many of the residents of Ealing (and presumably Acton and Chiswick).”

“Bass and drum unbelievably loud. It was difficult to concentrate in the back of our house with the doors and windows shut. It was also relentless and the fact that it started in the morning and finished at 10.30 (10 on Sunday with an earlier start) was difficult to put up with. I also felt that I couldn't stay in the house for part of the day as the repetitive nature of the noise was getting to me so much. I had wondered whether the stage/sound system in future could be directed towards the A4? I had one customer advising that he had been accused by his neighbour in Mill Hill Road of playing music too loudly – so the sound was travelling far and wide. In summary, it is the noise from the concerts and disruption to the park that is the most disturbing part of these events. And my fear is the ramping up in quantity of the larger events.”

“I have listed the unacceptable behaviour which myself and other residents experience:

1. “The noise was horrendous. I know you experienced this as well. When I called up Gunnersbury Park they informed me it was below the legal limit. Yes maybe for Glastonbury when you are in the middle of a field but not in a built up residential area. It was mainly the bass which was quite frankly insanely high so much so I had to cancel my client calls as it kept disturbing the call so I lost income that day. I can imagine if a load residents screamed in the face of these event organisers we wouldn't be doing anything illegal but it would be pretty damn unpleasant. Perhaps we should give them a taste of their own medicine.
2. The exiting of the festival was handled very poorly. As you can see from the videos it resembled xxx with people having to jump over fences to avoid being crushed. There were also several near misses due to festival goers running across the A406 and also taxis stopping on the dual carriageway. I had to call the police because at one point 6 festival goers decided to sit in the middle of the entrance of Park Place and were nearly hit by a lorry.
3. Lack of stewarding - The steward on our road bless him was completely overwhelmed with the number of drunk and antisocial festival goers. He had no radio so when the near misses were occurring he had no one to support him. I told him it was a residential road which was narrow and the number of taxis attempting to come down the road just was not going to work. Fortunately he tried his best to stop taxis going down the road, however only to receive a load of abuse from the festival goers.
4. Antisocial behaviour - as a resident of Park Place I am well aware who is a resident and who is a festival goer, however many saw our quiet cul de sac as an opportunity to take drugs including cannabis and Nox and also to urinate, vomit and defecate. Yes I indeed had to witness this. When I confronted one of these festival goers that he had no right to be on our road because he wasn't a resident he entertained me in the fact that he lived at number 15. Since the numbers only went up to 11 he'd just blown his cover. After being caught out he proceeded to shout a load of abuse at myself and the steward calling myself 'a f*cking frigid b*tch.' Now as a teacher I get abuse shouted at me more than the average person but I certainly don't expect to receive such verbal abuse at 11.30 at night. I was actually on the phone to the police and the call handler and myself felt so threatened by this man's behaviour that he upgraded the call to a high priority.”

“Over the last few years I have been disturbed by many Live Events in Gunnersbury Park causing a noise nuisance, however this weekend is by far the worse and is in my view totally unacceptable. The noise nuisance started at 10-30am on Saturday 20th, I contacted Gunnersbury Live at 10-45am (0203 475 2697) to complain, I was informed that they were doing sound tests and the noise would reduce when the event commenced, like a fool I believed this would happen. Unfortunately the Loud Base noise continued all afternoon and evening and if anything was even louder than the morning. I rang again to complain at 8.00pm, I was informed that the noise was being monitored and was within legal limits, that in my opinion was absolute rubbish. Today being a Sunday (21st) the Noise Nuisance commenced at 10.04am and is still continuing, no doubt until late tonight. It is unacceptable that as Hounslow Residents we have to close all our windows/doors in the middle of summer in order to reduce the noise nuisance that Hounslow Council should be policing. During my conversations with Gunnersbury Live it was quite evident that the noise was being monitored by a company employed by Gunnersbury Live, not what I would call independent monitoring and certainly not supportive of the effects on Local Residents. I would ask what action Hounslow Council has taken to monitor the noise on behalf of Local residents and will action be taken to ensure that we do not have to tolerate a repeat of this Noise Nuisance in the future.”

MOURNING HM THE QUEEN

“I am disappointed the event was allowed to go ahead during the national mourning period for the Queen. It does feel in poor taste for it to be taking place this particular weekend, even if it hadn't been so incredibly intrusive and disruptive.”

“My first complaint was that it was inexcusable to stage this event during the period of mourning for Her Majesty The Queen. Around a quarter of a million people were queuing to pay their respects at Westminster Hall whilst this shindig was being staged. It was disrespectful in extreme.”

“It is also highly inappropriate in the current period of mourning. It's really bad taste for the event to go ahead.”

“Let alone many residents who were trying to honour mourning of our late Queen adds salt to the wound. Largely a residential area and I feel little to any consideration was shown. It's not a question of trying to stop people having fun ... it's time and place.”

“Given the Country is currently in mourning for HM The Queen, I'm extremely angry at your total lack of consideration for those respecting this period of reflection, and the well being of the residents of this neighbourhood. It is unnecessary, antisocial and totally insensitive.”

“Chiswick Village is very close to Strand on the Green and noise levels should not be at a level of being heard here, especially during a national mourning of the Queen. I have looked on your website and can see that you made the difficult decision to go ahead with it due to the level of organisation but to continue and not to adjust noise levels shows a blatant middle finger to what is involved in a period of mourning.”

“Understand you signed this one off. It's a funeral weekend for our late Queen. Could you get them to turn down the bass a tad please? It's been going on all day, and it's now very late.”

“I have been away from home this week and am unable to queue to honour our late Queen Elizabeth. This afternoon I tried to spend some quiet time in contemplation and respect

watching the lying in state only for it to be completely destroyed by your disrespectful thumping cacophony! TURN THE BLOODY SOUND DOWN!"

"Other festival/live music events are respectful of the surrounding neighbourhoods, and are welcomed by the community. Shame on your attitude."

"What are you doing holding a noisy public event during a period of national mourning. SHAME ON YOU."

"I also feel it's quite distasteful given we are supposed to be in a state of national mourning."

"In event of the Queen passing many like myself find it in bad taste and disrespectful - money over sentiment may be your agenda but it is not to many thousands. These are of course exceptional circumstances. I feel you should have had adequate insurance for all eventualities, not impact on residents far and wide at such time of sadness and mourning."

Councillor Joanna Biddolph
December 2022