

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the  
**Licensing Panel**

Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire  
OX28 1NB at 10.00 am on **Thursday, 18 January 2024**

PRESENT

Councillors: Mark Walker (Chair), David Jackson, Julian Cooper and Jane Doughty.

Officers: Andrea Thomas (Licensing Officer), Kevin Dunford (Licensing Officer), Marianne Garrett (Senior Environmental Health Officer), April Paintain (Environmental Health Officer), Sara Anthony (Legal Executive).

Other Councillors in attendance: Nil.

**19 Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**20 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**21 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were deferred to the Licensing Committee for approval.

**22 Application for a New Premises Licence - The Wilderness Festival, Cornbury Park**

The Chair Councillor Mark Walker welcomed everyone to the hearing and introduced the Panel in attendance, Councillors Cooper and Doughty.

The Chair asked for the Officers in attendance to introduce themselves, Andrea Thomas introduced herself as the Licensing Officer, Kevin Dunford introduced himself as the Licensing Officer, Marianne Garrett introduced herself as the Senior Environmental Health Officer, April Paintain introduced herself as the Environmental Health Officer, Sara Anthony as the Legal Executive and Anne Learmonth introduced herself as Strategic Support Officer.

Following introductions, the Chair asked those who wished to speak that were in attendance to introduce themselves.

Simon Taylor, Solicitor, on behalf of the Applicant.

Emma Kirby, Festival Manager, on behalf of Applicant.

Harry Lang, Vanguardia Accoustic Consultant, on behalf of Applicant.

The Chair outlined the process the hearing would follow and explained that the Panel would be advised by the Council's Legal Adviser, and Committee Clerk (the Strategic Support Officer).

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The Chair reminded all parties to highlight only issues that related to Licensing Objectives, being:

- The prevention of crime and disorder;
- Public safety;
- The prevention of public nuisance;
- The protection of children from harm;

The Chair announced that the Panel were in attendance to consider an application for a new premises licence made by MAMA Festivals Limited for the Wilderness Festival at Cornbury Park.

The Licensing Officer, Andrea Thomas, outlined the application for a new premises licence made by MAMA Festivals Limited in regard to the Wilderness Festival at Cornbury Park. The Officer confirmed that there had been amendments to Annex D as follows;

- the main stage would not be in operation on Thursday and would only operate between the hours of 10am and 11pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The site would open at 8am on Thursday and close at 4pm on Monday.

The Panel was asked to consider the application and to determine whether to:

- Grant the application as requested;
- Grant the application subject to such conditions that are necessary to promote the licensing objectives;
- Refuse the application in whole or in part where it is necessary in order to promote licensing objectives.

The Chair then invited Simon Taylor to address the Panel.

Simon Taylor addressed the Panel and gave an outline of the application by focusing on key points; background to the festival, the application, structure and planning, response from authorities and residents' comments.

- The Wilderness Festival had been running from 2011 as an arts and music festival. The attendance included a demographic age range from 35 – 50+, with a focus on families and was widely attended. There was a focus on music, food and drink, theatre and arts. The festival offered day passes and camping facilities from Thursday to Monday for weekend passes. Passes for local residents from two postcode areas were discounted.
- The 2019 licence was used as a template for this application. The length of the licence was for 5 days, which were broken down over individual days and times. The new application made two changes in timings. On page 41, Annex D, timings on Thursday had been amended from 10pm to 11pm, amended to 11pm to midnight. The largest stage would be closed on Sunday. With these amendments the noise levels would be better managed over the duration of the days.

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- Sound systems were reviewed each year and checks were ongoing by sound engineers during the day to monitor noise levels. Decibel levels were explained and how these levels were managed to ensure reduction of noise within the later hours of the festival. The largest indoor stage would be closed on the Sunday, by closing this stage the off-site noise impact would be significantly reduced. Work would be done with Vanguardia and independent acoustic consultants throughout the duration of the festival. Local residents would be encouraged to contact a 'hotline' with any concerns or complaints, and these would be responded to promptly.
- Suggestions had been taken on from the Police, Fire and Ambulance services. Also there had been an improvement fed into the traffic management plan which included the use of traffic lights, train shuttle, improved signage, increased external staffing and liaising with local taxi firms with a pre-agreed route.
- There had been an expanded consultation with local residents and Parish Councils through meetings, letter drops, local forums and groups for residents and the provision of up to date information via the Wilderness website. Also, information regarding the festival to be provided for local councils to distribute and display.

The Chair invited questions from the Panel, which raised the following points:

- The Panel asked how long the licence would be in place for. Andrea Thomas, ERS Officer advised that the length of the licence would be dependant on the life of the business, objections from authorities and any breeches of conditions which would result in a review of the licence. Simon Taylor added that the festival had been running for 11+ years which provided the Panel with assurance as to how well managed the festival had been over previous years.
- The Panel questioned the robustness of the helpline and complaints process and how this would work. Emma Kirby, Festival Manager, confirmed that noise levels would be monitored. The Local Council would advise residents that there is a 24 hour residents' helpline and there would be an offsite monitoring team to support and deal with complaints.
- The Chair asked if there would be more engagement with the local communities and reduced rates to provide access for residents who were less able to afford the ticket process. The Festival Manager confirmed the availability to discounted day tickets for residents within the postcode OX29. In addition, local projects had been supported in the past by the event.

In Summary Simon Taylor invited the Panel to grant the licence as applied for and to include the amendment on page 41, Annex D, timings on Thursday which had been amended from 10pm to 11pm, amended to 11pm to midnight.

The Panel retired to determine the application.

The Panel returned and advised that they had considered all of the case papers and had taken into account what had been said during the hearing. They had listened carefully to Simon

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Taylor, Emma Kirby and Harry Lang, the representations of the interested parties, and considered the Council's licensing policy and objectives.

The Panel agreed that the application was robust and had demonstrated that feedback from the festival being run in previous years had been taken on-board including residents' concerns. The Panel was confident to accept the submission of the Applicant and that they would adhere to the conditions laid out in the licence.

The Panel **Resolved** to:

- I. Grant the application as requested.

The Meeting closed at 11.40 am

CHAIR