

BUSKER GUIDE CONSULTATION COMMENTS

What is your name ? - Name	What is your email address ? - Email	What is your organisation ? - Organisation	What are your views or comments on the introduction of a busker voluntary guide. - your views comments	tell us if there are any busking related behaviours that are affecting your businesses or home life that have not been captured within this document. - does this affect you
		BCC	I think it is a good idea. The guide is simple to follow and I agree with the content.	I don't mind busking as it makes the city centre more interesting and lively. The only time I dislike it is when it is too loud.
		Member of public	good idea, especially the amplified buskers	no
		Town Centre BID	<p>1. Why does this guidance just apply to the city centre? We are plagued with very poor quality supposed musicians who play for hours with a very limited repertoire. Have they been driven out of the city centre?</p> <p>2. How was the public consulted? I am very confident that if this consultation had been widely circulated and publicised then there would have been far less "public" support</p> <p>3. As a small BID, we don't fund street wardens as we have a very wide ranging programme of activities targeted at a wide range of business sectors so it is down to me to speak to the buskers. Some take it as a challenge to turn up the amplification when asked to turn it down. I live in fear of "rap" artists making up a rhyme about me asking them to turn it down so I will not challenge them.</p> <p>4. Buskers, in my opinion do not think about the local businesses when they set up</p> <p>5. Many do not speak English so what is the point of the guide?</p> <p>6. The police either have no powers or are not interested in tackling the issue</p> <p>7. Who is tackling the buskers who arrive with CDs to sell?</p> <p>8. Speaking to buskers often gets me abuse from passing shoppers who don't have to listen to the same limited repertoire over and over again</p>	Many do not speak English so will not understand guidance

		Birmingham City Council	In my opinion the introduction of a Voluntary Guide sets out clearly the conduct, behaviour and processes to be followed if you wish to busk within the city ctr, thus making it fair to all who pursue this activity. Before any action is taken against anyone it needs to be made a clear what is acceptable, a guide would do this. I think the guide should also make it clear what will happen if the guide is not adhered to and we need to make sure we can follow this through.	Busking does not personally affect my business or home life. As a visitor in my free time to B'ham City ctr. I have witnessed the increasing numbers of buskers and volume. Walking down the street hearing the odd busker should be a pleasant experience, the volume of some has made it so you cant even hold a conversation when walking past. I would welcome a Voluntary Guide
		None	There should be a guide as long as it remains voluntary. Restrictions on public entertainment and other uses of public spaces underpinned by law can be misused and become repressive.	
		N/A	I feel that a voluntary guide doesn't go further enough. There are too many buskers many using amplified equipment. A lack of police and city council officials in the city centre means a voluntary guide is unlikely to be adhered to. A small amount of buskers at a lower volume is of course ok, but the use of amplified equipment is too much and is quite unsociable. In addition preaching or religious music should not be played amplified.	
			I like the idea	I get buskers playing right under my living room window which overlooks Union Street as I live in Birmingham city center. I would like this area to be controlled or to be a banned area
		Just an interested party	Busking enriches the city. I love to hear or see street entertainers so please I understand the needs of guidelines but please don't stifle street entertainment.	none
		general public	Too many buskers! They deter you from visiting Birmingham. I go every week but dislike walking from Corporation Street to M and S because of all the buskers. There is an accordion player near Pound land who plays at full volume. He has an amplifier and it is deafening. By M and S, it is a nightmare! They should be either regulated or made to audition. There are drummers, loud speakers etc. I just feel it is overkill at the moment.	As above. I visit Birmingham as a shopper.

		City Centre business	This is a great idea as it will allow people to find what they like or avoid what they don't and can complain when someone is busking where they shouldn't.	There is a busker who busks every single day outside New Street Station. He is incredibly loud and absolutely awful. Can't sing a note. Should he be allowed to be there all day every day because it's all we can hear and its incredibly annoying.
		Birmingham City Council	A good idea as long as the authorities do not come down 'heavy handed'. Bear in mind that music and entertainment is a matter of taste. What suits one will not suit another. Some street entertainers rely on donations to keep them surviving.	There is one busker in particular who drives me insane, no names, no pack-drill but it does involve a trumpet! Can this guide be broadened out to religious preachers - who I find much worse than buskers? With the Christians and Muslims at the bottom of New St, I fear another 'Crusades' breaking out by the Villa shop; as if they don't have enough problems already. Thanks
		retail premises New St	This has been long overdue and needs to be implemented as soon as possible.	Buskers who use amplifiers need to be limited to locations where they cause no interference to business. In my store they cause us no end of stress as we often cannot hear conversations on the telephone due to excessive noise. They make it difficult for our own in store music to be heard and often we have to turn our music off as it cannot compete with theirs. We at times find it difficult to communicate with our customers at the till point. Some Buskers stay for many hours and have led to some of my customers leaving the store as they cannot tolerate the noise. They are difficult to move on and when they do they are replaced by others with similar amplifiers. When we have contacted retail Birmingham and the environment officers they have been very supportive however I feel that we need a policy that enables our customers to have a safe and fun shopping environment that does not interfere with businesses.
		unknown	Fine, just keep checking to see if it works,	No

		Professional Musician, Theatre Musician	We want to ensure that musical culture can thrive and enhance the cultural vibration of the city centre, whilst not becoming an annoyance to residents and businesses. Strong guidelines would ensure this - one of the most effective methods I've seen in cities around the world is a simple time limit for any one spot - an hour at a time before moving on. This would leave people free to express themselves, make a little money, and add to the cultural life of the city centre whilst limiting the impact of repetitive music for local businesses.	Let's not miss the chance to let our city's musical culture shine - let's encourage it. If Birmingham is to present itself as a world leading city it must foster the vibrant musical culture that goes hand in hand with that.
		unknown	this is welcome as no code exists at the moment, anyone can just start busking and sometimes it can obstruction to passing public or noise pollution. Or you can feel threatened by the person.	Outside our workplace we have all types of events taking place which are loud and cause obstructions. But buskers who have no planned agreed event stand anywhere, outside shops and stations etc. with the intent of collecting money. The obstruction is one thing as people gather to listen etc. but the noise levels must be limited as you have said it is awful to have repetitive song played over and over and can make doing your own job difficult especially if you are having a meeting etc.
		Birmingham	<p>Dear Sir/Madam,</p> <p>This comes of the back of a formal complainT I have made to BCC regarding the amplified religious preaching in Birmingham city centre which I am opposed to. I am a musician, I have been involved with music all of my teenage and adult life having worked with bands such as, I've released records which have featured on (redacted to preserve identity) and I think it's fair to say I have made music my life and also made substantial money from it. However, I have also been through some very tough times as a musician and even now it is not my full time employment. Many friends have busked. It is, I believe, a vital part of a musicians life, and also can be hugely positive to a city and the people who thrive there.</p> <p>What I object to however, is religious preaching via amplified means. The only people I have seen do this in Birmingham are the Muslim preachers in High Street city centre. I have seen confrontation, arguments between people of other faiths and also a pestering of people who walk past particularly anyone who looks like they may be worth targeting for conversion to Islam. I have no problem with religion itself, and believe it can be a great force for good, but Birmingham should</p>	

			<p>not be a recruitment ground for any religion via amplification.</p> <p>It is both alarming and intimidating to some, even from the same religion. You may wish to read this: http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=2663818</p> <p>There are some worrying comments in the thread above. Birmingham should retain a music only policy with regards to amplification, or no amplification at all. If a tent is erected for stalls etc, then there should be no preaching, it should be for the individual to approach and decide if they wish to find out more, being shouted at via a mobile soundsystem is archaic and will offend and irritate many people such as myself.</p> <p>A busker voluntary guide is a first step but really will this prevent anti social preaching via amplification? There should have been a distinct difference appreciated between music and religion during the last consultation. There is a world of difference between a busker singing about peace and a Muslim (change to any religion you like here) preacher trying to convert people who are possibly going through a tough time in their life and who may be lost.</p> <p>It's just about common sense.</p>	
		none	<p>need to be controlled ,and how many on the streets at any one time ,and need to be showing a licence that they can be there .</p>	
		unknown	<p>Great idea but not for it to be voluntary. Let's have some proper, enforceable by-laws.</p>	<p>Ban ALL amplification of sound for buskers. I simply do not want to be forced to listen to whatever music a busker deems to "entertain" with. There was a chap in Cannon Hill Park last night playing Flamenco on an un-amplified acoustic guitar and he attracted a crowd simply by the quality of his playing. For naturally louder instruments - saxophone, drums, etc. - there should be a time-limit for performance and a proper "move-on" distance so that they don't just start again 10m down the street.</p>
			<p>agree some control needs to be taken and as outlined in your communication:</p> <p>not to stay outside one building all day</p> <p>do not repeat the same song / music over and over</p> <p>noise level</p> <p>if disruptive to members of the public request for them to move on</p>	<p>depends if they come to you asking for money - which is inappropriate</p> <p>too loud</p>

		Insurance Brokers	I don't think we need to anything about buskers, on the whole they are not a nuisance and some of them are very good. They add a bit of character to the City centre, even the ones that are not so talented as they can be amusing. What really needs addressing is the number of 'chuggers' harassing people to make charitable donations. I thought the numbers were supposed to be drastically reducing, but immediately outside my office at lunchtime today I passed 7 of them working on behalf of 3 different charities.	It does not affect our business at all.
		Associates	Excellent news as long as it has some 'teeth' and can influence current behaviour	<p>Busking is good! It is both entertaining and good for the ethos of any main city.</p> <p>BUT, repetitive and low quality busking has the opposite effect.</p> <p>Regular buskers should be encouraged to alter location every day (or every two days) to prevent those with limited repartee annoying local businesses. Some buskers (i.e. at Victoria Square) are known to busk for the entire day at the same spot with little variation in songs/ tunes.</p> <p>Busking licenses should be enforced as the typically low quality buskers appear to be unchallenged and intrusive.</p>
		Bank	I would rather see a controlled area where people can perform from or yell their religious beliefs. At the moment it is all over the city and I find it really offensive to have to listen to the noise. I would rather have peace and quiet and visit an area if I want to listen to random people playing trumpets and accordians badly.	The chuggers are a pain outside the back of house of Fraser and Cherry street and I would prefer they were not there at lunch time.

			<p>Please can you stop the music played by all religions on New street, they bring amplified music and it is unnerving and loud? All the religious buskers stay in the same place all day and stop constantly, please stop the shouting at passers by, this constitutes an assault and should be stopped. Talking to people is one thing but shouting stops me from enjoying my home and I am unable to relax after work. This doesn't happen in London, why do the council allow these religious people to do this here in the heart of the city? Please stop the noise as this will stop visitors from coming here and stop others from wanting to live here. The use the f loud speakers and amplified music is very unfair to those who live here?</p>	<p>Please can you stop the music played by all religions on New street, they bring amplified music and it is unnerving and loud? All the religious buskers stay in the same place all day and stop constantly, please stop the shouting at passers by, this constitutes an assault and should be stopped. Talking to people is one thing but shouting stops me from enjoying my home and I am unable to relax after work. This doesn't happen in London, why do the council allow these religious people to do this here in the heart of the city? Please stop the noise as this will stop visitors from coming here and stop others from wanting to live here. The use the f loud speakers and amplified music is very unfair to those who live here?</p>
			<p>Provided it's voluntary I think it's a good idea. The guide itself seemed very fair.</p>	<p>None</p>
		Business District	<p>Business District welcomes the principle of introducing a guide for the use of public spaces in Birmingham. We also welcome the principle of setting out behaviours that people using spaces are expected to adhere to.</p>	<p>Business District believes that Birmingham City Council should pursue the adoption of licensing system with designated busking areas in order to strike a balance between vibrant streets and effective business. As a specific response to the proposals as set out, we do not feel that sufficient emphasis is given to business in these guides. They adopt a fairly narrow view of what constitutes 'business' in the city centre and the kind of impact that busking can have. Whilst we accept that retail makes up a significant amount of the mix of businesses, there is over 5.6 million square feet of office space in Business District alone. The development of the city centre, through projects such as Paradise, Arena Central, Snow Hill Three and the wider Snow Hill Masterplan will only see this figure</p>

				<p>grow. Anything devised now should continue to be relevant and workable over the coming years.</p> <p>Again, whilst we accept that the majority of busking takes place in areas of high retail footfall, we are mindful that the use of a guide such as this is likely to disperse less engaged buskers to other areas, including Business District. Therefore, this guide needs to be applicable both to office, retail and hospitality. There is often the perception that businesses who locate themselves in the city centre should be aware of, and be prepared to help to manage the issues that such a location brings. Whilst Business District does not shy away from this, busking is not an issue that business can easily influence or effect, and the burden placed on those businesses should be reflective of this fact. Business District fully accepts that businesses must be willing to step forward, register concerns, and be involved in the process, both formal and informal, of finding an acceptable balance between business and the vibrancy of our city centre. However, it isn't practical for businesses in multi-tenanted buildings to go out and engage with buskers at the initial point of concern. We would welcome a practical review of how businesses of this nature might submit their concerns. We note that the referral options are only available to businesses during standard working hours. Birmingham has a vibrant and growing night time economy; a key selling point of the city internally and externally. We are concerned that there is no opportunity to redress concerns</p>
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				<p>at night or during the weekend. Bearing in mind that the first semi-formal stage involves the reporting of a concern to Birmingham City Council, how will officers realistically assesses the impact at weekends and out of hours? Without this, a formal complaint cannot be initiated. We also note that the process includes no form of appeal if Birmingham City Council deems there to be no fault. It seems unbalanced that, whilst a busker is able to request a review of this decision, a business can't. This again shuts down the process for business at an early stage, a situation that is likely to cause economic and reputational harm to the city. Business District feels that the indicated performance time of 2 hours is too long. For professional services, this represents, on average, a quarter of the working day. A poor busker may, therefore, impact a quarter of a business' daily income. The nature of professional services means that excessive noise is extremely impactful and disruptive. Allowing for a such a significant level of disturbance seems prejudicial to this important sector of Birmingham's economy. We would prefer the guidance to make it clear that sets should be shorter in length, and that 2 hours should be seen as the exceptional maximum rather than the norm. We have previously suggested 45 minute slots as being more reasonable. Overall, Business District supports this informal/formal approach in principle, and supports the development of these guides, however, we do not believe it provides sufficient checks and balances to allow</p>
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				businesses to engage with it successfully when issues arise. Going forward, we would also welcome the introduction of electronic reporting system that would allow businesses to report online and track their enquiry. We also feel that Birmingham City Council should explore the creation of an online booking system for buskers to prevent pre-booking issues, which the guide clearly hopes to avoid.
		Property management	I think buskers add atmosphere and variety to the street scene and I strongly agree that the quality, content and volume needs to be monitored. They should also refrain from blocking shop windows, fire exits and access routes.	I have experience the volume being too loud meaning I do not want to visit the nearby shops.
			I think it is a good idea. I think there should be some general guidance.	I am a Birmingham resident. I am not a fan of indoor shopping Centres and enjoy shopping locally in Kings Heath, Moseley and the city centre. Buskers can enhance this experience, but sometimes they are intrusive and noisy. I am very concerned about the use of amplification particularly on High Street and New Street, both by buskers and people preaching or promoting their views. Ideally I would prefer there to be no amplification, and for buskers etc to rely on their voices and their own instrument - not amplifiers and background tracks. Obviously this would favour those who have loud instruments, such as brass, over instrumental soloists or singers, but I feel this issue it needs addressing to make the city centre experience better. My son used to live near Tesco's on New St. and having a loud busker on the street playing the same tunes repeatedly was very irritating for him and his wife when they were home a lot with their new baby, or had visitors around on a Saturday

				afternoon and wanted to open the windows.
			Buskers are generally fine if they are playing music or entertaining in some way. Good acts improve the atmosphere and make otherwise boring spaces interesting.	
		N/a	The guide is great as they give me a headache. i suffer with migraines which result in black outs and the bag pipe man in Northfield doesn't help this situation. They should go and get proper jobs like the rest of us! Buskers should be outlawed completely but, since that will never happen, they should be under stricter controls. Like, no music or noise.	They walk in front of me to block my path and refuse to move until I acknowledge them. They are rude, they have few, if any, rules to abide by and they generally cause a nuisance.
		Busker	I am a busker myself and believe the current system is fair. I earn less than £20 for every busking session and thus I am doing it more for the promotional side of things. Because it is very hard for buskers to earn an income I believe that if you were to introduce an audition (with a fee) or a licence that will cost money it will make street entertainment less viable. I also believe that the city should encourage buskers more. For example throughout London there are "busking spots" with power sources and they are placed in places that have a lot of pedestrians passing by. i feel that this would encourage higher quality performers to busk in Birmingham.	
		I am a resident	I think it's a good idea, but I wonder what effort will be made to distribute this information. I would also like to have the following included "We recommend that you finish busking when the shops close (around 6 pm) to avoid disturbing local residents and hotel guests"	I have had problems with buskers in the past, and I believe my complaints have contributed to the reasons for this guide being published. I am disappointed to see there are no specific busking areas anymore, and that no busking licence is required, and fear that this could lead to an increase in nuisance buskers who interpret this as a free for all.
			This is really disappointing. We were asked our views on more than just busking, where is the response to the high level of disruption caused by religious preaching on the streets of the city?	I can't sit on my balcony without being bombarded by constant preaching and religious music at high volume.

			<p>It doesn't go nearly far enough. I am a city centre resident and I am regularly inundated by buskers trying to play louder than one another to attract clients.</p> <p>When just walking around the city centre, people play with electronic amplification at such high levels that it is clearly an environmental and health concern - it can physically hurt your ears to stand near them. Many of the electronic amplifiers are cheap devices which conform to no health and safety regulations- they are essentially car batteries attached to speakers with jumper leads. It is only a matter of time before a child touches one of the electrical terminals and potentially kills themselves. I do not believe this is regulated at all currently.</p>	<p>They play far too loudly and frequently at incredibly antisocial hours. There have been events such as when I called the police (for an unrelated matter), they could not hear my voice when I was in my own home over the outrageously loud electronic amplified buskers. This is a huge concern of mine. The noise often means I have to leave my home all day sat-sun as it is impossible to get any peace. I have been verbally abused and threatened by buskers who I have asked to reduce their volume when playing at antisocial hours. I am frequently woken up past 11:30PM by opportunistic buskers on Friday & Saturday night setting up with trumpets, etc. near my home trying to make money out of drunk pub/club attendees. Even buskers who play at reasonable volume levels and at sensible times of day often simply play the same 3 songs on loop for 6-9 hours straight. There have been discussions to try and limit the time a busker can spend in one place, but as soon as they leave, someone else will take their spot. This has led to buskers playing outside my home for 14 hours straight on some Saturdays.</p>
		N/A - Public	<p>Guidance should be introduced to ensure all parties are aware of expectations.</p> <p>However this should not be overtly prohibitive to the busker, which a voluntary guide should assist with (unlike the blanket control option not now being considered).</p>	N/A

		Private, individual contribution	Generally I like buskers and think that most of them give a pleasant buzz to the city experience. I'm glad that the BCC is dealing with buskers individually rather than as a group as this allows them to focus on any which are a creating some problems. (One example of this would be something myself and my colleagues experienced one summer while working on an office in Martineau Tower. We needed the windows open most of the time and found a saxophonist working most of the day in just below us in Union Street quite a serious distraction.)	No longer personally relavent. I find the "chuggers" more of a problem in town.
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