
From: Jesse Gerald <
Sent: 25 May 2017 10:23
To: Licensing
Cc:
Subject: Simmer Down - Licensing Hearing 31 May 2017

Dear David,

Thank you for your e-mail.

We have responded by e-mail to PC Rohomon on a wide range of points that he has raised.

On some issues, such as the closure of Hinstock Road, that PC Rohomon has suggested for a number of years, there is a difference of opinion. Birmingham City Council's Highways Engineer for the Constituency does not recommend this because of the pressure it would put on surrounding roads, we have respectfully chosen to follow the advice of the professionals who understand traffic management and not the Licensing Police Constable on this occasion. We have however followed the advice from the Highways Engineer for the Constituency and it is proposed to close Philip Victor Road and to double the number of Birmingham City Council's Parking Enforcement Officers patrolling the area.

We have also explained in the past, and have reiterated again this year, that the majority of people either walk or come by public transport to the Festival and there is no intention of providing car parking on site for all the festival goers.

We have also successfully operated the Festival in Handsworth Park whilst the Leisure Centre is open since its inception. The arrangements to allow Leisure Centre users to use the Leisure Centre carpark have not been problematic in the past and there is no reason to believe they would be in 2017.

Handsworth Park does not have a multitude of entrances, it is an unusual park in that it is fenced in its entirety with only five gates and a footbridge over the railway line into the licensed area. This makes crowd control and the counting of festival attendees a straight forward process. In recent years barriers have always been used and they will be in situ at each entrance again in 2017.

There appears to be a misunderstanding of what the nature of the Festival is. It is, and always has been, a 'family festival'. It has children's activities, arts and crafts activities, handicraft and food stalls along with live music that is specifically chosen to appeal to a family audience. The idea that there could be a crowd surge trying to get into the Park at any point in the afternoon is just out of the question.

Security staff do have the capacity to search people entering the licensed area but this has always only been done when there is a reasonable belief that it is necessary and/or backed up by intelligence. As a family festival there is absolutely no need to search everybody. All six access points were controlled at all times in 2015, and that enabled a very accurate assessment to be made throughout the day of the number of people in the licensed area.

We take issue with PC Rohomon's assertion and implied criticism that in 2015 'West Midlands Police had to take a full role in the management of this event, around the entry points and traffic management'. We worked closely with the Police Commander on the day, Insp. Adam Henderson, and whilst there was active engagement throughout the day, at no time did this stray into the territory of 'taking over'. Indeed Insp.

Adam Henderson wrote to us after the event, highlighting some things that could be changed in the future but overall praising the event and its organisation.

Throughout the history of Simmer Down there have been no incidents of public disturbances or risks to public safety, and as organisers of the event, we have worked hard to maintain the relaxed and family oriented ethos of the event. The small number of crimes that have occurred are in line with any large gathering of people and have not been a concern to the local policing team.

In the last two days PC Rohomon has raised a number of new questions which we are preparing responses to.

These would have been provided sooner, however the tragic incident in Manchester on Monday night has meant that the security company has been focussed on reassessing security arrangements for events this coming weekend, which has rightly taken a priority.

We will be reiterating these points at Licensing Committee on 31st May 2017 and providing evidence that will assure the Committee that the event organisers have placed public safety at the top of our agenda.

Regards

Jesse Gerald
Chairperson - Simmer Down Festival CIC