# High Court ruling forces rethink on Brockwell Park summer festivals after Lambeth Council approval overturned



A recent ruling by the High Court has cast a shadow over the future of summer festivals in Brockwell Park, a treasured green space in London. Judge Tim Mould KC determined that Lambeth Council acted irrationally when it approved a series of large-scale events in the park, sparking a debate about the intersection of community needs and commercial interests in public spaces. This decision not only affects the events scheduled to begin imminently but also raises questions about the sustainability of such festivals in urban parks across London.

The growing trend of hosting extensive music festivals in public parks has been met with increasing scrutiny from local residents. Over 285,000 attendees flock to events in Brockwell Park each year, such as Wide Awake and Mighty Hoopla. However, the legal challenge spearheaded by local resident Rebekah Shaman, backed by advocacy group Protect Brockwell Park, sought to address concerns about the enduring limitations placed on public access to the park, particularly as areas have been fenced off for these commercial activities. The group has notably articulated a desire for festivals to return to their roots—event experiences that serve local communities rather than prioritising profit.

The Court’s ruling highlighted a critical aspect of planning law: local authorities can permit 28 days of commercial activity in parks without additional permits. However, Mould pointed out that anticipated usage in 2024 would exceed this limit, being projected at 37 days, thus invalidating the council’s justification for allowing the events. In her reaction, Lucy Akrill from Protect Brockwell Park called it a “victory not just for Brockwell Park, but for communities everywhere fighting to preserve their green spaces.” The ruling mandates that Lambeth Council will have to reassess its stance moving forward.

This decision is particularly poignant given the ongoing dialogue surrounding the balance between the economic benefits of festivals and their environmental toll. In May 2024, the council had to cancel a free community event due to damage inflicted on the park's grounds by consecutive festivals. Brockwell Live, the festival operator, had committed to providing additional ground protection and covering repair costs, yet local frustrations over noise and ecological disturbances continued to simmer throughout the summer, as multiple festivals crowded the calendar.

Moreover, calls for improved community consultation and accountability from event organisers have gained traction. A crowdfunding campaign initiated by Protect Brockwell Park aims to raise £30,000 to mount further legal challenges against permits for future events, signalling a commitment to safeguarding local interests against what many residents perceive as encroachment by commercial entities. The criticism is not unwarranted; constituents have frequently raised alarms about noise, parking issues, and damage to the turf, which have resulted in public complaints reaching management and even prompting apologies from the council.

Reflecting on past strategies, Lambeth Council has grappled with finding a balance between community enjoyment and commercial enterprise. In a significant decision from January 2018, the council had previously limited the number of major events permitted in Brockwell Park, aiming to maintain a harmony between the demands of local residents and the logistics of event planning. Yet, the continuing escalation in the scale and number of these events has led many to question the efficacy of such measures.

As advocates continue to call for eco-conscious planning practices and accountability within event strategies, the outcome of this judicial decision may serve as a bellwether for other local councils grappling with similar dilemmas. By prioritising community engagement and the environmental integrity of public spaces, there is hope that a more sustainable approach to urban recreational activities can emerge—one that respects both the cultural vibrancy festivals bring and the sanctity of the green spaces they occupy.

The summer ahead promises to be a pivotal moment for Brockwell Park and its supporters, as the ramifications of the court's decision unfold and the complexities of balancing commercial interests with community well-being remain in focus.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ft.com/content/e9389e54-3dd2-460a-a9de-895e05664a10> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2025/03/crowdfunder-launched-to-challenge-the-use-of-brockwell-park-for-summer-festivals/> - In March 2025, the group Protect Brockwell Park initiated a crowdfunding campaign to safeguard Brockwell Park from commercialization and environmental degradation caused by large-scale events. Their objectives include halting the privatization and fencing off of the park, ensuring comprehensive consultation on the council's Events Strategy, and holding private event organizers accountable for any damage inflicted. The campaign aims to raise £30,000 to cover legal expenses for potential challenges to event permits, licensing, planning procedures, and related expert reports.
3. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3gg8p770eeo> - In May 2024, a free community event in Brockwell Park was canceled after four consecutive festivals left the grounds 'churned up' and muddy. Brockwell Live, the organizer, stated they would implement 'additional ground protection' for upcoming events. Lambeth Council confirmed an agreement that Brockwell Live would cover repair costs and noted an annual £500,000 investment in park maintenance. Residents expressed concerns over long-term damage to the park's turf and the impact of frequent large-scale events.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c038l8n6ydpo> - In June 2023, residents near Brockwell Park voiced frustration over 'nightmare' noise levels from recent music festivals. Over two weeks, the park hosted six days of festivals, leading to complaints about noise, illegal parking, and damage to the park's turf. Lambeth Council apologized to residents, stating that noise conditions were consistent with previous years and fully compliant with license conditions.
5. <https://love.lambeth.gov.uk/brockwell-park-events-decision/> - In January 2018, Lambeth Council decided that two new major commercial events, alongside the free Lambeth Country Show, would be too disruptive for Brockwell Park and the local community. Consequently, only Field Day and the council-organized Lambeth Country Show were permitted that summer. The council emphasized the importance of balancing community interests with event planning.
6. <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/protectlambethparks/> - Following the Field Day festival, reports emerged of abandoned bird nests and premature fledging due to disturbances. The Protect Lambeth Parks campaign seeks to prioritize environmental protection in the planning of private events in public spaces. They aim to ensure that funds raised from events are reinvested into park maintenance and that the ecological impact is carefully considered.
7. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2024/12/brockwell-park-local-residents-send-letter-to-the-mayor-of-london-demanding-a-compromise-on-summer-festivals/> - In December 2024, local residents of Brockwell Park sent a letter to the Mayor of London, urging for a compromise on the number of annual events. They highlighted concerns over the commercialization of the park, ecological damage, prolonged fencing off of green spaces, and the impact on local communities. The residents called for transparency, meaningful discussions with the community, and adherence to environmental policies in event planning.