# Former manager warns Glastonbury Festival overcrowding is an accident waiting to happen



The Glastonbury Festival, renowned as the UK’s largest music event, has faced increased scrutiny regarding crowd safety as it gears up for another edition this year. An anonymous former festival manager has issued a stark warning, describing the event as an "accident waiting to happen," primarily due to the reported dangerous overcrowding that poses significant risks to festival-goers. Over 200,000 attendees descend upon Somerset annually, drawn by a stellar lineup of performances and an array of arts, crafts, and theatrical offerings. However, the former insider cautions that the festival's booming popularity—coupled with rampant drug use—could culminate in a disaster, especially following a capacity increase to 210,000 last year.

During the 2022 festival, serious crowd-related incidents marred the experience, particularly at smaller stages where overcrowding led to dangerous situations. One such incident occurred during a performance by the Sugababes, prompting festival organisers to cancel the act as the surrounding area was overwhelmed by fans. This has raised alarms among safety officials about the adequacy of current crowd control measures, with growing numbers of attendees leading to closed-off areas and heightened risks of crowd crushes.

Cognisant of these challenges, Mendip District Council has recommended improvements to the festival's safety protocols as it prepares for the 2023 event. The council’s assessments highlighted the necessity for enhanced security measures, better crowd distribution strategies, and revised risk assessments based on stage popularity and the demographics of attendees. In its findings, the council acknowledged the festival's overall success but stressed that safety cannot be taken for granted and must be actively managed through a comprehensive approach during peak times.

Despite the safety concerns, Glastonbury has continued to thrive financially, with its pre-tax profits nearly doubling to £6 million for the year ending March 2024. This financial success has permitted the festival to allocate millions to various charitable causes, demonstrating its commitment to social responsibility alongside its entertainment offerings. However, the festival has not escaped criticism, notably from artists like Neil Young, who raised concerns about its commercial partnerships and the increasing prioritisation of profit over attendee safety.

In light of the festival's ongoing issues, attendees have voiced frustrations over the handling of crowd sizes, particularly when popular acts are scheduled on smaller stages simultaneously. The complaints have prompted Glastonbury's organisers to reaffirm their commitment to robust crowd management plans and their collaborative efforts with local authorities to ensure safety measures are effectively implemented.

As the countdown to Glastonbury 2023 progresses, it is clear that while the festival remains a cultural landmark, maintaining safety amidst rising attendance and increasing pressure from both attendees and authorities requires vigilant attention and proactive measures. The potential for overcrowding to escalate into serious incidents underscores the need for the festival's organisers to heed warnings and implement necessary improvements.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062788/glastonbury-festival-accident-waiting-to-happen), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/1435048d-0564-4da9-ad69-f818cfb8c148)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062788/glastonbury-festival-accident-waiting-to-happen), [[5]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/music/news/glastonbury-2024-shania-sunday-crowds-b2571695.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.nme.com/news/music/glastonbury-urged-to-improve-crowd-control-for-2023-3356930), [[4]](https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/whats-on/music-nightlife/glastonbury-festival-crowd-density-issues-7846811)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/1435048d-0564-4da9-ad69-f818cfb8c148), [[6]](https://www.theticketingbusiness.com/2022/11/25/glastonbury-told-to-improve-crowd-control-and-noise-levels-in-2023/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[5]](https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/music/news/glastonbury-2024-shania-sunday-crowds-b2571695.html), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-somerset-11300255)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2062788/glastonbury-festival-accident-waiting-to-happen> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/1435048d-0564-4da9-ad69-f818cfb8c148> - Glastonbury Festival reported a significant increase in profits, with pre-tax profits nearly doubling to £6 million in the year ending March 2024, and revenues rising from £57 million to £68 million. The festival allocated £5.2 million to charitable causes, including the NHS, Oxfam, and Greenpeace, and paid £1.3 million to local charities and groups for services provided at the site. Despite financial success, the festival faced criticism from musician Neil Young over its commercial partnerships, particularly with the BBC. The festival has been criticised for overcrowding at popular acts, and the overall capacity has increased to 210,000 people. Founder Michael Eavis has transferred his shares to his daughter Emily, who has been handling the day-to-day operations. The festival's economic impact report highlighted £168 million of income generated for UK businesses, including £32 million for those in Somerset. The festival has been recovering financially after record losses due to Covid-19-related cancellations in 2020 and 2021.
3. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/glastonbury-urged-to-improve-crowd-control-for-2023-3356930> - Mendip District Council recommended that Glastonbury Festival assess and improve security measures and crowd distribution ahead of the 2023 event. The council noted issues with security preventing entry into overcrowded areas and suggested revising risk assessments to consider artist popularity, stage size, and attendee demographics. The council also called for better management of excessive noise levels through monitoring and time restrictions. Glastonbury organisers are expected to respond to these recommendations in writing in the coming months.
4. <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/whats-on/music-nightlife/glastonbury-festival-crowd-density-issues-7846811> - Following reports of crowd density issues at Glastonbury Festival 2022, Mendip District Council plans to issue safety improvement recommendations. Attendees reported overcrowding at performances on smaller stages and at site pinch points. The council's report praised overall festival management but highlighted areas for improvement, including assessing security measures, better crowd distribution, and addressing excessive noise levels. Recommendations will be discussed at an upcoming council meeting, with organisers expected to consider them appropriately.
5. <https://www.the-independent.com/arts-entertainment/music/news/glastonbury-2024-shania-sunday-crowds-b2571695.html> - Glastonbury Festival attendees expressed frustration over overcrowding at smaller stages, leading to area closures and one act halting their set. With over 210,000 attendees, organisers faced criticism for underestimating crowd sizes for certain pop acts on smaller stages. The Sugababes' performance, for instance, saw organisers close the area due to overwhelming crowds. Festivalgoers also criticised scheduling conflicts, with major artists performing simultaneously on smaller stages, causing safety concerns. Glastonbury stated it has a robust crowd management plan and works closely with relevant authorities to ensure safety.
6. <https://www.theticketingbusiness.com/2022/11/25/glastonbury-told-to-improve-crowd-control-and-noise-levels-in-2023/> - Mendip District Council advised Glastonbury Festival to enhance crowd control and reduce noise levels ahead of the 2023 event. The council acknowledged the festival's overall success but identified areas for improvement, including better crowd distribution to prevent injuries and crowd crushes. Recommendations also included controlling the number of tents and festival-goers at campsites to reduce fire risk. The council highlighted the need for organisers to address crowd dynamics, especially during peak times, to ensure safety.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-somerset-11300255> - Mendip District Council raised concerns about overcrowding at Glastonbury Festival, noting that the site felt extremely busy despite being deemed an 'unqualified success.' The council highlighted issues in areas like Shangri La and Block Nine, where increased capacity led to difficulties in crowd movement. Recommendations included providing extra entertainment on quieter nights to prevent overcrowding and emphasising that safety is achieved through complex factors and relationships that cannot be taken for granted.