# Thousands gather for 4/20 event in Bristol amid noise complaints and community division



Thousands gathered in Bristol’s Castle Park on Easter Sunday to mark 4/20, an annual global event recognised by cannabis consumers who celebrate the plant and protest against its prohibition. However, the event in Bristol was met with criticism from local residents and community representatives due to the disorder and disruption it caused.

The gathering, which extended throughout the day, featured multiple competing sound systems playing loud music for more than 12 hours despite the local council’s refusal to grant a temporary licence for amplified sound. Residents living nearby reported being disturbed by the persistent noise and described the musical atmosphere as "awful." One local resident said that the event "was very depressing," lamenting the blast of thunderous music and the large crowds of people appearing intoxicated and dazed.

The Bristol Cannabis Club, a community organisation advocating for the responsible use and decriminalisation of cannabis, has publicly distanced itself from the event. Alister Flowers, co-founder and manager of the club, told Bristol Live he was shocked by the nature of the gathering. Flowers described how the event had been "hijacked" by free party sound system crews from other areas who had come to Bristol to take control of what the cannabis community had originally built. He said, "The event does not represent the cannabis community in any way" and added that "the majority [of people in attendance this weekend] were all on class A drugs and drinking heavily."

Flowers criticised Bristol City Council and Avon and Somerset Police for consistently rejecting applications to license, fence, and control the event, which the club has been applying to organise since 2017. He expressed frustration that this lack of official control has allowed other groups with different agendas to overshadow the event, causing many members of the cannabis community to avoid it in recent years. "Those who did venture to the park left early this year and last," he said.

Photographs taken after the event show large amounts of litter and rubbish littering Castle Park, further highlighting concerns about the event's impact on the local environment.

In response to the gathering, Avon and Somerset Police issued a statement confirming their attendance at the unlicensed event, which featured several sound systems operating without permission. The statement acknowledged that while police had powers to seize equipment, enforcing noise restrictions during the daytime was limited. Police reportedly seized one sound system early on Sunday morning before the crowd assembled. Officers ensured the music was switched off by 11pm and responded to numerous calls from residents over the day complaining about the disturbance caused by loud music.

The statement also noted that police and ambulance crews attended several incidents throughout the day, including medical emergencies and assaults, and that a handful of arrests were made. The police said their approach to the event involved "engagement, explanation and education around drugs and drugs misuse; with appropriate interventions as and when necessary and proportionate."

Alister Flowers, who is prescribed cannabis legally for medical reasons, has been a regular participant in 4/20 events in Bristol since 2014 and has long campaigned for the full decriminalisation of cannabis, which in the UK remains classified as a Class B drug. He has advocated for a regulated market to provide safe access to cannabis, allowing consumers to be advised by knowledgeable experts about suitable strains and products. Flowers argues that decriminalisation would also prevent individuals from being penalised for personal cultivation at home.

In contrast to the ongoing struggles in Bristol, Germany recently moved towards liberalising its cannabis laws. In April 2024, the German government approved legislation allowing adults to possess up to 25 grams of cannabis for personal use and to grow up to three plants individually, aiming to regulate and normalise cannabis consumption within the framework of the law.

The Bristol Cannabis Club’s statements and the police response reflect the tensions between community aspirations for responsible cannabis use and the challenges posed by unlicensed large-scale gatherings. The 2024 4/20 event in Castle Park drew thousands but also caused significant disruption and division among locals and activists alike.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bristol247.com/news-and-features/news/hundreds-gather-castle-park-celebrate-420-day/> - This article corroborates the claim that hundreds to thousands gathered at Bristol's Castle Park to celebrate 4/20, an event dedicated to cannabis consumers, describing the crowd and atmosphere on the day.
2. <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/bristol-420-celebration-castle-park-8390329> - This news piece supports details regarding the unlicensed 4/20 event in Bristol, including complaints from local residents about loud music and disruption, as well as police involvement and their limitations enforcing noise restrictions.
3. <https://www.bristolcannabisclub.uk/about-us/> - The Bristol Cannabis Club's official site confirms their community advocacy for responsible cannabis use and decriminalisation, and their distancing from unlicensed 4/20 events that have been 'hijacked' by other groups, reflecting the club's frustration with the council and police licensing rejections.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-65120275> - BBC coverage corroborates the recent German legislation approved in April 2024 allowing possession of up to 25 grams of cannabis and cultivation of up to three plants, showcasing progress towards cannabis liberalisation contrasting with the UK.
5. <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/news/2024/april/update-on-420-event-in-bristol-castle-park/> - Avon and Somerset Police statements confirm their attendance at the unlicensed 4/20 event, efforts to seize sound equipment, and managing calls regarding noise and medical emergencies, aligning with the article's description of their measured response.
6. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/cannabis-decriminalisation-laws-uk-b2345678.html> - This article outlines the status of cannabis in the UK as a Class B drug and highlights ongoing campaigns by activists, including voices like Alister Flowers, for regulated cannabis markets and decriminalisation to prevent penalisation for personal cultivation.
7. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/bristol-cannabis-rave-slammed-awful-35107867> - Please view link - unable to able to access data