# High Court quashes Lambeth Council’s approval of Brockwell Park summer festivals over planning breaches



The High Court in London has ruled against Lambeth Council's approval of a series of summer festivals in Brockwell Park, highlighting significant implications for the live music landscape in the UK capital. Judge Tim Mould KC described the council’s rationale for sanctioning these weeks-long events as “irrational,” a decision that raises serious concerns regarding adherence to planning law and community impact.

Brockwell Park, located near Brixton, has increasingly become a hub for large-scale music festivals, attracting over 285,000 attendees annually and providing a considerable financial boost to the local council. The ruling comes at a critical juncture, as festivals such as Wide Awake, Field Day, and Mighty Hoopla are set to commence shortly. Local resident Rebekah Shaman, who spearheaded the legal challenge, teamed up with the advocacy group Protect Brockwell Park to contest the council's actions, which they believe threaten both the park's integrity and the local community.

Judge Mould’s judgment underscored that the proposed use of the park would exceed the 28 days of commercial activity permitted under current planning laws, a stipulation that is designed to protect public green spaces from excessive commercialisation. “It was clear that the proposed use would continue beyond the 28th day,” he stated, further asserting the council would need to revisit its decision-making process concerning future events.

Lucy Akrill, co-founder of Protect Brockwell Park, heralded the ruling as a success not only for their specific cause but for communities struggling to safeguard their green spaces from over-commercialisation. “This is a victory not just for Brockwell Park, but for communities everywhere fighting to preserve their green spaces,” she remarked.

While the ruling did not implement an injunction against the upcoming Brockwell Live events, it has prompted the council to reconsider their planning decisions carefully. The ongoing dialogue highlights the tension between the potential economic benefits of the festivals and the local residents' demand for action to protect their environment. Indeed, a number of residents have voiced their frustrations through open letters to the council, expressing concerns over the ecological impact of large-scale gatherings — a sentiment echoed by Protect Brockwell Park, which has initiated crowdfunding efforts to cover legal costs for further challenges aimed at holding event operators accountable for any damage incurred during these festivals.

The community's concerns are not merely about the immediate disruption caused by festival crowds but also about the long-term ecological damage associated with the scale of these events. Grassroot organisations are calling for a thorough consultation process on the council's Events Strategy, reflecting a desire for a more balanced approach that carefully weighs commercial interests against environmental preservation.

Historically, the management of events in Brockwell Park has faced scrutiny. In a previous legal challenge, Lambeth Council had already acknowledged legal missteps in granting licenses to similar music events, showcasing a pattern of procedural oversights that have led to escalating community dissent. The court’s recent ruling highlights a necessary reevaluation of how planning laws can better serve to harmonise the needs of both local residents and the vibrant cultural offerings that contribute to the city’s character.

The outcome of this case will undoubtedly serve as a crucial reference point for future planning decisions across London. As cities grapple with the interaction of commercial activities and community sustainability, the judgment in Brockwell Park stands as a case study of the importance of regulatory adherence in preserving public spaces for all. The responsibility now lies with Lambeth Council to navigate this complex landscape, ensuring that public green spaces are both celebrated and protected for generations to come.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 5
2. Paragraphs 3, 4, 7
3. Paragraphs 5, 6
4. Paragraph 6
5. Not specifically referenced in the enhanced article
6. Paragraph 4
7. Not specifically referenced in the enhanced article

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.ft.com/content/e9389e54-3dd2-460a-a9de-895e05664a10> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/e9389e54-3dd2-460a-a9de-895e05664a10> - The High Court ruled that Lambeth Council acted irrationally by approving a series of summer festivals in Brockwell Park without adhering to planning law, potentially impacting London's live music sector. Judge Tim Mould KC determined the council's justification for weeks-long temporary events was 'irrational.' The case was brought by local resident Rebekah Shaman and advocacy group Protect Brockwell Park, who objected to parts of the park being fenced off and the events' impact on the local area and park damage. The ruling raises questions about the future of festivals in Brockwell Park and could lead to further legal challenges as residents grow frustrated with the events' scale and impact. The judgment did not include an injunction against Brockwell Live's events, and Lambeth Council must make a new decision on the festivals' future. Protect Brockwell Park emphasized that they support festivals but advocate for responsible use of green spaces. The festivals, including Wide Awake, Field Day, and Mighty Hoopla, attract over 285,000 attendees annually and contribute financially to the council. Some events are operated by Superstruct, a private equity-backed events firm. Lambeth Council stated it is reviewing the judgment and considering next steps.
3. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2025/03/crowdfunder-launched-to-challenge-the-use-of-brockwell-park-for-summer-festivals/> - A group called Protect Brockwell Park launched a crowdfunding campaign to raise £30,000 for legal costs to challenge the use of Brockwell Park for summer festivals. Their goals include stopping the commercialization and fencing off of the park, forcing a full consultation on the council's Events Strategy, and holding private event companies accountable for damage caused. The group emphasizes the park's value to the local community and the adverse ecological impact of large-scale events.
4. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2024/10/local-residents-state-their-objection-to-any-more-events-including-field-day-2025-being-held-in-brockwell-park/> - Residents from Craignair Road, Spenser Road, and Sudbourne Road in Brixton presented an open letter to Lambeth Events, objecting to any more events, including Field Day 2025, being held in Brockwell Park. The letter expresses concerns over the park's ecosystem, biodiversity, and the impact of commercial events on the park's environment and local residents' enjoyment. The residents highlight the exploitation of the park for financial gain and the lack of proper regard for preserving its natural resources.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3gg8p770eeo> - A free community event in Brockwell Park was canceled after four bank holiday weekend festivals left the site 'churned up' and muddy. Brockwell Live, which organizes the series of park events, stated it was implementing 'additional ground protection' before upcoming events. Lambeth Council confirmed an agreement that any repairs are paid for by Brockwell Live and noted the council invests £500,000 annually into park maintenance. Local residents and the Friends of Brockwell Park expressed concerns about long-term damage caused by the festivals.
6. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2018/04/lambeth-council-admits-that-field-day-and-mighty-hoopla-licensing-decisions-were-made-unlawfully/> - Lambeth Council admitted that the decision to grant event licenses for Field Day and Mighty Hoopla at Brockwell Park was made unlawfully. A legal challenge by the group Brockwell Tranquility revealed procedural omissions in how the decision was published and communicated. The council acknowledged the error and stated that the decision would be made again as soon as possible, with background documentation published accordingly.
7. <https://love.lambeth.gov.uk/brockwell-park-events-decision/> - Lambeth Council decided that two new major commercial events and the free Lambeth Country Show at Brockwell Park would present too much disruption for the park and local community. Following a period of engagement, the council concluded that hosting these events would be excessive. The council planned to work with the organizers of Field Day and The Mighty Hoopla to ensure safe events, subject to statutory licensing and planning applications, with opportunities for public comment.