# High Court rules against extended music festivals in Brockwell Park over environmental and legal concerns



A recent ruling has ignited a significant debate surrounding the use of Brockwell Park in South London, particularly focusing on the impact of music festivals on this cherished green space. Campaigner Rebekah Shaman, backed by the group Protect Brockwell Park, successfully challenged Lambeth Council’s approval for a series of summer festivals, arguing that such events unfairly monopolise public land and have detrimental effects on the park’s ecology and accessibility.

The High Court’s decision centred on Lambeth Council’s adherence to planning laws that permit only 28 days of commercial activity in public parks without the need for additional permissions. The festivals in question, such as Wide Awake, Mighty Hoopla, and Field Day, are anticipated to extend over 37 days. Mr Justice Mould ruled that the council’s decision to issue a certificate allowing these extended events was “irrational,” calling into question the appropriation of public land for commercial purposes.

The controversy surrounding Brockwell Park is emblematic of larger societal issues, including the balance between community enjoyment and environmental stewardship. Protect Brockwell Park articulates concerns that the increasing frequency of these high-impact events leads to significant ecological damage, as noted by Shaman’s barrister. The group claims that the organisation of massive festivals has resulted in considerable soil compaction and degradation of the park’s natural features, making it, at times, a “mud bath” after heavy rain during these events.

However, not all residents are against the festivals. Supporters, represented by the pro-culture group SayYesLambeth, argue that these events contribute vital economic support to the area, attracting over 285,000 attendees and bolstering local businesses. Their advocacy reflects a cultural landscape eager to promote vibrancy, creativity, and connection in Lambeth. Some argue that a small, vocal minority opposed to festivals contradicts the broader community’s desire for these cultural experiences.

Calls for a compromise have intensified, with locals expressing frustration at the encroachment on public access and the festival's inherent noise levels. Many residents, previously oblivious to the length of festival setups and break-downs, have now come to realise how these activities severely restrict access to park areas. In an open letter to Lambeth Events, residents from surrounding streets like Craignair Road and Spenser Road detailed their objections, stressing that commercial events seem to take precedence over the park’s ecological integrity and legacy as a communal space.

In a further reflection of public sentiment, a letter directed to the Mayor of London advocated a reevaluation of the frequency and duration of these events. It highlighted significant #concerns about soil degradation and tree damage, showcasing a community desperate for assurances that their beloved park will remain accessible and environmentally sound.

The court ruling does not automatically halt the planned festivals for this summer but requires Lambeth Council to revisit its approval process. The decision illustrates a growing call for regulatory structures around how public spaces are utilised, particularly as the pressures of urban life and commercialisation collide in invaluable recreational zones.

With the council indicating plans to assess its future strategies regarding event approvals, the ruling evokes the critical question of how a community can harmoniously balance cultural celebrations with the preservation of public spaces for all residents. As local councils like Lambeth navigate these treacherous waters, the outcome for Brockwell Park may set a significant precedent for other urban public spaces grappling with similar tensions.

### Reference Map

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

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/16/campaigners-win-court-case-that-could-ban-festivals-from-london-park-brockwell> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/e9389e54-3dd2-460a-a9de-895e05664a10> - The Financial Times reports that the High Court ruled Lambeth Council acted irrationally by approving a series of summer festivals in Brockwell Park without adhering to planning law. Judge Tim Mould KC determined the council breached rules allowing only 28 days of commercial activity in parks without additional planning permission, with festivals in Brockwell expected to last 37 days due to setup and breakdown periods. The legal challenge, initiated by local resident Rebekah Shaman and advocacy group Protect Brockwell Park, highlighted concerns over restricted public access and environmental damage. Although the court did not halt the imminent events, Lambeth Council must revisit its approval process. Protect Brockwell Park emphasized 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 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/> - Brixton Buzz reports that Protect Brockwell Park launched a crowdfunding campaign to challenge the use of Brockwell Park for large-scale commercial events. The group aims to raise £30,000 to cover legal costs for potential challenges to event permits, licensing, and planning procedures. They argue that the park is being damaged by private events, leading to issues such as soil compaction, tree damage, and restricted public access. The campaign seeks to stop the commercialization and fencing off of the park without full public consultations and to force a full consultation on the development of the council’s events strategy.
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/> - Brixton Buzz reports that local residents in Craignair Road, Spenser Road, and Sudbourne Road presented an open letter to Lambeth Events, objecting to any more events, including Field Day 2025, being held in Brockwell Park. The residents express concerns over the impact of large-scale events on the park's ecosystem and the reduction of amenity space for local residents. They argue that money-generating events take precedence over biodiversity and the park's general well-being, leading to long-term damage and closure of the park for weeks during the summer months.
5. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2024/12/brockwell-park-local-residents-send-letter-to-the-mayor-of-london-demanding-a-compromise-on-summer-festivals/> - Brixton Buzz reports that local residents concerned about the condition of Brockwell Park after recent festivals sent a letter to the Mayor of London demanding a compromise over the number of yearly events. The letter highlights issues such as soil compaction, tree damage, and restricted public access due to fencing off large areas of the park. The residents urge the Mayor to intervene and ensure that the council's events strategy respects the park's ecological and community value, advocating for a balance between hosting events and preserving the park for public use.
6. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2025/02/lambeth-council-launches-community-consultation-events-for-the-summer-brockwell-park-festivals/> - Brixton Buzz reports that Lambeth Council launched a series of community consultation events for the proposed summer festivals in Brockwell Park. The council received an event application from Brockwell Live to run a series of festivals in late May and early June. The consultations aim to gather local feedback and ensure that the events align with community interests. The proposed events include Wide Awake, Field Day, and Mighty Hoopla, with the potential to help fund the Lambeth Country Show and other community initiatives.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3gg8p770eeo> - The BBC reports that a free community event in Brockwell Park was canceled after four bank holiday weekend festivals left the site 'churned up' and muddy. The festivals, organized by Brockwell Live, caused significant damage to the park's grounds, leading to the cancellation of the Brockwell Bounce event. Brockwell Live stated that they are implementing 'additional ground protection' before upcoming events. Lambeth Council emphasized that any repairs are paid for by Brockwell Live, adding that the local authority invests £500,000 annually into park maintenance.