# Residents clash with Lambeth Council over Brockwell Park festivals despite High Court ruling



The lush expanse of Brockwell Park in south London has become a battleground in the ongoing conflict between residents and local authorities over the use of public green spaces for commercial festivals. Despite a recent High Court ruling that challenged Lambeth Council's legal standing regarding festival durations, the line-up of events under the banner of 'Brockwell Live' is set to continue. The situation has inflamed tensions, with campaigners arguing that commercialisation threatens both the park's integrity and the community's access to nature.

The principal campaign group, Protect Brockwell Park, spearheaded by Rebecca Shaman, has articulated its grievances about the festivals planned for the summer. The High Court found that the council's arrangements for staging festivals, lasting 37 days, surpassed the legally permissible duration of 28 days for temporary changes of use. Nevertheless, Lambeth Council has moved to sidestep this ruling by issuing a certificate of lawfulness for ongoing events, enabling festivals like Mighty Hoopla and Field Day to unfold as planned. This decision has left residents frustrated, prompting Shaman to assert that, “we’re not anti-festivals”, but do demand “proper logical assessments” and greater transparency in the planning process.

The intense local backlash stems from multiple concerns. Many residents, including Jen Hawkins from Protect Brockwell Park, emphasise the detrimental effects on public access, local wildlife, and community spirit. For residents lacking private gardens, Brockwell Park serves as an essential connection to nature, crucial for both mental and physical well-being. Hawkins laments the impact of “fencing off” this vital communal space, suggesting that it creates a barrier in an urban landscape where such access is invaluable. The park's role as a shared sanctuary is further underscored by voices like that of local musician Mark Baynes, who has described the noise from recent events as unbearable and disruptive to everyday life. His sentiments echo a broader dissatisfaction over illegal parking and significant disruptions caused by festival-goers.

Financial motivations also complicate the narrative. Lambeth Council, facing severe budget constraints exacerbated by government cuts, views these festivals as essential revenue generators. For example, previous events in other London parks, such as Finsbury Park, have delivered substantial income that supports local services. Yet, critics argue that this reliance on outdoor events serves to prioritise short-term financial gain over long-term environmental and community health. The council’s position, accentuated by Cllr Donatus Anyanwu’s claim about a balance between cultural offerings and stewardship of public spaces, has prompted accusations of neglecting residents' rights and ecological considerations.

Local protests have included striking graffiti urging a boycott of the festivals and vocal opposition from community members, who warn of increased crime rates associated with such large gatherings, citing a notable surge in drug-related incidents during festival periods. This unrest is reminiscent of larger trends across London, where public spaces are being grappled with various demands from urban dwellers and event organisers. Critics question whether councils are adequately equipped to negotiate with powerful festival operators, fearing that the allure of revenue could lead to the degradation of cherished community spaces.

As the summer unfolds and a series of festivals continue, the opposition led by Protect Brockwell Park remains unwavering in its mission to safeguard the integrity of Brockwell Park. With grassroots activism gaining traction, there is hope that ongoing dialogue might lead to a more equitable balance between cultural celebration and community preservation—a crucial step in addressing the complexities of urban public space management.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2059496/we-live-park-fenced-off-cash-brockwell-brixton> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/4d70a5b0-3ec2-4f92-83c5-8d3450d1f1f3> - London's summer festival scene, including events like Raver Tots and Mighty Hoopla, has become a contentious issue between local councils, residents, and event organizers. With festivals occupying London parks for a combined 140 days in 2025—a 14% increase from the previous year—residents argue the events limit public access, damage the environment, and create noise pollution. Councils, facing significant budget shortfalls due to central government cuts, see these festivals as vital revenue sources. For example, Finsbury Park and Victoria Park generated £1.2 million and £1.6 million respectively from such events. A legal dispute over Brockwell Park in Lambeth highlighted these tensions. A High Court ruling found the council exceeded legal limits on event durations, yet festivals are proceeding under a newly approved certificate. The Protect Brockwell Park group continues legal efforts to stop them, while facing lawsuits from organizers. Critics warn of the risks of commercializing public spaces and the lack of strong negotiation positions by councils against powerful festival operators. Nonetheless, supporters argue that festivals serve cultural purposes and benefit younger and ethnically diverse audiences, with 27% of ethnic minorities having attended festivals versus 19% of white Londoners.
3. <https://www.ft.com/content/0dbe0089-c93c-47a3-bcf7-a0c5038b289f> - A controversy has erupted in London's Brockwell Park over the hosting of large-scale music festivals, spotlighting the tension between public enjoyment and preservation of green spaces. Lambeth Council’s plan to host six festivals drawing an estimated 285,000 attendees triggered a legal battle, with a High Court judge ruling the council lacked the necessary planning permissions. Local resistance intensified after trees were removed for festival preparations and last year's events left the park damaged and muddy. Notable figures like Sir Mark Rylance have criticized the events for harming the park's ecosystem. Campaigners have raised concerns about increased crime, citing a significant spike in drug offenses during festival periods. In contrast, the council and event organizer Superstruct argue the festivals create cultural opportunities and economic benefits, though critics dispute the allocation of profits. Political ramifications include a Green Party victory on a pledge to protect the park, contrasting with Labour's prior dominance. The debate underscores broader questions about the commercialization of public spaces and the balance between access, cultural events, and environmental stewardship. The author humorously admits to personal ambivalence—advocating fewer festivals while still hoping to attend a favorite performance.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c038l8n6ydpo> - Residents near a south London park have expressed their annoyance at "nightmare" noise levels from recent music festivals. Brockwell Park in Lambeth has hosted thousands of revellers during six days of festivals across the past two weeks. Some locals say they are also annoyed at illegal parking, damage to the park's turf, and weeks of having fencing segregating areas of the park. Organiser Brockwell Live said the sound levels had been agreed with Lambeth Council and were "built into our licence". Lambeth Council apologised to residents but added the noise conditions for this year had been exactly the same as last year, and noise generated was "fully compliant" with "license conditions".
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3gg8p770eeo> - A free community event in a south London park was cancelled after four bank holiday weekend festivals left the site "churned up" and muddy. Brockwell Park, in Lambeth, hosted four day festivals over the weekend and was due to host family-friendly Brockwell Bounce on Wednesday. Brockwell Live, which organises the series of park events, said it was implementing "additional ground protection" before the Mighty Hoopla on 1 and 2 June and Lambeth Country Show on 8 and 9 June. Lambeth Council says there is "an agreement" that any repairs are paid for by Brockwell Live, adding the local authority puts £500,000 a year into park maintenance. Brockwell Live hosted four festivals at the park from Friday to Monday - Project 6, Wide Awake, Cross The Tracks and City Splash. Peter Bradley, chair of Friends of Brockwell Park, said the festivals cause "long term" damage. Peter Bradley, chair of Friends of Brockwell Park, said the green space had seen "long-term" damage from the summer festivals. "Nature takes a long time to recover," he said. "The damage to the ground from these vehicle movements, these thousands and thousands of people is long term. He said Lambeth Council "see pound signs". "It's not the best that Brockwell Park can be, it's the worst." A local resident, who did not want to be named, added: "I'm a musician and I don't think this is okay. The ground is just ruined. "This is our local community space and I think community spaces have got to stop being used so frequently for these money-making events." Brockwell Park in south London has been hosting a series of day festivals.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/brockwell-park-festivals-noise-lambeth-council-mighty-hoopla-wide-awake-city-splash-b1085996.html> - People living near a South London park taken over by music festivals for the last two weekends have hit out at organisers and the council over "inescapable" noise they say is ruining their lives. Thousands of revellers have flocked to Lambeth’s Brockwell Park in the past two weeks for festivals including Mighty Hoopla, Wide Awake and City Splash. But many residents living close to the park claim their lives have been made a misery by unbearably loud music and partygoers illegally parking on their streets, the Local Democracy Reporting Service reports. They are also annoyed at a large section of the park being fenced off for weeks and the damage done to grass by the thousands of visitors the park attracts. Herne Hill father Mark Baynes said the noise from the festivals was inescapable. The 43-year-old, who has lived in the area for a decade, said: “It’s like we’ve been living at a festival for the last 10 days. The noise is annoying: you just hear noise, not any of the music. It has also been pretty awful not being able to access the park. The kids wanted to play on the grass.” He added: “The Hoopla crowd don’t cause trouble but for the festival on the May bank holiday a lot of people drove here and the traffic was crazy. My wife went out and had to leave her car in Dulwich, because there weren’t any spaces around here.” On the other side of the park, Tulse Hill resident Stella said she’d never known the noise to be so bad in the 27 years she’d lived in the area. She said: “Without any doubt the noise this year is the worst it has been. It wasn’t just a little bit of wind carrying the sound. It was horrendously bad on the first weekend. I went for dinner with my husband in Balham and I could hear the noise there.” She added: “I tried to stay away from home but there’s only so much time you can spend away. It starts with the sound check at 10:30am and it’s relentless until it closes at night. It’s a nightmare.” Organisers Summer Events Limited have been running a yearly series of festivals in Brockwell Park since 2018 under the Brockwell Live brand. Lambeth Council approved the company’s bid to hold the latest set of events in the 50.8 hectares park back in March.