# High Court challenges Lambeth Council’s festival approvals amid Brockwell Park access and conservation dispute



A recent ruling by the High Court has shed light on the contentious relationship between local residents and festival organisers regarding the use of Brockwell Park in South London. Rebekah Shaman, a member of the advocacy group Protect Brockwell Park (PBP), successfully challenged Lambeth Council's approval of several large-scale music festivals, arguing that these events not only infringe on public access to the park but also lead to significant environmental harm. This decision could result in a ban on various upcoming festivals scheduled for this summer, including Wide Awake, Mighty Hoopla, and Field Day, which collectively attract an estimated 285,000 attendees each year.

Prior to the court case, PBP raised concerns over the growing frequency of such commercial events, noting that they restrict access to vast areas of the park and often leave the grounds in a degraded state. During the hearing, Shaman's barrister pointed to the park becoming a "mud bath" following a particularly wet festival weekend in 2024. The court determined that Lambeth Council had acted “irrationally” by allowing these festivals to exceed the legally permissible 28 days of temporary usage under permitted development rules, a decision that sparked significant debate around the management of public spaces.

While the court did not immediately halt the impending events, it mandated that Lambeth Council revisit its approval process. The council claims that these festivals contribute culturally and financially to the community, a sentiment echoed by some supporters who argue that events bring joy and engagement to local residents. However, this perspective clashes with voices in the community who prioritise the ecological integrity and accessibility of the park. One local resident, expressing frustration, stated that the annual influx of commercial events seems to overshadow the needs of the community and the park's natural resources.

PBP has garnered notable support, including from actor Mark Rylance, as they argue for a comprehensive approach to park management that balances community interests with cultural activities. Their crowdfunding efforts have been aimed at promoting responsible use of the park and ensuring that future events are subject to proper consultations and environmental considerations.

The tension surrounding Brockwell Park extends beyond Shaman's case, with widespread public sentiment captured in open letters and protests from nearby residents. Many have echoed a call for a compromise that would curb the number of summer festivals while promoting the park’s ecological well-being. Critics point out that decisions about large-scale events appear to be driven by financial considerations rather than community welfare, raising questions about the long-term impacts of such activities on both the environment and social dynamics within the area.

Additional discussions have shown that while Lambeth Council has attempted to involve the community through consultations concerning the festival events, many residents feel that their voices are not being adequately heard or valued. A significant portion of the local population believes that the park should primarily serve the community rather than commercial interests, especially in light of the adverse ecological effects reported after previous events.

As the summer approaches, the future of festivals in Brockwell Park remains uncertain, hinging on the council’s response to the court's ruling and ongoing community pressure. Uproar over the park's preservation highlights a broader issue facing numerous urban green spaces where the clashing interests of culture, commerce, and conservation continue to spark heated debate.

### Reference Map

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

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 build a fighting fund to 'protect Brockwell Park for everyone.' Their stated aims are to stop the commercialization, destruction, and fencing off of the park, force a full consultation on the development of the Council’s Events Strategy, and to get the private events companies to pay for the damage caused. They are looking to raise £30,000 to pay for legal costs to enable potential challenges to the Events Permit, licensing and planning procedures, and accompanying experts’ reports. 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/> - Brixton Buzz reports that local residents in Craignair Road, Spenser Road, and Sudbourne Road presented an open letter to Lambeth Events at a recent Brockwell Live consultation event. The letter expresses objection to any more events, including Field Day 2025, being held in Brockwell Park. Residents highlight concerns over the park's ecosystem, biodiversity, and the impact of large-scale events on the park's environment and the community's enjoyment of the space. They note that money-generating events appear to take precedence over the park's natural resources and the needs of local residents.
5. <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 events in the park in late May and early June. The proposed events include Wide Awake, Field Day, and Mighty Hoopla. The council emphasized the potential benefits of the events, including providing culturally rich experiences for young people and supporting the Lambeth Country Show. The consultation events aim to gather feedback from local residents before a final decision is made.
6. <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 the year's festivals sent a letter to the Mayor of London demanding a compromise over the number of yearly events. The letter highlights issues such as the commercialization of the park, ecological damage, prolonged fencing off of green spaces, and the impact on the community's access to the park. Residents urge the Mayor to get involved in enabling more transparency on the part of the Council, meaningful discussion with the local community, compliance with the Council’s existing pro-nature/environment policies, and the correct application of planning laws and procedures.
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. Brockwell Live, which organizes the series of park events, stated it was implementing 'additional ground protection' before upcoming festivals. Lambeth Council confirmed an agreement that any repairs are paid for by Brockwell Live, adding that the local authority invests £500,000 a year into park maintenance. However, local residents and groups like Friends of Brockwell Park expressed concerns about the long-term damage caused by the festivals and the impact on the park's environment and community use.