# Brockwell Live festivals to proceed despite legal ruling and community opposition



Organisers of the Brockwell Live festival series, which is set to take place in Brockwell Park, South London, have announced that the events will proceed despite a recent legal victory for the local residents' group, Protect Brockwell Park (PBP). This decision, which allows for the continuation of festivities such as Wide Awake, Field Day, Cross the Tracks, City Splash, Mighty Hoopla, Brockwell Bounce, and the Lambeth Country Show, underscores the ongoing tension between event organisers, local authorities, and community advocates.

The legal challenge hinged on the assertion that Lambeth Council had acted beyond its legal authority by approving a 37-day duration for the festivals, exceeding the 28-day limit permitted for temporary use of public land without further planning permissions. The High Court ruled in favour of PBP, declaring the council’s decisions “irrational.” Despite this ruling, Brockwell Live made it clear that the events would not be cancelled. They stated, “Friday’s high court ruling dealt with a particular point of law and whether an administrative process had been carried out correctly,” indicating their intention to proceed as planned.

Lambeth Council has also sided with the festival organisers, indicating that the council is in the process of reviewing a new application for a certificate of lawfulness that would allow for 24 days of events. They echoed the viewpoint that the events would still occur while this review unfolds. However, this unresolved legal status adds an air of uncertainty to the proceedings and sets the stage for a continuing dialogue between the council, residents, and the event organisers.

The community opposition, led significantly by Rebekah Shaman and supported by notable cultural figures like Sir Mark Rylance, has raised serious concerns about the ecological impact of the festivals, arguing they have already led to noticeable damage in prior years. Residents and campaigners assert that large crowds and the infrastructure required for staging such events harm both the park’s ecosystem and its communal value. Reports of increased crime and environmental degradation during festival periods have further fueled the residents’ concerns.

Critics of the festivals argue that such large-scale events represent a worrying trend of commercial encroachment on public spaces. They contend that the environmental and social costs of hosting these festivals outweigh the claimed cultural and economic benefits. Proponents of the festivals, however, including event organisers and local businesses, maintain that they inject life into the area, boosting the local economy and fostering a sense of community among attendees. As noted by Michael Kill, chief of the Night Time Industries Association, the festivals provide vital social experiences that form part of the wider cultural fabric of London.

This ongoing dispute raises broader questions about public space stewardship and the need for more sustainable management of community resources. PBP has expressed a desire to find a middle ground that allows for community-connected events while mitigating their ecological impact. They are not against events per se, but seek a model that prioritises community involvement and environmental respect.

Meanwhile, the Field Day festival faces its own challenges, with several artists withdrawing from the lineup amid controversy linked to its parent company, KKR, which has been accused of unethical investments. This has highlighted the complicated intersection of music, politics, and social responsibility, further complicating the landscape for festivals in Brockwell Park.

As the Brockwell Live events prepare to commence, the developments surrounding them will serve not only to illuminate local issues of governance and public engagement but will also have implications for the future of large-scale public festivals in urban green spaces throughout London. The outcome of these discussions and disputes may well shape the trajectory of cultural events in public parks, making it essential for all parties to engage in a constructive dialogue for sustainable solutions.

### Reference Map

1. Informed paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Informed paragraphs 1, 2
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5. Informed paragraphs 2, 4, 5
6. Informed paragraphs 3, 5
7. Informed paragraphs 4, 5

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2025/may/19/brockwell-park-music-festivals-to-go-ahead-despite-successful-legal-challenge> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2025/may/19/brockwell-park-music-festivals-to-go-ahead-despite-successful-legal-challenge> - Organisers of Brockwell Live, a series of music festivals in Brockwell Park, London, have announced that the events will proceed despite a successful legal challenge against Lambeth Council. The residents' group, Protect Brockwell Park (PBP), argued that the festivals, including Wide Awake, Field Day, Cross the Tracks, City Splash, Mighty Hoopla, Brockwell Bounce, and the Lambeth Country Show, were damaging the park's ecology and heritage. The High Court ruled that the council's decision to approve the events was 'irrational,' but the festivals are set to go ahead as planned.
3. <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. The council's decision 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.
4. <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.
5. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2025/03/crowdfunder-launched-to-challenge-the-use-of-brockwell-park-for-summer-festivals/> - Protect Brockwell Park, a group of local residents and park users, 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 overused and under-protected, with large-scale events damaging the park's ecology, heritage, and community value. The campaign seeks to ensure that Brockwell Park remains a thriving, green oasis serving as a sanctuary for both people and wildlife.
6. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/cx2wrrdgl77o> - Campaigners argue that large-scale festivals are causing long-term damage to Brockwell Park, leading to a legal challenge against Lambeth Council. Protect Brockwell Park contends that events like Brockwell Live, which draw over 285,000 attendees over nine days, are damaging the park's ecology. The group has received support from residents and actor Sir Mark Rylance, who states that such festivals harm the park's grass, trees, and plant life. Lambeth Council maintains that the area used for events has been independently assessed as being of 'low ecological sensitivity grassland' and that no ecological damage was caused.
7. <https://www.iq-mag.net/2025/04/campaigners-bid-to-halt-brockwell-park-festivals/> - Campaigners are seeking to halt the Brockwell Park festivals, including Wide Awake, Field Day, and Cross The Tracks, due to concerns over environmental damage and public access. The group, Protect Brockwell Park, argues that the festivals, which draw large crowds and require significant infrastructure, are damaging the park's ecology and heritage. They have initiated legal proceedings against Lambeth Council's approval of the events, claiming that the council's decision was unlawful. The campaigners emphasize the importance of the park as a public space and the need for responsible event management.