# Brockwell Park festival row deepens as council pushes on despite High Court ruling



In the vibrant setting of Brixton, London's Brockwell Park has become a battleground between residents fighting to preserve green spaces and local authorities eager to exploit them for profit through large-scale festivals. This tension was starkly illustrated when a campaign group successfully challenged Lambeth Council in a recent High Court ruling that found the council exceeded legal limits by approving festivals for an astonishing 37 days, far surpassing the permitted 28 days for temporary land use. Despite this judicial setback, the council has shamelessly pushed ahead, issuing a certificate of lawfulness to allow the festivals to continue, a decision rightly condemned by campaigners and concerned residents alike.

The upcoming summer festival season will see events like Wide Awake and Mighty Hoopla draw massive crowds, with expectations of around 285,000 attendees. Although the festivals are touted as a means to inject crucial revenue into the local economy—especially necessary in light of government cuts—this supposed financial boon masks the detrimental impact they have on public access, community wellbeing, and environmental integrity. Local councillor Donatus Anyanwu's attempt to balance "a world-class, inclusive cultural programme" with proper stewardship of public spaces is disingenuous, given that the financial gains from these events often come at the expense of the community's rights.

Opposition voices within the community have sounded alarm bells about the festivals’ detrimental effects on the park and its visitors. Jen Hawkins, a representative from Protect Brockwell Park, encapsulated the group's stance: while they are not against festivals in principle, they demand proper assessments to prioritize local benefits. “It's such a shame that they use our beautiful public space as a cash cow,” she declared, underscoring the loss of public access, alongside potential environmental degradation and the alarming absence of transparent consultation with the local community.

This debate is emblematic of a broader concern in London, where the festival calendar is projected to consume parks for an overwhelming 140 days in 2025, reflecting a 14% increase from the previous year. Critics rightly argue that this commercialisation of public spaces poses serious threats, including noise pollution and environmental degradation, with figures like Sir Mark Rylance vocally denouncing these events for their harmful impact on local ecosystems.

Within this context, the council’s dependence on festivals as a financial crutch reveals a troubling prioritization. With budgetary constraints tightening, it is telling that Finsbury Park generated £1.2 million from events—evidence of economic motivations that drive local authorities to compromise public interest in favor of short-term gains, all while public dissent grows.

Moreover, the legal battle is far from over, as Protect Brockwell Park continues its fight, insisting on public consultations regarding the council's Events Strategy. The group has launched a crowdfunding campaign to fortify their efforts, appealing for community support to challenge the festival permits and advocate for a more transparent planning process. Their recent protests, particularly a symbolic lie-down protest emblazoned with “NO WALLS,” powerfully demonstrate the community's unwavering demand for unencumbered access to their beloved park.

As enthusiasm mounts for the upcoming festivals, the unfolding narrative in Brockwell Park serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing struggle to reconcile public enjoyment with ecological responsibility, all while grappling with the pressures of economic sustainability. The community's resolute demands resonate widely, reflecting a collective desire to safeguard not only a park but also the intrinsic value of open spaces in urban settings—sharpening the discourse on how cities can balance cultural celebrations with the imperative to preserve vital green areas for future generations.

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.
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/e9389e54-3dd2-460a-a9de-895e05664a10> - The High Court has ruled that Lambeth Council acted irrationally by approving a series of summer festivals in Brockwell Park without adhering to planning law, posing a potential setback for London’s live music sector. 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.
5. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/brockwell-park-brixton-wide-awake-cross-the-tracks-mighty-hoopla-b1223948.html> - Festival organisers who run events in Brockwell Park have paid over £300,000 to help look after the green space. Neighbours have launched a legal challenge against Lambeth Council following concerns about festivals in Brockwell Park. The organiser of large musical festivals held in Brockwell Park have “welcomed scrutiny” after campaigners launched a legal challenge to protect the beloved green space from large-scale private events. Brockwell Live, which hosts festivals in the park, including LGBTQ friendly Mighty Hoopla and critically acclaimed jazz and funk festival Cross the Tracks, has defended itself, insisting it takes its “stewardship seriously”. It comes after nearby residents have complained that the festivals are permanently damaging the park, with the Oscar-winning actor Sir Mark Rylance claiming the events have turned the space “into a prison camp”.
6. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2025/03/crowdfunder-launched-to-challenge-the-use-of-brockwell-park-for-summer-festivals/> - A group calling itself Protect Brockwell Park have launched a crowdfunder to build a fighting fund to ‘protect Brockwell Park for everyone.” Their stated aims are to stop the commercialisation, 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.”
7. <https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2025/05/no-walls-campaigners-rally-to-keep-brockwell-park-open-as-legal-battle-with-lambeth-council-heats-up/> - On Sunday, Protect Brockwell Park campaigners staged an eye-catching protest against what they feel is the over-commercialisation of the park, with 150 supporters lying on the grass to spell out the words, ‘NO WALLS.’ The organisers got in touch with Brixton Buzz to explain why they are fighting Lambeth: ‘NO WALLS’ Protest Hits Brockwell Park Ahead of Legal Challenge Showdown With just days to go before HGVs move in to build infrastructure for a series of six large-scale commercial festivals in Brockwell Park, more than 150 supporters of Protect Brockwell Park, gathered on the grass to demand the park remain fully open and protected for public use this summer. In a striking visual protest, campaigners lay down on the grass to spell out “NO WALLS” – a direct reference to the four-metre-high perimeter fencing scheduled to go up from 11 May, fencing off large areas of the park for weeks. The visual protest is also a prelude to a judicial review hearing in the High Court on 15 May, where Protect Brockwell Park will challenge the lawfulness of the Lambeth Council’s decision to allow the massive commercial festivals to proceed without proper planning scrutiny.