# Notting Hill Carnival faces crisis as funding shortages threaten public safety and future



The future of the Notting Hill Carnival, Europe's largest street festival, is hanging in the balance amid severe funding shortages that threaten public safety and the event’s very existence. The carnival’s organisers have issued a stark warning—leaked correspondence to the Culture Secretary highlights that without urgent financial backing, the safety of attendees and the continuation of the event could be imperiled. Yet, despite clear risks, the government remains absent in providing necessary support, leaving organisers to scramble for resources that are increasingly inadequate for the scale of the crowds they face.

This crisis stems from an independent safety review commissioned by the organisers and supported financially by local authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA). The review exposes “critical public safety concerns,” chiefly around crowd management and the capacity of overwhelmed police services to respond effectively. With attendance swelling to approximately two million people over the August Bank Holiday weekend, the Metropolitan Police’s limited resources are strained to breaking point. The authorities continue to rely heavily on handouts from local councils and the GLA—funds that simply do not match the growing operational needs of organizing such a massive event.

Policing the carnival has become an increasingly futile attempt. In 2024, around 7,000 officers were deployed—covering 14,000 shifts—yet these efforts are nowhere near enough. Senior police officials have warned that the dangerous densities of crowds could lead to a “mass casualty event,” echoing fears that dangerously loose crowd control could result in another tragedy on similar scales to Hillsborough. Metropolitan Police leadership has criticised the organisers’ handling, claiming the event is “poorly managed” and stressing that crowd control should not rest solely on police shoulders. Instead, they argue that the organisers must take responsibility for effective stewarding and safety management.

Within the London Assembly’s Police and Crime Committee, concerns are equally stark. Their April 2025 report describes crowding and stewarding failures that create “substantial safety risks.” The committee called for an independent review to identify specific vulnerabilities on the parade route and for increased government funding to match the rising pressures on policing. Committee chair Susan Hall warned that without proper support, the police will be unable to protect attendees during what should be a festive occasion but has become a safety nightmare.

Despite an additional £300,000 funding boost from the GLA in 2024, the shortfall remains glaring. The funds, intended to improve crowd control and stewarding, are woefully insufficient, leaving police officers under immense stress—as illustrated by recent surveys revealing 89% felt unsafe working at the event, with a third having been assaulted. Officers report feeling “powerless” in managing the scale of the crowds, pointing to a systemic failure that places public safety at grave risk. The organisers’ plea for direct government funding—potentially unprecedented—raises serious questions about political will and the priorities of a government that seems unwilling to take responsibility for safeguarding Britain’s most iconic cultural celebrations.

This ongoing neglect signals a troubling trend: a government that refuses to fully support vital public events when their safety infrastructure is most compromised. Without immediate, well-resourced action, the Notting Hill Carnival risks becoming a relic of neglect, overshadowed by safety failures and the tragic consequences that follow from a lack of leadership. It is high time policymakers recognised that true support and proper funding are essential to preserve the safety, tradition, and cultural significance of this beloved event.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cq8zxk083qko> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cx2891zgqdwo> - In September 2024, Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist highlighted the risk of a 'mass casualty' crowd crush at Notting Hill Carnival due to insufficient stewarding. He reported 889 crimes and 353 arrests during the event, noting the organisers lacked adequate resources to compensate for a reduction of 1,200 police officers. Twist emphasised the challenges in policing the carnival, citing significant violence, crime, and crowd safety issues.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c77xjv11lm8o> - Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley expressed deep concerns about the safety of Notting Hill Carnival, describing it as a 'poorly run event'. He feared a 'mass fatality event' due to crowd risks, similar to the Hillsborough disaster. Rowley criticised the organisers for not being 'run by experts in event management' and stated that police should focus solely on crime and disorder, not crowd management, which he believed was the organisers' responsibility.
4. <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/london-assembly-work/london-assembly-publications/review-notting-hill-carnival-crowd-numbers-mass-casualty-event-occurs> - In April 2025, the London Assembly Police and Crime Committee called for a review of crowd density and safety at Notting Hill Carnival. The committee shared the Metropolitan Police's concerns about the risk of a crush scenario due to high crowd density and inadequate stewarding. They recommended that the Mayor commission a full review to inform future stewarding requirements and assess known pinch points along the parade route.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/london/2025-04-22/london-assembly-raises-concerns-over-crowd-safety-at-notting-hill-carnival> - The London Assembly's Police and Crime Committee published a report scrutinising the Metropolitan Police's approach to public order policing, raising concerns about funding shortfalls, officer welfare, and safety risks at large-scale events, including Notting Hill Carnival. The report highlighted ongoing concerns about crowd safety at the carnival, citing high crowd density and insufficient stewarding provided by event organisers, and recommended a full review of crowd density and management.
6. <https://www.london.gov.uk/md3267-notting-hill-carnival-2024-additional-support> - In 2024, the Greater London Authority (GLA) approved additional funding of up to £296,300 to Notting Hill Carnival Ltd to enhance stewarding and crowd-management resources. This funding aimed to support the organisers in mitigating public safety risks and reduce the reliance on policing for crowd management. The total cost to the GLA for the event was up to £946,300 in 2024, reflecting the significant investment in public safety measures.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5yvk5dk38xo> - A survey by the Metropolitan Police Federation revealed that a majority of officers felt unsafe working at Notting Hill Carnival. Of 486 officers surveyed, 89% did not feel safe, and 29% reported being assaulted while policing the event. The survey highlighted concerns about the large scale of the event, which made officers feel 'powerless' to prevent crime and protect attendees, and called for a 'step change' in the running of the event to improve safety.