

Report responding to the Objection of Wild Wood Events Ltd Premises License

Complaints:

1. The Licensing Process

I don't believe we need to comment on this as these facts are wrong.

2. Infringement of the Licence by the Designated Premises Supervisor

Licensable activity on the site in 2020 equals less than 3 days. 21st - 23rd August and the 12th September.

Friday, 21st August licensable activity from 18:00 – 23:00 hours – 5 hours

Saturday, 22nd August 13:00 – 23:00 hours – 10 hours

Sunday, 23rd August 13:00- 17:00 hours - 3 hours

Total Licensable Activity: 18 hours, less than 2 days

Saturday, 12th September 13:00 – 23:00 – 10 hours

Total Licensable Activity: 10 hours

There were no licensable activities on the other days mentioned in the objection.

B) We informed the Parish Council of all activities on site (including the non-licensable one) apart from before the weekend of the 21st August. We did, very unfortunately make a mistake and forget to inform the Parish Council. This was a matter discussed at length with John Howard on the phone. I explained how quickly we'd turned the event around and how so much of our attention was focused on Covid precautions and ensuring the event was Covid friendly and in tune with the WHO mass gatherings protocols. I told him I was very sorry and assured him this would never happen again. He accepted my apology and understood my actions were unintentional.

C) Limiters were placed on the sound system which meant sound projected from the speakers could not play music above 85 db. To follow Government guidelines, we set them at this level after sitting at the tables closest to the speakers to check we could easily have a conversation with the music playing and would not need to raise our voices to be heard. We had been instructed by the council that the noise level was up to the organiser, but we needed to make sure that voices weren't raised and there was no need to shout to be heard above the music, which can cause the spread of coronavirus through droplets. We took the added precaution of having limiters as DJs can sometime turn the music up and we wanted to ensure it was kept at the decided level throughout the day. Security checked noise levels at the gates (Manor Farm in Horseheath and the gate from the A1307) and around the event site before and during the live event and very little sound was audible.

D) There was no event on the Sunday, 13th September and music was played only while the crew litter picked and cleared up the event site. This music was incredibly quiet; we couldn't hear it in our crew area and was switched off around 6pm when we were finished working for the day. The speakers used for the live event had been picked up at midday on Sunday, 13th September. Speakers we were actually using during our clear up were from a camper van which would have had very limited noise. On the phone call with John Howard on Saturday, 22nd August, he mentioned the music and said it was "quite audible" if they stood in their garden, as are the point to point announcers - which is why he had wanted to know what was happening. He said that hadn't been the reason for the call, they were most distressed about the Friday access to the site and that had been the reason for the call.

3) Non-compliance with the agreed safety plan

With just 30 cars on site on the Friday, 21 August and a horse event happening close to the main gate we agreed with the landowners request to use this route for one evening only. I'm not sure what John Howard means by agreed safety plan, but I did tell him we weren't happy with that access and it wouldn't be used regularly or again.

4) Other Significant Concerns

A) Trees have not been felled on the event site specifically for our events. We work closely with the landowners when working or whilst building our stages to ensure we always follow best practice and guidelines to ensure that the woodland is managed responsibly with them and according to guidelines. The landowner's team are very well informed on how to do this. They plant kms of trees each year on their land and 2020 was to be the first year that The Wild Wood Disco donated towards their hedgerow and planting programme. I had mentioned this to John Howard on the phone who told me he didn't believe the landowners follow best practice work out ways to get government money for their gain rather than managing the land correctly. He told me about the Parish Council's plans to plant a millennial wood and I said I would be interested to hear about this as perhaps the money could go to a community planting programme.

We haven't yet used stretch tents or plastic structures in the trees. It is my understanding that stretch tents do not harm trees in any way at all and if we hold an event with poor weather conditions, we may use them in the future. All our stages are built by Matthew Gill from Acid Carpentry. He runs the entire Greenpeace build at Glastonbury and would be classed as an eco-carpenter. He is very well respected in his field of work. The stages are built mostly using sourced from the ground materials. Working with people like this costs a lot more money but it fits with our caring ethos which roots both The Wild Wood Rumpus and the The Wild Wood Disco Festivals.

C) As above- the route in through Manor Farm was a one-time only route used because of so few cars were coming in and as mentioned previously will not be used again.

D) We followed all government guidelines for the hospitality and tourism sector, going above and beyond what is expected. Please see our attached covid documents and security plan and printed paper which was attached to each picnic table that was booked per crowd and written on signage all around the site. As an individual in the extreme high-risk category (no spleen, transplant and half a lung removed) who shielded for over 3 months, I was scrupulous about making sure this event was safe as was my team.

3. As per 2 b) and c)

4. A) As per 2

B) REGARDING EXPANDING NUMBER OF EVENTS- We are not sure where this has come from. As communication channels were both friendly and open with John Howard by phone and e-mail, we would suggest he could have checked with us before taking things this far and advertising this false information to the local villagers to gain support and damage our reputation. We are simply hoping that in 2021 we can do the events planned for 2020, these are the same events we had done in 2019 successfully with no complaints and in 2018 with 1 complaint. As our events have rolled over from 2020 to 2021 we have 1,000 ticket holders that have kindly kept their tickets for The Wild Wood Disco and 200 that have kindly kept them for the Rumpus, we asked (for financial reasons) that people keep hold of them if they could, and offered refunds if not. We have over £30,000 invested in these events already. This is why we are hoping that despite the pandemic a solution becomes available that makes these events possible. We are not certainly not planning more and bigger events at this time and it is not our intention to do so in the future. We also had 1 wedding booked in and a corporate team building day on site. Looking at the premises license we think that John Howard may have looked the run of event days and times of opening and felt that we wanted to run 3-day events, even so our license clearly states we couldn't do this.

C) Same points as above regarding using that route in. With 4 security patrolling the site all night we don't feel any illegal activity would be encouraged by this event, they would surely choose to do illegal activity under darkness with no security on site.

Saturday 22nd August phone call with John Howard.

- From my point of view, I felt we had spoken well, he was very concerned about the route used the previous day and I assure him it wouldn't be used again and let him know the very small volume of traffic. He told me at the beginning and end of the phone call that the route was the main concern and is reason for calling. He said it would be useful for me to know the history of the arguments between the Vestey's (the landowners) and the village so I could understand why they were partially upset and explained a little of this.
- I told him about the social distancing measures and the rules around music, letting him now we had made sure did not have to shout to be heard above it

and could conduct a normal conversation. I told him that as it was inaudible at the manor farm gate in Horseheath residents wouldn't be able to hear it.

- John Howard said that if they stood in the garden it was quite audible and explained that his house was the closest to the wood and not in fact in Horseheath but Cardinal's Green. I told him I would check the db. levels and following the call I went to check with our tech man that the limiters were in place and working and our security team about checks at the gates.
- As I'd apologised about not informing him, I took the opportunity to say that I hoped that we might do one more day/ evening event with music in the woods on the 12th September.

The phone calls the week following

- We spoke for half an hour; I would say it was a very good and decent discussion where I listened a lot to John Howard's concerns. Much of this was the full history of the route over the bridge and the fact the landowners did not allow public to use it.
- I told him I would not be able to come to the Parish council meeting in September. I told him it would be most beneficial for all of us if I came in the new year. Then we may be aware of what the future of events in 2021 will be due to the pandemic. I said it may well not be possible we hold our regular 2 events the Rumpus and the Disco. I told him that now we had run 2 successful socially distanced events, if we couldn't run our main ones, we may look to run these.

Regarding comments on the advice and changes from the 14th September. We ran the event as per government advice and could have run the same event after the 14th it did not change anything for an event such as ours. To compare our event to the thousands at Duxford where it is impossible to socially distance is not useful. We had bookable tables with a marked border, one-way systems, acres of space, plenty of security specifically there to ensure social distancing, hand gel stations and hand washing points and toilets cleaned throughout the day. All social media is international! That is the nature of it. For a 10-hour day event the majority are local, and all arrive and leave the site without going into Horseheath. The boutique camping company did say people could stay from the 12th but there was no activity on site, it was for them to try and sell some bell tent stays, this could have meant people from the event going into the villages for some food but we did in fact only sell 1 bell tent that weekend and they arrived on Saturday and left Sunday morning. We had been trying to help the boutique company re-coup business after a very difficult summer and with campsites full they felt people might want to stay over an extra night. They had very stringent covid guidelines on their front page. A copy is in our covid folder.

We have spoken to many residents in Horseheath. The only night this year people heard music was the 21st August, there were 40 mph winds.

We feel that it is most worrying regarding the parish council meeting and the fact that John Howard as a parish councillor has a duty to speak for the community. The Agenda for their meetings is normally published around 1 week prior to the meeting. From the week before the meeting and until now, when you click on the Agenda on the website it says, "not found". The Parish Council are also supposed to use their notice board in the middle of the

village to put the agenda of the next meeting on and the minutes once the meeting is complete. Although they have opened this notice board to put in the poster "Wildlife or Disco" (as they have all around the village and surrounding area), they have not put an agenda or minutes in since August. Please see attached photo showing August minutes and Agenda. Therefore, how could anyone in the community with thoughts and comments or indeed us know that the meeting was to include discussions about events at Horseheath. The minutes have still not been published, so we do not know who was actually there as part of the discussion and what was said. We feel that it is the job of the Parish Council to speak for the community, but that John Howard has used his new position as chair to make this opposition and is doing so in a very underhand manner. After many e-mails and facebook messages, we do not believe he is speaking for the community and the community have shown us tremendous support which we are very grateful for and they seem very happy that these events are happening. We believe any opposition for the events is now based on lies and exaggeration and not valid anyway due to the campaign he led in Horseheath and surrounding villages (see posters and e-mails attached). We also feel that as a company running such events it is important, we have an honest and good relationship with the local community that he has seriously jeopardised with slander and libel.

Regarding the last paragraph about the illegal rave. I called Lucy Thompson as the officer of our SAG to tell her of a rumour heard at the event of an illegal rave in a wood in the area. I felt it was my duty to report this. I went myself and looked for equipment on the Friday and Saturday and tried to talk to people in Haverhill to find out information to do my best duty as a citizen. Illegal raves are becoming more common due to lack of events, so we don't feel holding ours is causing this problem.