



<http://protectbrockwellpark.org>

---

15 May 2025

## **Beyond the Spin – A Response to Lambeth’s “Alternative Facts”**

**Protect Brockwell Park (PBP) is seriously concerned by Lambeth Council’s recent media messaging about the planned large-scale *Brockwell Live* commercial events.** Lambeth’s narrative sets up a false choice between culture and conservation. We’re not trying to ban festivals. We enjoy them, but we need to balance the needs of the park, the environment, and the community.

### **Our position is clear:**

We are not opposed to well-managed, appropriately scaled community events. But what’s happening in Brockwell Park is **neither appropriate nor sustainable**. We reject the assumption that this beloved public green space is a suitable venue for **massive, damaging festivals**.

Nor are we against events that enhance community cohesion, expression of identity and inclusion. Brockwell Park is inherently inclusive – it welcomes all – but it can welcome nobody if its amenity and ecology is **destroyed** by huge festivals for festivals’ sake.

Each summer, these events result in **nearly half of Brockwell Park being fenced off** – sometimes for over a month – leaving behind damaged parkland that can take months to recover. This **excludes** many local Lambeth residents, who have **no access to a garden**, from fully enjoying their park.

**We aim to set the record straight and put a spotlight on the Council’s erroneous claims.**

---

### **1. Lambeth claims there is “no ecological damage” to parkland**

**Contrary to Lambeth’s claims, Brockwell Park is not simply “recovering” — it is deteriorating.**

A [March 2025 report by Agrostis](#), commissioned by Lambeth Council, using aerial photography, makes clear that Brockwell Park has not recovered from the impacts of previous large-scale events, including damaged ground cover and altered soil structure. The report warns that parkland is expected to deteriorate further without major intervention. Crucially, the report states:

*“The condition of that ground cover, reflecting the health and density of the grass, continues to reflect the disruption that it has undergone. The pattern of the event structures and activities may still be discerned quite clearly in the aerial imagery. This implies that the soil conditions, as opposed to the grass cover on that soil, continue to **carry the legacy of the events** most probably in terms of its structure and hydraulic behaviour.”*

It further adds that *“Without restoration in good reasonable time to dense attractive sward, the **regular events will most likely lead to a continual deterioration** in the overall quality of the surfaces.”*

It concedes that while the park may be “probably quite satisfactory” as ornamental open space, it **cannot support major events without “substantial enhancements”** of both land construction and maintenance.

In contrast to this frank assessment, Lambeth continues to rely on totally outdated reports (they’ve not paid for a full independent ecological assessment since 2020). Indeed, Lambeth will often cite the *Ecological Constraints and Opportunities Plan* (Greengage, 2024), a **desk-based report commissioned by the event promoters, Summer Events Ltd**. The research *did not* include site visits, baseline data collection or on-the-ground ecological assessments. It also failed to assess cumulative or long-term impacts and relied heavily on incomplete and public volunteer-submitted species data (e.g. Greenspace Information for Greater London- GIGL) and ignored many ecologically important species that lack formal conservation status. (See also below)

**To draw broad conclusions about ecological impact based on such limited evidence is misleading. It’s like claiming a building is structurally sound after reviewing only the floorplan.**

The reality on the ground is plain to see:

- Grasslands have not recovered
- Invasive weeds such as plantains are now spreading
- Mature trees have been damaged and cut back
- Soil compaction is affecting tree roots and has created flooding
- Heritage footpaths have been degraded
- Litter is embedded in the soil

In his [detailed report](#), ecologist Tony Stone delivers a **scathing critique** of Lambeth Council’s claims regarding ecological mitigation in Brockwell Park in the face of large

scale events, highlighting a “**fundamental inability to assert mitigation of any ecological impacts**” due to **the lack of up-to-date data, surveys, and assessments**. He describes it as “**nonsense**” to propose an Ecological Impact Assessment **after** events are approved or held, stressing that such assessments must be completed in advance to determine whether mitigation measures are adequate and how Biodiversity Net Gain requirements under the Environment Act 2021 will be met.

Furthermore, Stone also points to the **lack of a cumulative impact assessment** that looks at a range of impacts of repeated large-scale events, including night lighting, loud music, and high footfall. He also notes that all baseline data cited by Lambeth is outdated or “**patchy at best,**” with the most recent ecological reports dating back to 2023 or earlier. He further supports concerns raised in the RSPB report obtained by the Friends of Brockwell Park, warning that its content appears to have been **misrepresented** by both the event organisers and the Council.

Brockwell Park is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Its ancient oak trees, wildflower meadows and diverse wildlife are being placed under increasing pressure by the impact of over 300,000 attendees, heavy infrastructure, HGVs, lighting, noise and diesel generators. These natural assets cannot be simply replaced – once they are lost, they are gone.

A [Heritage Impact Assessment](#) by Dr. Sarah Rutherford (former head of the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens) concludes that these events are causing **unacceptable long-term harm** to the park’s historic character and ecology.

---

## ***2. Lambeth claims that “festivals are good for young people and diverse communities”***

**Brockwell Park is already a vital sanctuary** – for young people, for the diverse local community that relies on it, and for biodiversity. **Protect Brockwell Park (PBP) is not anti-festival**. We support well-managed, appropriately scaled events that respect the park’s social value and ecological importance.

However, the current model – high-impact, multi-week commercial festivals in a densely used urban park – is simply **unsustainable**.

While festivals can promote diversity and inclusion in principle, that is not always reflected in practice. Our local experience tells a different story: **large metal fences cut off public access to this cherished green space for weeks at a time** that should be open to everyone. This feels more like **exclusion than inclusion**.

The recurring damage to grassland, trees, and disruption to wildlife – especially during sensitive periods in the ecological calendar – far outweighs the short-term

entertainment offered. These events often exclude local residents through high ticket prices and prolonged disruption, while the benefits flow primarily to private companies.

Indeed, **high ticket prices make the event exclusive rather than inclusive**, creating a divide between those who can afford to attend and those who cannot.

Urban parks like Brockwell are **essential** to communities. They support mental and physical health, biodiversity, and everyday community life. Like Glastonbury, Lambeth should consider letting the park **lie fallow** for at least one or two years to enable genuine ecological recovery.

---

### **3. Lambeth claims that the park area for holding events is of “low biological diversity” and there are no impacts on wildlife**

**Lambeth Council’s claim that major festivals in Brockwell Park have no significant impact on biodiversity is deeply misleading.** However, independent ecological analysis tells a different story – one the public deserves to hear.

Councillor Anyanwu, Lambeth’s Cabinet Member for Parks, has cited Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) data to support the view that biodiversity and large-scale events can coexist. However, Protect Brockwell Park contacted the author of that data, Czech Conroy, who clarified that it was **based on casual birdwatching lists** – *not* systematic surveys – and doesn’t reflect the true state of biodiversity in the park.

In his 2024 report, [\*Birds & Biodiversity in Brockwell Park\*](#), Conroy warns that many bird populations are **critically low** due to limited nesting space. He stresses that large-scale events – **particularly in May, a vital breeding month – pose serious risks through noise and crowd disruption.**

#### ***Species at risk***

Conroy emphasises that the true measure of the park’s biodiversity health lies not so much in the number of bird species observed passing through, but in the **presence and breeding success of resident species**. Many resident and summer birds exist in extremely small numbers – some with only a single breeding pair. Conroy writes:

*“Some of the resident birds and summer visitors are very few (less than ten) in number... Further disturbance or loss of habitat/cover could mean that they cease to breed in the park.”*

Species at risk include the Chiffchaff, Mistle thrush, Reed warbler, Nuthatch, Song thrush, Swift and whitethroat. Their survival depends on undisturbed habitat and nesting areas – both of which are threatened by festivals.

#### ***Disturbance from large-scale events***

Conroy further notes:

*“Disturbance results in **birds feeling threatened, and avoiding an area where they might otherwise feed or nest...** The presence of exceptionally large numbers of people could deter birds from accessing certain areas to collect food for their chicks.”*

Scientific research supports this concern. A 2020 literature review (Sordello et al.) found that anthropogenic **noise is potentially a threat to the persistence of many species**. Ornithological studies confirm that noise reduces breeding success and causes birds to avoid affected areas (Ortega, 2012).

Even areas of higher biodiversity value, like the Copse of ancient trees, are under strain. The footprint of these events guarantees that large portions of the park remain **ecologically degraded**.

### ***Biodiversity needs action, not complacency***

While Brockwell Park may compare favourably to other London green spaces, this should not breed complacency. As Conroy notes:

*“There is plenty of scope for further measures to support the park’s wildlife and significantly increase its biodiversity and importance for nature conservation.”*

Lambeth’s own *Biodiversity Action Plan* (2019–2024) commits to not just protecting but enhancing nature and wildlife in Lambeth parks. Permitting major festivals during peak breeding season directly **undermines** this pledge.

Brockwell Park is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. It should be protected for its long-term ecological value – not sacrificed for short-term commercial events.

---

## **4. Lambeth claims that “festivals bring in revenue for Brockwell Park”**

We recognise that councils are under severe financial pressure. However, in the case of large-scale festivals in Brockwell Park, **the primary financial beneficiary is not Lambeth Council – it is the commercial operators**, who generate millions in ticket sales by using the park as a low-cost venue for profit-driven events.

Lambeth claims these events are essential to raise funds for park maintenance, yet the council remains **opaque about the financial arrangements**. Crucially, Brockwell Park is held *in trust* for the public. It cannot legally be used as a cash cow – the council is only permitted to recover what it costs to maintain the park, not profit from it.

Lambeth Council has **publicly claimed** that it “saves” £700,000 on the Lambeth Country Show by having certain costs covered through the connection with the commercial events. However, the council has **not been transparent** about how this financial model works. The council also states that it receives £50,000 for charities and


£125,000 for parks from these events—of which 80%, or £100,000, is supposedly ringfenced for Brockwell Park.


However, a recent response to a **Freedom of Information (FOI) request** paints a different picture. It suggests that the actual amounts may be significantly lower, and crucially, that there is no separate accounting for Brockwell Park. This means we **have no clear idea** how much money is received, apportioned, saved or reinvested into Brockwell Park, other Lambeth parks, or the wider Council budget.


Lambeth cannot have it both ways. They cannot claim to receive substantial funding for parks while refusing to show how much is actually involved and where it goes. This lack of transparency raises serious concerns. The public has a right to know how much revenue is being generated from these events and exactly how much is being reinvested in Brockwell Park.


Furthermore, publicly-filed accounts reveal that **income from some Brockwell Live events is being routed offshore**, where it may be taxed – or not – outside the UK. So not only is Lambeth ruining our park by enabling commercial exploitation of a cherished public space, but it is also allowing those who are profiting from those events to extract huge value, with **little – if any – benefit returning to the local community**.


Here are the details:

 The rights to several Brockwell Live festivals – including Mighty Hoopla, Field Day, and Cross The Tracks – are ultimately owned by international events company **Superstruct**. Superstruct owns the rights to a total of 80 live festivals worldwide and was reportedly acquired in October 2024 for **£1.3 billion** by two massive private equity firms, **KKR** and **CVC**.

 Superstruct indirectly owns the event companies behind Mighty Hoopla, Field Day, and Cross The Tracks through an offshore holding company registered in Luxembourg – **Superstruct Holding Sàrl**.

 Publicly filed accounts indicate that revenues from these event companies are ultimately routed back to Superstruct Luxembourg offshore holding company via loans. This structure may reduce the profits made in the UK – and therefore potentially **lower the amount of UK tax paid**.

 To give a sense of scale: **Superstruct’s UK festivals generated £83 million in revenue in 2023**, according to publicly available accounts. Globally, their total festival revenue for the same year was £173 million, on which they reported an **operating loss of £33 million in the UK**.

 Publicly filed accounts also show that **Superstruct acquired the rights to Mighty Hoopla in 2023 for an implied value of approximately £8 million** – a figure which is likely to be based on projected future profits from ticket sales.

As illustrated above, vast revenues are generated by corporations through these festivals, yet only a small **fraction of that money reaches Lambeth**. We have called for alternative financial models that would prevent ‘**parksplotation**’ by councils and big businesses.

**KKR**, the global private equity firm that owns **Superstruct** (which in turn holds the rights to festivals like Field Day, Cross The Tracks, and Mighty Hoopla), manages approximately **\$600 billion in assets**. Legally, KKR is accountable only to its shareholders, and its primary goal is to maximise long-term profits for them. There’s no requirement to protect our beautiful park.

**KKR’s average return on investment is approximately 18%-23%**, meaning they only acquire assets – such as the rights to **Mighty Hoopla** – that will generate more than **£1.18 in revenue for every £1 invested** over the medium term.

The revenues generated by these festivals, including **Brockwell Live ticket sales**, ultimately flow through to **Superstruct Holding Sàrl**. In 2023, Superstruct’s UK holding company reported no tax on its festival revenues (as it was technically loss-making). However, it still managed to pay approximately **£6 million** to the Luxembourg parent company through loan repayments.

We are **opposed to the privatisation of public space** by a multinational investment firm (KKR) with offshore interests and ties to weapons manufacturing. We are raising serious questions about **who is profiting from our public space, and at what cost**. This is about commercialisation, not community.

This new information underscores the importance of **holding Lambeth Council to account** for its role in enabling such practices.

---

### ***5. Lambeth claims it holds proper “community consultations” and follows “correct procedures”***

Lambeth Council has **failed to follow due process and adhere to its own Events Policy 2020–2025** in progressing the event permit applications for Brockwell Live (BL) and the Lambeth Country Show (LCS). The Council’s handling of both applications appears to breach several key procedural requirements.

Critically, there is no clear evidence that **Stage 2A** – which mandates community engagement through Event Proforma Briefing Notes or presentations, public consultation via digital platforms, and meetings with stakeholders – has been properly carried out. Despite acknowledged concerns and documented objections from stakeholders, the Council appears to have advanced the BL application to **Stage 3** without demonstrating that these objections were meaningfully addressed, as the Events Policy requires.

Essential documents – including updated **Sound, Tree, and Biodiversity Plans** – have not been published, and promised improvements remain unsubstantiated. Further undermining trust in the process, key engagement data such as **Public Consultation Notification (PCN) figures** have been misreported.

The LCS application has been handled inconsistently, despite its scale and overlap with Brockwell Live. There is no evidence of a Stage 2A review or a **Post-Event Report for LCS**, both of which are required under the Council’s own Events Strategy.

These procedural failings raise serious concerns about the legitimacy of proceeding with either application without **renewed scrutiny and genuine stakeholder engagement**.

---

## **6. Lambeth claims that the festivals “benefit” local businesses**

**Lambeth claims that festivals benefit local businesses** – but the Council has failed to provide any public data to substantiate its claim that the events generate meaningful revenue for traders.

**Our local poll shows that 60% of local businesses in the Herne Hill area earned less during last year’s festivals.** Several traders noted a decline in footfall, disruption to regular operations, and restrictions on their use of outdoor space – all negatively impacting their business.

Furthermore, the **Lambeth Country Show (LCS)** does **not offer local residents or businesses discounts** for participating in the festivals. Here’s what the [LCS website states \(FAQs\)](#) at the time of writing:

**— Do you offer discounts to Lambeth residents or businesses registered within the borough?**

There are currently no discounts available to residents or businesses within the borough.

However, residents and businesses are given priority if all requested information is provided and high standards are met – such as food hygiene rating, environmental policy, risk assessments etc.

Moreover, in addition to paying high fees to rent a stall, stallholders were reportedly required handover 25% of their takings last year, once a certain profit threshold was reached. This year the percentage has reportedly risen to 25.5%. This hardly constitutes meaningful support for local enterprise.

## Conclusion

**We want music. We want festivals. But we want them to be fair, inclusive and sustainable – not run at the community’s expense. This isn’t “NIMBYism”. It’s about protecting our park – for now, and for the future.**

**We believe most people on all sides of this conversation share a love for Brockwell Park as a place of joy, celebration and connection. Let’s make sure it stays that way, without sacrificing its ecological health, community value or public purpose.**

*We are calling for:*

- Lambeth Council to **follow the law** and to ensure that all consents are obtained properly and lawfully including planning permission for commercial events like these festivals
- Lambeth Council to **consult the local community** about how to balance the interests of festival goers and the local community
- Brockwell Park to have **full ecological assessments** so that Lambeth understands the real and cumulative impact of festivals on the park
- To respect nature: to have **fewer and shorter festivals** with one or more **fallow years** and consideration of holding the events later in the year – around what is best for nature and local residents, not profits.
- **Honesty and transparency about how much money the festivals make**, and how it is spent to benefit Brockwell Park and local people.

We call on Lambeth Council to listen to the voices of local residents and ecological experts. **Brockwell Park is not a commercial venue** – it is a vital, historic green space that serves both people and nature. The current festival model is **incompatible with long-term environmental sustainability, heritage preservation, and community wellbeing**.

We urge the Council to **pause, reflect, and commit to a new approach** – one that respects the park, honours the community, and protects the nature.