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High Court Rules Lambeth Council Acted Unlawfully Over Brockwell Park Festivals

London, 16 May 2025 – Protect Brockwell Park welcomes today's landmark court ruling confirming that Lambeth Council **acted unlawfully** by allowing large-scale commercial festivals in Brockwell Park **without proper planning permission** or public scrutiny.

The judgment, handed down by **Mr Justice Mould**, sets a vital precedent for the protection of public parks and green spaces across London and beyond. It confirms that such significant changes in park use require **full planning processes**—not shortcuts under "permitted development" rights.

"This is a victory not just for Brockwell Park, but for communities everywhere fighting to preserve their green spaces," said Lucy Akrill, Co-Founder of Brockwell Park. "Parks should not be handed over for private profit without proper oversight."

*"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 and damaging festivals," said Rebekah Shaman, the claimant in the case.*

The Brockwell Live series now draws over 300,000 people across nine days, crammed into just 33 acres. That's a **denser footfall than Glastonbury** – but without any fallow years, without meaningful ecological assessments, and without even requiring a full planning application. Protect Brockwell Park has repeatedly stated that it's reckless and environmentally damaging and shows a careless disregard of the impacts on park users.

We are proud to have the **support of acclaimed actress Adjoa Andoh (Bridgerton) and BAFTA award-winning actor, Sir Mark Rylance (Wolf Hall):**

Adjoa Andoh offered a deeply personal and moving reflection on what the park means to her: *"Over the past 40 years I have raised three children in the glory of Brockwell Park, walked my dog, played with my grandson, wept and celebrated. For many Lambeth users it is their only green space, a place to play, reflect and refresh in nature – a free open healthy space,"* said Andoh.

"We residents need our park! We need to know we have a free green space available and accessible."

*“Whatever the financial benefits the council presents in mitigation, **residents, who may not be able to afford the festivals taking place in our park behind high walls are being denied over many months their green space in favour of wealthier users.** And when we get our park back it is frequently **ruined**, with a year-on-year loss of nature within its fences.*

“This park was secured almost two centuries ago for the enjoyment in perpetuity of the residents of Lambeth. We urge the present council to honour and not betray that long-held generous commitment to the public good of Lambeth residents.”

Sir Mark Rylance shares our joy in this landmark victory: **“Wonderful news!!!! Brockwell park will be open to all for free again this summer. No walls. No trucks. The grass, and trees, and plants will have a chance to recover from the years of abuse. Now let's help revive the beloved Lambeth country fair as it used to be, open to all. Congratulations to all who worked so devotedly to achieve this decision. **Every small victory for Nature makes a difference.**”**

Protect Brockwell Park brought the legal case after years of community concerns were ignored. The court's ruling casts serious doubt on whether **Brockwell Live 2025** should go ahead in its current form.

*“This judgment confirms what we've said all along,” said **Jen Hawkins, Co-Founder of Protect Brockwell Park.** “This is a major and damaging change of use of the Park. Large-scale commercial events cannot be pushed through by hiding behind ‘permitted development’ rules to avoid a full planning process and scrutiny. This is a victory for local people who stood up to defend their park.”*

*“These events significantly reduce public access, cause environmental harm, and breach the council's own policies. Large-scale events like these are simply **not sustainable for Brockwell Park,**” added Shaman.*

This is the second victory against Lambeth Council in just over a week, following the West Dulwich Action Group's successful legal challenge to the borough's Low Traffic Neighbourhood scheme. Together, these rulings send a clear message: the Council must start listening to residents, conduct genuine consultations and carry out up-to-date impact assessments.

*“Our case was supported by **over 800 individuals – not wealthy donors, but local people who came together to defend their park.** Thank you to everyone who stood with us – this victory belongs to you,” said Akrill.*

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Notes to Editor:

1. The legal challenge, launched on 17 April 2025, centres on a narrow legal point – Lambeth Council's decision to permit large-scale commercial festivals under ‘permitted development’

28-day rules, thereby avoiding a full planning process. Full planning permission is only required if an event occupies a site for more than 28 days. Under 'permitted development' rules, the Council allows certain temporary land uses for up to 28 days within a calendar year **without requiring formal planning permission**, provided all legal conditions are met. This provision typically applies to temporary activities or structures, such as fêtes or construction sites.

Protect Brockwell Park argues that this planning rule was misapplied in the current case. The six event series in question, spanning well over 28 days from setup to dismantling and enclosed behind 4-metre-high walls, exceeds the legal time limit. The Council's attempt to segment the events – treating the first six events under "permitted development" and only submitting a planning application for the final seventh event, the Lambeth Country Show – is, in our view, a deliberate strategy to sidestep proper planning scrutiny and public consultation.

We argue that the purpose of the relevant planning law is to prevent extended changes of use of public parkland that extend beyond that statutory limit without appropriate oversight and proper application of planning laws. Lambeth Council's approach undermines that purpose by artificially fragmenting the event series to evade the statutory limitations and its purpose.

2. A proper planning process would require proper assessment of critical issues:

Ecological Damage: Brockwell Park, is a heritage park and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, that now faces irreversible harm to its ecosystems. Over 300,000 attendees, along with heavy infrastructure, HGVs, and noise, are damaging soil, ancient oak trees, wildflower meadows, and local wildlife.

Loss of Public Access: During peak seasons, 35–50% of the park's amenity space is fenced off for weeks at a time, restricting access for local residents, especially those with disabilities who can no longer fully enjoy the park. The resulting ground damage lasts for months, further limiting use and enjoyment of the park.

Flood Risks: Soil compaction from these large-scale events is exacerbating flood risks in an area already vulnerable to flooding, endangering the park and nearby areas.

Biodiversity Loss: Commercial music festivals disrupt nesting seasons, disturb birds, bats, and other wildlife due to excessive noise, lighting, and crowds. In 2024, trees were damaged or cut back to accommodate HGVs and infrastructure.

Air and Noise Pollution: The operation of 26 generators during the events, along with noise from sound systems, construction, and HGV movements during setup and takedown, contributes to multiple forms of pollution in this densely built-up area – impacting both local residents and wildlife.

Heritage Damage: The park, a valuable heritage site featuring Regency parkland and the Grade II* Brockwell Hall, is being degraded by the damage to the grounds and trees, as well as high fences, heavy vehicles, and the overwhelming influx of over 300,000 attendees.

Crime and Nuisance: Large-scale events lead to spikes in crime, anti-social behaviour, noise, and traffic congestion, creating a disruptive environment for local residents.

3. Brockwell Live / Glastonbury: Brockwell Live events generate a far denser footfall than Glastonbury. While the Glastonbury Festival takes place over approximately 900 acres of remote farmland, Brockwell Park covers around 33 acres – making it roughly 1/27th the size.

This stark size difference means that, on a per-acre basis, footfall in Brockwell Park can be up to four times denser than Glastonbury on a festival day – and even greater during events like the Lambeth Country Show. This high concentration of people places immense pressure on the park's fragile landscape, local infrastructure, and the surrounding community.

Brockwell Live has **no fallow years, no independent ecological assessments, and no full planning application process**, despite its scale. Noise from the events reaches well beyond park boundaries to neighbouring towns, with residents frequently reporting excessive levels.

4. Protect Brockwell Park is a group of local residents and park users, who champion the Park, its ecology, heritage and open access to local people. We are fighting to ensure that Brockwell Park is a thriving, green oasis that serves as a sanctuary for both people and wildlife, free from the interruption of protracted large-scale unsustainable events during the critical period of late spring and early summer. Please see our [media pack](#) for photos and background information. *Please note: The media pack includes photos of graffiti on the event fencing. We want to make it clear that this graffiti was not carried out by Protect Brockwell Park. However, we have included these images because they reflect the strength of local feeling about the issue.*

Our organisation emerged after local residents rallied in Spring 2024 when 44 trees were due to be felled or lopped to facilitate these commercial events in the park. We are now challenging Lambeth Council over its renting out of this vital public space for multiple private events that are causing irreparable ecological harm to our park. To date, we have achieved:

- ✔ In July 2024, we submitted a deputation to the Council, requesting Lambeth Council puts forward a new vision for Brockwell Park, ceasing large commercial events.
- ✔ Over **1,000** people signed our letter to the Mayor, urging him to take action on the fencing off and damage to the Park.
- ✔ Over **3,400** people have signed our [petition](#)
- ✔ Over **860** people have signed our letter opposing this year's Event Permit.
- ✔ We have commissioned experts' reports, including heritage, ecological and acoustic reports.
- ✔ We successfully argued for an in-depth consultation on the Events Permit.
- ✔ We have successfully crowdfunded over **£40,000** for our legal action fund from over **800** supporters.

Website: www.protectbrockwellpark.org.uk

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/protect_brockwell_park

CrowdJustice page: <https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/protect-brockwell-park/>

5. Brockwell Park, surrounded by residential homes and tower blocks, is essential to the physical and mental wellbeing of all Lambeth and Southwark residents in an area where many do not have access to a garden.

There are multiple playing areas, and sports and community spaces across the Park. Consequently, the space is used by a huge range of ages and groups across our diverse community.

As well as beautiful trees – including veteran/ancient oak, whitebeams and elms – the space is home to a variety of bats, woodpeckers, swans, newts and toads. The park's many micro-ecosystems and biodiversity makes it incredibly important in our nature-depleted borough.