

Licensing Committee – 5th August 2008

4. Report on Sunrise Festival 2008

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Purpose of the Report

To update members of the Licensing Committee on the 2008 Sunrise Festival, and the licensing issues arising from the cancellation of the event.

Recommendation(s)

That Members note the report.

Background

Members will be familiar with the licence for Sunrise 2008, having debated the matter at a full licensing hearing on 27th March 2008.

Sunrise 2008

Following extensive media coverage of the event, members will also have been aware of the cancellation of the event due to torrential rain in the days leading up to the festival. A summary of events leading up to the decision to cancel and the issues that arose following cancellation are detailed below.

Wednesday 28th May 2008

When the council team arrived on site they found the site to be flooded throughout and the entrance to the production compound and all roads on site to be 6 – 8 inches underwater. The main arena was underwater and this had slowed site build to a halt.

Due to the conditions, all council staff were taken off site at midday, and the site was then attended for a risk assessment by Bob Killick (Health and Safety), Julia Bradburn (Licensing) and Annette Barrell (Food safety). It was agreed to stay offsite and reassess at 6p.m. that evening to see if the water levels had dropped.

At this stage, the Medical Marquee was operational, with electricity, water and heating connected. One fully equipped ambulance was on site. There was an issue with the medical response times in that they would be slower because of the difficulty in moving around the site. The medical unit had clean toilets, but was awaiting the provision of showers.

There were 125 stewards already on site, with a number still to arrive and waiting outside for conditions to improve. It was agreed that the stewards could operate with a smaller team until the remaining stewards could move onto site.

A scheduled multi agency meeting was held at Taylor's garage at 6p.m., when it was clear that traffic unable to get on to the site was waiting in the garage area and starting to back up onto the A303.

Security were finding that it was difficult running mobile patrols on the site perimeter, and their response with vehicles was slower because of the need for greater control of traffic and people.

The organisers ordered 700m of tracking that would be laid at various locations on site the following day as soon as it arrived.

The organisers estimated that there had been around 6000 tickets sold to the public and there were approximately 3000 production crew, traders and Artists.

The organisers had placed a number of media messages asking people not to arrive until later on Thursday or Friday. The site by mutual consent of the organisers was closed until 0800 the following day to allow it to dry out.

Thursday 29th May 2008

At 8 a.m. site opening was delayed until 1p.m. to allow laying of tracking and site recovery. The route onto site was being well managed despite the problems, but there needed to be clear signage for the emergency vehicle route.

A weather report from the Met Office was received detailing heavy showers expected that afternoon.

It became apparent early in the morning that there could be no vehicle movement on site without being towed by 4x4 vehicle or tractor.

The welfare area of the site had flooded and they had had to move their operation into 2 caravans.

Track way was laid into the car park, so movement onto site improved, woodchip was laid on the pedestrian walkway. All sanitary arrangements were working, electrics were complete and site would have lighting by the evening. The pedestrian bridge remained partially underwater and could not be used. The farmer was assisting the organisers with tractors to tow vehicles on site.

There had been some complaints received from residents about festival goers walking down the lane. The liaison patrols with the local community had started.

By mid day there were 200 stewards on site.

At 1 p.m. the police informed the team on site that traffic was starting to build on the Cartgate and A303 due to the fact that the organisers could not get people on site fast enough with all vehicles being towed onto site with tractors from the main entrance.

At 6 p.m. torrential rain hit areas across South Somerset.

At 6.25 p.m. the Directors contacted Licensing to say that they had approximately 5000 people on site but had decided to cancel the festival. SSDC and police immediately attended the site to assist with the assessment of the site and the arrangements for the dispersal of the public and crew.

Due to the time it was agreed that if people could not leave then they were to be allowed to camp on site overnight and be assisted to leave the following day.

Friday 30th May 2008

The farmer had organised tractors to haul vehicles off the site to the hard road and tracks.

The Council arranged extra coaches from SW Coaches to shuttle people from the site to Yeovil Bus Station.

During the night there were a number of tent thefts, and a positive security presence was required to deter a repeat. Additional security was brought in for this purpose.

Welfare were given a supply of space blankets by SSDC, and wellies and socks were also distributed.

During the day SSDC staff remained on site to assist with the safe dispersal of the public and crew

By the 6 p.m. meeting, the organisers reported that festival goers were leaving, but that some were having to wait for a tow off site.

By 8 p.m. the organisers maintained that public camping had been cleared although there were still some public camping with displaced crew in the Woodhenge area of the site. Tents were still in place for those waiting to be towed out to allow them some dry shelter if it rained again.

Some 80% of traders had left the site and the entertainment sites had been broken down and sound equipment removed to prevent unauthorised use. It was probable that those remaining on site would create some self generated entertainment when not working.

The crew food arrangements were still operational, they were cleaning their area and food was being donated. The team were tired, but still working.

Arrangements to transport people off site would change from the bus to a twelve seater Landrover, as demand declined.

Further arrangements were made to ensure some continued support from the farmer regarding tractors to remove vehicles from the site.

Saturday 31st May 2008

At the morning meeting it was agreed that the site was to be cleared of all remaining crew that were non-essential to the closedown of the festival.

Security on site was now only manning the gates. AMASS security (the main contractors) would leave the site at 8 a.m. on 1st June.

There were approximately 400 vehicles left on site.

Most volunteers had left the site including the Litter pickers, although a core team of around 30 remained.

The message to leave was passed to all on site by sweeping through with all available staff. SSDC staff encouraged remaining food traders to close and depart to remove opportunities or any desire for people to remain.

The landrover that had been identified as available to transport pedestrians at the previous evening's meeting had now left the site. SSDC provided details of taxi operators who could collect people without their own transport. It was not felt that there were many who would be unable to leave the site by their own means.

The site owner reminded the organisers and others that there were a number of spikes and sharp objects left in the mud (tent pegs, marquee spikes) and that these presented a danger of damage to vehicle and tractor tyres.

Security reported one incident overnight when a confrontation arose when requesting that music be turned down. The situation was de-escalated and there were no reports of crime overnight.

The medics reported that all was well but the condition of the site still affected their response times. Only two people had presented with problems overnight.

Organisers reported that trucks would be coming onto site for the removal of stages and marquees. They would be held at 'C' Gate and then escorted to points as required.

Sunday 1st June

The site was reassessed at 11 p.m. and 3 p.m. and by mid-morning was relatively clear.

Monday 2nd June

SSDC retired from the site following a final multi agency meeting and handed the final arrangements to the festival organisers.

The final report from medical was that 37 patients were attended, 5 were conveyed off site to Yeovil hospital, none of the medical incidents were serious however there were 2 fractures due to slips and trips contributed to by the site conditions.

The police reported 10 thefts from tents and one assault on gate staff from a local resident which was under investigation by the police. No arrests were made.

Complaints following the festival

A number of complaints have been received following the festival from the residents of the local area. There were also a number of letters in the press from residents as well as comments both positive and negative on various web forums.

Financial Implications

Even though the staff on duty worked intensively until Saturday 31st May, the rota organized for noise patrols was significantly reduced, and so overall costs were less than expected for a normal festival.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

Impact on Corporate aims 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Other Implications

A number of complaints from the local residents.

Background Papers: None
