OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

Christmas lights switch-ons: a capacity without a turnstile

What three towns changed for 2026, how to set and enforce a capacity in an open square, and what the law and guidance say

Correct as of 2 November 2026

SUMMARY

No turnstile, still a capacity.

75% backed a simpler event in one town [2]



A crowd fills a lit town square with a Christmas tree. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

OTAS

The facts, as reported

75%

backed a simpler event in one town [2]

£15,058

one city's 2024 switch-on cost [4]

800

people in the SIA event test [11]

01

What changed for 2026

A MARKET TOWN

- A midweek date [2]
- A simpler event [2]
- Stalls under review [2]

A SCOTTISH CITY

- A written capacity trigger [1]
- A second access street [1]
- Subject to confirmation [1]



Start at the street mouth

Stewarded entry points, one for each street

A steward with a radio walks a street lined with steel barriers. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Why the town changed

WHAT THE REPORT SAID	WHAT IT IS EXPLORING
A crowd found “frightening” [2]	Stewarded entry points [2]
Hard to reach a medic [3]	A smaller stage [2]
Wheelchair users struggling [3]	A one way system [2]

03

The law in brief

ENGLAND AND WALES

- Licensing Act 2003 [15]
- Four licensing objectives [15]
- Public safety is one [15]

SCOTLAND

- Civic Government Act s41 [16]
- Conditions can limit numbers [16]
- Ask your council early



Keep a lane for medics

From the medical point to the stage front

An empty barriered lane in a wet street, with a first aid sign. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

04

Martyn's Law

WHAT IS KNOWN	FOR A SWITCH-ON
Royal Assent 3 April 2025 [12]	Event test has entry checks [11]
Expected spring 2027 [11]	800 or more at once [11]
Final guidance autumn 2026 [11]	Check the final guidance

05

Costs are rising

ONE CITY	ONE TOWN
£5,389 in 2023 [4]	£10,000 to £15,000 [3]
£15,058 in 2024 [4]	Professional management
Safety lines drove it [4]	An estimate

06

Zones on switch-on night

1	2	3	4	5
Arrival streets	Street mouths	Viewing area	Stage front	The exit

OTAS guidance, drawing on HSE.

Count from the start

A logged count every 10 to 15 minutes

Radios on charge, a tally counter and a zone plan on a table. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

07

Capacity by zone

FOR EACH ZONE	THEN
Measure the usable area	Choose the count method [6]
Find the narrowest point	Set a warning point
Set a working figure	Agree it with the council

08

The full call

WRITE DOWN	AND
Who calls it	Which barrier line moves
The warning call	The PA message
The exact radio words	The second route [1]

09

Signs the square is filling

Signs 1, 2 and 4 draw on HSE guidance.
Signs 3 and 5 are OTAS guidance.

01 **Density rising in a marked area**

02 **Flow into an area exceeds flow out**

03 **People stopping at street mouths**

04 **Bottlenecks forming**

05 **No way through for a medic**

10

Five stages, from the plan to the exit



STAGE 1

Zones

Capacity per zone

STAGE 2

Trigger

Who calls full

STAGE 3

Count

Every
10 to 15 minutes

STAGE 4

Lane

Medical point
to stage

STAGE 5

Exit

The first 15 minutes

From the plan in this Insight. OTAS guidance.

11

Roles on the night

WHO OWNS WHAT	COMMUNICATIONS
Event lead: overall	PA and social posts
Crowd manager: full call	The full message
Zone supervisors: one each	A back up loud hailer [8]
Medical lead: the lane	

What to do at each level

Operational

Know your zone limit

Report in agreed words

Keep the lane clear

Tactical

Hold and log the count

Warn before full

Move the barrier line

Strategic

Set zone capacities

Name who calls full

Agree the second route

13

The checklist

BEFORE THE NIGHT	ON THE NIGHT
Zones and capacities	Stewards at street mouths
Written full trigger	Counts logged [6]
Medical lane on the plan	Control point and CCTV
Weather decision time	Full message ready

“

Even if the event is free or takes place on urban streets or open spaces, you should still apply the same crowd management principles.

HSE guidance on crowd management, assessing the risks [5]

Where the facts come from

1 **Perth and Kinross Council, Elected Member Briefing Note, Christmas Lights Switch-on Weekend, key event changes, 23 September 2026** pkc.gov.uk

2 **Keswick Reminder, scaled back and safer Christmas lights event decided for this year, 23 March 2026** keswickreminder.co.uk

3 **News and Star, Keswick Town Council discuss light switch future, 15 January 2026** newsandstar.co.uk

4 **BBC News, Worcester Christmas lights switch-on costs, 21 October 2026** bbc.co.uk

5 **HSE, crowd management, assess the risks** hse.gov.uk

6 **HSE, crowd management, monitoring** hse.gov.uk

7 **HSE, crowd management, controls** hse.gov.uk

Where the facts come from

8	HSE, crowd management, control inside the venue	hse.gov.uk
9	HSE, crowd management, roles and responsibilities	hse.gov.uk
10	HSE, crowd management, working with others	hse.gov.uk
11	Security Industry Authority, understanding Martyn's Law and the SIA's role as regulator, 17 July 2026	gov.uk
12	GOV.UK, Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 collection	gov.uk
13	The Purple Guide, crowd management chapter summary, 26 January 2026	thepurpleguide.co.uk
14	The Purple Guide, about the Purple Guide	thepurpleguide.co.uk

Where the facts come from

15	**Licensing Act 2003, section 4, legislation.gov.uk**	legislation.gov.uk
16	**Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, section 41, legislation.gov.uk**	legislation.gov.uk

Web sources opened 2 November 2026 and labelled with their publisher.

OVER TO YOU

If your square filled 20 minutes early, who would call “full”, and where would the next person go?

If you need support with zoning, capacity and stewarding plans for a switch-on or another open space event, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

OTAS Live Ltd.

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