OTAS LIVE

Supporting Events and Professionals at Every Stage

OTAS Insight, licensing and law. Article

What licensing committees expect from new festivals

Two decisions from autumn 2026, the timeline one committee wrote into a licence, and the site questions a committee may test before it says yes



Illustrative image

Operational **Tactical** **Strategic**

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OTAS Live Ltd.

SUMMARY

Two committees have just shown what they expect from new festivals. They test whether the organiser can deliver, not just whether the papers read well.

180 days

before the event: when one committee now requires the event management plan [1]

16 days

before the event, the police said the safety advisory group still lacked the necessary documents [1]

45

objections, 10 in support, none from a responsible authority, and the licence was still refused [7]

ACTION

Before you apply, appoint an experienced event manager, contract your key suppliers, and check that every figure in your plan matches the site you will build.



CONTENTS

In this article

01 Read this first

02 Case one: stopped, reviewed and reset

03 What else the committee heard in case one

04 Case two: refused on a town green

05 What the two cases share

06 Conditions written into one licence

07 Why committees test delivery

08 Seven questions your site plan must answer

09 Capacity and exit sums on open ground

10 The evidence pack

11 Preparing for the hearing

12 What to do at each level

13 What we do not know yet

14 Questions, sources and notes

01
Read this first

Sources: 15 public sources opened on 2 November 2026. They are two councils' decision notices, minutes and appendices, a local newspaper, BBC News, HSE guidance, the Security Industry Authority and four Acts of Parliament. We do not name any festival, company, organiser or site. Each fact carries its source number. Everything without a source number is OTAS guidance for event organisers.

In the space of a month, two English licensing sub committees showed what they now expect from new festival organisers. In Wiltshire, a new festival was stopped by a prohibition notice after its safety papers were found incomplete at the event safety advisory group [1][2]. On a police review, the committee did not revoke the licence. It reset the event to “year one” at 5,000 people and wrote a timeline into the licence [1]. In south west London, a committee refused a new three day festival on a town green, even though no responsible authority had objected [7]. The common thread is simple. Committees are testing whether the organiser can deliver the event, not just whether the paperwork reads well.

> **In short:** committees now test delivery. Appoint your event manager early, have your event management plan ready 180 days out, contract suppliers by 60 days out, and make sure your site plan, your sums and your marketing all tell the same story.

Five things to take away

01	One committee now requires the event management plan at least 180 days before the event, and key suppliers contracted at least 60 days before [1].
02	A safety advisory group reviews plans. It does not write them for you [1].
03	Exit sums must match the site plan you submit. In one case they assumed four exits where the plan showed two [1].
04	A licence can be refused with no objection from any responsible authority [7].
05	Your website and marketing are evidence. A committee read one as suggesting an alcohol led event [7].

ACTION

Read the case, then share the actions with your team.



02

Case one: stopped, reviewed and reset

A new festival in Wiltshire was planned for 15 August 2026. The council's decision notice, minutes and appendices set out what happened [1][2][3][4].

The timeline and the site plan, on the wall before the build. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

Before the event

The papers	The police said the organisers failed to provide the event safety advisory group “with the necessary documentation 16 days before a planned Festival on 15 August 2026” [1].
The drafts	The plans “contained numerous ‘to be confirmed’ elements and were little more than skeletal drafts”. Contractors named in them had not been engaged [1].
The deadlines	The minutes record that not all the documents had been provided by the 60 and 30 day deadlines [4].
The meeting	The minutes record that responsible authorities at the meeting “had gasped when the papers were presented” [4].

The prohibition notice

When	A prohibition notice was served on 31 July 2026, with immediate effect [2].
What it stopped	The build, opening, admission, operation and de-rig of the event [2].
The crowd	Anticipated attendance was 2,500 to 3,000 [2].
The issues	Exit widths affected by fencing, missing security detail including SIA staff numbers and locations, inconsistent emergency code words, no medical provider appointed, and outstanding sign off evidence for temporary structures and electrics [2].

The review

Who applied	The police applied for a review. The committee modified the licence. It did not revoke it [1].
The reset	“2027 year shall be treated as year one with a maximum capacity of 5,000 and 2028 as the second year with a maximum capacity of 10,000” [1].
The finding	The committee found that documents “remained incomplete, inconsistent or absent less than two weeks before the event” [1].
Next	The next event is planned for August 2027. There is a 21 day right of appeal [1].

	What happened
31 July 2026	Safety papers incomplete at the safety advisory group, and a prohibition notice served [2][4]
15 August 2026	The planned date of the festival [1]
30 September 2026	Police review heard. Licence modified, not revoked [1]
2027 and 2028	Year one at 5,000, then year two at 10,000 [1]

Table 1. Case one in four dates, from the council's decision notice [1], the prohibition notice letter [2] and the minutes [4].

ACTION

Read your own plan for “to be confirmed”, and list every contractor named who has not yet signed.

03

What else the committee heard in case one

The decision notice, the safety advisory group summary and the press set out more detail [1][3][5][6].

From the council papers

Safeguarding	The organisers were unfamiliar with work on violence against women and girls and with “Ask for Angela” [1].
Fire	The exit width sums were based on four final exits, where the site plan showed two from the main event area [1].
The action list	The safety advisory group asked for confirmed attendance, potable water, food trader registration, risk assessments, reviewed fire exit sums, consistent code words, a PA failure back up and wildfire measures [3].

From the press

- A police alcohol licensing officer said: “If this had gone ahead, it would have been dangerous” [5].
- The officer also said: “When asked what Ask for Angela is they didn't have a clue” [5].
- The Gazette and Herald reported that the organiser “admitted during a licensing hearing that he had never organised a festival before securing permission” [5].
- BBC News reported, citing the organiser, “only around 100 tickets having been sold” [6].
- Both reported that the original licence allowed the event to grow to nearly 15,000 people [5] [6]. The decision now sets 5,000 for 2027 and 10,000 for 2028 [1].

ACTION

Ask your safeguarding lead to brief the team on “Ask for Angela” before your plan goes in.

04

Case two: refused on a town green

A new three day festival was planned for 25 to 27 June 2027 on a town green in south west London. The committee refused the application on 19 October 2026 [7].

The applicant's case [7]

The footprint	Just under 16,000 square metres, 38 per cent of the green.
The capacity	A daily capacity of 4,999, which the applicant said gave "over 2.5 square metres per person".
The offer	48 conditions offered, and clicker counts.
The fence	"The fence is about 2 metres high. The 4 emergency exits can be opened quickly and easily. They will be manned, but [the applicant] is unsure whether this would be at all times. They are 3 metres wide."

The representations [7]

- There were "45 objections and 10 representations in support".
- The committee "noted that there were no representations from any Responsible Authority".

The reasons [7]

- The committee was “not satisfied that the number of people who could be present ... could be safely accommodated”, with “only one entrance and limited exit points which would also serve as the sole exit aside from emergencies”.
- The plan “did not take account of the proposed inner boundary to take into account the trees, such that the event space would be even smaller.”
- There was a “significant risk of people gaining unauthorised access ... by breaching the external perimeter fence”, which “could lead to the event capacity being breached”.
- The committee noted the “use by the Metropolitan Police of Section 35 Dispersal Orders due to ongoing concerns about antisocial behaviour” at the green.
- The event website “suggests that the event will be alcohol led”.
- In a highly residential area, “it would not be possible to impose conditions that could be sufficient to prevent significant public nuisance.”

The grounds were the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety and the prevention of public nuisance. The Legal Officer noted that the cumulative impact policy did not apply, as the site is just outside the zone. There is a right of appeal to the magistrates' court “within 21 days” [7].

ACTION

Read your own application as an objector would, starting with the entrance, the exits and the fence.

05

What the two cases share

Two different outcomes, one review and one refusal. The same test sits under both. This is OTAS analysis of the two decisions.

The common thread

Delivery	Both committees asked whether the organiser could run the event safely, not only whether the forms were filled in [1][7].
The site	Both turned on exits. In case one the exit sums did not match the site plan [1]. In case two there was one entrance and limited exits [7].
The detail	In case one plans were incomplete [1]. In case two the plan missed the inner boundary for the trees [7].
Authorities	Case one began with the police and fire [1]. Case two was refused with no responsible authority objecting [7].

ACTION

Share both cases with whoever will sign your licence application, before the plan is fixed.

06

Conditions written into one licence

In case one, the committee modified the licence rather than revoke it. These are the main conditions [1].

Condition	What it requires
Capacity	5,000 in 2027 as year one, then 10,000 in 2028 [1]
Event manager	Experienced, appointed at least two weeks before the plan [1]
The plan	At least 180 days before the event [1]
Suppliers	Key suppliers contracted at least 60 days before [1]
Risk assessment	One document for build, live and de-rig [1]
Milestones	Dates for each area of the plan [1]
Sign offs	No build or admission without them [1]

Table 2. The main conditions in the case one decision notice [1].

The milestones cover security and stewarding, medical and welfare, fire, traffic, water and sanitation, safeguarding, alcohol and drugs, emergency command and contractor interfaces. The plan must also set attendance assumptions with scalable resource triggers [1].

ACTION

Set your own milestones for each of these areas, even if your licence does not require them.



07

Why committees test delivery

The two decisions show what a committee looks for. The causes below come from the sources. The lessons are OTAS guidance.

A staffed exit gate, the kind of detail a committee asks about. OTAS style image, generated from real photography. Not a record of a specific event.

The path from idea to opening

Case one was stopped at the safety advisory group, because the plan was not ready in time. OTAS guidance, drawing on the two decisions.

Drafts are not plans

The plans in case one held “numerous ‘to be confirmed’ elements” [1]. A plan with gaps reads as a plan that is not ready.

Names are not contracts

Contractors named in the plans had not been engaged [1]. A committee can ask who has signed.

The sums must match the site

Fire and rescue said the exit width sums “appeared to be based on four available final exits, whereas the submitted site plan showed that only two exits were available from the main event area” [1].

One set of words

Emergency code words were inconsistent across the plans [2]. In an emergency, two sets of words means two sets of actions.

Support is not planning

The safety advisory group process exists “to review plans, not to plan” [1]. The organiser keeps overall responsibility [13].

ACTION

Check that the exit widths in your fire plan use the exits on the site plan you submitted.

08

Seven questions your site plan must answer

Drawn from the reasons in case two [7]. The questions are OTAS guidance.

Ask these before a committee does

Entrances	How many entrances are there, and is the entrance also the everyday exit?
Exits	How many exits, how wide, and are they staffed at all times?
Usable area	Does the capacity sum use the real usable area, after trees, structures and buffers?
The perimeter	Can people outside without tickets breach the fence, and what is the plan if they do?
The area	What is the local antisocial behaviour picture, including police dispersal powers?
Marketing	Does your marketing match your application?
Noise	Can conditions really control noise in a highly residential setting?

ACTION

Answer the seven questions in writing, and attach the answers to your plan.

09

Capacity and exit sums on open ground

A method, not a set of figures. OTAS professional practice.

Five steps

Measure the usable area	Start from the fenced area. Take out trees and their buffer, stages, bars, structures and welfare.
Count the real exits	Count only the exits drawn on the site plan you will submit. In case one the sums used four, and the plan showed two [1].
Check what the fence does	Check where the fence narrows a route. The prohibition notice letter in case one found exit widths affected by fencing [2].
Staff every exit	Say who staffs each exit, and when. In case two the applicant was unsure if the exits would be staffed at all times [7].
One version	Use one site plan and one set of sums across the fire plan, the security plan and the application.

ACTION

Ask your safety officer to recheck the exit sums against the latest site plan.

10
The evidence pack

What the committee and the safety advisory group asked for in case one [1][2][3]. Have it ready before you apply.

The plans

- A consolidated risk assessment for build, live and de-rig [1].
- A security and stewarding plan, with SIA staff numbers and locations [2].
- A fire plan, with exit widths calculated on the actual site plan [1][3].
- A traffic and transport plan [1].
- Water and sanitation, including potable water [1][3].
- Safeguarding, including work on violence against women and girls and “Ask for Angela” [1].
- An alcohol and drugs policy [1].

The proof

- A medical and welfare provider, appointed and named in the plans [2].
- An emergency command structure, with one set of code words [2][3].
- A PA failure back up [3].
- A contractor interface plan, with contractors actually engaged [1].
- Attendance assumptions with scalable resource triggers [1].
- Sign off evidence for temporary structures and electrics [2].
- Wildfire measures, where relevant [3].

ACTION

Tick off the 14 items, and name the person who owns each one.

11
Preparing for the hearing

OTAS professional practice.

Decision points

Go or no go	Do not apply until the event manager and core suppliers are in place.
Talk early	Hold pre application meetings with the police, fire, environmental health and licensing.
Rehearse	Decide who answers on capacity, exits, security and noise, and rehearse it.
Year one	Consider proposing a smaller first year yourself, rather than having one imposed.

At the hearing

- Bring the site plan and the sums, and make sure they match.
- Answer with what is signed, not what is planned.
- Check your website and posts say the same as your application [7].

ACTION

Book a rehearsal of your hearing, with someone playing the objector.

12
What to do at each level

Operational

Know the site plan

Learn one set of codes

Report blocked exits

Know the site plan you will work to. Check that the exits you staff are the exits on the plan. Learn the one set of code words. Report any exit that is blocked or not staffed.

Tactical

Own one plan section

Remove “to be confirmed”

Match figures to the site

Own a section of the plan, such as security, medical, fire or traffic, and remove every “to be confirmed” from it. Check that your figures match the site plan and the contracts that are signed.

Strategic

Appoint the manager early

Sign suppliers first

Propose a smaller year one

Appoint an experienced event manager before the plan is written. Do not apply until core suppliers are in place. Consider proposing a smaller first year yourself, rather than having it imposed.

ACTION

Pick one action at your level and do it this week.

13
What we do not know yet

- How the year one conditions will work in practice. The next event in case one is planned for August 2027 [1].
- Whether other committees will set the same 180 day benchmark. We found it in one decision [1].
- When Martyn's Law comes into force. The SIA says it is expected in spring 2027 [14].

ACTION

We will update this Insight if more committees publish similar conditions.

14

Coming up: dates to plan around

The festival in case one plans its next event for August 2027, as year one at 5,000 [1]. Working back, 180 days before an August event falls in February or early March. The event refused in case two had been planned for 25 to 27 June 2027 [7]. Martyn's Law is expected to come into force in spring 2027 [14].

ACTION

If you need support with an event management plan or a licensing hearing for a new festival, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

Questions

Can a committee refuse a licence when no authority objects?

Yes. In case two the committee “noted that there were no representations from any Responsible Authority”, and still refused, on grounds of crime and disorder, public safety and public nuisance [7].

What is a review, and does it mean the licence is revoked?

The police can apply for a review. In case one the committee modified the licence rather than revoke it, and reset the event to year one at 5,000 [1].

Who can stop an event close to the date?

An inspector may serve a prohibition notice under section 22 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 where activities “involve a risk of serious personal injury” [11]. In case one the notice stopped the build, opening, admission, operation and de-rig [2].

Will the safety advisory group help write our plan?

No. In case one the Principal Licensing Officer said the process “existed to review plans, not to plan” [1]. HSE says you retain overall responsibility for the safety of the public [13].

How long is there to appeal?

21 days, to the magistrates' court [1][7][10].

Does this apply in Scotland?

The two cases are English, under the Licensing Act 2003. In Scotland, public entertainment licensing sits under section 41 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 [15]. The lessons on planning and evidence still apply.

If your hearing were next week, who would answer on capacity, exits, security and noise?

ACTION

Send us your question and we will add the answer to the next update.

Sources

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

1. **Wiltshire Council, Northern Area Licensing Sub Committee, decision notice, 30 September 2026** cms.wiltshire.gov.uk
2. **Wiltshire Council, Appendix 14, prohibition notice cover letter, redacted, 31 July 2026** cms.wiltshire.gov.uk
3. **Wiltshire Council, Appendix 12, event safety advisory group summary, 31 July 2026** cms.wiltshire.gov.uk
4. **Wiltshire Council, Northern Area Licensing Sub Committee, printed minutes, 30 September 2026** cms.wiltshire.gov.uk
5. **Gazette and Herald, festival can go ahead despite failings, 9 October 2026** gazetteandherald.co.uk
6. **BBC News, festival licence review, 10 October 2026** bbc.co.uk
7. **London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Licensing Sub Committee, public minutes and decision notice, hearing 19 October 2026** cabnet.richmond.gov.uk
8. **Licensing Act 2003, section 4, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk
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10. **Licensing Act 2003, appeals, Schedule 5, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk
11. **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, section 22, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk
12. **HSE, crowd management, working with others** hse.gov.uk
13. **HSE, crowd management, roles and responsibilities** hse.gov.uk
14. **Security Industry Authority, understanding Martyn's Law and the SIA's role as regulator, 17 July 2026** gov.uk
15. **Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, section 41, legislation.gov.uk** legislation.gov.uk

Related OTAS Insights

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When a social post draws a crowd: pop-up events without a plan

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Law: this Insight summarises parts of UK law and guidance as published on legislation.gov.uk and GOV.UK. It is not legal advice. Ask your council what applies to your event, and take advice.

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Images are OTAS style images, generated from real photography. None is a record of a specific event.

ACTION

Check the sources before you quote them, and tell us if any link has changed.

OVER TO YOU

If your hearing were next week, who would answer on capacity, exits, security and noise?

If you need support with an event management plan or a licensing hearing for a new festival, reach out to us to see how we can support you.

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