

FOBP letter to Cllr Rose following the large events over the summer and in response to her letter following the planning committee decision.

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2 Dec 2023

Dear Councillor Rose,

After experiencing the large events in Burgess Park during summer 2023 FOBP is now writing to respond to your letter of 11 May 2023. We have compiled these points regarding the use of Burgess Park based on the events that have happened, feedback gathered through FOBP social media and local networks, and the large events consultation process.

There are considerable costs associated with running the large events as listed below, which do not necessarily get accounted for in the monetary income to the council but need to be considered within the costs and benefits as part of the council's decision making process. Could you kindly update on the council's intentions to increase the permitted number of days for large events/filming and the number of days proposed for large events in Burgess Park in 2024.

In terms of consultation about large events FOBP would much prefer to attend a general community stakeholders event with the council on overall large events – once or twice a year. It would be instructive to hear what other park users feel about these big events. This year we have spent vast numbers of volunteer time attending individual event consultation events; responding to consultation on individual events both before and after. No-one has time for this when the main issues are perfectly clear and need to be addressed by the council before any events take place next year or the number of events is increased.

The main issues are:

- Costs and benefits;
- The noise levels, including the response to calls during the event and unlicensed large events;
- The public vacating the park after the events;
- Litter;
- Non-biodegradable materials used and left on site;
- The overall effect on the park, its users and on the local environment;
- The benefit to local communities.

Costs and Benefits

When we attended the planning meeting where the council agreed to double the number of days for big events and filming in Burgess, the figures given for money made were approx. £100,000 to £150,000 in the previous couple of years which was not a great deal and probably would only have covered the events team's salaries. The council also need to commit to attending all large events in the park themselves, over and above the current site check.

Further resources are needed to maintain and keep up basic maintenance of Burgess Park during and after events. This includes adequate bins and emptying of bins and litterpicking in areas around the event and the routes in and out of the park. This cannot be achieved within the existing grounds maintenance contract for the park. Carnival Pueblo site was litterpicked by the park grounds maintenance team, with no additional resources. Other areas of the park need to be kept in good order if large area of park is fenced off. It is a large park but not all areas are usable; mown paths

need regular cutting – Nile Terrace and Neate St; the woodlands need more maintenance to encourage use and the marginal park edge areas need attention.

A question often asked is whether a percentage of the income available for use is used on the protection and repair of the park. Greater transparency on this is needed.

Noise levels

The inhabitants of the areas north and south of the park continue to find the noise levels difficult and intrusive and for some people it is unacceptably overwhelming. For example, the Boiler Room sound seems to have travelled further in September (than May) as it was quite loud still at Camberwell Road. It was also noted by residents how sound was louder further away along St George's Road than immediately by the stage.

Burgess Park has residential flats to the north and south, very close to the event space.

It was felt by local residents that the sound level agreed with the Council was too high. Southwark Council had agreed to put a limit of 75 dB. However, we understand that the Council has its own recommendation of 65 dB which would be more appropriate.

The Boiler Room said that they had responded to complaints phoned in by measuring the sound levels and making adjustments. However, the measurements, during the events, were not carried out by acoustic engineers and the complainants said that the measurements were not taken in the right locations. For example, one inhabitant lived several floors up, but the measurement was taken at ground level where the sound was muffled by building, trees etc. The movement of sound – taking account of volume, frequency and impact of sound on the building needs a sophisticated approach. The location of sound monitoring sites and times should be made available and there should be an acoustic engineer on site in the evenings.

The events finished on time, so the overall noise level was reduced on time. However, there has also been another unlicensed event (or events) in the park playing amplified music until much later. This means that noise issues continue and many people living locally are not necessarily distinguishing that noise from the large main event.

FOBP have consistently pointed out that the inhabitants would be more understanding about the events if they were not already exhausted by the unlicensed music etc which takes place throughout the summer every weekend through Saturday to early Monday mornings. This is at a number of locations around the park; but most regularly - almost every week-end - near the old library.

Enabling people to leave the park after the event

Generally, this was carried out well by the Boiler Room. The September event was the most successful with various exits well signed and staff helping the public.

However, there was a problem that Lime Bikes had been left by the main entrance to the Park, on Camberwell Road, which blocked the pavement for local traffic and made exiting the park difficult. It is not clear how this happened. It was said at a meeting that Lime left the bikes at the entrance during the event and that also many were left there on arrival at the park. Some communication with the bike companies is required for the future.

Remaining Rubbish and Refuse

Carnival del Pueblo: There were not enough bins for the Carnival del Pueblo and a lot of rubbish left including plastic leaves etc. FOBP attended the event and regularly cleaned up the section of the site

where the stalls were. At Carnival del Pueblo we noted that the community stalls held various competitions that left a lot of rubbish on the grass. It would have been very simple for the organisers to require that these stall holders clean up after themselves.

The rubbish removal from the September Boiler House Event was very good, much better than the previous event earlier in the year. Much of the rubbish was cleaned up and removed from site.

The Boiler House events contract a rubbish removal company to work with them. This is not done by smaller events. In this case the park needs to have larger and more bins to take the rubbish and to prevent it from being strewn over the park by foxes and birds and blown by the wind. Organisers should ensure that visitors can dispose of their rubbish and do so in an organised way going to and from the event.

The music events also draw large numbers who remain outside the fenced area. They also leave large amounts of rubbish and more bins/litter picking is needed in those areas.

Sustainability - Biodegradable materials

The FOBP would expect that all groups licensed to use the park should not use single use plastic either in terms of decoration or cutlery etc. The event organisers must pass on information and explanations regarding alternative materials and general recycling materials.

There needs to be more scrutiny of the traders booked so that those who use single-use plastic such as Tropical Slush (Carnival del Pueblo), who were selling drinks in large single-use plastic cocktail-style glasses complete with plastic palm tree and plastic straw, are not invited back. The Radiate Windrush event included decorations of plastic leaves.

There is persistent use of non-reusable cable ties at all events that are then left all over the grass; our FOBP litterpick team have collected large amounts after every event.

During an Eid celebration there was a non-compliant generator being used near children. We have asked that standards are reviewed.

Effect on the park users

All of the above concerns about large events can be minimised and managed to reduce the overall impact. However, there are other impacts which are harder to assess but are cumulative over a number of events. The main one being the impact of noise on nearby residents and loss of use of the park space.

Loss of the green space in the main areas of the park is over all the days that the site is unavailable and the time after when the grass is in a terrible condition and really not suitable for use. The quality of that central green area has definitely been affected by the large events. After the September Boiler Room event the ground was quite damaged, the grass condition and recovery is also affected by the weather.

The availability and condition of the wider park, when a large area is fenced off is also an issue. The available free access space is now less as the sports centre and BBQ/basketball court area are fenced off.

There should be more oversight by the council on all aspects of the event licence and the events environmental policy.

Benefit to local communities

We do not know whether the Carnival del Pueblo was beneficial to local traders etc. but it is possible that some local communities were involved with the carnival.

The Boiler Room event organisers had set out to employ many local suppliers and staff, but it was agreed at the post event debrief meeting that they had not been able to do this, which reduced the local benefit of both events. Few, if any, local suppliers were used. Equally, the temporary staff were not local. Boiler Room have agreed to work more closely with the local businesses and employment offices for future events. The council may need to provide supporting information and work with the Boiler Room to enable closer contact with the communities. It was also agreed that their distribution of free or reduced-price tickets to local inhabitants did not work well. Many people did not receive tickets or get an answer from the phone number.

The free ticketing arrangements for the Windrush event were also not clearly communicated.

FOBP would like to see more free tickets available, well-advertised and easy to obtain across all the large events. There should be some appropriate funding or support for local charities and general community benefits. Local people should be employed as bar staff, security etc.