

Agenda Item No. 4 – Additional Information from Other Persons

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From: D WARD
Sent: 22 April 2020 12:22
To:
Cc:
Subject: Durfest Licen

Dear Ms Karen Robson,

I am writing on behalf of the Whinney Hill Community Group (WHCG) regarding your email to Alan Hayton in respect of our objection to the Durfest Event.

Thank you for forwarding the Durfest information and the letter from the event manager Elsa Kent. With regard to her request that WHCG retract its objection to the application, I wish to advise you that we will not be withdrawing our objection. Unfortunately nothing in the documents alleviates or lessens our concerns regarding noise and disturbance. Now that we are at last in receipt of the event manual document, which is new information, we will be strengthening our objection and would ask that our additional comments are included alongside our original objection.

It is clear from the event manual that the organisers really don't know how many will attend the event; though they hope for 6000. That is a number well above anything the rugby club has previously managed. In fact, we have no knowledge of that club managing an event of the 3500 claimed and we see no detail in the document that gives us confidence about that club's ability to service such numbers.

Given that the organisers don't know how many will attend the event, the references made to security are vague at best. Mention is made of employing licensed security operatives and unlicensed volunteers but no mention is made of the respective numbers or of their experience in managing such large crowds. Such specifics should be fundamental to the granting of any licence when such huge crowds gathered and alcohol is being served.

It is claimed that noise from the event will travel no more than 30 metres, yet other than a vague claim that natural barriers will deaden the noise; no evidence is provided to support such a claim. Past experience of even smaller events in the vicinity would not support this claim as noise travels very easily despite natural barriers. Regardless of the parts of the grounds the music will be played we are not shown the direction the stages and speakers will face or what noise suppressing measures would be employed. Having the music in the marquee from 11pm will do nothing to prevent noise pollution. In contrast outdoor University events are moved indoors or have silent discos after 11pm in order to prevent noise disturbance and in accordance with agreements with the police. Further to this, the organisers claim they've had no noise complaints from previous Durfest events. Those events catered for a few hundred people and were held indoors. To use those examples in support of competence to manage noise in the proposed event is insulting to residents and to the Committee considering the application and should be dismissed.

The document claims that no disturbance is anticipated in relation to the event. This shows absolutely no insight into the lived experience of Durham residents when large events are held and alcohol is involved. The claim is at best a naïve triumph of hope over expectation but in reality it is an insult towards those in the community whose lives are regularly blighted by the anti social behaviour which always ensues around such events. Of course, it is noted that the event security takes no responsibility beyond that of the event itself. In addition, the event is proposed to take place at the end of the university term. This is a time when there are huge numbers of complaints about student noise due to other events and private parties. The timing of the event will simply add to the already high levels of anti social behaviour and to the misery of residents.

Despite this, the applicants appear to think their timing is a virtue which just demonstrates how little consideration they've given to others.

It is claimed that the money raised from the event will go to charities yet, other than Rainforest Alliance, there is no mention of other specific charities, what they'll get and when the funds will be distributed. For instance, who are the local charities and how much are they to benefit? What will be the percentage distribution to which charities and what will be the expected net distribution after organisation costs? These are basic points left unaddressed.

With regards to transport, the applicant claims there are good transport links and adequate parking. In fact the nearest bus service to the event which serves Old Elvet and Whinney Hill was withdrawn some time ago. As the nearest bus stops at the southern end are on Stockton Road this would result in massive footfall throughout Whinney Hill for many hours of the day. The alleged good parking in Green Lane is somewhat limited and used by the public and other businesses located there. It's therefore inevitable that parking on Old Elvet, Whinney Hill and Hallgarth Street would be in heavy demand and there would be extra traffic flow throughout these areas causing additional traffic pollution. Such consequent disruption is ignored by the applicant in favour of promoting the event.

Owing to Covid 19 the proposed event cannot take place this year yet an application for a licence for events henceforth is still being pursued. It's unreasonable, for all of the above reasons, to consider a year on year license for such a large event in close proximity to a residential area, and for which the consequences cannot yet be measured.

WHCG will continue to pursue its objection towards the premises licence and given all the above we strongly believe it is the applicant who should be withdrawing the application in its entirety.

Diane Ward
Sec. WHCG