

## **COUNCIL – 20 JUNE 2023**

### **QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS**

#### **QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR C SEWELL TO COUNCILLOR M B WYATT**

##### **DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL AND TRAFFIC CHAOS**

###### **Background:**

Every year the Download Festival at Donington Park, near East Midlands Airport, Castle Donington causes congestion on nearby roads and gridlocks adjacent villages during arrival and departures to and from the festival. Residents have got used to this now and expect to be marooned in their close-by villages on arrival days and when the venue closes on the Monday.

However, this year saw the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the event taking place and 1 extra day of performances was planned, with Headliners Metallica performing on the first day, Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> June. Normally festival traffic arrives over 2 days, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, but this year as the festival started on the Thursday all the campers who stay over the whole period only had a small window in which to arrive, on the Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June, and gates weren't open officially until 12 noon (although local knowledge states the gates might have been opened earlier due to large numbers queueing). The large numbers arriving in a short space of time caused prolonged and widespread road traffic congestion, centred on the venue and according to news and social media bulletins, this affected an 18-mile radius, with people marooned in cars and gridlocked traffic for many hours. HGVs trying to gain access the SEGRO site and the M1 were stationery. This had a huge impact on local residents, people endeavouring to transverse the area, airport users, workers, businesses, schoolchildren, and festival goers. It seems feasible that the venue should have opened on the Monday 5<sup>th</sup> or Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> to allow festival goers adequate time to access the site – bearing in mind a record number of tickets were sold for this year's event. Normally 100,000 people are expected to descend on the already congested area and claims are that double this amount attended this year.

###### **My question is:**

"With safety issues at the forefront here, ie people trapped in stationery traffic for hours on end in sweltering temperatures, and the roadsides being used as public toilets, amongst other things, was it the conditions of the licence, provided by NWLDC, which prevented early opening of the venue, and did the organisers in fact ask for a sufficient extension of the license to allow this to happen, if so did NWLDC refuse the request or is there another explanation?"

#### **RESPONSE FROM COUNCILLOR M B WYATT TO COUNCILLOR C SEWELL**

The festival this year created an unprecedented level of travel disruption to residents, visitors, travellers and businesses across the district and beyond. The Download Festival operates under a permanent licence granted by this Council in 2005 under the Licensing Act 2003. The event organiser is responsible for complying with the licence conditions which relate to public safety, crime and disorder, public nuisance and the protection of children from harm.

Technical advice is provided to the event organiser through the NWL Safety Advisory Group (NWLSAG) which is chaired by North West Leicestershire District Council. Each agency provides advice relating to their area of expertise so for example Leicestershire County Highways, Leicestershire Police and National Highways advise on traffic management,

Leicestershire Police advise on crime and disorder and the fire service advise on fire safety. This Council advises on its area of expertise in the form of noise control, food hygiene, licensing, infection control, health and safety as well as water and sanitation.

The event organiser informed agencies at a meeting of the NWLSAG in January that the 2023 event would have four entertainment days starting on the Thursday and were considering opening the campsites on the Tuesday, a day earlier than in previous years. These proposed changes to the event were all permissible within the current licence, therefore a formal amendment to the licence was not required. The event organisers asked if any agency had an objection or concern relating to the proposal. No concerns or objections were raised.

At a meeting of the NWLSAG in February the event organiser informed agencies that their plans had changed. The arena would open on Thursday providing an additional day of entertainment within the arena, however the car parks and campsites would not open until midday on Wednesday. The event organiser held a multi-agency traffic management planning meeting in March to scrutinise and develop the plans. No concerns were raised by agencies relating to traffic management at the NWSAG meeting in April.

The event organiser will be setting up a multi-agency debrief focussed on traffic management in order to fully understand the causes of the disruption to the road network this year and to take the learning forward to minimise the impact on the local road network in 2024.