

The value of the PSPO to Brent Council – The Wembley Stadium Situation

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The Euro 2020 Final at Wembley Stadium was blighted by unacceptable levels of casual street-drinking that ultimately led to shocking scenes of fan disorder and anti-social behaviour. These scenes created an unwanted world-wide news story that reflected badly on the organisation of the tournament, and on the preparations made by key agencies, including the police, the Football Association and Wembley Stadium, and Brent Council as the local authority.

The FA commissioned an independent review, led by Baroness Casey, to establish the reasons for the disorder and to provide recommendations to ensure there is no repeat in the future.

A summary of Baroness Casey's findings that are relevant for present purposes are:

- There was evidence of overnight drinking as early as 9am on the match day.
- By mid-day over 10,000 fans had arrived in Wembley area, many of whom had travelled in on public transport (buses, national rail and tube).
- Many of the fans were in possession of large amounts of alcohol.
- Some of the fans were already drunk on arrival.
- There was insufficient enforcement of the ban on consuming alcohol on public transport in London.
- There is a lack of enforcement mechanisms available to respond to (and deter) the kind of behaviour witnessed at that Final.
- Planning for crowd control for the Final did not match the 'occasion'.
- The reckless and life endangering anti-social behaviour that ensued was caused largely by people who were under the influence of alcohol / and or drugs.

The Review made five recommendations for national consideration and two specifically for the FA and Wembley and its partners, including Brent.

The key recommendation of the Review required that the Sports Ground Safety Authority (SGSA), the events industry, the police and local government agree on a way forward on who is accountable for Zone Ex. The question of who was responsible for public safety on Olympic Way was a contributing factor to the inability to deal with the disorder seen in the build-up to kick-off at the Final. The police and stadium operators have for many years contested the issue of who is responsible for safety and security in Zone Ex (the area of public space outside the stadium used by supporters) and the financing of it remains a contested issue. The recommendation reflected that this should be resolved.

In response, Brent gave its commitment to working with the key neighbouring agencies to ensure these recommendations are complied with in full. A new, energetic and more resilient tri-partite collaboration (known as 'Best in Class') has since been agreed and activated with the FA and Wembley Stadium, and with Quintain. All parties have agreed

joint action is needed to fundamentally improve and coordinate operations in Zone Ex on match days. All are now signed up to a renewed and sustained programme of investment in enhanced infrastructure and resources.

The 'Best in Class' project has been created in order to help identify the gaps that sit between the three key partners. These gaps are those activities and/or initiatives which exist outside the three key partners' statutory responsibilities. There is a mutual understanding by all parties, however, that whilst these issues do not directly sit with one group, these initiatives and activities need to be addressed collectively by all primary stakeholders.

This programme now assumes a very high priority as a consequence of the recommendations of the Casey Review.

From this, a key responsibility for the Council has been to review licensing arrangements with respect to off-sales of alcohol in the local area. These are considered to contribute to problems associated with street-drinking in Zone Ex on match days.

Since 2021, we have taken forward a robust twin-track approach to review and change, as follows –

- A short-term (and ongoing) approach with the police and partners to prevent alcohol off-sales to street drinkers on event days. This is a statement of intent that has set a new culture.
- This is married to a longer-term (and more intricate) process to embed and uphold the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) enforcement framework to change relevant licensing conditions at relevant premises in a more fundamental way. That has imposed a more resilient and fully consistent set of conditions that prevent alcohol-related ASB over the longer term.

Through the PSPO, licensing and enforcement interventions are therefore now imposed by the Council and the partner agencies at each match.

The arrangements that are now implemented are set out below –

- A full Council enforcement resource that has successfully exercised existing PSPO powers to enforce against street-drinking and urination, ASB, illegal trading, ticket-touting, and the use of flares/pyrotechnics, by applying a zero-tolerance approach for the first time.
- Enforcement of licensing restrictions on retail premises within the PSPO no-drinking zone.
- Agreement with event partners to provide –
 - Improved signage.

- Dedicated drinking zones to contain and manage casual outdoors drinking.
- Pre-messaging to supporters and the general public.
- A full stewarding and policing resource to support the PSPO approach.
- Full training for these staff.
- Bins for can/bottle confiscation
- A new Zone Ex control room for the events.
- Full commitment from the police to greater numbers and an earlier deployment compared to the Euro Final
- Dedicated enforcement against illegal street trading, ticket touting, the use of flares and pyrotechnics, street urination, and ASB
- A greater number of public toilets
- Better fencing and segregation
- Regular tannoy information announcements
- A commitment from train companies to ban the carriage of excessive alcohol on their trains to London.
- Ongoing communications by the FA, the clubs, the police, BTP and a commitment to the need to educate and publicise a very clear message on this new approach.

Brent officers now work successfully with the many off-licence premises in and around Zone Ex to advise on the street-drinking culture at Wembley Stadium events, the problems associated with the supply of alcohol, the effects of this on high levels of street-drinking and also their specific responsibility as retailers under their Premises Licence to assist in reducing this. Any failure by any off-licence to uphold the licensing objectives, may result in a review of their Premises Licence, with additional conditions or a revocation of their licence being requested.

These premises have been advised that since 2017 Brent Council has administered the PSPO across the entire Borough of Brent, which amongst other factors, aims to prevent street-drinking. It's been made clear that the reasonable response to the Casey Review is for the Council to make a commitment to use the PSPO to eradicate street-drinking on Wembley Stadium match days by banning the consumption of alcohol in open public spaces.

Knowingly selling alcohol to customers who consume alcohol in the street is a breach of an off-licence's responsibility, as there is a clear link between street-drinking and the ASB and criminal and disorderly behaviour we are seeking to remove. In effect, it means that, if they sell alcohol under these circumstances, they would effectively be aiding and abetting customers in breaching the PSPO. The Council, for the first time, is now properly requiring their full co-operation to assist in guaranteeing a street-drinking-free zone during Wembley Stadium match days. In order to achieve this, we have asked that they only-

- Recognise those customers that are likely to consume alcohol in the street (retail is still possible to other customers).

- Refuse the sale of alcohol to anyone that is likely to drink alcohol in the street
- Refrain from increasing their store set-up to include additional alcohol for the purpose of match days
- Voluntarily cease selling alcohol in glass vessels including all wines, beers and ciders and where possible cease selling any alcohol on match days.

This requirement has been communicated to all premises and the response has been mostly favourable. The monitoring of compliance on match days is a key task as evidence is necessary for any firmer action to be applied at subsequent matches. Premises are still able to sell alcohol to regular local customers. The ban is on retail to obvious football fans only.

It is appreciated that this approach may be seen as detrimental to business but we believe that by using it to prevent the scenes of 2021 it is a very positive move overall, with the social and community benefits outweighing any inconvenience to the off licenses. Our advice to these businesses is that this will help ensure the problems are avoided, it will remove pressures on them from drunken fans and will make Wembley a much more family friendly destination for everyone. That is our clear objective and is working every effectively. To protect our community, and the visitors to the area, this approach will be applied at every upcoming large event.

PSPO Enforcement Outcomes

The metrics so far around enforcing the PSPO are significantly reduced ASB, reduced disorder, reduced match-day crime, reduced street urination and significantly less litter. These are all issues that the local community had made known they wished to see resolved. The PSPO has worked to resolve difficult problems and should be retained, enhanced and upheld. Anything less would be a retrograde step.