



**Minutes of a meeting of Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003
Matters) held on Wednesday, 19 August 2026**

Members present:

Ian Watson (Chair)

Naomi Bloomer

Nick Bridges

Paul Evans

Officers present:

Kevin Dunford, Licensing Officer

Emma Sparkes, Licensing Officer

Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Leonie Woodward, Head of Legal

5 Apologies

Members of the Sub-committee and officers introduced themselves. The Democratic Services advised the Chair that they had received apologies from Councillor Daryl Corps and Councillor Julia Judd. The Chair declared the meeting quorate.

6 Substitutions

Councillor Ian Watson attended as substitute Chair on behalf of Councillor Dilys Neill.

7 Declarations of Interest

The Chair declared that, in his capacity as the Gloucestershire County Council member for the relevant area, he attended parish council meetings, including Long Newnton Parish Council. He confirmed that he had previously made clear that he would not take part in planning debates or comment upon planning matters relating to Existence Festival and that he had not predetermined the licensing application.

No other declarations of interest were made.

8 Application for a new Premises Licence

The Sub-Committee considered an application by Wilde Dancing Limited for a new premises licence in respect of Existence Festival at Land East of Boldridge Farm, Crudwell Lane, Long Newnton.

The application sought authorisation for regulated entertainment, late-night refreshment and the sale of alcohol, with the proposed activities and hours set out in the report.

The Licensing Officer reported that:

- the application had been duly made and correctly advertised;
- representations had initially been received from the Council's Noise Pollution Team and Water Pollution Team;
- following clarification and agreement of arrangements, both responsible authority representations had been withdrawn;
- water would be brought onto the site by tanker/pillow bowser arrangements and neither the borehole nor local community water supply would be used;
- Gloucestershire Constabulary had raised no objection; and
- the Sub-Committee could grant the application, grant it subject to conditions necessary to promote the licensing objectives, or refuse it in whole or in part.

The report recorded that multiple parish councils and more than 70 residents had submitted representations in objection. The Licensing Officer also advised Members that traffic, parking, wildlife and landscape matters were not matters which could, in themselves, be determined under the Licensing Act 2003.

The Chair invited the applicant's representative to speak.

Rebecca Lowe, representing the applicant, addressed the Sub-Committee. She was accompanied by the Festival Director, and a representative of the landowner.

The applicant submitted that this was a new application which had to be considered on its own merits, but noted that a substantially similar application relating to the same site and festival had previously been granted for a proposed June 2026 event. The June event had not taken place.

The applicant emphasised that the present application was for a single event only, and that no more than 2,000 persons would be permitted on site at any one time. The applicant anticipated attendance closer to approximately 1,500 and stated that the licence could be restricted so that only one event could take place under it.

The applicant highlighted the withdrawal of the representations from the Noise Pollution and Water Pollution Teams and explained the proposed arrangements for

independent tanker-supplied water, the Noise Management Plan, the Event Management Plan and consultation through the Safety Advisory Group.

The applicant further confirmed its willingness to accept additional conditions, should they be set, including:

- no use of the community water supply or borehole;
- a post-event litter pick of the surrounding road network within 48 hours; and
- no fireworks or pyrotechnics.

The applicant stated that the event would be restricted to one event in September 2026.

The Chair then invited members of the Committee to ask any questions for clarification. Members questioned the applicant on capacity, camping, traffic, water, fire safety, the public right of way and noise.

Capacity and camping

The applicant confirmed that the proposed maximum capacity was 2,000 people, including staff. The festival was principally a camping/live-in vehicle event and the applicant sought to minimise vehicles entering and leaving throughout the weekend.

Noise

The acoustic consultant explained the proposed noise monitoring arrangements. The discussion included the proposed night-time limit of 43 dB LAeq over a 15-minute period at the closest noise-sensitive locations and the methodology for monitoring and reducing music levels where necessary.

The consultant – attending virtually, explained that permanent and mobile monitoring equipment would be used, with measurements taken at off-site locations and correlated with stage sound levels. The applicant confirmed that noise would be adjusted where monitoring identified levels above the agreed limits.

The Sub-Committee also heard that the applicant was willing for a post-event noise report to be provided to Environmental Health.

Water supply

Members sought assurance that sufficient water would be available, particularly during continued dry or hot weather.

The applicant explained that the site would initially receive 30,000 litres, with subsequent deliveries of 20,000 litres. Water deliveries would be planned throughout the event and additional supplies could be obtained if necessary. Bottled water would also be held as a contingency.

The applicant gave a clear commitment that the borehole would not be used.

Fire safety

Members raised concerns regarding the exceptionally dry conditions, portable barbecues and other potential ignition sources.

The applicant confirmed that fires and barbecues would not be permitted and that such items would be confiscated. Fire safety arrangements included extinguishers, sand buckets, increased steward awareness, separate security and site management arrangements, and a pre-opening site inspection.

Public right of way

The applicant confirmed that the public right of way would not be diverted or closed. The route would remain available, with the festival and camping areas separately secured.

Members of the Public were then invited to speak. The Chair advised that seven people had registered to speak. Speakers were invited in the following order: parish council representatives, the ward member and then other objectors and interested parties. The Chair asked speakers to avoid repetition and indicated an approximate ten-minute limit for each speaker.

Di Thomas – Chair, Long Newnton Parish Council

Ms Thomas raised concerns regarding:

- the timing of the application in relation to the Council's policy guidance for large-scale events;
- water supply;
- fire risk in the context of exceptionally dry conditions and a previous field fire;
- emergency access and evacuation;
- smoking and other ignition sources;
- the public right of way and site security;
- toilet and catering provision;
- traffic;
- noise;
- the potential effect on nearby children and nursery facilities; and
- the competence, credibility and consultation arrangements of the applicant.

She requested that, if the application were granted, robust and enforceable conditions be imposed, particularly in relation to water and fire safety.

The Licensing Officer confirmed that the Council's policy timescale was guidance and did not override the Licensing Act 2003, which did not impose a statutory deadline preventing the application from being determined.

Ms Thomas' principal objections concerned the potential impact upon the licensing objectives of public safety, prevention of public nuisance and protection of children from harm.

Trevor Jones – Chair, Ashley Parish Meeting

Mr Jones stated the parish's view that the festival could result in public nuisance, risks to public safety and inadequate protection of children from harm.

He raised particular concerns regarding:

- noise continuing until 2.00am;
- emergency access and response times;
- the local borehole and the importance of ensuring that it was not used;
- the risk of wildfire and rapid fire spread in the prevailing dry conditions; and
- the proximity of neighbouring homes and horses.

Mr Jones supported making the prohibition on use of the borehole an express condition of any licence granted. He also invited the Sub-Committee to consider an earlier finishing time for music.

Cllr Chuck Berry – Wiltshire Council Member for Minety Ward -the division including Crudwell

Cllr Berry reported that he had sought information from Wiltshire traffic officers and raised concerns regarding traffic management and the potential impact upon surrounding roads.

He also raised concerns regarding the current fire risk and urged the Sub-Committee not to underestimate the potential consequences of a fire in the prevailing dry conditions.

Roy Hamilton Lambley on behalf of Crudwell Parish Council

The Chair of Crudwell Parish Council spoke in objection.

The speaker stated that the parish was not opposed to festivals in principle but considered that the proposed site was unsuitable. Concerns were raised regarding:

- fire and emergency access;
- public safety;
- the adequacy of facilities;
- late-night music;
- the suitability of Crudwell Lane for event traffic; and
- the lack of meaningful consultation with the Parish Council.

The Parish Council requested refusal of the application.

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Local Ward Councillor Councillor Nikki Ind

The local ward member spoke on behalf of the affected communities and parishes.

Concerns included:

- the narrow rural road network;
- HGV movements associated with nearby businesses;
- the suitability of the Fosse Way for emergency access;
- fire risk in the exceptionally dry conditions;
- water deliveries and site infrastructure;
- safeguarding and welfare arrangements;
- the effect on local residents and neighbouring landowners;
- lack of confidence in the applicant's operational arrangements and;
- lack of engagement with the local community.

The ward member concluded that the site did not have the necessary facilities and infrastructure for the proposed event.

David Roberts – Solicitor, Knights

Mr Roberts represented Judy Pratt and Matthias and Charlotte Ljungman, associated with Ashley Marsh Farm.

Concerns were raised about the impact upon the neighbouring property, residents and horses, including:

- noise and vibration;
- the potential effect upon livestock and horses;
- fire risk;
- emergency access;
- the suitability of the site in the current dry conditions; and
- the adequacy of insurance and protection against potential losses.

Mr Roberts submitted that the site was unsuitable for the proposed event and invited the Sub-Committee to refuse the application.

Nikki Burton – Managing Director, Melcourt Industries

Ms Burton spoke on behalf of Melcourt Industries, an active manufacturing and distribution business located close to the proposed festival site.

Her principal concerns related to:

- lack of coordination of the traffic management plan with Melcourt;
- HGV and business access;
- the potential for traffic conflict during set-up, the event and breakdown;
- site security;
- fire risk arising from dry land, ignition sources and nearby combustible materials; and

- the need for the fire risk assessment and emergency arrangements to reflect the actual conditions at the time of the event.

Ms Burton requested greater assurance that the operational arrangements would adequately protect the business, its staff and its operations.

Members subsequently asked further questions of the applicant and objectors, including clarification on:

- the position and security of the public right of way;
- site fencing;
- the effect of the event on the neighbouring horses; and
- the ability of the applicant's management arrangements to respond to concerns raised during the hearing.

The applicant confirmed that the final site plan included continuous fencing around the festival and camping areas, with separate arrangements for the live-in vehicle area and an unfenced main car park.

The Chair then invited the applicant's representative to provide a closing submission.

Rebecca Lowe responded to matters raised during the hearing and reiterated that:

- the application had to be determined on its own merits;
- the applicant had engaged specialist safety and acoustic expertise;
- the responsible authority representations concerning noise and water had been withdrawn following agreement of suitable arrangements;
- the proposed licence would permit one event only;
- the applicant accepted the importance of complying with the agreed noise management arrangements;
- the borehole and community water supply would not be used; and
- additional conditions could be imposed where necessary and proportionate to promote the licensing objectives.

The applicant again invited the Sub-Committee to grant the application subject to the proposed and agreed safeguards.

The Chair allowed the Objectors spokesperson to make a final comment which summarised their objections.

The Sub-Committee retired to deliberate in private.

Before retiring, the Chair reminded those present that the decision would be based upon the four licensing objectives:

- Prevention of crime and disorder;
- Public safety;
- Prevention of public nuisance; and

- Protection of children from harm.

The Sub-Committee also confirmed that it would determine the application under the Licensing Act 2003.

At 19:15 the committee returned and the Chair announced that they had reached a decision.

Application

Applicant: Wilde Dancing Limited

Premises: Land East of Boldridge Farm, Crudwell Lane, Long Newnton

Event: Existence Festival

Application: New Premises Licence

Decision

The Licensing Sub-Committee **GRANTED** the application, subject to conditions.

The Sub-Committee considered the application against the four licensing objectives, the Licensing Act 2003, the relevant statutory guidance, the officer's report, the representations received and the oral submissions made at the hearing.

The Sub-Committee noted that the Noise Pollution and Water Pollution representations had been withdrawn following agreement of satisfactory noise and water arrangements. The Sub-Committee also took account of concerns raised by parish councils, residents, businesses and other speakers concerning noise, fire safety, water, traffic, consultation and other matters.

On balance, the Sub-Committee concluded that the application could be granted subject to conditions necessary to promote the licensing objectives.

Conditions

The licence is granted subject to the applicable mandatory conditions and the conditions discussed and agreed as part of the application with the various statutory consultees, including the noise management plan, together with the following specific conditions and requirements arising from the Sub-Committee's decision:

1. Noise Management Plan

The agreed Noise Management Plan shall be in place and implemented for the duration of the event.

The decision reflects the agreed noise management arrangements which were considered by the relevant environmental health function and formed the basis upon which the responsible authority representation was withdrawn.

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2. Pre-event Fire Inspection

A fire inspection shall be undertaken by an independent, competent authority, for example Wiltshire or Gloucestershire Fire Service, before the event commences.

This requirement was imposed in response to the particular concerns raised during the hearing about fire safety and the exceptionally dry conditions.

3. Prohibition on Use of the Ashley Farm Borehole

The Ashley Farm/Ashley Marsh borehole shall not be used for the event in any respect.

The event's water supply is therefore to be provided through the alternative tanker arrangements considered during the hearing.

4. Fireworks and Pyrotechnics

No fireworks or pyrotechnics shall be used at the premises during the event.

5. Fires and Barbecues

No fires or barbecues shall be permitted at the premises during the event.

6. Smoking Safety and signage

Appropriate signage shall be displayed requiring the safe disposal of smoking materials/devices.

The Sub-Committee required the signage to address:

- no fireworks or pyrotechnics;
- no fires or barbecues; and
- the safe disposal of smoking devices/materials.

7. Restriction to One Event Only

The premises licence is restricted to one event only, to take place in September 2026.

No further event is authorised under this licence.

In addition the Chair highlighted Additional Matters:

The Sub-Committee encouraged, but did not state as a formal licence condition, that the applicant should work as closely as possible with local residents and businesses, particularly in relation to the traffic management plan and operational coordination.

Right of Appeal

All parties were advised that there is a right of appeal to the Magistrates' Court within the statutory time limit, which is 21 days from the date the decision notice is published.

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The Meeting commenced at 2.00 pm and closed at 7.26 pm

Chair

(END)

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