

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

<b>TO:</b>	Housing Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee		
<b>DATE:</b>	9 March 2023		
<b>TITLE:</b>	Reading Festival Update		
<b>LEAD COUNCILLOR:</b>	Councillor Rowland	<b>PORTFOLIO:</b>	Environmental Services & Community Safety
<b>SERVICE:</b>	Planning, Transport & Public Protection	<b>WARDS:</b>	ALL
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At committee on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2022, it was agreed to provide a further update on plans for Reading Festival 2023. The update provided to Committee in November was in part a closed session due to the commercial nature of the discussion and some proposals were yet to be finalised. This paper updates on those proposal and provides an overview of the event which is in its planning phase for 2023.

#### 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Committee note the content of the report.

#### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Council are the Licensing authority for the event and work with the organisers, Festival Republic and partners to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all those involved.

#### 4. THE PROPOSAL

##### 4.1 Current Position:

- 4.2 Reading Festival 2023 is to be held over the August Bank Holiday weekend; 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> August with “Early Bird” tickets allowing camping entry from Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August which is the same as in previous years. There is no change proposed to the capacity of this year’s event, which is set at 104,999.

4.3 There are also no changes proposed to the Arena Layout this year. The event is keeping the two main stages - East and West, with headline acts announced including The Killers, Imagine Dragons, Lewis Capaldi, Sam Fender and Billie Eilish.

## 5. Changes for 2023

5.1 This year's event offers an introduction of payment plans to ensure tickets are accessible to all.

5.2 Festival Republic are implementing Challenge 25(\*Appendices i) replacing Challenge 21. Challenge 25 is a retailing strategy that encourages anyone who is over 18 but looks under 25 to carry acceptable ID (a card bearing the PASS hologram, a photographic driving license or a passport) if they wish to buy alcohol. Challenge 25 is the industry standard to allow for a margin of safety when trying to prevent the sale of alcohol to under 18s. Taking this approach is aimed at protecting children from harm.

## Safety

5.3 There was concern following the 2022 event that there was not enough accountability or visual presence of support staff, security and assistance within the campsite areas and as such the event made the headlines for the wrong reasons with a minority of festival goers causing disruption within the campsites leading to evictions. A full debrief has been held with Festival Republic and other stakeholders including Thames Valley Police as it is after every event, and plans have been reviewed ahead of this year's event taking concerns into account.

5.4 Festival Republic have worked on measures to improve this and will be introducing key points within the campsite areas to be used as check points and aimed at being friendly, approachable sites for information, support and assistance.

## Safeguarding

5.5 The safety initiative 'Ask for Angela' campaign was very successful at Reading Festival 2022. People who feel unsafe, vulnerable or threatened can discreetly seek help by approaching venue staff and asking them for 'Angela'. This code-phrase will indicate to staff that they require help with their situation and a trained member of staff will then look to support and assist them. This might be through reuniting them with a friend, seeing them to a taxi, or by calling venue security and/or the police.

5.6 Unfortunately, logistically it was not possible to record statistical information on the success of the "Ask for Angela" campaign. However, the "Ask for Angela" campaign was briefed out to staff and security teams prior to the event starting and during on-site briefings. Mystery shopping by the Security Coordinators and Reading Borough Council showed positive engagement by staff with gate security teams proactively explaining to ticket holders that the event was operating the campaign and how to use it. Throughout the event, all security teams were asked for their understanding of the campaign. If any re-briefing was required, it was completed.

- 5.7 Festival Republic keep statistical information from their teams including Medical, Welfare, Safehubs, Evictions and other Safeguarding partners. This is to enable trend monitoring and being able to use first hand data to action any responses.
- 5.8 Multi-agency Meetings are held twice daily throughout show days to ensure these records are followed through in a timely matter. Examples include identifying an increase of a particular crime in a certain area (which will then become a ‘hotspot’) which then follows into the deployment of resources to assist or monitor.
- 5.9 Recognising the challenge of capturing data on the scale of this event, Festival Republic are reviewing how they might be able to do this and the value it might bring to actionable intelligence.
- 5.10 Festival Republic are increasing the number of Safeguarding officers as part of the Festival Republic team to ensure a 24 hour response throughout the event.

#### Questions from the November 2022 Committee

- 5.11 Cllr Emberson raised concerns about the harm of some of the social media groups can do to the reputation of the event and asked about what monitoring of these sites is done and whether reassurance or correct messaging is provided.
- 5.12 Festival Republic acknowledge the impact and power of social media, particularly amongst the younger demographic who attend the event. Festival Republic’s social media team are keen to explore how social media can be used proactively and positively to reassure or respond to community forums or group pages on social media. Safeguarding partners such as ‘Safe Gigs For Women’ are also keen to look at how they are able to positively present on pages such as Tik Tok. This subject is part of this year’s planning meeting agendas and will remain so as Festival Republic learn more about how these platforms can be used positively to support the community. Festival Republic already use social media in several ways to inform, advise and reassure ticket holders, whereas Thames Valley Police’s Social Media pages, for example, are targeted at reassuring parents of those who attend the event.
- 5.13 Councillor Creswell enquired about emissions from waste, specifically the incineration of non-recyclable material, which are classified as Scope 3 emissions. Festival Republic use DEFRA conversion factors which are used by UK companies as standard to report greenhouse gas emissions. They apply the same factor for recycling and combustion of 21.280 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e / tonne of waste. Details are set out in the table below:

STREAM	2022 (t)	2022%	CO <sub>2</sub> e(t)
Landfill	0.00		
Energy From Waste (RDF)	151.75	19.30%	3.23
Energy From Waste (SDF)	103.79	13.20%	2.21
Recycled	436.37	55.50%	9.29

Green Waste (Composted)	94.35	12.00%	0.84
TOTAL	786.26	100%	15.56

- 5.14 The total waste reduced from 2021 was 42 tonnes (5.07%).
- 5.15 Non-recyclable waste (including tents) is sent to Solid Recovered Fuel (SRF) or Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF), the latter creates energy.
- 5.16 The Material Recovery Facility (MRF) that processed the festival waste reported a 55.05% recycling rate during the period between 22nd August - 16th September (53% in 2021).
- 5.17 Festival Republic also include water and wastewater processing as part of the on-site Scope 3 emissions, which gives a total of 74.6 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e compared to the 2021 scope 1, 2 & 3 total of 452 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e.
- 5.18 It is estimated that 38% of tents were left behind during 2022 which was a 35% decrease from 2021, due to the strong communication of the ‘take your tent home’ message and the ‘No Reading on a Dead Planet’ campaign which saw the eco campsite left absolutely spotless. The festival plans to double the capacity of the eco campsite for this years event.
- 5.19 Festival Republic are happy to work with the Council to help develop an approach which supports the wider festival and events community in Reading.
- 5.20 This year’s event will see the first year with no Campfires permitted. This is something which the Council has been working with Festival Republic on for some time and which supports the Councils Air Quality Action Plan and Climate Change commitments. Officers are working to ensure the message is shared with local shops that no firewood will be allowed to be brought on to the festival site.

### Vape Use

- 5.21 Festival Republic recognise the increasing use of VAPE’s by its audience and will be working to ensure that the disposable devices are recycled. Officers will continue to check vape sales arrangements on-site and are working with Festival Republic and local retailers near the site to manage underage sales of vapes.

### River Safety

- 5.22 The Council and Festival Republic have had the first boats and river safety meeting for the 2023 event, working with external agencies to include the Environment Agency, Blue Response (Life Guard service on the river), Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, District Enforcement, Marine response, Maritime and Coastguard Agency. This is building on the success of the team that worked during the event in 2022. Last year the team worked to clarify roles and responsibilities and enforcement powers, and the police supported by having a boat on the river to enable immediate action. Feedback was that the benefit of the work that was undertaken during the run up and throughout

the event had an ongoing impact after the event and this is continuing as part of the plan for this year's event.

## **6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

### **6.1 Reading Borough Council's vision is:**

To help Reading realise its potential - and to ensure that everyone who lives and works here can share the benefits of its success.

### **6.2 The actions contained in this report contribute to:**

**Healthy Environment** through the promotion of waste recycling streams, zero waste to landfill and generation of energy from waste.

**Thriving Economy** through the introduction of payment plans for festival goers and is planning to support the Council and voluntary and community sector through providing advice and information on net zero.

**Inclusive Economy** by delivering a world-famous festival in Reading.

## **7. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The impact of the changes which the event is bringing forward are considered to be a net medium positive. The rationale for this is that alongside existing policies to achieving net zero, the event has taken further positive steps to improve its overall impact, including the banning of campfires, the implementation of eco-campsites (where a 1000 festival goers decided to camp during 2022 event), evaluating its Scope 3 emissions and assessing and looking to put in place action to manage new waste streams such as disposable vapes. The event has also committed to supporting activity as part of the Climate Change Action Plan.

## **8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

8.1 No community engagement is required, however the festival has its own outreach programme which informs for example its communications approaches and how it engages with its audience on key public health and climate messages.

## **9. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

9.1 No Equality Impact Assessment is required.

## **10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are no Legal implications to this report, however, the Council has a duty under the Licensing Act 2003 to ensure the safety of events and to that end has regular Safety Advisory Groups, which are multiagency meetings to look at every aspect of the delivery of the event. In the event that there are concerns over the ability of an organiser to deliver a safe event, there is a right to review a licence.

## **11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are none.

## 12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 There are none.

## 13. Appendices

13.1 <https://wsta.co.uk/challenge-25/>