



APPG ON CYBER SECURITY AND BUSINESS RESILIENCE MEETING MINUTES 15th September 2025, 3.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. Room M, Portcullis House

Title: The purpose of the meeting is to look at the independent events and festivals market and what is needed from HMG to build resilience into the sector. In particular, it will look at the effectiveness of the ticket levy.

Chairman's welcome: James Frith MP took the chair

Present: Lord Sharpe of Epsom, Kit Malthouse MP (APPG Chair), James Frith MP

Apologies: Baroness Neville-Jones, Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom, Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate

Speakers:

1) Tim Thornhill, Managing Director, Tysers Events

The Events and Festivals sector has seen significant changes, to do with rising costs such that it can be cheaper to attend a festival in Europe. Costs have risen due to inflation, increased NI and a lack of Govt support for the sector. Music festivals are also limited by the weather.

The UK was the best in the world for developing freelancers. We are losing people who are going overseas for better pay and conditions. Called for tax reliefs akin to those for touring orchestras. For many, putting on an event or festival is a passion project, not a money earner. IR35 is not a huge issue as freelancers are employed by many events not a single one.

Also seeing consolidation amongst promoters which leads to increased buying power. This puts smaller events at a disadvantage.

James Frith MP – recognises that festivals are a labour of love for many. Understands that there is a risk of failure and also of new festivals not coming to market which will kill the sector.

2) Susan Tanner, CEO of UK Events and Al Turner, EightPR

See attached paper.

Comments:

AT – this is a classic example of market failure. There is no reward for risk so promoters put up ticket prices. This excludes the young and the poor. Youngblud did run a lower priced festival.

ST – the ticket levy has raised £1.7m but this does not cover outdoor events.

Kit Malthouse MP – has the economic balance shifted because of consolidation in the main players?

ST – Big companies make more use of their buying power. Baby boomers can afford to attend events, younger people find this very difficult financially.

AT – we are losing two festivals per week.

James Frith MP – how do you get new talent through? Clearly we cannot mandate overseas acts but many US Stars do support new talent. The Government is keen on growth.

3) Chris Buckley and Lyndsey Hopkinson, Glaston-Bury.

CB - Glaston-Bury started as a platform for local talent and a fundraiser for the Bury Hospice. Bury suffers from being in the orbit of a large city – Manchester. The festival helps to correct that. To be successful year on year, the festival needs to offer a variety of acts.

LH – The festival is run entirely by volunteers and creates a virtuous circle. Keep ticket prices down to £12 per person. The Council fees are a huge part of the costs of running the festival. Bury BID also contributes to the costs.

James Frith MP – electronic music seems to dominate the festival scene, is this true in Bury?

CH – every genre is represented. We are up to 5000+ attendees.

Comments and questions

ST – few local authorities now run their own events. They are more interested in raising money than in giving help to festivals in the shape of free venues, reduced fees etc. They could offer infrastructure for events and help revitalise town centres.

CB – we have had to create a blueprint for the introduction of Martyn's Law.

Mike Hurst – worked with Herts. CC to put on a road event. Concerned that Martyn's Law will lead to extra cost, believes that it needs a SIA licensed person to refuse entry to a venue. Traffic management costs are very expensive, especially for one day events.

Kit Malthouse MP – understands that there are longstanding arguments between the Police and the Premier League about the costs of policing events. It is a question of who bears the risk. What about opposition locally to events? Has any festival done a proper cost / benefit analysis? The sector needs to come up with a proper analysis.

ST – The Balloon Fiesta brings in between £3 and 4M to Bristol. UK Events are looking at such an analysis.

LH – do get some opposition in Bury. Traffic problems such as road closures and over-parking can cause local residents problems. Changing opening hours has an effect on businesses which now open on the Bank Holiday Monday when the festival takes place.

CB – the restaurant and pub trade do well out of the Festival. There are food vans but they are on one place only and offer a different eating experience to a sit down meal.

Dominic Connor – how can Councils make it easier for the sector?

ST – bring down the rates for closing roads.

Philip Virgo – Brockwell Park has introduce fees for groups to get into the Park. They have also disallowed food and drink there.

Conclusions:

Tim Thornhill – figures show that 500 people attending a festival over a weekend can generate £1m in GVA.

Susan Tanner – helping the sector will support the PM's growth strategy.

Chair – send a copy of the meeting minutes to Caroline Dineage, Chair Culture, Media and Sport Committee for consideration.

Non-Parliamentary Attendees:

Andrew Henderson – Secretariat

Susan Tanner, CEO of UK Events

Al Turner, EightPR

Tim Thornhill, Managing Director, Tysers Events

Hayley Mackness, Tysers Events

Chris Buckley and Lyndsey Hopkinson, Glaston-Bury.

Philip Virgo

Mike Hurst

Dominic Connor

David Cook

Richard Menear

Andy Lenthall

Ajay Rathor

Rick Stainton