

Hosting Major Events in The Royal Parks

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Introduction

Our eight Royal Parks are among the most visited attractions in the UK, with millions of visitors each year, and can mean different things to different people at different times. A leisurely stroll through the Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park; enjoying London's largest collection of roses in Queen Mary's Gardens in The Regent's Park; or being among the one million visitors exploring the Diana Princess of Wales' Memorial Playground in Kensington Gardens each year. Other visitors come for the range of events that we host: from state occasions to guided walks; from sporting events to local community days; and from fun runs to legendary concerts. We seek to balance the enjoyment and inclusion that events can bring to the communities and visitors we serve, with the provision of spaces for quiet enjoyment and relaxation and to protect and conserve the parks for future generations.

As custodians of these unique spaces, The Royal Parks purpose is: "To manage, protect and improve the parks in an exemplary and sustainable manner, so that everyone, now and in the future, can enjoy their natural and historic environments."

We have three corporate objectives:

1. Welcome everyone: We will deepen our understanding of public needs, and make the visitor a key focus of our work
2. Conserve and enhance: We will protect our diverse range of historic landscapes, adapt to climate change, increase biodiversity and facilitate higher visitor numbers
3. Build a secure future: We will build a resilient charity with a strong business model that operates in a responsible, sustainable manner and has a focus on ensuring best value. We will add new sources of funding and grow existing income streams

Alongside our corporate objectives, we also have charitable objects. These are:

- To protect, conserve, maintain and care for the Royal Parks, including their natural and designed landscapes and built environment, to a high standard consistent with their historic, horticultural, environmental and architectural importance;

- To promote the use and enjoyment of the Royal Parks for public recreation, health and well-being including through the provision of sporting and cultural activities and events which effectively advance the objects;
- To maintain and develop the biodiversity of the Royal Parks, including the protection of their wildlife and natural environment, together with promoting sustainability in the management and use of the Royal Parks;
- To support the advancement of education by promoting public understanding of the history, culture, heritage and natural environment of the Royal Parks and (by way of comparison) elsewhere;
- To promote national heritage including by hosting and facilitating ceremonies of state or of national importance within and in the vicinity of the Royal Parks.

Major events contribute significantly to the resources the charity requires to advance its objects effectively.

The eight Royal Parks have a long and historic tradition of hosting events. We host around 20 major events and hundreds of small events every year, excluding ceremonials, as well as licensing other activities, such as fitness training, horse riding and a range of organised sport activities. The unique settings of the parks are a major attraction to event organisers and there is high demand to host events in the parks.

Hosting cultural, social and sporting activities in the open space can provide public enjoyment, social inclusion and health benefits, as well as contributing to the wider London economy. However, we recognise that events can interrupt the daily life of the parks that visitors enjoy, particularly where areas of the parks are enclosed for events, or roads or paths are out of use. Having clear guidelines and criteria for events that we host make us more accountable to the communities we serve.

We estimate that we now receive around 100 enquiries for major events every year and over 1000 applications for small events. Our Strategy has helped us to better manage the expectations of those seeking to host events in the parks, as well as establishing from the outset a greater understanding of the constraints within which event organisers must work, including the importance we place on minimising the impact of events on the park fabric and ecology, park users, local residents, park operations and ceremonial activities. Since its original publication in 2014, and refreshed in 2015, this Strategy has been successful in

reducing demand to host events as it clearly sets a cap on the number of major events we will host. We reserve the right to amend this Strategy as necessary in response to business requirements to ensure the charity's continued effectiveness and sustainability.

Background

Formerly an executive agency of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), The Royal Parks became a charity in 2017 and is contracted by DCMS to manage and maintain the parks.

Whilst we receive a fee for service, it is intended to provide a proxy value to the maintenance and management costs that we incur and does not compensate us in full for undertaking our obligations under the contract. We are therefore required to raise the vast majority of our income independently, over 85%. It costs around £65 million a year to maintain the parks.

Our self-generated income derives from a number of sources. Around 45% is from events, but the remaining 55% comes from a range of other income streams, including catering, grants, lottery funding, licences, rental income, filming and photography. In addition, we are diversifying into new income streams such as retail and bringing some commercial activities in house, such as boating and swimming, to achieve greater value for money, as well as offering an excellent service to park visitors.

Since becoming a charity, we have significantly improved the income we generate from major events. We tender for our largest events, recognising that these events are large-scale, highly complex and world-leading. They require significant capital investment, as well as extensive experience in planning and delivering events of similar scale and quality. As a result, only a limited number of world-class bidders will be capable of tendering for them.

When *Hosting Major Events in the Royal Parks* was first published in May 2014, and refreshed in May 2015, we capped for the first time the number of major events that we host. Evolution of the previous Strategy, which we consider to be successful, has meant we have been able to reduce the cap further.

Continuous improvement is at the heart of our contracting. We are constantly pushing for improvements in the quality of events, and range of content, entertainment and food and beverage provided. We seek ways to enhance the customer experience of events, including through effective use of

technology. We expect high levels of event production and park protection, in keeping with the location, history, heritage and environment of the park. We anticipate high levels of investment throughout the contract term. We are constantly driving for improvements to the sustainability of our events, as well as making our events more welcoming to a diverse audience.

History and significance of events

The Royal Parks has been hosting events for longer than most people realise. Events hosted in the past include the Tour de France, the Golden, Diamond and Platinum Jubilee celebrations of the late Queen Elizabeth II, the Coronation of King Charles III, Live8, and the hosting of 11 sporting competitions across six of the Royal Parks as part of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. One of the largest ever events, The Great Exhibition, was held in Hyde Park in 1851, attracting around six million visitors.

Speaker's Corner is also a traditional spot for open-air public speaking, debate and discussion. Assemblies and demonstrations are held in Hyde Park, subject to conditions and availability.

Regular events in the parks include the start and finish of the London Marathon, Hyde Park Winter Wonderland, BST Hyde Park, Taste of London, Frieze Art Fair, Swim Serpentine and the Royal Parks Half Marathon.

The Royal Parks also hosts a range of ceremonial events every year. Horse Guards Parade Ground is the setting for The King's Birthday Parade to mark His Majesty the King's official birthday each June. The Mall and Horse Guards Parade Ground form the processional route for such occasions as the State Opening of Parliament and State Visits.

Small events, major events and our application process

This document covers what we refer to as "major events," but recognises and considers the cumulative impact of all events and activities in the parks. The Royal Parks are a major attraction for event organisers. Every year, we host hundreds of small events, many of which are enjoyed by our local communities.

Applications for small events will be considered by our dedicated Parks Events Team. Typical examples of small events are:

- A small, sponsored run or walk or similar;
- A guided walk;
- A community sports competition;
- A concert on a bandstand;
- One-off small performing arts events such as outdoor opera, a recital or theatre production, with an expected audience of a few hundred people.

For further information, [please see our website](#).

We have set upper limits on the number of major events we will host each year, based on our current funding model. "Major events" can be commercial, charitable or publicly funded. They cover the whole spectrum from sporting events to concerts. This Strategy clearly defines "major events."

The Royal Parks classes major events as those that meet two or more of the following criteria:

- Over 4,999 ticketed capacity;
- Greater than 4,999 event participants;
- Free-to-access events where crowds are expected to be in excess of 4,999;
- 7,500 sqm or greater of event infrastructure;
- On site more than three days, including build and de-rig;
- Requires multi-agency planning;
- Requires road closures impacting beyond the park boundary*;
- Involves more than one park; and
- Requires statutory consent (for example, Town Planning or falling under the requirements of the Licensing Act 2003).

We recognise the impact road and path closures have on park users and always aim to limit these closures to the minimum time necessary for the event and for public safety.

*Some events require road closures that don't impact beyond the park boundary.

Our approach to events

The Royal Parks' stewardship of the estate goes back over 150 years, and The Royal Parks continues to apply the highest standards of park management when hosting events. We have a highly experienced and competent team that understands the needs of the parks and those delivering events. Most events that we host are delivered by event organisers and we ensure that anyone working within the parks respects the environment and heritage of these spaces, understanding their constraints and putting measures in place to protect the park fabric and ecology. We work with event organisers to deliver successful events and to ensure that they appropriately engage with stakeholders, and maximise safe access for park users. We ensure the parks are fully restored after events have taken place, funded by event organisers.

When we published *Hosting Major Events in the Royal Parks* in 2015, we reviewed our approach to events, and the following still applies. We will:

- Set upper limits on the number of major events;
- Consider event applications in the context of individual park seasonality;
- Minimise concurrent events across parks, impacting on park amenity and our resources;
- Consider the cumulative impact of all events and activities in each park and across all parks;
- Consider the park protection and reinstatement requirements across all park events;
- Seek to balance the national importance of the parks with the communities we serve;
- Seek to host a diverse range and balanced programme of events across the parks;
- Tender for events where this provides the best outcome for our corporate objectives, and consistent with public procurement requirements;
- Have a fair and transparent application process for all enquiries;
- Seek full cost recovery and income from events in accordance with our Rate Card;
- Presume against approving private commercial events with no social, cultural, artistic, physical or recreational merit; and

- Ensure event content does not conflict with our [policy statement on religious activity in the Royal Parks](#)

Guiding principles for all events

We have a number of guiding principles for all events that we host in the parks. These principles should be read in conjunction with the criteria developed for each park.

Given the huge number of requests we receive for events every year, we will continue to prioritise events that:

- Are consistent with the published park specific criteria below;
- Are consistent with [The Royal Parks Ethical Statement](#);
- Help us to balance our budget and continue to maintain, conserve and improve the parks to high standards;
- Are safe, well-planned and well-run, minimising the reliance on our resources;
- Are delivered by event organisers with proven financial backing and/or funds;
- Are ceremonial or of a unique or national or historic importance;
- Are environmentally sustainable, respecting and complementing the park environment;
- Minimise impact on the park fabric and ecology, and guarantee full and timely reinstatement;
- Minimise impact on parks users, local residents, park operations and ceremonial activities;
- Prioritise accessible public participation and take place in open spaces.

These guidelines are designed to steer decision-making about whether to accept an application for a particular type of event.

Park Specific Criteria

Each Royal Park has its own distinct features and natural constraints. For example, the demands of Richmond Park as a National Nature Reserve are very different from those of The Regent's Park Hub, the largest outdoor sports area in London. Managing the parks therefore requires balance, and respect of the local environment. In developing the park specific criteria, we have considered the numbers of major events that we have hosted in the past.

These park specific criteria should be read in conjunction with the major events criteria, the guiding principles for all events and The Royal Parks approach to hosting events. Whilst we have endeavoured to accurately reflect the current events that we host, clearly some events, and event names, may change over time.

It is illegal to advertise in the parks (including branding, sponsorship and promotions of products and services) without the express permission of The Royal Parks. We seek to limit advertising to within the event site and work closely with event organisers over any proposal for any branding on or adjacent to ceremonial routes. To protect the park environment, we do not normally allow merchandise giveaways and flyers.

Any opportunities for major events that the charity develops will be advertised on our website, unless specified otherwise. All other approaches should follow the process set out on our website, and updated from time to time, and comply with the requirements of this Strategy.

Bushy Park

Bushy Park has some significant practical constraints for major events, not least the deer herds and the sensitive natural park environment, including as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Public transport links are limited in capacity. We are not currently considering applications for major events in Bushy Park. Any opportunities for major events in Bushy Park that the charity develops will be advertised on our website. Whilst it is historically important to the parks, we do not class Chestnut Sunday as a major event in accordance with criteria set out in this strategy.

Greenwich Park

We will consider up to three major events per annum for Greenwich Park, in accordance with our criteria and approach to major events. We already currently host the start of the London Marathon and the finisher's village for the Big Half. We would look to host one other event, on either Bandstand Field or Queens Field.

Hyde Park

Hyde Park has a long tradition as “the people's park” and also as the venue for ceremonial and other events. We will seek to avoid scheduling major events during the busy summer holidays, unless it is a unique or one-off event of a national or historical importance which could not be held at another time. We will seek to strike a balance between the many uses and demands upon the park by permitting the following annual major events:

- Summer concert series;
- Hyde Park Winter Wonderland;
- Royal Parks Half Marathon weekend; and
- Swim Serpentine.

The Parade Ground is at capacity for major events and needs to be available for the public to use, as well as to recover between events. We will always tender for our largest events. All events need to avoid clashing with other activities taking place within Hyde Park and any major events taking place in Kensington Gardens.

Hyde Park has a long tradition of accommodating demonstrations and protests which we continue to respect, as long as the terms and conditions in our longstanding [demonstrations and assemblies policy](#) are met.

Kensington Gardens

All major events in Kensington Gardens will need to take into account the scheduling of major events in Hyde Park. We will consider up to three major events in Kensington Gardens per annum. The most suitable location in Kensington Gardens is the East or West Albert Memorial Lawns or the adjoining picnic lawn. Elsewhere in Kensington Gardens we will usually regard major events as inappropriate for the design and traditions of the Gardens unless it is a unique or one-off event of national or historical importance.

Brompton Cemetery

Brompton Cemetery will only accommodate small events which are sympathetic to the setting.

Richmond Park

Richmond Park is not generally well suited to holding major events because it is a National Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and most areas of the park are some distance from public transport links. Any event,

as well as respecting the natural park environment, also needs to consider the herds of wild deer which roam freely. We will consider hosting up to two major events per annum.

St James's Park, The Green Park and Victoria Tower Gardens

Set in a unique central London location, St James's Park has extremely high footfall. Some visitors enjoy the park as part of their daily walk to or lunch break from work; others come to relax in its peaceful green space. It is also known for the many historic buildings that border the park, together with its exceptional horticulture and bedding. The Mall and Horse Guards Parade Ground are part of St James's Park. If event organisers are considering an event in these spaces, they must approach The Royal Parks in the first instance. We will preserve the tradition and splendour of St James's Park, incorporating both The Mall and Horse Guards Parade Ground, as a venue for state ceremonial events, and for this reason, we will not usually accept other events unless they are ceremonial or an event of unique or national or historic importance.

We will seek to minimise the impact of events on ceremonial activity, including Guard Change. Therefore, The Mall and Horse Guards Parade Ground are not normally an appropriate venue for major events other than state ceremonials and military parades and military musical events. By exception, we currently permit the following annual sporting events:

- The finish of the London Marathon;
- Vitality 10k and Westminster Mile.

As stated previously, it is illegal to advertise in the parks (including branding, sponsorship and promotions of products and services) without the express permission of The Royal Parks. We work closely with event organisers over any proposal for branding on or adjacent to ceremonial routes, including The Mall and Constitution Hill. Similarly, and as host of the daily Guard Change and other ceremonials, we aim to preserve the military traditions of Horse Guards Parade Ground. The Parade Ground is not normally an appropriate venue for most event proposals, and any events taking place would need to take into account military business and the function and security of adjacent buildings. The green spaces within St James's Park and The Green Park are generally not suitable for hosting major events. It is difficult to accommodate the layout of major events in these areas. The parks also have exceptionally high footfall and a large number of organisations that operate in and around the park, so major events cause significant disruption

St James's Park sits on the edge of the event footprint for London's New Year's Eve fireworks display and we work with multi-agency partners to manage people within the parks.

In keeping with its sensitive location and site constraints being adjacent to the Palace of Westminster, Victoria Tower Gardens is only suitable as a space for small events. Event proposals must consider future plans for the construction of a UK Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre which is likely to make the park unsuitable for hosting events.

The Regent's Park and Primrose Hill

There are two fixed suitable locations in The Regent's Park to host major events and these are Marylebone Green and Gloucester Green. We currently host Frieze Art Fair and Taste of London in these locations. We will consider one other major event in The Regent's Park but this must take into account park seasonality and the reinstatement requirements of the Frieze and Taste events. The Hub, London's largest outdoor sports area, also hosts a large number of walks and runs across The Regent's Park throughout the year.

Our Premises Licence from the London Borough of Camden prohibits the holding of major events on Primrose Hill and the charity therefore will not organise any formal major events. We will continue to work with multi-agency partners to manage large numbers who gather on Primrose Hill on New Year's Eve to view the central London fireworks display.

Hosting sustainable events in the parks

To ensure long-term viability of events in the parks we must deliver events as sustainably as possible. We have Sustainable Events Guidance that aligns with The Royal Parks Sustainability Strategy. Our Sustainable Events Guidance covers actions that event organisers must do and should consider in efforts to make events more sustainable.

The Royal Parks expects event organisers to manage and control all waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy (Eliminate, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Recover, Dispose). We expect no event waste produced to go to landfill, unless in exceptional circumstances. Suitable waste management records must be kept, including waste transfer and consignment notes. Event organisers must ensure all wastewater discharges are appropriately managed, with necessary

consents. Events should use materials and products from sustainable sources as much as possible. Event organisers should also promote the sustainable behaviour of staff and attendees, for example using public transport and recycling waste.

The Royal Parks requires event organisers to manage their events in accordance with the principles of ISO 20121 and ISO 14001 (Environmental Management Systems) and to meet all applicable legislation. We work with organisations such as A Greener Future and we are dedicated to continuous improvement, exploring areas of sustainability innovation within major events. Examples of some of the sustainability best practice at our events currently include;

- Running generators exclusively on HVO fuel, an advanced biofuel made from verified waste feedstocks such as used in cooking oil that results in up to a 90% reduction in Greenhouse Gas emissions when used in place of fossil fuels;
- Using vacuum toilets which typically use 90% less mains water than standard flushing toilets;
- Using plant-lined disposable cups that are fully recyclable and made from recycled materials;
- Labelling food menus to highlight the most environmentally friendly offerings.

Hosting inclusive events

The Royal Parks are dedicated to hosting inclusive events and are required to be proactive about improving access under the Equality Act 2010. We work with organisations such as Attitude is Everything who connect disabled people with music and live event industries to improve access together. Our two largest events, Hyde Park Winter Wonderland and BST Hyde Park have 'Gold' status as part of Attitude is Everything's [Live Events Access Charter](#).

For accessibility, our venues will always have accessible toilets, seating and viewing areas and dedicated customer service staff trained to deal with queries. Personal Assistance tickets are available free of charge.

Our events are designed to be accessible to all: bars and concessions have lowered counters for those who require it; we provide hearing loops, as well as

BSL interpreters for live performances; and certain rides and attractions are audio-described.

We work hard to make our events inclusive and to engage the community. At BST Hyde Park, we host Open House in the weekdays between the concerts. This totals eight days of free entertainment and activities in Hyde Park which includes a dedicated schools programme, content targeting the over 60's, an open-air cinema, sports workshops, Wimbledon tennis screenings and much more. In previous years the Open House programme has included 'All Things Orchestral', a live orchestral performance, aimed at making classical music accessible to new audiences. We work closely with charities to donate an allocation of tickets to each concert.

In 2023, Hyde Park Winter Wonderland launched Winter Wishes, an initiative to welcome those from charities or schools who might find it challenging to visit the event on a normal day. The site accommodates a smaller number of invited guests for a morning where all rides and attractions are free and adaptations are made to make their visit more pleasant, such as low-sensory ice rink sessions.

We pride ourselves in showcasing diverse artists at our events, be that through headliners on the Great Oak Stage at BST Hyde Park to local performers on intimate stages at Hyde Park Winter Wonderland. Employment opportunities are advertised in the local area and where feasible, staff are recruited locally. Food traders at our events cater for a range of dietary needs, including vegetarian, vegan, gluten free and halal.

At Hyde Park Winter Wonderland, there are quiet spaces and prayer rooms for both visitors and staff.

We are constantly seeking to improve our approach and collect feedback to meet the changing needs of our visitors. We do this by gathering information from post-event customer surveys.

Safety and security

The Royal Parks is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all events held in the parks. We chair or participate in Safety Advisory Groups for all major events and scrutinise all required event documentation including, for example risk assessments and safeguarding procedures. We work closely with the Metropolitan Police Service, contracted security providers, and stewards to maintain a safe environment at events. Additionally, we collaborate with a

range of organisations to protect the wellbeing of both staff and attendees, supporting initiatives such as Ask for Angela and the Women's Night Safety Charter. We recognise the importance of forthcoming legislation in reference to public safety, and will ensure its implications are fully considered and integrated into our approach.

Protecting and reinstating the parks

The Royal Parks requires event organisers to work to the best practices of Environmental Management and to minimise the impact of events upon the environment of the parks. Event organisers are required to propose measures to ensure that park flora, fauna and habitats and the wider park fabric are protected, including use of ground, tree and park furniture protection. The Royal Parks conducts independent surveys of event sites before and after events to determine any impact. We require event organisers to fully fund the reinstatement of the parks after events, and we take a bond from them in advance of events, to cover anticipated costs.

One of our guiding principles is minimising impact on the park fabric and ecology, and guaranteeing full and timely reinstatement. When we receive applications for major events, we will carefully consider what impact we expect the event to have, and plan how and when the park will be reinstated. Whilst our parks teams are experts in protecting and reinstating the parks, we cannot always guarantee timelines for reinstatement as this is very weather dependent, and subject to the seasonality of the parks.

Working with and engaging our stakeholders

We work with our stakeholders to ensure they are appropriately engaged in events that we are hosting. For example, for large events such as our summer concerts, The Royal Parks and event organisers work with key stakeholders such as Westminster City Council, Transport for London, and the Metropolitan Police Service, to ensure joined up planning, delivery and monitoring of events. We ensure park users, local residents and local businesses are aware of events and likely impacts, in advance of them taking place. We are always seeking to improve engagement, for example through better use of social and digital media platforms.

In 2013 we created a Hyde Park resident stakeholder group and, together with our event organisers, we have continued to meet regularly to address any concerns they have, such as litter, sound and egress.

There are many channels through which we regularly engage with our stakeholders to get feedback, and we will continue to take into consideration a range of views. This includes bi-annual stakeholder meetings, meetings with the Chairs of the Friends Groups for each of the parks and other ongoing local stakeholder engagement. During all of our events we run a dedicated phone line to log issues, feedback and sound complaints. We have set up a dedicated 'event feedback' email address to ensure that concerns or queries regarding events are responded to efficiently; the feedback gathered also assists us in future planning and improvement.

We work hard to gather insights from visitors to the parks. We have a Parks Panel, made up of 3,600 people across all eight parks surveyed regularly on their views on several topics concerning the parks. The Parks Research Panel consists primarily of people who are regular users of the parks. The feedback from surveys with this Panel provides us with useful insights to help shape the parks for the future.

We also work with our major event partners to survey attendees to learn more about their customer experience and how events may be improved.