

Tougher fines ahead of Bank Holiday to crack down on illegal gatherings

Tougher measures targeting the most serious breaches of social distancing restrictions will come into effect on Friday 28 August ahead of the bank holiday weekend.

Those facilitating or organising illegal raves, unlicensed music events, or any other unlawful gathering of 30 people or more may face a £10,000 fine – placing a new deterrent on the breaches that put the public most at risk.

Fines of £100 can continue to be issued to those who participate in illegal gatherings and those who have already received a fine will see the amount of doubled on each offence, up to a maximum of £3,200.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

These gatherings are dangerous and those who organise them show a blatant disregard for the safety of others.

I am pleased the police have already stepped up their response and I am giving them the tools they need to continue to keep us safe.

We will continue to crack down on the small minority who think they are above the law.

It comes as the NPCC warned police forces in England and Wales will continue to increase patrols to prevent illegal gatherings during the pandemic heading into the bank holiday weekend.

In areas of concern – such as Leicester and Greater Manchester – deployments have already been larger than on New Year's Eve.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Unlicensed Music Events, Commander Ade Adelekan, said:

We welcome this further deterrent against those who irresponsibly put people's health and safety at risk by organising these events. Unlicensed music events are unlawful and unregulated. These events are hosted without regard for the safety of those attending, and police have observed cases of anti-social behaviour, sales of drugs and gang activity.

It is vital that forces obtain information about any illegal events at the earliest opportunity. As organisers are able to spread the word about these events quickly online, timely information about suspicious activity or plans enables forces to plan ahead and take

effective action against them.

To the organisers of this sort of activity, I strongly advise that you seriously consider the risks you're creating for everyone in attendance and the wider community. There is a risk of prosecution for those who organise these events and equipment will be seized.

In London, the Metropolitan Police has responded to more than 1,000 unlicensed events since the end of June, receiving information on more than 200 events across the city in a single weekend.

Aside from the risk of spreading the virus, many events are linked to criminality and also turn violent. This week two teenagers were stabbed at a warehouse rave in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire.

In Manchester a 27-year-old woman, said to be the organiser of large illegal gatherings over two consecutive evenings was issued with a fine for £100 and issued with an anti-social behaviour banning order preventing anyone outside the household from entering the property.

Also on the 28 August, fines for not wearing face coverings where it is mandated will also double for repeat offences, starting at £100 and doubling to a maximum of £3,200 for each repeat offence, mirroring fixed penalty notices for breaches for other restrictions.

It is mandatory to wear a face covering on public transport, and in many enclosed public spaces including shops, supermarkets and high street outlets unless you are exempt, including on the grounds of age, health or disability.

[Letter from Roger Taylor to Royal Statistical Society: 21 August 2020](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Letter from the Chair of Ofqual to Prof.

[Driving test booking service: update](#)

The Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency (DVSA) has announced that the driving test booking service will return to being available between 6am and 11:40pm each day from Wednesday 16 September 2020.

You'll be able to book, change or cancel tests in England, Scotland and Wales.

Gareth Llewellyn, DVSA Chief Executive, said:

We're pleased to have met customers' exceptionally high demand for tests. Since Monday 14 September, over 182,000 driving tests have been booked.

We continue to monitor the number of people using the service and the number of available appointments to help us meet demand.

Fewer than 50% pass the test first time, so we're asking candidates and instructors to only book a test when they are confident they can pass.

You can now book 18 weeks ahead

You can now [book driving test appointments](#) within the next 18 weeks. This means you can now book appointments as far as January 2021.

DVSA has increased the number of car driving tests that each driving examiner carries out from 5 to 6 per day. DVSA can safely increase the number of tests a day as driving examiners are:

- now familiar with how to use personal protective equipment (PPE) such as face coverings and gloves
- following the latest safety guidance when carrying out tests

When you book your driving test

You'll be able to see and book appointments available within the next 18 weeks.

You must be ready to take your driving test within that time. If you're not ready, do not try to book now.

The service will show you available appointments at your other nearest driving test centres if your preferred choice is fully booked.

All the available appointments are shown on the online service. The DVSA customer service centre does not have access to any other appointments, so please do not call them.

There is not a 'waiting list' or 'cancellation list' for driving tests – you can only book the appointments you can see online.

Checking you're eligible

Your driving test booking is subject to confirmation that you have:

DVSA will check that you have both of these before your test. If your test is booked at short notice (within a week of your booking), DVSA will check it as a priority before the day of your test.

If you do not have both of these, DVSA will contact you before the date of your test to cancel it and offer you a refund.

Practise with your driving instructor

It is vital that you are test-ready if you want to book now, as tests could be at short notice.

On average fewer than 50% pass their driving test and there could be long waiting times for a retest – you should only book when you are confident you can pass.

DVSA encourages you to spend time practising on a variety of roads and in different driving conditions with your driving instructor before you book your test.

Culture Recovery Fund saves 135 grassroots music venues with emergency grants

- £2.25m funding topped up by more than £1 million to help more venues in need of support to survive
- Recipients of the fund include The Troubadour in London, where Adele and Ed Sheeran performed in the early days of their career, as well as The Jacaranda in Liverpool, where The Beatles played early rehearsals and one of their first gigs
- Arts, film and culture organisations encouraged to get their bids in for a share of £880 million worth of grants through Arts Council England, the British Film Institute, Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund

Grassroots music venues across England are the first recipients of the

Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund, the Culture Secretary has announced today.

The £3.36 million Emergency Grassroot Music Venues Fund is being shared among 135 venues across England who applied for support to survive the imminent risk of collapse caused by the coronavirus pandemic. In response to the demand for help from some of the hardest hit in the sector, and to ensure the support would be felt far and wide, an additional £1.1 million was also brought forward, increasing the fund from £2.25 million to £3.36 million to help as many venues as quickly as possible.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said:

This Government is here for culture and these grants today show we are determined to help our exceptional music industry weather the covid storm and come back stronger.

"Grassroots music venues are where the magic starts and these emergency grants from our £1.57 billion fund will ensure these music venues survive to create the Adeles and Ed Sheerans of the future.

I encourage music fans to help too by supporting music and cultural events as they start to get going again. We need a collective effort to help the things we love through covid.

The accelerated funding has been delivered by Arts Council England in under a month to save grassroots venues previously facing insolvency. The emergency grants of up to £80,000 will cover on-going running costs incurred during closure, including rent and utilities, so that some of the country's most vulnerable venues can survive.

CEO, Arts Council England, Darren Henley, said:

This much-welcomed emergency investment from the government into grassroots music venues will have a profoundly positive impact on England's music ecology, and today's news will mean a great deal to the many artists, audiences and communities they serve across the country. I'm pleased that the Arts Council has been able to use its expertise to administer this fund, ensuring that we are supporting music venues in these challenging times.

Recipients of the fast-acting fund include The Troubadour in London, where Adele and Ed Sheeran performed in the early days of their career, as well as The Jacaranda in Liverpool where The Beatles played their first gig. The fund will support The Sunflower Lounge, one of the oldest music venues in Birmingham, and Night People in Manchester, home to Northern Soul and club nights as well as live performances and DJ sets. Other successful recipients include The Brickyard in Carlisle, which has hosted a range of acts including

Foals, Blossoms and Biffy Clyro since it opened in 2002, and The Louisiana in Bristol, where Florence and The Machine was among the acts that performed to small audiences there at the start of their careers.

Mark Davyd, Music Venue Trust, said:

We warmly welcome this first distribution from the Culture Recovery Fund which will ensure that the short term future of these venues is secured while we continue to work on how we can ensure their long term sustainability. Both DCMS and Arts Council England have worked very quickly to fully understand the imminent risk of permanent closure faced by a significant number of grassroots music venues across the country, and the funding they've brought forward creates a real breathing space for under pressure venues.

Tom Walker, 2019 Brit Award British Breakthrough artist, said:

This is great news for the music sector and fans alike. Grassroots venues play such an important role in kickstarting many careers, including my own, so it is vital that they are supported. The welcome investment from the government will help safeguard venues across the country so that the next generation of home grown talent can shine through.

Jeremy Pritchard, Everything Everything, said:

I owe my life's work and the best times I have ever experienced to the UK's live music scene. When we first formed Everything Everything it was the early days of playing in grassroots venues that gave us the experience we needed, taught us how to play together, and gave us the basis of a career. The UK's live music industry is something to be proud of, not just fiscally but for the vital social role it plays, and it needs continued support.

Frank Turner, singer-songwriter, said:

I'm very pleased to see that the government's headline announcement of the Culture Recovery Fund is now blossoming into practical assistance for grassroots music venues in dire need. These spaces are an irreplaceable part of the live music infrastructure in this country and play a vital role in building the careers of internationally successful artists and in our culture more generally. There is, as ever, more to be done, but this is a positive step for sure.

Gilles Peterson, Brownswood Recordings, said:

This is vital funding for the cultural sector that is being hit the hardest by Covid. So many people in the music world are reliant on the live music sector, and without this government help irrevocable long-term harm threatened the world leading UK music industry and those who rely on it for a living.

Andrew Roachford said:

It is good to see that the emergency funding has reached the grassroots music venues that were most at risk, and that those venues are now able to survive until the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund is processed. Without grassroots music venues there will be no sustainable live music industry. Hopefully enough of that Culture Recovery Fund will be made available to the grassroots music venues to ensure that this absolutely vital sector of the arts will survive and thrive.

Indoor performances can now restart with socially distanced audiences so music venues are able to reopen safely, alongside other culture venues and heritage sites.

Music venues are also eligible to apply for a share of £500 million in grants being delivered to cultural organisations by Arts Council England, which is accepting applications until 4 September.

Organisations across the arts and heritage sectors are encouraged to apply for funding designed to support the cultural sector's recovery and beyond.

Independent cinemas whose businesses have been unavoidably disrupted will also be able to apply for grants up to £200,000 from the British Film Institute. Heritage sites at risk were able to apply for a share of £92 million available in grants through the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England.

ENDS

Notes to editors

The full list of recipients of the Emergency Grassroots Music Venue Fund is [here](#).

Today the Government also launches the Here For Culture campaign to encourage the public to show their support for organisations by joining in with events and cultural activities again as they restart across the country.

Additional quotes in support of the Culture Recovery Fund:

Alistair Spalding, Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Sadler's Wells, said:

This week, Sadler's Wells submitted its application for support from the Cultural Recovery Fund. Guidance for the fund allows for a breadth of organisations, including those that would not normally receive funding from the government, to qualify for this much needed support. While we hope our application is successful, we also know that these funds will be critical for many parts of the arts ecosystem. If we are awarded funding, we recognise our responsibility to then use this money to support the parts of the industry that cannot apply or are still struggling and to play our part in getting artists back on stages, bringing professionals back to work and sharing world-class live dance back with audiences.

Indhu Rubasingham, Artistic Director, Kiln Theatre, said:

The impact of Covid-19 on our industry has been seismic, and the Government emergency funding is crucial to help towards getting our industry back on its feet. We deeply need this government support; and are grateful that organisations of any scale are eligible to apply. It is incumbent upon us a sector that we in turn support our freelance community, as they are as integral to our recovery as this funding is.

Sir Mark Elder, Music Director, Halle Concerts Society, said:

The Hallé has served the public of Manchester and the North for over 160 years and, apart from two world wars, this crisis is the most threatening it has ever had to face. We are incredibly grateful therefore that the Government has created the Fund to support the cultural life of this Country, and to give hope to all those who are committed to sustaining it

Alan Ayckbourn, playwright, said:

I welcome the Culture Recovery Funds. There has never been any doubt in my own mind that the arts shape the heart of every community. I have grown more convinced of that after nearly fifty years of providing theatre for local communities. If this current crisis were to continue, and without the support the government has put in place, we'd be in real danger of losing them. It is my hope that the prospect of that loss has now made the importance of the arts obvious to everyone – and there is nothing like absence for

making the heart grow fonder.

Marcus Davey, CEO and artistic director of the Roundhouse, said:

The Culture Recovery Fund is a welcome lifeline to many cultural organisations who continue to be negatively impacted by Covid-19. We hope that all parts of the huge cultural ecosystem are encouraged to apply for this fund, so that everyone including venues and organisations are supported by this much needed money. Arts and culture are such a huge part of our communities and our lives, but everyone in our sector has been hit hard by this pandemic. We hope this money will go some way to helping organisations such as the Roundhouse not only survive, but plan for our future, and come out the other side thriving.

Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.

Bumper weight of fish produced at Environment Agency's National Fish Farm

The Environment Agency restocked rivers with more than half a million (520,475) fish last year, as its national fish farm near Calverton produced its largest ever tonnage of fish.

12.3 tonnes of fish were produced at the farm in Nottinghamshire in 2019 – compared with 11.6 tonnes the previous year – an increase of 6%. In 2017, the amount of fish bred at the farm was 9 tonnes.

The fish farm also stocked over seven million (7,600,000) 'advanced reared larvae' into the wild. The larvae are bred at the farm for longer than tiny larvae, so that they have a better chance of survival.

The farm produces coarse fish including chub, barbel, dace, roach and crucian

carp. The fish and larvae replace stocks which have been lost to pollution incidents, following improvements to habitats or where natural reproduction in the area is low. They are also used to help create fisheries in areas where there is a shortage of angling opportunities.

Heidi Stone, Fisheries Manager at the Environment Agency, said:

The fish we breed are used for the recovery and re-stocking of rivers and still waters all over the country, so it's great to see the National Coarse Fish Farm have another record breaking year in the overall weight of healthy fish produced.

The fish farm's work is a key example of how we inject income from fishing licence fees directly back into fisheries. The fish they produce play an important role in the Environment Agency's work to restore, improve and develop sustainable fisheries in England.

Alan Henshaw, Team Leader at the National Coarse Fish Farm, said:

We're pleased to have had another record breaking year at the fish farm in 2019. By introducing better growing techniques and achieving a good survival rate for the fish, the overall weight of fish we have produced has risen by 6% to 12.3 tonnes compared with the previous year.

Great care is taken to ensure that every fish we produce is fit for purpose so they can survive when stocked out into the wild. During their 18 months at the farm, we feed the fish live natural food, they encounter a range of flora and fauna, and are trained in flowing conditions while being grown in the earth ponds.

Due to the hot weather over the past few weeks, EA teams have carried out a number of fish rescues across the country. Hot, sunny weather has caused low flows in some rivers and led lakes and ponds to warm up, causing a drop in oxygen levels which can be damaging or fatal to fish. Changes in air pressure found with thunderstorms can make the effects of hot weather more severe.

EA staff have worked around the clock to respond to reports of fish in distress, using aeration equipment or hydrogen peroxide to restore dissolved oxygen levels, clearing pollution, or in some cases relocating fish when it is possible to do so.

The Environment Agency has urged anyone who sees fish in distress to call their incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.