

Licensing and Gambling Act Sub-Committee

5 May 2026

Application for a New Premises Licence Don't Panic Festival, Stalbridge Recreation Ground, Park Grove, Stalbridge For Decision

Cabinet Member:

Cllr G Taylor, Health and Housing

Local Councillor(s):

Cllr J Vitali

Senior Leadership Team:

S Crowe - Executive, Housing, Prevention and Communities

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Statutory Authority: Licensing Act 2003

Report status: Public [Choose an item.](#)

Executive summary

An application has been made for a new Premises Licence for the Don't Panic Festival at Stalbridge Recreation Ground, Park Grove, Stalbridge, Dorset. The application has been out to public consultation, and a representation has been received. A Licensing Sub-Committee must consider the application and representation at a public hearing.

1. Recommendation(s)

The Sub-Committee determines the application in the light of written and oral evidence and resolves to take such steps as it considers appropriate and proportionate for the promotion of the licensing objectives which are:

- a) The prevention of crime and disorder
- b) The prevention of public nuisance
- c) Public safety
- d) The protection of children from harm

2. Reason for the recommendation(s)

The Sub-Committee must consider all the written representations, the oral representations made at the hearing, and any other information given at the hearing before making a decision.

3 Statutory Authority

- 3.1. Section 4 of the Licensing Act 2003 sets out the duties of the Licensing Authority. It states that a Council's licensing functions must be carried out with a view to promoting the four licensing objectives of: -

- (a) the prevention of crime and disorder;
- (b) public safety;
- (c) the prevention of public nuisance; and
- (d) the protection of children from harm.

- 3.2. All applications and decisions must be made with due regard to the [Licensing Act 2003](#) (the Act), the [Revised Guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003](#) (the Guidance) and the [Dorset Council Statement of Licensing Policy](#) (the DC Policy).

4. Details of the application

- 4.1. Guggleton Farm Arts CIC have made an application for a new premises licence for a festival at Stalbridge Recreation Ground on 25 May. The application form and supporting documents are attached at Appendix 1.

The event is described as “the inaugural Don’t Panic Festival is a celebration of Douglas Adams extraordinary global contribution to literature, culture, technology, environmental thinking of his life and his legacy. This will be a festival weekend building up to a Towel Day of Celebration

On the weekend of 23rd to 25th of May 2026, Stalbridge, Dorset will come alive. There will be events in the town, including a Vagon Poetry Jam, a Pan-Galactic cocktail competition and an evening open air cinema picnic, showing the Hitchhikers’ Guide To The Galaxy film.

On towel Day itself, Monday 25th of May 2026, a Douglas Adams themed fancy-dress parade will wind its way to Lydden Cottage for the unveiling of a Blue Plaque, before celebrations continue at nearby Stalbridge Recreation Ground with music, performances, storytelling, crafty science, environmental action, playful invention, food and drink.

It will be a joyful, inclusive celebration of creativity, curiosity and collective possibility, ending at teatime, because a properly made cup of tea is as important as a Pan Galactic Gargleblaster.”

- 4.2. The application is for: -

Plays (outdoors)

Monday 1200-1800 hours

Films (outdoors)

Monday 1200-1800 hours

Live Music (outdoors)

Monday 1200-1800 hours

Recorded Music (outdoors)

Monday 1200-1800 hours

Performance of dance (outdoors)

Monday 1200-1800 hours

Supply of Alcohol on the premises only

Monday 12:00 – 18:00

- 4.4. The applicant has confirmed that the event will be taking place each year and has agreed to have the following added as a condition on the licence if it is granted:

The premises licence is used for a one day event called the Don't Panic Festival that is to take place on the Late May Bank Holiday each year with the first event taking place on 25 May 2026.

- 4.6 The email confirming this additional condition can be found at Appendix 2. There were minimal details initially supplied regarding the operating schedule and the conditions from it. The Applicants had stated that risk assessments, for example will be available.

5. Representations to the Review from Responsible Authorities

- 5.1. Section 13 of the Licensing Act contains the list of Responsible Authorities who must be consulted on each application. Dorset Police, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service, Public Health Dorset, the Immigration Authority, Dorset Council Trading Standards, Dorset Council Children's Services, Dorset Council Planning, Dorset Council Licensing, Dorset Council Environmental Protection and Dorset Council Health and Safety have all been consulted.

- 5.2. There were no representations from any of the Responsible Authorities.

6. Representations from other people

- 6.1. The Safety Advisory Group (SAG), which is made up of representatives from a number of different bodies have made a representation which states: -

The SAG considers that there is insufficient detail within the application to determine how the steps proposed to promote the licensing objectives will be implemented. Furthermore, the event management documents submitted to the SAG only provide aspirational comments from the applicants as to how they will protect public safety, mitigate risks and promote best practice.

The applicants have met with representatives of the SAG and agreed to submit additional information and provide an opportunity for all responsible and other regulatory authorities to gain certainty that whatever is conditioned on the licence can be satisfactorily delivered.

The SAG asks that the licensing authority, in the public interest, uses its powers under the Licensing Act 2003 (Hearings) Regulations 2005 to extend the timescales for a hearing be held so that the SAG may consider the additional details and reach a position where it can advise the authority that the licence when issued will be clear, concise, appropriate, and proportionate.

- 6.2 The full representation is included at Appendix 3.

- 6.3** The applicant has submitted additional documents that were presented to a recent Safety Advisory Group panel. In addition to these documents, the SAG suggested the following; a separate fire risk assessment and four first aiders instead of two that were originally planned. The applicant has confirmed that these matters are in hand and they hope to have them confirmed by the time this application is heard. The additional documents and the email from the applicant are at Appendix 4.7.

7. Guidance and Policy

- 7.1.** Paragraphs 1.2 to 1.5 of the Revised Guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003 issued in February 2026 (The Guidance) sets out the Licensing Objectives and aims;

The legislation provides a clear focus on the promotion of four statutory objectives which must be addressed when licensing functions are undertaken.

Each objective is of equal importance. There are no other statutory licensing objectives, so that the promotion of the four objectives is a paramount consideration at all times.

However, the legislation also supports a number of other key aims and purposes. These are vitally important and should be principal aims for everyone involved in licensing work. They include:

- protecting the public and local residents from crime, anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance caused by irresponsible licensed premises;
- giving the police and licensing authorities the powers they need to effectively manage and police the night-time economy and take action against those premises that are causing problems;
- recognising the important role which pubs and other licensed premises play in our local communities by minimising the regulatory burden on business, encouraging innovation and supporting responsible premises;
- providing a regulatory framework for alcohol which reflects the needs of local communities and empowers local authorities to make and enforce decisions about the most appropriate licensing strategies for their local area; and
- encouraging greater community involvement in licensing decisions and giving local residents the opportunity to have their say regarding licensing decisions that may affect them.

- 7.2.** Paragraph 1.16 of the Guidance sets out how conditions should be formulated;

Conditions on a premises licence or club premises certificate are important in setting the parameters within which premises can lawfully operate. The use of wording such as “must”, “shall” and “will” is encouraged. Licence conditions:

- must be appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives;
- must be precise and enforceable;
- must be unambiguous and clear in what they intend to achieve;

- should not duplicate other statutory requirements or other duties or responsibilities placed on the employer by other legislation;
- must be tailored to the individual type, location and characteristics of the premises and events concerned;
- should not be standardised and may be unlawful when it cannot be demonstrated that they are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in an individual case;
- should not replicate offences set out in the 2003 Act or other legislation;
- should be proportionate, justifiable and be capable of being met;
- cannot seek to manage the behaviour of customers once they are beyond the direct management of the licence holder and their staff, but may impact on the behaviour of customers in the immediate vicinity of the premises or as they enter or leave; and
- should be written in a prescriptive format.

7.3. Paragraph 1.21 states:

While licence conditions should not duplicate other statutory provisions, licensing authorities and licensees should be mindful of requirements and responsibilities placed on them by other legislation.

7.4. Paragraphs 9.42 – 9.44 of the Guidance set out how the Licensing Authority will determine an application:

Licensing authorities are best placed to determine what actions are appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives in their areas. All licensing determinations should be considered on a case by-case basis. They should take into account any representations or objections that have been received from responsible authorities or other persons, and representations made by the applicant or premises user as the case may be.

The authority's determination should be evidence-based, justified as being appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives and proportionate to what it is intended to achieve.

Determination of whether an action or step is appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives requires an assessment of what action or step would be suitable to achieve that end. While this does not therefore require a licensing authority to decide that no lesser step will achieve the aim, the authority should aim to consider the potential burden that the condition would impose on the premises licence holder (such as the financial burden due to restrictions on licensable activities) as well as the potential benefit in terms of the promotion of the licensing objectives. However, it is imperative that the authority ensures that the factors which form the basis of its determination are limited to consideration of the promotion of the objectives and nothing outside those parameters. As with the consideration of licence variations, the licensing authority should consider wider issues such as other conditions already in place to mitigate potential negative impact on the promotion of the licensing objectives and the track record of the business. Further advice on determining what is appropriate when imposing conditions on a licence or certificate is provided in Chapter 10. The licensing authority is expected to come to its determination based on an assessment of the evidence on both the risks and benefits either for or against making the determination."

8. Options

8.1. The Sub-Committee will determine the application in the light of all the written representations and any oral evidence from the hearing. They will take such steps as they consider appropriate and proportionate for the promotion of the licensing objectives of: -

- a) The prevention of crime and disorder
- b) The prevention of public nuisance
- c) Public safety
- d) The protection of children from harm

8.2. The steps that the Sub-Committee may take are; -

- a) to grant the licence subject to -
 - i. conditions consistent with the operating schedule accompanying the application modified to such extent as the authority considers appropriate for the promotion of the licensing objectives, and,,
 - ii. any mandatory conditions
- b) to exclude from the scope of the licence any of the licensable activities to which the application relates,
- c) to refuse to specify an individual as the premises supervisor, or,
- d) to reject the application.

9. Financial Implications

Any decision of the Sub Committee could lead to an appeal by any of the parties involved that could incur costs.

10. Environmental Implications

None.

11. Well-being and Health Implications

None.

12. Other Implications

None.

13. Risk Assessment

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

14. Equalities Impact Assessment

Not applicable

15. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Application and supporting documents

Appendix 2 – Condition to be added if granted

Appendix 3 – Representation from Safety Advisory Group

Appendix 4 – Email from the Applicant, additional information and policies

16. Background Papers

[Licensing Act 2003](#)

[Home Office Guidance issued under Section 182 of the Licensing Act 2003](#)

[Dorset Council Statement of Licensing Policy 2021](#)