



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Licensing (Statutory) Sub Committee

Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 2:00 pm on
Wednesday 22 July 2026

Present

Councillor Lavinia Edwards
Councillor Keith Horgan (Chair)
Councillor Gareth Wilson

Officers

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Alex Beebe – Senior Licensing Officer
Stewart Broome – Licensing Manager
Maggie Camp – Director Legal & Monitoring Officer

Others present

Thomas Janes – Applicant
Amy Robinson – Senior Ecologist (East Cambridgeshire District Council)

1. Apologies and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr John Trapp. Cllr Gareth Wilson attended as a substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Determination of an Application for a Premises Licence at Dullingham Polo Club, Hill Farm, Station Road, Dullingham

The Chair explained the procedure to be followed at the meeting and introduced the officers and members present.

The Senior Licensing Officer presented the report, AB50, previously circulated, which invited the Sub-Committee to determine an application for a premises licence submitted by TDC Group Ltd, on land at Dullingham Polo Club, Hill Farm, Station Road, Dullingham.

The Senior Licensing Officer explained that the application had to be determined according to the following four licensing objectives:

- The prevention of crime and disorder
- The prevention of public nuisance

- Public safety
- The protection of children from harm

It was noted that the applicant had the right to appeal the decision to the magistrates.

Members of the Panel asked the Senior Licensing Officer questions and received the following responses.

In response to Cllr Gareth Wilson, the Senior Licensing Officer stated that the replacement Event Management Plan included a new Environmental Protection and Ecological Management section, which set out measures on how the environment would be protected. It was noted that Mr Janes would refer to this in his presentation.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, the Senior Licensing Officer reported that there had been no local objections to the application. It was noted that the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service had raised concerns for the applicant's consideration. The Licensing Manager explained that the Licensing Sub Committee were not responsible for any matters that were covered by Fire and Safety legislation and so these could not form part of any decision.

The Senior Licensing Officer confirmed that under the current wording of the application an event could be held on any Saturday. The Applicant, Thomas Janes, explained that he only wanted a licence for a single event on a Saturday at the end of August. He made the following statement.

"Hifields Festival has been successfully held at this site since 2015. The application before you relates to the same managed woodland area and the same event layout that has previously been used, including the 2025 event, without any proposed expansion into new areas.

"I have worked in the events industry for over 15 years, delivering large scale events in woodlands, open countryside, fields and country parks across Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and Norfolk. Throughout that time I have worked closely with local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure events are delivered safely and responsibly whilst respecting the environments in which they take place. None of those events has resulted in environmental enforcement action or wildlife offences.

"I take my responsibilities as an event organiser extremely seriously. Throughout this application I have worked proactively with the Licensing Authority and have updated my Event Management Plan to provide additional detail where appropriate.

"In response to the representations received, I have introduced a comprehensive Environmental Protection and Ecological Management section, together with supporting environmental management procedures. These clearly set out how the woodland environment will be protected before, during and after the event.

“To be absolutely clear, this event does not involve tree felling, vegetation clearance, habitat removal or excavation within the woodland. All infrastructure is temporary, existing managed areas and access routes will be used wherever practicable, contractors will receive environmental briefings, and procedures are in place to protect wildlife, prevent pollution and respond appropriately should any environmental issue arise.

“I also made every effort to engage directly with the objector and local authority ecologist. I contacted the Licensing Team, spoke with the objector by telephone, offered a site visit and asked whether there were any reasonable mitigation measures that could be implemented. He advised that he was unable to engage, so I have instead sought to address the concerns by strengthening the Event Management Plan and documenting the environmental controls that will be in place.

“My objective has always been to work collaboratively and deliver a safe, professionally managed event that promotes the licensing objectives while respecting the surrounding environment.

“I respectfully submit that the application demonstrates that the event can continue to operate responsibly, as it has done for a number of years, and I ask the Committee to grant the premises licence.”

Sub Committee members were invited to ask the applicant any questions.

In reply to Cllr Gareth Wilson, Thomas Janes stated that the event had taken place every year from 2015 and from 2017 it had been held in the woods. He had not received any complaints.

In reply to Cllr Lavinia Edwards, Thomas Janes stated that there was no CCTV on the site. They had one member of security staff for every 100 attendees.

In reply to the Director Legal, Thomas Janes explained that no trees had been removed and no wildlife had been knowingly disturbed. An ecologist from Mott McDonald had assisted with the writing of the Event Management Plan. He had tried to liaise with Council officers about their concerns but without success.

In reply to the Director Legal, Thomas Janes reported that there were two existing licences on the premises. The landowner ran wedding events on the site, but this had no connection with his business.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Thomas Janes stated that he had previously used the landowner's licence for events but he wanted his own licence to continue to run the event once a year.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Thomas Janes explained that there were no petrol generators on site. Diesel generators were used and he understood that the catering crew use gas for their cooking.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Thomas Janes stated that if an animal's habitat was found close to where they planned to set up the stage, they would move the stage.

In reply to Cllr Gareth Wilson, Thomas Janes explained that last year's insurance was for 1,000 attendees. This year 1,500 were expected so the insurance would need to cover 2,500 attendees to ensure that there was some headroom.

In reply to Cllr Lavinia Edwards, Thomas Janes confirmed that he had not carried out a wildlife survey. He had asked for advice from the Council's ecology section, but they had been unable to assist him in this matter. He explained that holding the event in the woods created more atmosphere and this annual event had always been held in the trees.

Amy Robinson, Senior Ecologist, made the following statement.

"My name is Amy Robinson, a qualified ecologist, a full member of Institute of Sustainability & Environmental Professionals and Chartered Environmental Professional. You may recognise me as the Council's senior ecologist, but I am not permitted to attend in such capacity at this meeting, therefore you must treat me as an external party.

"Today I represent Richard Kay's valid objection, as he could not attend. Again, Richard should be considered as an 'other person', rather than an employee of the council. I shall not repeat the submitted objection. Instead, I'll focus on the implications, should this application be approved.

"It is understood that, in deciding upon applications, you are obliged to promote the licensing objectives set out in law, one of which is the prevention of crime and disorder.

"Typically, for a licence, such crime and disorder risks would be matters such as anti-social behaviour or drug use. But the law does not limit your considerations to just those issues. The law requires you to consider the prevention of all crime and disorder, including local environmental, such as wildlife crimes.

"More broadly, whenever the Council undertakes its statutory duties, whether licensing or any other duties, it has a legal requirement under the Crime and Disorder Act and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act to prevent harm to the natural environment and protected species.

"As such, you are legally obliged to consider whether, in approving this, if there is a real risk of a crime, likely to take place. Importantly, you do not have to prove a crime will take place. For example, you do not have to prove drug use will take place, you simply must determine whether it is likely or that is reasonably possible a crime will take place.

"In this instance, the applicant is proposing to install stages, bars, dancing areas, pathways, lighting, loud music etc in a woodland in a few days' time at the peak activity seasons for many protected species.

“Protected species, such as all nesting birds, all bats and badgers. It is illegal to intentionally harm or disturb protected species or their resting places. This includes scaring them away through loud noise / inappropriate lighting or destroying their roosting areas or their setts. All of these actions are a criminal offence, which come with imprisonment, and unlimited fines per animal.

“In appendix 3 of the Event management plan version 2 there are still no tree safety reports or ecology reports. The applicants state “no intentional harm to wildlife will occur” but still intend to create noise over 50db which are harmful to bats in peak bat pup season, generate artificial lighting in an area that doesn’t have any normally. In 14.4 of the appendix it states “should any active bird nest, bat roost, badger sett or other protected species be identified during the event build, the affected area will be protected and works will cease within that location pending appropriate advice.” The appropriate ecological advice has already been given by the councils’ ecology team. We have been informed this is simply not an option for them.

“In an attempt to compromise we had sought to restrict the licence to only the open field near to but not in the woodland. An event taking place in the field only, with appropriate measures to prevent harm, which would dramatically reduce the risk of harm, to the point that it is unlikely a wildlife crime would take place. Consequently, the objection could be withdrawn.

“I therefore, respectfully ask the Committee to align with the compromise which has been proposed to make this legally compliant or refuse this application in order to prevent a crime taking place under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, and the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017 as well as making sure this Council follows its legal duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006.”

In reply to Cllr Lavinia Edwards, Amy Robinson stated that under the Environment Act 2021 all licensing applications needed to consider the impact on the environment and habitat of protected species.

In reply to Cllr Gareth Wilson, Amy Robinson explained that there was an extremely high likelihood that there were protected animals in the woods in question, such as badgers, bats or nesting birds. In reply to Keith Horgan, Amy Robinson explained that noise and lighting could disturb animals such as bats and badgers in their habitat. Juvenile bats, in particular, would be vulnerable at that time of year. She stated that in her view and that of the Climate Change and Natural Environment Manager, the event should be held in the nearby field, 100 metres away from the woodland area.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Amy Robinson explained that the Council had a duty to prevent crime and crime did not have to be reported in order of the Council to refuse to award a licence.

The applicant was asked if he had anything to add. Thomas Janes reiterated that he had approached the Council’s ecology section for advice and none was given.

He stated that if the stage had to be 100 metres from the woods the event would not be able to take place and under that restriction, many other events would also have to be cancelled. He confirmed that he been given a fair hearing and been given every opportunity to make his case.

The Chair explained that the Sub Committee would go into private session with the legal officer to discuss the application and come to its decision. All parties would be notified of the decision in 5 working days.

The public meeting concluded at 10:45 am and the meeting then went into closed session.

The Committee **agreed** to:

DECISION: The decision of the Licensing Sub-Committee (in exercise of the powers delegated by East Cambridgeshire District Council as Licensing Authority) is to grant the licence subject to conditions, as per the operating schedule and further modification of conditions in order to promote the licensing objectives, as set out below:

GRANT the application for a premises Licence to TDC Group Ltd in accordance with paragraph 4 of the Officer Report subject to:

- (i) the conditions contained in the operating schedule accompanying the application.
- (ii) the following conditions to be applied to Annex 3 of the licence:

Condition 1

- Events limited to one per calendar year, to take place on a Saturday in August.

Condition 2

- Attendance at the event shall be limited to 2,500 persons at any given time, including ticketed customers, staff and volunteers.

Condition 3

- The premises licence holder shall give notice of any events dates (where more than 1000 people will be in attendance) together with the proposed licensable activities and timings permitted, no later than 3 months before the date of the event to the Council's Licensing Authority and the Safety Advisory Group (SAG). The notice will include a draft version of the Event Management Plan (EMP).

Condition 4

- The premises licence holder shall submit the final agreed version of the EMP to the Safety Advisory Group no later than 28 days (14 days (2026 event only)) before the day of the event itself, not including the day of the event. The final version of the EMP must be agreed by the Licensing Authority and Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

The Event Management Plan shall comprise of, but not be limited to:

- Detailed site plan showing the locations of fencing, bars and entertainment areas
- Details of security (including fencing) and stewarding arrangements for the event
- Details of the event hotline (in the event neighbours wish to contact the organiser)
- Noise monitoring procedures including management and control measures being in place to adequately address music noise impacts
- Traffic management plan
- Major incident plan (including counter terrorism measures)
- Security & crowd management plan (including search, admissions and eviction Policies)
- Medical risk assessment and plan
- Adverse weather plan
- Children & vulnerable adults safeguarding policy (including reference to a risk assessment relating to presence of open water on site)
- Alcohol management plan
- Drugs policy
- Environmental Protection and Ecological Management plan

Condition 5

- Any changes to the final EMP may only be made with the written agreement of the Licensing Authority as the contents of the EMP will be regarded and treated as though they are premises licence conditions.

Condition 6

- Condition 3 of this Annex will only be applicable to events from 2027 onwards.

Condition 7

The Environmental Protection and Ecological Management section of the Event Management Plan will include the following amended statements:

- All contractors, staff and volunteers will be instructed that no trees or vegetation are to be removed without prior consultation with the Council's Ecology Officer.
 - Should any active bird nest, bat roost, badger sett or other protected species be identified during event build, the affected area will be protected and works will cease within that location pending appropriate advice of the Council's Ecology Officer.
 - Following the event, the Event Organiser will undertake a post event review and produce a report, which will be submitted to the Council's Ecology Officer, to identify any environmental issues and implement improvements for future events
- (iii) Any mandatory conditions that must be included in the licence.