

MAYOR OF LONDON

Andrew Boff AM

Chair of the London Assembly
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Our ref: LA9FebResponse

Your ref: MGLA140223-0107

Date: 20 June 2023

Dear Andrew,

London Assembly (Plenary) Meeting, 9 February – Motion on Overcrowding in London’s Night Time Venues

Thank you for the letter regarding the motion agreed at the London Assembly Plenary meeting on 9 February 2023. I’d like to thank the Assembly for its recommendations which I have responded to individually in the attached appendix.

The Mayor and I were deeply saddened by the tragic events at the O2 Academy Brixton on 15 December 2022. Our thoughts continue to be with all of those that were affected, including the families of Rebecca Ikumelo, Gaby Hutchinson and the 21 year old woman who remains critically ill in hospital.

Venue and event safety in London is highly regulated and London’s venues are some of the safest in the world, and so the events of 15 December were doubly shocking. I’d like to assure the Assembly that the safety of Londoners attending our world-class venues is a top priority for the Mayor and I. We are doing all we can to support authorities and businesses to ensure the highest safety standards.

The Mayor and I also recognise the importance of Brixton Academy to the local economy, London’s live music scene and the UK’s reputation as a global music leader. Lambeth Council Licensing Committee will determine the future of the current operator’s licence at a hearing in the coming weeks. Whatever the outcome of the hearing, I am committed to working with the live music industry, the council and the police to ensure that this iconic venue can re-open safely as soon as possible.

As you point out, the Mayor has no formal powers over licensing. However, the Mayor’s Police and Crime Plan and his Culture Strategy set out the benefits of more consistent approach to licensing across the capital. I chair a monthly licensing and regulation group attended by the Met Police licensing and counter terrorism units, the London Local Authority Licensing Managers’ Forum, the Association of London Environmental Health Managers, Safer Business Network and UK Hospitality to address key issues, share best practice and support the safety of the public.

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It is vital that we prioritise good planning for the night across London. That is why I have set up a network of Night Time Borough Champions that meets twice a year and includes a cabinet member or committee chair from every borough. I also run a Night Time Policy Forum to brief local authority officers on night time policy and practice and exchange knowledge. These important groups help boroughs to put comprehensive night time strategies in place, including night time safety, as required by the Mayor's London Plan.

Finally, I will be chairing a National Events Safety Roundtable on 26 June to address the changing landscape that event organisers from sport, music, festivals and other sectors are working in, as well as the challenges that police, local authorities, the security sector and others are facing. I will ensure that the Assembly is kept updated on the outcomes of this event.

If I can be of any further help on this critical issue, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, reading 'Amy Lamé', is positioned above a small yellow rectangular stamp.

Amy Lamé
Night Czar

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APPENDIX: Response to London Assembly Recommendations on Overcrowding in London's Venues

Recommendation 1: We recognise the Mayor is not the decision maker in licensing applications. However, given the convening role the Mayor can play the Mayor should collaborate with London Boroughs and the existing work they are doing to keep an up-to-date register of all night-time venues, their capacities and licensing conditions.

Response: Under the Licensing Act 2003, boroughs already keep a register of their licensed premises and any conditions that have been agreed as part of granting the licence. Venue capacity limits are not dealt with through a licensing application and are determined and agreed under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Licence holders do however have a responsibility to ensure the safety of those using their premises, including ensuring appropriate limits on the maximum capacity of the premises at any time.

I chair a monthly licensing and regulation group attended by the Met Police licensing and counter terrorism units, the London Local Authority Licensing Managers' Forum, the Association of London Environmental Health Managers, Safer Business Network and UK Hospitality to address key issues, share best practice and support the safety of the public. I also set up the Night Time Borough Champions Network and Night Time Policy Forum to brief local authority officers on night time policy and practice and exchange knowledge.

Recommendation 2: The Mayor should instruct his Night Czar to invite all relevant stakeholders including the police, local authorities and the largest security providers to City Hall to discuss bribery allegations and what can be done to combat overcrowding in night-time venues.

Response: Many of the challenges facing events exist across the country and across multiple sectors, including culture, entertainment, sports and retail. We require a multi-agency partnership approach to understanding them and putting realistic, timely and achievable solutions in place. To that end, I will be convening a National Events Safety Roundtable on 26 June, bringing together industry and regulators from across the country, to better understand the risks and challenges facing event organisers who operate in a range of settings and what can be done to address them.

Recommendation 3: The Night Czar should meet with all relevant senior officers and borough cabinet members in London responsible for licensing to find best practice ways of preventing overcrowding in venues.

Response: The issue of queue management and crowd dynamics will be discussed as part of the National Events Safety Roundtable that I am chairing on 26 June. Any learnings will be shared with the Night Time Borough Champions Network, which includes a cabinet member or committee chair from every borough. It should be noted that prior to the tragic events of 15 December, no concerns had been raised with the Mayor and I about overcrowding at venues, including at the O2 Academy Brixton. Overcrowding at venues and events is taken extremely seriously. Responsibility for agreeing the maximum capacity of venues and events and ensuring their compliance with the relevant regulations sits with a number of agencies including the Fire

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Authority, local authorities, the Metropolitan Police, the Health and Safety Executive and various multi-agency safety advisory groups across the capital. Guidance on venue and event safety is also provided by a range of specialist businesses, institutes and industry bodies.

Recommendation 4: The Mayor should release an update to his 2017 report 'From good night to great night' with additional sections on venue safety.

Response: The Mayor and I take venue safety very seriously, which is why I'm convening a National Events Safety Roundtable to better understand the risks and challenges facing event organisers who operate in a range of settings and what can be done to address them. We are also working to ensure better planning for all aspects of life at night is undertaken at a local level and are supporting boroughs in producing holistic night time strategies, including through extensive guidance we have published. These documents will look at all aspects of life at night, including nightlife and safety. There are currently no plans to update the report from 2017 in full.

Recommendation 5: The Night Czar should outline best practice for night-time venues which is not currently enforced by statute.

Response: This will be a key topic of discussion at the National Events Safety Roundtable that I am chairing on 26 June and any proposals that come from that event will be reviewed by all partners and actioned by the appropriate bodies.

Recommendation 6: The Mayor should write to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, asking the department to conduct a review of how licensing decisions and enforcement action are currently taking place in local authorities with a view to improve crowd management and public safety, including ensuring venues are safe spaces for women."

Response: The Mayor and I do not currently plan to write to the government on this issue. We have confidence in the licensing system and how the review process is carried out by the relevant responsible authorities should any breaches of the four licensing objectives occur. The Mayor has also invested records sums into tackling violence against women and girls, including in supporting night time venues through his Women's Night Safety Charter.