



# Witney Music Festival 2025

*Every Groove One Festival*

## Annual Report to Witney Town Council

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**Witney Music Festival Ltd**

**Directors:** S Foster, E Marshall, M Keeble, J Ashby, S Edney  
**. Registered in England and Wales 8449499.**

**Registered Office:** Pebble Cottage, New Yatt Road, North Leigh, Witney, OX29 6TH.



## **Executive Summary**

Witney Music Festival 2025 delivered a safe, professional event with zero medical incidents and no community complaints, whilst attracting around 1000 visitors from outside Witney and selling out all local accommodation. The festival recorded an £8k loss due to lower-than-targeted attendance (3,312 vs. 4,500+ goal), reflecting industry-wide challenges that saw 72 UK festivals cancel in 2024 and 204 closures since 2019.

**Our Response:** We have implemented comprehensive organisational improvements including professional management systems, clear director accountability, weekly governance meetings, and a Community Advisory Board launching November 2025. A bespoke festival management platform (built in-house) now handles contracts, budgets, and scheduling—eliminating previous communication gaps and cost control issues.

**20th Anniversary Plans:** Enhanced marketing through various channels, and potential Cotswolds Tourism membership, earlier ticket sales (November vs. Spring), and active grant applications including the Sustainable Tourism grant. Infrastructure improvements planned include covered bar areas, modernised food court, and enhanced family facilities—subject to budget and sponsorship confirmation.

**Partnership Obligations Fulfilled:** We continue exceeding our four core commitments—building cohesive communities (Tough To Talk mental health partnership), furthering youth talent pathways (67% local artists), showcasing Witney for tourism (36% out-of-town visitors, Muddy Stilettos feature), and supporting local businesses (sold-out accommodation, increased town centre footfall).

The 2025 challenges have catalysed systematic improvements positioning us to return to profitability whilst maintaining community accessibility. Combined with 20th anniversary momentum and our strengthened Council relationship, WMF is well-placed to serve Witney for the next 20 years.



## **Overview 2025 Event**

Witney Music Festival held on the Leys on the 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> June 2025 was successful in many respects, however financially the Festival we made a small loss of £8k on the event due to the attendance figures and consequential lack of bar sales.

We feel that this year was the smoothest run festival to date. This is a reflection on the continued support of the Witney Town Council and their willingness to help wherever possible, and the tight knit team we have at the Festival that continues to learn and evolve as we focus on delivering the best possible event for the community. We were pleased to see many staff and Councillors from the Town Council in attendance, and we hope they had an enjoyable festival.

Leading up to the event the Festival registered for VAT as suggested by the Council and has been trading as such in the leadup to the Festival and will continue to do so.

### **Key Statistics**

|                                               |                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Attendance over the weekend:                  | <b>3,312</b>                                                                                                                   |
| Medical Incidents:                            | <b>0</b>                                                                                                                       |
| Security Incidents Summary:                   |                                                                                                                                |
| - <i>Ejections</i>                            | <b>4</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - <i>Responses</i>                            | <b>10</b> (3 for breaching the site parameter)                                                                                 |
| - <i>Basic toxication issues</i>              | <b>10</b> (security called, left of their own accord)                                                                          |
| Bar Issues:                                   | VIP Area, football firm in VIP bar area - racial slur used against a performer. Victim did not want to escalate to the police. |
| Traffic Management/Highways incidents/issues: | <b>0</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - Noise complaints received:                  | <b>0</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - Resident complaints received:               | <b>0</b>                                                                                                                       |
| - General complaints from non-ticket holders: | <b>0</b>                                                                                                                       |

### **Key learnings**

- We need to improve attendance through better promotion
- Review strategy for the Festival for the long term with next year being the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Festival
- Review areas of cost saving in bar area
- Consider layout of the Festival to accommodate higher numbers
- Continue to look at more inclusivity in terms of acts, access & facilities



## **Partnership Agreement Obligations**

Witney music Festival and Witney Town Council have entered into a partnership agreement on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023 detailing the following obligations of both parties to work together in order to:

- Build a cohesive and inclusive community through music
- Further a talent pathway for the youth of Witney
- Showcase Witney for tourism
- Support Local businesses

This year has demonstrated how the festival continues to meet and exceed these obligations in pursuit of building better communities through music.

### **Building a cohesive and inclusive community through music**

This year we have seen a greater diversity in attendees both young and old, and with our disability access platform we are continuing to ensure access is for all. We pride ourselves in a varied mix of music which attracts a wide spectrum of attendees, something that will be our brand as we move into the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the festival “Every groove one festival”. The introduction of the dance stage has expanded our appeal which ensures the maximum draw to the broadest scope of attendees. The safe environment we have created has encouraged a real family environment which we continue to build on, and we are looking to work with The Station and The Music & Arts Trust to invest in local talent and continue to provide opportunities. But nothing speaks volumes more than comments from local residents, an extract of these can be found in **appendix 4**

This year the festival partnered with **Tough To Talk**, a UK charity whose mission is to reduce male suicide and break the stigma surrounding men’s issues and poor mental health. They were present onsite to help highlight this big issue and reported some amazing conversations with attendees of the festival. This is an example of the many ways the festival is trying to deliver a cohesive and inclusive community and work with organisations that complement our objective. The festival has incorporated a link to the Tough to Talk website on the festival site – see **appendix 5**.

### **Further a talent pathway for the youth of witney**

67% of artists at this year’s festival were from Witney with young artists such as “Violet Band” that was formed after being inspired by attending the festival in previous years. Local artists who have played at the festival and gone on to bigger things either as a band or individually are:

- Dolly Mavis (also famous for snubbing the vice president of the US this year)
- Danny Mellin (Touring the UK)
- South Arcade (just signed to Atlantic Records in the US)
- Genevieve Miles (Touring the UK)
- Twisted State of Mind (individuals touring Europe as session musicians playing the likes of the Albert Hall)
- The Mezz (Touring the UK)



As you can see the festival has and continue to promote young artists, many of whom have gone on to greater things. An extract of comments from some of the bands that played this year can be found in **appendix 3**

### **Showcase Witney for tourism**

Of the 3,312 people that attended the festival this year 36% 1,192 came from outside of witney, from as far north as York and as far south as Southampton, so the festival really attracts people from far and wide to the festival. This is supported by the fact you cannot get a hotel room, guest house or B&B in witney during the festival as they get sold out to people travelling to Witney to attend the festival. Indeed, the word about the festival is spreading including a citation in a Muddy Stilettos article about reasons to come to Witney (see attached article and **appendix 1**) which specifically mentions the Witney Music Festival in its opening paragraph.

### **Support Local Businesses.**

Many local businesses benefit greatly from the festival. With so many people travelling from outside witney to attend the festival, hotel rooms, guest houses and B&B's are all sold out, and bars and restaurants benefit from the increased activity in town before, during and after the festival. The festival is in the unique position that it is in such close proximity to the town centre, and the town is inextricably linked with the festival so many view the visit to the festival an opportunity to explore the town and all it has to offer. See comments below in the appendix from a selection of the businesses approached for comment. This year saw in an influx of over 1,000 people for the festival from outside Witney, it is difficult to see how this has not benefitted the town when viewed with such positive comments the festival has received, a sample of which can be found in **appendix 2**



## **Planning For The Future - Organisational Improvements**

### ***Professional Management Systems***

We have developed a comprehensive festival management platform (built in-house drawing on film/TV production and event management experience) that manages contracts, budgets, timelines, and rider approvals. This eliminates previous communication gaps and ensures professional supplier relationships. All artists will now work under documented agreements before appearing on promotional materials.

### ***Governance Strengthening***

Community Advisory Board: Launching November 2025, a board of 10-12 people will work alongside our five directors, distributing workload sustainably whilst bringing specialised expertise in accessibility, marketing, and community engagement.

School Partnerships: We are in discussions with Henry Box School and Wood Green School about establishing WMF boards, actively engaging local secondary students in festival planning and youth talent development.

Director Structure: Each director has clearly defined responsibilities:

- Eric: Bars (Hook Norton partnership), press relations, council liaison, chair/spokesperson
- Jim: Operations (power, lighting, security, staging)
- Matt: VIP area, toilets, fencing, insurance
- Sam: Dance stage production, accessibility and sensory areas
- Stuart: Creative direction (booking acts, scheduling, fundraising, marketing)

Weekly Meetings: We have instituted weekly director meetings through to the festival with clear agendas, documented decisions, and accountability tracking.

### ***Recruitment Event***

We are hosting a major recruitment and networking event on 18th November 2025 at Shaan Restaurant to build our volunteer, supporter, and sponsor teams whilst identifying potential Community Advisory Board members.



## **20th Anniversary Plans (2026)**

### **Marketing & Community Engagement**

**Cotswolds Tourism:** We are exploring membership with Cotswolds Tourism for regional promotion and integration with broader destination marketing.

**Visit Witney Event:** We recently attended a Visit Witney event organised by Witney Chamber of Commerce where the festival was regularly discussed positively. We came away with fresh ideas and valuable local business contacts.

**Grant Applications:** Actively pursuing multiple funding opportunities including the Sustainable Tourism grant for infrastructure improvements.

**Enhanced Strategy:** Earlier ticket sales (November 2025 launch), advance sponsorship commitments, and 20th anniversary narrative as marketing momentum.

Infrastructure Enhancements (Budget Dependent), subject to final budget approval and sponsorship commitments:

- Covered bar areas with seating
- Modernised food court with curated vendors
- Enhanced family facilities and wet weather provision
- Premium gin bar partnership
- Improved site aesthetics and lighting

### **Format Considerations**

With 2026 being the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the festival we are looking at how we might be able to enhance our commitment for inclusivity and building community by considering how we might spread the scope of artists we might be able to showcase. One idea being considered is extending the festival to a Thursday just for comedy in the dance tent plus Friday/Saturday as usual. Financial modelling will determine optimal structure, with the anniversary year providing opportunity for thoughtful evolution.

### **Summary**

The festival will be celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year in 2026 and hope to build on the success to date and re-launch ourselves to underpin the objectives we have committed to as part of the partnership agreement with Witney Town Council. We are conscious of our responsibility as a partner of Witney Town Council and the obligations we have signed up for. We believe we have exceed expectations of this agreement to date, however, we are not content with past wins, we aim for better results for the Witney Music Festival that benefit the town, the community and justify the Town Councils continued partnership with an event that helps showcase the best Witney has to offer to people all over the UK.



## **APPENDIX**

### **Appendix 1**

Extract from Muddy Stilletos talking about the best places to visit and covers Witney.

#### **WHY?**

This buzzy town is pretty self-contained when it comes to shopping, eating out and things to do, so it's great if you want to take baby steps into country living and feel rural, but not cut off. You have Oxford or Cheltenham a reassuring 30 – 45 mins away, and there's always loads on, from the weekly farmers market to the **music festival**, so meeting people and getting stuck in isn't too daunting. The commute to Oxford can be plagued by traffic issues but the train to London is easy enough and there's pretty parts to the town like Church Green, above, with its perfect village green and church spire.

### **Appendix 2**

Comments from local business owners

We had a great weekend for our first year at WMF. Being a local supplier, we got to showcase to our most local audience across two days. We'll be back again next year!

**Alex**

Sausage Bros (Food Stall Vendor)

We love the Witney music festival and value it greatly. It is always busy with a wonderful atmosphere in our venues after the festival kicks out!

**Paul Spink**

Eagle Tavern Landlord & Fat Lils Owner

We're big supporters of Witney Music Festival! It brings people from out of town into Witney, which is always a good thing. We love attending ourselves, and it's brilliant to see events that contribute to the local community.

**Michael Dove**

Three Horseshoes Landlord

Second year of attending the festival and the best yet! The festival has given me so much confidence in myself and my food that I am now doing my food stall full time. Thank you for that, WMF team. The festival team are amazing and very professional to deal with, as well as a great laugh. Thank you again and hope to be part of this amazing festival for many years to come. Up the chicken!

**Earl**

Earl's Jerk Chicken (Food Stall Vendor)





## Appendix 3

### Comments from local artists about the festival

For the past three years, I've had the pleasure of working with Stuart and the Witney Music Festival team, both as a solo artist and with my band. Each time has been a fantastic experience. Stuart is always easy to reach and quick to answer any questions in the lead-up to a performance. On the day of the festival, the entire stage crew is amazing - they make everything easy and stress-free, and I can't recommend them enough. The organisation at all of their events is outstanding. Beyond performing, I've attended many of the gigs and events put on by WMF, and every single one has been brilliant. The acts are always great, the amenities are well-organised, and the atmosphere is wonderful. Whether you're looking to perform or just enjoy some great music, the Witney Music Festival is a must-attend event.

**Georgia**

Violet band

Witney Music Festival is an absolutely vital event for both established creatives and up-and-coming artists in the local area. The festival provides a thoroughly professional environment for musicians, DJs and performers to ply their trade and for the next generation to find both development and inspiration within, as well as putting on an incredible event for the enjoyment of the entire community across all ages and backgrounds.

**Shaun**

The Scribes (Live Act, Dance Stage)

## Appendix 4

### Comments from local residents

The Witney Music Festival is certainly one of the highlights of my year. The team involved have taken it from strength to strength year on year, and it's something we can really take pride in. Catering for all music tastes, the event brings everyone together for a perfect value festival where we continue to make fond memories. This, along with the Cogges Beer festival, are my two particular favourite local events, and I can't wait for 2026!

**David Hambridge**

Witney Resident

I'm writing to express my support for the Witney Music Festival and to highlight the many benefits it brings to our community. The festival not only showcases fantastic local talent and a wide range of musical genres, but also fosters a sense of pride and togetherness among residents. It's an inclusive, family-friendly event that brings people of all ages together in celebration of music - something that's increasingly needed in today's world. Beyond the social and cultural value, the festival has a positive economic impact on the town. Local businesses, from pubs and cafés to shops and vendors, benefit from increased footfall and trade during the event. It puts Witney on the map as a vibrant and welcoming place to visit, supporting tourism and community spirit alike. I believe continued support for the festival is an investment in the town's identity, wellbeing, and future.

**Mick Morris**

Witney Resident

Cracking little festival! As a new parent taking a baby to a festival for the first time, it was perfect. Really well laid out and organised, very welcoming, with great facilities. Loads of variety of acts too. Long may it continue!

**Dr Jonathan Reeves**

Ex-Witney Resident

## Appendix 5



### Find Out More About Tough To Talk

Tough To Talk is a UK charity whose mission is to reduce male suicide and break the stigma surrounding men's issues and poor mental health. We collaborate with organisations to confront this crisis directly, offering impactful initiatives such as our powerful Tough Talks, suicide prevention and intervention training, and bespoke, targeted campaigns designed to support men and foster cultural change. We aim to create spaces where men feel empowered to speak openly, seek help, and rediscover hope. Together, we can save lives. Join us in breaking the silence and building a future where no man feels alone."

[FIND OUT MORE](#)