

WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL 2026

Additional information for the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee

The festival's economic, community and cultural value to Witney, in response to the Committee's questions

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Introduction

Witney Music Festival is a volunteer-run festival that has become a fixture of the town's calendar. In 2026 it welcomed around 2,900 ticket holders to The Leys over two days, ran 22 build-up events across 12 Witney venues, and generated an estimated **£169,000 of direct spending**, around £17 for every £1 of the Council's £10,000 grant.

It was also a difficult year, with a crowded weekend of national events and an audience that bought later than ever. We have learned from it, and for 2027 we are tightening costs, strengthening governance and improving our noise plan for our neighbours.

This document sets out the festival's economic and community value, and what it means to local people in their own words. Figures are drawn from our ticketing and bar records; where a figure is an estimate, we say so.

We are grateful to the Council, and to our sponsors, volunteers, partners and audience, for making the festival possible.

WMF 2026 at a glance

Festival programme	Build-up events 22 May – 7 June, comedy night 11 June, festival 12–13 June (The Leys)
Community build-up events	22 events: 21 in 12 Witney venues, plus one promotional gig near Banbury; est. 800–1,200 attendances
Festival tickets issued	c. 2,900: 2,385 online (including free under-14 tickets) plus c. 530 on the gate
Where ticket buyers live	64% Witney and its villages; 36% from further afield, including 11% from outside Oxfordshire
On-site spending at bars	c. £66,500
Facebook reach (May–June)	720,000+ views; 62% from people not already following the festival
Website (May–June)	40,000+ page views; 10,500 first-time visitors
Local business sponsors	19
Volunteers	30+ named volunteers, plus partner organisation teams; c. 1,600 volunteer hours
Accessibility	Sensory and accessible area run by Bass Therapy, and accessible stage
Ticket prices	£15 Friday and £25 Saturday, plus booking fee; under-14s free

1. Economic Impact Assessment

WMF 2026 generated substantial direct spending in Witney, on site at the festival and across the town's pubs and venues during the build-up.

Direct spending generated	Amount (inc. VAT)
Ticket sales (online and gate)	c. £56,000
Spending at festival bars	c. £66,500
Spending with independent food traders (est.)	c. £18,400
Total on-site spending	c. £141,000

Across the town. The 21 Witney build-up events brought an estimated 770–1,150 attendances into 12 Witney pubs and venues, much of it on weeknights, when hospitality businesses most need trade. One Sunday afternoon show at Part & Parcel alone drew more than 150 people. Official after-parties at local venues, including Studio Se7en, also kept festival-goers spending in town after the festival site closed each night.

Local suppliers. Wherever a local option existed, we used it. Our marquees were hired from Witney Buttercross Scout Group, putting money straight back into a local youth organisation. Waste and recycling were handled by West Oxfordshire District Council. Power and technical production came from EPS, an Oxfordshire company, sound from Temple Audio, which has a base in Witney, and the main stage backline from Witney venue Studio Se7en, and the comedy night was programmed by Oxfordshire-based Lone Wolf Comedy Club. Food traders included West Oxfordshire businesses Sausage Bros and Burgers and Brews (both Carterton), and La Tazzina, a local family-run Italian coffee and focaccia business. Witney printer Print Ready produced our banners, posters, flyers and volunteer T-shirts to a very high standard and at short notice. Volunteer catering came from Sandwich de Witney. We also hire local freelance production professionals

wherever we can, including our stage management and event management teams and our main stage sound engineer, so specialist fees stay in the local economy and local expertise is built up year on year.

Some services, such as licensed security, event medical cover, specialist accessible toilets and managed festival bars, are only available from specialist regional or national providers. Even so, **7 of our 15 main contracted suppliers (47%)** were based in Oxfordshire, four of them in Witney itself, along with all three of our food traders. The beer served at our bars was supplied by Oxfordshire's Hook Norton Brewery, which was also one of our largest sponsors, so a significant share of bar spending went back to a local business.

Visitor nights. We did not collect accommodation data from ticket buyers in 2026, but our own experience shows the demand. When booking rooms for visiting artists and DJs, we found Witney accommodation very busy over the festival weekend, and had to house one of our headline acts, Henge, outside the town. Local hotel prices were so high that one of our directors hosted the sound team in a caravan on his own driveway to keep costs down. Ticket data shows buyers travelling from across the UK (see section 6), and visitors from further afield are the most likely to stay overnight. From 2027 we will ask ticket buyers where they are travelling from and whether they are staying overnight, so we can report visitor nights accurately.

Estimated off-site spending (conservative)

We did not survey visitors in 2026, so the figures below are estimates. We have used deliberately cautious assumptions and shown our working so the Committee can test them.

Source of spending	Estimate
Build-up events: 770–1,150 attendances × £15 average spend in host pubs and venues	£11,550–£17,250
Visitors from outside Oxfordshire: 267 ticket holders × £25 each on food, drink, taxis and shopping in town	£6,675
Overnight stays: half of those 267 visitors × one night × £50 per person	£6,675
Estimated off-site spending	c. £25,000–£30,500

This excludes all off-site spending by the 587 ticket holders from elsewhere in Oxfordshire, including Carterton, Burford and Oxford, and by Witney residents themselves. The true figure is therefore likely to be considerably higher. From 2027 we will run an audience survey to measure it directly.

Return on Council investment. On-site spending of around £141,000, plus an estimated £28,000 spent off site, gives total direct spending of around **£169,000**. That is roughly **£17 for every £1** of the Council's £10,000 contribution, before any indirect or wider economic benefit is counted.

Business testimonials. Host venues reported a real boost in trade from the build-up programme:

"Hosting the WMF opener this May was wonderful. So many talented artists on the line-up drew lots of Witney locals and visitors to P&P. Both customers and staff had a great time listening to and watching the artists perform. From a business standpoint, the opening night was brilliant for both sales and local recognition. We saw many familiar faces but also new ones, many of whom have since returned to P&P. We welcome the return of WMF and would love to continue to be part of its opening nights."

Sophia, Part & Parcel

Studio Se7en and the Eagle Tavern also reported new customers and strong trade from their build-up events (see Appendix A).

2. Value for Council Investment

When the Council's Stronger Communities Committee recommended the 2026 partnership grant on 17 November 2025 (minute SC649), members recorded that, compared with other grants, a contribution of £10,000 to WMF illustrated “*exceptional value for a two-and-a-half-day event*”, and noted that “*the positive impact on local businesses by visitors to the event should not be underestimated*”. The Committee also described WMF as an outsourced event, akin to those delivered for the Council by other local organisations such as Witney Rotary. The 2026 evidence supports all three points.

Updates to figures previously provided. The Committee's table quoted figures from our earlier report. Having now analysed ticketing data in full, we have updated them:

- **Attendance:** previously 2,780. Ticket data now shows around 2,900 festival tickets issued (2,385 online, including free under-14 tickets, plus around 530 at the gate), with further children admitted free at the gate and not counted.
- **Visitors from outside Witney:** previously 31%. Postcode analysis of online ticket sales now shows **54% of tickets were bought from outside Witney town (OX28)**, and **36% from beyond Witney and its surrounding villages (OX28 and OX29)**. Both figures are higher than previously reported.
- **Local accommodation sold out:** we cannot verify this as a statistic. What we can say is that accommodation was very hard to find over the festival weekend (see section 1), and we will measure it properly in 2027.
- **Local artists:** previously 50%. The full line-up shows 57% (20 of 35 acts).

What the Council gets back for its funding:

Council objective	Festival contribution in 2026
Community cohesion	c. 2,900 festival tickets issued (2,385 online and c. 530 on the gate), plus further children admitted free at the gate; 64% of tickets bought by people in Witney and its villages; 21 free or low-cost community events in Witney venues; family area run with the Mulberry Bush charity
Tourism promotion	54% of tickets bought from outside Witney town and 36% from beyond Witney and its villages, including 11% from outside Oxfordshire (Gloucestershire, Swindon, Surrey, London and beyond)
Economic growth	c. £66,500 spent at festival bars; build-up events across 12 local venues; 19 local business sponsors
Youth development	Local dance school Flair Dance Studio performing; open mic nights for emerging performers; young volunteers, including a 17-year-old music student; initial discussions with Wood Green School in 2026, leading to a schools and college programme planned for 2027 with Wood Green School, The Henry Box School and Abingdon & Witney College
Local talent	57% of festival acts (20 of 35) were local, sharing the bill with national headliners; local artists across the build-up programme
Accessibility	Sensory and accessible area run by Bass Therapy, plus an accessible stage; the area was free to use, with a £3,000 donation from a local resident towards its cost of around £5,000
Town profile	Headliners including Fun Lovin' Criminals, Henge, BBC Radio 1's Charlie Tee and internationally renowned techno DJ Mark Broom
Environment and community voice	Main-stage platform and stand for Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP)

How we count attendance. 2,385 festival tickets were issued online through Skiddle, including free under-14 tickets, and gate sales represent around 530 further tickets. Many children also came in free at the gate without a ticket, and weekend passes cover both days. Actual attendance across the weekend was therefore higher than ticket numbers alone suggest. From 2027 we will count all children on entry.

3. Evidence of Community Benefit

Measure	2026
Local volunteers	30+ named volunteers, plus the Mulberry Bush team (6–7); c. 1,600 volunteer hours (section 7)
Community groups participating	Mulberry Bush charity, WASP, Bass Therapy, Flair Dance Studio, Friends of WMF and the festival's Community Advisory Board
Local business sponsors	19
Local suppliers	7 of 15 main contracted suppliers in Oxfordshire (4 in Witney), plus all 3 food traders
Local venues hosting build-up events	12
Local performers	20 of 35 festival acts (57%), plus local artists across the 22 build-up events

Local sponsors. Nineteen businesses sponsored WMF 2026: headline sponsor CETA Software (a Witney business owned by one of the festival directors), Hook Norton Brewery, Bee Bizzi, Genese Property Group, MG Carpentry Construction, TWM Financial Planning, Millsy & Kin, Parker Bullin, DSA Prospect, LA Hair, Humand Talent, Witney Business & Innovation Centre, Littledots Daycare, R&J Autocare, Ford Plumbing, Thames Street Barbers, Fraser Evans & Son, Rentacure and Roadnight Taylor. Most are small local businesses choosing to back a local event.

Local talent on the festival stages. 20 of the 35 acts at the main festival (57%) were local, including bands Bear Trap, Fawlers, Jewelia, Paige and the Red Shift and Sons of the Seventies, soul and disco collective Lucille & the Lightning Soul Train, and eight local DJs, who made up most of the Dance Stage line-up. Local artists shared the bill with national names such as Fun Lovin' Criminals, Henge and Sandi Thom, giving them exposure to a much larger audience than they would normally reach.

Windrush Against Sewage Pollution (WASP). The local campaign group had a stand, busy throughout Saturday, and gave a 10-minute talk from the main stage that was very well received. This gave an important local environmental campaign direct access to a large audience of residents and visitors. It also showed the festival as a platform for community voices, not just entertainment.

“Witney Music Festival gave us something we rarely get: a stage in front of thousands of local people. Our stand was busy all day Saturday, and we spoke to loads of people about the state of the Windrush and all of our rivers, and what they can do to help. The chance to address the crowd from the main stage was invaluable. Events like WMF are where local campaigns reach people who might never come to a public meeting, and we'd love to be part of it again.”

Ash, Windrush Against Sewage Pollution

Flair Dance Studio (Witney). The local dance school performed at the festival on Saturday, giving young local performers the chance to appear at a major community event in front of a large audience. Around 12 dancers aged 5 to 10 took part.

"Performing at Witney Music Festival was a highlight of the year for our dancers. For many of them it was their first time on a real festival stage, in front of a big home-town crowd, and the confidence they took away from it has been fantastic to see. Opportunities like this, right here in Witney, are exactly what young performers need, and the reaction from the audience made them feel like stars. We'd love to be back in 2027."

Jo, Flair Dance Studio

Mulberry Bush. The charity ran the Family Fun Arena, bringing its own volunteer team and helping make the festival welcoming for families.

"Running the Family Fun Arena at WMF 2026 was a fantastic opportunity for Mulberry Bush. Our volunteer team welcomed families all weekend and made sure the festival felt like a place for everyone, including young children. Just as valuable was the support of the WMF community, who rallied behind our Brand the Bus campaign and helped us reach the top ten. WMF brings Witney together in a way few other events do, and we're proud to be part of it."

Tania, Mulberry Bush

Bass Therapy. Bass Therapy, a specialist provider of accessible festival spaces, ran the festival's sensory and accessible area, a calm, supported space where neurodivergent and disabled visitors and their families could take a break and stay for the whole event. The area was free to use. It cost around £5,000, of which £3,000 was covered by a donation from a local resident and the rest by the festival.

Families who used the area told us what a difference it made:

"Wonderful to see a small local festival thinking of those with additional needs. My daughter was able to access the festival in a way that meant our whole family could enjoy the day, whilst catering to her needs if she was overwhelmed."

Sophy, Witney resident

What our audience says. Local residents, and regular festival-goers who travel to Witney from further afield, tell us the festival matters for more than the music:

"I've been going to Witney Music Festival for the last few years and it's been great. I really value it for catching up with long-lost friends. Often the big festivals get the limelight, but these smaller festivals do such an important job for community cohesion. I see people I haven't seen in years there. It's not just a party, it is a crucial part of the community. Keep it going."

Jonathan, Bristol

"Events like WMF are invaluable to our local community, bringing in new custom and keeping Witney thriving. I have been attending WMF for the last eight years, and WMF 2026 did not disappoint."

Kerry, Witney resident

Further testimonials from residents, visitors, artists and partners are included in Appendix A.

More than a weekend: three weeks of community events

In the build-up to WMF 2026, we ran a programme of **22 community events over 17 days (22 May to 7 June)**, followed by a comedy night on 11 June and the main festival on 12–13 June. In total, that is more than three weeks of live music and community activity across the town.

Twenty-one of the build-up events were hosted by **12 Witney venues**, mostly independent pubs and hospitality businesses: Part & Parcel, the Corn Exchange, the Griffin, the Blue Boar, the Hollybush, the Elm Tree, the Angel, Studio Se7en, Scarlet River Brewing Co., Fat Lil's, the Red Lion and the Eagle Tavern. We also took the festival "on tour" with a gig at the Plough in Bodicote, near Banbury, which doubled as promotion for the main festival and encouraged a new audience to make the trip to Witney in June.

- **Live music** from local and regional artists, headlined by former Inspiral Carpets frontman Tom Hingley, whose Sunday afternoon show at Part & Parcel drew more than 150 people, alongside soul, funk, folk, indie and acoustic acts
- **Open mic nights**, giving emerging local performers a stage
- **Community and participation events**: a quiz night and a comedy tribute night
- **Ticketed shows** at the Corn Exchange and Studio Se7en

All events were well attended, with an estimated **800 to 1,200 attendances** across the 22-event programme (770–1,150 at the 21 Witney events). The closing Sunday at the Eagle Tavern drew over 50 people, and most other events drew 30 to 50. Almost all events were free to attend.

4. Why Council Support Is More Important Than Ever

The festival sector is in crisis. According to the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF), 78 UK festivals were cancelled, postponed or closed in 2024, 43 in 2025 and a further 36 so far in 2026, including long-established events such as Boundary, Godiva and Splendour. The AIF cites rising costs and thin margins as organisers try to keep tickets affordable, and is calling on government for targeted support.

The loss was smaller than first feared. Our earlier report flagged a potential loss. Once final bar income and costs were confirmed, the provisional loss came in materially below that estimate. Costs were held within 5% of budget, so the loss came from lower income on the festival days, not overspending. Provisional figures are provided to the Committee separately, in confidence (section 11).

Audiences are buying later, or not at all. Advance ticket sales in 2026 came in close to forecast. The shortfall was almost entirely on the festival days, where on-the-day sales, online and at the gate, fell well short of forecast. The weather was dry and sunny, so this was not a weather problem. More than 60% of all festival tickets were bought in the final six days before and during the event. This late-buying pattern is now common across the sector and leaves organisers carrying the financial risk until the very last moment.

A crowded weekend. WMF 2026 took place on the opening weekend of the FIFA World Cup, alongside Download Festival and major outdoor concert series in London, and just a week before the Isle of Wight Festival. None of these is in direct competition with a community festival in Witney, but together they competed for the same leisure time and household budgets, and may well have affected how many people chose to come along on the day.

Costs have risen. Around 95% of our costs fall into three areas: artists and programme; site and operations, where power is the largest single item; and safety and welfare, including security and medical cover. All three have risen sharply in recent years.

Security requirements are increasing. Martyn's Law (the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025) will bring new legal duties for public events of WMF's size once it comes into force, no earlier than April 2027. That means additional planning, training and security costs from 2027 onwards.

These are fixed costs of running a safe, licensed event. They do not fall when fewer people buy tickets.

We keep the festival affordable. Tickets in 2026 were £15 for Friday and £25 for Saturday, plus booking fee, with under-14s admitted free, and most build-up events were free. Keeping WMF accessible to local families is central to its purpose, but it means ticket income alone cannot cover the cost of the event.

Accessibility costs money. Our sensory and accessible area, run by Bass Therapy, cost around £5,000. A public appeal brought in a £3,000 donation from a local resident, and the festival covered the remaining £2,000 itself. That appeal also earned the festival local media coverage, including an interview with BBC Oxford. Provision like this should not depend on last-minute generosity.

The festival is delivered by volunteers. WMF 2026 was delivered by a very small volunteer board, with two directors carrying most of the organisational load after changes to the board early in the planning cycle.

Stable Council support is what allows a community festival to survive where many commercial events have not.

Demand for 2027 is strong. Early-bird tickets for WMF 2027, our 21st year, went on sale immediately after the festival. 249 of 500 sold within three days.

5. Comparisons with Similar Festivals

Community music festivals across Oxfordshire and beyond typically depend on a mix of volunteer effort, sponsorship and local authority support. For example, BunkFest in Wallingford is a free, volunteer-run community festival that is listed and promoted by Wallingford Town Council, and reported attendances of around 30,000 across its 2022 weekend.

Neighbouring councils are also stepping in to support live music. In August 2026 Oxford City Council launched a £20,000 Grassroots Music Fund for 2026/27: two grants of £5,000 for music venues and around ten grants averaging £1,000 for musicians and promoters. Announcing it, Councillor James Taylor, the City Council's Events, Live Music & Nighttime Economy Champion, said: *"Oxford's live music industry is undergoing significant financial strain, and, without council intervention, will continue to shrink."*

Against that backdrop, £10,000 for a two-day festival selling around 2,900 tickets, with a three-week community programme across 12 local venues, is proportionate, as the Stronger Communities Committee itself noted in November 2025.

Compared with events of a similar scale, WMF delivers a two-day festival with national headliners, a three-week community programme and dedicated accessibility provision, on a modest budget.

6. Reputational Benefits for Witney

Where our audience came from

We analysed the billing postcodes of all 2,385 festival tickets sold online:

Where ticket buyers live	Tickets	% of tickets
Witney (OX28)	1,100	46.1%
Witney villages (OX29: Ducklington, Hailey, North Leigh, Eynsham, Leafield and others)	425	17.8%
Carterton, Bampton and Burford (OX18)	350	14.7%
Rest of Oxfordshire (other OX postcodes)	237	9.9%
Outside Oxfordshire	267	11.2%
No valid postcode	6	0.3%
Total	2,385	100%

The festival is first and foremost for Witney. Witney town accounts for 46% of tickets, and Witney with its surrounding villages for 64%. Adding Carterton, Bampton and Burford, 79% of tickets were bought in West Oxfordshire. Local residents were also the most committed: they were the most likely to buy weekend passes and to attend on the Friday night.

It also brings people into the town. More than half of all tickets (54%) were bought from outside Witney town, and more than a third (36%) from beyond Witney and its villages. 11% came from outside Oxfordshire, mainly from neighbouring Gloucestershire (including the Cotswolds and Forest of Dean), Swindon and Surrey, with others from London and further afield. Families were well represented: free under-14 tickets made up 15% of Witney tickets and around 20% of tickets from the Carterton area.

Figures are based on the billing postcode of the ticket buyer, which may not always be where every attendee lives. Gate sales are not included.

Profile and media

- Headline acts including **Fun Lovin' Criminals**, **Henge**, **BBC Radio 1's Charlie Tee** and internationally renowned techno DJ **Mark Broom**, putting Witney on the gig map for audiences well beyond Oxfordshire
- Local radio partnership with Get Radio
- A Facebook post about the anonymous accessibility donation received more than 500 likes, showing strong local goodwill
- **Social media reach:** between 1 May and 30 June 2026, the festival's Facebook page generated over 720,000 views, up 776% on the previous period, and more than 62,000 engagements, including 6,745 reactions, 646 comments and 689 shares. 62% of views came from people who did not already follow the festival, showing how far WMF's promotion reached beyond its existing audience. The line-up announcement alone was seen more than 116,000 times.
- **Media coverage:** our public appeal to fund the accessible stage and sensory area attracted local media attention, including an interview with BBC Oxford, putting Witney and its commitment to inclusive events in front of a county-wide audience
- **Website:** between 1 May and 30 June 2026, witneymusicfestival.com received over 40,000 page views across 18,500 visits, including 10,500 first-time visitors. Visitors spent an average of around 1 minute 30 seconds engaging with the site, more than double the typical figure for arts and culture festival

websites. The tickets page was viewed more than 9,500 times and the line-up page 5,800 times, and on the Friday of the festival alone nearly 1,900 people visited the site.

7. Volunteer Contribution

WMF could not happen without volunteers. In 2026, more than 30 named volunteers, plus partner teams such as Mulberry Bush, gave their time across:

- building the perimeter fencing and site (Tuesday to Friday)
- accreditation, the information point and stewarding during the festival
- toilet, bin and site checks
- early-morning litter picks on Saturday and Sunday
- site breakdown on Sunday and Monday
- promotion: distributing posters and flyers across the town, trading estates and surrounding villages, and a volunteer “ticket squad”

Estimated volunteer hours for WMF 2026:

Activity	Est. hours
Planning and organisation by the unpaid volunteer board and core team (January–June)	600
Build-up programme: organising and running 22 community events	200
Site build: fencing day plus Wednesday–Friday build	215
Festival days: stewarding, information point, toilet and site checks	180
Accreditation and volunteer coordination (Thursday–Sunday)	120
Partner teams (Mulberry Bush Family Fun Arena)	110
Promotion: posters, flyers and the “ticket squad”	100
Litter picks and breakdown (Sunday–Monday)	90
Total	c. 1,600

At the National Living Wage (£12.71 an hour from April 2026), this represents an in-kind contribution of around **£20,300**. None of the festival's directors are paid.

Community involvement in running the festival

Beyond event-day volunteering, the community helps shape the festival throughout the year:

- **Friends of WMF:** an open group of local supporters who help with ideas, fundraising contacts, promotion and recruiting volunteers. Friends met regularly in the run-up to the 2026 festival, and helped with flyering, social media and ticket sales.
- **Community Advisory Board:** an extension of Friends of WMF that gives community members a real voice at board meetings, so the festival is shaped by the people it serves. The board currently has six members, and we plan to expand it after its next meeting in October 2026.
- **Schools and college:** in 2026 we opened discussions with students and governors at Wood Green School about how young people could get involved in the festival. Time constraints meant this did not get off the ground for 2026, and we would rather say so than overstate it.

For 2027 we want to go much further. We plan a structured schools and college programme with Wood Green School, The Henry Box School and Abingdon & Witney College, giving students real, hands-on roles in delivering the festival, from production and stewarding to marketing and performance. We will share the full proposal with the Council.

8. Future Funding Risks

Without continued Council support, the festival would need to:

- increase ticket prices, making the festival less accessible to local families
- cut back the free community build-up programme and the trade it brings to local venues
- scale back accessibility provision, including the accessible and sensory area
- reduce opportunities for local performers, community groups and young people
- book fewer headline acts, weakening the festival's ability to attract visitors to Witney

In the current climate, where dozens of UK festivals are closing each year, reduced support would put the festival's future at serious risk.

9. Funding Request

The Council's partnership grant has been £10,000. Since that level was set, the cost of staging the festival has risen sharply, with higher costs for power, security, medical cover, infrastructure and artists, and new security duties under Martyn's Law to come. A grant held at £10,000 is worth less each year in real terms.

We are also doing our part. For 2027 we are reviewing every major cost line to find savings, and have strengthened the team with new volunteers who bring specialist expertise, including a senior figure from a large international consultancy firm, to support financial planning, sponsorship and governance.

To secure the long-term future of a festival that delivers substantial economic, cultural and community benefits to Witney, the Directors request that the Council **increase its partnership grant to £12,500 a year** to reflect rising costs, and **agree it for three years (2027–2029)**. A longer-term arrangement would allow earlier artist bookings, stronger sponsorship partnerships and earlier marketing to build advance ticket sales, directly reducing the on-the-day risk that affected 2026. It would also give the festival greater financial stability.

10. Noise Management and Control

We take the concerns of neighbouring residents seriously. The festival did not receive any complaints directly, either during the event or afterwards. We would welcome details of the complaints received by the Council, including dates, times and locations, so that we can investigate each one and respond properly.

Event control log. Our event control room kept a timed log of every incident, message and instruction across both days of the festival. It records no noise complaints or enquiries from residents or anyone else. It also confirms that music stopped on all stages by 23:00 on both Friday 12 and Saturday 13 June, in line with our licence, with advance warnings given to the stages ahead of the finish.

Vibration reported by a resident. Since our initial report to the Committee, we have been made aware of a video showing items vibrating in a nearby home during the festival. The complaint reached us via the Council after the event, so we could not respond at the time. We take it seriously and want to understand it.

Low-frequency (bass) sound travels further and passes through buildings more easily than the rest of the music, so even at normal levels the bass from a dance stage can make loose objects vibrate in nearby homes. The dance stage has been in the same position on The Leys for the last three festivals. A site plan and further detail are provided to the Committee separately, in confidence, to protect the privacy of nearby residents.

We would welcome an introduction to the resident via the Council so that we can visit, hear their account and, if they are willing, take readings at the property during a 2027 sound check. If the Council can tell us when the video was taken, we will match it to the running order.

Working with our neighbours. We were in direct contact with The Henry Box School, next to the festival site, in the run-up to the event. Sound checks and testing were scheduled around the school's exam timetable so that students sitting exams were not disturbed.

Our 2026 noise management plan. Noise was managed under a written plan prepared by our production manager as part of the festival's risk assessments. Its main controls were:

- all licensable activity to finish by 23:00
- a fixed sound level meter at the main stage mixing position, recording levels (LAeq) throughout the event
- monitoring of the dance stage by our sound supplier, Temple Audio, from the sound booth at the rear of the tent
- spot checks by our production manager with a roaming meter across the site and beyond it, including periodic readings 1 metre from the nearest noise-sensitive homes against a limit of 75 dB, with particular attention to low-frequency (bass) sound
- a complaints phone line (our event manager's number) and email address, published on our website before the event, alongside our social media channels, so residents could contact us with any concerns
- a commitment that, with the resident's permission, a member of staff would visit any address that complained to check levels, and that volume would be turned down immediately if levels were too high

The plan also protected audiences and crew, with at least 3 metres between speakers and the crowd, free ear protection on request, and hearing protection for anyone working in the stage pit.

Recorded levels. Readings were taken on both nights at the mixing positions and at the site boundary, and none exceeded the limits set in the plan. They were reported to the production manager during the event so that levels could be adjusted immediately if needed. We have asked our suppliers for any written record and will pass it to the Committee if one has been retained; for 2027, all readings will be kept in a single written monitoring record held by the festival.

Strengthening the plan for 2027. Building on the 2026 plan, we will:

- agree noise limits in advance with the Council's environmental health team, including a separate low-frequency (bass) limit, with monitoring at the nearest homes and a named noise management lead
- carry out more off-site monitoring near the closest homes, and keep readings from every stage in a single written monitoring record that is retained after the event
- keep the resident phone line answered throughout the event, logging every call with its time, location and the action taken
- write to all neighbouring homes before the event, giving dates, finish times and the resident phone number. Our 2026 plan included a letter to residents but it was not sent; for 2027 it will be a named action for the noise management lead, completed before the site build begins
- review the dance stage sound system with our sound supplier, Temple Audio, to direct bass away from residential properties, and review dance stage finish times
- ask that any complaint made to a councillor or officer during the event is passed straight to our noise lead, so it can be acted on while the music is playing
- send the Council a post-event noise report, including the full monitoring log and complaints record

11. Final Accounts and Governance

The 2026 festival was run through **WMF Entertainment Ltd**, the festival's trading company. Because they contain commercially sensitive information, our provisional 2026 income and expenditure figures are provided to the Committee separately, in confidence.

Final accounts. Final accounts for the 2026 event, prepared by independent accountants, will be provided to the Committee by the end of January 2027.

Governance

The Committee asked in November 2024 for information on governance, so we set out the current position here:

- **Two companies.** Witney Music Festival Limited, a company limited by guarantee, ran the festival up to and including 2025. From 2026 the festival trades through WMF Entertainment Ltd, which is VAT-registered and able to take investment.
- **Directors.** The festival is run by an unpaid volunteer board: Stuart Foster (founder), Eric Marshall and Sam Edney. Two directors stood down during 2026, and both departures have been filed at Companies House.
- **Accountants.** We are appointing independent accountants to prepare and file accounts for both companies and to review our records.
- **Related parties.** CETA Software, a company owned by director Sam Edney, was the 2026 headline sponsor. This and any other related-party transactions will be disclosed in full in the 2026 accounts.

Appendix A: Community testimonials

We asked partners, venues, artists and festival-goers to tell the Committee, in their own words, what WMF means to them. Their statements are reproduced below, lightly edited for length.

Venues and local businesses

"Hosting three nights of the WMF build-up at Studio Se7en brought brilliant crowds through our doors, from local bands to touring acts, and introduced plenty of people to the venue for the first time. Hosting one of the official festival after-parties then kept the celebration going in town long after the gates closed. We were also proud to support the main festival behind the scenes, supplying the backline for the main stage and green room space for the artists. WMF gives Witney's grassroots music scene a real focus each year, and venues like ours benefit directly. We'd love to be part of it again in 2027."

Darren, Director, Studio Se7en, Witney

"On Sunday 7th June, we had the great pleasure of hosting an event organised by the Witney Music Festival team, as part of their fortnight build-up to the main event on The Leys. Their show, featuring two original bands, Bonnie & The Bar Studs and Skint, not only brought lots of regular customers to the pub, but also some lovely folks from out of town. It was a great atmosphere, great music and a great addition to our calendar for the year. We're looking forward to the 2027 edition."

Paul, The Eagle Tavern, Witney

Community partners

"We were delighted to run the sensory and accessible area at Witney Music Festival 2026. For many neurodivergent and disabled people, and their families, a busy festival can feel off-limits. Having a calm, supported space on site meant people could take a break, regulate and then get back to enjoying the music, rather than having to leave or not come at all. It was wonderful to see families who wouldn't normally attend a festival having a great day out. Thanks to the generosity of local supporters, this provision was free to use, and we'd love to see it become a permanent part of WMF."

Kyley, Bass Therapy

Artists

"The festival brings people together from all different ages and backgrounds and gives everyone the chance to enjoy live music right here in Witney. As an artist myself, I know how important opportunities like this can be. Having a local festival where musicians can perform in front of a bigger audience can make a real difference, particularly for new and developing artists. It also brings people into Witney who spend money in local pubs, restaurants, shops and other businesses, and helps put Witney on the map as a town that supports music, culture and local talent."

Jamie, local artist, Witney, and member of our Community Advisory Board

Audience and residents

"WMF is absolutely an invaluable cultural asset to Witney. It succeeds in bringing people together, strengthening community connections and generating support for an important cause, with Witney's incredible and diverse music scene at its heart. Its recent and ongoing success demonstrates both its positive local impact and its potential to reach even more people. With continued funding, WMF can build on this strong foundation, extend its contribution to the town, and continue to thrive and grow for years to come, something I would love to see."

Andy, Hailey, WMF volunteer and member of our Community Advisory Board

"Witney Music Festival is an asset to our town. The event supports local talent as well as bringing in bigger names, which in turn brings footfall not only to the festival but to many local venues, restaurants, pubs and shops. It's an important part of Witney's event calendar that means a lot to many people. A huge effort goes into organising the festival every year, heavily supported by an army of volunteers. The music offering is diverse; there is something for everyone. With continued support and funding, WMF will only continue to grow, showcasing what a fabulous event can be provided for our community, for hopefully many years to come."

Abi, Witney resident and member of our Community Advisory Board

"We had such a great time at Witney Music Festival with our family. I particularly love the mix of music on offer, from electronic music to the live bands; there really is something for everyone. It's wonderful to have something like this for the local community, and we look forward to the next one!"

Bill, Surrey

"I absolutely loved Witney Music Festival. I live in London, so it was brilliant to discover such a fantastic festival in a small town. There was such a great atmosphere, with an amazing mix of music and something for everyone. What really stood out to me was how much the festival brings people together and creates such a strong sense of community. It feels like a real asset to Witney, showcasing great music while bringing people into the town and supporting the local area. It's impressive to see a festival of this scale and quality in a small town, and I'd love to see it continue to grow and thrive for years to come."

Darren, London (formerly of Witney)

"I've been a regular attendee as a local resident for years, but joining the Friends of WMF to help spread the word in 2026 was new for me. Seeing the dedication, money, time and effort poured into this event made me appreciate it more than ever. WMF is simply brilliant for our town: it bridges generations and gets everyone of all ages together enjoying great music. Long may it continue, and thank you to the organisers and volunteers for making our town so vibrant and fun!"

Elaine, Witney resident and Friends of WMF member

"Witney Music Festival is important to the Witney community because it brings people together. Friends who haven't seen each other in ages travel back to reconnect, and families come together too. It creates long-lasting memories that people will look back on one day as the good old days. It also helps people make new friends, so no one has to feel isolated or alone. With work and everything else going on in people's lives, it's easy to lose touch, and WMF gives everyone a reason to come out with their neighbours, friends and family and celebrate together. You never know who you'll bump into. Without it, people would stay indoors and not connect as much. That's why WMF is so important to Witney."

Ant, WMF volunteer

"WMF is, for me, easily the highlight of the Witney calendar. It brings together people of all ages, and the atmosphere is always fantastic. The variety of music is incredible, from country to drum & bass, so there really is something for everyone. We're extremely lucky to have such an amazing music event in our little town. I can't think of another small town that puts on such a grand, well-organised event."

Alex, photographer, Witney