Cardiff Council to Close Barrage to Residents and Visitors

Monday 5 February, 2024

Cardiff Council's recent approval of hosting Livenation concerts at Alexandra Head during the busiest week of the year has sparked widespread concern among local residents and businesses. The decision, impacting the last week of August, will see the closure of the barrage not only on concert days but also during setup, disrupting the daily routines of residents and hindering the usual flow of visitors to the area contradicting the council's strategy to encourage walking and cycling.

In 2023, the concerts were held in the first week of September after the school holidays allowing residents and visitors to enjoy the picturesque surroundings without disruption. However, the 2024 decision to close the barrage in August and from midday for security reasons, even though the concerts start at 9 pm, has raised eyebrows and ignited a wave of frustration among the local community.

While acknowledging the positive impact of hosting concerts, local businesses express their concern over the timing of the events. The busiest week in Cardiff Bay traditionally enjoys a surge in visitors due to favourable weather conditions, making it unnecessary to introduce additional events during this period. Instead, local businesses are urging the Council to consider scheduling such events involving closing the barrage in the shoulder months of March, September, and October, when the potential economic benefits can be maximised without disrupting the peak summer season.

The decision to close the barrage not only affects the residents and visitors seeking leisure and exercise opportunities but also poses a significant challenge to local businesses that rely on the regular influx of customers during the summer months. Concerns have been raised about the impact on restaurants and hotels, with the fear that the usual summer clientele will be diverted to concert attendees, ultimately leading to a detrimental effect on revenue.

Martyn Driscoll of Cardiff Cruises remarked, "This is a full-on ball to the face made sweeter by an own goal. People of Cardiff should be more outraged about this and not allow the concerts to take place on these dates, it's completely hypocritical from Cardiff Council who say they want to encourage walking and cycling and then close the only public road in the city not accessed by traffic. Small businesses, striving to make a living, are often taken for granted and pushed aside, I was prepared to accept the drop in revenue caused by the concerts in September knowing it benefits other businesses around me, but this changes everything, we will lose thousands of pounds from loss of trade. This is plain selfish greed from Livenation and Cardiff Council have enabled them, you wouldn't close Barry Island beach which is a public space and the Barrage should be no different! How can the council bang on about having no money when their own revenue producing car parks will be empty at the height of summer? How can they justify their strategy to get residents walking and cycling and issuing parking zones throughout the city yet close the barrage on the days when we are most likely to use it? ”

Attempts to address these concerns with the Council have yielded a response indicating collaboration with event promoters and local businesses to minimise disruption and maximise economic benefits. However, local business owners argue that the proposed solution, represented by a simple "businesses open as usual" sign, is inadequate and fails to address the broader issues at hand.

The discontent among the local community is reminiscent of similar instances, such as the scheduling conflicts during Ironman in Tenby and clashes between the game between Cardiff Rugby V Scarlets on the same day as Wales V Barbarians. The recurring theme of neglecting small businesses during crucial times is a cause for concern, and the affected parties are calling for a reconsideration of the decision and a more inclusive approach in planning future events.

Local businesses are mobilising efforts to voice their concerns and seek a resolution that supports both the cultural vibrancy of the area and the economic sustainability of small enterprises.

For further information, please contact:

Martyn Driscoll

Managing Director

Cardiff Cruises

Info@cardiffcruises.co.uk

Media:



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Scan Me:

Company Contact:

Cardiff Cruises Ltd

T. 0845 489 6969
E. Info@cardiffcruises.co.uk
W. https://Cardiffcruises.co.uk

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