



Westminster Busking and Street Entertainment Policy Consultation 2020

Westminster council is consulting on their proposed Busking and Street Entertainment Policy. **The closing date for responses is Sunday 1st November.** The full consultation document is available at this [link](#).

It is important that West End residents respond to the consultation if they are concerned, as well as businesses who can be affected by busking nearby. Street performer organisations have hundreds of their members and friends responding to oppose any regulation, but this could give a distorted view of what everyone thinks if it is not balanced by responses from the local community.

The form is simple to complete (it has only 7 questions, all of which are multiple choice), and is at the 'online questionnaire' link on [this page](#). We have given the CGCA's proposed answers below.

The view of the Covent Garden Community Association (CGCA) is that Street Entertainment - which is not limited to busking - is a vital part of the street scene in the West End, but that it needs to be done without causing a nuisance to residents, businesses and visitors. Westminster's proposed approach (which we have summarised below) tries to strike an appropriate balance between:

- residents and businesses who want to live and work without annoyance, and
- street entertainers and their audiences who wish to be able to perform in the West End.

We suggest that people review either our summary (below) or the full policy and complete the Consultation form to give their views.

Summary of Westminster council Proposed Policy

1. Everywhere in Westminster, people doing street entertainment (which includes busking, conjuring, acrobatics etc) need to abide by a code of conduct.
2. The area South of the Euston Road (which includes Covent Garden) is a Regulated Area. In this area street entertainment will require a Street Entertainment Licence which will cost £20 annually.
3. The hours are restricted to **10am to 9pm**.
4. There is a set of licence conditions which includes a requirement not to cause a nuisance or allow the performance or its audience to cause an obstruction.
5. Within the area Regulated Area street entertainment is restricted to certain pitches, and amplification and loud instruments such as drums, brass etc will only be allowed in some of these. There are 25 pitches in total. Within Covent Garden there would be 5 pitches to start with:
 - 3 on James Street
 - 1 in front of the Portico of St. Pauls' Church
 - 1 on the North side of the Market Building

Only the one in front of the church portico will allow amplified sound.

6. Enforcement for breaches can be carried out by the Police or Council Officers who, in the Regulated Areas, have power to remove equipment, prosecute for an offence or request removal of the Licence.

7. The policy only applies in areas controlled by Westminster council. In areas under private ownership, such as the Covent Garden Market Buildings, the rules are decided by the landowner.

The CGCA's view is that, whilst no Policy is perfect, this one strikes a reasonable balance between the street entertainers and the needs of residents and workers. Westminster has committed to keep it under review and, if the balance is wrong, then it can be changed.

We believe that the main thing that could be changed is that the number of official pitches could be increased a bit. The number of informal pitches that currently exist is much higher than the number of official pitches under the Policy, and buskers will have to stop using the informal ones. However, we would like the Policy to be implemented as it is rather than waiting any longer, because local people have been pressing for action for a long time. Actual pitches can be reviewed as COVID restrictions are eased.

CGCA's Consultation Response

The CGCA Licensing Committee has sought the views of a number of residents and has concluded that our response to the consultation questions should be as follows:

No.	Question	CGCA Response
4	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the area and streets where we are proposing to regulate busking and street entertainment?	Strongly Agree
5	If you disagree with the proposed regulated area, please tell us why:	No response
6	Within the regulated area the Council wants to introduce designated busking and street entertainment pitches in locations where it may be appropriate to do so. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the locations of the pitches?	Strongly Agree
7	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the standard licence conditions?	Strongly Agree
8	To what extent do you agree or disagree with the licence application process?	Strongly Agree
9	To what extent do you agree with the proposed £20 licence fee for buskers?	Strongly Agree
10	Do you have any final comments that have not been covered by the consultation questions that you would like us to consider?	No response

If you think that we should take a different position please let us know. You will need, of course, to form your own view on the Consultation.

If you have any questions on this summary please email CGCA at licencing@coventgarden.org.uk.

If you have any questions on the overall Policy please email Westminster at streetentertainment@westminster.gov.uk