

The commercial future of London is intrinsically linked to it's street performers

The Governor of Louisiana and New Orleans wanted to ban street buskers in the City because it upset the wealthy people living in the centre. After consideration the City decided it needed the money from tourists more than it needed the Governor. So instead of banning the buskers the City increased the number of buskers in order to bring in and entertain more tourists, this would make the City more money..... Then they got rid of the Governor.

Written by John Smith stage name Guy Stewart 16-1-2024

I conducted and paid for the only study of busking noise complaints in London in 2022, the outcome of which is referenced in this document.

Buskers are noisy - and that's a good thing

There is only one legal metric of noise level. That is the decibel db level. Normally measured at 50 feet as an average over time, normally one minute.

Background noise in London is usually around 65 - 75 db. For a street performer to perform in the street effectively above that requires a performance around 75-85 db at 50 feet. This is in fact not that loud.

Tourists like a noisy exciting atmosphere and need it to help them spend money. Buskers generate a noisy exciting atmosphere where tourists are entertained for free and encouraged to spend their money.

So why is WCC trying to stop the London buskers from creating an atmosphere to encourage more tourists?

The answer is as follows.

I spent 6 months conducting a study of noise complaints and measuring the db levels of buskers on Bankside London later presented to The City of London.

The outcome was as follows

Most of the noise complaints against buskers on Bankside London, where my study was conducted beside the Tate Modern were initiated by white, upper middle class property owners. I proved they gamed the system by managing a constant barrage of complaints over 2 years knowing that no complaint ever had to be quantified, nothing ever had to be proved and the main driver of the complaints were the perceived increase in property values. It was proved that every single complaint was worthless and had absolutely no value except in

damaging hospitality and tourist businesses, decreasing footfall and degrading the opportunities for hospitality sector business opportunities. The only value in removing the buskers is the increase in property values that are kept in the hands of a very few. The wider population suffer a loss in revenue to local Government that results in a loss of services due to the slow collapse of hospitality tourist sector jobs and local incomes.

I investigated all the busker related noise complaints from the complainants own residential location and proved that in fact not a single complaint was merited. In fact the opposite was proven. I proved that every single noise generated on Bankside from a radio in a coffee shop to a Thames party boat to a laughing child or aircraft generated more noise when recorded at the residential property of the complainant, then any busker ever did. I proved that indeed for the noise level to be as intrusive as some residence had suggested a busker would have to have a pa system close to the size of Glastonbury, around 110db. We did all the calculations in real time.

I proved that there is **no noise problem** on Bankside caused by buskers. There is a problem of an over abundance of wealthy property developers lawyers and Barristers gaming a system that will if allowed to continue turn London as a tourist destination into a quite suburb that no tourist will want to visit. By that time it will be too late, the property owners will have taken their gains and left.

Why is this happening?

As soon as WCC allow a business to be converted to a private residence the area around that residence becomes subject to various laws protecting the rights of the resident to a peaceful life. If the property is in the middle of the West End it matters not because all the businesses surrounding the new residential property will now take second place to the needs of a single resident. Unfortunately WCC don't use zoning to solve this problem so there are no exceptions. All the businesses will have to go or be made commercially non-viable in order to satisfy the needs of the property owner to levitate the property value.

Just as on Bankside, WCC have on not a single occasion asked a complainant to record the db level or provide evidence of any kind. In no other situation can a handful of wealthy property owners dictate to the 7 million Londoners, tourist and hospitality business owners what happens to the prosperity of their City, except in London. WCC have given up governing in favour of acquiescing to a couple of lawyers in Covent Garden.

Buskers are just the first line to be knocked down. Next is the clubs and bars, then the restaurants and markets, then the tourists start to go. Lower footfall means fewer businesses and the steady decline in London as a tourist destination. For the first time this year I heard tourists say "Why is London closed by 8,30, its so quiet."

Street performers are really good for tourist business. It's a fact.

Retailers in London spends millions of pounds trying to get people to stop outside their shop. It is often the biggest part of any budget.

The main function of a street performer is to get people to stop and watch. Every study ever performed states that when people stop in a street, they spend more money. They buy a coffee, they eat look in shop windows and spend more money. Buskers are free. Why would WCC want to get rid of the very thing that gets people to spend money. Its just odd behaviour for a City Council that runs one of the biggest tourist destinations in the world to do.

A few years ago In New Orleans the rich and powerful Governor tried to ban all the Buskers. Allegedly he and a number of his mates owned some property in the centre of town and wanted to sell. Everyone got caught up in the game of having a go at musicians. At the last minute someone who actually understood where the city got its income from pointed out the real value of street entertainers. Every picture video or poster inviting tourists to the City had music entertainment and street Jazz in the promotion. What resulted was an ordinance that strengthened the rights of street performers. Db levels were introduced so if anyone wanted to complain they took a db level reading at their place of residence, filmed it, logged it and action was taken. This was done because the City needed the money that the street performers generated. WCC does not have a busker problem. WCC has a lack of db meter welding properly trained officer problem. A db meter costs £30. It worked for New Orleans because the truth is that ***New Orleans needed the money more than they needed the Governor.***

Amsterdam has in all but one location banned busking. They are actively reducing tourists into the City. Not allowing Cheese shops to open in favour of local food shops. Already there is a reduction in footfall, less money is coming into Amsterdam. Fewer businesses are opening, less income is entering the ecosystem. Just as in London the hospitality sector is now starting to flounder. Amsterdam as a business is failing. If Amsterdam were on the stock market the CEO would be fired for deliberately running down the business. When the tourists with real spending power have gone, when the Cheese shops close the property developers will be enjoying their drinks on their sunny islands wondering how an entire City was so easily taken advantage of. The act of getting rid of street entertainers is an act of self harm and is a symptom of a city in commercial managed decline.

London needs more street performers

The tourist and hospitality sector in London is in real trouble. WCC should be spending their time doing everything in their power to entice as many people as possible to London to spend their money on the businesses in town. The street entertainers are a real asset that needs to be managed better to benefit the businesses as part the tourist driven commercial ecosystem. Hospitality sector wages are dropping because not enough tourists are being brought into London and kept entertained by more street performers.

For London to prosper commercially it needs more street entertainers not fewer. It needs more noise, more action, more excitement, more of anything that brings in people and keeps them entertained and spending. That's business.

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