

Rhythms of the World
Cancellation of main event on 11th August
Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why was the event planned for the Town Centre?

We held a public meeting in July 2017. The majority of the people who attended wanted the event back in the town centre. This was echoed by feedback via social media. From the outset, it was planned that it would be a lot smaller than previous town centre events with generally local acts and a lot fewer stages. All the performances would have finished by 8.00pm.

2. Why apply for a Premises Licence?

When we started consulting with NHDC, they made it clear that this was the only suitable licence for what we had planned. Previous ROTW events in the town were subject to a Temporary Event Notice (TEN), a far less complex application. We were not allowed to apply for a TEN on this occasion. A Premises Licence applies to events of 500 people or more.

3. Who attended the Hearing from ROTW?

Three Trustees and the Head of the Event Group attended the Hearing, all taking annual leave in order to do so. The charity is entirely run and managed by volunteers.

4. Why were there no Hitchin councillors on the Licencing and Appeals Sub-Committee?

The make-up of this committee is subject to local authority rules and is outside our control.

5. Why did you not apply for more than one location (such as Bancroft or Butts Close)?

Our main objective was to hold a free event in the town centre. Putting in a premises licence application requires an enormous amount of effort as well as significant cost. We had considered both Bancroft & Butts Close in the early stages of planning but had not taken those forward because of various logistical and funding constraints.

6. There were many objections from NHDC and Hertfordshire Constabulary outlined in the Licencing Committee Documents. Why weren't these addressed?

The objections in the responses from NHDC Environmental Health and Herts Constabulary followed our initial application in May 2018. At that stage, the event Health and Safety Plan was still being developed. After regular consultation with NHDC and Hertfordshire Constabulary during June & early July, the majority of their objections were met by the time of the Hearing on 18 July 2018. Those responses were acknowledged at the Licence Hearing. We believe that we put in a very robust and detailed application with an emphasis on public safety, welfare, waste management and noise control.

7. Was the licence approved?

Yes the Licence was approved, but it was very heavily conditioned. The main condition was that it was to be held in the churchyard only. We did not feel that we could put on an event of any calibre in such a restricted space. Our planned event was to be held on four stages in different locations around the town centre where attendees could dip in and out of various activities and entertainments and not congregate in one location. Additionally, the imposed conditions meant entry to the event was restricted to over 18s unless they were accompanied by someone over 21 and then in groups of no more than three.

The decision notice is published: <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s2836/Decision%20Notice%20-%20Rhythms%20of%20the%20World.pdf>

8. Why not hold the event just at St Mary's Church?

The ROTW Trustees and Event Committee had previously agreed that it would not be suitable to hold a main festival event solely within St Mary's Church grounds. The St. Mary's stage areas were always a fantastic place to rest tired feet, (& tired children), chill out and enjoy the music & conversation. For this reason, this option did not form part of our event plan or our Premises Licence application. We agreed with the opinion of Canon Michael Roden when making this decision.

9. Will you appeal the decision?

There is the ability to challenge the decision in a magistrate's court, but we do not have the time or resources to do this.

10. Did you have the budget to run the event?

Yes we had a very realistic budget. This was financed from sponsorship from local businesses, the NHDC Hitchin Area Committee, donations and income from stalls. Charity reserves underpinned the budgeted spend and we had included a contingency sum.

11. How much were you paying the bands?

All the bands had agreed to perform for free.

12. It was reported in the Comet that had the Licensing Committee known that ROTW would not accept a licence solely for the Churchyard, then they may have made a different decision. What is your view on that?

We had submitted the application for the Market Place and High Street as well as the Churchyard and Cloisters. This compromise was not put to us during the Hearing by the councillors themselves. We were not given the opportunity to suggest any deviation from the premises area defined on our application and were not aware that this type of negotiation is permitted at a Hearing. We also believed that presenting the Committee with an 'all-or-nothing' choice would not be helpful.

13. Why did you start to arrange the event before you had a licence?

As with a lot of event applications, the process can be very slow. If we had not started to make the arrangements before we had the Hearing then we would not have had enough time to arrange the event.

14. I understand that ROTW will still be running an event on 11th August?

We are currently in discussion with various venues who have offered to hold events, under their own licences, to support the Charity.

15. Will you be looking to put on a large event in 2019?

At this stage we are unsure. We need to consider possible options when we re-convene in the autumn.

16. Will you close or re-brand ROTW?

There is no current intention to do so. It is clear that any event planning has to cope with 'legacy' issues of pre-2008 and the perception of what the festival is and what impact it has. We will have to take that into account if we consider closing or re-branding the Charity.