



Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

Oral evidence: The future of UK music festivals, HC 886

Tuesday 16 March 2021

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Members present: Julian Knight (Chair); Kevin Brennan; Steve Brine; Clive Efford; Damian Hinds; John Nicolson; Giles Watling; Mrs Heather Wheeler.

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Witnesses

I: Robert Del Naja, Massive Attack; and Professor Carly McLachlan, Professor of Climate and Energy Policy, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research.

II: Assistant Chief Constable Justin Bibby, Staffordshire Police; Deputy Chief Constable Jason Harwin, National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Drugs; and Professor Fiona Measham, Director, The Loop.



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Robert Del Naja and Professor Carly McLachlan.

Q182 **Chair:** This is the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee and our latest hearing into the UK music festival sector. Today we are joined by two panels. In the first panel we have Professor Carly McLachlan, Professor of Climate and Energy Policy, Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, and Robert Del Naja from Massive Attack. In the second panel we have Professor Fiona Measham, Director at The Loop, Deputy Chief Constable Jason Harwin, National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Drugs, and Assistant Chief Constable Justin Bibby, Staffordshire Police. Thank you all for joining us today.

Before we commence, I will ask the Committee if there are any interests.

Kevin Brennan: I am a member of the Musicians' Union and have received support at election time from the Musicians' Union.

Chair: Is there anyone else? No. Our first questions will come from Kevin Brennan.

Q183 **Kevin Brennan:** Good morning to our witnesses and welcome. Professor McLachlan, I will ask you first. Your evidence strongly argues that the festival sector is not doing enough to mitigate its environmental impacts. What is preventing the industry from taking more meaningful action to address the problem up until now?

Professor McLachlan: The reason we think that not enough action is happening is that although there has been a pledge to reduce emissions by 50% by 2025, in the five years between making that pledge in 2015 and now, emissions from the sector have gone up. Why isn't there meaningful action? I think it is very similar to what we see across many sectors. There is a need for a clear policy and regulatory framework that means that people in the sector know that they have to invest and plan for this and deliver on it: a year-on-year reduction, a monitoring of that and adjustments if the pathway that has been planned is not being followed. I think it is about structure, monitoring and ongoing challenge to the way that things are done. That is not to say that there is not a lot of enthusiasm for and commitment to this but the data speaks for itself that the emissions have gone up in the last five years.

Q184 **Kevin Brennan:** Perhaps you could have a go at this one, Robert. Is there something inherently unenvironmental about music festivals that means that despite the very strong views of many of the people who attend them and play at them about the need to do something about climate change, the environment and so on, actually music festivals as we know them are some of the worst polluting type of activities you could come across?

Robert Del Naja: That is a big question. I can only speak from the point of view of an artist who has enjoyed living in a fossil fuel economy for the last eight years in the northern hemisphere and expressed some of my



frustrations within my own industry. When we set out to make this report with Tyndall we did not set out to make a report on the festival industry. We wanted to understand our own emissions as a band because we are very aware of the carbon activity and the carbon-negative production when we are touring. We went to see Tyndall on a recommendation because we had spent years offsetting our own behaviour by planting trees in different schemes and we felt that it was time to do something a little bit more fundamental.

It has been frustrating to experience the lack of meaningful activity within our sector and as an activist I have also felt pretty livid about it. The industry seems to have been locked in a cycle of green pledges, carbon calculations, while emission rates have remained really high. Paradoxically, as an artist, even though we drive ticket sales, we have had very little control over the organisation of events and festivals and even the way venues organise themselves over power and how audiences are expected to travel to and from venues and festival sites. It has become something of an embarrassment that the artist wears the climate T-shirt, waves the placard and makes declarations from the stage while simultaneously operating in a high-carbon, high-polluting sector, and that is not really something we feel comfortable about.

We have become the messengers but after 30 years of climate science, the Paris accord, the IPCC 1.5 report, countless documentaries, Greta Thunberg, Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, we feel the public has got the message and now is the time for action and no more pledges. We are very aware of the toxicity of our industry but we also feel that cleaning it up at a sustainable, economic level is not mutually exclusive.

Q185 Kevin Brennan: Thank you. Professor McLachlan, I know you are preparing a report around this that is not out yet, so I don't expect you to tell us all of its findings, although feel free to do so if you want to. If the live music sector really was to take this issue seriously, what are the sorts of things that you think it would do?

Professor McLachlan: I think the primary thing is it is a mindset change. This is true across all sectors really. It is thinking about every single thing that you do: how could that be done more sustainably? The sense that we have always done it like this or it is very difficult is not an okay answer. There has to be a pathway to getting to really low emissions and then if there are some emissions you cannot get rid of, there is no technical solution for that, look at the negative emissions and offset things. But it is really focusing on every single action.

It may seem a bit flippant to say it is thinking about everything but it has to be core to what you are trying to achieve because if you allow a comparison with a kind of business as usual, we won't meet our carbon targets, it is always going to be quite difficult for the transformation option to win through. What you need to be picking between is different options for transformation. We are going to get to zero carbon, how are we going to do it, has to be the question rather than what could we do



that is a bit of a tweak to how we do things already to knock the emissions down a little bit. It is having the vision of genuinely sustainable live music and festivals.

Q186 **Kevin Brennan:** When Jarvis Cocker said, “Is this the way the future is really supposed to feel or just 20,000 people standing in a field?” if you have 20,000 people standing in a field, it is not just that. You have to get them to that field, don’t you? The way they get there is largely by car, isn’t it? How on earth do you overcome that issue and never get to zero carbon, just to challenge you on that point?

Professor McLachlan: I do want to talk about audience travel, but let’s talk, first of all, about the things very directly in the control of the people putting on events. That is about how much energy they consume and the pattern of that energy, shaving the peak of the energy, and where they get it from. In our submission, we talked about because the decarbonisation of the grid has been such a success story in the UK, if you can connect to the grid that is a really good way of decarbonising. If you are going to do it in some other way you need to be trying to track the level of carbon intensity per kilowatt hour that we will be getting out of the grid.

Grid connection is really important or a solution that is as ambitious that is not grid connected. That could be about long-term planning, the demand and the layout of the site so that you are making the most of where you are, grid connected where you are shaving the peak so that the demand off the grid is not as high at peak moments.

There are also issues of the travel of crew and artists. I think this is a bit of a blind spot in the sector. The reports about festival decarbonisation say that. You have to look at that as well: how many people are travelling, how are they travelling?

Kevin Brennan: No more Shirley Bassey arriving at Glastonbury in a helicopter, that sort of thing?

Professor McLachlan: You have to take ownership of the emissions because that is what gives you credibility, in my view, to then work with the audience to reduce their emissions. You have to make it that the low-carbon option is the most fun, easiest way to get there—so there is the incentive side of it—and you make it difficult for all but people who have particular access requirements to come in the other modes. There will, of course, be decarbonisation of private vehicles over time, as we shift to electric vehicles, but that is not going to come fast enough for the kind of transformation that we are talking about here.

It is about shifting people on to public transport. How can organisers take a more active role in working with local authorities as transport providers to create transport options for people that are really high value, incredibly convenient and reliable? One of the things I think it is



interesting to explore in the festival sector is how you make it fun as well, how you make that part of the experience in a positive way.

Q187 **Kevin Brennan:** Thank you. Robert, a number of different bands have taken different approaches. Coldplay said they won't tour unless it is carbon neutral. How useful is that kind of approach? What role do you think artists have to play in the decarbonisation of live events?

Robert Del Naja: There are two ways of looking at it. To be honest, one band's unilateral action is not going to change the look of the whole problem here at all, so one band not touring does not change a thing. We have recently toured by train, which was an interesting experience. We managed to reduce our carbon over that tour by something like 45%, 50%, just in the band transportation alone and taking other measures in the rider section of the organisation of our tour.

Ultimately we are talking about a sector that has been really hit hard. You could arguably say that we are a product of the festival like a culture sector and we need to look at these things as year on year they are very small adjustments. We are not talking about having to cancel anything. Bands don't need to cancel tours and festivals don't need to cancel festivals. There is a way of bringing emissions down year on year by 7.6%, which is well within the recommendations by the UN, without facing prohibition and cancellations, and that goes for the bands and the organisers of the festival.

There are lots of different solutions across transportation where you can charter trains and buses and even get tents and luggage to a festival in the right way, and in the same way bands can take the train themselves. There are lots of different solutions for energy and powering the festival. Some of the formulas we are looking at for our Liverpool project, which we can talk about later, we can go into some of the various solutions around—

Q188 **Kevin Brennan:** Yes, I think people are going to ask you about the Liverpool show later, Robert, so I don't want to stray on to other people's territory.

Before I finish I will ask you briefly about something else while we have got you here. There is an article in today's *Guardian* about a potential 10-point plan to try to resolve the issue of touring in Europe and musicians playing in Europe post-Brexit. Do you have anything to say or any comment or ideas about what has happened post-Brexit for the ability of bands and others to continue touring in European Union countries?

Robert Del Naja: I wasn't really planning to answer that, but there is a lot of conversation. You guys have already interviewed about that and also about the problems artists face with their revenues from the digital streaming platforms with major labels. There has been a paradigm shift in the way artists can make income for the industry; whereas we used to tour to promote a record, it is the opposite now. Music comes out and it promotes the tour, effectively, so you have seen an exponential rise in



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bands touring and festival products and the festival industrial complex has grown exponentially over the last 10 years, which means there is a lot of moving parts now. There are a lot more crews moving, more gear moving, more bands and artists moving.

Brexit has made it very difficult and some of the conversations we are having around movement—I won't get into the visa area because it is well out of my depth. I have no power to change that and most artists have made their feelings very well known there. But I think there is a different way in which we can approach carrying all that gear around with us in tour buses, passing like ships in the night, while maybe we hire the gear directly from the venues and the venues hire from the suppliers, so we are using a lot of the same gear in the supply chain. Let's face it, a lot of it is the same equipment. There is definitely a way that we can reduce the amount of gear that is travelling by haulage across Europe.

Kevin Brennan: That might be happening anyway with what we hear from the hauliers who are mainly based in the UK about what is happening to their businesses as a result of it, but I won't press the point further since that is not the main focus of today's inquiry.

Q189 **Chair:** Professor McLachlan, you mentioned right at the start of your first answer that emissions from festivals have gone up in the past five years. Is this due to what Robert has described as the festival industrial complex? What are the reasons for that increase in the past five years?

Professor McLachlan: I am citing "The Show Must Go On" report for that figure and its explanation is an increase in audience numbers. Yes, it is what Rob mentioned, that although there is a relative improvement in measures like carbon per audience member per day, from a climate change perspective relative measures are just not where it is at. It is about absolute carbon emissions. I would like to see the sector make a commitment in absolute terms to reduce its carbon emissions.

Q190 **Chair:** You said the relative numbers had gone down. How much have they gone down by?

Professor McLachlan: It is about 23% according to that report, but that is only looking at energy, waste and water on the site. As I mentioned before, there is less certainty about the audience travel but also band and crew travel, so you are not looking at the full picture. There is a need to understand that more, but we can safely say that more carbon is not being captured in a complete way although there might be particular events that capture it.

Q191 **Chair:** Do we still have those disposable tents? I can remember the pictures from a few years ago after a festival with the fields of disposable tents. It seemed like an absolute abhorrent waste.

Professor McLachlan: I can only say anything about that as a festivalgoer. I know the last time Glastonbury was happening there was a lot of work to try to stop people abandoning tents and to take a more



circular economy type approach to taking your tent home and bringing it back the next time, but I don't have any particular figures on the waste from tents.

Q192 **Chair:** There was a lot of talk about donating to the homeless and so on. It was one of those things where you wondered whether or not there was a breakdown between the promise and the actual delivery, if you see what I mean. I wonder whether or not there has been any real progress with tents, not just at Glastonbury but more generally for other festivals as well.

Professor McLachlan: I think these elements can be very symbolically important as well. If it is a coalition of the audience, the organisers and the artists all coming together to deliver change, if you can have a very convincing narrative on that as an event and bring your audience with you, that feels like a positive way to go. But I think you have to maintain the credibility by genuinely reducing the emissions directly under the control of the event before enthusiastically encouraging audience members to do anything in particular to reduce their carbon footprint.

Q193 **Chair:** It is not gestures, effectively. It is about actual action rather than gestures in that respect.

Professor McLachlan: Every sector has taken far too long to decarbonise in general and there is no time for gestures. There is time for immediate, urgent, significant emissions reductions.

Q194 **Steve Brine:** Good morning, Robert and Carly. We are talking about greening of our festival sector and all those efforts this morning as part of a wider inquiry into festivals. The reason we wanted to do this inquiry is because we believe festivals are an important industry in this country and there is a lot of employment around them and they are part of remember that word "fun". But all this discussion about greening of festivals has been going on for a long time, as you rightly said. Bluntly, given that a lot of festivals right now are deciding whether or not they can survive, isn't this a bit first world?

Robert Del Naja: These questions about the industry making progress in its transition to a better carbon position would have been a bit more difficult a few weeks ago, but since we submitted the evidence I have got some notes here that the industry has convened a new umbrella group called LIVE that has sustainability as a key focus, which we are really excited about, obviously. We understand the group is planning a sector-wide charter to reduce emissions resulting from live music events and it is also contributing to the Tyndall road map. We hope that the carbonisation road map that Tyndall scientists and analysts are producing will underpin the live charter.

This is coming from the industry itself, recognising it has this problem, but the problem is not mutually exclusive. You can reassemble the industry post-pandemic and rebuild that economy and still reduce emissions in a meaningful way incrementally as opposed to taking drastic



measures. The idea of drastic measures will bring the industry to halt, which we do not want in the future. As you pointed out, it is not just a cultural situation, it is a way of life, a community. Thousands of highly skilled professionals work in that sector and they have been through a terrible time and this project is all about avoiding prohibition. There is not a bone of prohibition in it; it is about the opposite.

Q195 **Steve Brine:** Yes, okay. While you have the floor there, Robert, you have talked before about offsetting creates an illusion that high-carbon activities can continue. The Tyndall Centre has talked about reducing primary emissions rather than secondary emissions. Do you want to give us a sense of what you mean by that? You basically mean getting down to brass tacks. What does that look like in practical terms?

Robert Del Naja: There is no sign of greenhouse gas emissions peaking in the next few years according to the UN, so the longer we delay action the more drastic the action required. As I have probably said already, that is going to have an even more devastating effect on future jobs and livelihoods in the live music industry and particularly the festival industry. I will pass the mic over to Carly on taking immediate actions.

Steve Brine: Please do, Carly. I will come back to you, Robert, in a bit.

Professor McLachlan: Particularly on offsetting, I would encourage every sector, but the festival sector and the live music sector, to have a pathway for reducing its emissions. It is quite a recent development that everybody is so obsessed with net zero. We used to be talking about 80% reduction by 2050. Now we talk about net zero as if we have always talked about it, but it is quite recent. That target has mashed together emissions reduction with offsetting or negative emissions, so the point at which you stop getting your emissions down and buy some offsets or some negative emissions in a net zero framing could be anywhere between just offsetting everything now or getting right down to zero in your emissions.

I think it is really important that you have a pathway for both and you are constantly challenging what we feel we cannot get down at the moment, so we might consider offsetting or negative emissions, and how do we come back to that and challenge and say, "Has the technology moved on? Could we look at investing in a different way? Could we look at different partnerships to bring those emissions down?" My personal view is that people should be very cautious about calling themselves carbon neutral because it creates a sense that there are no impacts from the thing that we have been doing. I think that means that you lose a bit of a sense of the urgency to challenge and keep chipping away at the emissions and getting them down.

If the industry wants to have some offsetting and negative emissions there are lots of questions to ask in the types of projects that you go for, but the primary message for me is to get the actual emissions down. Once you have emitted it, it is definitely contributing to climate change.



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There is always an element of uncertainty and risk about the negative side of it, because the projects can be reversed, undone, you are relying on things to happen over a number of years, but you have definitely emitted it already. It is much better to not emit it in the first place and not have to rely on that chain.

Q196 **Steve Brine:** Okay, but I am still looking for practical, your recommendations about reducing primary emissions. I am a big festivalgoer and a lover. What would I notice different? What do I lose, what do I gain? What is going to change to reduce primary emissions, Carly?

Professor McLachlan: A good connection makes a huge difference. It is about how you are powering the festival but the step before that is about potentially reorganising your site in a different way for the power consumption. In the conversations we are having with people in the sector, there is so much creativity and enthusiasm to tackle this problem and I feel confident that that can be unleashed at this problem. As a festivalgoer, I think you will have a very similar experience. You will have been encouraged on to public transport, which you will have found fantastic and convenient and reliable and the best way to access it, but will you still get to see great acts and great music? Yes, I think you will. I don't think it is about putting it on to the audience. I think it is about the organisers thinking about who is playing at the show, how are they getting there and how are they powering the show, while still delivering a good quality festival experience.

Q197 **Steve Brine:** All right, that is good. A big part of the festival experience is food and drink and the supply chains. You talk about localised food and drink and supply chains. I have a festival here in my constituency, I go to Glastonbury and other festivals, and I see the same concessions at all of them. They are struggling so much as a result of festivals last year because it is their business. They don't look like locally-sourced supply chains to me. Am I right? Does the evidence back that up?

Professor McLachlan: My area of expertise is not on the concessions side, it is more about energy. I don't know if Rob wants to say anything about the local side of things. Taking a co-benefits approach to everything that you do to decarbonise so that you have a just transition to a low-carbon economy, thinking about how you can support local prosperity and jobs, seems like a really sensible thing to do. It would certainly fit with the ethos of many festivals that talk a lot of about local benefits, tackling climate change. All these things would fit with a localised supply chain, but that is not what we have been looking at in our project with Massive Attack.

Q198 **Steve Brine:** Have you done any looking at the customers' view of this, the public, the festivalgoers' view?



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Professor McLachlan: I haven't done it, looked at that in our work, but there are some figures around how much support there is from festivalgoers and that they expect the environmental impact to be—

Q199 **Steve Brine:** What is your view on this? They wouldn't say they didn't, would they? I remember standing at Glastonbury a number of years ago and Bob Geldof was on stage and everybody was chanting, "Make poverty history" before they go off and pay £3.50 for a pint of Carlsberg. My point is it is very easy to sit in a field for a weekend and to say that all energy should be generated through renewable sources, but then on Monday you want the hairdryer to work. When people go to a festival—and certainly when they go back to festivals after the nightmare of the last 12 months—are they looking for release, are they looking for hedonism or are they looking to still be thinking responsibly about the planet? I am being devil's advocate deliberately, Carly, but you take my point. Do the customers care enough?

Professor McLachlan: I just don't see it as contradictory in the way that you frame it. I don't think there is a problem with both wanting to make poverty history and buying a pint of Carlsberg for £3.50. In fact, at a festival £3.50 is probably quite a good deal.

Steve Brine: It depends how watered down it is.

Professor McLachlan: I think that people can hold both of those positions very consistently, but we are talking about is there a demand from ticket buyers and audience members. You can see that, there are various sources saying that. But I also think we have to create a situation where the industry, where there is a lot of enthusiasm to do this, know that they are going to have to do it. They are going to have to do it to be able to get a licence, sponsorship, for people to want to buy their tickets, and that gives them the stability to know that investment will be worthwhile because it is not an option to not do it. If we compare it to business as usual, of course that is a challenge but this should be in a framework that we are trying to decarbonise.

Q200 **Steve Brine:** It is interesting you mentioned a licence. The safety advisory groups, the SAG, maybe should be the SSAG, the safety and sustainability advisory groups, and that should be a key part of what they are doing. Would that be a sensible suggestion?

Professor McLachlan: That is one of the things we would like to say to you today. Yes, we think that licensing is a key tool to use. If you look at how many local authorities have declared a climate emergency, the net zero plans at a national level, it seem very sensible that if you are allowing an event in your area you ask not just, "Have you considered your environmental impacts, particularly your carbon emissions?" but "what is your plan for reducing those?" It is that year-on-year asking and monitoring of what is better this year, how are we getting on the pathway to zero? It is not a sense of, "We thought about it but all we can make



work is diesel generators” but trying to get a pathway away from diesel generators. That requires ongoing challenge and checking.

Q201 **Steve Brine:** Thank you. Going back to you, Rob, I want to ask you about touring bands, but the public, the customers and the ticket-buying festivalgoers, ultimately they are the ones who should drive this. Are they going to refuse to buy tickets for festivals that they don’t believe are sustainable events?

Robert Del Naja: That is a good question. Listening to what you have been talking about, I think that the audience has a participatory component here. They have an opinion and they want to see the festivals modify and correct their behaviour. I don’t see it as the case of people just turn up and do whatever goes at the festival for that weekend and then pack up and leave and get on with their lives. I think this is a part of something that we all feel we are moving together on. As a band working with promoters, we have often challenged the food and drink supply and where the supply chain is. Over a summer, for instance, we will encounter lots of different festivals, some very big festivals and some smaller local festivals. You see a big difference between the small community-based festival, which has local supply chains embedded in it, and that is what the festival is about. The bigger festivals struggle a bit more because of the scale of the project, but I feel that everybody wants to change together and the audience wants to see that change.

When we have been at the front end of putting on festivals we have gone for meat-free festivals. You might get a few people complaining they couldn’t get a burger but on the whole you are going to get that, not everyone is always going to be happy. You can make those changes and people will go with you.

Q202 **Steve Brine:** Rob, I didn’t get the impression that you were that enamoured with Coldplay’s no-touring announcement at the end of 2019, which looked prophetic given what happened. What do you think about that? Is it a bit of gimmick, dare I say, or is there something to that?

Robert Del Naja: I understand their frustration and it is a frustration that all bands have been feeling for a long time and everyone gets asked how can you square touring with climate change. All of us end up looking like hypocrites, we always have done, hence the point I made earlier about us being reduced to being messengers where we just message about climate change and wave the placards but still contribute to the problem. That is not somewhere we want to be. As we have very little control over the way festivals and live events are organised, you can tell that that frustration is going to keep coming.

Often a band will say something unilaterally like, “Well, we are going to stop touring” and it might seem a sensible thing to do in one instance but the whole problem is it is all about collective solutions and systemic change. Everyone has to work together across all of it, the festival promoters, the audience and the bands. As we keep saying, there is a



way, without looking towards drastic measures and prohibition, year-on-year reductions in line with the UN targets, that we can make this thing work easily.

Q203 Steve Brine: Do you look like hypocrites? At the end of the day, what are we seeking to save ourselves for? You bring a lot of pleasure, a lot of fun and a lot of enjoyment. If we are going to save ourselves, surely we have to have something to look forward to, haven't we? Seeing Massive Attack is a good gig, right?

Robert Del Naja: It depends on your perspective.

Steve Brine: Well, mine is that it is.

Robert Del Naja: Thanks for the compliment. Ultimately what I mean by that is that if we are continually rolled out to make the pledges with no control over whether those pledges turn into action, it becomes problematic for us. It creates almost a space. If you look at the distance between pledging and action, in that shadow is greenwashing, in a way. We do not want to be greenwashing for our own industry. That is the last place we want to be as artists. We want to stand up and if we are going to make declarations we want to stand by them and know that meaningful action will follow them.

We have had no control over that in our own industry, which has been a source of frustration. Hence you get Coldplay making that declaration about stopping touring, but everyone knows that one band stopping touring is not the solution, or even all bands stopping touring. As you point out, culture is important. It brings everybody together. I think the best way is to look for solutions together, collectively.

Q204 Steve Brine: The extreme end of your not touring would be that basically you just use technology that produces avatars that appear on stage and you play the gig that way. That way then I could have Massive Attack from the early 1990s or I can have a young Bret Michaels and Poison on the stage. Imagine the excitement for me.

Robert Del Naja: A younger version of me would be—

Steve Brine: Exactly, so why don't we just create avatars of you all and be done with it and you can sit in your artistic studio, which looks fantastic, and you wouldn't have to travel anywhere?

Robert Del Naja: That would be great but all the money would go back to the network providers and the DSPs, wouldn't it?

Q205 Steve Brine: That is another inquiry. Finally, what is your low-carbon event in Liverpool—a city I used to live in and I love much—about?

Robert Del Naja: Basically, it is an experiment and it is what we call an open and transparent, open source collaborative experiment. Everything we do there, the six primary emission principles, we will share with everybody. The six key emissions are: the first ever smart-to-train ticket



system via three train providers; the second is 100% renewable energy event power achieved via renewable-to-battery technology, green hydrogen power units; the third is zero-to-landfill waste management; the fourth is a meat-free arena; the fifth is advance liaison with tour production to reduce haulage and locally source as much tech as possible; and the sixth is free post-show EV shuttles to major train stations.

Q206 Steve Brine: Excellent. What is the venue? Whereabouts in Liverpool is it?

Robert Del Naja: Hopefully, this is outdoor and on the dockside at a date yet to be settled on, considering the dynamic situation we are in.

Steve Brine: We will have to follow the road map, as they say—#follow data. Thank you very much, Robert.

Chair: Thank you, Steve. I now have an image of you in your perfect festival, which involves Poison and £3.50 Carlsberg lager. I don't think you can get a pint for £3.50 at most festivals though.

Steve Brine: This was a few years ago.

Q207 Chair: Robert, do you think people will pay more to have a festival that is much more friendly to the planet, given that the industry is in very straitened circumstances right now with not having able to have a summer of 2020? Are you fearful that the possibility is that people will try to cut corners and try to put on a festival or a show for as little as possible?

Robert Del Naja: I think that the biggest promoters have a lot of liquidity and there is no argument that the biggest promoters and the biggest bands can probably absorb some of the costs of transition. With some of the technologies we are looking at, the green hydrogen battery cell units for instance, there is a bit of a lag in supply and demand but we can see that moving into use very quickly. I can imagine that with band transportation via train, audience transportation via transport hubs there will need to be price differentiation to absorb some of these costs, but I don't think an audience would look badly upon it. If I am a band, we will probably take a hit on our offers to get back out on the road again to absorb some of those costs and I would imagine that promoters and the audience and the bands would all be happy to absorb a few of those costs.

These are transitional year-on-year reductions in carbon emissions and costs that will be incurred to do that. It is not something that we are going to ever imagine as a drastic step unless we don't do anything, unless we continue to be inactive.

Q208 Chair: Obviously there will be extra costs from this but also there will be extra costs from Covid because it is likely that people are going to have to pay for tests and so on to attend these events. The sort of prices we are talking about are probably between £5 and £15 per festivalgoer. Do



you think that this needs to take account of the fact that people will be asked to pay more anyway over the next year or so and that, therefore, there needs to be a much more gradualist approach?

Robert Del Naja: It has to be balanced economically and it will be a gradual approach, but we are talking over initially a five-year period of meaningful emission reduction and I think those costs can be absorbed. I take your point on the testing and the Covid dynamic and how it is going to affect the price of tickets. I am not qualified to speak on that. Maybe Carly can talk about it or maybe somebody else, but I believe that this is very achievable.

Q209 Mrs Heather Wheeler: Carly, my question was really meant to be about that through the Covid period have we lost sight of what the environmental impacts have been with live performances, but of course we haven't had any live performances. I am trying to work out whether you think that in the downtime the music industry, the festival industry has really taken a look at what it could do so that it builds back better? I am blessed by having Catton Hall and the Spring Gathering festival group, so Bloodstock, in my patch. Are you helping to work with these big groups to see if they can build back better?

Professor McLachlan: As a research team, we are newbies to music. We know about carbon and energy and we are learning about music with the sector. I think it is really important to try to coproduce recommendations, so we don't come in and say, "This is what you need to do". We come in and try to help and collaborate. It has been really encouraging in the conversations we have been having with people in the sector that it has seemed to provide a moment of reflection for many. There has obviously been incredible hardship in the sector but as people look to have a pathway to live events again, issues of sustainability, diversity and mental health have all been raised to us as a moment to think about how that is all supported. It is absolutely thinking about building back better.

On the question earlier about is it a bit first world to think about this at a time when the sector is trying to survive, I think we need to take a longer view for the benefit of the sector so that it has a more sustainable future that can be in line with net zero and we do not get to a point down the line where reductions are incredibly costly because they need to be done very quickly and very severely. I think it absolutely can be part of build back better and it should be. When you reassemble what you are doing, new things are possible. We are having to challenge things around Covid anyway, so that reassembly could be for both, the Covid reassembly, which is hopefully a very short-term measure for the sector, but then building out from that into a more sustainable version of festivals.

Q210 Mrs Heather Wheeler: Thank you. Robert, taking that on to the next step, whether the support for festival groups, live event groups, has been enough is a bigger question. Do you know if there has been any practical support from those grants for when the business comes back that it will



be able to put those sustainable improvements, or is this just an absolute roadblock and because we have worried about everything else we have lost sight of that bit?

Robert Del Naja: I am not absolutely qualified to answer that question entirely, but I know that speaking about our own people and our own crew with very different situations, a lot of people have fallen through the gaps with benefits and support. Our tour manager, David Lawrence, was instrumental in setting up the Stagehand organisation that has helped crews for the last 12 to 18 months, dealing with not only people's livelihoods but also, as Carly pointed out, mental health.

I would like to think that building back better, as you call it, and reassembling the industry so it can reopen will not impact upon those livelihoods. I would like to think that we can enhance those livelihoods by creating a sense of sustainability. I don't think the crews will have to absorb these costs. I think that the promoters and the bands to a certain extent—and I won't be popular for saying this—will be able to absorb the costs more than the crew will have to.

Q211 **Mrs Heather Wheeler:** Between the two of you, I am not sure who might be able to answer this. Has the industry-led sustainability, those initiatives, been successful or is it—to use a bad phrase—so last year that we cannot really remember about it? Is there anything new on the horizon? When we manage to open up the festivals again and Catton Hall is absolutely rocking, what might they see this time that is different?

Professor McLachlan: As Rob mentioned earlier, this new body LIVE coming in to say that it wants to make a charter is great. We have had conversations with it and it feels like a clear sense of commitment to doing this from the industry. My only caution is that five years ago we had a pledge that did not come directly out of that industry trade body but had a lot of backing in the sector. We need to see behind that is pledge and move super fast: you make the pledge, but what is happening immediately to make those reductions?

We would like to see an independent review of progress against, whether that is something that you as a Committee could call people back in a year's time to see what progress has been made and what plans there are or whether it is for the Department to provide an independent review. But that really helps a sense of your progress will be reviewed and commented upon. That will also give the industry an opportunity to say what it needs to make progress move faster. If you don't hold people to account on the pledges that they make, pledge accounts often don't lead to a reduction in emissions.

Q212 **Mrs Heather Wheeler:** Robert, it is really interesting the way that certain festivals and part of the industry make arrangements with green charities and they make great claims and you used that great phrase "greenwashing". How successful has it really been? Is this the moment for absolute change?



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Robert Del Naja: We have done 30 years of messaging, along with most of our peers in the industry, and there have been multiple pledges made over the last decade. As we have seen, the emissions curve has gone up, so it has not worked at all. We know that, so now is the time to turn pledges into action, definitely, and working with Carly and Tyndall you start to realise how that might manifest.

Mrs Heather Wheeler: That is really helpful. Thank you so much.

Q213 **John Nicolson:** I have to say that I feel very guilty asking some of these questions, given how much we know festivals are struggling. There is a touch of the Marie Antoinette about some of this, given that many of them are having an existential crisis, but none the less we are where we are. I am just reading some of the figures and they are really extraordinary, aren't they? I want to ask Professor McLachlan about this: 25,000 tonnes of waste, 876 tonnes of CO₂ and 185 million litres of water annually. This is just for UK festivals when they up and running. That is twice as much produced over what the average daily consumption is for households. I haven't yet managed to get a handle on why these figures are so bad from the evidence thus far.

Professor McLachlan: I think the issue, the challenge for festivals is that so many of them operate outside our existing infrastructures for energy, waste and water. That makes it very challenging. If you look at the waste performance in the sector, many audience members might be a bit surprised by how much of the savings in the recent years have been from avoiding waste going to landfill, which in your own home recycling has been a key priority for many years. When you are collecting things from a site and you don't have that infrastructure there is more work to do there. I think that is part of the problem and that is why we would recommend that festivals get a grid connection, if they can.

On things like waste, for example, as is often the case with climate change, we are framing this very much as everything that you do here will cost more money, so how are we going to afford that? But there are some things you can do that will save you money and if you don't create it in the first place, you do not have the cost of collecting it. That is a way to save money in your industry if you reduce the volume of waste. It is the same if you can reduce your energy consumption. It is a saving if you can arrange things differently, programme things differently, lay it out differently to reduce consumption. Of course there will have to be investment to get towards net zero, I absolutely accept that, but when you save energy and collection costs you are saving money.

Q214 **John Nicolson:** I understand that festivals do not have plumbed-in cludgies like we have at home, so I understand why that type of waste might be a bit of a problem but I don't understand why you can't recycle plastic bottles, for example, from festivals.

Professor McLachlan: I think that is happening increasingly. The best option is to not have the plastic bottles in the first place, so go to



systems where you have water flowing that you can fill a refillable bottle, where you can use cups that are more easily reprocessed rather than plastic bottles. That should be possible, but it is about your waste collection contract and whether you can get that service. My understanding is that this is an area that the sector is moving on in a more effective way. The relative omissions reduction that I mentioned earlier is mainly coming from improvements in waste management.

Q215 John Nicolson: It is a surprising in a way, isn't it, that the waste problem should be so bad at festivals given the demographic? All the evidence is that young people are disproportionately likely to go to festivals—obviously apart from Steve Brine who defies that trend—and we know that they are disproportionately interested in environmental issues. Why do you think there is the gulf between what we assume young people care about and what they are doing in practice at these festivals?

Professor McLachlan: This is a common problem between the structure and agency in the world. Yes, audience members may want to have a lower impact but is the structure that they are operating in facilitating or allowing them to do that? If there is nowhere to recycle your plastic bottles and all water is sold in plastic bottles, you are going to create plastic bottle waste over a weekend, whereas if you are encouraged ahead of time to bring your refillable bottle and to refill that for free on site, you are not going to create that waste. I think there is only so much individuals can do with their agency and that varies between people, but we have to get the structures right to make it easy for people to achieve the goals that they want to.

I also think that we should not be relying on the altruism of individuals. This is a national priority to transform to net zero, so how do we create an environment where that is the only option to make that transformation and we don't require it of individual festivalgoers to manage their waste. It is the festivals themselves. I think they do lots to help to manage this already, to reduce the amount of waste created and then how it is processed, and the content and makeup of that waste, which materials are being used. I think there is a lot of knowledge in the sector about how to reduce those kinds of waste emissions.

Q216 John Nicolson: I noticed earlier, and I wrote down what you said, that there needs to be a coalition to deliver change. We all realise that coalitions can cause enormous damage to the country but this is a benevolent coalition, presumably. Who would need to take the lead in that coalition? Who would need to take charge? Who would be the lead player?

Professor McLachlan: I will let Rob come in on this after me if he wants to. I think the obvious actor at the moment is the LIVE group that has been created recently, since we submitted our evidence, and made an environment group to look at this and they are looking at a charter and a plan. I think the coalition part comes from who is continually keeping the



challenge on that, on delivery, on new emission reductions, but then you have lots of other players, like the transport providers, the district network operators of the electricity system. You need all of them coming together in a cross-stakeholder group. I think there is a lot of will to do that, so hopefully we would achieve a positive coalition.

Q217 **John Nicolson:** Rob, I will ask you that question. Who needs to take the lead in this benign coalition that will deliver change?

Robert Del Naja: You pointed out the existential crisis faced by the festival industry but if we were to re-evaluate that and look at it from the point of one of the largest promoters, they have £2 billion in liquidity. If you are asking for leadership, that is where you go. The group that has the resource and the power over the whole industry is where you start. You don't really start with the artists. The artists can do the messaging, as we discussed before, but the crew and all the skilled workers that make this industry, this culture work, don't have the power to implement this change. It is really the promoters that need to lead.

Q218 **John Nicolson:** What do you think is holding them back?

Robert Del Naja: Bottom line.

John Nicolson: The bottom line is the bottom line, okay. It is just greed?

Robert Del Naja: I don't think it is greed. I would be oversimplifying to say I know how this works economically. It is very difficult and very complex, but we know that everyone is trying to protect their margins all the time because everyone does. The band is trying to make their tour work; the audience is trying to afford to go to a festival; the crew are trying to make a living; the promoters are trying to make it all work. It is very complicated so I would hate to oversimplify.

It is simple for me to do that, but it is about having to work away from the bottom line agenda and think we are going to have to invest in this. To implement the things we need to implement in time to keep up with the recommendations by the UN or the IPCC, we are going to have to invest in it. If the leadership is shown, the bands will definitely. We will all be expected to take a hits on our fees, I should imagine, just because of the recovery process for the industry. I imagine audiences will be receptive to spending a bit more money to go to a festival that is showing its credentials. That is me projecting that but that is how I feel about it.

Q219 **John Nicolson:** I hope you are right, although I think a lot of musicians are going to be listening to this and screaming and saying, "We can't even tour at the moment".

Robert Del Naja: Yes, I am mostly talking about the bands like us that can afford to make the adjustment. We know that it is a struggle for a lot of the bands entering into this market, as we found it a struggle, so we are not expecting those bands to take a hit. Our agenda here is not to



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create any sort of prohibition, nothing. We are looking to avoid prohibition and trying to create a sustainable future where you don't take drastic action, which creates more problems and affects more livelihoods and stops bands entering into an industry like we had the opportunity to do 30 years ago.

Q220 John Nicolson: Yes, because we have discovered recently, talking about the post-Brexit visa issue, for example, that when bands start to tour again they are going to have to pay €600 per person for a night in Spain and €500 in Italy. It is utterly unsustainable. You were talking about touring the States by train and of course that is expensive. I have travelled the States by train and I know how expensive it is. A lot of bands are only going to be able to tour at all if, first, they sort the visa issue and, secondly, if they are able to use cheaper transport. You very graciously said that you are in a different position than lots of other bands.

I will finish by asking you—and I like to do this with witnesses—if you could get us to include one important point when we write this report, what would you ask us to include? What is the takeaway headline for you that you really want us to understand?

Robert Del Naja: I would rather pass that on to Carly because she is the expert on this. That is why we commissioned Tyndall because we are merely the artists.

Professor McLachlan: I have mentioned it already. I think an independent review will help the sector, if the Department or you, as a Committee, were to work with the new body that is created, with a charter and a plan, and to make sure that you see that as scientifically and technically robust in line with net zero targets for the UK and that it is delivered year on year. I think that creates a space to have the conversations about we are really struggling with this element of decarbonisation or this element, all of the issues that you have raised, and that creates an ongoing conversation. But it is not a sense of, "Oh great, somebody has made a pledge and we will come back in five years and see if you have made progress" because we can't make no progress for another five years. There is not enough carbon budget for us to be able to do that.

John Nicolson: Thank you both very much.

Q221 Damian Hinds: I will ask about where festivals take place. You have recommended that they should happen where there is good capacity and access to mass public transport, ideally mass electrified public transport. What does that mean in practical terms? Which of the big festivals have to move? Does Glastonbury have to go to Bristol, for example?

Professor McLachlan: It is not that you would have to move your festival. You could also get a good connection to your festival.

Q222 Damian Hinds: What about the transport, realistically, to somewhere



like Glastonbury?

Professor McLachlan: I think it is possible to devise transport solutions where you incentivise the lowest carbon options that you have and you disincentivise the higher carbon versions. We are not trying to say that every festival needs to move but if you take the sense of this moment of reassembly, this would be a time to consider for a long-term low-carbon future, is this the right venue for us? Could we, should we be somewhere else? That is right across the sector, but festivals where the location is really a central part of their identity may not want to do that. Then it is thinking about, "Can I get a grid connection and, if not, how do I roll out renewable energy options on site that will track the carbon intensity of the grid so that I am at least as good as if I did have a grid connection?"

Q223 **Damian Hinds:** Moving from the grid connection, which I understand, is it realistic to say that you are going to get mass electrified public transport to somewhere like Glastonbury? I could believe that would happen in Reading and Leeds in time but when will that happen in Glastonbury?

Professor McLachlan: I am thinking on the hoof a little bit here because we are not making recommendations to particular festivals. Glastonbury has the answer to that. All these problems, all the barriers and issues are best understood by the people who are living with them every day. Glastonbury would give you by far the best answer to how that could be done.

But thinking about a context like that—how do you shift much more of the transport demand on to trains and then how do you shuttle people from train stations in a lower-carbon way—would be a much lower-carbon option than allowing or encouraging or making it super easy for lots and lots of people to drive. How do you make that option the cheapest, most fun, easiest option to do so that it is not, "Maybe I just won't bother going because I will have to get this kind of transport". It is, "That transport really works brilliantly well and you get fast-tracked entry and you get a better place to pitch your tent". There are lots of things you could do to incentivise that and you have to work with the infrastructure that you have so that there are train stations that could then, and do, have shuttles to Glastonbury.

Q224 **Damian Hinds:** Moving away from that specific case, many councils have now declared a climate emergency and they have adopted their own zero carbon commitments in many cases. They also license events to take place. Do you expect there is going to be a very large increase in the number of licence refusals as a result of this?

Professor McLachlan: Rob may know more about this than me from the work that they have been doing in Liverpool, but I will have a bash first. You would expect that logically, wouldn't you? If you declare a net zero target by 2030 or 2038 you are going to have to look across everything that you are doing. With the coalition approach that we have been talking



about, how could local authorities work together to challenge and require a higher level of performance, what is the role of national Government in helping that through the licensing Act, or similar, but how could local authorities work together so that they do not have the fear of losing out to a festival because they are holding it to a higher standard? Could there be some collaboration on a common approach, "If you have declared a climate emergency these are the things you should require of people holding events in your area"?

Damian Hinds: Do you want to add anything to that?

Robert Del Naja: No, I think Carly was very precise with that answer, thank you.

Q225 **Damian Hinds:** Carly, you mentioned earlier that the term "net zero" could be sometimes unhelpful particularly if it deflects from making reductions in carbon emissions. In the case of festivals and other events, is the concept of offsetting more cosmetic than real? As a country we are trying to plant a lot more trees anyway, regardless of what festivals take place. I get the fact that it makes sense to talk about carbon neutrality at a national level, but does it really make sense at the level of one event or is it something of a nonsense?

Professor McLachlan: I personally am not a fan, for some of the reasons you have just outlined. It helps people to own their emissions and to own the solutions for continuing to reduce those if you stay on an emissions reduction reporting, rather than, "We have hit net zero". There are very high-carbon activities that you can do now that are called carbon neutral. If that is genuinely the case, why would we also need to reduce demand for them? We absolutely need to reduce demand for them because there is limited availability of these offsets and negative emissions and there are uncertainties about them delivering. I would much prefer that events companies, anyone who is talking about carbon, reported on its reductions and if it wants to do offsetting and to maximise other co-benefits from that, meeting sustainable development goals, for sure report on that too but keep them separate and show that downward trajectory.

We were talking earlier about greenwashing. I think that would help the audience see that different options are much lower carbon than others and help to create a bit of a drive to not be a laggard in the sector.

Q226 **Damian Hinds:** Who in the sector or in your academic world is doing the work on what is a realistic target for festivals to get to for carbon reduction? It does strike me that there is a bit of wishful thinking going on in this, like saying that all food should be locally sourced and so on. How would you run a business that ticks along all year round, then for five days the business went bananas and then it stopped again for the other 11 and three-quarters months? That is why you have businesses that follow big events around the country, music festivals and other things. You cannot wish away that economic reality, just like you cannot



wish away the fact that you are not going to sustain a mass electric transport system in the countryside around Glastonbury year round. Who is doing the work that sets out what is a realistic target to get to?

Professor McLachlan: Realistic options for delivery of the target that we have committed to nationally is how I would like to frame it, and so organisations like Julie's Bicycle collect and support examples of best practice. There is some really good practice going on in the sector and some really great examples of all these areas—energy, waste, local supply chains—so I think that kind of sector-led organisation is able to provide that.

One of the things that often happens in climate change discussions is we go to the extremes of banning or that it cannot all be local, but there are lots of decisions you could take to make it more local than it is, make it more sustainable than it is. It is about that journey of saying, "What more could we do and what more could we do on year on year?"

Sometimes if you are trying to get to zero straight away or completely doing something like all local traders in one year, that seems very challenging, but can you constantly reassess whether you could do more in these areas, where you have some principles and goals that you want to achieve? Yes, I think you can do that and you can shift in that direction significantly and urgently.

Q227 Clive Efford: Part of the question I was going to ask you, Carly, has been answered. What more can local authorities do about the venues for festivals to make them more carbon neutral? You made the point about them co-operating better. That was a question I was going to ask you: should they set a criterion or standard by which a location for a festival is approved? For instance, if there is a regular spot that is used, should they be making sure that the infrastructure is there for renewable energy and water sources and so on? What are your thoughts on that?

Professor McLachlan: Local authorities have a really central role to play and they often work very closely with their district network operator for their electricity system, for example. That would be one of the key stakeholders for any DNO making plans for its network, thinking about where we want supply or the places we would like to use for festivals that do not currently have supply, and that could be built into future plans. I think that collaboration and standard is important.

Examples like what Rob is doing in Liverpool are exciting because they potentially give people a plan for how you could do it, sharing that, "If you come to us we can help you have a super-low-carbon gig because we have tried it, tested it, we have iterated it and now we know how to do it." I think they could do a range of things to help those in the sector who would really like to accelerate fast but also to make sure there is a minimum standard that they are looking for.

Q228 Clive Efford: Is there a danger that in the absence of a standard where



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they all approve a set of criteria, if they put these measures in place it adds to cost, perhaps, or makes it more awkward, and they lose out? Do we get a competition to go to the lowest common denominator?

Professor McLachlan: A race to the bottom?

Clive Efford: Yes.

Professor McLachlan: I think it is a potential risk. I feel like I am uncharacteristically optimistic today. If we looked at it the other way around you could say might festival organisers want to go to the cities that help them, with the local authorities that help them run a super-low-carbon event? There could be something about appealing to people to bring them in, in that way.

The leakage thing, the race to the bottom idea, is maybe helped by having that coalition, but also I suppose whether at a national level that needs to be instigated so that there is not a race to the bottom and you find somewhere that has not declared a climate emergency and is not doing anything. That balance between what local authorities can do and what national Government can do to help them has to be found and it probably needs a bit more investigation to work out what the balance is there.

Q229 **Clive Efford:** Rob, is the industry demanding enough of the venue providers to say, "We want you to set these high standards so that we can comply more and be more carbon neutral"? Does the industry need to do more?

Robert Del Naja: The experiment with Liverpool is also very much a collaboration with the Liverpool City Council and Culture Liverpool in the sense that we are all working together to not only look at how the transportation to and from the venue is managed, how the power is managed across the whole of the project, but also which groups we work with, which identities, which corporate sponsors we work with. That is really important because we are just starting to get a collaborative partnership with the right corporate identities and the right local council and local authorities so that you end up with a very simple system to work with.

We have already found in the last year alone by looking at these six principles for Liverpool—how to deal with transportation, how to deal with energy, how to deal with landfill, waste and food—that by working with the right identities everything is achievable. I think that is half of the problem. It is looking at which partnerships you create and I think we have found across this that working with Liverpool as a partner as opposed to just working with a promoter in isolation makes this whole project a lot more realistic as an achievable target.

Chair: That concludes our first panel. Thank you, Professor Carly McLachlan and Robert Del Naja, for your evidence today. It has been most illuminating.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Assistant Chief Constable Justin Bibby, Deputy Chief Constable Jason Harwin, and Professor Fiona Measham.

Q230 **Chair:** This is our second panel and we are joined by Professor Fiona Measham, Director at The Loop, Deputy Chief Constable Jason Harwin, National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Drugs, and Assistant Chief Constable Justin Bibby, Staffordshire Police. Fiona, Jason and Justin, thank you very much for joining us. Our first question will come from Steve Brine.

Steve Brine: Good morning, witnesses. Thank you for joining us. I should say at the outset that I have Boomtown fair, festival in my constituency. Fiona, I have seen The Loop in practice, in operation at a live festival.

Before we talk about drug-related harm events this summer, would it be helpful if you gave a very brief synopsis of what multiagency safety testing is and what The Loop does at the festivals it is invited to?

Professor Measham: Multiagency safety testing, or drug checking, has been going for nearly 50 years now. It started in California and has been established in the Netherlands since the late 1980s. It brings together the chemical analysis of substances of concern dropped off by the public with healthcare consultation when those test results are embedded in some sort of a brief intervention or counselling session. The aim is to reduce harmful drug use, not necessarily to eradicate all drug use but to reduce drug-related harm, hopefully to reduce medical incidents on site, because everybody knows what is in circulation, reduce hospital admissions and ultimately reduce hospital drug-related deaths.

Q231 **Steve Brine:** Is it the case that there have been no drug-related deaths at any festival that MAST has operated at?

Professor Measham: To the best of my knowledge there has never been a death related to a drug-testing service in the world in 50 years. There is no evidence of that, to the best of my knowledge and, yes, there has not been a death at a festival that The Loop has operated at.

Q232 **Steve Brine:** Thank you for that. It is the case that drug taking at festivals, let alone the sad deaths—and I have had them in my constituency at Boomtown—is not an oft-talked about subject, not least of course because festival organisers are not keen to talk about it and to address it, given that clearly it is not what they are presenting to their customers. How concerned are you, Fiona, about drug-related harm at events this summer? Bearing in mind that we produce reports for Ministers to read and to respond to, we hope, what more can Government do to reduce those risks?

Professor Measham: I think there are some general concerns about festivals and the additional vulnerabilities there and then there are some concerns about this summer. Generally festivals are places where we



have the additional vulnerabilities. In my research I estimate that about half of people who go to festivals take illicit drugs and we have found that a quarter say that they take larger quantities of drugs when they are at a festival than they would in their usual weekend consumption. Combined with that often they are drinking alcohol, they are probably a little bit run down, their sleep and eating patterns are disrupted. We have concerns about all of those things together and the extension of what might be a usual night out—at a festival it can go on from Thursday afternoon until Monday morning. Those are some of the concerns and I think that level of excessive intoxication and sometimes atypical intoxication means that we should have festivals on our radar.

For this summer in particular though, on top of that, I think there are four concerns. Two are related to the drug markets. We know from Switzerland and from drug checking there that they have tested the highest strength pills in circulation ever, at over 350 mg of MDMA, so that is probably three or four times an adult dose. We have concerns about the strength of what is in circulation, but also about adulteration of MDMA. In New Zealand the festivals have continued during their summer just gone and they found that about half of substances sold as MDMA turned out to be a cathinone or butylone, which is a particular concern. Half of their MDMA was butylone that was mis-sold, so that is on our radar as well. It is both high-strength substances and the adulteration by a drug that people do not want to buy, they do not want to take but it has been mis-sold to them.

Added to that there are a couple of concerns about behaviour at festivals. First, most people have not been to festivals or nightclubs for a year. Their tolerance is going to be much lower, and also because they have not been partying for a year we can imagine there is going to be some pent-up demand for partying. We are concerned that combination of lowered tolerance to drugs plus the greater desire to be partying could be quite a problematic combination, combined with high-strength drugs and this mis-selling of butylone as MDMA. For all of those reasons, we are particularly concerned this summer.

Q233 Steve Brine: You talk about the number of people at festivals who take a substance. Is this just a festival problem or is this a societal problem, bearing in mind that festivals are made up of people from society? They just happen to be in a field and camping, as opposed to in the centre of another nightlife. The Loop does not just operate at festivals, does it? Am I right in saying that you operate in some city centre environments as well?

Professor Measham: Yes, that is right. Drug use is widespread, and I am sure the police will be able to add to this. Drug-related problems are widespread. The UK has the highest drug-related deaths in Europe and on record. That does not just relate to adulterants but also to high and variable strength drugs. There are all sorts of reasons why we want to improve drug treatment services and improve harm reduction services so



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that we can access people who are taking drugs and get the information to them.

Festivals are a particularly good opportunity to engage with people who use drugs and have those sorts of conversations. By and large, people respond in sensible and responsible ways if they have that information. When we put out alerts, for example, for adulterants in circulation at festivals quite often people come to use our service and they will voluntarily drop off those substances because they do not want to take them. That puts the dealers on site out of business because they cannot sell them because we put out alerts. In some ways it is a virtuous circle about getting that information out to people who might be using drugs, to support services, to emergency services and to wider drug-using groups. It goes beyond festivals but I think there are some particular concerns about festivals.

Q234 **Steve Brine:** Thank you. Deputy Chief Constable Jason Harwin, you were nodding a lot throughout that. What could you add to the high risk profile of drugs that will be circulating this year? Fiona has spoken well about the low tolerance, about the desire to really go for it, bearing in mind that people have not been able to go for anything in the last 12 months. What would you say about the risk profile of substances this summer?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: First to say that taking any drugs is a risk and accepting the scale of the risk. Fiona touched on it, and we are supportive of it, we are going into an environment where it is a captive audience and people will be there for a number of days. The reality is the profile of the attendees. As we said earlier on, excepting myself and probably yourself, Steve, the makeup of the audience is very young. We certainly see at these events individuals taking drugs who have never taken drugs before or infrequently take drugs.

Purity is a massive issue. We know, we already have intelligence to suggest, that individuals through serious and organised crime will exploit the opportunity not just festivals but the night-time economy that will hopefully be switched back on this year and ultimately they will be looking to make the most money they can at the event and the risk is that they will be looking to push more out. We have seen it with intelligence where it is two for the price of one, which ultimately is trying to get people to take more.

There is the poly use, which again is a bit unique to festivals and the night-time economies where it is not just about drugs but about alcohol. At the same time we recognise that we are going to have an audience that has not been out, as Fiona said, for a number of months, a year now, and that ultimately will look to use it as a celebration. We are seeing the attendance there linked to people finishing exams at school and part of the celebration of finishing their exams is to go to a festival.

We are seeing a lot of factors from policing and, importantly, we are not just looking at what is happening in the UK. We are looking across the



waters to see what is happening elsewhere in the world, to make sure that we are sharing the best intelligence. The challenge around the festival scene for policing is for the right reasons police involvement in festivals is reducing. We are saying that for policing purpose, quite rightly it is not necessary to have police there. We have organisers who are more professional, who have experience and, providing they are working with other providers, can run a safe event without the need for police to be there to prevent crime and disorder and breaches of the peace and so on.

The challenge I think comes back to your point around societal. We cannot deal with festivals in isolation. That is my point in conversation with the chiefs, the reality of individuals coming into festivals. The profile might be less frequent user but the reality is that there is still a number of people going to festivals who are taking drugs pre-festival, in-festival and outside it. Therefore, it has to be a wider public health response to this issue, not just a policing issue and not just one for the organisers to take responsibility for either.

Q235 Steve Brine: Sticking with the risk profile, could you share with the Committee and those watching some of the things that you have seen over the years that turn out to be not what you thought they were, either because they are something far more dangerous or because they are something far more ridiculous, like chalk?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: You have touched on this earlier. We go from the scale of things that are saying they are Ecstasy, but the scale and purity of it is so significantly higher that people think that one tablet could be fine, they could manage one tablet many times before but they take one and that is too much. We go to the other degree where they take one tablet, it is not strong enough, they take another and that one is even stronger and they have the overdose and other issues from there.

We are seeing the emergence of edible tablets. We are getting a lot of cases in the country at the moment of CBD and the issues around edible tablets that to the naked eye would look like a sweet. No one would be able to tell the difference. That is creating some issues of impacts on the individual, again recognising the strength but also at the same time recognising individuals not seeing the immediate effects of what they thought would happen by taking that drug and taking more. Before you know it, in a period of time there is a significant issue with a risk to the individual's life.

From a policing perspective we see the scale of increased purity, strength of the tablets, the inconsistency of the tablets. We could have two people together taking what they believe to be the same product, but their strength is so different, all the way through to the issues where we have individuals who will be taking drugs who have not taken drugs before and, therefore, will not know the effects they are likely to have on them individually or collectively as friends as well.



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Q236 **Chair:** Professor Measham, given that, as Mr Brine just stated, he thinks it is likely that festival-goers may go for it this year in potentially taking drugs, do we need a more or less consensual approach to this? Do we need more understanding this summer in particular?

Professor Measham: I think we need more understanding and more resources as well. A multiagency approach is essential on site and most festivals have variations on that sort of multiagency approach, ideally not just medical or paramedical services but also welfare services, trip-sitting services that can give people support if they have taken psychedelics. One of the concerns with some of the drugs in circulation at the moment is that they can last for not just hours but days and for some young people that can be really disconcerting at a festival site.

One of the things that I did not mention is that people have not been partying for a year and most people have not been in crowds for a year. We are also concerned about that as well, the additional anxiety and mental health issues of people being at a festival of 100,000 people. If you imagine that they have taken psychedelics on top of that, I think having trip-sitting support services is going to be really invaluable in those sorts of circumstances.

It is summertime—we saw this in 2019—and I also want us to be thinking about the temperature on site. We could learn something from our Australian festival counterparts where they now build tarpaulin shades over crowds to help give them some cover from the sun. They have water cannons that spray water into the crowds to cool them down if necessary, if it is very hot, and also they have iced water dispensers. I think we can do much more with water provision, free tap water available across the site with the speed of flow of the taps being that it comes out at a reasonable speed so the queues do not build up. A couple of years ago we saw people queuing for an hour just to fill a water bottle. Hydration is a key issue for us to think about.

When we go to funfairs and things like that they have a lost child site. I think we probably should have lost adult sites. A real concern at festivals is that people lose touch with their friends. They lose their phones, they lose their bags and then if they become unwell from alcohol or drugs they might go behind a tent to sleep it off. People walk past and do not know them and then there is a real concern that they can really slump into a very difficult position before medics get hold of them. We need lost adults sites for friends to get in touch with each other so that we can access support for those people as soon as possible if they start to feel unwell.

Early presentation is a key issue. Festivals can be very big sites and it can take an hour or more to get across them. Early presentation to the medics and having wraparound support services will help people if they get into trouble with drugs, alcohol or more generally at the festival. There are a lot of young people in a small space.

Q237 **Chair:** Assistant Chief Constable Justin Bibby, you have heard what



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Professor Measham has said and you have heard the earlier comments from my colleague Mr Brine about the likelihood that people will go for it. Is this potentially the riskiest year that we have seen for festivals and drug use and harmful consequences for festival-goers?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: Yes. Certainly not just within the festivals but right throughout all of the night-time economies and other environments where people are going to be coming together for the first time, we may well see an increase in risk-taking behaviour. We are seeing people who have been inside for a very long time without socialising, and people like to socialise. My view is that it will certainly be a period where we have the potential to see increased risk-taking behaviour and perhaps some of the things that we have faced in the past may well be exaggerated.

Q238 **Chair:** Does this lead to a change of approach or either a consensual or a less consensual approach?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: From my perspective, there is a balance to be struck. There will be some opportunities that will be afforded by festivals, for example. They are very controlled, there will be a lot of discussions about numbers and what that is going to look like, coming on the back of Covid, and what environments we are going to be looking at. It provides us with some opportunities but, as Jason alluded to earlier, it is the broader public health approach, looking at where we need to get that balance between enforcement and harm reduction.

Q239 **Chair:** This Committee has chided the Government somewhat for being quite slow in organising, for example, festival insurance, Covid insurance, but also in running pilot events. I presume all the factors that you have spoken about means that effectively it is really important that we get pilots up and running at the very earliest opportunity. If we do not there is there a potential for really harmful consequences for festival-goers from drugs, hydration and, frankly, Covid and any resultant infection? What are your views on that? Jason?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: We have a piece of work at the moment and I have a call this afternoon about it with Devon and Cornwall Police. There is a chief superintendent there who has done a piece of work on my behalf for the National Police Chiefs' Council about the public health response to festivals. They have a lot of experience of events taking place in their part of the country. Importantly, they have engaged public health significantly during that event with the organisers to say, "What is our system approach to this?" There is some work that will hopefully cover the bit around the pilot to say what is working for them at the moment in their approach and, importantly for policing, how we are sharing that with other police forces and, with the work that Fiona is doing, how we embed it within a wider piece of work as well.

What we have not mentioned so far—and we are seeing this through the work that we do throughout wider events—is that there are significant



changes in the profile of those who are likely to steward the events because a number have lost jobs and already the prediction is that 40% to 50% of the stewarding on site at festivals will not be the same people who were there two years ago. That in itself creates an opportunity, because it is about training and awareness and all the bits where we can signpost something else, but at the same time there is a real risk about understanding the dynamics of the festival at a wider event like that and, importantly, the eyes to recognise when something does not seem quite right.

Fiona made a point about where somebody may be asleep but we do not want people to be left thinking they are asleep. We want them to have a quick check to make sure that they do not need help. There is a real risk around that. While the organisers have significantly got better at making it safer, there is a real risk that those employed on the events will be significantly less experienced. We need to work with the organisers to make sure they get the relevant skills and knowledge as soon as possible.

Q240 Chair: Professor Measham, considering that we are looking at having festivals hopefully for the second half of this year—maybe July or August—are we moving quickly enough in ensuring that we know exactly what we are doing, considering that we have not had any festivals since 2019? Also there are all the points that the officers have made and the points that you have made about the potential for drug harm as a result of people basically caning it and the ready supply within festivals?

Professor Measham: Personally I would like to know a lot more about that combination of what is in circulation, how people are going to respond to what is in circulation, earlier on than we will. Usually we test maybe from May onwards, and so we have a good idea from May what is in circulation and what the particular concerns are. One of the things that I have learned over the years from doing this work is that we see seasons for the drugs that are manufactured. Each season there are particular pills that are of concern and we can flag those up in May-June time.

A couple of years ago when we did our last festivals there was one pill in particular that we identified in June. The very first festival we were at I think five people were hospitalised, so it was on our radar and we could then let the other festivals know. There is that opportunity to disseminate information across the events and more widely. I think the Jersey Government picked up on it and put out a Government warning on that particular pill. It caused problems all summertime, but at least we knew what it was, what was in it, from that first festival moving forward.

It does feel a little bit like we are going to be fighting with one arm tied behind our backs at the beginning of the festival season.

Q241 Chair: Is this going to cost lives?



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Professor Measham: It is very difficult to say. We do not know how many people die at festivals. That information is not collected centrally. I would love to know that information. Also drug-related deaths are complex and multifactorial. I imagine that drug-related harm will increase because of the reasons that I said.

Q242 **Chair:** In essence, you think that there is a possibility, because of the lack of lead-in period and the lack of sharing of information you are talking about, that should there be a bad batch of drugs we will see more deaths at festivals this year?

Professor Measham: I am concerned about that this year, yes.

Q243 **John Nicolson:** Professor Measham, are there best practices to be observed and learned from overseas? As a journalist, I filmed in Amsterdam where the police had pharmacists at work in clubs and they were certainly not encouraging the folk at the clubs to use drugs, but they would test the drugs for the people at the clubs and determine whether or not they were safe to take. Then of course it would be up to the person concerned whether or not to take them.

Professor Measham: That sounds quite similar to the system that The Loop operates. I set up The Loop as a university action research project to gather evidence to see how effective drug checking might be in reducing drug-related harm.

On best practice overseas, the Dutch have the longest-established drug-checking service. It is a national drug-checking service now and the Government fund it to the tune of about €1 million. I think that would probably be considered to be the gold standard and the benefit of that is that people across the Netherlands can drop off substances of concern and get the test results embedded in the health consultation.

One of the reasons why the Government fund it is of course that they have fantastic data for trend monitoring. They know what is in circulation and also importantly they know what the substances are sold as. It is not just about knowing what the substance is. It is knowing who to target with the alerts by knowing what it is sold as.

On other countries with good practices, New Zealand is really interesting at the moment. They passed legislation in December that said that drug checking was legal at festivals. They have had festivals open. They are post-Covid now in New Zealand and festivals have been operating as usual. They are now setting up a Government legislative and policy framework for drug checking, which is something that is not anywhere else in the world to the best of my knowledge. They are going to have the first bespoke, dedicated drug-checking policy framework for best practice. I have been having some conversations with the New Zealand Government about that. I think that is going to be very exciting.

It is quite a difficult thing to be rapidly and accurately testing substances in muddy fields and giving appropriate correct useful advice. We have



found that when people use the service they have so many questions to ask us. More than 95% of the people who use our service have never spoken to a healthcare professional about their drug use before. Often they have questions about things like how illegal drugs interact with the female contraceptive pill, anxiety or antidepressant medication, multiple sclerosis. We are able to answer all of those questions.

In some ways it is almost like a pop-up GP surgery and one of the things we were mindful of when we set it up was that we have large teams of professional chemists who do the testing and we have large teams of health professionals who give out the results, so doctors, nurses, pharmacists, psychiatrists. One of the benefits of that multidisciplinary approach is that they can respond to whatever questions the public brings. I say "they" because I do not do the testing and I do not give out the results. I am behind the scenes.

We try the very best that we can to give accurate, useful and appropriate information. It is a difficult thing to do and we have huge teams of very kind volunteers who staff it, but I think the concern is that the way that we operate definitely is not economically viable. In the biggest festivals we have 35 chemists and 35 healthcare staff. If you paid for the service it would probably be £50,000 or £60,000 per festival. We do not charge that because we have volunteers who are very happy to staff it, but I think that is something to consider moving forward: how do we have an economically sustainable but accurate drug-checking service in the future? We can look to New Zealand and to the Netherlands for some ideas around that.

Q244 **John Nicolson:** Can you imagine politicians in this country being brave enough to endorse the systems that you have cited? I get the impression that this is just far too hot for most politicians to want to handle. You know what will happen; if you were to endorse the system that you are talking about there would be screaming headlines all over *The Daily Mail* the next morning, wouldn't there, "Druggie MPs push drugs at festival-goers". There is a great reluctance. Let me frame it as a question. Would you agree that there seems to be a great reluctance to have a mature, adult conversation about this? All we hear instead is lots of stuff about the war on drugs, rather than how we can possibly effectively control the damage that drugs do to kids who are going to be taking them anyway.

Professor Measham: There is a lot I could say about this.

John Nicolson: You are right. It was far too long a question. I should have précised it.

Professor Measham: No, it is a great and fascinating question. It is a complex and probably in some ways contradictory situation. Eight years ago I set this up because I wanted to see whether it could be effective and I have been bowled over by how effective it has been. With my academic hat on I would like to persuade people with the evidence, but also we operate an open door policy and lots of people, including as



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Steve mentioned, have come and seen us in operation and I would like to think that we can win over the hearts and minds of anybody who comes to see us.

We have some great results now coming out of it. If you tell people that the substance is not what they bought, half of people throw it away or give it to us to give to the police to throw away. We take drugs out of circulation. If you tell people their substances are too strong, we know that half will take lower doses, so that is going to help to reduce overdose.

At the beginning a lot of stakeholders were concerned about negative press, as you mentioned then, the screaming headlines. In fact we have been covered by pretty much every news agency, local and national, and it has been overwhelmingly positive. We also have very strong support from bereaved families who have come and seen us in operation and I work closely with bereaved mothers who say they only wish the festival had had the service that we operate when their young person went to the festival.

When people see it they realise it is not so controversial and that it is common sense. People do not take things that they do not want to take. If you give people information they respond in sensible and responsible ways. Everybody on site wants to know what is in circulation, so we have police and paramedics every single day on site who come to our lab, bring us samples, we let them know what the substance is and then they can respond appropriately. The paramedics can provide the appropriate care and I think once people see it in operation the objections generally melt away.

Probably the last thing I will say about this, to give everybody else a chance to speak, is Nick Hurd, when he was Minister for Crime and Policing, said in Parliament that this is a local operating decision and that the Government would not stand in the way.

Q245 John Nicolson: What would you like us to put in our report about this as a recommendation?

Professor Measham: What I would like you to put in your report is it is successful, it is effective, we have some good peer-reviewed evidence now, and we really do think it can make a difference to harmful drug use on site. We know from the festivals we have been at that there has been a 10% to 25% reduction in drug-related harm on site because of that. We would like to recommend it, not for all festivals because clearly there are small literary festivals and arts festivals where this is not necessarily a useful service on site, but for many festivals it is and we think that it can make a difference. It is not a panacea for all drug-related problems but we genuinely think it can reduce drug-related harm.

Q246 John Nicolson: Should there be similar operations in clubs, for example? If you go to Heaven, for example, should you be able to get drugs tested



there?

Professor Measham: Not necessarily in individual clubs, because quite often people move between bars and clubs and having it sited within one club would not necessarily be useful. Definitely within city centres so that anybody could access the service, and by "anybody" I mean beyond party-goers. We must not forget that three-quarters of drug-related deaths in the UK are opiate-related, so I think it is important that the service is accessible for problem drug users, people who might be daily dependent or injecting drug users and not just for party-goers.

Q247 **John Nicolson:** Thank you. Can I ask the two police officers a question? Deputy Chief Constable Harwin, what particular problems do you find as a police officer with this system? All the evidence suggests that it works, it is effective, it reduces deaths. That is the evidence we have heard, but these people are breaking the law and that is a difficult thing for a police officer to come to terms with.

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: It is. It is the potential mixed messages, not just for the public but for our staff as well. The reality around it for me always goes back to what we are trying to achieve. If it is about harm reduction, the enforcement of the law is not necessarily the right way to do it but that does not take away our responsibility to enforce the law around supply of the drugs into the event and during the event. That clearly is a police responsibility, but when it is in possession of drugs then, as Fiona knows very well, people take drugs for different reasons. The issue for us is that at the moment it is against the law. The challenge with the testing that Fiona does is because it is against the law some people will be very reluctant to go and get their drugs tested. They are committing an offence by being in possession and potentially they could get arrested in doing that.

The second bit from my side is that potentially we have a situation where we have what people would describe as tolerance areas where ultimately the police will not enforce the law, to allow people to go into Fiona's areas to test the drugs. We get into this bit of a no-man's land, if I am very honest, where policing is stuck in the middle. We all want to make it safe; we do not want anybody to die. Far too many people die from illicit drugs already, but we have that catch-22 where people ultimately are committing criminal offences. It is that wider issue of what is the role of the police. I think it is a really interesting approach by the New Zealand Police and it will be interesting to see what happens there.

The evidence base, as Fiona has touched on, is growing. We did a desktop review with the Home Office in 2019 regarding mass testing, because it was an issue then and the evidence base was not that well known, if I am honest. The numbers that engage with the capability change behaviour to different degrees. We identify potentially harmful drugs and therefore can do the warning and informing, but the proportion of people that are having that test done to the use at the festival is really small.



Q248 **John Nicolson:** Would you like to see the law changed and adapted? At the moment you are choosing not to enforce the law, but if the law was changed there would be a greater connection between what you are doing and what the law requires you to do.

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: The bit for me goes back to evidence base. What is the evidence? New Zealand is really interesting because this is where again we cannot just deal with festivals in isolation. By way of example, in New Zealand they have a licence to make it legal for people to be in possession to go to have it tested. That is the proposed change in legislation. Where does that stop from festivals to outside festivals? As we touched on, there a significant amount of drugs consumed in the night-time economy and in wider society and communities as well. My view here is that we need to work with all the agencies but it should not be the police leading this. It should be around public health, because ultimately it is about harm reduction and public health should be leading that conversation not the police.

Q249 **John Nicolson:** Would you like to answer your own question for us? It is a good question, referring to the New Zealand change in the law. Do you think we as politicians should change the law so that it is not illegal to be carrying drugs when you are on your way to have those drugs tested?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: I think it is one where we should see the impact, but the reality is where does it start to be going to have your drugs tested and where does it stop? If we stop somebody at a festival site, bearing in mind we know very well the scale is significant, just because someone is in possession of drugs does that give them a lawful excuse that they are going to have it tested? The reality is that may not be the case. This is why I am really keen to go back to the evidence, let us see how New Zealand applies it, let us see how it has the effect that they are hoping to achieve, and therefore going back to the point about let us try it, if it is seen to work.

We have to look at the potential unintended consequences by just making it legal to be in possession to go and have it tested. There is a wider issue about not just festivals but outside of festivals where again people unfortunately on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday night, and on other days of the week, are dying from overdose as well.

Q250 **John Nicolson:** Assistant Chief Constable, can I ask you the same question? Would you like to see politicians adapt the law so that it is easier for the police, so you do not have to make operational decisions that might be different in different parts of the country?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: I very much echo everything that Jason articulated. The personal challenge that I have as a commander working in that environment is that you had to make decisions in very grey areas on how it is going to be done. If there is a broader agreement about the public health approach to harm reduction, the questions that



need to be asked, if this is a policy that is going to be pursued, are what legislative changes do we need to bring to bear to enable that to happen?

Q251 **John Nicolson:** What is the answer?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: You would need legislative change to make it happen effectively, particularly if you are going to do it at scale.

Q252 **John Nicolson:** Would you like to see that happen?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: From personal experience and speaking from my own view I think, as Jason said, it is very important to get the evidence base. From the very limited experience that I have had policing a festival over a number of years, we did see some positive impacts as a result of the testing. What was lacking and what Fiona alluded to about the broader testing and the broader evidence base is what happens before the festival and what happens after. Are the interventions that you are putting in place in a festival environment then going on to reap wider societal benefits? Are we seeing long-term harm reduction as a result of that type of intervention? If it is successful in a festival scenario, how is that then being applied and how are we going to consider its application in the night-time economy, for example, and other areas where we see drug use and the harm associated with it?

Q253 **Giles Watling:** Going on from what John Nicolson was saying, it seems we are moving towards the big question of is there a case for legalising drugs, taking control of them and thereby removing the problem so that we can see where the harm is? I will put that to Fiona.

Professor Measham: A lot of the problems that we have relate to the fact that drugs are illegal and because they are illegal we do not know what is in them. Drug checking in some respects is a response to a prohibition regime, undoubtedly, the variations in quality, in strength, in the contents. However we also have similar issues about food, for example. We have to test beef burgers to check they contain beef and not horse meat. There has to be trading standards regardless of whether something is illicit or licit. There has to be some sort of understanding of what the contents are. I do not think we will totally get rid of the need for some sort of a trading standard, quality assurance, drug checking, even with legal substances. Also, the additional challenges, and I think one of the additional benefits, of drug checking is the conversations around poly drug use, dosage, moderation.

These are the sorts of conversations that you can have about alcohol as well, that we have on site about alcohol. I guess it would be similar to alcohol, that if you had a pint of alcohol you would want to know whether it was a pint of whisky or a pint of bitter shandy.

Q254 **Giles Watling:** My point being that something that is legal and above board you can then see it and measure it.

Professor Measham: Exactly.



Giles Watling: You can then legislate for safety.

Professor Measham: Yes. Some of these problems undoubtedly would be removed by having a legal supply, a legal trade in manufacture and supply and use. That would eliminate some of the problems. If we look at decriminalisation, countries such as Portugal have had very positive outcomes by putting increased funding into public health and getting more people going into treatment services as well. There is a lot of reasons to consider at least decriminalisation of illegal drugs.

Q255 **Giles Watling:** Thank you. That was not what I was going to ask at all, but thanks to John Nicolson's questioning it brought me right to that point.

What I was going to say was I am old enough to remember the Weeley Festival that took place in my constituency in 1971, where a bunch of guys put together a festival. We did not know where we were going, the policing had to come in later on, as a second thought. We have come a long way and it would appear now that no matter what regime is in play, drug use at festivals will happen. As Professor Measham said, over 50% of people are going to use drugs at festivals, so now we have moved into a realm of managing to minimise harm. I think we are all agreed on that, but what more can we do? I think this goes to you, Justin, because you are the guy on the ground. Are your guys on the ground doing the right thing? What more can they do to engage?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: If we are looking at festivals specifically, I think we have some very good tried and tested approaches to enforcement. It is not just the drugs piece. A wide range of offending and victimisation takes place within the festival sites.

If we are looking at the drugs element, my experience has been that you need to have a very robust approach to the enforcement of the misuse of drugs. Festivals are exploited by a wide variety of criminality, serious organised crime and other aspects. It needs a sophisticated approach to first prevent the drugs from getting on to the site itself, then the detection around the supply networks within the site and being able to target that. Then the area around the drug testing comes to that bit where you have done everything that you possibly can to try to prevent the drugs getting on to the site, you are doing everything that you possibly can to target the people that are supplying the drugs, but what are we doing about those people who get hold of them and irrespective of what messages it is giving to them are determined that they are going to take it? The discussion starts to come in around dealing with that and that is when the focus starts to shift towards harm reduction.

From a purely practical point of view when you are policing a festival to start looking at the lower level possession offences is not generally something that the police—

Q256 **Giles Watling:** Practically you cannot nick 50% of the attendees at a festival. That is clearly nonsense. You cannot even begin to police that.



We are asking you to do a really tricky job. We have talked about legislation and we have talked about the New Zealand example. What I was trying to drill down to was how your officers are trained and what they are told to do on site, how they can have an open hand, open mind policy, when dealing with not necessarily the dealers, the organised crime side of it, but when dealing with the users who might be these innocent people abroad? I think that one goes to Jason.

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: My point first is that outside festivals we come across individuals in possession of drugs probably for the first or second time. We look to divert that individual away from the criminal justice process, again getting back into the treatment piece where ultimately we would see it as a public health response. There is a number of programmes that are probably in your constituencies or your colleagues' at the moment where that is taking place. There is some really good evidence base being developed in Thames Valley, likewise in the West Midlands and certainly up in the north-east in Durham.

My point goes back into Justin's point that we recognise from the police service we are here to enforce the law and our focus needs to be quite rightly on those who are creating the greatest harm, that is those dealing in drugs through serious organised crime. They are significantly profiting and exploiting some very vulnerable people in doing so.

I think it comes back to the legislation point. Portugal has not decriminalised drug. Possession is no longer illegal but supply is still illegal in Portugal, with the view that it gives a person, an individual, the opportunity to get into the right treatment services if they are taking drugs to try to resolve the underlying issue of why they need to take drugs or other issues in their life.

My view personally—and again it is not one that is supported through the National Police Chiefs' because there is a different view on this—is that if we utilise the approach where possession is seen as more of a public health response, with a view to giving that person an opportunity to address the issues, recognising if they continue to be in possession of drugs then ultimately they come back into the criminal justice process, they have to because there has to be some line as to where it stops, but then it focuses our attention more up-line on the supply and distribution. If we are thinking we can stop drugs getting into our communities and that will sort out the demand, unfortunately we are very naive or very complacent. The message from the Chiefs' Council is that we need to reduce the demand, the need for drugs, at the same time as we are stopping the supply of drugs. We cannot do either in isolation.

Q257 **Giles Watling:** On the back of that, what is unique about the nature of drug dealing at festivals as opposed to other night-time economies? There must be a big difference, because you have a captive audience and clearly if you are a drug dealer it is a good place to be. You have all those thousands of people.



Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: First, it is the fixed location. The location is usually vast, and the environment itself creates an opportunity. With the Cumbria experience of how you try to manage that pre-event—because we have seen lots of examples where the events have been preloaded with drugs being concealed in events ready for the event, so people can just get it when they are there. We then see it in the supplying. We see the issue of exploitation of staff who are employed in the safety of the event, among the staff but other suppliers coming into the events as well and that includes the artists, if we are very honest, that includes the individuals who may be bringing the drugs in, all the way through to the issue about individual possession and the way they are being concealed. I could show you a lot of pictures of things that we have found drugs concealed in. You probably would believe, but you would never believe it when you saw the pictures that we have.

The issue is the captive audience, and it is a captive audience. I do not like it being described like this but it is the reality, the two-for-one offer where people are getting drugs two for the price of one with the view that they want more during the event, therefore people get more during the event. We have a very young audience and, as I said before, they are very vulnerable and are likely to be in a position where they are in behaviours they are not usually in in their normal day-to-day lives. They like to take risks that they probably would not do because they are in a circle of friends that they trust and they are probably making up for lost time when they have not been with their friends. That is our risk coming into the summer period.

Certainly from my side the profile is different, but the serious and organised crime involved in it are still involved in dealing with drugs in communities every day of the week. We see that they go from one festival to another. They are a target, as we can see from the arrests we have made prior to the lockdown situation with Covid, but then certainly we saw them going from one festival to another to deal.

Q258 **Giles Watling:** Fiona, why is it important that your work is face-to-face contact with those who submit samples? Is that absolutely necessary or can it be remote in some way?

Professor Measham: That is a good question in Covid and post-Covid times. We have been thinking about that ourselves: is it possible that people drop off samples and they are brought to the lab and we could have some sort of a virtual online or telephone consultation? That is one of the things we are looking at.

However, one of the things that we have found in delivering the service is the real benefits of that dialogue. I mentioned before 95% of the people who use our service have never spoken about their drug use with a healthcare professional before. They start off talking about drugs and then it expands and spirals to all sorts of other health issues, which sometimes have nothing at all to do with drug use.



Q259 **Giles Watling:** Mental health issues as well?

Professor Measham: Yes, exactly, and unfortunately there is a lot of young people with mental health problems. When they get the opportunity to sit down in front of a psychiatrist, sometimes for the first time, then they will have discussions about that. Festivals might be sites of increased intoxication but they can also be sites of increased anxiety and it can be a great opportunity for that wider discussion.

I wanted to add to something that Jason said. You have young people in potentially vulnerable situations at festivals and what I found from my research is that dealers on site are twice as likely to mis-sell substances on site as neighbourhood dealers. I think one of the reasons for that is there is less accountability and they can get lost in the crowds. If you have tens of thousands of people in a crowd, they can sell pretty much anything, disappear, and there is no recourse. There is an additional vulnerability there in that they are consuming more than their usual quantities of drugs, but they are twice as likely to be ripped off by the dealers on site. There are all sorts of reasons for added concern.

To go back to your point, there are additional benefits from face to face but in post-Covid times, we need to be thinking about alternatives.

Q260 **Giles Watling:** My real final point here is that if it were remote, would people not be more likely to trust it and come forward?

Professor Measham: When I set this up, when I started to deliver this five years ago, we had no idea that anybody would turn up. In fact, it is the opposite. People are willing to queue for hours in sun or rain outside the festival tent to use the service. We do customer evaluations. People love using The Loop service and say it is part of the festival experience now. One of the great things about a festival is that people are there for four days, they have a lot of time on their hands, and they are very happy to engage with healthcare staff, particularly if it is in a tent and they can shelter from the rain and particularly if it is free—we do not charge for the service—to have this free, non-judgmental service, where genuinely we do not know their names, they can wander in and wander out again.

The issue for us is keeping up with the demand. We can now process many hundreds of samples a day, which is why we have large teams of volunteers on site, but we always have more people wanting to use the service than we can deliver to. We have the opposite problem, which is that so many people want to use it.

Giles Watling: Great stuff. Thank you very much.

Q261 **Kevin Brennan:** Professor Measham, there has been a lot of mention of young people. Is there any case for there being greater supervision required of the under-18s attending festivals?



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Professor Measham: That is a good question. I know it was raised at the Leeds inquest on the death of Anya Buckley, who was 17 and who died at the Leeds Festival in 2019.

In my experience, I have seen festivals that have had under-18s supervised and unsupervised. One of the things that has happened with the supervised under-18s is that they sometimes harangue an older sibling to take them to the event and then manage to shake them off as soon as they get inside the event. The supervision can be quite light touch. However, there are other festivals that are genuinely family-focused and family-friendly. Justin Bibby was in charge of policing one of those. We want to allow whole families and under-18s into festivals if there is some sort of supervision.

My concern relates to unsupervised under-18s, who we probably would not let into nightclubs or allow to buy alcohol in pubs. It is not clear why they are allowed to roam in tens of thousands across some sites. There are safeguarding concerns about that. I am pleased that that is being reconsidered at Leeds Festival as a consequence of the inquest.

Q262 **Kevin Brennan:** Justin, Fiona mentioned your name. Do you have any observations about this from your practical experience?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: I was responsible for policing the festival, which had a quite broad demographic. It was almost a rite of passage, locally, for 16 to 18 year-olds, post GCSEs, post A-levels. That in itself can present a number of challenges over and above the drugs issue.

The question of supervision very much needs to sit with the licensing authorities and with the organisers themselves as to what their approach is going to be. There would no doubt be some benefits. You can look at our approach to the night-time economy for example. There is also the issue of proportionality to think about when we look at the numbers of people who attend festivals and their ages to see whether or not there is a disproportionate impact from putting supervision in certain festivals. Festivals are very different up and down the country. Some are very family-oriented; some are not. Some are very adult-oriented. It comes down to local considerations.

Q263 **Kevin Brennan:** As well as those issues, there is the practicality of enforcing supervision of a 17 year-old, for example. Is that a very practical proposition, in your opinion?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: It comes down to the arrangements that the organisers could put in place. It would be a condition of entry on the ticket. It would be something that the organisers and their security would have to work through. Unless it was in breach of licensing or other issues, it is something that the police would be less likely to become involved in, but it would be very much an issue for the licensing authority and the organisers themselves.



Q264 **Kevin Brennan:** Fiona, earlier on you talked about the provision of water at festivals and some of the practices in other countries, in Australia and so on. Is there a case that there needs to be more regulation about that aspect, about the provision of free drinking water at festivals, given what you said about the health implications of its availability?

Professor Measham: I think it would be helpful to revisit the mandatory conditions for festivals in particular. As far as I understand it, the mandatory conditions were not written with festivals in mind and there were particular concerns and practicalities about large events—the number of standpipes that are available and the speed of flow. There have been a number of high profile deaths at festivals where people reported very long queues to access free water. Sometimes the standpipes do not work. Often they are located in the camping areas and once people get into the entertainment area, which could be quite a long walk away, they are less inclined to walk all the way back to the camping area to access free water. Most of the bars will sell bottled water but sometimes, at hot events, they will run out, so it will not be possible to even buy the bottled water.

One thing to consider is whether the bars themselves should provide tap water, as happens in nightclubs, rather than it just being left to standpipes at the other end of the camping site.

These are very important issues. Hydration can make such a difference to the outcomes of people who are struggling with alcohol and drug use. It would be helpful to revisit the mandatory conditions.

Q265 **Kevin Brennan:** Okay. Briefly, one or two other things to mop up. Perhaps Jason could answer this. A few years ago there was a lot of debate, certainly in this place and elsewhere, about so-called legal highs and their availability and provision. Is that still a major issue? It seems to be less in the headlines since some regulations were changed. It is an issue at festivals? Do you have any comment on that?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: It is still an issue. While it is not on the same scale as it was when the legislation changed—the legislation changed again to make so-called legal highs illegal—we certainly are still seeing issues in towns and cities and not just connected to festivals. We know that ultimately, due to poly use, there is a good chance that individuals will be using some elements of so-called legal highs along with other illicit drugs. We cannot manage it in isolation. It is something we have to consider. It goes back to Fiona's point that the strength and depth of the issue is significant. A lot of what is likely to be on a site is unknown, and without testing or amnesty bins so that we can do some further testing, we do not know what people are taking, which becomes a risk.

Q266 **Kevin Brennan:** Fiona, you mentioned people getting lost at sites. It reminded me a little bit of when I was growing up, when there were no mobile phones. Down at Barry Island in south Wales, there was a man



with a microphone at the top of the beach who would make an announcement saying, "We have found a small child up here wearing nothing but nature's costume. Can you come and fetch him if you have lost him?" and so on. Should that be in regulation, that there should be such a requirement at festivals? We tend to assume everybody is connected these days, because of mobile phones, but of course mobile signal loss, battery loss and all that sort of thing, being out of contact, probably make for an experience that a lot of people are not used to and so do not know what to do in that situation. Should it also be part of the regulation and licensing requirements at festivals that there is a proper system, lost-adult sites, that sort of thing, as you suggested?

Professor Measham: I suggest that it should be considered, not necessarily regulatorily but for best practice. You are right that young people often are not used to not being in touch with each other. Mobile phones do not work on sites if there are large numbers of people trying to post photographs to Instagram at the same time. Phones run out of battery charge very early on. It can be quite expensive to recharge phones. People might be charged £10 or £20 on site, just to recharge. I have a daughter who went to a festival. Her phone stopped working on Friday night. I did not hear from her until Monday morning. That is a very long time to be out of touch with your child at a festival. But having some sort of better communication system comes into the realms of good practice rather than within the regulatory framework.

Kevin Brennan: Thank you very much.

Q267 **Clive Efford:** Fiona, I want to ask you about the legal framework that you operate in. Would it have been better if you were licensed by the Home Office to do the work that you do?

Professor Measham: We set up the service to be legally compliant and we got advice from our lawyers about that. For example, we never return substances to people. We test and destroy in the testing process. We never encourage, facilitate or assist with drug use. We are very clear that the safest way to take drugs is not to take them at all. We always invite the police to be inside the labs throughout our service, subject to their resources. We ask for our lab to be located within the police compound, but that is subject to space limitations. We operate an open door policy, as I mentioned previously

One of things that has happened about the way that we set up the service is that the view of our lawyers and also of some police is that it is a local operating decision. We operate with the full support of the police but there was not a licence that fitted what we did and what we do. The Home Office licences have always been for fixed sites, permanent laboratories and not for mobile facilities. One of the challenges we face is that the address for the licence would be a festival field with cows or sheep in it.



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We are planning to apply for Home Office licence to handle controlled drugs. We do not process or store substances; we destroy them. We are planning to apply for a licence in the near future, but part of the issue is that it is not a licence for drug checking; it is a licence for handling controlled drugs and that is a little bit different. We would appreciate having greater clarity about the legislative and policy framework that we operate in because legal opinions differ.

Q268 Clive Efford: Would the licence that you apply for be portable? Would you be able to use it at different locations, or would you have to apply location by location?

Professor Measham: Our plan is to apply for one licence, under the guidance of the Home Office. If necessary, we could apply for more but that could be prohibitive in costs. It costs several thousands of pounds for each licence and we might have to have a licence for each festival. We also have to remember that non-public testing happens at festivals anyway and that does not operate with a Home Office licence. The Home Office has not given a licence for mobile testing at festivals. We would be the first to apply and we hope to have the guidance and support of the Home Office through that process as to whether it would be for one site or multiple sites, but cost would be an issue. Although I said we have hundreds of fantastic volunteers to staff the service, The Loop is a small, non-profit organisation so we would not have the resources to pay for lots of licences for lots of different festivals. We would have to work that out with the Home Office.

Ideally, looking beyond The Loop, and beyond festivals, it would be great if we could have something like the New Zealand dedicated drug-checking legislative and policy framework, rather than trying to alter or adapt the existing framework to a new situation.

Q269 Clive Efford: Briefly, do you have any indication from the Home Office about whether it will look favourably on your application? Do have any communication with the Home Office?

Professor Measham: We hope so. Various lawyers and the police are helping us to write the application so that we can be as legally compliant as possible. I am a criminologist in my day job so I have every reason to want to be as legally compliant as possible. The challenge for us is to operate within whatever framework there is. The problem we have had is that it has previously not been clear whether we should apply for a licence and whether this would be the appropriate licence to apply for.

Q270 Clive Efford: Can I ask you about Dame Carol Black's review? She was supposed to have published some interim recommendations last September. We are still waiting. What do you hope for from that?

Professor Measham: I very much hope for support for drug checking. We think it is very effective. In my job as an academic, my day job, I have been building up the evidence base for drug checking and I think it is looking very strong, so I am hoping that we get support for it. At the



end of the day, everyone wants to reduce drug-related deaths at festivals. Jason and Justin have both mentioned that as well. We want to reduce the number of drug-related deaths more generally. The UK has the highest drug-related death rate in Europe on record and drug testing can help with that.

Q271 Clive Efford: Justin, can I ask you about Kendal Calling? You approved the introduction of multiagency safety testing there. What challenges did you face, policing-wise or practically, in introducing testing at that festival?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: It came as a request from the organisers to the safety advisory group. For testing to function, it needs the involvement of the police. I, in turn, have to speak to the Crown Prosecution Service. I had to have conversations with the director of public health to make sure that everything was aligned.

Points about the challenges on the site have already been covered. Fiona talked about the exemptions within the Misuse of Drugs Act, which The Loop is currently using to operate. Obviously licensing would make that much clearer but you would still have the legislative issue about having to create a tolerance zone to allow that to happen. There are no exemptions in the law on possession of controlled substances as it stands at the moment to go to these types of places. Locally and practically, you would need to have that covered within the enforcement policy that you put in place for that particular festival.

Q272 Clive Efford: What sort of resources are required to create that safe zone for testing to take place?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: From a policing perspective, none at all. It comes down to the effective briefing of the police that are engaged on the site.

Looking at the set-up of festivals now—I know it has already been alluded to—you are starting to see increased use of private security. Private security now forms the majority element of security at festivals. Discussions about how the police are involved come down to discussions at the safety advisory group and what policing response the organisers are asking you to achieve. Organisers will put proposals forward to the safety advisory group and that is the forum that we use to agree what type of policing will be needed on the site. In purely practical terms, a tolerance zone comes down to briefing.

Q273 Clive Efford: Whether it takes places at a festival or not, is that finally the decision of the police? How much influence do the police exert over whether testing is available or not?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: It comes down to the safety advisory group. It is not just a police issue. It would be very difficult to put something like that in place without police consent. It comes down to the enforcement policy, to how the case is going to be prosecuted.



Discussions that are had at the safety advisory group ultimately inform the licensing and the go, or no go, for that particular event.

Q274 **Clive Efford:** Research indicates that more than 50% of the people who go to festivals take drugs. Does that figure indicate success or failure?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: It will be interesting to see what the figure looks like right across the night-time economy and other areas where drugs are taken. I think the level of drug taking is concerning. Then it comes down to the question of how effective our enforcement measures are, what we are doing, what are we learning and how are we getting better. For me, it is a very disappointing statistic and one that we are trying to improve through both enforcement and any other measures that can be brought to bear.

Q275 **Clive Efford:** Do you have any idea of what the night-time economy is like in comparison to festivals? Is there a difference in the rate of drug use? Do the police not know what that is?

Assistant Chief Constable Bibby: I am sure Jason and his team have been doing quite a bit of work on this, so I will defer to Jason for anything in particular, but on the types of use, you see different types of drugs on festival sites and in different proportions, compared to what you see in the night-time economy. The night-time economy varies from county to county and from location to location, depending on the demographics. A lot of influencing factors come to bear on deciding the prevalence and types of drugs in a particular environment. I don't have any particular figures.

Q276 **Clive Efford:** Jason, do you have any idea? How does the rate of drug taking compare between festivals and the night-time economy?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: We don't know the details. It varies, as Justin said, depending on what monitoring we have in place. We are starting some work as part of the Project Adder initiatives around the country to better understand the demands in different environments; the night-time economy itself is an environment. The difficulty is that the level of drug use is certainly greater than we know about at the minute, from the data we have. The reality is that we look at the issues around cocaine, which is an issue of the night-time economy, and we know that a lot of people who take cocaine are not in treatment services, have very little contact with the police and are not necessarily taking cocaine frequently. How we compare and contrast is an issue for us. The reality is that it is still a risk, at whatever level.

As Justin said, ultimately we are trying to stop the supply of drugs but the reality is that while people are still taking drugs, the supply will come. We have to do everything we can to deal with the demand and need for drugs at the same time as targeting those who are supplying. We cannot do it in isolation because if we do, we do not achieve any outcomes.

Q277 **Clive Efford:** Fiona, you wanted to come back.



Professor Measham: Yes. I have been doing research on drug use in night clubs and bars for nearly 30 years. It is my specialist area.

As Justin and Jason have said, it varies a lot with the genre of music, the headliners, with the entertainment, but in general about one in three people currently at night clubs report taking drugs and about one in two at festivals. That is a very broad generalisation, but in my surveys—and I do them regularly—those are the sorts of numbers we see.

One other thing to mention about festivals, which is perhaps a little bit more unusual—I touched on it before—is the extension of the drug-taking episode. If somebody goes to a night club, the drug-taking episode might only be from 10.00 pm to 2.00 am, or something like that. At festivals, it could well be from Friday night to Monday morning and that has additional risks.

Also, we have talked a lot about young people but I want to mention old people, as in the over-30s. Some research suggests that the average age of people at UK festivals is 37. While most people are 18 to 25, there is quite a long tail of people in their 30s, 40s and 50s, and that has a vulnerability all of its own. We interview people, and people use our drug checking service, who only take drugs at festivals, once a year, so their tolerance will be lower, and also their knowledge of the market will be lower. It can be in a situation where they maybe have children, they give the children to the grandparents for the weekend, and this is their one weekend blow-out per year and they say, “Drugs weren’t like this in the olden days”, or, “They’re not like they used to be back in the ‘90s”. The truth is that they don’t really know what is in circulation and they do not realise how strong the drugs in circulation at the moment are. We have seen people in their 30s and 40s and older get into trouble for that reason, this once a year blow-out, and they are unaware of what is in circulation. I did just want to say that it is not all about young people.

Q278 **Clive Efford:** Jason, can I come back to you? We have been told by a festival in Essex that it was prevented by the Metropolitan Police from having multiagency safety testing on site. Why are local police forces taking different approaches?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: It is the issue about the legislation. While I can give advice on behalf of the Chiefs on what the best approach should be, it is ultimately around the Chiefs’ appetites for potentially going against the law. I do not think for a second we should not be doing harm reduction but there are wider issues about what may be occurring in that community or at the festival at that stage where it is not seen as appropriate.

Going back to our earlier conversation, if the evidence base shows testing reduces harm, and therefore the law supports it, whether that is because of the facility that Fiona or anybody else can provide is licensed, that in itself gives some assurance to the force areas that testing can legitimately take place without the risk of breaking the law and being



seen as allowing drug taking to be allowed to take place in that location. That is the issue.

Q279 **Clive Efford:** Is it that the police do not trust these services to handle the drugs, or is it just the sort of rigid application of the law? Surely, the two services, the police and those volunteers carrying out the drug testing, want to work together to create a safe environment. Surely the police would facilitate that. Is it the rigid application of the law that says that the Metropolitan Police would deny testing in that situation?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: Obviously I cannot speak to the specifics of that event and the Metropolitan Police. Clearly they would have had some rationale for why they decided not to support drug testing. The issue is from policing generally. I can talk on behalf of the Chiefs' Council. We have talked about this already. The issue is around the framework and where this matter sits, legally or not legally.

If we are very honest, and again we touched on this earlier, the evidence base on this is growing, isn't it, Fiona? It would be fair to say that. But the evidence base over the last two years has probably not been where it should have been. We have lost a year's evidence base on the impact. We have the opportunity, as we go into this next period, to test it more, going back to the previous conversation about pilot opportunities and joining up the whole system. The reality is that the use of MAST should not be a police decision. It should be decided by the organisers, through the safety advisory group—whether there is a harm reduction strategy in place for this event, is it linking into not just during the event but to before and after the event, and, importantly, is the local public health provider engaged in this conversation and it is not just being seen as a one-off response to that issue on the site. The reality is that there will be lots of issues pre the event, certainly during the event, as Fiona has touched on, but also after the event and it is about how we join it all up.

Q280 **Clive Efford:** In 2018, the Government said they were going to clarify the situation. You said that we have had a year of Covid and we have lost a year of evidence, but is there any sign that the Government are going to move soon? Have you been in any discussions about whether the Government are going to clarify this area of the law?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: No. I think the conversation about licensing is the first one. Let's be honest, the Home Office is unlikely to issue a licence in circumstances in which they have never issued a licence before. I think you have the frustration there, Fiona, around the framework that does not necessarily fit. The traditional licences do not fit these circumstances.

Again supported by the conversation at the Home Office, the reality goes to the Home Office should not technically lead. While the legislation, the law, is for the Home Office, this should be led more by the Department of Health and Social Care because really it is a public health response. That,



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to be fair, is where Dame Carol Black has gone, isn't it? Hopefully the review's findings will influence the conversation.

Q281 **Clive Efford:** Yes, but you have quoted the law, and that would be the responsibility of the Home Office rather than the Department of Health and Social Care. Could they do more to assist in this area?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: I think it goes back to licensing. If the evidence base shows it works, the Home Office can issue the licence. Then there is a debate about the New Zealand piece. Are we willing to look at what is happening elsewhere, to say if that is effective, and can we do that in the UK? From my conversations with the Home Office, I would say they are receptive to it but the overall issue is the policy about trying to stop the illicit use of drugs when the reality is that we are very naive because drugs are being used on different sites and in different forms, as we speak.

Q282 **Clive Efford:** Overall, do the police see multiagency testing as a positive thing and therefore something that should be supported?

Deputy Chief Constable Harwin: The feedback we gave to Chiefs back in 2019 was that multiagency safety testing has benefits. There are clear benefits, which Fiona has touched on. But as we have said, it is not the panacea. It cannot be done in isolation. It has to be done as a wider public health response. Importantly, it should not be the police that make the decision about multiagency safety testing. There should be a conversation led by the organisers with public health and we can make sure we are playing our part in it. We are supportive, while recognising the limitations, but it cannot be done in isolation. The effect of it is not where it needs to be, for all the reasons we have talked about today.

Chair: Thank you. That concludes our second panel and concludes this session. Thank you very much to our three witnesses. Your evidence has been most illuminating. Thank you.