

**Business, Innovation, Science and  
Trade Committee**

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# **Competition and market functioning in the UK live music industry: Government Response**

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**Third Special Report of Session 2026–27**

**HC 625**

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# Business, Innovation, Science and Trade Committee

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# Third Special Report

The Business, Innovation, Science and Trade Committee published its Third Report of Session 2026–27, on 24 May 2026, [Competition and market functioning in the UK live music industry](#) (HC 128). The Response from the Government was received on 20 July 2026, and from the CMA on 24 July 2026, and are appended below.

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## Appendix 1: Competition and Markets Authority Response

**Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) response to the report of the Business and Trade Committee on competition and market functioning in the UK live music industry**

### Overview

1. The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) welcomes the Business and Trade Committee’s report on competition and market functioning in the UK live music industry. The Committee’s inquiry has provided an important body of evidence and analysis concerning relationships across the live music supply chain, the position of vertically integrated businesses, the availability of market data, and the experiences of independent operators.
2. We recognise the importance of a thriving live events sector for fans, artists, promoters and the wider UK economy. The end goal of all the CMA’s work—to drive economic growth and improve household prosperity—has clear resonance in a sector that combines significant economic and cultural value with high-value purchases that matter greatly to fans. In our written evidence in January, we outlined the work the CMA has already done to support a thriving live events sector. Since then, our investigations into major secondary ticketing platforms

over hidden fees have already led to a fine of almost £900,000 against StubHub, and refunds of over £590,000 for more than 50,000 affected customers.<sup>1</sup>

3. Our January written evidence also confirmed that we were carefully considering whether to undertake markets work in the live events sector. This submission updates the Committee on that consideration and sets out our anticipated next steps, in light of its recommendation that “the CMA launch a market investigation into the UK live music industry by the end of 2026 and sooner if possible”.

## Update on CMA consideration of markets work in the live events sector

4. In our January written evidence to the Committee, we confirmed that as part of consideration of further markets work, we would take account of action in other jurisdictions; the appropriate scope of any work; the choice of tool; other priorities for CMA action; and the Committee’s report and associated evidence. We provide an update on these areas below:
  - (a) **Action in other jurisdictions.** We have continued to monitor developments in the US antitrust case, *United States v Live Nation Entertainment Inc.* We note the Department of Justice and seven of the states bringing the original action settled with Live Nation on 5 March, with the settlement, which is yet to be formally approved, including a penalty of \$280 million and a commitment to sell some tickets through rival ticketing agencies. We note that the other 33 states rejected settlement and continued with the litigation, and that the jury returned a verdict in April, finding that Live Nation/Ticketmaster had a harmful monopoly over big arenas in the US. The jury also found that Live Nation/Ticketmaster had overcharged concert goers by \$1.72 per ticket in 22 states. We understand that any damages hearing is unlikely to take place before spring 2027.
  - (b) **The scope of markets work, and the Committee’s report and evidence.** We are carefully reviewing the evidence published by the Committee, and have undertaken further research into the functioning of the market and held initial discussions with UK and international stakeholders. We are actively considering how the issues raised in the Committee’s report and by stakeholders should be reflected in any potential future CMA work, including

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/cma-orders-stubhub-uk-to-refund-customers-over-hidden-fees>

the extent and impact of vertical integration within the sector and the interaction between various parts of the supply chain (including venue ownership, event promotion, and ticketing), the market power of participants in these different layers of the market, and the use of exclusivity clauses.

- (c) **Choice of tool.** The CMA has a range of tools relevant to the concerns raised by the Committee. These include its markets tools (studies and investigations) and—where the evidence gives reasonable grounds to suspect an abuse of dominance—enforcement under the Competition Act 1998. We note the case the Committee has made for moving at pace towards a market investigation. Market investigations are the CMA’s most intensive markets tool, both in the breadth of the remedies they can deliver, including legally binding orders, and in the resource and time typically required to undertake them. Decisions to launch market studies and investigations are made by the CMA Board, informed by the available evidence, the nature and scale of the potential harm, the outcomes that CMA action could achieve and whether order-making powers are likely to be needed. Our current work is directed at enabling the Board to consider this question, taking into account the CMA’s wider portfolio and other potential priorities for action (see below). Consistent with the CMA’s 4Ps, our aim is to reach a decision as quickly as possible, while ensuring that any tool that might be selected is proportionate to the issues and capable of delivering effective outcomes.
- (d) **Other priorities for CMA action.** In making decisions to launch new work, the CMA looks to deliver the greatest positive impact for the UK, taking account of its existing portfolio of work across its functions, and the priorities laid out in our three-year strategy to drive growth and improve household prosperity. In relation to the CMA’s existing portfolio—alongside progressing work under the digital markets competition regime, taking forward a range of consumer and competition enforcement cases, and delivering our merger control function—the CMA is progressing a substantial portfolio of markets and policy work aimed at easing cost-of-living pressures, supporting investment and growth, and securing tangible benefits for consumers and businesses across the UK. This includes a market study into dentistry (expected to report in March 2027), into childcare (expected May 2027) and a programme of policy work on scaleups, regulation and procurement.

CMA resources are therefore largely committed until the end of the year. Looking further ahead, in September, the Board will start its annual process of planning and prioritisation, to

inform the forthcoming 2027/28 CMA annual plan. Potential work on tickets, including the findings of the Committee, will be considered carefully as part of this process. Reflecting the recent change in administration, the Board's prioritisation will also take account, where appropriate and relevant, any steers provided by the UK government on priority areas of focus for the CMA.

## Next steps

5. We will continue to carefully analyse the Committee's evidence and engage with stakeholders across the supply chain to undertake our own initial assessment of potential harms in the market, including careful consideration of whether future CMA work could deliver benefits for consumers and the wider economy. As set out above, we are planning for the CMA Board to consider whether to undertake formal markets work in this area in the autumn, and we will write to the Committee with an update following that consideration.

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## Appendix 2: Letter from Kate Dearden MP, Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection, dated 20 July 2026

Dear Liam,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your committee for your deep consideration of this matter. I read with interest the evidence that was presented to you and the conclusions you have drawn. In response, I thought it would be helpful to set out the government's work on some of the issues you raise and our position on your principal recommendation.

### **The cost of living challenge**

First and foremost, you are right to highlight that well-functioning markets are central to supporting people across the country with the cost of living. What is more, competitive markets help to keep prices down and allow consumers to buy with confidence, driving growth. On this, as the Business Secretary set out in his letter to you on 2 April 2026, we have begun a programme of work to improve outcomes for consumers to support them with the cost of living. The government will set out its action plan later this year. This plan will focus on three outcomes:

- **Preventing harm at source:** Working with high detriment sectors and government departments to ensure the consumer experience is designed into business models and policies at an early stage to encourage greater confidence across the economy.
- **Educating consumers:** Working with consumer groups, businesses and other departments to ensure consumers make more informed purchasing decisions and are supported to enforce their rights and get redress, with a focus on digital tools; and

- **Enforcing decisively against the worst offenders:** Addressing the systemic challenges faced by enforcement bodies, especially at a local and regional level, to drive structural reform that will build and protect capacity into the future.

### **Dynamic pricing in the ticketing market**

We recognise the concerns highlighted by the committee, many of which were also reflected in the evidence submitted to our 2025 call for evidence, *“Putting fans first: pricing practices in the live events sector.”* Respondents, including consumers, industry participants and consumer groups, raised concerns about price transparency, dynamic pricing and the clarity of information at the point of sale. These issues underline the importance of ensuring consumers are treated fairly and can make informed decisions in this valued and culturally significant sector.

The government carefully considered the responses to the call for evidence and agrees that, while practices such as dynamic pricing can deliver benefits, they must be transparent and must not mislead or disadvantage consumers. We heard that some consumers were unclear about how prices were set or changed during the purchasing process, which can undermine confidence in the market. We therefore agree with the committee that greater transparency and consumer understanding are important to the effective functioning of the live events market.

Having reviewed the available evidence, the government concluded that the existing framework of consumer protection and competition law remains broadly sufficient to address the harms identified, provided it is effectively enforced. The evidence did not show that new primary legislation is needed at this stage. Instead, the government considers the proportionate approach is to clarify expectations of business compliance, improve consumer awareness and support robust enforcement of existing rules. This preserves flexibility in a dynamic sector while protecting consumers from unfair or misleading practices.

In this context, the government welcomes the work of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) in issuing targeted business guidance, including *“Tips for businesses using dynamic pricing.”* This makes clear that businesses must present pricing information transparently and in good time, avoid misleading practices, and give consumers enough information to make informed choices. We expect businesses in the live events sector to take full account of this guidance and comply with consumer law.

The government will continue to monitor developments in the sector closely and remains prepared to take further action if evidence shows the current framework is insufficient to protect consumers or support fair and effective competition.

In relation to Ticketmaster’s role in the sale of Oasis tickets in 2024, the government notes the action taken by the CMA into the way Ticketmaster operated for the event. Following widespread consumer concerns, the CMA launched an investigation into whether Ticketmaster had breached consumer protection law. The CMA identified issues relating to a lack of transparency, including the failure to inform consumers that tickets were being sold at different price tiers and that prices would increase as lower-priced tickets sold out, as well as the use of “platinum” ticket labels without sufficient explanation of their value. In response, the CMA secured formal undertakings from Ticketmaster requiring it to improve the clarity and timeliness of pricing information, provide advance notice where tiered pricing is used, avoid misleading labelling, and report on its compliance. These actions demonstrate the CMA’s ability to take effective enforcement action.

The Digital Markets, Competition and Consumers Act 2024 has updated and strengthened consumer protection legislation. The CMA now has new direct enforcement powers, under which it can decide if certain consumer laws have been breached, require compliance, impose remedies such as compensation, and impose monetary penalties of up to 10% of turnover for substantive breaches of consumer law, without having to go through a lengthy court process. These new powers will increase the improvement of outcomes for fans and address harmful practices.

### **Secondary ticketing**

The government notes the committee’s recommendations on the secondary ticketing market and ticket resale practices and reiterates its clear manifesto commitment to strengthen protections for fans. This commitment reflects longstanding concerns about ticket touting, including the bulk purchase of tickets for resale at inflated prices, the use of automated purchasing tools, and a lack of transparency in the secondary market. These practices risk undermining trust, distorting fair access, and disadvantaging genuine fans seeking to attend live events.

In line with this commitment, the government consulted on proposals to reform the secondary ticketing market, including measures to tackle exploitative resale practices and improve consumer protections. Following this consultation, the government published its response in November 2025, setting out a package of reforms designed to ensure that the ticketing market operates more fairly and transparently. The response confirmed the government’s intention to introduce draft legislation in this Parliamentary session to deliver these changes.

The measures outlined in the government’s response include strengthening restrictions on the use of automated tools (bots) to purchase tickets in bulk, improving the transparency requirements for resale platforms so that key information—such as the original face value and seat location—is clearly

and consistently presented, and enhancing enforcement mechanisms to address breaches of consumer law. The Government has also set out its intention to take forward provisions to limit the ability of resellers to list tickets above a specified cap where appropriate, and to ensure that platforms take greater responsibility for verifying sellers and preventing fraudulent or misleading listings.

Taken together, these reforms will help to rebalance the market in favour of consumers, improve access to tickets at fair prices, and ensure that fans are better protected. The Government will continue to engage with parliamentarians, industry, regulators and consumer groups as it develops and introduces the legislation and remains committed to ensuring that the UK live events sector operates in a way that is fair, competitive and works in the best interests of fans.

### **Voluntary ticket levy**

The government has been clear on the need for action from the music industry to back live music from the ground up by reinvesting in the critical infrastructure that forges the success of our global artists. We have shown full support for the live music sector's £1 voluntary ticket contribution for arena and stadium shows over 5,000 capacity, urging major promoters, venues and artists to support widespread adoption. The positive trajectory of this initiative is already delivering tangible support to the grassroots sector, highlighted by the LIVE Trust's distribution of £1.5 million to vital initiatives like the Featured Artists Coalition's UK Artists Touring Fund, Music Venue Trust's Developing the Future of Grassroots Music Venues Programme, and the Association of Independent Festival's Micro & Very Small Festivals Development Programme. We welcome the commitment already made by many, from major artists like Harry Styles, to landmark venues, such as the Royal Albert Hall, demonstrating the collective impact made possible when the wider industry steps up to secure its own talent pipeline.

However, there is more to do, and we will continue to call on those industry leaders, including Live Nation, who can make a real difference to step up and drive further uptake. If needed, we are clear that we are prepared to explore legislative options to support this industry initiative and ensure the sustainability of our world-leading live music industry.

### **Market dominance**

The government has carefully considered the committee's principal recommendation regarding further CMA intervention in the market. While we recognise the concerns underlying this recommendation, we are clear that it is not for government to determine whether the legal thresholds for intervention have been met in individual markets. That role is properly vested in the CMA, the UK's primary expert competition authority, which

operates independently and is best placed to assess evidence, apply the relevant statutory tests, and take action where appropriate. This independence is a cornerstone of the UK's competition regime and ensures that decisions are made objectively, based on robust analysis and in line with established legal frameworks.

The CMA is already equipped with a comprehensive range of powers to address competition and consumer harms where it identifies that thresholds have been met. These include the ability to investigate suspected breaches of consumer protection law, enforce against unfair commercial practices, and take action under its competition powers where there is evidence of anti-competitive behaviour, including abuse of a dominant position, or where adverse effects on competition are found. The government considers that this existing toolkit provides a strong and flexible basis for addressing issues in the live music and ticketing markets.

The government therefore considers that the appropriate course is to allow the CMA to continue to monitor the sector and exercise its independent judgement as to whether and when intervention is warranted. We will continue to engage closely with the CMA on developments in the live events market, but we do not consider it appropriate for government to pre-empt or direct the use of the CMA's statutory powers. This approach maintains the integrity of the UK's competition framework, while ensuring that the regulator remains able to act decisively in the interests of consumers where the evidence justifies it.

Once again, I thank you and your committee for its important work in this area and hope my response reassures you that this government is fully committed to ensuring fairness for consumers and acts in the interests of the live music sector.

I'm copying this letter to Minister Murray, Minister for Creative Industries, Media and Arts at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

**With best wishes,**

Kate Dearden MP

Minister for Employment Rights and Consumer Protection  
Department for Business and Trade