

**BY EMAIL**

streetentertainment@westminster.gov.uk

22 October 2020

Dear Sir or Madam,

**Response to Draft Busking & Street Entertainment Policy – October 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Westminster City Council's consultation on Busking and Street Entertainment in Westminster. Our response is primarily focused on those areas that New West End Company works across.

New West End Company is a business partnership of 600 UK & international retailers, restaurateurs, hoteliers and property owners in the world's top shopping and leisure destination, anchored by Bond Street, Oxford Street and Regent Street. We work across 80 streets, representing 150,000 employees.

We work in partnership delivering transformational projects, sustainable placemaking and management, destination marketing, advocacy, inward investment and commercial insights.

New West End Company understands the benefits of street entertainment to cultural diversity and city enjoyment. Increasingly entertainment, both in-store and in the public spaces, is an integral part of creating a wider experience which encourages more people to visit and to dwell longer in the West End.

As an International Centre, the West End is actively looking at ways to enhance our visitors' experience and New West End Company and its member businesses, work closely with Westminster City Council on events such as The Crown Estate's Summer Streets initiative.

Busking is another daily entertainment which creates a welcoming atmosphere for visitors. But, as a benefit to the International Centre, the quality and distribution of busking throughout the district needs to be curated, to ensure quality and prevent nuisance and abuse.

We therefore welcome this guidance, not as a means of restricting busking, but as a way of ensuring that it adds to the wider appeal of the International Centre.

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We have the following comments on the overall draft Busking & Street Entertainment Policy:

1. For new applicants, it is not compulsory to join the Busking & Street Entertainment Forum. New West End Company believe this should be a mandatory condition for a licence to be approved.
2. The Busking & Street Entertainment Forum is facilitated at Council officer level. New West End Company believe this should involve wider BID representation and be facilitated by a senior member of Westminster City Council. The meetings should be minuted, effectively chaired with attendance tracked for all busking/street entertainment acts.
3. New West End Company believes BID's should have a voice during the application stage. There does not seem to be a consultative phase when new acts are being considered. Each BID area might have subtle nuances which lend themselves to a particular type of music or act. An application framework which identifies these nuances would be welcomed.
4. The document assumes the acts have knowledge on what might be deemed an obstruction, a public highway safety concern or an un-manageable pitch. How can New West End Company be reassured the acts can manage pitches themselves?
5. New West End Company would like a centralised enforcement capability within the Council, which sits outside BID funded City Inspectors. If such a unit is not planned, there might be increasing pressures on localised resources, especially with Crossrail and the Oxford Street District transformation due for completion over the next few years.
6. New West End Company would not support any proposed pitch on Princes Street. Over recent years, Regent Street businesses have been increasingly vocal about the detrimental effects of busking on office environments and customer experience. We would prefer busking to be centralised within the Oxford Street corridor, which has advantages of increased pavement space.
7. New West End Company have no objections to the Oxford Street pitches when considered within a district wide approach, but we are aware that both local business and property owner are concerned with the proposals. New West End Company encourage the council to listen to such concerns and adapt the proposal accordingly.

We are keen to work with the Council to deliver the proposals and would be happy to discuss any of the points we have raised above, if it would be beneficial.

Yours faithfully



**Dee Corsi**  
**CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER**