

Cost of running gala days reduced

New price structure agreed after organisers of Edinburgh's gala days warned some events were "close to folding"

Sky-high 'amusement device' licence fees for bouncy castles and funfair rides risked the much-loved community events being cancelled, councillors were told last year.

Now a new price structure which will significantly reduce overheads has been approved by councillors.

Licensing manager Catherine Scanlin said gala days were "viewed as a priority for the council" and engagement with organisers was launched after concerns were raised.

Speaking on behalf of eight city gala associations in October Caitlin Boddy said: "The costs associated with running our events have got to a point that actually a number of the events are close to folding."

Increasingly organisers were being forced to appeal to their local communities for extra cash, with volunteers overwhelmed by the overwhelmed by the "time and stress" involved with obtaining licences, she told the regulatory committee.

The system in place meant galas had to pay the same rate as commercial operators to set up bouncy castles, funfair rides and merry-go rounds – with the cost of running six or more amusement devices set at £2,960. Public entertainment licences for non-commercial events are already heavily discounted, set at between £187 and £371 depending on capacity, compared to upwards of £1,300 for commercial events.

Ms Boddy said over £4,000 was spent on amusement device

licences alone last year for Balerno Gala Day which she helps to organise.

“Not only does it not work financially, but actually the amount of time and stress that went into it this year was just not okay. We have committee members saying ‘I am not going through that again’ and there’s a number of other gala organisations who are close to folding,” she said.

From April 1 a new price structure will see gala days and community events charged based on the capacity of an attraction. For an amusement device with a capacity of 20 the cost will now be £50; 21-60 people will be £125, and 61-80 people will be £250. For any rides with a greater capacity than 80 the cost will be the same applied to commercial operators.

Councillors gave the revised scheme the go-ahead at the regulatory committee on Tuesday, March 5.

Ms Scanlin said: “This has been raised as an area of concern as these events are viewed as a priority for the council and the organisers had raised the fact they thought the fees were too expensive.

“A working group was formed with elected members and representatives from gala days and their views were taken into account. There was also consultation with providers of the amusement devices and then a follow-up meeting with the organisers to feed back on ideas that we had.

“The main change to it is that the fee will now be based on occupancy of the actual amusement device. Previously it was per piece of equipment so the smallest bouncy castle can take six occupants whereas a waltzer could take 90 occupants. So there was a significant difference in how the capacities work.

“So we have proposed that it is based on capacity now of the equipment, split into three categories.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



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