

Big Green Gathering festival cancelled at last minute

Ticket buyers told to stay away after council's safety concerns lead to festival surrendering licence for Mendips event

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The organisers of Britain's biggest green festival have been forced to cancel the event just days before it was due to start because of a failure to resolve safety problems with police.

The [Big Green Gathering](#) was expecting 15,000-20,000 people to turn up for the event, held in the Mendip hills, Somerset, but organisers have now told ticket buyers to stay away.

"The event will now not take place and the directors' advice and request is that no one intending to attend the event should attempt to do so, as the site is now closed and they are likely to be turned away by Somerset police," the Big Green Gathering website said.

The five-day event, near Cheddar, was described by the festival directors as the "world's premier and award-winning green festival". It was due to open on Wednesday. The organisers said they had no choice but to voluntarily surrender the licence for this year, following legal moves by Mendip district council supported by Somerset and Avon police.

"It is our intention to avoid any form of confrontation or public disorder in regard to this and it is our earnest hope that all those involved will follow this advice," the directors said. "It is with great sadness that we have been forced into this position and we express our profound apologies to all those concerned.

The local authorities said they were concerned about whether proper traffic management and signs would be in place before the event started.

Donna Nolan, of the council's legal team, said: "The implications of the issues raised meant that the council and police had significant concerns about the safety of the public attending the event as well as those living, working and visiting the local area."

Mendip council's application to the high court in London for an injunction to stop the festival was due to be heard tomorrow despite the council granting

a licence at the end of June.

The Big Green Gathering grew out of the original Green Gatherings of the 1980s and the Green Fields section of the Glastonbury music festival. The first event took place at Watchfield, south Oxfordshire, in July 1994, and was attended by about 1,600 people. In 1995 the event moved to Lower Pertwood farm on the Wiltshire downs, one of Britain's largest and most successful organic farms. By 1998 it was attracting more than 7,000 visitors and participants.

In 2006 the event for the first time came under the provisions of the new Licensing Act 2005, which required the organisers to get a licence from the district council. This entailed compliance with the Security Industry Act, that requires all security staff to be individually licensed. The festival costs rose substantially, though the organisers declared the event a huge success, with close to 20,000 people enjoying what many said was the best Big Green Gathering ever.
