

**OUT TO GRASS
WOODEND FARM
CRADLEY
MALVERN
WORCESTERHSIRE
WR13 5JW**

STATEMENT OF IAN JOHNSON

I, **IAN JOHNSON**, of Woodend Farm, Cradley, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR13 5JW say as follows

Introduction

1. I am the sole director of Out to Grass Leisure Limited who are the holders of the premises licence at Out to Grass ('**OTG**').

2. I make this statement in support of the premises. Attached to this statement are a number of appendices as follows:
 - **Annex 1** – Proposed Operating Schedule
 - **Annex 2** - Marketing brochure for OTG
 - **Annex 3** – Email of 24 April 2025 cancelling booking
 - **Annex 4** – Letter from Charlie Elcock
 - **Annex 5** – Noise Management Action Plan
 - **Annex 6** – Noise Management Plan
 - **Annex 7** – Noise Management Plan Monitoring Policy and Procedure
 - **Annex 8** – Noise Check Reports 19 July 2025
 - **Annex 9** – Noise Check Reports 26 July 2025
 - **Annex 10** – Noise Check Reports 5 September 2025
 - **Annex 11** – Email from Simon Durrant – event on 30 August 2025
 - **Annex 12** – Email form P Collins to HCC 3 September 2025

Background

3. The Johnson family have been the custodians of the land on which OTG is based, and which belongs to the Duchy Of Cornwall, since December 1962 on a 3 generation tenancy. My father was the original tenant and I took over the tenancy on 1st August 1990.
4. In the late 1990s the government introduced the Rural Enterprise Scheme. The objective of the scheme was threefold:
 - (i) To enable farmers to be less dependent on production subsidies:
 - (ii) To increase rural employment and
 - (iii) Bring people and therefore income to rural communities.
5. In line with government objectives, I opened OTG on 6th August 2000. My business has achieved all the stated objectives. Since Brexit all productions subsidies (Single payment scheme) have been phased out completely and we need the income from OTG to survive as a business. We are a community of 8, OTG has created 7 seasonal jobs and provides homes for four people.
6. OTG bring in the region of 4,000 people Herefordshire each year. People who spend money in shops, garages, rent local accommodation and use local pubs. We also source all our beer and spirits and catering/food locally.
7. OTG has a GOLD AWARD from "Green Tourism". We use no chemicals, no bleach and supply eco-friendly soap and shower gel in our ablution blocks. We use super-efficient fridges and freezers, and a rated water heater. Everything is A rated.
8. No expense has been spared on double glazing and insulation, If we can't up-cycle it, we recycle it! All lights are low energy and intentionally not bright so we minimise light pollution and our visitors can enjoy the stars they rarely see if they live in a city. I visit many licensed venues and festivals, and we are the quietest venue I know.
9. The model of the business was always that it should be a public facing activity and events business. I am proud of what I have been able to develop at OTG. Demand without any external marketing has meant that the business has grown to what it is now. A copy of the marketing brochure can be found at **Annex 2**.

10. The site now comprises

- Enclosed stages/dance floors x 2 (Geodesic domes used for entertainment)
- Enclosed Art space
- Camping spaces for up to 500 people
- 5 glamping pods
- Shower blocks
- Lavatories
- Licensed bar
- On site kitchen and catering
- Covered area with central fire
- Electricity provision via 112 hook-ups
- Water provision across the site
- Café
- Roads, car parking and extensive pathways.

11. Although the business has grown it is important to set this in some context. This is, naturally, a seasonal business, open from May through to early September. We trade from Spring till Autumn.

12. We have built a business around the current licence granted to us. Our bookings have moved further away from general camping to exclusive hire. Events are varied with up to 5 larger music events, with in the region of 300 – 499 attendees, some smaller gatherings of friends and family, birthday parties usually 30-60 age range and wedding celebrations, and which can attract anything from less than 100 people up to 250 people.

13. Of the larger events that we hold these take place on a Friday to Sunday with people leaving on the Monday, or a Thursday to a Saturday, with guests leaving on a Sunday. We do not hold 4- or 5-day events as is suggested in the representations, and with a capacity limited to 500 any suggestion that our site is becoming a “mini-Glastonbury” is, I am afraid, fanciful.

14. If someone leaves rubbish behind or leaves their tent, then they will not be allowed back on to site

15. We are very careful about who we allow on site. We do not accept all booking enquiries we receive. By way of example, I exhibit at **Annex 3** an email I sent to a couple who had booked OTG. It became apparent that they wished to play a style of music – techno – which I did not feel was appropriate for OTG and as a consequence I cancelled the event.

16. From Spring through to Autumn, we provide employment for a wide range of people on the site:

- Bar Crew 2-3 per weekend
- Cafe Crew 2 persons

- Events Manager x 1 (50 hours per week)
- Site Crew x 3
- Sound Engineer x 1
- During the closed season we have:
- Events Manager x 1 (20 hours per week)
- Maintenance and Build Crew x 2

17. During the closed season we employ:

- Events Manager
- 2 x Maintenance and Build Crew

18. As well as this we have an accounts manager working throughout the year.

19. Since the site opened in 2000, I estimate that I have invested in excess of £500,000 in OTG and which includes investment in glamping pods, sound equipment, path and road maintenance, storage, bar and café and the GeoDomes.

20. This is a business that I am genuinely proud of and it is pleasing to see, from the significant number of letters in support from a wide range of people, the affection in which OTG is held

Sound Management

21. It is clear from the review application, and the comments that are made in the letters supporting the review application that the sole issue of concern in so far as the licensing objectives are concerned is the prevention of public nuisance.

22. I am acutely aware of the potential impact that OTG may have on the local community which is what we have over the years taken a considerable number of steps to mitigate against causing our neighbours issues of public nuisance. Amongst other things we engage noise consultants, set noise levels at nationally accepted levels, carry out noise checks during events taking remedial action as necessary, and have sought to engage with the Council in advance of a larger event.

23. In recent years OTG has engaged professional assistance from Andrew Bayliss and Charlie Elcock. Andrew is a “live sound engineer” working in venues across, Bristol, Birmingham, Oxford and beyond for more than 15 year, also touring, albeit selectively, with artists on festival shows, nationally promoted tours and DIY/self-promoted shows. When not on a show,

he is the technical manager at Exchange, a live music venue in Bristol, overseeing technical kit specification, deployment and maintenance.

- 24.** In addition to this Andrew runs his own small PA company working shows across the country, including the work with West Holts at Glastonbury and bespoke festivals hosted on beautiful and sensitive sites around the country. He has also worked in other sectors as quality manager including accreditation to ISO standards so has an excellent grasp on interpretation of legislation and ways of implementing compliant systems.
- 25.** Andrew was brought in to OTG in 2025 to improve the interface between delivery of live sound during shows, understand the needs of bands, artists and promoters, understand the sensitivities of the site its sensitivity to noise and deliver on all three areas without allowing any one to be compromised. This has led to substantial involvement in the organisation's ongoing conversations around noise management and ensuring there is an effective and evolving noise management plan now and in the future. Andrew understands that the plan is not only integral to the business going forward but is also practical and flexible enough to be a practical reference rather than a piece of work gathering dust on the shelf.
- 26.** OTG is also being supported by Charlie Elcock who has worked in sound management for over 10 years. A letter from Charlie Elcock setting out his background and credentials is attached at **Annex 4**.
- 27.** I attach at **Annex 5** a Noise Management Action Plan which sets out the work that we aim to carry out on site prior to the season starting in May 2026, as well as on going proposals for 2026 and beyond.
- 28.** I have also attached at **Annex 6** a draft Noise Management Plan and at **Annex 7** – Noise Management Plan Monitoring Policy and Procedure. These are living documents that will be adapted and updated as circumstances require
- 29.** The reality is that I have had very few complaints made direct to me over the years that I have been operating OTG and where complaints are made to me, I seek to deal with these in as an efficient and appropriate a manner as possible.
- 30.** The event manager, who is on site when any events are taking place, is always contactable by telephone on event nights and where local neighbours do have concerns then they can contact the telephone number so that their concerns can be addressed.
- 31.** Although this is not currently a condition of our licence it is something that I am happy to commit to by way of a licence condition in the future.

Review Application

32. The application for review (which is dated the 30 January 2026) specifically references 4 events in July, August and September of 2025. I deal with each of these below:

- **20 July 2025**
- **26 July 2025**
- **30 August 2025**
- **5 September 2025**

33. The application for review also references two more historic events, one in 2001 (arising out of a Mountain Boarding Event) and in 2015 (a booking by Piers Shiapara). In so far as the event in 2001 is concerned, any noise issues that may have been caused were caused by the commentary on the event. The Mountain Boarding event is no longer held at OTG.

34. In so far as the Piers Shiapara event is concerned, the booking was accepted on the basis that the event organiser used our sound system and was due to run for three nights (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). On the first night the event organisers bypassed the in house sound system and used their own system. I was advised of this on the Saturday morning and immediately closed the event down and cancelled the further 2 days of the event. These clients have been banned from booking further events at the site.

35. In so far as the more recent events are concerned, I comment as set out below:

- 20 July 2025

Malvern Magic is a gathering of friends and their families. They like the music they play to be quiet such that their children require no ear protection.

Noise checks were carried out by my Events Manager during the course of the day with these being recorded on a Noise Check Report which can be found at **Annex 8**

My events manager has confirmed to me that she continued to monitor the noise levels until the entertainment ended at 1am

At the end of the night of the 19 July (going in to the 20 July) when the entertainment ended at about 1am, we could still hear music which everyone said was coming from the south east of the venue. It was loud!

I am not surprised people complained nor that properties near to whoever was playing the music could hear it in their homes. It was still playing when I retired and the event organiser could hear it in her tent long after the music on site ended and long after our licenced hours.

- 26 July 2025

This was an event called All Sorts.

Having received a letter from Herefordshire Council on the day before this event I personally monitored the sound with my events manager. The climatic conditions were ideal for us and the wind was a gentle breeze unusually coming from the northwest

I was unable to hear any music at the set monitoring positions we use off site. I was pleased with how well our sound control was working that I chose to take Clare, our event manager to our nearest neighbour where she was also unable to hear any music whatsoever during their headline act at 1.30 am.

At our meeting with Environmental Health four days after the event, their officer, Josh Greaves, concurred with me that there was no audible music anywhere near the venue but when he drove half a kilometre east he could distinctly hear someone speaking over a PA system.

In moving 500 meters east he had aligned himself with a wedding venue on a neighbouring farm and, in my experience, weddings are the only events we run who use PA systems. In any event, AllSorts were playing music and had no access to a PA system.

Furthermore, if no music could be heard at our entrance as Mr Greaves stated and our entrance is to the east of the stage then moving three times as far away in the same easterly direction, the sound would be less not more.

Copies of Sound Check Records are attached at **Annex 9**

- 30 August 2025

Any noise nuisance that was caused to the neighbourhood on this day did not originate from OTF

OTG was not trading on this date. The GeoDomes were closed and the sound system locked away.

It is perhaps no coincidence that on this night a house party was taking place near Seedwood Cottage.

I attach at Annex email I received from Simon Durrent and which states as follows:

“We live at Whitewells Farm House which is on the A4103 between the turn to Bromyard and Tanhouse Lane. We believe that the music was coming from the vicinity of Seedwood cottage at the junction of Tanhouse Lane and the A4103. The music was very loud and raucous and went on well into the evening on three or four occasions. It was so clear that we could identify what song was playing. Kate, at Seedwood cottage held an end of school holidays party in their garden on 30th August. It was particularly loud and noisy. Apparently, She did text her immediate neighbours to warn them of the event I am aware that there was an event being held that night. “

- 5 September 2025

This was an Arts and Music Event, with an emphasis on independent artist and neurodiverse demographic.

As Something Different are one of our larger events. We hired the services of Pete Collins who is a sound technician and who works for multiple festivals across the country. His company is called Central Audio Services and has been providing services to the entertainment industry for 25 years.

Pete contacted EHO at Herefordshire Council to set parameters to do checks. A copy of his email to the Council is attached at **Annex 12**

Pete did hourly checks through the site and made regular adjustments on site to ensure 10Db above ambient was not exceeded.

Copies of the Noise Check Reports are attached at **Annex 10**.

Support for the review

- 36.** I have lived for 60 years on Woodend Farm and am keen to ensure that I get on with all of my neighbours. I was surprised when I saw the letters of representation as save for Barratt Price, John Ellis and Mike Moorhead (which I address below), I have not previously been contacted by the other residents.
- 37.** Jerry and Alison Reakes – Williams, Lucinda Lidell, Mike Wennen or Stuart and Mary Horner have not previously engaged with me. That is of course not to say that I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with them to discuss and address their concerns in person.
- 38.** I have not previously spoken to Victoria Price although I have had numerous exchanges with her husband Barratt Price. Any engagement I have had with Barratt has, save for on one occasion, been in relation to farming matters.
- 39.** The only occasion I can recall Barratt discussing the operation of OTG was back in 2023. The specific issue was addressed and not repeated.
- 40.** It is fair to say that I have had a number of engagements with John Ellis over the years. These have related to not only to farming issues but also, on occasion to the operation of OTG. These complaints have included noise levels (both from the music as well as noise generated by children on site, enjoying themselves and having fun. Notices were placed on site asking children to be quiet as a consequence of this.
- 41.** We have taken a number of steps to address John's concerns and these have included:
- Changed Soundsystem to a very expensive short throw system and had to turn away many events that want their own sound system
 - Directed sound system away from Mr Eliis' house
 - Sound check point specifically outside his property with most of the monitoring being based around avoiding audible music at his property and Pool Farm.
- 42.** In July of 2025, Mr Ellis came to visit OTG and said that he had a house viewing on the weekend Saturday July 4th. As a consequence of this we shut all stages for 3 hours to appease him at the detriment of the 400 people on site and cancelled musicians on the line-up.

43. The event had to have silence during this time and the bookers were upset but willing to work with us.
44. In so far as my engagements with Mike Moorhead are concerned, I have never had any complaints from Mike until the 7 September 2025 when he called me on my home landline. He asked me to turn the volume of the music down. I spoke to the sound engineer and the music was turned down as requested. I was very much left with the impression that Mike was happy with the steps we had taken to address his issues.
45. We do not, and have never, run 5 day events, nor have we ever traded beyond our permitted licensing hours as is being suggested.
46. I am willing to work with the local residents and as part of the mediation in this process. I have circulated an updated operating schedule to all those who have supported the review as well as to the EHO who brought the review.
47. I address below in more detail the proposed conditions being offered
48. It is my intention going forward to involve all my neighbours in achieving a resolution to any issues they have, including monitoring their homes for noise which is being played elsewhere in the neighbourhood.
49. It is clear that every time local residents hear music, they assume it comes from my business and that the EHO also assumes this to be the case. In recent years there have been a number of properties in the locality that offer Air BnB facilities. There are three in particular. Seed Farm House (which, on its website sets itself up as a wedding and events venue), Seed Wood Cottage (the noise source on the 30 August 2025 and in my view also on the 20 July) and Hope End Cottage.
50. I had had no noise complaints whatsoever for two years before July 2025 and can give assurances that we have changed nothing in our operation to have caused the complaints made to the council in July, August and September last year.

Support for OTG

51. I was pleased to see that so many people had taken the time to write in to the Licensing Authority in support of the review application.

52. There are in excess of 90 representations supporting OTG. These come from a wide variety of sources that includes local residents, patrons, commercial operators all of whom have experience of OTG and they reflect the positive experiences that they have had at OTG

Solution to the review

53. I note that the EHO has asked for a number of possible actions to be considered by the Licensing Committee. I would make the following observations on these:

54. Our base running costs are such that limiting the size or number of events that we have would have a drastic financial impact on our business.

- (i) restricting the number of large festival events to for e.g. 2 a year

Whilst no definition is given of what constitutes a “large” event we consider this to be events with a capacity from 300 to no more than 499 people

We have offered a condition that limits these larger events to no more than 5 a year

- (ii) restricting entertainment days to a maximum of 15 days a year

As a venue it's important to have a number of dates available, especially if we are moving more towards weddings. It's essential we don't restrict the dates available.

In terms of crew retention, we offer a full season of events in order to ensure we have a solid crew throughout the season. If we only had sporadic events, we would struggle to find crew that can find more consistent work elsewhere.

In terms of food and drink we have a lot of perishable goods. We order beer each week and minimise waste as having 1 week between events ensures food and drink don't perish. Waste would be considerable

We provide consistent business to stakeholders and suppliers, minimising our days would affect these relationships and have impact on our procurement and business relationships.

- (iii) restricting live music to smaller events

Music is the heart of all events

Even weddings and family gatherings, wellness and wakes.

Live music has always been in our opinion less invasive than electronic music as the noise is less persistent and heavy. Having an entertainment license is the heart of events, we would literally have to divert the trajectory of the business and spend a lot of time and money restructuring the whole business to 'non-entertainment. It's very hard to make enough to make the business viable without music.

Alcohol sales without music does not appeal at all to our ethos or create a safe, creative and inclusive space.

(iv) limiting areas on site where you can provide entertainment

The site is already sectioned into the venue area and camping. All the infrastructure above is on 'the site'. We could not operate elsewhere as it lacks sewage, drains, electric, lighting etc.

We have 3 geodomes, one not allowing music in the camping field. 2 is a minimum for the events we run as its not safe to have overcrowding in one dome for events up to 499 (which is few of our events)

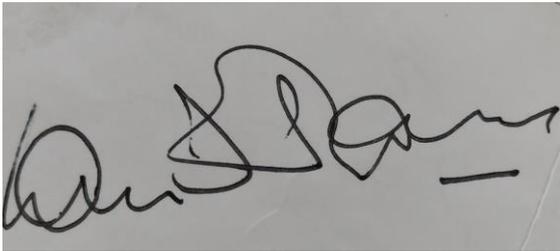
55. As such we do not believe that the options suggested by the EHO are appropriate to address the concerns that have been raised.
56. As an alternative we have offered a modern and updated operating schedule of new conditions to replace the existing conditions on the licence.
57. A copy of the proposed schedule of conditions (which has been shared with all parties to the review), can be found at **Annex 1**.
58. These conditions include the following:
 - Limiting capacity to no more than 500 (inclusive of staff and performers)
 - Limiting the larger events with a capacity of between 300 to 500 to no more than 5 in any calendar year
 - Removing all non-standard timings

- Enhanced conditions in relation to prevention of public nuisance that includes:
 - (i) Provision for a noise management plan
 - (ii) Event specific Noise Management Plans for events with a capacity of over 300
 - (iii) additional on-site signage requesting patrons to respect the amenity of local residents
 - (iv) Litter patrols

- Provision of a contact number to residents that will be manned during all events

- Removal of all conditions in relation to events with a capacity of over 500

59. I would also happily welcome officers from the local authority (both the licensing officer and the EHO) to the site to carry out an inspection in advance of our first event this year.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored surface. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Ian Johnson'.

Ian Johnson

Date the 13th day of March 2026