

An Garda Síochána

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An Garda Síochána
Páirc an Fhionnuisce
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Secretary General
Department of Justice and Equality
94 St Stephen's Green
Dublin 2

Secretary General's Office

23 JUL 2012

Received

Phoenix Park Concerts July 2012.

Dear Secretary General,

An Garda Síochána has conducted a review of the pre-event management activities and the policing arrangements implemented at the Swedish House Mafia concert in the Phoenix Park on the 7th July 2012. This review took place against the background that the arrangements put in place for the concert were not sufficient to prevent the serious incidents of public disorder which took place. This concert was one of three concerts held in the Phoenix Park on the 5th, 7th and 8th of July 2012. The headline acts for these concerts were as follows:

- 5th July 2012 – The Stone Roses
- 7th July 2012 – Swedish House Mafia
- 8th July 2012 – Snow Patrol

Members of Garda management attached to the Blanchardstown District formed part of the event management structure and liaised with MCD Productions and other stakeholders in the planning phase for the three concerts. This pre-event planning process resulted in the development of a customised Event Management Plan and Event Control Manual for the three concerts in addition to An Garda Síochána's Policing Plan, Traffic Management Strategy and Risk Assessment for the events. Risk management was an integral part of the event planning process undertaken by An Garda Síochána in the planning of policing operations for the concerts held in the Phoenix Park. Consequently, during the pre-event planning phase An Garda Síochána raised a number of concerns with the concert promoters regarding the sale of alcohol, gate opening times and stewarding of the concerts.

An Garda Síochána's review of the pre-event management activities and the policing arrangements implemented at the Swedish House Mafia concert makes a number of recommendations under the following headings:

- Selection of concert venue
- Culture of alcohol consumption

- The composition of the on-site Event Control Centre
- The requirement for all relevant statutory agencies to be present at the on-site Event Control Centre
- Security/stewarding
- The provision of Welfare Tents within a concert venue by concert promoters
- The utilisation of temporary concert signage
- The security of temporary outdoor lighting by concert promoters
- The utilisation of Grid Location Systems by concert promoters
- The deployment of Garda Public Order Unit and Reserve Units
- Prisoner Management at the Bridewell Garda Station
- The transport of prisoners from within the concert venue

These recommendations are set out as follows:

Selection of concert venue

The Phoenix Park is not a suitable venue for large scale outdoor 'electric music' concerts of the kind which took place on the 7th July 2012. The Swedish House Mafia concert on the 7th July was the first large scale outdoor 'electric music' concert held in the Phoenix Park. The Phoenix Park is an urban location in close proximity to a wide population demographic. In the recent past similar concerts were held at the Oxygen Festival, which is located in a rural location with limited access. This reduces the number of non-concert patrons congregating in the vicinity of the concert and the probability of potential public order incidents. There were no indicators during the pre-event planning process of the unsuitability of the Phoenix Park for this type of concert. This location differed from Oxygen Festival in that patrons had a separate camp site from the concert area where they could congregate in a controlled environment under the supervision of security/steward personnel and members of An Garda Síochána.

An Garda Síochána recommends that concert promoters and licensing authorities give greater consideration to the selection of concert venue for this type of music, its appropriateness for the anticipated crowd demographic, the potential to attract non-patrons to the vicinity of the concert and the impact of inclement weather on the venue's ground conditions.

In addition, An Garda Síochána recommends that concert promoters tendering for contracts to promote concerts in OPW or other public locations are required to stipulate the artists/type of music e.g. 'electric music' that they intend to perform at each concert date as well as providing a detailed risk assessment based on the type of audience which is likely to attend the event. In this instance the artists were not confirmed until the 7th March 2012.

Culture of alcohol consumption

An Garda Síochána's experience from previous large scale outdoor events indicates that concert patrons in the 17 – 25 age group prefer to purchase alcohol at off-licence premises prior to attending a concert than consuming alcohol within the venue. This may be attributable to the Irish culture on the consumption of alcohol and the cost of alcohol within a concert venue. Due to this preference, the result will be individuals consuming alcohol in the vicinity of concert venues, as upon entry to these venues the alcohol will be seized by security/steward personnel and members of An Garda Síochána. This in turn is a contributory factor in the volume of anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of concert venues. An Garda Síochána is aware that the Minister has indicated his intention to bring forward proposals aimed at curbing excessive alcohol consumption.

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The composition of the on-site Event Control Centre

The size of the Event Control Centre provided by MCD Productions was not fit for purpose. An Garda Síochána requested additional accommodation in the centre. The Concert Promoters gave an undertaking this would be facilitated but it failed to materialise. The CCTV for the venue was controlled by a contractor on behalf of the Concert Promoters. Consequently, An Garda Síochána had limited access to its functionality. This resulted in it not being possible for a member of An Garda Síochána to be employed to monitor the CCTV footage on a continuous basis for items of Garda interest that may be relevant to the policing of the event. An Garda Síochána had to request the contractor to monitor areas in response to reports of incidents instead of An Garda Síochána being able to proactively monitor the crowds using CCTV. An Garda Síochána will require priority access to the CCTV system in the Event Control Centre for future events in the Phoenix Park.

The requirement for all relevant statutory agencies to be present at the on-site Event Control Centre

An Garda Síochána recommends that representatives from the HSE/ Ambulance control and Dublin Fire Brigade are present in the Event Control Centre for future events of the nature of these concerts to enable efficient communications among the statutory agencies and an immediate response should it be necessary to declare an emergency and hand over control to the relevant statutory agency.

Security/stewarding

It was the responsibility of the security/steward personnel to conduct full bag searches and utilised Hand-Held Metal Detection Wands in addition to cursory pat-down searches of the patrons attending at each concert date.

The high volume of incidents at the entrance gate search areas coupled with the large number of breaches in the perimeter fencing indicate that MCD Productions did not have appropriate security measures in place for the Swedish House Mafia concert and the associated crowd demographic. This is evidenced by the logs in respect of the deployment of security/steward personnel at the entrance gate search areas and the quality and installation of the perimeter fence. An Garda Síochána recommends that concert promoters review their policy and procedures regarding the searching of patrons attending concerts in relation to the potential crowd demographic and arrival rates. An Garda Síochána also recommends that concert promoters review the quality and installation of perimeter fencing utilised at outdoor concerts in the Phoenix Park as in this instance the perimeter fence was breached on numerous occasions.

In relation to the checking of patron's identity to ascertain their age it is apparent that security/steward personnel were unclear on MCD Productions policy in this area and it was not strictly adhered to. An Garda Síochána will require security/steward personnel to receive specific instruction on their responsibility with regard to validation of patron's ages prior to entry to a concert venue.

In addition, there was uncertainty on the behalf of security/steward personnel in respect of their responsibility with regard to the removal of intoxicated patrons from the concert venue. For future concerts in the Phoenix Park, An Garda Síochána will require security/steward personnel to receive specific instruction on their responsibility with regard to the removal of intoxicated patrons from the concert venue. Security/steward personnel must be given specific instruction in respect of intoxicated patrons attempting to enter the site and similar instructions are necessary in respect of those patrons who become intoxicated while on site.

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Specific instructions must also be given to security/steward personnel in relation to dealing with drug abuse and, in particular, incidents of drug dealing which come to their attention.

The provision of Welfare Tents within a concert venue by concert promoters

MCD Productions provided a Welfare Tent for the concert on the 7th July. The Welfare Tent is used by Medical Staff employed by the concert promoter to monitor the condition of patrons who are brought to the tent under the influence of intoxicants (drugs/alcohol). The absence of a Welfare Tent at the other two concerts increased the calls to the medical staff within the venue and requests for ambulance services to transfer intoxicated individuals to hospital for medical assistance. An Garda Síochána recommend that a Welfare Tent is provided at all concerts regardless of attendance size.

The utilisation of temporary concert signage

MCD Productions used wooden staked temporary signage in the Phoenix Park to inform patrons of the venue layout. Individuals were able to remove the staked signs from the ground and the wooden stakes had the potential to become offensive weapons. An Garda Síochána recommend that this signage is no longer used by concert organisers in the Phoenix Park.

The security of temporary outdoor lighting by concert promoters

MCD Productions provided outdoor lighting in the vicinity of the concert to assist patrons egress from the concert venue. The design of the tower lighting systems required the key to be left in the 'on-position' to operate the lights. Some of these lighting systems were left unattended. Consequently unknown individuals removed the keys from these lighting systems thereby making them redundant. An Garda Síochána recommends that appropriate security be provided by concert promoters to their lighting systems which will eliminate this issue.

The utilisation of Grid Location Systems by concert promoters

A Grid Location System was utilised by MCD Productions to identify incident locations within the concert venue. However, the absence of a physical marking system on the site to cross reference with the Grid location system distinctly disadvantaged members of An Garda Síochána on the ground. This contributed to a delay in members of An Garda Síochána arriving at the location of some incidents. This matter was identified at the first concert on the 5th July. Consequently, An Garda Síochána brought forward the briefing time for the remaining concerts to afford Garda personnel additional time in advance of the gate opening times to orientate themselves with the venue. Concert promoters should provide a physical marking system on the site to enable cross reference with the Grid system.

The transportation of prisoners from within the concert venue

The adverse weather made the ground conditions unsuitable for the large vehicular access required by the prison vans. The event management team had laid a circular track around the perimeter of the concert venue which they travelled with light vehicular buggies. The larger Garda prison vehicles were unable to utilise this access track resulting in prisoners being walked from within the concert venue to the nearest entrance gate. For future out-door concerts, An Garda Síochána will insist on the provision by concert promoters of suitable vehicular transport for the removal of prisoners from concert sites where there are poor ground conditions due to inclement weather.

Public Order Unit and Reserve Units

The proactive deployment of two public order units for the duration of the concert on the 7th July was very effective. They responded to public order incidents and performed the role of a reserve unit responding to public order incidents of a minor nature and as a snatch squad to arrest prisoners within the concert venue. It is now clear that had An Garda Síochána been fully briefed on the likely conduct of the patrons associated with the Swedish House Mafia concert a separate public order unit would have been employed within the concert venue to perform the role of a snatch squad if required and separate reserve units to respond to incidents of a minor nature. In addition the use of the public order units to conduct a sweep of the Phoenix Park after the concert to remove individuals was an effective public order tactic.

Prisoner Management at the Bridewell Garda Station

The Swedish House Mafia concert on the 7th July was the first time the Prison Section at the Bridewell Garda Station was used for the processing of prisoners arrested at concerts in the Phoenix Park. This system was very effective and will be incorporated into future policing plans for events of a similar nature in the Phoenix Park.

In conclusion, there are a number of lessons to be learned by all agencies in respect of the staging of large outdoor concerts in the Phoenix Park. An Garda Síochána's recommendations are wide ranging, incorporating matters that impact on the event management of such large scale events in the pre-planning and implementation phases. There is a necessity for all stakeholders to proactively engage at the pre-event planning phase where communication and shared understanding will enable all concerned to facilitate similar events in the future. It must be appreciated that these events are dynamic in nature and must be continuously assessed and managed as they require a spontaneous response to incidents as they arise.

Finally, a full review of these concerts is being conducted with MCD Productions and the other stakeholders. Dialogue is continuing with the promoters and others engaged in the running of the concert to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that the lessons learned are incorporated into future event planning to mitigate against recurrence of similar situations arising in the future, including all upcoming concerts and other major events.

For its part, An Garda Síochána will insist that all practical steps are taken aimed at preventing a reoccurrence of the type of disorder which took place at the concert on the 7th July 2012.

Forwarded for your information and that of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence.

Yours sincerely,


MARTIN CALLINAN
COMMISSIONER OF
AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

25th July 2012