

**In the Matter of an Application for a Premises Licence for -
The upper car park at St Mary's Works, St Mary's Plain, Norwich**

WITNESS STATEMENT OF

MICHAEL FEMI-OLA

My name is Michael Femi-Ola and I am the Managing Director of After Dark Promotions Ltd, the applicant for the Premises Licence. I make this statement in response to the written representations made during the period of consultation for our application.

I have built and marketed events in Norwich and across the UK since 2011. My company holds a Premises Licence at The Royal Norfolk Showground and is now considered one of the largest event organisers in the region. I have extensive experience in pre-event planning, building and delivering successful events. I have a successful track record working with relevant authorities in Norfolk, and I am very passionate about supporting 'Local', including businesses and the local community.

We started the Junkyard Market with a community ethos at heart. Yes, we wanted people to enjoy the high-end street food and drink offerings, but more importantly, we hoped to have a positive impact on the local community. The project aimed to create an innovative space in which the local community could enjoy some sense of normalcy during this time. Due to the short turnaround of the project, we have continually encouraged and acted upon feedback from both customers and other local stakeholders.

Before the project began, we encouraged many stakeholders to come and be part of it. We hand-delivered invitation letters to residents, communicated with local authorities and worked with local businesses. Many stakeholders did visit, such as police licensing, environmental health and local businesses, all of whom have all supplied positive and constructive feedback. We are only aware of one resident, Mr Darren Dewing, coming to the site to give feedback during one of his late-night dog walks in the early weeks of the project. Mr Dewing's input led to immediate action, we

had a team monitoring the grass area for any rubbish that impacted his dog walks as requested. Mr Dewing seemed happy with the suggested action as per his email on the 31st of August 2020. We had no further correspondence whilst the event was operating during the seven weeks and had no further points to take action upon. We also included a direct line of contact with us, the organisers, for any further feedback.

We were surprised to learn, on 8th of October 2020, after the close of the event, that residents unfortunately had some concerns, described in the representations, regarding our proposed License. During the project, we had worked hard to promote the licensing objectives, minimise any negative impact on the local community, support local charities and serve as a good role model for younger members of the community. We worked with specialist contractors, Harrier UK, to ensure we were in full compliance with COVID-19 operational guidelines and prevention measures along with effective signage across the site. Additionally, we had two weekly meetings to ensure we successfully reacted to any changes in government guidelines, and our application demonstrates our ability to maintain these high standards of safety as long as there is an opportunity for socialising in public.

The project has already led to a significant investment in this currently undervalued outdoor space in the north of Norwich, and a Premises License would lead to an even more substantial investment that will strengthen local infrastructure for the future. The site will benefit from a renewed attention to detail, and fewer spaces in the area will be seen as derelict. With the increase in capacity of the nearby Arts School, independent restaurants and the rise in popularity of nearby St Benedicts Street, the area is on a path to become the creative quarter of Norwich. It is an opportunity to stimulate economic activity for local businesses, increase house values and grow the desirability of the area, and we would love for the Junkyard Project to be part of this exciting journey.

Not knowing who might oppose the application, or what they might have to say, we did not attempt to encourage neighbours, customers or any stakeholder to write in support of it during the consultation. There are, however, two supportive written representations from Councillor Ben Price and a nearby resident from New Mills Yard. Our representative will also share a small sample of testimonials from relevant people, including Dr Jan Sheldon, Chief Executive of St Martin's homelessness charity. We also hope to present Mr Guy Gowing, Managing Partner from Arnold Keys, in person at the hearing. Guy has been involved in the long-term planning for the St Mary's Works site and has also been a customer.

To save time at the hearing, I hope you will allow me to share some facts regarding the representations made in opposition to our application.

Whilst the project operated using Temporary Event Notices, we kept strictly to a fixed number of tables, spaced out to seat 2, 4, or 6 customers. The maximum seated capacity was 450 people. Although the Junkyard Market has been very popular and some of the 3-hour slots sold out, there was a natural tailing-off of attendance towards the 10 pm closing time, with an average of only 25% still on site at closing. The most number of people leaving just after 10 pm would have been 100 people. We see that James Richards alleges '*some 600 customers... leaving at the same time*'; however,

this would not have been possible, nor would the figure of '5000' stated by Norwich Market Traders Association.

We ensured the site entrance was located near wide pavements with ample room to accommodate the relatively small numbers leaving at any one time. We complied fully with coronavirus restrictions including the 10 pm curfew, meaning we closed events at 10 pm sharp and promptly marshalled any remaining customers from the site. Claims that there was noise from people leaving '*at c.11pm*' cannot relate to our operation. Councillor Martin Schmierer raises this point on behalf of '*residents*'.

The Junkyard Market has always maintained a key focus on the food aspect; I can evidence this by the fact that revenue from food sales during the initial seven weekends outweigh that from the sale of alcohol by 67/33 ratio. During each sitting, attendees are given two warnings not to take any drink or food off site when leaving. The first is 15 minutes before the end of the session, and the second is at the very end of the session. To further mitigate against any attempts to remove food or drink from the event, we had two marshals standing at the exit with two bins. The Junkyard Market attracts many families, young professionals and well-respected members of the local community. Through the booking and ordering process we have carefully tracked demographic information on our customer base; data shows that the average age of a ticket holder is 37 years.

All attendees of the Junkyard Market would have seen that the project isn't focused around drinking, nor was it trying to appeal to groups dominated by drinkers; alcohol was delivered to tables, and there were at most six people seated at each one.

Several representations alleged an increase in crime and disorder whilst the event was in operation. Our representative, who is a former senior police officer, will produce a record of local crime, which includes reports of anti-social behaviour. The records show that there was less crime and disorder in and around Duke Street during August 2020 than during August 2019 when there was no Junkyard Market. I note that Norfolk Constabulary did not make any representations in response to reports to the police on any of the seven weekends of the operation during late summer – there were no such reports whatsoever. I would be happy to provide our incident record and accident/first aid record, which were kept for the entire 21 days we operated, which will show that no reports were logged. We have thorough debrief procedures in place with at least one manager always on site overseeing operations and staff, a daily debrief and a full review at the end of each weekend of operation. I was involved in the only relevant conversation reviewed in which a male customer took off his shirt in the sunshine. I asked him to respect a more sober dress code because of the family nature of the Junkyard, and he put his shirt back on with no confrontation or attitude. The Junkyard Market has been built on family and local community foundations; the project does not portray a rowdy atmosphere and does not breed conflict or violence.

I will attend the Sub-Committee Hearing on 2nd November 2020 and would be happy to address any concerns the Committee may have once they have read this statement and the disclosed documents.

The facts stated in the above statement are true to the best of my knowledge.

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M Femi-Ola