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Thames Island Festival given go-ahead

3 June 2025

The show will go on for an exclusive summer concert on a private island in the Thames. D'Oyly Carte Island has been given the go-ahead to host three days of music and entertainment as part of the Weybridge Festival over July 4-6, 2025.

The private island, inaccessible to the public for part of the year, opened its grounds last year for Weybridge Festival and celebrated music ranging from Motown and Soul to 70s' and 80s' soft rock.

In January 2025, the festival plans were put on hold as Elmbridge Borough Council decided to stop the event going ahead due to "serious health and safety concerns". After four months of working on risk assessment and escape plans, the weekend concert can now go ahead.

A unique location, only one bridge serves as the connection from the mainland to D'Oyly Carte Island. Officers raised the alarm that the evacuation routes in the event of a fire or an emergency were not enough for the requirements.

Owner of the Island and event organiser Mr Andy Hill said: "It's an island, it's surrounded by water, it's 50 yards from the mainland. My experience of human beings, if confronted with burning to death or taking on 50 yards of the Thames—I know what I would do. People that are confronted with death will do a lot of things to avoid it."

Mr Hill explained people can evacuate via the bridge in 5 minutes and 3 seconds—just 3 seconds over the legal time. He also added there will be a ferry that is available for the "odd straggler who can't get on".

The environmental officer said she is "still concerned about Mr Hill's attitude and competency to health and safety, and fire safety". Officers stressed their key concern was the evacuation plan as they were not satisfied proper emergency routes and exits were in place. The environmental officer said the barge is not licensed to carry people.

Councillors recognised Mr Hill had put plans in place like an evacuation plan and alternative routes. But Cllr Paul Hughes, chairman of the licensing committee, said: "I really encourage you to carry on working as there are clear issues that need to be resolved."

Mr Hill said after the meeting: "We have worked very closely with the Fire, Police and Health & Safety for the last four months to ensure the events in 2025 are as safe and enjoyable as they were in 2024 and we very much thank these services for their valuable input. We are very grateful to the three Councillors at the TENS hearing who listened to the points made by all parties and concluded that the extensive safety measures that have been put in place will result in a safe and fabulous event with some sensational performers."

Related reports:

Surrey's D'Oyly Carte Island concerts cancelled.

Bridge to private D\'Oyly Carte Island, Weybridge. (Credit: Google Street View)

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