



**LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL
PLANNER'S REPORT**

LICENCE NO.: LIC 2023/02

APPLICANT NAME: Forestfest Ltd.

PROPOSAL: Music festival with camping and parking, July 21st – 24th

ADDRESS: Celtic Emo GAA Club,
Emo National School,
And various surrounding fields

LEGISLATION:

In accordance with Article 183 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) an event licence is required for events where the audience comprises 5,000 or more persons. The applicant is therefore seeking a licence in accordance with Section 230 "*Obligation to obtain a licence for holding of an event*" of Part XVI "*Events and Funfairs*" of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

PROPOSED EVENT:

The applicant is seeking an Event Licence to stage a music festival with camping between July 21st and July 24th 2023, at Celtic Emo GAA Club, Emo National School and various surrounding fields.

PRE-EVENT MEETING:

Statutory Pre-Event meetings were held before the licence application was lodged with all relevant stakeholders invited. No significant issues were raised by any of the stakeholders in attendance.

SUBMISSIONS / OBSERVATIONS:

One submission was received in relation to the proposed development and is briefly summarised below. The submission in its entirety is contained on the planning file.

- Mairead Dunne: Noise; Rubbish; the GAA site is in breach of planning laws

The content of the submission has been fully considered in the assessment and recommendation of this report.

REFFERALS:

- **Eastern Area Office:** No objection subject to conditions relating to: Litter management for the village of Emo for the duration of the event; Submission of a detailed traffic management plan; Road closure application; Retention of local access for residents/businesses
- **Environment:** No objection subject to conditions relating to waste management and the submission of a food waste management plan.
- **Water Services:** No objection subject to conditions as follows:
 - The collection and disposal of wastewater/sewage is to be done by a licensed contractor/agent. The applicant or their agent will need to apply to Uisce Eireann for a tankered waste agreement for the disposal of this material to a Uisce Eireann Wastewater Treatment Plant.
 - Applicant to identify source of water supply (public/private). Engagement with IW/LCC will be required if the supply is public. Associated details of total quantity required, daily consumption, storage amount, max flow rate, on site testing regime, contact details for water supplier are also required.
- **Roads:** No report at time of writing
- **Housing:** No objections raised
- **Laois County Council Fire and Rescue Services:** No objection subject to conditions
- **E.H.O:** No objections subject to conditions
- **HSE (Emergency Management Office):** No objection subject to conditions
- **Uisce Eireann:** No objections subject to conditions including a connection agreement being in place
- **An Garda Siochana:** An Garda Síochána has serious concerns regarding the proposed traffic management plan in its current state. The proposed event is spread across a large area involving two regional roads and up to 10,000 pedestrians. Key concerns are as follows:
 - The event organisers propose to close two regional roads, the R422 (Mountmellick to Emo Road) and R419 (Portlaoise to Portarlinton Road). Both roads cater for a large volume of traffic. It is not feasible to close both roads without having a major impact on traffic. Consideration could be given to the closure of the R422 but in doing so access to the R419 becomes integral to the management of the alternative route.
 - The provision of any parking on the Mountmellick side of the R419

- The provision of a Staff Car Park and Caravan Car Park so close to Kennels' Cross.
- Clarity required on the proposed bus and public service vehicle access points, and on collection and drop off points.
- The proposed Emergency Route is the main access Point to Emo Court. Can Organisers indicate how Emo Park is to be accessed by people not attending the proposed event and how this is to be managed from a traffic management aspect.
- Parking in Emo Village.

ASSESSMENT

The proposed event comprises a camping festival with live outdoor music on three stages together with a carnival area and a children's area at Celtic Emo GAA Club, Emo National School and various surrounding fields in Co. Laois. The camping fields will open on Thursday 20th July and close Monday 24th July, while event entertainment is proposed to be held on Friday 21st, Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd July.

This will be the second year of the Forestfest festival. The first festival was held on the site in 2022, albeit with a lower attendance of 4,000. An Event Licence was not therefore required, as per Article 183 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).

The applicant has submitted letters of consent from the various landowners to indicate their consent in relation to the use of their lands for the proposed event.

As set out in the Event Management Plan the anticipated maximum number of attendees will not exceed 10,000.

Details relation to the event site construction have not been provided.

The application is supported by the documentation required under Article 187 of the Regulations, including an Event Management Plan and layout drawings. The individual chapters in the draft Event Management Plan are as follows:

- Introductions and general arrangements;
- Meetings;
- Event management, safety and operational staff;
- Command and control;
- Security provision;
- Safety strategy;
- Event safety measures;
- Temporary demountable structures and infrastructure;
- Campsites and carparks;
- Environmental and welfare;
- Environmental monitoring and protection;
- Crowd management;

- Medical facilities;
- Emergency plans and procedures;
- Traffic management plan

Certain aspects of the above plan will be altered subject to the requirements and conditions of the statutory agencies including An Garda Síochána, the Fire Services, the HSE and the Planning Authority. It is recommended that an appropriately worded condition be attached to any grant of this Licence requiring a finalised Event Management Plan be submitted prior to the event taking place.

▪ Event Schedule

The approximate start and finish times for each day of the festival are provisionally scheduled as follows:

Date	Opening and Closing Times		
	Opening Time	Bar Closing Time	Arena Closing Time
Thursday 20 th July	Camping fields open at 16:00 hrs	No entertainment	No entertainment
Friday 21 st July	16.00 hrs	00.30hrs	01.00hrs
Saturday 22 nd July	12.00 hrs	00.30hrs	01.00hrs
Sunday 23 rd July	12.00 hrs	00.30hrs	01.00hrs
Monday 24 th July	Camping fields close at 12:00 hrs Site clearance will finish at 15:00 hrs	No entertainment	No entertainment

The above schedule is considered to be reasonable, and any significant variation in the above times shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the event.

▪ Traffic Management Plan

A Traffic Management Plan has been included in the submitted Event Management Plan. This has been reviewed by An Garda Síochána who have raised serious concerns. In particular:

- The event organisers propose to close two regional roads, the R422 (Mountmellick to Emo Road) and R419 (Portlaoise to Portarlinton Road). Both roads cater for a large volume of traffic. It is not feasible to close both roads without having a major impact on traffic. Consideration could be given to the closure of the R422 but in doing so access to the R419 becomes integral to the management of the alternative route.
- The provision of any parking on the Mountmellick side of the R419
- The provision of a Staff Car Park and Caravan Car Park so close to Kennels' Cross.
- Clarity required on the proposed bus and public service vehicle access points, and on collection and drop off points.
- The proposed Emergency Route is the main access Point to Emo Court. Can Organisers indicate how Emo Park is to be accessed by people not attending the proposed event and how this is to be managed from a traffic management aspect.
- Parking in Emo Village.

It is considered appropriate to seek further information in relation to these matters.

▪ Camping & Campervans

A number of camping and campervan sites are proposed to cater for the anticipated attendance. These are located on various parcels of land close to the main venue at Celtic Emo GAA Club and Emo National School. These sites include:

Site No.	Facilitates	Location
1	Main arena	East of the Strategic Regional road, R-422
2	Campsite	South of the Local Primary road, L-3154 – Behind the pub
3	Campervan (red)	East of the Strategic Regional road, R-419 – Emo tyres site
4	Caravan (green)	West of the Strategic Regional road, R-422
5	Caravan (yellow)	West of the Strategic Regional road, R-422
6	Caravan (purple)	West of the Strategic Regional road, R-419
7	Staff carpark	North of the Strategic Regional road, R-422 and west of the Strategic Regional road, R-419
8	Campervan (blue)	West of the Strategic Regional road, R-419
9	Park & Ride	North of the Strategic Regional road, R-445

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As a result of the above layout, it is proposed to barrier / fence the Strategic Regional road R-419. This is to provide a walkway to allow patrons to walk to the site of the main arena. Security is proposed along this walkway.

An Garda Síochána have raised serious concerns in relation to this proposal.

▪ **Parking / Drop off zones**

As stated, a number of camping and campervan sites are proposed to cater for the anticipated attendance. It is noted that a staff carpark is proposed close to Kennels' Cross. However, patron carparking has not been identified and it is not clear where a drop off zone for cars would be located.

The submitted documentation refers to a Park & Ride facility which would be located off the Strategic Regional road R-445. The Event Management Plan refers to bus linkages to the site and a bus drop off zone is located on the main arena site.

▪ **Road Closure**

It will be required to advertise the closure of public roads.

▪ **Medical Plan**

The HSE (Emergency Management Office) has not raised any objections to the proposal subject to conditions. This includes the submission of an Event Medical Plan which shall be agreed in writing with the HSE no later than two weeks prior to the event. This shall be included in the finalised Event Management Plan.

▪ **Environmental Monitoring**

- **Noise:** The submitted Event Management Plan states that sound levels will be monitored before and during the event. Further details have not been provided in relation to this matter.
- **Waste Management:** The submitted Event Management Plan states that a Litter and Waste Management Plan will be submitted as part of the finalised Event Management Plan.

In the event of the grant of an Event Licence, the conditions suggested by the HSE shall be attached.

- **Sanitation:** The submitted Event Management Plan provides a schedule of the proposed sanitation facilities based on the maximum event capacity of 10,000. The location of the proposed sanitation facilities has not been identified and it is not clear if servicing vehicles will be able to access these facilities. Uisce

Éireann have advised that wastewater collected at temporary sanitary facilities must be disposed of in an appropriately licensed waste or wastewater treatment facility. If the intended disposal route is to import the wastewater to an Uisce Éireann wastewater treatment plant, then the Uisce Éireann imported wastewater application process must be adhered to by the Event Manager. The Event Manager must apply to Uisce Éireann a minimum of eight weeks in advance of any imports being received.

It is considered that a Sanitation and Waste Management Plan is required as part of the finalised Event Management Plan.

- **Water Services:** Drinking water points will be provided and placed around the site to provide an adequate potable supply for attendees. Uisce Éireann have advised that where a new connection to public water mains is proposed, a connection agreement with Uisce Éireann shall be signed prior to any works commencing and connecting to the network.

NATURA 2000 SITES

An appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening Report has been prepared and is appended to this planning report.

DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION

Not application at this time given the recommendation for a request for Further Information

BOND

Not application at this time given the recommendation for a request for Further Information

CONCLUSION

Having regard to the consultations with the prescribed bodies it is noted that one submission has been received in relation to the proposed event. Furthermore, a number of the prescribed bodies have requested conditions in the event of a grant of the licence. However, An Garda Síochána have raised serious concerns particularly in relation to the proposed location of the camping and campervan sites. In accordance with Article 191 (1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), it is considered appropriate to seek further information in relation to these matters:

I am writing in relation to the submitted Licence application for the proposed 'Forest Fest 2023' event at Celtic Emo GAA Club, Emo National School and various surrounding fields.

As discussed at the meeting held on May 25th, An Garda Síochána have raised a number of concerns in relation to the content of the application. These can be summarised as follows:

- It is noted that it is proposed to close the Strategic Regional road R422 (Mountmellick to Emo Road). This proposal is acceptable in principle subject to a Road Closure agreement. It is accepted that there is no proposal to close the Strategic Regional road R419. However, the proposal to barrier / fence this road to provide a segregated walkway is unacceptable. This is for safety reasons. The freeflow of traffic along the R419 is imperative to traffic management and therefore any proposal to provide facilities to the west of the R419 cannot be supported and alternative proposals are required.
- Further concerns were raised at the meeting as follows:
 - A Public Service Vehicle plan is required
 - Clarity is required in relation to taxi / car collection and drop off points (note that this should be set away from the proposed bus drop off point).
 - The proposed Emergency Route is the main access point to Emo Court. It is not clear how visitors to Emo Court will access this amenity or how this will be managed in terms of traffic management.
 - Details relating to the proposed emergency route is required
 - Feedback from last year's event identified parking in Emo Village as a hazard to other road users and emergency vehicles. A proposal to address this issue is required. This proposal shall also seek to prevent double parking in the village.
 - Details of lighting are required.
- In addition to the concerns raised by An Garda Síochána, you are advised that:
 - Details in relation to the duration of site construction have not been provided.
 - The submitted Event Management Plan states that sound levels will be monitored before and during the event. Further details have not been provided but are required in relation to this matter.
 - The location of the proposed sanitation facilities has not been identified and it is not clear if servicing vehicles will be able to access these facilities. Uisce Éireann have advised that wastewater collected at temporary sanitary facilities must be disposed of in an appropriately licensed waste or wastewater treatment facility. If the intended disposal route is to import the wastewater to an Uisce Éireann wastewater treatment plant, then the Uisce Éireann imported wastewater application process must be adhered to by the Event

Manager. The Event Manager must apply to Uisce Éireann a minimum of eight weeks in advance of any imports being received.

In accordance with Article 191 (1) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended), further information in relation to the above matters is required. Please note that the Local Authority must make a decision on the licence application by June 22nd (4 weeks prior to the date for the holding of the event). Your prompt response to the above raised matters is therefor imperative.

Olive O'Donnell

Olive O'Donnell, Executive Planner, 08/06/2023

D. J. O'Hara
Senior Planner
8/6/23

**APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT SCREENING REPORT
AND
DETERMINATION**

(A) Project Details			
Licence File Ref	LIC 23 - 02		
Applicant name	Forestfest Ltd.		
Development Location	Celtic Emo GAA Club, Emo National School and various surrounding fields.		
Application accompanied by an EIS (Yes/NO)	No		
Distance from Natura 2000 site in km	The nearest Natura 2000 Site is the Mountmellick SAC which is located circa 5kmwest of the subject site.		
Description of the project/proposed development			
The applicant is seeking an Event Licence to stage a music festival with camping between July 21 st and July 24 th 2023, at Celtic Emo GAA Club, Emo National School and various surrounding fields.			
(B) Identification of Natura 2000 sites which may be impacted by the proposed development			
		Yes/No	
		If answer is yes, identify list name of Natura 2000 site likely to be impacted.	
1	Impacts on sites designated for freshwater habitats or species. <u>Sites to consider:</u> Mountmellick SAC	<i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include freshwater habitats and/or species, or in the catchment (upstream or downstream) of same?</i>	No

2	Impacts on sites designated for wetland habitats - bogs, fens, marshes and heath. <u>Sites to consider:</u> Mountmellick SAC	<i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include wetland habitats (bog, marsh, fen or heath)</i>	No
3	Impacts on designated terrestrial habitats. <u>Sites to consider:</u> Mountmellick SAC	<i>Is the development within a Special Area of Conservation whose qualifying interests include woodlands, dunes or grasslands, or within 100m of same?</i>	No
4	Impacts on birds in SPAs <u>Sites to consider:</u> River Nore	<i>Is the development within a Special Protection Area?</i>	No

Conclusion:

If the answer to all of the above is **No**, significant impacts can be ruled out for habitats and bird species.

No further assessment in relation to habitats or birds is required.

If the answer is **Yes** refer to the relevant sections of C.

(G) SCREENING CONCLUSION STATEMENT		
<i>Selected relevant category for project assessed by ticking box.</i>		
1	AA is not required because the project is directly connected with/necessary to the conservation management of the site	
2	No potential significant affects/AA is not required	X
3	Significant effects are certain, likely or uncertain. Seek a Natura Impact Statement Reject proposal. (Reject if potentially damaging/inappropriate)	
Justify why it falls into relevant category above (based on information in above tables)		
Having regard to the proximity of the nearest Natura 2000 site and given the nature and extent of the proposed development, with no direct connections to the hydrology of the SAC/SPA, it is not considered there would be potential for significant effects on the Natura 2000 network.		
Name:	Olive O'Donnell	
Position:	Executive Planner	
Date:	08/06/2023	

