

Police issue £10,000 fine after illegal gathering, Norwich

A woman involved in an illegal gathering in Norwich yesterday (Thursday 24 September 2020) has been given a £10,000 fixed penalty notice.

It follows a gathering on the Haymarket which started just after midday and involved more than 80 people.

The 37-year-old, from the Norwich area, was arrested at the scene yesterday after refusing to provide her details to police. She was taken into custody at Wymondham and following enquiries later issued with the fixed penalty notice for contravening the ban on being involved in holding a gathering of more than 30 people.

In addition, a 25-year-old man from the Norwich area arrested at the scene on suspicion of common assault after allegedly coughing at a woman, has since been charged with the offence. He has been released on bail to appear at Norwich Magistrates Court on Monday 23 November.

Three other people at the gathering were reported for the offence of organising or facilitating a gathering of more than 30 people, in breach of the Health Protection Regulations.

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Megicks, who has been leading the local police response to the coronavirus, said: "As a police force, we fully appreciate how difficult the past six months have been for the county and I am pleased that the vast majority of people have played and continue to play their part, following the guidance and legislation helping to protect Norfolk and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"However, the infection rate is now rising rapidly across the country and while in Norfolk it is not increasing as significantly as other areas, we must carry on working together to keep everyone safe. Our focus will remain on our use of the 4Es – engaging, explaining, encouraging and then enforcing when required. The gathering yesterday was in breach of the Health Protection Regulations and we took action to disperse the group including making two arrests. We will all have a role to play in keeping our county safe going forward and we won't hesitate to take action if needed as yesterday demonstrated.

"We will also continue with our partnership approach, working closely with all our local authorities and Public Health colleagues as well as other sectors. Another part of the new restrictions meant that from yesterday all hospitality, leisure, entertainment and tourism businesses have to close by 10pm. This includes takeaways, though they will be able to deliver between the hours of 10pm and 5am. Our officers and dedicated licensing teams will work to fully engage with licensed premises holders and ensure they are aware of the legislation and comply. Local authority, environmental health, and trading standards officers will also be supporting businesses to ensure they adhere to the rules. If advice is ignored, fines can be imposed and prohibition notices issued for breaches, if necessary. We know that this is a particularly challenging

time for the hospitality industry, but the sooner we adhere to the rules, the slower the virus will spread and the sooner we will be able to get back to a sense of 'normal'.

"We police by consent and we need people and businesses to work with us on this. Our approach will remain the same: engaging with people first, explaining the guidance and law and encouraging people to do the right thing. However, we will not sit back and allow people to deliberately break the law. Where we are left with no choice but to enforce we will do so to protect our communities.

"If members of the public are concerned that the law is being broken or they are experiencing anti-social behaviour, they can report this to us and we will consider the most appropriate response, targeting repeat and high risk behaviour. We all have a personal responsibility to reduce the spread of Coronavirus, and ensure that police enforcement is used only as a last resort. Reports should be made through our online reporting wherever possible."