

Financial trouble in the Notting Hill Carnival food festival paradise

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions. Give details.

- Have you ever been to a street festival? How was it? Did you enjoy it?
- What are some advantages of local community events like street festivals?
- What are some disadvantages of local festivals?

2 Reading for gist

a. Read the article quickly and choose the statement that best summarises the main idea.

1. This year, everything will cost more at the Notting Hills Carnival because the sellers want to make more profit.
2. This year, customers will pay higher prices at the famous Caribbean festival because of rising costs of produce, rent and staff.
3. The community must support the festival stalls even if they're expensive to keep the culture alive.

3 Key words

a. Choose the key words that match the definitions. Check your answers and your understanding of how the words are used by using them to complete the example sentence immediately after each definition. Use a capital letter where needed. Then read the complete article to see how the key words are used in context.

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| lobby groups | input costs | compiled | soaring | watchdog |
| buckle from | base business | poultry | prompted | revellers |
| carpenter | mitigate | solidify | ongoing | |
| persistent | steeper | race riots | threshold | |
| cultural touchstone | owing to | welfare | upmarket | |

1. _____ are birds such as chickens, ducks or turkeys that are often produced for food.

The local _____ industry saw higher sales during the holiday season.

2. _____ are people who enjoy themselves loudly and actively, especially at parties or festivals.

The streets of Rio were full of _____, celebrating the carnival late into the night.

3. To _____ something means to collapse under pressure or weight.
Several temporary stalls began to _____ too many revellers leaning on them.
4. _____ describes something unpleasant that continues for a long period.
The company has faced _____ issues with supply chain delays.
5. To _____ means to reduce the negative effects of something.
The festival organisers tried to _____ complaints about noise during the street festival.
6. A(n) _____ is the point at which something starts or changes.
Sales reached the _____ that allowed the stall to be able to make a profit.
7. _____ are what is necessary to pay to produce goods or services.
Rising _____ forced the festival vendors to raise their prices.
8. If something is _____, it is increasing quickly, often unexpectedly.
Hotel bookings were _____ as runners rushed to get accommodation before the marathon.
9. _____ refers to groups that actively campaign on a particular issue.
Several _____ protested against excessive commercialisation of the festival.
10. A(n) _____ is a skilled worker who makes or repairs wooden objects.
A local _____ built the stage that became the festival's centerpiece.
11. To _____ means to make something stronger, more definite or more certain.
The successful festival helped to _____ the city's reputation as a cultural destination.

12. A(n) _____ is an object, event or tradition that has strong symbolic importance in a culture.

The annual parade is a(n) _____ of the community's identity.

13. If something is _____, it is for wealthy or high-end customers.

A(n) _____ hotel chain sponsored the carnival, hoping to attract wealthy customers.

14. _____ means because of or as a result of something.

Many small businesses made a profit _____ the influx of tourists.

15. A(n) _____ is an official organisation that monitors standards or behaviour in a particular area.

A government _____ checked that all food stalls complied with hygiene rules.

16. _____ describes something that is more difficult or challenging.

The new tax policy created a(n) _____ slope for small business profits.

17. _____ means repeated, continuing or not finished.

The company is busy with _____ negotiations with suppliers over contract terms.

18. A(n) _____ refers to a core or main business activity.

The café's _____ is selling regional coffee, though it also offers cakes and muffins.

19. _____ means gathered or brought together information or data.

A report _____ customer feedback from the last festival.

20. _____ is care for people's health, happiness and living conditions.

Festival planning must take the _____ of the local residents into account.

21. _____ refers to violent disturbances between groups of people of different racial backgrounds.

Authorities worked hard to prevent _____ during the carnival weekend.

22. _____ means was quick to cause action or attention.

The sudden rise in prices _____ the local vendors to adjust their stock.

Notting Hill Carnival food sellers grapple with rising costs

TRADERS PLAN TO USE CHEAP CUTS OF CHICKEN AS THEY WARN OF HIT FROM RISE IN EMPLOYER NATIONAL INSURANCE CONTRIBUTIONS

BY JOSH GABERT-DOYON

- 1 Street food vendors at Notting Hill Carnival are downsizing operations and revising their menus in the face of rising poultry prices and labour costs, as the UK hospitality sector buckles from financial pressures.
- 2 The two-day celebration of Caribbean culture, which starts on Sunday, draws millions of revellers to west London each year, as dozens of sound systems, steel pan groups and colourful masquerade bands parade through the streets.
- 3 But traders preparing for this year's edition told the Financial Times that persistent cost inflation and the government's increase in employer national insurance contributions had caused them to rethink their approach.
- 4 Annette Evans, co-owner of Jerk Hub, which has worked at the event since 2021, said the food stall would halve its staff to six from 12 previously, and use an agency "rather than employing directly" to mitigate the NICs rise.
- 5 The company would also switch boneless chicken thighs to cheaper cuts of bone-in chicken in order to lower costs, Evans said.
- 6 "Chicken is the big seller at carnival and we're going through a fair bit of it every single day," she added, noting that the stall would charge 15 British pounds per meal this year, up from 14 British pounds last year and 10 British pounds four years ago.
- 7 Diego Burton said he would be working alone at the Jerk Pon Da Corner food stand, after profitability fears forced him to cut back his usual staff of five. Steeper poultry prices meant he had reduced the supply of chicken and would focus on serving curry goat dishes, Burton added.
- 8 "I'm stressing quite a bit," he said. "The cost of everything is going up; chicken is expensive now."
- 9 Restaurants, pubs and lobby groups have warned of higher employment costs as a result of the rise in employer NICs, which was announced in the October Budget last year and took effect in April.
- 10 Under the change, the NICs rate rose from 13.8 per cent to 15 per cent, with employers starting to pay the tax from salaries of 5,000 British pounds a year, instead of the previous threshold of 9,100 British pounds.
- 11 Higher input costs have also hit some operators in the sector, with the retail cost of fresh chicken soaring by more than 46 per cent — or 3.47 British pounds a kilo — in the year to August 2025, according to data from large grocery stores compiled by market research agency Assosia.
- 12 Welfare improvements, higher labour processing costs and EU-UK trade regulations have contributed to the rise in prices.
- 13 Several traders also said that fees they were required to pay to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the local authority where the carnival is held, had surged in recent years.
- 14 The council said fees — which vary according to a stall's location and size — had on average risen by 2 British pounds per square metre a year in order to support "toilets, safety checks and the clean-up". Notting Hill Carnival Ltd, the non-profit that organises the event, did not immediately comment.
- 15 The carnival in its current form came into being in 1966, after community organiser Rhaune Laslett had arranged a parade from Earl's Court to Ladbroke Grove two years earlier. It followed race riots and the racially motivated, still unsolved murder of 32-year-old Antiguan carpenter Kelso Cochrane.

Continued on next page

- 16 Members of the “Windrush generation”, who migrated from the Caribbean to Britain last century, were integral in establishing the carnival.
- 17 Over time the lively parade and open-air sound system sessions — along with performances by acts such as Jay Z, Busta Rhymes, and Stormzy — have helped solidify the event as a cultural touchstone in what has become an upmarket neighbourhood.
- 18 Caribbean food and drink seller Dub Pan, which has six locations across London, has decided against setting up a stall at this year’s carnival, owing to the NICs rise and logistical difficulties caused by tight policing.
- 19 “National insurance is adding pressure to our base business,” said Matin Miah, Dub Pan’s chief executive, adding that “concerns about security [and] safety of the team” had prompted the business not to attend for the first time in three years.
- 20 Policing at the free two-day event remains controversial. This weekend the Metropolitan Police will reintroduce live facial recognition technology at the carnival for the first time since 2017, insisting that there are “strong safeguards in place” to avoid discrimination and protect human rights.
- 21 A judicial review of the Met’s use of the technology is ongoing; this week the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the UK equalities watchdog, said the police force’s deployment of it was “unlawful”.
- 22 Jerk Hub’s Evans said that despite the financial difficulties and criticism over policing and safety at the carnival, it was important to be present.
- 23 “The Windrush generation has come here and established quite well. To have that taken away just because of the cost of ingredients would be a shame,” she said. “It’s really important to us to keep our culture alive.”

FT

Josh Gabert-Doyon, 22 August, 2025.

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4 Understanding the article

a. Read the article carefully, then choose the correct option for each sentence below.

1. Labour and produce costs have made the vendors at the festival ...
 - a. fire the current staff.
 - b. reduce their business and change the food they serve.
 - c. boycott the festival.
2. Anette Evans says her company had to reduce the staff for the festival ...
 - a. by 50 per cent.
 - b. by 70 per cent.
 - c. by 25 per cent.
3. The price of a meal at Evans' stall has ...
 - a. doubled in recent years.
 - b. increased by 50 percent from four years ago.
 - c. increased by 4 British pounds from last year to this.
4. The changes to National Insurance Contributions (NICs) have ...
 - a. made it more expensive for the vendors to hire staff for the festival.
 - b. made the poultry prices higher.
 - c. reduced labour cost.
5. The rent for the location of a stall has ...
 - a. decreased since last year.
 - b. increased since last year.
 - c. stayed the same over the years.

6. The festival was started by immigrants who came from the Caribbean in ...
 - a. the 19th century.
 - b. the 20th century.
 - c. the 21st century.
7. Dub Pan decided not to run a stall at the festival because ...
 - a. of a bad experience last year.
 - b. it can't find staff.
 - c. the increase in staff cost and management requirements made it too complicated.
8. Anette Evans thinks even if it is difficult, she should be at the festival because ...
 - a. it's important for the minority culture.
 - b. it's profitable.
 - c. it's fun.

5 Business language – reported speech

- a. Look at these sentences from the article. Fill in the gaps in the rules for forming reported speech.

Several traders also said that fees they were required to pay to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea had surged in recent years.

The council said fees had on average risen by 2 British pounds per square metre a year in order to support "toilets, safety checks and the clean-up".

Diego Burton said he would be working alone at the Jerk Pon Da Corner food stand.

The company would also switch boneless chicken thighs to cheaper cuts of bone-in chicken in order to lower costs, Evans said.

| Direct Speech | Indirect speech |
|---|---------------------------------|
| <i>to be (is / are)</i> | _____ |
| Present perfect <i>have + past participle</i> | _____ + past participle |
| Future Simple <i>will + verb</i> | _____ + verb |
| Future continuous <i>will + be + verb + -ing</i> | _____ + <i>be + verb + -ing</i> |

b. Rewrite the sentences in task a into direct speech.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

c. Rewrite these sentences into reported speech.

- "We'll be cutting down on costs by reducing the staff."
They said _____.
- "The cost of the basic produce we use to make the food for the festival has increased steeply."
They said that _____.
- "We are forced to pay higher rent fees this year because of the cost of security."
They said that _____.
- "I'll see how this year's festival goes and rethink my participation next year."
He said that _____.

6 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

1. Who is usually the most affected by government increases in insurance costs? Why?
2. What are some benefits for a business of appearing at a local festival like this?
3. Do you agree with Anette Evans that such festivals are important for cultural identity?
4. What are some of the challenges of ensuring safety at large outdoor events like this one?

7 Wider business theme – memo about labour costs

a. You are the CFO of a medium-sized business. The government is going to change some tax and national insurance laws. These changes will affect your operations greatly by increasing employment costs. Follow the steps below to write a memo to your board informing them of these changes and requesting a meeting to discuss steps to mitigate this hit.

1. Read the government announcement and fill in the gaps in the notes below.

Government announcement

The government has decided to introduce new measures to ensure sustainable public finances. From next quarter, national insurance contributions will rise by 2 per cent, and taxation on mid-sized companies with annual net profit over 10 million British pounds will increase by 1.5 per cent. These adjustments are necessary to protect the welfare programmes that we all benefit from and stabilise input costs for essential services like the National Health Service. We believe these changes are vital for long-term economic stability and funding of our essential public sector.

Notes:

1. National insurance contributions will rise by _____ per cent.
2. Taxation on mid-sized companies will increase by _____ per cent.
3. The government says these changes are needed to protect _____ programmes.
4. Officials argue that the measures are vital for long-term economic _____.

2. Write the memo to the board. Use the outline provided here.

- Heading (e.g. "Memo to the Board")
- Date and recipient(s)

- Purpose (explain the reason for writing)
- Summary of changes (tax and insurance increases, impact on costs)
- Implications (how this affects company finances and profitability)
- Call to action (request for a meeting, outline possible mitigation steps)
- Polite closing

3. Share your memo with your partner. Give them feedback on their memo. Did they follow the steps outlined above?

Useful language

These regulatory changes will have a significant impact on ...

We need to explore strategies to ...

It is essential that the board ...

The revised taxation policy will affect ...

I recommend ...