

## *Financial trouble in the Notting Hill Carnival food festival paradise*

### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions. Provide details for your answers.

- Which kind of outdoor events do you think are the most profitable: concerts, massive music festivals, cinema festivals or street carnivals?
- How do street festivals like carnivals benefit the local community?
- Do local festivals make more money than they cost?

### 2 Reading for gist

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

1. Food stall owners prioritise profits by drastically raising prices for this year's Notting Hill Carnival.
2. Rising costs of produce, rent and staff threaten a famous Caribbean festival.
3. Whatever the cost, the Caribbean community is determined to keep the Notting Hill festival going.

### 3 Key words

a. Read the definitions and find the key words in the article that match them. The section number is given in brackets to help you. Check your answers and understanding of the words by using them to complete the example sentences 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.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to birds such as chickens, ducks and turkeys that are kept for meat or eggs. (Paragraph 1)

*During the carnival weekend, local restaurants reported that demand for \_\_\_\_\_ dishes almost doubled.*

2. To \_\_\_\_\_ something means to collapse or give way under pressure. (Paragraph 1)

*Several temporary stalls began to \_\_\_\_\_ the weight of too many carnival goers leaning against them.*

3. \_\_\_\_\_ are people who are enjoying themselves in a lively and noisy way, especially at a party or festival. (Paragraph 2)

*Every year for the carnival, Notting Hill streets are filled with \_\_\_\_\_, enjoying the shows and food.*

4. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to make something less severe, harmful or serious.  
(Paragraph 4)

*Organisers tried to \_\_\_\_\_ noise complaints by setting a strict end time for live music.*

5. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is the level or point at which something starts to happen or change. (Paragraph 10)

*Ticket sales for the concert reached the \_\_\_\_\_ that made it profitable.*

6. \_\_\_\_\_ are the expenses a business has to pay to produce goods or services, such as materials and labour. (Paragraph 11)

*Rising \_\_\_\_\_ for food vendors meant higher prices for festival snacks this year.*

7. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is increasing very quickly, often at a worrying rate. (Paragraph 11)

*Tokyo hotels reported that bookings are \_\_\_\_\_ as runners rushed to secure accommodation before the marathon.*

8. \_\_\_\_\_ means health, happiness and good living conditions.  
(Paragraph 12)

*Community leaders emphasised that the festival must prioritise the \_\_\_\_\_ of residents as well as profit.*

9. \_\_\_\_\_ are violent disturbances between groups of people of different racial backgrounds. (Paragraph 15)

*The festival remained peaceful this year, in contrast to the \_\_\_\_\_ that often happened in the previous editions.*

10. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is a person who makes or repairs wooden objects or structures. (Paragraph 15)

*A local \_\_\_\_\_ built the wooden stalls for some of the vendors.*

11. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to make something more definite, stronger, or certain.

(Paragraph 17)

*The success of the event helped to \_\_\_\_\_ the city's reputation as a cultural destination.*

12. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is an object, event or tradition that has strong symbolic importance within a culture. (Paragraph 17)

*The annual parade is seen as a \_\_\_\_\_ of the community's shared identity.*

13. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is designed for or appealing to wealthy customers. (Paragraph 17)

*A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ hotel sponsored the carnival, hoping to attract wealthy international tourists.*

14. \_\_\_\_\_ means because of or as a result of something. (Paragraph 18)

*The local economy benefited \_\_\_\_\_ the influx of visitors during the festival.*

15. A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ is an official organisation or person whose job is to monitor standards or behaviour in a particular area. (Paragraph 21)

*A government \_\_\_\_\_ checked that all food stalls complied with hygiene regulations.*

## 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. Are these sentences True or False according to the information in the article? Tick (✓) the true sentences and rewrite the false ones.

1. Sellers at the Nottingham Carnival are worried about the increasing costs. ☐
2. Anette Evans says that the food vendors had to reduce staff by 50 per cent. ☐
3. The price of a meal at Evans' stall has doubled in recent years. ☐
4. Increases in National Insurance introduced by the government are also contributing to higher costs for employers. ☐
5. The cost of trade with the EU is one of the factors for the increase in costs. ☐
6. This year, the vendors at the Carnival will be paying more for renting the space. ☐
7. The Carnival was started by Caribbean immigrants in the 19th century. ☐
8. Martin Miah used to be a seller at the festival but decided to skip this year's edition. ☐
9. People are sceptical about the way the police are planning to ensure the safety of the festival goers. ☐
10. Anette Evans thinks the festival should continue even if it is difficult because it's important for the minority culture. ☐

## 5 Business language – paraphrasing direct quotes

a. Look at the sentences from paragraphs 7 and 8 below. Which phrase in paragraph 7 describes 'being stressed' about 'the cost of everything going up'.

*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.*

*"I'm stressing quite a bit," he said. "The cost of everything is going up; chicken is expensive now."*

**b. Match the direct quotes with their paraphrasing.**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. "The government bumping up the National Insurance costs will drive employment down."                                       | a. Long-time festival goers expressed concerns about the proposed safety measures.                           |
| 2. "We're stressing out about losing our jobs to AI."   | b. They expressed concern about the planned usage of invasive technology by the police.                      |
| 3. "Most of my classmates have no idea what we'll all do after graduating. The hiring's seemed to die out."                   | c. HR departments are warning of the decrease in employment as a result of the new National Insurance costs. |
| 4. "We're worried about the invasion of privacy from the face recognition technology used by the police during the Carnival." | d. The workers fear job losses as AI technology grows.   |
| 5. "I've been to every Notting Hill carnival over the years but the way the police says they'll monitor us doesn't sound OK." | e. Soon-to-be graduates remain uncertain about their career start as recruitment has declined drastically.   |

**c. Rewrite these sentences, turning the quotes into reported speech using the phrases in the brackets.**

- "I'm stressing out about what I'll do after I graduate next month." (students / express worries / career prospects)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- "I won't be able to hire as many people now that I have to pay more in National Insurance." (HR Director / warn of / employment costs)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- "I don't think banning phones at school will be all that easy to implement." (parents / express concern / effectiveness)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- "We've had problems finding skilled people, so we started offering more flexible home-office solutions." (business owners / struggle to / skilled hires)  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 6 Discussion

### a. Discuss these questions.

1. What are the social and cultural benefits of the type of festival described in the article?
2. Should the local government cover some of the extra costs of security for such festivals?
3. Is putting up temporary market or festival stalls a good way for local businesses to promote themselves? Why / why not?
4. In what ways do businesses usually mitigate the rising costs of staff and suppliers?

## 7 Wider business theme – business plan for a market stall

### a. You are the owner of a chain of restaurants in London, specialised in the popular regional dishes from your country. You want to promote your restaurants by setting up a stall at an upcoming food festival.

1. Read the text and fill in the notes with tips on making a successful business plan for the stall.

#### Market Stall

Opening a temporary stall at a street festival requires a clear business plan. Vendors must calculate input costs, from raw ingredients to staff wages. It's important to set prices that balance profitability with customer expectations. If you choose an upmarket product, you attract wealthier crowds, while offering affordable options appeals to local revellers. Location is crucial: stalls near cultural touchstones, such as the main parade route, guarantee visibility. To mitigate risks, businesses should plan for varied demand, especially dependent on the weather. Always have Plan B for when things go wrong.

Notes:

- Vendors must calculate \_\_\_\_\_, including raw ingredients and staff wages.
- Prices should balance \_\_\_\_\_ with customer expectations.
- A(n) \_\_\_\_\_ product attracts wealthier crowds, while affordable



options appeal to local revellers.

- Best location: near \_\_\_\_\_ like the main parade route for visibility.
- To mitigate risks, prepare for \_\_\_\_\_ demand and have a \_\_\_\_\_ for rainy days.

## 2. Write the business plan for your market stall:

- Products and dishes you want to have at the stall.
- Target customers – Who your main buyers are (e.g. wealthy tourists, local revellers, families)
- Pricing strategy – How you will balance profitability with affordability.
- Costs and resources – Estimate input costs (ingredients, equipment, staff).
- Location and setup – Where the stall will be and how it will be presented.
- Risk management – How you will mitigate risks such as bad weather or supply shortages.

### Useful language

*Our main objective is to attract ...*

*We aim to balance profitability with ...*

*One potential risk is ..., which we plan to mitigate by ...*

*Our unique selling point is ...*

*The chosen location will maximise visibility because ...*