CLIFF TOP MUSIC FESTIVAL 2025

Celebrating the Best of 1970s & 1980s Music

September 6th 2025 | Cliff Top Overspill Car park, Highcliffe

Report from Stir Events CIC
for
Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council









INTRODUCTION

- Festival Overview: A one-day ticketed event held in Highcliffe, set against a breathtaking backdrop overlooking the Isle of Wight.
- Emphasis on community, tourism, nostalgia, and a unique music experience.
- Event History & Vision: Now in its third year, building on the festival's growing reputation for excellent music, atmosphere, and community spirit.
- Location Highlight: Grassed Council Overspill Car Park adjacent to Wharncliffe Road—an ideal spot that combines accessibility with scenic views.

A YEAR IN THE PLANNING

- Planning for the 2025 Cliff Top Music Festival began in autumn 2024, with an initial review of the previous year's event and the creation of an updated project timeline.
- Over the following 12 months, Stir Events CIC led a comprehensive planning process, including the production of a detailed Event Management Plan (EMP), Risk Assessments, Site Plans, and operational documents in accordance with local authority and licensing requirements.
- Our team engaged in regular meetings with key suppliers — including stage and sound providers, fencing and toilet hire, security teams, and the park & ride operator — to coordinate logistics and ensure timely delivery.
- Sponsorship proposals were developed and shared with local businesses and larger regional brands, with particular success in the new Fund-a-Fence initiative and community business engagement.
- Public-facing work began in early 2025, with a call-out for artisans, food and drink traders, and charity/community stallholders.
- Simultaneously, Stir Events recruited a core group of volunteers and assigned roles to our paid freelance team, covering areas such as artist liaison, stewarding, stage management, marketing, and safety.
- As the creative vision came together, artists were booked, including headliner Odyssey, local favourites such as Sound of Soul Choir, The SoulSonics, All About Abba, and others.
- Family entertainment was also planned, with Punch & Judy, face painting, stilt walkers, and a themed entrance installation designed to enhance the visual impact and overall visitor experience.
- This collaborative and carefully managed process ensured a high-quality festival that reflected community values, strong artistic programming, and professional delivery.

SITE MAP- WHARNCLIFFE RD

This map shows the final layout of the 2025 event.

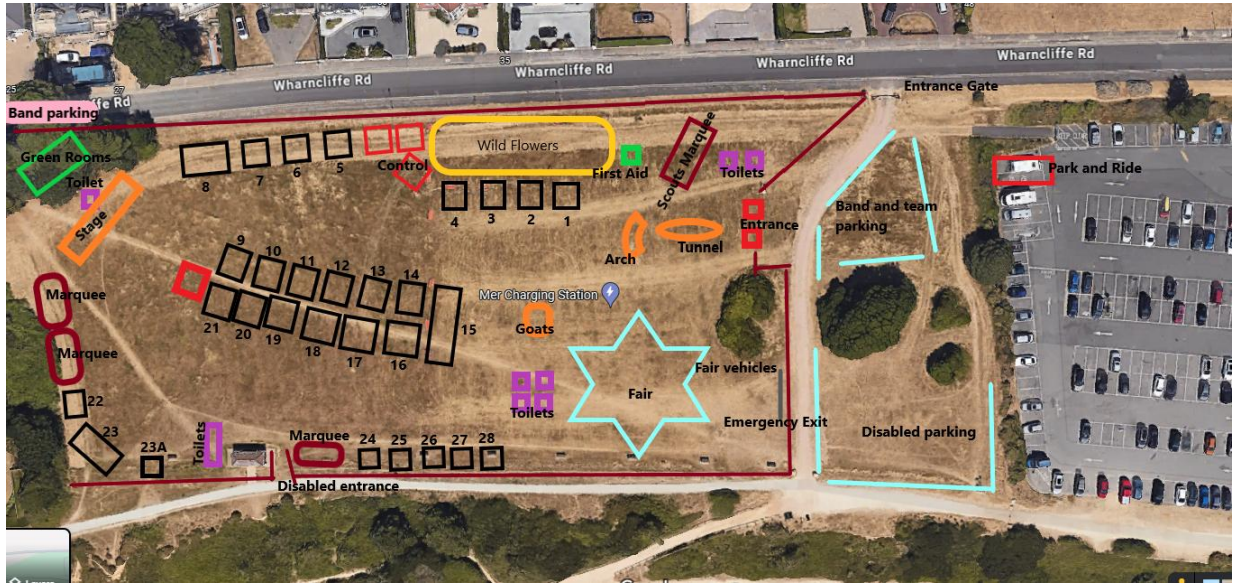
Changes to layout this year included the use of 3 10x4 meter marquees that were used to offer shelter from sun and rain. These were gifted to us by Westbourne Rotary Club.

We then changed the central trader's location nearer to the stage and directly behind the sound engineer.

With the help of local volunteers, we dressed the site with a new art installation – 70's style windmill tunnel to give visitors a colourful experience as they entered.

Banners from the 'Fund a Fence' initiative and sponsors were placed on the outside fences on Wharncliffe Rd.

These fences were then dressed in 120 meters of bunting made this year by local volunteers to give it a real festival feel!



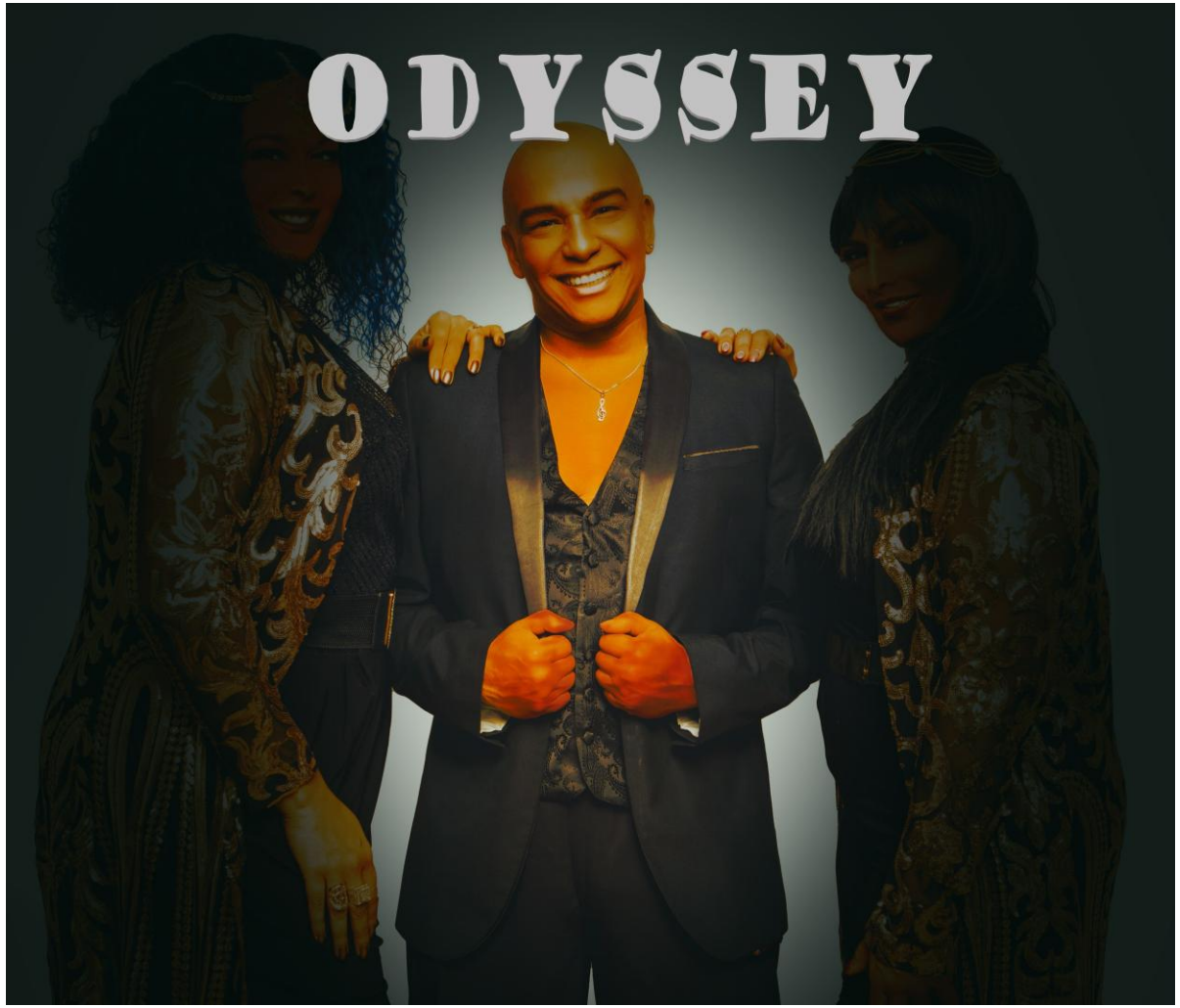
PARK & RIDE FAWCETT'S FIELD

- Fawcett's Filed in New Milton is the site of our dedicated Park &Ride service.
- This was set up in 2024 after the first festival in 2023 showed itself to be impactful where parking and visitors were concerned.
- The site is rented from New Milton Parish Council and can hold approximately 450 cars.
- Tomorrows Travel bus company were contracted to manage the transport.
- This year there was a lift up in usage from 2024. 40 cars used the site last year and 160 used it this year with 380 individual passengers registered as using the bus – counted both ways.
- New Milton Parish Council lifted the cost of hire 20% this year so we may have to review this as the park and ride location for next year.



THE MUSIC

- **Musical Focus:**
  - A celebration of the iconic sounds of the 1970s and 1980s.
- **Featured Artists:**
  - Headlined by the legendary **Odyssey**, along with a curated lineup of bands and artists that capture the era’s vibrant spirit.
- **Audience Appeal:**
  - Designed to draw residents, tourists, and nostalgic music lovers who appreciate classic hits and retro vibes.
- **Program Highlights:**
  - Live performances, themed DJ sets, and interactive musical experiences that recreate the magic of the decades.









VOLUNTEERS





Volunteers & Community Involvement

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Cliff Top Music Festival, forming the foundation upon which the event is delivered smoothly, safely, and with heart.

From welcoming visitors to assisting performers and supporting logistics, their presence ensures the festival runs to a professional standard while retaining its warm, community-driven ethos.

A wide range of volunteer roles were filled this year, including stage management, customer service, ticketing support, stewarding, park & ride operations, litter-picking, and general event assistance.

These roles were critical in creating an enjoyable and safe experience for all attendees.

We are incredibly grateful for the outstanding support of key local groups, including:

- Westbourne Rotary Club, who not only filled multiple key volunteer roles but also ran their own community stand and generously loaned three 10×4m marquees
- New Forest Litter Pickers, who helped maintain a clean and welcoming event site
- Highcliffe Scouts, who supported the volunteer effort and embodied the spirit of community service
- Highcliffe Residents Association, who gave fab individuals to help with earlier programme delivery
- Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council, whose generous funding enabled the event to take place
- And of course, the Stir Events volunteer CIC team and our network of paid freelance professionals, who delivered across site management, safety, artist liaison, and infrastructure
- All volunteers were offered training and exclusive access to the festival
- Our recruitment strategy focused on building strong local partnerships, outreach to schools and community groups, and targeted calls via social media.
- This collaborative approach is central to Stir Events CIC's ethos — working hand-in-hand with the local community to deliver events that are both high-quality and deeply rooted in place.



Bunting and windmills ! Hours of volunteer time













THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING



Delivering an event of the scale and standard of the Cliff Top Music Festival requires months of meticulous planning, underpinned by detailed logistics, strong local partnerships, and a constant focus on safety, quality, and visitor experience.

Site Management & Logistics:

At the heart of the planning process was the development of a robust Site Management Plan, covering every physical and operational aspect of the festival site.

This included:

- Installation schedules and layouts for Heras fencing, black-out sheets, and decorative bunting
- Sourcing and erection of large-scale marquees, gazebos, and the main performance stage
- Strategically placed toilets, bins, signage, and utilities to ensure functionality and cleanliness
- Clear zoned areas for food traders, artisan stalls, VIP, first aid, control, and stage management.
- Road management to ensure access for bands and artists plus accessibility for professional services

All logistics were designed to optimise flow, accessibility, and emergency access, ensuring a professional and safe layout across the clifftop site.

Seen here are staff from The Oaks who were our free water sponsors this year!

SAFETY & SECURITY

Public safety remained a core priority.

Stir Events CIC produced and submitted detailed Event Management Plans and Risk Assessments, in full compliance with BCP Council and Dorset Police requirements.

In line with the introduction of Martyn's Law, the event featured

- Enhanced security staffing, including bag checks at entry points
- Training for volunteers in suspicious package awareness and general safeguarding
- Crowd flow planning, with multiple entrance and exit points and steward coverage throughout
- These measures were visible but welcoming, reassuring attendees while maintaining a friendly festival atmosphere.
- Partnerships & Suppliers:

The event was delivered through an extensive network of local suppliers and partners. From stage hire and power, to food and drink traders, all businesses were vetted for quality, sustainability, and alignment with Stir Events CIC's community values.

Our strong relationships with businesses such as BH Dough Box, Sirius Catering, Holichow, and local artisan vendors ensured an exceptional visitor experience.

Highcliffe-based businesses, including our venue sponsor Cliffhanger Café, were central to delivery, with Stir Events always prioritising local spend and collaboration.

Contingency & Risk Management:

As with any outdoor event, weather planning was key. Risk mitigation strategies included

- Emergency response plans for wind, rain, or heat
- Loaned marquees from Westbourne Rotary providing shelter
- Daily checks of site infrastructure, and continual liaison with onsite control

These proactive approaches meant that even with some wind on the day, the event remained safe and enjoyable.





Ticketing & Entry Management



The Cliff Top Music Festival adopted a low-cost ticketed entry model via Eventbrite to ensure accessibility while generating vital income to support the event's delivery and growth.

This approach aimed to balance affordability with operational sustainability, helping cover essential costs such as staging, security, toilets, and infrastructure.

Sales Strategy & Channels:

- Tickets were made available through Eventbrite, our primary online sales platform, and were promoted via
- Stir Events' social media channels and newsletters
- Partner community groups and local event listings
- On-the-day gate sales, priced consistently with the final online price (£9 per adult)
- Children under 12 were admitted free of charge, with approximately 80 children attending.

We ran a phased pricing model to encourage early uptake:

- Early Bird Tickets at a low introductory price
- Standard online pricing as the event approached
- Gate price remained at £9, offering parity with online sales to ensure fairness

Total Sales & Revenue Impact;

Over 1,600 tickets were sold in total, with a mix of advance online and day-of sales. This provided a significant contribution to the event budget, alongside sponsorship and vendor fees

Operational Challenges & Learnings;

A key challenge this year involved the Eventbrite scanning equipment. Despite pre-ordering handheld scanners, they were not configured correctly upon delivery. As a result:

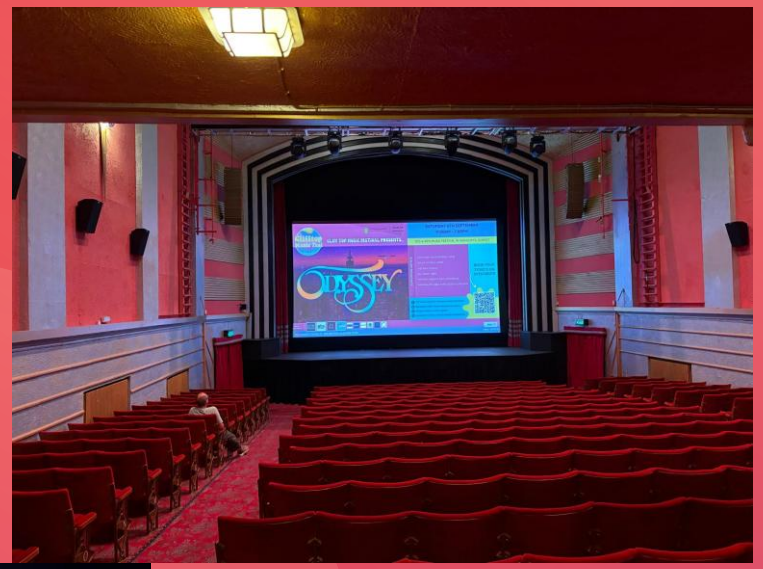
- Some attendees entered without proper scanning
- Gate management experienced bottlenecks and confusion

This was a valuable learning curve, and future planning will include:

- Early setup and testing of scanning equipment
- Designated queue lanes for pre-paid and pay-on-the-day tickets
- Improved training for gate volunteers and staff

Despite these issues, ticketing overall was a success and confirmed that a ticketed model is viable and valuable for future years. It enables better audience planning, improved site management, and sustainable event growth.









Marketing & Communications

Our marketing strategy for the Cliff Top Music Festival 2025 focused on community reach, regional visibility, and consistent messaging across both traditional and digital channels.
The campaign aimed to build excitement, drive ticket sales, and support sponsor visibility throughout the planning and delivery period.

Social Media:
Regular and engaging content was published across Facebook and Instagram, including artist announcements, trader showcases, safety updates, competitions, and thank-you messages.
Posts consistently achieved strong engagement, with standout content such as the Odyssey headliner and volunteer callouts receiving high interaction.
Live updates and photo shares on the day of the event added to the festival's online buzz.
Website:
The Highcliffe Village website hosted essential information about the festival, including the full line-up, FAQs, ticket links, accessibility guidance, and trader applications. The website was updated regularly and linked consistently from all social channels
Print & Promotional Materials:

- Official Festival Programme – distributed locally and at the event, showcasing sponsors, artists, traders, and the full schedule.
- A5 Leaflets – delivered to key locations across Christchurch, Highcliffe, and the New Forest.
- A3 Posters – displayed in shops, cafés, libraries, and community boards.
- Lamp Post Banners – strategically placed in Highcliffe to attract local attention in the weeks leading up to the festival
- Vinyl Banners – installed at key locations and partner premises, prominently displaying dates and ticketing information

Advertising & Media:

- The Regent Centre (Christchurch) – advertising slides ran before cinema showings for three weeks, helping reach family and adult audiences from across Dorset and Hampshire
- Press Releases – issued pre- and post-event, resulting in coverage from local media including the Bournemouth Echo and community websites. The post-festival press release highlighted community impact and volunteer support and was well received

Overall, our marketing activity effectively delivered awareness, supported strong ticket sales, and significantly elevated the profile of the event. Sponsor visibility was prominent across all materials and digital channels, delivering real value in return for their support.


Highcliffe & Walkford Parish Council
HEADLINE SPONSOR
Clifftop Music Fest
HIGHCLIFFE 2025
CLIFF TOP MUSIC FESTIVAL PRESENTS...
ODYSSEY
SATURDAY 6TH SEPTEMBER - 11.00AM - 7.00PM
70'S & 80'S MUSIC FESTIVAL IN HIGHCLIFFE, DORSET
SUPPORTING ARTISTS
YOUR HOST DAVE NORRELL! MR D!
SOUND OF SOUL CHOIR
THE SOUL SONICS
ALL ABOUT ABBA
MADISON HEIGHTS SOUL EXPERIENCE
IMMACULATE VIBES WITH JESSICA LOVELOCK
BOOK YOUR TICKETS ON EVENTBRITE
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P+
Park and Ride

WHAT WENT WELL / WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED



What Went Well:

- Headline Acts & Programme Delivery: The artist line-up, including headliners Odyssey, Madison Heights Soul Experience, and All About Abba, was extremely well received. Performances ran to time, and audience feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- Traders & Atmosphere: Artisan and food traders added vibrancy and quality to the festival experience. Businesses like BH Dough Box, Rocket Records, and Quay Pieces praised the organisation and atmosphere.
- Stage Sound & Branding: The upgraded stage scrim and event branding elevated the professional look of the site. The sound engineering team performed excellently, ensuring quality audio throughout.
- Community Engagement: The support of Westbourne Rotary, Highcliffe Scouts, New Forest Litter Pickers, Highcliffe Residents Association, and Stir Events volunteers created a genuine community-led environment that attendees commented on with appreciation.
- Park & Ride Usage: 160 people used the Fawcett's Field service, proving that sustainable transport options are both viable and welcomed by attendees.

WHAT WENT WELL / WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED



What Could Be Improved:

Site Layout & Visibility:

The layout of the trading stalls unintentionally divided the crowd and obstructed sightlines to the stage. In 2026, the stage will be repositioned and all trade stands moved to the perimeter to preserve the open arena layout.

Facilities:

Toilets were insufficient at peak times, with noticeable queues. We will increase the provision for next year to better meet demand.

Bar Provision:

The bars did not meet the agreed service level, running out of key drinks (e.g. wine) by 3pm and providing limited choice. This caused long, time consuming queues. Additionally, a serious breach occurred when one bar was caught serving drinks in glass containers, which directly violated event safety policies. This was swiftly addressed by security, but it highlighted unacceptable practice. As a result, we will be reviewing bar contracts for 2026, introducing stricter agreements, and sourcing new suppliers with greater capacity, compliance, and professionalism. We shall also be implementing a returnable cup strategy and be requesting new bar suppliers to have covered queuing areas.

Park & Ride Staffing:

While well used, the staffing of the park & ride suffered when key members of the paid team called in unwell. This affected the wider operations team, with internal staff having to be redeployed to cover. Contingency planning and backup staffing structures will be a focus in 2026.

Artist Facilities:

While artists praised the event, backstage facilities could be improved. In particular, we will source white or clear-topped green room gazebos to ensure performers can prepare comfortably and with better visibility.

FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

Here is a snapshot of feedback from our community and performers:

"Fabulous acts! One of the best days of the year!"

Maria Kavanagh "Such a brilliant day! Amazing crowd and outfits!"

The SoulSonics "You smashed it! What a team – can't wait for next year."

The Real Deal UK "Absolutely brilliant music event. I arrived at 11:15am and stayed until the very end. Loved every second."

Ruth Marsh "What a day. Odyssey were outstanding!"

Lee Smith "Can't fault the organisation – well done to all the staff and volunteers."

John Hughes "Fantastic event – especially loved seeing our clothes being worn!" – Lavanta Bay"

Please let us know the date for next year – we're booking our accommodation now!" – Mandy Long

Maria Kavanagh"The siting of a few stalls in the middle taking up valuable viewing space was a bit annoying. I understand and want to support local businesses, but I believe everyone still would if they were around the edge or at the back. Maybe next year more bars. At 3pm they ran out of wine....a bit of an underestimate. A few more toilets might be good too."

Venetia Anderson"Great day 😃… Particularly Odyssey! The only comment I would like to make is why the tents were placed down the middle of the grass? Causing less space for everyone to see the stage... Otherwise a great event."

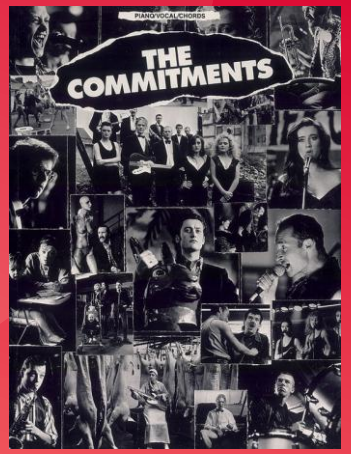
Peter Loizou"Fantastic day, been to the last two as well – thanks to everyone involved. Plenty of dancing and a few beers and food. Looking forward to next year! If I could add a little input – the vendors should be around the sides instead of down the middle. All in all, thanks again."

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026!

- We are thrilled to confirm that Cliff Top Music Festival will return as a two-day event on: Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th September 2026
- We are applying to have our premises licence updated to make it a two-day event
- With themed music days (Soul Saturday / Glam Rock Sunday), we aim to build on the success of 2025 and create an even more vibrant and memorable experience for Highcliffe.
- Your continued support will be essential in making this possible. From all of us at Stir Events CIC – thank you for backing local community events that bring joy, tourism, and pride to our coastal town.

…..and the Saturday headliner for next year is definitely one to get your autograph books out for!.....

THE COMMITMENTS!

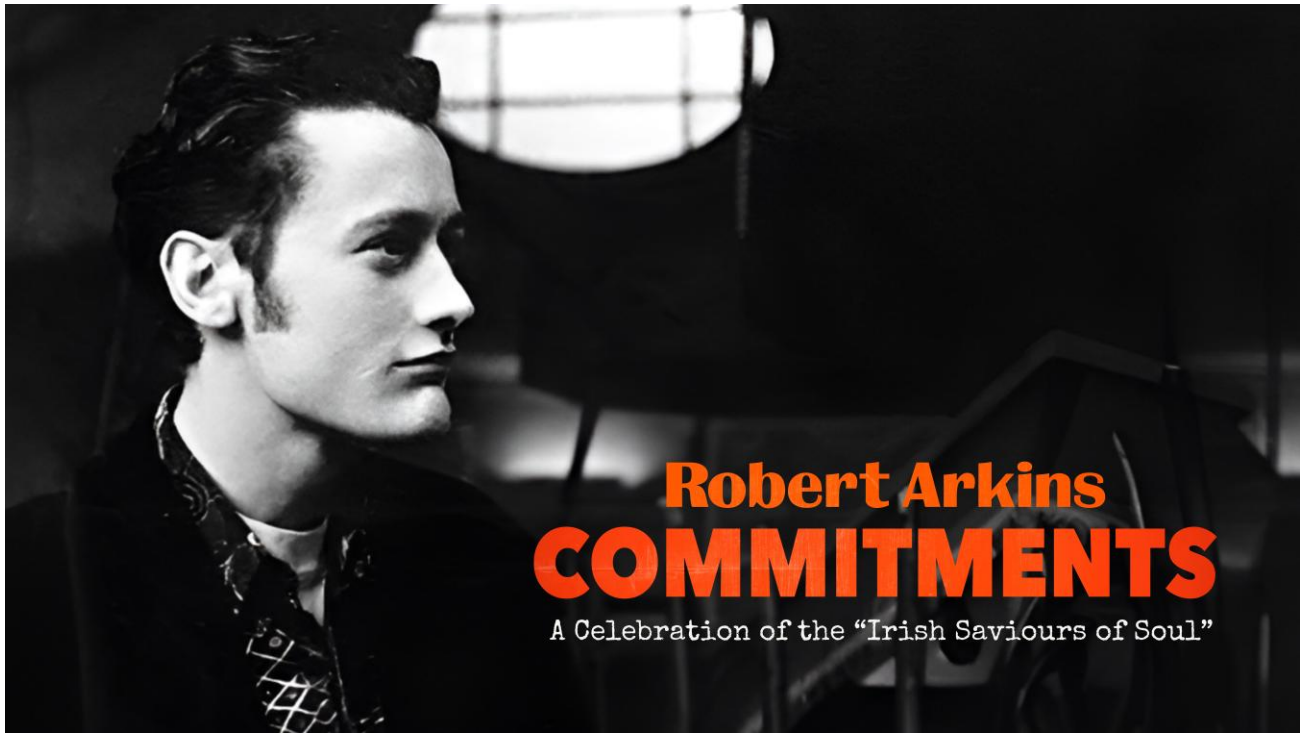


We are absolutely thrilled to announce that Robert Arkins and The Commitments will headline the Cliff Top Music Festival 2026.!

Known globally for their electrifying performances and unforgettable soul anthems from the iconic 1991 film The Commitments, this legendary band brings with them a catalogue of powerhouse hits including Mustang Sally, Try a Little Tenderness, and Take Me to the River.

Led by original cast member and lead vocalist Robert Arkins, their live shows are packed with energy, authenticity, and pure soul.

This headline performance promises to be a standout moment in the festival's history – an unmissable experience for fans of classic soul and unforgettable live music. Get ready to dance, sing, and relive the magic of one of the most celebrated Irish soul bands of all time!



This report has been complied for Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council

By

Mandy Polkey and the Stir Events CIC Team

24/10/2025

www.eventsbystir.com