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## Council denies failing to protect the public at carriage death fair

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*The dramatic scene as the horse collapsed to the ground at Nowton Park Country Fair Picture SASASTRO*

Organisers failed to take 'simple' steps to ensure visitor safety at a country fair where a woman was fatally injured by a bolting horse, prosecutors have claimed.

At Ipswich Crown Court this week St Edmundsbury Borough Council denied failing to take adequate steps to protect the public at the Nowton Park Country Fair in June 2011.

The jury heard how a bolting horse injured ten people and how Carole Bullett, 57, from Clark Walk, Bury, died in Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge the next day having sustained serious chest injuries.

Prosecuting, Jonathan Ashley-Norman alleged that the council had failed to take 'simple' steps to ensure members of the public were not exposed to risk as a result of the operation of horse and carriage rides.

John Smithson, park operations manager for the council, refuted claims by the Health and Safety Executive that he should have seen a written safety plan from carriage ride operator Duncan Drye. A plan was only seen by Mr Smithson after the accident, the court heard.

When the trial began, Mr Ashley-Norman said the safety plan drawn up by Mr Drye was 'a woeful document. It was wholly inadequate.'

It was alleged that a woman assisting Mr Drye had 'broken a cardinal rule' by removing the horse's bridle, which was essential to control it, moments before it bolted.

Giving evidence, Mr Smithson said he had been satisfied with the results of a site meeting with Mr Drye three days before the fair and knew of his carriage rides in the town centre and for Greene King.

Mr Smithson said: "Whenever you were in his presence with the horses you felt relaxed because you felt he was in control of the situation."

Mr Smithson said that if he had not felt completely assured of the safety of the carriage rides to be offered at the country fair he would not have allowed them to go ahead.

Mr Drye, 64, of Bishops Road, Bury St Edmunds has pleaded guilty to breaching health and safety legislation.

Reading from a list of facts accepted by both the prosecution and defence Mr Ashley-Norman told the jury that the horse which bolted, three and a half year old Lucas, had been seen to rear up and appeared at one stage to be agitated and reluctant to pull the carriage.

Lucas was subsequently put down in January 2012 for unconnected medical reasons. The trial continues.