

Bid to Host the Eurovision Song Contest 2023

Date: 5 September 2022

Report of: Director of City Development, Leeds City Council

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) is the world's largest live music event, organised annually since 1956 by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which represents public service media in 56 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

The EBU has agreed that the event will be held in the United Kingdom in 2023 with the BBC as Host Broadcaster. Having made the decision to host in the UK the next key decision for the BBC and the EBU is to identify a city in the UK to host the event. The BBC began a Host City selection process in late July 2022 which invited cities to formally express their interest.

In August 2022 Leeds were shortlisted with six other UK cities. The next stage of the process requires each shortlisted city to provide detailed information to the BBC (referred to here as a *bid submission*) which will be used to identify the preferred Host City. The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of Executive Board ahead of bid submission. Details are necessarily confidential due to the nature of the process and are therefore included in confidential Appendix 1.

It is a matter of deep regret to Leeds City Council that, having won the Eurovision Song Contest, Ukraine will be unable to host the event. As a city we will put our heart and soul into hosting Eurovision for Ukraine. We have already engaged our 5000 strong¹ Ukrainian community across Leeds and Yorkshire including Bradford, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Together we'll make this a region wide celebration for Ukraine.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- (i) Approve the submission of Leeds' bid to host the Eurovision Song Contest 2023; and to approve the councils' financial contribution to Eurovision as detailed in the confidential appendix and delegate the final composition of the funding mix to the Director of City Development in consultation with the Chief Officer Financial Services and with the Executive Members for Economy, Culture and Education and Resources.

- (ii) To agree that the decisions taken in relation to this report be exempt from Call In due to the short time scale of the bidding process and to ensure that the submission deadline is met.

What is this report about?

- 1 The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) is the world's largest live music event, organised annually since 1956 by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which represents public service media in 56 countries in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.
- 2 In 2022 Eurovision reached over 180 million viewers on TV and digital platforms. The competition was won by the band *Kalush Orchestra* from Ukraine with their song *Stefania*. Under normal circumstances this would mean that the ESC in 2023 would be held in Ukraine. However, in light of the war in Ukraine and the challenges this presents in terms of hosting a complex international event the EBU has agreed that the event will be held in the United Kingdom in 2023 with the BBC as Host Broadcaster.
- 3 Having made the decision to host in the UK the next key decision for the BBC and the EBU is to identify a city in the UK to host the event. To identify the host city the BBC began a Host City selection process in late July 2022 which invited cities to formally express their interest.
- 4 On 12 August 2022 the BBC announced that Leeds had been shortlisted alongside Birmingham, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield. A total of 20 cities expressed an interest in becoming the UK Host City for Eurovision 2023.
- 5 The next stage of the process requires each shortlisted city to provide the details of their proposed approach to hosting Eurovision to the BBC (referred to here as a *bid submission*) which will be used to identify the preferred Host City. The purpose of this report is to seek the approval of the bid submission by Executive Board before it is submitted to the BBC. Details are necessarily confidential due to the nature of the process and are therefore included in confidential Appendix 1.
- 6 It is a matter of deep regret to Leeds City Council that, having won the Eurovision Song Contest, Ukraine will be unable to host the event. As a city we will put our heart and soul into hosting Eurovision for Ukraine. We have already engaged our 5000 strong¹ Ukrainian community across Leeds and Yorkshire including Bradford, Huddersfield and Wakefield. Together we'll make this a region wide celebration for Ukraine.
- 7 We continue to progress towards our twinning with the Ukrainian City of Kharkiv, an expression of our solidarity and compassion for Ukraine.
- 8 Ukrainian artists call Leeds home, including The Ukrainians, the Leeds band that's been wowing audiences for 32 years with its fusion of western rock music and Ukrainian folk. They have performed in over 30 European countries, including to 50,000 in Kyiv's Independence Square celebrating the 2nd Anniversary of independence from the Soviet Union in 1993. The band is fundraising for Ukrainian refugees and symbolise above anything else why Leeds is the perfect cultural fit to host Eurovision 2023.
- 9 In 2023 Leeds will be letting culture loose with our international year of culture. A legacy of our European Capital of Culture bid (withdrawn when UK cities no longer qualified), the programme involves cities and communities across Europe and has the capacity to expand to specifically celebrate contemporary music and Ukrainian culture.

¹ The Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain estimated that 5000 Ukrainians were living in Yorkshire and the Humber before the Government schemes to settle refugees from Ukraine were put in place.

- 10 The programme is rooted in the diverse culture and communities of our city (over 170 languages spoken here) and region. Those communities' international connections, alongside international business networks, and the city's musical heritage make Leeds the ideal host for Eurovision 2023. Leeds 2023 also provides the infrastructure to ensure measurement and delivery of lasting benefits of hosting Eurovision.
- 11 Leeds is recognised globally as a birthplace for innovative and diverse new music, influencing artists across the world. From Gang of Four who put the groove into punk rock inspiring the Red Hot Chilli Peppers and Nirvana, to Corinne Bailey-Rae's impact on contemporary crossover artists between jazz and pop, and the godfathers of Goth Sisters of Mercy, who influenced 2021 ESC winners Maneskin. The legacy continues with Mercury Prize nominated Yard Act, harnessing the energy of Chumbawumba.
- 12 New music flows through Leeds with young talent engaged in courses across four universities. Students come from across Europe, including Italian rapper Blackson and ESC 2022 Czech entry, We are Domi.
- 13 Leeds is equally famous for its large-scale live music events, with Live at Leeds by The Who being the most famous live album in the world, and Leeds Festival annually attracting over 100,000 attendees as well as a huge audience through BBC radio and streaming platforms.
- 14 We deliver through strong regional relationships, and we'll build on partnerships with Kirklees Year of Music and Bradford, UK City of Culture 2025. In Wakefield, Production Park provides the number one live events production destination in Europe (with Coldplay and Little Mix utilising its arena-sized rehearsal space). Events like The Tour de France Cultural Festival and the Rugby League World Cup mean relationships across the region are mature, and now given additional depth through the West Yorkshire Mayor, Tracy Brabin who has made culture a priority.
- 15 Leeds has the necessary infrastructure with an arena that has a capacity of 13,781, and with an operator (ASM Global) that has experience of hosting Eurovision in Stockholm in 2016. Leeds has over 7,200 hotel beds within the city and there are a further 14,655 bed spaces within one hour travel of Leeds. This doesn't include hotel beds in Manchester which is less than an hour from Leeds by train.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 16 Subject to the bid being successful, the event will have a significant impact on the city and specifically Little London and Woodhouse and Hunslet and Riverside wards. This will include event infrastructure in the city centre, traffic management and security arrangements for the duration of the event.
- 17 We are committed to continuing to promote a positive, dynamic, diverse, and outward-looking image on a global stage and major events are an important part of the city's offer that can deliver this. Large events have an important role to play in destination marketing as they can seize the imagination of the public and the media and leave a long-lasting impression in people's minds. Events play a key role in promoting Leeds's narrative and showing visitors what makes Leeds unique.
- 18 Major events encourage people to visit places they have never been to before. Domestic and international visitors spend on accommodation, food and beverage, entertainment, retail and

other goods and services. Tourism activity can be immediate from event attendance and longer term as guests return to the region, or others are inspired by event coverage to visit later.

19 In addition to tourism activity, extensive business to business transactions are required to deliver major events, such as security, ticketing, venue hire, entertainment, waste management, and many other services. When money from outside the region is spent in the region to deliver the event, there are positive economic returns from event operations.

20 The economic tourist impact for previous host cities ranges from €17 million – €38 million. We would expect an event in Leeds to generate revenues toward the mid-high end of this given the increased popularity of the ESC with ongoing events from Leeds 2023 and other economic factors including inflation. Lisbon (2018) is a good case study and here the economic impact of Portugal's hosting of the ESC exceeded both their hosting of Expo 98 and Euro 2004. According to the Director-General of the Portuguese Hotel and Restaurant Association (AHRESP), José Esteves, "Neither Euro2004, nor the Web Summit or even Expo98 had this impact".

- Economic tourist impact of previous host cities:
- Lisbon (2018) - €25 million
- Kiev (2017) - €20 million
- Stockholm (2016) - €36.8 million
- Vienna (2015) - €27.8 million
- Copenhagen (2014) - €17.3 million

21 Turin (2022) had a significant boost to its tourism sector as forty thousand air passengers passed through Turin airport for Eurovision, of these 56% were making their first trip to the host city. 57% of Turin's tourists arrived solely for Eurovision in the weeks leading up to the ESC and a survey showed 90% of visiting Eurovision fans said they would like to visit Turin again.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

22 The Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to 'Promoting Leeds and Yorkshire' and 'Maximising the Economic Benefits of Culture'. Our approach to hosting Eurovision in Leeds for Ukraine will allow us to use our commitment to be a compassionate city as a powerful marketing message. It will increase awareness of Leeds as a place to visit, invest, study and live attracting inward investment, supporting the ongoing recovery of the tourism sector both in the city and the wider region. Working with Leeds 2023 and regional partners the cultural programme will allow us to provide support to the cultural sector and to SMEs in the supply chain, all areas heavily impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

23 In March 2019 Leeds City Council declared a Climate Emergency. All aspects of our approach to the delivery of Eurovision will be subject to review in relation to minimising the impact on the environment wherever possible. Leeds is well placed in relation to presenting a Host City option based in a compact city centre which alone will make a significant contribution to offering a more sustainable event.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: Subject to the bid being successful, the event will have a significant impact on the city and specifically Little London and Woodhouse and Hunslet and Riverside wards. This will include event infrastructure in the city-centre, traffic management and security arrangements for the duration of the event. Ward members have been consulted at a high level and will receive a briefing in advance of Executive Board on 5th September.

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

24 Leeds City Council has met with our 5000 strong Ukrainian community across Leeds and Yorkshire including Bradford, Huddersfield and Wakefield. The community is supportive of the bid.

25 The MPs for Leeds have been consulted at a high level and are supportive.

26 The Mayor of West Yorkshire and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority including the member Local Authorities (Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees and Wakefield) are key partners and will be formally consulted through the appropriate governance processes.

27 In addition, the Leeds bid to host Eurovision is supported by:

- LEEDS 2023 including Gabby Logan (LEEDS 2023 Chair)
- Leeds Beckett University
- Leeds BID
- Leeds Hotels and Venues Association
- Leeds University
- Harrogate Borough Council
- Destination Harrogate
- Harrogate International Festival
- North Yorkshire County Council
- York City Council
- Make it York
- West and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce
- Regional CBI

What are the resource implications?

28 . Given the economic and wider benefits, the Host City is expected to make a contribution towards the costs alongside any funding from the relevant national government and other regional funded bodies that may exist. The detail is covered further in Appendix 1.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

29 The risks associated with the delivery of the ESC will be managed in line with best practice. The key risks associated with the delivery of the ESC are:

- Financial including cost and income
- Operational including non-financial resource impact on the council
- Security

- Reputational

What are the legal implications?

30 Legal implications are set out in the confidential Appendix 1.

31 The appendix to this report is considered to be confidential/exempt under Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3) as it relates to the business affairs of UK Host City selection process for the Eurovision Song Contest which has been established by the BBC as a confidential process between the BBC and the cities and other partners involved and in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining confidentiality outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

32 Due to the short time scale of the bidding process, there is also a need to follow the special urgency procedure relating to publicity in connection with Key Decisions. In line with Part 2 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, and Part 4(b) 2.3.4 and 2.6.1 the relevant Scrutiny Board Chair has provided confirmation that consideration of this matter is urgent and cannot reasonably be deferred. The use of the special urgency provisions on this occasion will in accordance with Executive and Decision-Making Rule 2.6.2 feature in the annual report to the Corporate Governance & Audit Committee.

33 For the same time critical reasons, in accordance with Part 4(b) 5.1.3 of the Constitution the recommendations within the report include the decision being declared exempt from Call In as the decision is urgent, and any delay would seriously prejudice the Council's interests as the Call In period extends beyond the deadline for submitting the bid.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

34 Leeds City Council is responding to a competitive bidding process and the option is, therefore, already prescribed.

How will success be measured?

35 Please refer to confidential Appendix 1.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

36 The City Development Directorate is leading on the bid submission and, if successful, will lead on implementation. During the bid phase the Director of City Development is acting as the Senior Responsible Owner with the Chief Officer for Culture and Economy leading on the bid development. The bid submission will be made in line with the timeline set out by the BBC.

37 The final Host City decision will be made in the autumn. Tickets will go on sale sometime after the Host City is confirmed with the Eurovision Song Contest 2023 taking place in May 2023.

38 A more detailed timeline is provided in confidential Appendix 1.

Appendices

39 Appendix 1, Confidential details of the Leeds City Council Bid to host the Eurovision Song Contest 2023

40 Appendix 2, Confidential maps showing venues and possible road closures

Background papers

41 None.