



Leicester
City Council

Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission

Date: 12th October 2021



As a result of the COVID-19 risk and to ensure a consistent approach to all LCC Autumn/Winter events, here we have outlined the plans for events until the end of the financial year.



Background:

Leicester City Council's autumn and winter events programme traditionally includes:

2 Diwali celebrations

Centered in Belgrave

A potential attendance of up to 45,000 people attending one event alone

Abbey Park Bonfire

A ticketed event

Christmas Lights Switch On

Sees upwards of 22,000 people in the city centre.

In recent years the programme has been amplified by large scale Christmas activities including an ice rink, a marketing campaign and town hall square installations

The relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions has allowed the Festival and Events team to deliver a programme of city Centre activities across the summer weeks. The 6 week Summer in the City Programme, Street Art in the City and Splash on the Soar was well received by the public and showed that with considerations towards safety and public opinion, events could be delivered with great success.

Comments from artists involved with Street Art in the City

“Great to be part of such a well organised event. Thanks & congratulations.”

“the whole team said it was a fantastic event and loved being part of it!”

Attendance of approx. 10,000

across the Splash on the Soar weekend with numerous verbal comments from attendees about their enjoyment to see festivals back in the city



Diwali:

Lights Switch On & Day

Sunday 24th October & Thursday 4th November

In **2020** the two events were combined into a 1 hour virtual celebration aired on Diwali Day. The film was viewed over 16,200 times during the live feed and on You Tube with comments from people across the world including South America, Texas and Denmark. The trailer was also viewed over 30,000 times, with a total of 488,864 interactions.

2021:

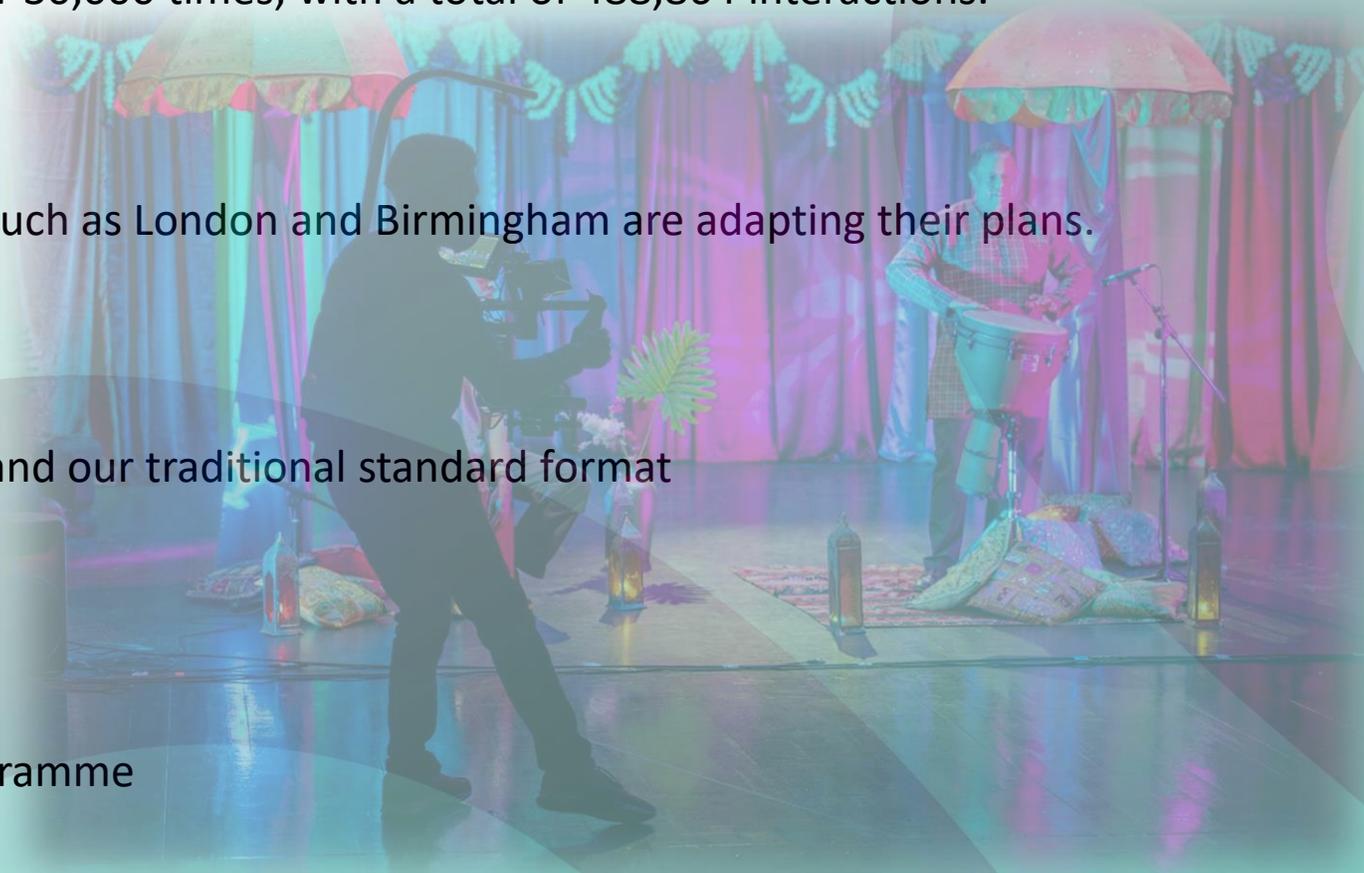
Benchmarking has shown that other large scale UK cities such as London and Birmingham are adapting their plans.

Our plans for 2021:

To create a hybrid of the success of 2020's virtual festival and our traditional standard format

Adaptations:

- Remove 'switch on' moment during the event
- Omit firework display and main stage structure or programme



Safe and positive replacements to programme include:

- Cossington Street Rec – high quality fire garden installation
- Switch On of lights to take place prior to event
- Main stage programme is replaced with a pre-recorded film, drawing on the successes of last years virtual production. Duration of 1 hour, shown on a loop on 3 large screens. 2 situated on Belgrave Road, 1 on Cossington Rec.
- For both Diwali Switch On, and Diwali Day, we would still have a full road closure of Belgrave Road, to allow the public to go shopping, move freely and safely, whilst also continue with the Diwali Village on Cossington Street Rec.
- This year we will be able to augment the traditional event with a £20k campaign to encourage shopping across the Diwali period, funded via the government's ERDF funded 'Welcome Back' campaign.

Recorded programme to include:

- Religious ceremony from the Hindu Festival Council
- Political and safety speeches, from the City Mayor, Cllr Clair and emergency services representatives
- High level cultural programming, from our partners, such as Nupur Arts, An Indian Summer and Belgrave Mela
- Increase community programme from the event in 2020, to make the programme more representative of the usual main stage

Benefits:

- Allows public to gather on the usual footprint of the Diwali site, yet the rolling, managed programme reduces the likelihood of a high number of attendees at any one time in one area.

Abbey Park Bonfire

Saturday 6th November

In **2020** the event was cancelled due to COVID-19 restriction

Overview:

This is a ticketed event taking place in an enclosed park enabling more control over the number of attendees if required to aid social distancing and crowd flow. Means there is less need to remove elements to achieve a safe environment

Our plans for 2021:

Continue to deliver a main stage and an entertainment package to encourage early attendance, thus reducing crowds entering the site simultaneously. A firework display could still be included. The site is much larger which enables people to be dispersed. Fireworks can be seen from many positions, which is not the case at the Diwali event sites.

Adaptations:

As numbers may be high, some other measures could be put in place to ensure a safe event. Final decision can be taken closer to the day. Options include

- Selling tickets in advance only, with no walk ups to preventing overcrowding
- Reducing capacity to a maximum number

Christmas Light Switch On

Thursday 18th November

In **2020** the celebrations featured a Light Switch on film 'They Can't Cancel Christmas' created in partnership with Curve theatre, an online programme of engagement and activities, interactive public projections and competitions.

Our plans for 2021:

In similar fashion to the proposed Diwali option, the Christmas Light Switch On will be designed to reduce crowd density and increase crowd flow by removing elements that require people to gather.

Adaptations:

- Removal of stage at Humberstone Gate West to avoid mass crowds in confined space. To be replaced with a funfair
- Have audible countdown relayed to all open spaces in city centre
- Brass bands, tableau and Nativity scene in Town Hall Square
- Retain movie night in Green Dragon Square and retain food & drink vendors
- Big Wheel operational in Jubilee Square
- Large light installation in Orton Square funded by BID Leicester
- Increased number of street acts & installations to keep people moving
- Online digital programme with messages, performances pre and post Switch On

Christmas Activities

The Christmas activities programme will provide entertainment for families and encourage them to safely use and enjoy the city centre over the festive period which is so crucial for many businesses. This will include the ice rink and Big Wheel at Jubilee Square, film showings and a Santa's grotto in the (Green Dragon) Square, a bespoke marketing campaign, new video, an online programme and a compilation of the best of the Town Hall tableaux.



Santa in the Square opening times
Monday to Friday 11am – 6pm
Saturday 10am – 6pm
Sunday 10am – 4pm
FREE

