



Report on the short-listed applications for the UK nomination for European Capital of Culture 2008

Issued by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, on behalf of:

The Independent Advisory Panel for the UK nomination for
European Capital of Culture 2008

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Introduction

The European Parliament and the Council of Ministers have established a European Capital of Culture programme, to run from 2005 to 2019. The programme follows on from the European Cities of Culture programme which ends in 2004. Under the new programme, each Member State has been assigned a year for which to nominate a city to hold the title.

The purpose of the title is not simply to highlight existing cultural excellence, but to encourage cities to develop and innovate in the cultural field. It will be an opportunity to show that culture is central to the life of a city, and demonstrate its contribution to regeneration, social inclusion, education and business. In addition, the European Capitals of Culture scheme aims to foster European cultural co-operation and understanding and therefore requires a city to mount a programme of European scale and significance. Glasgow, which held the title European City of Culture in 1990, is widely regarded as an example of the positive, long-lasting cultural and social benefits which the designation brought.

The aims, objectives and requirements of the European Capital of Culture programme, together with the procedure for designating a city as European Capital of Culture, are set out in Decision 1419/1999/EC. Member States must submit their nomination or nominations to the EU institutions at least four years before the start of the year to which they relate. A selection panel of experts appointed by the Commission, the Council, the Parliament and the Committee of the Regions considers the nomination or nominations and submits a report. In the light of this report, the Council, acting on a recommendation from the Commission and taking account of any Opinion of the Parliament, designates a city as European Capital of Culture for the year in question.

In accordance with the procedure set out in Decision 1419/1999/EC, the Council has designated Cork (Ireland) as European Capital of Culture 2005 and Patras (Greece) as European Capital of Culture 2006.

The UK will nominate a city to be European Capital of Culture in 2008. The UK's nomination must be submitted to the EU institutions by the end of 2003.

A competition to select the UK's nomination was launched by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in September 2000, with the publication of criteria, information and guidance for applicants. In their applications, cities were required to answer eleven questions and demonstrate how they would address and satisfy the criteria set out by the UK Government and the EU.

At the closing date of 31 March 2002, twelve cities had submitted applications to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. They were: Belfast, Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton and Hove, Bristol, Canterbury, Cardiff, Inverness, Liverpool, Newcastle-Gateshead, Norwich and Oxford.

An independent advisory panel was appointed by the Government to evaluate the applications and make recommendations to Ministers. The members of the panel were Sir Jeremy Isaacs (Chair), Sue MacGregor (Deputy Chair), Dame Judith Mayhew-Jonas (Deputy Chair), Barry Douglas, Marc Jordan, Hilary Lade, Magnus Linklater, Stewart McGill, Tessa Sanderson, Miranda Sawyer, Peter Stead and Ruth Wishart.

Selection of the shortlist

In the first stage of the selection process, members of the advisory panel visited the twelve cities. The Chair and Deputy Chairs visited all twelve cities. Other panel members visited as many of the cities as they were able to, the great majority.

The advisory panel held meetings on 24 September, 1 and 8 October 2002 at which each of the cities in turn was invited to give a short presentation and answer questions.

The advisory panel then met again on 21 and 22 October 2002 to consider their evaluation of the twelve applications and agree recommendations for the shortlist.

The Government accepted the advisory panel's recommendations and the shortlist was announced by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport on 30 October 2002.

The shortlisted cities were: Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Liverpool, Newcastle-Gateshead, and Oxford.

Selection of the UK's Nomination

In the second stage of the selection process, the shortlisted cities were invited to update their original applications and respond to questions proposed by officials from relevant Government Departments and independent consultants, who had scrutinised the original applications. The updates and responses to the questions were submitted to the Department by 31 March 2003.

Advisory panel members visited the shortlisted cities during April 2003.

The advisory panel held meetings on 19 and 20 May 2003, at which each of the shortlisted cities in turn was invited to answer questions from panel members.

The advisory panel then met on 28 and 29 May 2003 to consider each of the shortlisted applications and agree a final recommendation to the Government.

Summary of the applications of the six shortlisted cities

Birmingham

Birmingham's bid envisages a 'community celebration on a grand scale' based on four themes: the City, Shakespeare, Champions and Invention. The bid - made on behalf of the city and the West Midlands region - highlights a long-standing commitment to regeneration through culture, a track record of delivering high profile events and the region's industrial history, with Birmingham positioned as the 'Capital City' of the West Midlands. The programme is presented as three distinct layers comprising of a wide range of projects, a network of 400 existing festivals and events across the region and a series of special events with high profile commissions, performances and international sporting activities. Some 18 emblematic activities represent the city's flagship projects. Over 100 capital schemes are identified in the bid. However, the programme is not dependent on major capital funding or on an individual capital project. Cultural diversity is central to the proposals and the aim is to attract audiences and participants from a wide range of cultural and religious backgrounds. The bid presents Birmingham as an inter-cultural model for new European

cities with European themes and issues embedded and well integrated into the proposed programme. The bid estimates additional revenue costs of £143m over and above existing costs. The legacy of the bid includes improvements to the already very strong cultural infrastructure and a long term change in the image of Birmingham across the UK and beyond - the bid is seen as a base from which to build for the future and not an end in itself.

Bristol

Bristol's bid incorporates the 5 themes of building bridges; exploration, experimentation and discovery; the creative city; the city in harmony; the contemporary city. The city already plays host to a number of cultural activities and events and plans stress the council's experience of managing large, one-off arts and media festivals. The programme includes 78 projects, including key projects in keeping with the 5 themes. Planned activities are divided between festivals, the visual arts, exhibitions, film, media and digital media, history and heritage, theatre/performances, music, literature and sport. There have been a number of developments in Bristol's cultural infrastructure over the last decade and alongside the Bristol Old Vic, the Arnolfini, the Watershed and Colston Hall, facilities now include the Kuumba project, @Bristol, the Tobacco Factory and Futurelab. The bid includes 26 new capital projects, all of which are described as being important, but none of which is considered crucial to the programme. Participation remains the cornerstone of the city's plans with a commitment to making culture relevant to all local people. While the bid retains a strong local and regional focus, several European/International initiatives are clearly identified, with an emphasis on twin city arrangements. Revenue and capital project costs are estimated at £20m and £350m respectively. The bid includes plans to enhance Bristol's existing cultural infrastructure and a commitment to work with partners beyond 2008.

Cardiff

Cardiff's vision is for the city to become a crucible for European cultural exploration. The bid's three themes - The Square Mile, The City, And Beyond - place culture at the centre of the relationships of individuals to their communities; communities to their city; and the city to its country. Cardiff celebrates its centenary in 2005 and the bid encompasses a programme of nationally focussed activities for that period which would allow capacity to be built through to 2008, when a year long celebration of international culture is envisaged. The city has a track record in hosting major cultural and sporting events in the Millennium stadium and Cardiff International Arena. The programme for 2008 is based on three main seasons of activity and consists of over 220 events, festivals and projects. The plans make reference to 19 capital projects, including the Wales Millennium Centre, due to open in late 2004, the Depot, a new production and exhibition space expected to be open as a receiving house by 2005 and a National Theatre, to be in place by 2007. The programme has been designed to appeal to all communities and plans contain a community strategy with an emphasis on engaging with children and young people. European themes and issues are embedded and integrated into the proposed programme. Revenue costs are estimated at £175m and capital project costs at £578m. The bid places emphasis on cultural-led regeneration and sustainability is a key theme, for example the proposal for a Legacy Fund to put groups that have come together in 2008 on a firmer footing with low level funding assistance.

Liverpool

The central theme of Liverpool's bid is 'The World in One City' complemented by the 3 supporting themes of Create: a new expression of 21st century British culture; Participate: a culture defined through participation; and Regenerate: a city made whole through cultural

expression. The plans highlight the major regeneration taking place across Liverpool and the city's track record in managing large scale capital projects. The programme envisages the development of annual programmes of themed activities and events taking place between 2003 and 2010, thus providing a phased build up to 2008. The plans are structured around flagship activities involving three or four major events, performances and exhibitions each month. The city has a wide range of existing cultural facilities with particular strengths - the Walker and Tate Liverpool – in the visual arts. New cultural infrastructure is planned or already under construction, including the Kings Dock waterfront development, new exhibition galleries and storage facilities at the Liverpool museum, a new Philharmonic Centre and the Fourth Grace. The bid targets support to disadvantaged communities and includes a large number of events designed to appeal to a wide cross section of people. The international dimension focuses upon connections with communities represented in the city alongside an emphasis on twin city linkages. The 25 new capital projects outlined, entailing over £1.5bn of new investment, are considered an essential component of Liverpool's cultural development. Revenue costs are estimated at £54.75m. The long-term benefits are envisaged as making the city a better place to visit, live, work, and invest in, with the overall legacy of the award being a new Liverpool.

Newcastle-Gateshead

The bid incorporates the 5 themes of Opportunity, Innovation, Environment, Europe and the Future, developed against the backdrop of the need to put children first, improve access to cultural activities and resources, provide opportunities to access technologies and support local communities. The bid emphasises a powerful track record and the extensive experience of both councils in developing and delivering major cultural and regeneration initiatives. The bid outlines a comprehensive and innovative programme of activities, events, festivals and exhibitions including 32 capital projects, 7 of which are already complete with others underway. Newcastle-Gateshead now contains a substantial number of cultural resources following a major period of development in the area's cultural infrastructure. The bid highlights the recent additions of the International Centre for LIFE, BAL TIC Centre for Contemporary Arts, the Gateshead Millennium Bridge and Angel of the North. The plans are strong in their commitment to relate to and involve all sections of the community, with considerable work undertaken to engage traditionally hard to reach groups. There are a number of specifically European projects planned involving theatre, music, youth and ethnic groups in addition to co-commissions and co-productions. Revenue and capital project costs are estimated at £101m and £350m respectively. The programme is intended to leave a legacy of skilled artists and arts promoters with greatly improved training and exhibition facilities, to expand further the cultural and transport infrastructure and create a permanent shift in attitudes towards culture and the arts.

Oxford

The chosen theme for the 2008 event is 'Oxford Inspires', incorporating inspiration in the arts, science, young people, lifelong learning, sustainable development and international cultural research and development. The city already supports a range of events and festivals and the programme aims to raise the profile of the whole county. The programme is based around 15 flagship festivals and two year-long events based in Oxford, Abingdon, Banbury and other locations throughout the county. The bid outlines 12 'Events of Excellence', each with a different monthly theme to provide a structure to the year and would run along side additional events and activities. Besides Oxford's university buildings, the existing cultural infrastructure includes, a botanic garden, important museums, several performance venues and sporting facilities. A specific social inclusion strategy has been developed and plans are strong on involving children and young people. The bid material emphasises plans to make

science accessible. The bid demonstrates strategic understanding of wider European issues. The city has long experience in European/International networking in academic circles. The programme includes 28 capital projects at a cost of £436m; revenue costs are estimated at £18m. The long-term benefits of the bid are the proposed improvements to the existing cultural and transport infrastructure, a permanent shift in attitudes towards culture and creativity and the establishment of an endowment fund to encourage greater interaction between culture and sciences.

The advisory panel's judgement

The advisory panel based its judgement on the criteria outlined in Article 3 and Annex II of Decision 1419/1999/EC and the additional criteria set out by the UK Government. To assist them in reaching their conclusions, panel members had available to them the original applications, the updates, responses to questions and other supplementary material provided by the shortlisted cities, and advice provided through the DCMS Secretariat.

The Panel were greatly impressed by the energy, imagination and commitment shown by all six cities, and grateful for the way in which they responded, appropriately and speedily, to the many requests made to them.

The Panel confirmed their view that any one of the cities could provide a successful European Capital of Culture in 2008. None was perfect. The choice between them was therefore a difficult task.

The Panel were conscious throughout that they were considering these applications from the cities, and their experiences, in 2002-3, almost five years before the 2008 programme will begin. Conditions, circumstances and individuals will change over this period. Some elements of their current plans could fail. On the other hand, the simple fact of success in this high-profile project has the potential to realise new opportunities and resources. As well as considering the quality vision and drive of the programmes the Panel therefore looked for evidence that the plans would be delivered and their potential exploited competently, vigorously, and without hindrance.

The Panel noted that each of the city bids has its own distinctive character. The cities differ in size and in the scale of their cultural infrastructure, in their heritage and their personnel. There are differences in their experience of running large-scale events, and in the momentum of the initiatives they have under way, and which need to continue if they are to deliver their 2008 programme.

The cities have different histories and demography. Economically, they face varying challenges. Their distinct communities reflect in different ways the diversity of British cultural life.

The Panel recognised that all these factors give each city a particular profile against the competition criteria, creating different models of a cultural city; winning the nomination would impact differently on each. The Panel believed that in every case the outcome would be a positive one. Their overall aim has been to recommend from amongst this richness what is in their view, the city best able to provide a European Capital of Culture on behalf of the United Kingdom in 2008.

The Panel's finding

In accordance with the relevant criteria, the Panel set out to choose a city which possesses a robust cultural infrastructure, and the vision and skills to bring into being a year of attractive events. It looked for strong civic leadership, sound finance, and the managerial drive to ensure delivery; a city whose people are wholly and enthusiastically committed to a year of culture in 2008, and will participate in it to the full. We sought to identify a city which warmly welcomes visitors, which knows how to promote itself, and which will use 2008 to build a lasting legacy. We wanted a city which will exchange ideas with and collaborate with the cities of Europe.

The Panel, after prolonged and thorough discussion of all the short-listed candidates, concluded that Liverpool is such a city, and chose to recommend its nomination as European Capital of Culture, 2008.

Liverpool has made great progress in recent years. The city has magnificent public architecture, on the revived waterfront, and in the renewed city centre. It has two fine cathedrals, and is rich in listed buildings. Liverpool has a powerful artistic tradition, and today excels in displaying the visual arts; outside London, The Walker, Tate Liverpool, the Lady Lever Gallery at Port Sunlight, the John Moores Competition and the Biennial are arguably second to none. Taken together they underpin a year-long festival in themselves.

Liverpool has claims to have invented 'pop', and points to the Beatles to prove it. Liverpool has committed to high-tech, new media in education and outreach. Liverpool excels in sport, and in sports education. Liverpool looks outward, and welcomes the world.

Liverpool's bid, crucially, best combines strong central direction, civic leadership, with whole-hearted public participation.

The Panel decided that, from a strong field, Liverpool was most likely to deliver a successful year-long celebratory festival in 2008, and would represent the United Kingdom to Europe and the world with flair, energy and distinction.

The advisory panel's recommendation

On the basis of an overall evaluation of the applications from the six shortlisted cities, the advisory panel therefore concludes that Liverpool best addresses the objectives and criteria set out in Decision 1419/199/EC and the additional criteria set out by the UK Government. The panel recommends that Liverpool should be nominated by the Government to be the European Capital of Culture in 2008.

The Panel believes that this open, competitive process to arrive at a choice has demonstrated a cultural zest and liveliness across the UK, and has, in city after city, highlighted the arts' and culture's potential - though it cannot address every problem - to enhance the quality of life. The Panel hopes that the excellent work all 12 competing cities are engaged in to this end will continue. We welcome the stated intention of the DCMS to facilitate this in every way possible.

Sir Jeremy Isaacs
Chairman of the Advisory Panel