



## MEDIA RELEASE

### COUNTING DOWN TO LEEDS WEST INDIAN CARNIVAL 2016 – 100 DAYS TO GO

May 19<sup>th</sup> 2015

Organisers of Leeds West Indian Carnival are counting down as this weekend marks 100 days to go until Europe's longest running authentic Caribbean carnival parade takes to the streets of Leeds.

Thousands of visitors are expected to descend on the city on Bank Holiday Monday 29th August for the sparkling procession of floats and hundreds of stunning costumes from across the UK.

Carnival Founder and Chairperson Arthur France said, *"As well bringing the streets of Leeds to life with the colour, spectacle and unbeatable atmosphere that have attracted millions of visitors and millions to the economy over 49 years, Leeds Carnival 2016 gives culture in the city yet another chance to shine."*

Organisers of the Carnival, which in 1967 was the first of its kind in Europe to feature all three essential Caribbean carnival elements of masquerade, music and a parade - are working closely with artists, funders and partners and hope to attract corporate sponsorship to ensure that 2017's landmark 50th anniversary celebrations are the biggest and best yet.

Mr. France said, *"We are already receiving national and international queries from carnival fans planning to be in the city for our 50th anniversary next year. As well as being a huge milestone, 2017 will be a fantastic opportunity for Leeds to show the world how proud we are of this phenomenal event that unites people from all walks of life. To make sure that we get it right, this year's Carnival has to be the biggest dress rehearsal Leeds has ever seen."*

With a number of Caribbean carnivals across the UK being cancelled or scaled down over the past two years due to funding cuts, Mr. France commented, *"We are very much aware that public spending and arts funding across the UK are facing significant challenges. So, we are particularly pleased to receive continuing support from Leeds City Council and from Arts Council England Lottery funding which will help us to fly the flag for Carnival arts and culture in Leeds."*

Arts Council England support means that the much anticipated annual Leeds Carnival King and Queen Show, which showcases dramatic large scale costumes will make its third showing at West Yorkshire Playhouse on August 26<sup>th</sup>.

The funding will also help Carnival organisers to offer young people practical skills, mentorship and work experience with costume designers, and partner organisations including BBC Radio Leeds, BBC North, West Yorkshire Playhouse and BBC 1Xtra.

Plans for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations will be announced later in the year including *Carnival Ballet* – a 2017 world class dance production inspired by the Carnival's story, heritage and spectacle in partnership with acclaimed contemporary dance company, Phoenix Dance Theatre.

Official events leading up to the Carnival include the Prince and Princess and Carnival King and Queen Costume shows and the Soca Monarch calypso contest.

More details of Leeds West Indian Carnival 2016 events are available at [www.leedscarnival.co.uk](http://www.leedscarnival.co.uk) on 0113 3070001 and Twitter @CarnivalLeeds using #CarnivalHappy .

### Image Captions

Image 1: Leeds West Indian Carnival Founder Arthur France will join thousands for this year's celebrations.

Picture by Guy Farrar

Image 2: Leeds Carnival Queen 2015 Charis Betts as *The Dream Catcher* - Picture by Keith Pattison

**ENDS**

### Editor's Notes

- Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May marks 100 days to the Carnival parade on August 29<sup>th</sup>.
- Please note that the event is called *Leeds West Indian Carnival* or *Leeds Carnival*.
- **Leeds Carnival 2016** is funded by Leeds City Council and Arts Council England National Lottery Funding.
- The Reggae Concert/Leeds Black Music Festival held in Potternewton Park on August 28th is not a Leeds Carnival event.

**About Leeds West Indian Carnival (LWIC)** One of the North's biggest annual events and held annually on August Bank Holiday Monday, Leeds West Indian Carnival was founded in 1967 by Arthur France as a remedy for Caribbean homesickness. The first Carnival in the UK to incorporate all three elements of authentic Caribbean carnival – costumes, music and a masquerade procession - it is Europe's longest running Caribbean carnival parade and the biggest outside London. Featuring warm up events which include the UK's biggest Carnival King & Queen Costume show, LWIC brings phenomenal costumes, rhythmic steel pan and soca music together with the arts, crafts and cuisine of the Caribbean. **Arthur France** was awarded an M.B.E. in 1997 for services to the community and Carnival arts. Mr France also received the prestigious Leeds Award and an Honorary Degree from Leeds University in 2015. [www.leedscarnival.co.uk](http://www.leedscarnival.co.uk)

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