

**PRESS RELEASE**

**CARNIVAL PLANS TO BOOST CITY CENTRE PRESENCE**

August 11 2015

With just weeks until Leeds West Indian Carnival takes to the streets on August Bank Holiday Monday, organisers have announced plans to take the sights and sounds of Europe’s longest running Caribbean carnival to city centre audiences.

Thanks to funding from the Leeds BID and support from Leeds City Council a number of city centre focused initiatives will kick start on Saturday 15th August from 12:30pm to 2:00pm with *Pop Up Carnival in the City* on Briggate which will bring carnival colour to thousands in the heart of one of the UK’s most popular shopping destinations.

Carnival Founder and Chairman Arthur France commented, *“The first Carnival parade in 1967 went from the streets of Chapeltown to Leeds Town Hall. With our 50th anniversary fast approaching we are working with a range of partners to look at sharing this Leeds gem with wider audiences by hosting more events in different locations and hopefully to see a return of the parade to the city centre in 2017.”*

Following on from the popularity of 2014’s Pop Up Carnival appearances at the Grand Depart of the Tour de France and Scarborough Seafest, thousands of shoppers, visitors and spectators are expected to take in the 20 costumed troupe dancers, huge King and Queen creations and steel pan music from New World Steel Orchestra.

Leeds BID interim CEO Keith Ramsay said, *“Leeds Bid is delighted to support Leeds West Indian Carnival - an iconic, signature Leeds event which has contributed to raising the city’s profile for almost half a century. By bringing feel good factor and amazing spectacle into the heart of Leeds, Pop Up Carnival in the City is a great way to add something special to shopping and visitor experiences in the City Centre as well as boosting the local economy”.*

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Building on last year’s Leeds City Council study which estimated that spectator spend at the Carnival parade contributed at least £2.7 million to the local economy, this year the Council will survey audiences at the pop up event, the King & Queen Show at West Yorkshire Playhouse and the Carnival parade.

The plans have also helped to build a new partnership with the National Carnival Bands Association (NCBA) - experts from the world famous Trinidad and Tobago Carnival, who will attend events over the carnival weekend and make recommendations for artistic programming and enhancing planned city centre presence.

NCBA President Mr. David Lopez said, *“The National Carnival Bands Association is happy to be partnering with Leeds West Indian Carnival ahead of the 50th anniversary. Along with organisers of the Carnival in Leeds we share a passion for bringing people together and showcasing Caribbean arts and culture. We look forward to visiting such a great city, to joining this year’s celebrations and to sharing our expertise and involvement in Trinidad and Tobago the Real Carnival.”*

Mr. France added, *“Leeds Carnival will always have its roots and heart in the local communities who have worked so hard to bring the event to life. However, with a milestone anniversary and the city’s bid for European Capital of Culture just around the corner, we want to make sure that the residents, business sector and visitors alike can share in the harmony, pride and joy that Carnival brings to Leeds.”*

Over 100,000 are expected to attend the annual carnival parade on Bank Holiday Monday 31st August and events in the lead up, including the Prince and Princess and Carnival King and Queen Shows, and the Soca Monarch calypso contest.

Details of all Leeds Carnival 2015 events are available at www.leedscarnival.co.uk on Twitter @CarnivalLeeds #LeedsCarnivalHappy or on 0113 307 0001.

**Picture Caption**

One of the costumed dancers who took part in last year’s Pop Up Carnival in Leeds city centre. **Credit: Andy Lord**

**ENDS**

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**Editor’s Notes**

**About Leeds West Indian Carnival** One of the North’s biggest annual events,Leeds West Indian Carnivalwas founded in 1967 by Arthur France as a remedy for the homesickness for his native St Kitts & Nevis. Bringing phenomenal costumes, rhythmic steel pan and soca music together with the arts, crafts and cuisine of the Caribbean it is Europe’s longest running authentically Caribbean carnival parade and the biggest outside London. **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**

* Please note that the event is called *Leeds West Indian Carnival* or *Leeds Carnival.*
* **Leeds Carnival 2015** is funded by Leeds City Council and Arts Council England National Lottery Funding.

**About Leeds BID** Leeds BID covers the City Centre business district of Leeds.

* The Leeds BID is the third largest in the country and will be funded by a 1.25 per cent levy via business rates on business property above £60000 rateable value to pay for a range of improvements.
* Of the 952 eligible businesses who voted 38% took part and 84% voted in favour of the BID.
* Business Improvement Districts have proved to be highly successful around the UK.
* There are more than 200 BIDs in the UK serving more than 75,000 businesses investing over £200 million in their areas each year.
* The BID is confirmed until March 31st 2020. **www.bid4leeds.com**

**About the National Carnival Bands Association of Trinidad** The Trinidad and Tobago based National Carnival Bands Association (NCBA) aims to ensure that the celebration of Carnival maintains its creative integrity, local pride and future development by representing the interests of producers and participants of the Carnival industry. The NCBA collaborates with local and international stakeholders and organisations in order to raise the profile of the Carnival industry and has advised international carnivals. The NCBA also presents the interests of the various producing and participating stakeholders to the National Carnival Commission of Trinidad & Tobago - NCC. (NCC is a government appointed body that manages the presentation and marketing of Trinidad and Tobago’s Carnival products and Carnival – widely referred to as ‘the greatest show on earth’) **www.ncbatt.com**

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