

Leeds City Council's bonfire and firework events cancelled for 2021

Leeds City Council's six annual bonfire and firework events have been cancelled for 2021.

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PIC: Bruce Rollinson

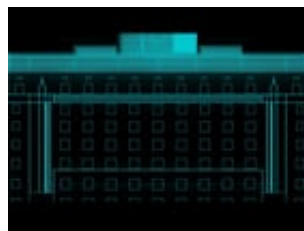
Community bonfires managed by the council traditionally take place at six locations and attract in total around 100,000 visitors. Events are held at East End Park; Roundhay Park; Woodhouse Moor; Springhead Park in Rothwell; Middleton Park and Bramley Park. Due to coronavirus, the community bonfires did not take place in 2020.

The authority says it follows guidance issued by national government

when restrictions were eased in July 2021 that particularly relate to large gatherings at outdoor events including firework displays.

A key aspect of this guidance is ensuring that people who attend these events demonstrate that they are at a lower risk of carrying COVID-19 and transmitting it to others, and that a limit should be made on numbers attending. The council say that would mean that everyone wishing to attend needing to provide evidence of their COVID status either through vaccination, testing or their natural immunity.

A city council statement said: "To ensure that this could be delivered in an appropriate manner, the council would have had to put in place ticketed arrangements for each individual event. To support crowd management, these tickets would have needed to be distributed to each attendee before each event took place, with no capacity to pick up on the night. In addition, a substantial amount of supplementary infrastructure would also be necessary to control access and check COVID status and tickets. This would mean that gaining entry would take a lot longer for everyone and could mean that those without evidence of their COVID status not being able to gain access. There would also be significant additional costs of putting these measures in place, which added to uncertainty about any further COVID changes that may be made prior to the bonfire events, has meant that following an assessment, a decision has been taken to not to host the events in 2021."



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Leeds City Council's Safer Strong Communities Team will be working closely with partners in areas across the city to mitigate any potential negative impact of fireworks and associated anti-social behaviour in the

run up to and on Bonfire Night.

This work will be focussed in those areas that are known to have experienced anti-social behaviour around bonfire night in previous years.

Working within the confines of the guidance, the council continues to be committed to ensuring that significant community and cultural events will still be able to take place later in the run up to Christmas and next year where there is flexibility in terms of crowds being able to be spaced out and not have to be in close proximity.

On offer includes the fabulous 'Light Night' experience in and around the city centre from Thursday, October 14 - Friday, October 15, and working closely with city partners, putting together a programme of festive fun, activities, and events for all the family to enjoy.

Councillor Salma Arif, Leeds City Council's executive member for public health and active lifestyles said: "The health and wellbeing of every person in attendance at all proposed council managed events, including our community bonfires remains our absolute priority. This is extremely important especially in an environment where the threat of coronavirus is still very much present and it remains unclear looking ahead, what its impact might be in the autumn and winter months.

"Every event that we manage is subject to certain checks and safeguards in line with government guidance and we must assess if because of its expected size and scale that measures to limit the spread of coronavirus are put in place.

"Having undertaken an assessment, we do not believe given the additional changes that would need to be implemented, that it is possible to host the six bonfire events this year without incurring significant additional expense and affecting the attendees' overall enjoyment."

Coun Arif added: "We certainly did not take this decision lightly, and we know that this news will come as a real disappointment to many people, and this is something that we too very much share. We will be continuing

to monitor all the guidance and relevant information that is available to us to inform and guide any final decisions that might be made regarding other individual council events scheduled in the future. I am delighted to say that we still have a packed programme of events and activities that people of all ages will be able to enjoy."