

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2743

London New Year's Eve celebrations review – alternative formats

Executive summary:

This Assistant Director Decision seeks approval to spend £24,000 from the Major Sports Events Programme 2024-25 budget, to procure an event producer who will review London's New Year's Eve (NYE) celebrations. The purpose of the review is to scope viable alternative formats to reinvigorate and reimagine London's NYE event, to ensure it continues to meet the objective of showcasing London internationally whilst remaining cost-effective.

Decision:

That the Interim Assistant Director of External Relations approves spend of £24,000 from the Major Sports Events Programme 2024-25 budget to procure an event producer who will review, and provide alternative options for, London's New Year's Eve celebrations.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Katie Morrison

Position: Interim Assistant Director - External Relations

Signature:

Approval received via email from Katie Morrison, Interim Assistant Director, External Relations on 14 February 2025

Date:

14/02/2025

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. London's New Year's Eve (NYE) fireworks have been an annual event since 2004, centred around the London Eye, Embankment and South Bank.
- 1.2. Originally, this was an unticketed event. Ticketing to watch the fireworks was introduced in 2014 as a response to the event becoming hugely oversubscribed, and crowd levels becoming a significant risk. The growth in attendees put enormous strain on transport, infrastructure, and emergency services' ability to move around the city – threatening their capacity to respond to a major incident effectively. The visitor experience was also becoming extremely poor, with thousands of people unable to get anywhere near the event.
- 1.3. Ticketing the event at a 100,000-person capacity helped to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the fireworks as a safe, enjoyable event for many years. There is a clear message of 'unless you have a ticket, you shouldn't come to central London'.
- 1.4. Over more recent years, and especially since the pandemic (broadcast-only events took place in 2020 and 2021), the number of those wishing to be in central London, and trying to view the fireworks from areas outside the official event footprint, has increased. Audience behaviours have also changed significantly, with crowds becoming less compliant with restrictions put upon them.
- 1.5. To manage these risks, costs to deliver the event have risen significantly – with ticket prices also rising in response. With this significant cost to the public purse, the increase in numbers and the change of audience behaviour, the GLA wants to consider alternative approaches. This is in terms of both reducing the event budget, and meeting our objective of a global showcase moment for London.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The Mayor of London NYE celebrations have the following objectives (any alternative formats from the review should also meet these):
 - to create and deliver a safe and successful event that has public safety at the forefront of all planning and delivery
 - to produce a world-class show that:
 - provides an exceptional viewer experience to both live and television broadcast audiences, as well as providing video and still footage to support marketing objectives – the creative proposal should work across these mediums to convey a contemporary and exciting view of London with strong visual imagery, which could include (without limitation) music, lighting and special effects such as pyrotechnics
 - galvanises Londoners behind a core values statement, which generates optimism and positive public support for London as a centre of progression and equality
 - to promote London nationally and internationally as a global city, strengthening its reputation across the UK and overseas, and raising confidence to visit, study and do business in London, thereby supporting London's economy
 - to create an event that generates a wider economic impact for London via the spend of attendees through hospitality and trade benefitting local businesses

- to create an event that highlights and encourages sustainable activities and work towards a zero-carbon city by 2030, whilst ensuring the event supply chain is sustainable and/or offsetting its carbon emissions.
- 2.2. The outcome of the review will be a proposal that sets out viable creative event format options for future NYE events. Each event option will include:
- details of how it meets the NYE event objectives, and incorporates the considerations for new alternative event formats
 - a comprehensive budget that ensures the event can be delivered within budget, without compromising on quality or safety
 - a review of GLA resource, identifying additional support to deliver each alternative event option
 - costings for a third, broadcast-only option (without a live audience).
- 2.3. Hosting the Mayor of London's NYE celebrations helps to maintain London's reputation as a leading global city; and demonstrates that events of this scale can be done safely and securely in London.
- 2.4. Procurement will be carried out in accordance with the Contracts and Funding Code. Requests for quotes will be sent to a minimum of three potential suppliers. Responses will be marked against set criteria – including previous relevant experience, proposed methodology and approach, as well as cost.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as a public authority, the Mayor of London must have 'due regard' of the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The "protected characteristics" are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership status. The duty involves having appropriate regard to these matters as they apply in the circumstances, including having regard to the need to: remove or minimise any disadvantage suffered by those who share or are connected to a protected characteristic; take steps to meet the diverse needs of such people; and encourage them to participate in public life or in any other activity where their participation is disproportionately low. This can involve treating people with a protected characteristic more favourably than those without one.
- 3.3. The NYE event is aimed at bringing people from different communities together, celebrating London's diversity and helping to foster good relations between communities. This is achieved through the creative show, which will highlight and celebrate London's diversity; and through a broad and targeted approach to marketing channels, encouraging people from different communities to attend. Any alternative event format should maintain to meet this objective.
- 3.4. Any new format will be accessible, with a minimum provision including a dedicated viewing area for people with disabilities and mobility issues; and the provision of a support line in the lead-up to the event to discuss access requirements.
- 3.5. Any new format will be accessible to all via national media coverage, and live broadcast on national and international television. Subtitles and audio-descriptive support will be available throughout the broadcast depending on the format.

4. Other considerations

Key risks and issues

4.1. The table below sets out the key risks:

Risk	Mitigation	RAG rating
The event format does not meet its objectives and is not cost-effective.	Undertake a review to explore possible alternative event format options. By doing so, we are ensuring that the event remains relevant, showcases London internationally and ensures best value for money.	Green
Proposed alternative event formats do not meet the event objectives.	Work closely with the event producers, including fortnightly meetings to ensure the work continues to deliver against the brief and its objectives.	Green
Information about the review may be put into the public domain before the work has been completed; and before the GLA has agreed and communicated the plan for future NYE events.	Ask all potential event producers to sign an NDA before sharing the tender opportunity with them. Ensure consultation throughout the process is confidential, so that public messaging is controlled and managed.	Green

Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

4.2. This decision, to approve the budget for a review of London's NYE event, links to the following Mayoral priorities:

- backing London's world-leading cultural and creative sector
- growing London's economy
- London for Everyone Campaign
- All of Us, the Mayor's strategy for social integration: using sport, volunteering, arts and culture as powerful tools for social integration; and establishing London's reputation as a welcoming city for newcomers from other parts of the UK and abroad, with opportunities to feel a strong connection and positive sense of belonging to the city in which they are living
- The Mayor's Cultural Strategy: the Mayor will continue to fund festivals and events with an emphasis on more community involvement, increasing quality, raising London's profile, and increasing volunteering
- Inclusive London, the Mayor's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy: celebrating London's rich diversity; and bringing communities together through a series of high-profile, accessible and inclusive events and campaigns.

Consultation and impact assessment

4.3. Consultation will take place with key stakeholders where appropriate (including internal teams within the GLA, local authorities, landowners, etc), to ensure viability of all alternative event format options.

Conflicts of interest

4.4. There are no known conflicts of interest in relation to those involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form, or those involved in the delivery of the project.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. The £24,000 cost for the review can be met within the Major Sport Events programme budget for 2024-25. The review will ensure value for money for future events, whilst balancing event expectations and safety. Given that it is the first iteration of the new pricing scheme for the NYE celebrations, insight from the review will inform the sustainability of this event.

6. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 6.1. This work will be delivered according to the following timetable:

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	February 2025
Scoping of creative options	February 2025
Submission of draft creative proposals	24 February 2025
Viability work and review of draft proposals	10 March 2025
Submission of final recommendations for alternative formats – including estimated budgets	28 March 2025

Appendices and supporting papers:

None

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? YES

If YES, for what reason: To ensure communication around any possible new NYE event can be managed and shared publicly through the appropriate channels.

Until what date: June 2026

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

James Fitzgerald has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 10 February 2025.

✓

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL SERVICES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature:

Anne Eastcott

Date:

12/02/2025