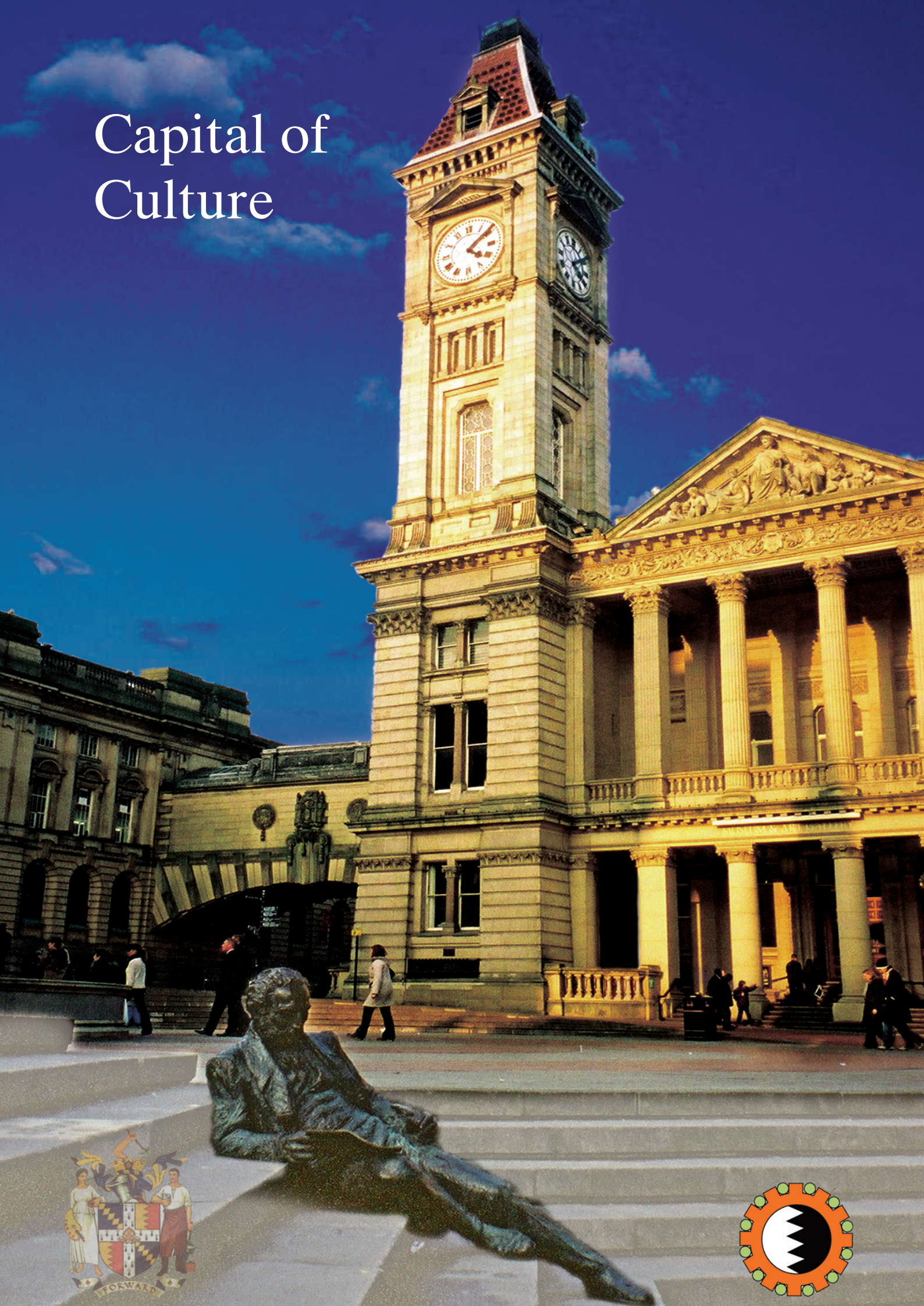


Capital of Culture





Lessons to be Learnt from the Outcome of the European Capital of Culture Bid

Plea for views on failed Culture bid

BRUMMIES are being urged to tell crestfallen council chiefs what they thought of the city's failed bid to be European Capital of Culture 2008. Birmingham lost out to Liverpool, sparking criticism in some quarters of the city's £2 million bid.

Critics said more

BY STEVE SWINGLER

imagination could have been put into the bid which they said also failed to involve enough ordinary Brummies.

If successful, it would have landed Birmingham an estimated £1 billion

investment and tourism windfall.

An inquiry into the fiasco was launched by a council scrutiny committee last month and its members are now anxious to hear the thoughts of men and women on the street.

Opinions

They want to find out if there are any lessons to be learned from the failure and what can be done differently when bidding for similar prestigious titles in the future.

Scrutiny committee chairman Coun Ken Hardeman said: "I would love to hear the public's

views in general but there are also specific questions that if answered would greatly help."

The questions include:

● Were you surprised at Liverpool being chosen?

● Why do you think Birmingham was unsuccessful?

● Did you feel involved in the bidding process?

● How do you think we could increase Birmingham's chance of success in future bids?

People should send their views to Coun Ken Hardeman, The Scrutiny Office, Council House, 1, Victoria Square, B1 1BB or via ken.hardeman@birmingham.gov.uk

City opens its inquest into lost campaign

By Paul Dale
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An official investigation to discover why Birmingham failed to become European Capital of Culture has begun.

The City Council's leisure, culture and arts scrutiny committee wants to examine the doomed campaign to win the coveted title, which cost almost £2 million to put together.

Committee chairman Ken Hardeman insisted he did not intend to "point a finger" at anyone but it was important to discover if Birmingham could have done better and whether any mistakes were made in compiling bid.

The Government announced last month that it was nominating Liverpool to become European Capital of Culture 2008, beating Birmingham and several other shortlisted UK cities.

Some city councillors and business leaders criticised the Birmingham campaign, claiming it was remote from ordinary people, while the decision to embrace the whole West Midlands region in the bid was described as a mistake by the chairman of the capital of culture judging panel.

Coun Hardeman (Con, Moseley) said Birmingham's failure to attract prestige national projects was worrying.

He added: "It's not just that we failed with the capital of culture bid. We seem to fail with almost every major bid we make."

"We didn't get the Olympic Games, the Millennium Dome or the National Stadium."

"We should be asking some hard questions about why we fail."

Coun Hardeman said he believed there would be occasions in future when Birmingham would bid for national projects. It was important to learn lessons from the past.

He added: "I think we should have done better with the capital of culture bid. We were confident we had a bid that would top the list but we failed to sell the story of Birmingham."

The committee will interview key players in the bidding process and hopes to produce a report later in the year.

The decision to scrutinise the process had been resisted by Labour council bosses, although Conservative and Liberal Democrat councillors are backing an inquiry.

Sir Albert Bore (Lab, Ladywood), leader of the city council, said after the capital of culture judges announced their decision that an investigation would serve no purpose.

"We will never find out why Birmingham was not selected or, indeed, why Liverpool was. It would be senseless to try to take a view on why we lost," he said.

Evening Mail 10/10/03



Lessons to be Learnt from the Outcome of the European Capital of Culture Bid

Capital of Culture campaign created publicity worth £4m

By Paul Dale
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Birmingham's campaign to become European Capital of Culture generated positive publicity worth £4 million for the city, it was claimed last night.

Even though the attempt failed, with Liverpool winning the coveted title, the national and international focus on Birmingham during the bidding process was almost as great as that triggered by the G8 conference of world leaders held at the ICC in 1998, a senior Labour councillor insisted.

Ian Ward, Cabinet spokesman for leisure, sport and culture, said the culture campaign cost £1.5 million to put together, with £1.5 million split between the council and the regional development agency Advantage West Midlands.

However, the money was well spent and helped deliver a lasting impact on the image of Birmingham in this country and abroad, Coun Ward (Lab, Shard End) added.

He said: "It has been widely accepted that the bid process brought more positive publicity than any other single activity since G8."

If Birmingham had set out to buy advertising and media coverage to the extent of that stemming from the culture campaign, the cost would have been £4 million, according to consultants appointed by the council.

Coverage singled out as particularly helpful to Birmingham included supportive statements issued by former American president Bill Clinton, a leader column in *The Times* and numerous articles in national newspapers and magazines.

Other benefits from the campaign included production of a comprehensive list of cultural organisations, festivals and sports in the West Midlands, the first time such a database had been created.

Coun Ward said he would not be conducting an inquest into why Birmingham did not win the

culture title. The important thing now was to maximise the benefits of the work undertaken during the bidding process.

A large number of new initiatives were proposed and the council aims to deliver many projects in the bid document, including a plan to develop collaboration between cultural organisations such as the CBSO, the Birmingham Royal Ballet, Birmingham museums and the Barber Institute.

It is hoped prestigious capital schemes that formed the backbone of the culture bid, including development of the Midland Arts Centre, the New Library of Birmingham and a city park at Eastside, will go ahead.

Coun Ward said meetings between the council and Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell indicated that National Lottery funding may be available to support initiatives. Birmingham's strategy to attract international cultural and sporting events would continue, he said.

The final of the World Badminton Championships, at the ICC on Sunday, was watched by a TV audience of a billion in China and the Far East.



Vital bid questions yet to be answered

Birmingham entered the Capital of Culture contest with high hopes. The intention was never to come an honourable second. The city aimed to win, and was capable of doing so.

No other competitor could boast the range of high quality cultural institutions and events of Birmingham, from world class ballet to world-renowned street carnivals.

The result, which saw Liverpool named the champion, was a crushing disappointment.

Of course, no matter how convinced we may have been that Birmingham deserved to win, victory was never guaranteed.

And it makes sense to avoid self-pity and make the very best of the result, whatever it may be.

But Birmingham Council's "post mortem" into the contest makes depressing reading. It smacks of complacency.

The bid cost around £1.5 million from public funds. It also generated a substantial amount of media coverage for Birmingham, most of it positive.

It may well be that the value of this coverage exceeded the cost. But the truth is that there is no way of knowing.

The figure of £4.5 million suggested by the council is undoubtedly based on careful research but it can never be more than an informed estimate.

This attempt to bandy specific figures around appears to be a politically-motivated act of self-justification.

It also helps the authority avoid some of the difficult questions which arose after the result was announced.

There is no doubt Birmingham was right to enter the competition, and did submit an impressive proposal. But it has been convincingly argued the city failed to enthuse most of its residents and rally them to the cause – in stark contrast to Liverpool.

Questions have also been raised about the decision to submit a "West Midlands" rather than a city bid.

Recent prestige projects such as Millennium Point also suggest that Birmingham may still be failing to recognise the importance of appealing architecture.

None of these issues has easy answers. But they should not be swept aside with serene assertions that the bid was a great success.

B'ham Post 05/08/03



Lessons to be Learnt from the Outcome of the European Capital of Culture Bid



We need a wide debate on culture bid

The interest shown by Birmingham's movers and shakers in a city council inquiry into the failed European Capital of Culture bid is impressive.

So keen are some people to have their say on what went wrong, and how things might be better organised on a future occasion, that they volunteered to appear before a scrutiny committee without first being asked.

This is to be welcomed, for it is vital that as wide a cross section as possible contribute to the culture debate.

The scrutiny process, however, can only achieve its ultimate aim if it hears from all of those who were most closely associated with the bid.

The apparent failure of Stephen Hetherington, who compiled the bid, to reply to a scrutiny summons is not the snub it first appears. Mr Hetherington has assured *The Birmingham Post* that he has not received an invitation and, when the letter does reach him, he will consider its contents very carefully.

Hopefully, he will attend the committee and explain in detail his approach to the capital of culture bid. There is certainly no reason to imagine that he will not do so. The position of Dr John Heeley, former chief executive of Marketing Birmingham, is less clear. Dr Heeley, now working in Nottingham, has turned down a request to give evidence to the scrutiny committee, apparently on the grounds that he no longer has links to Birmingham.

We hope he will think again. It has been suggested that Marketing Birmingham's input into the culture bid was not as great as it ought to have been, but only Dr Heeley can say for certain.

While it is important the scrutiny process does not turn into a witch hunt, there are nevertheless a number of points to be answered. Was the culture bid really elitist, secretive and removed from most Birmingham people?

A decision to ask members of the public for their views should cast valuable insight into the way the culture campaign was regarded away from the claustrophobic atmosphere of the Council House. If it transpires the people of Birmingham did not know what the bid stood for, it is hardly surprising that the culture judges chose Liverpool instead.



Lessons to be Learnt from the Outcome of the European Capital of Culture Bid

CULTURE BID TEAM SLAMMED

OFFICIALS behind Birmingham's failed bid for European Capital of Culture behaved in an "elitist, arrogant and secretive" way, a leading businessman claimed.

Andrew Sparrow, giving evidence to a council scrutiny committee, criticised the city council-led bid team for failing to capture the public imagination and refusing help and advice from the business sector.

Mr Sparrow, a director of the professional services lobby group Birmingham Forward and chairman of the Birmingham Press Club, said the business community became concerned about the bid's low profile.

MAIL REPORTER

Business leaders felt so strongly about the issue that, in December 2002, a letter was sent to council leader Sir Albert Bore expressing misgivings.

Failed

Mr Sparrow, who stressed he was speaking as an individual, told the committee: "The bid just wasn't being communicated well. No one understood the substance of the bid or what it consisted of.

"Concern was becoming great. People were asking why is this campaign not being raised?"

BBC WM broadcaster Ed Doolan, giving evidence to

the committee, said the team failed to "check in with real people".

The campaign revolved around the upper middle class and politicians and not the city's communities, he claimed.

Mr Doolan added: "I genuinely believe that the people who put this bid together did so with the best of intentions.

"The campaign never caught the public imagination."

B'ham Evening Mail

15/10/03

Culture bid ignored key smaller groups

By Paul Dale
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One of Birmingham's best known choirs was excluded from the city's bid to become European Capital of Culture despite expressing a wish to be involved.

Dr Jim Berrow, president of the Birmingham Bach Choir, said the snub reflected a mistake in concentrating on "big guns" such as the Hippodrome Theatre and the CBSO while neglecting the small but influential arts organisations that gave Birmingham its cultural identity.

Giving evidence to a city council scrutiny inquiry into the failure to win the Capital of Culture title, Dr Berrow said he

went to see Stephen Hetherington, the leader of the Birmingham bid team, to ask him to include the Bach Choir in the city's submission to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport.

He felt the exclusion was particularly difficult to understand because the choir had just returned from Dresden, where it was asked to help celebrate restoration of the city's cathedral. This underlined the choir's international credentials, Dr Berrow added.

Dr Berrow said he believed the culture bid placed too much emphasis on the West Midlands region and did not concentrate enough on Birmingham.

"The mortar in the wall of our bid should have been the small organisations. There are a lot of them and some of them have international recognition.



The mortar in the wall of our bid should have been the small organisations

Dr Jim Berrow

Much more time should have been spent looking at the wider scene and not just concentrating on the jewels in the crown," Dr Berrow added.

He was also critical of the team leading the culture bid. "I got the feeling, in the nicest way, that the usual suspects

were there. An accountant was drafted in to head the bid.

"Birmingham has a huge amount to offer, it has more going on around the place than Liverpool. But there was a lack of understanding of the cultural punter.

"Birmingham should be confident at telling people what they might enjoy rather than looking at market research and saying 'we want more pictures by Relf Harris'."

The second day of hearings into the culture campaign heard further claims that the bid team failed to engage the people of Birmingham.

The accusation was first levelled by Jeremy Isaacs, chairman of the Capital of Culture judges, when explaining why Liverpool was awarded the title over Birmingham.

Kevin Johnson, public affairs director at Carlton Television

in Birmingham, told yesterday's hearing that the bid team committed a fundamental mistake by deciding against a publicity campaign. "There was clearly a feeling from the top of the bid team that it was unnecessary to involve the people. But whichever side of the political divide you are on, everyone knows that this Government reacts to people pressure."

Mr Johnson hit out at "last-minute planning" and a failure to involve political leaders and the Birmingham business community.

"I think we were terribly naive," he added. "The idea that these kinds of campaigns are won by playing by the rules and filling in forms is nonsense. "We needed to be cleverer and use more ammunition in prosecuting our bid."



CULTURE BID HURT BY POOR SUPPORT

Leaders 'wasted' £2.5m

CITY leaders have wasted £2½ million in a flawed bid to win the coveted European Capital Of Culture title for Birmingham, it has been claimed.

A scrutiny team has heard three days of evidence from businessmen and civic leaders who claim the campaign was doomed because it failed to recruit support among Brummies.

Instead the bidding team, locked behind office doors in Brindley place:

- Brusquely rebuffed offers of help from local businessmen, companies and arts organisations
- Drew up a bid spanning an area from Stratford to Ironbridge rather than concentrating on Birmingham.

Condemned

Central TV's Ian Squires said he screened a last minute 'I'm backing Brum' campaign featuring Jasper Carrot.

"We did it off our own back," he told councillors.

"Had we waited I have a fear nobody would have asked us."

Neil Mayberry, of Birmingham Business Focus, explained: "The bid team was looking to lobby London rather than getting people in Birmingham really

BY DAVID BELL

enthused. Even many of Birmingham's own MPs seem to be scared to go public.

"If it had all been handled differently I think we would have come out on top."

Brummie historian and broadcaster Carl Chinn condemned the way rules were changed to rob Birmingham of the National Stadium and the Millennium Dome.

"I feel we wasted our time," he told councillors.

"The only way we should spend money on any further bids is if we have a cast iron guarantee of a level playing field - and I don't think we shall ever get that."

Scrutiny chairman Coun Ken Hardiman said there had been a repetitive theme running through the evidence.

"Nobody gave the people of the city any encouragement to join in," he said.

B'ham Evening Mail

18/10/03



Lessons to be Learnt from the Outcome of the European Capital of Culture Bid

Culture bid 'very weak'

By Paul Dale
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Birmingham's bid to win the European Capital of Culture crown was underfunded and failed to win the full backing of city council officials and MPs, it was claimed yesterday.

Former deputy council leader Andy Howell, who led the political input into the bid team, said

the chairman, supported by the MPs, that this had to be a low-key approach. I don't think you can embark on something like this without really going for it."

Mr Howell said he was glad the culture title was awarded to Liverpool because its bid had "engaged with the people". Birmingham, however, failed to galvanise public support and even members of the bid team had little idea of the ideas they were supposed to play he claimed.

He added: "Birmingham, and particularly the council, didn't get

behind it. I spent some time in Liverpool and everywhere you went you were aware of the fact that they were bidding.

"The bid team was frustrated that city council departments did not highlight the fact that we were trying to become European Capital of Culture."

Although the Birmingham bid cost more than £1.5 million to process, Mr Howell pointed out that Liverpool's campaign was "considerably more expensive."

"If we were really serious bidders we would have made a more

realistic assessment of the financial requirements," he added.

He was also critical of the council's failure to emphasise the economic benefit that would flow to Birmingham and the West Midlands from a successful bid.

"It was asked to go through the final bid documentation and the thing that really stood out was a big section on the economic impact prepared by council officers, which was very weak."

By Paul Dale
Chief Reporter
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Birmingham's bid to become European Capital of Culture was "not right, repeat and almost totally wrong" working class manufacturing credentials. The allegations were levelled yesterday by Dr Carl Chinn, the Birmingham historian and author. Dr Chinn told a city council scrutiny committee that the bid

failed because it did not involve the ordinary Brummies". Dr Chinn said the bid team was "not winning city, generated a huge campaign of civic pride and public support."

Dr Chinn said the Birmingham bid team, led by Stephen Hetherington and Brian Woods Scawen, adopted a "top down approach" from which business leaders and community groups were excluded. He said the remoteness of the process reflected growing concern about the regeneration of Birmingham city centre.

sense of unease among many Brummies about the high-profile regeneration programme in the city's working classes. Whether the are Sikhs, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, or of no faith they are excluded from what is happening in the city centre.

"It is a shame that the Capital of Culture bid included so little about Birmingham's history and seemed to hide away from our people the fact that we are the city that produced the world's most advanced precision engineering." He said he feared a lack of affordable housing and the deterioration of the city's traditional markets area near the Bullring and the city centre.

reach of most people. I would be keen to see us stop pretending we are not a city that has been built by the sweat and blood of working class people."

Asked to comment on Mr Hetherington, who was appointed by the council to draw up the bid document, Dr Chinn said: "There is a tendency in Birmingham to bring in an outsider. We don't look at the talent there is in Birmingham. It is an inflexible complex, on surely it is not good enough to do-it ourselves. I am not saying we shouldn't have input from people who are not Brummies, but the balance

might have tipped the balance," he said.

Mr Squires told of this morning's deliberations, that Birmingham's campaign had little in the way of public profile. Neil Maybury, representing Birmingham Business Forum, criticised the bid team for including regional attractions. He asked: "Why did we include the Wedge, Rockingham Avenue and Wedge, Rockingham Avenue bridge certainly didn't know they were connected to Birmingham's Capital of Culture bid."

Chinn slates culture bid team

needed changing and we need to be much more alert to the talent we have in the city."

Mr Squires said of this morning's deliberations, that Birmingham's campaign had little in the way of public profile. Neil Maybury, representing Birmingham Business Forum, criticised the bid team for including regional attractions. He asked: "Why did we include the Wedge, Rockingham Avenue and Wedge, Rockingham Avenue bridge certainly didn't know they were connected to Birmingham's Capital of Culture bid."



Lessons to be Learnt from the Outcome of the European Capital of Culture Bid



The Birmingham Post

Too late now for culture bid insight

After several weeks of scrutiny hearings into Birmingham's European Capital of Culture bid, a depressing picture of disunity, poor organisation and ultimate failure is beginning to emerge.

Evidence given yesterday by Andy Howell, the former deputy leader of Birmingham City Council, mirrored previous contributions and also offered fresh food for thought.

Mr Howell is the latest among those closely involved with the bid to talk about tensions behind the scenes, needless secrecy, poor communications, the failure to engage the people of Birmingham and the unwillingness of the region's MPs to embrace the campaign because they could not stand the thought of failure.

Add to that the apparent snubbing of the business community, whose representatives were given the distinct impression that their input was not required, and it is hardly surprising that Birmingham did not land the culture crown.

As far as the city council is concerned, Mr Howell offered a fascinating insight into corporate inactivity.

After much soul-searching about whether Birmingham should bid in the first place, it was decided to enter the race. But if Mr Howell is to be believed, the decision did not attract the full support of senior council management and this lukewarm approach was reflected in the failure to embrace and promote a three-year culture campaign.

That there was a lack of joined-up thinking, which meant that civic, business and arts organisations were not moulded into one effective force, is undeniable and must be borne in mind should Birmingham bid again for high-profile projects.

Of course, if all those who are now criticising the arrangements had done so publicly a year or more ago it might have been possible to restructure the bid and get the campaign back on track. Sadly, they only speak now with the benefit of hindsight.

B'ham Post 04/11/03

Birmingham lost Culture bid because it 'did not engage the public'

A leading festival organiser yesterday claimed Birmingham's bid to become European Capital of Culture was doomed because it did not engage with the public.

Mr Howell, managing director of Birmingham's bid, told a city council meeting that the "true meaning of culture" was not to be lost.

He said: "So many people in Birmingham are frustrated about so much of what we have done. It's not just the bid itself, it's the way we've done it. We've not got the recognition that a great city deserves."

He said: "So many people in Birmingham are frustrated about so much of what we have done. It's not just the bid itself, it's the way we've done it. We've not got the recognition that a great city deserves."

B'ham Post 28/10/03



Lessons to be Learnt from the Outcome of the European Capital of Culture Bid

Judges 'moved bid goalposts'

By Paul Dale
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Liverpool won the European Capital of Culture title because the competition judges "moved the goalposts" at the last minute, the City of Birmingham's bid chairman said yesterday.

Brian Woods-Scawen said he believed Birmingham had the deepest, broadest and strongest case and ought to have been a clear winner if a decision had

been taken based on the criteria issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Other evidence to a city council scrutiny committee, Mr Woods-Scawen said he spoke privately to members of the judging panel after a decision was taken to award the prestige culture title to Liverpool.

It was told the panel found it difficult to decide between Birmingham and Newcastle-Gateshead.

They came down in favour of Liverpool because the city's cultural infrastructure was not as

advanced as Birmingham and they felt the title would act as a boost to regeneration.

In that case there was nothing more Birmingham could have done to improve its chances of winning, he insisted.

"The question was, would the judges reward success in the bid or the bid itself?"

"Or should they give it to a city with a lot of potential but which has further to go in its journey?"

He hit back at critics of the

Birmingham culture bid, rejecting claims made to the scrutiny committee that the campaign was also removed from the people and wrapped in excessive secrecy.

The bid consisted of contributions from more than 700 organisations and arts groups and was based on extensive public consultations.

"There was no quality threshold. We had hundreds of projects and hundreds of people with relevant things managed to get through."

He also dismissed a suggestion

that an extensive publicity campaign by Birmingham might have persuaded the judges to think differently.

Mr Woods-Scawen pointed out competition made no reference to submitting a bid. A "hearts and minds" campaign would have been organised if Birmingham's bid had been awarded the title.

"Going early in a big public campaign would not, in my judgement, have secured a win. The busiest public campaigns

were in Bradford and Belfast and they didn't get shortlisted," he added. Mr Woods-Scawen said Birmingham's bid may have suffered from a lack of clarity.

The scrutiny committee also heard from Paul Spooner, director of economic development at Birmingham City Council, who insisted the culture bid should not be viewed as a failure.

Mr Spooner said the campaign had brought arts organisations together, worked on structures and 600 projects in the culture bid would still go ahead.

The Birmingham Post

Admit defeat and move on

The scrutiny investigation into Birmingham's failed European Capital of Culture bid has been a difficult, sometimes painful, but ultimately necessary exercise.

It is right, in view of the large amount of public money spent on attempting to win the culture crown, that city council leaders should take a look at why the venture was unsuccessful and whether lessons could be learned in the event of a similar bid in the future.

However, after several weeks of hearings, enough is enough. As Aston Villa chairman Doug Ellis pointed out yesterday, the capital of culture saga is history. It is time to move on.

The scrutiny committee must have listened to more than enough evidence by now to come to a conclusion, although it is difficult to imagine that members will be able to deduce any clear-cut reasons why the bid did not succeed.

On a technical basis, Birmingham's bid was the best and most comprehensive of any of the competing cities. Stephen Hetherington, who wrote the document, did all that was asked of him and has been congratulated by the scrutiny team for the quality of the submission sent to the Government.

The bigger questions remain unanswered. Should Birmingham have engaged in a hearts and minds publicity campaign? Was it wise to include the whole of the West Midlands in the bid? Was the Birmingham business community properly engaged in the process? Should the city council have taken more of a lead? Was Liverpool successful because it put forward a case for economic regeneration off the back of the culture title?

Underlying all of that is the long-held suspicion that Birmingham's chances of progress are routinely demolished by a London-centric Government. Failure to win the Millennium Dome, the National Stadium and, now, the Capital of Culture weighs heavily in this city.

Too much scrutiny and navel-gazing, however, can be debilitating and ultimately self-defeating. Other culture contenders, notably Newcastle-Gateshead, Bristol and Oxford, decided against dwelling on the past and are intent on using the experience of the past three years to strengthen their cultural infrastructure.

Birmingham should admit defeat, accept that the reasons for defeat will probably never be known, and move on.

B'ham Post 06/11/03