



8 April 2011

Jackie Crozier  
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Dear Ms Crozier

A group was set up on Facebook called 'Facts about Manchester Pride' and we are writing to give you the opportunity to answer some of the key concerns and questions that emerged from it. Your reply will be made public.

Many of us believe that there is a lack of accountability and transparency in the way Manchester Pride operates and a conflict of interest in some areas. Another major concern is the amount raised for good causes each year which never seems to increase and actually is reducing in real terms after inflation.

Here are our questions:

1/ Why are there no public meetings or official online forums? Manchester Pride receives hundreds of thousands of pounds from the general public each year, yet there is no opportunity for the public and LGBT community to question those who are behind it. You merely answer carefully selected questions on your website. While your Facebook page is a controlled PR exercise and unfavourable comments or questions are often removed.

Public meetings could include a planning meeting for the community before the event, a meeting after to review it and another after the annual charity amount is announced.

2/ Why aren't minutes of your meetings (for example of the board and trustees) published and if Manchester Pride holds an Annual General Meeting why isn't it public? Why the secrecy?

3/ Why are there no concessions for the unemployed and why has the period for buying a lower-price early bird ticket been greatly reduced over the years? In 2005 early bird tickets were available until 22 August. But by 2010 they were only available until 1 July. This makes life more difficult for people who are on a low income: they have to find the money much earlier and if they work some weekends they may not know their shift pattern two months ahead.

4/ Why has the Village Business Association (VBA) been given £4,000 from the charity fund to help build decorative arches on Canal Street (the same sum as awarded to Body Positive North West)? Isn't this a perversion of the original aims of this event, which was set up in 1990 by a couple of the business people to raise money for HIV and AIDS causes? Also, isn't this a breach of one of your own rules which states that causes that have a grant from another source are not eligible for one from Manchester Pride? It is reported that the VBA project will receive money from Manchester City Council.

5/ Isn't it a conflict of interest to have individuals from various businesses or organisations sitting on the panel that decides on the grants, when those same businesses or organisations stand to benefit from money that is given out? Gaydio is one such example that has been brought to our attention. However other people who have decided to grant money to the VBA will see their own venues benefit due to the proposed decorative arches.

6/ In a survey done by Manchester Pride itself in 2008, 53 people (6.9% of all respondents) said they didn't attend the event and, of those, 11 people (20.75% of those not attending) said it was because they 'were unable to afford the ticket price'. Tickets exclude many LGBT people from attending for all kinds of reasons.

According to Marketing Manchester, some years Manchester Pride has generated £17.5 million of extra income for businesses across the region. That being the case, why does the LGBT community need to fund this event by buying tickets? Even if the village was fenced off with security for a free-to-enter festival, the costs of doing that are small compared to the extra income generated for businesses.

If Pride is going to be this commercial event, why can't it be funded by the businesses that benefit - either directly or through the City Council? Considering Manchester Pride's strong connections with Marketing Manchester and some of the most powerful people in the city, why haven't you fought for this on our behalf?

The City Council gave £2 million to the first International Festival and that was expected to bring in £32m of extra income for businesses. In the last couple of months, the City Council has withdrawn the small amount that it used to give Manchester Pride and which was completely wiped out by charges and street cleaning costs anyway (£32,500 given in 2010 and £33,300 charged not including cleansing costs). Why are we in the LGBT community being treated as second class citizens?

7/ The last ten years has seen an economic boom. Over the same period, what is now known as Manchester Pride has gone from being free-to-enter to the current situation where around 40,000 people pay as much as £22.50 plus booking fee for a ticket. In 2010 your income was £1,036,294 and only just over 11% of that went to good causes.

Why is the charity amount the one thing that never increases significantly? In 2010 just £115,000 was raised. Why do you describe this as a 'massive amount' on your current website when, seven years ago in 2003, the figure raised was £127,690?

In 2000 the free-to-enter GayFest generated £105,000 for good causes and according to The Pink Paper (August 30, 1996 issue) the final figure from Mardi Gras 1996 was expected to be £127,000. Also there is the effect of inflation on top - perhaps 35% over the last decade. In real terms the amount you raise is dwindling year-by-year.

Isn't it actually a choice on your part not to generate any more than this for charity? You put up ticket prices to cover higher charges imposed by the police and so on, but you seem to have decided that about £125,000 is enough for the charities.

8/ The 2010 charity amount represents just over 11% of Manchester Pride's total income and the percentage continues to dwindle each year, while across Manchester businesses enjoy tens of millions of pounds of extra income and the event continues to be controlled by people who are closely involved with the tourist industry and big business.

At what point will you cease to claim on your website that the 'main goal' of Manchester Pride is to 'raise money for a variety of LGBT organisations and groups within Greater Manchester'? How low must that percentage and the actual charity figures fall? Isn't it time to recognise that the main goal

of the event in its current form is to drive tourism and generate profits for businesses across Manchester? And then, having recognised that, make changes?

9/ We're told that one reason for the tickets is the capacity of the gay village. Have tickets ever sold out completely and people been refused a ticket because the village was full up? What is the maximum number of tickets that can be sold?

10/ Why must we fence ourselves into the gay village during Manchester Pride and pay the police and private security firms to protect us? Don't LGBT people have a right to expect to be able to walk the streets of the city centre at all times in safety? Why does Manchester Pride accept this extremely negative state of affairs and give in to it?

11/ Almost half of the trustees at Manchester Pride are venue owners, so decisions regarding the ban on Pride-goers taking in their own alcohol tend to be driven by self-interest and profit-making considerations. With ticket and drink prices so high and the current economic situation, shouldn't people be allowed to take in their own food and drink and picnic in Sackville Park if they wish? Longer term shouldn't Manchester Pride challenge the need to have fences in the first place? How is it that bylaws can be relaxed for other events (Glasgow Rangers in Piccadilly) but not for the LGBT community? Why don't you ask these questions and campaign on this?

12/ Why does a member of the public have to submit a Freedom of Information Request to Greater Manchester Police or Manchester City Council to find out how much those organisations give to and charge Manchester Pride? Shouldn't you make this kind of information available on your website and Facebook page as a matter of routine? Along with other data, such as the amounts raised and donated by venues and other businesses.

Wouldn't this exposure be a way of 'encouraging' these bodies/businesses to give more and keep down their charges made to Pride? Or is it that your main priority lies with keeping the police, City Council and certain businesses happy, rather than fighting for what is best for the LGBT community and charities?

Isn't it unfair that some village businesses give or raise a lot, while others give nothing at all and escape any scrutiny because there is no negative publicity for them?

13/ On 18 January 2008, City Life reported that Sarah Rowland had left her position as your Festival Director for a new role at Marketing Manchester but had 'agreed to manage the four-day Big Weekend' that year. Her profile on LinkedIn shows that she worked at Marketing Manchester from '2007 - 2009' and as your Event Manager at Manchester Pride from 'April 2003 - Present'. We understand she was also the secretary of Manchester Pride Limited until recently.

From 2003 until a few months ago the position of Chair of Manchester Pride was held by Andrew Stokes the Chief Executive of Marketing Manchester, who is also on the board of CityCo and now the Chair of the Village Business Association and Queer Up North. Until mid-2007 Marketing Manchester and Manchester Pride shared an office at 56 Oxford Street along with the same email address, telephone and fax numbers.

We note that the contract to direct Manchester Pride has been awarded to Nine Lives Event Management Ltd. a company that Sarah Rowland is a director of. On what date was this contract awarded? Was it put out to tender? If so, how many applications did Manchester Pride receive and from which companies?

Isn't it true to say that Manchester Pride has an unhealthy and over-close relationship with Marketing Manchester? An organisation that is primarily interested in tourism and promoting the city at all costs. Aims that, in many cases, go against the best interests of many in the LGBT community, in

terms of inclusion and so on?

14/ Why does Manchester Pride use young people as unpaid interns? Doesn't this favour applicants who have parents who can support them while they work for you free of charge? Shouldn't an organisation such as yours be about giving everyone equality of opportunity and paying minimum wage would be a small price to ensure that? Just a couple of hundred pounds out of an income of more than £1m.

15/ Why do you allow events such as UniChallenge to promote themselves as a charity fundraiser for Manchester Pride when the amount raised for good causes in the end is tiny? In 2008 this event gave just £1 from each £23 ticket to Manchester Pride. In itself that is only 4.35% of the ticket price.

However, after it went through Manchester Pride, something like 88% of that £1 had been spent on your costs and just 12p from a £23 ticket went to a good cause in the end. Yet the 2009 UniChallenge website states: 'while you're all partying over Manchester Pride's Big Weekend remember why we're actually here to celebrate Pride... it's to raise money for charity!'

How can 12p for good causes from a £23 ticket possibly be the reason behind why anyone is at UniChallenge? Doesn't this just bring Manchester Pride and, indeed, all charities into disrepute? One night in 1991 Rockies club gave 50% of its door money to the charity. Shouldn't there be a minimum percentage before an event is allowed to 'tag on' to Manchester Pride?

16/ As you know, there has been a huge increase in charges by the police since 2004. From £20,000 charged in 2004 to £52,500 in 2010.

In response to a Freedom of Information Request regarding Manchester Pride, Greater Manchester Police says that: 'the increase in charges, seen in recent years, reflects the move away from the position of providing policing services to this event at a cost to Greater Manchester Police, to a position where the fee charged reflects the cost incurred by Greater Manchester Police.'

Presumably policing is costed according to expected crowd numbers at the parade and in the ticketed area? In the past, GMP has stated in writing that all estimated crowd figures come from the organisers of Manchester Pride. We note that in the past, statements made by representatives of Manchester Pride to the press and in publicity releases have exaggerated the attendance figures.

In your negotiations with Greater Manchester Police what crowd figures did you quote to GMP in 2007 and for the most recent event in 2010, for both the parade and ticket area?

Yours sincerely

On behalf of the group  
'Facts About Manchester Pride'  
on Facebook

cc. Tony Lloyd MP