

Windrush Campaigners Call for Government Support to Secure Future of Notting Hill Carnival

On Windrush Day, campaigners and cultural leaders have issued a renewed plea to the UK government to provide urgent funding for the Notting Hill Carnival, warning that the landmark event faces cancellation due to unmet safety requirements. In a letter leaked to the BBC, carnival chairman Ian Comfort appealed to Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy, citing concerns over public safety and calling for immediate financial support.

Human rights lawyer and Windrush advocate Jacqueline McKenzie described the funding crisis as a “grave injustice,” particularly given the event’s historical ties to the Windrush generation. “Notting Hill Carnival is a profound cultural celebration rooted in the Caribbean diaspora. Its vulnerability at this moment, while so many Windrush victims still seek justice, is deeply troubling,” she said.

Founded in the late 1950s by Caribbean migrants who arrived in post-war Britain, the carnival has evolved into Europe’s largest street festival, drawing over two million attendees each August. It stands as a global symbol of multiculturalism and community resilience. Campaigners argue that its potential cancellation would not only mark a cultural loss but also undermine decades of progress in racial inclusion and representation.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan expressed serious concern over safety risks, warning of the potential for a “mass casualty event” if essential measures are not funded. While City Hall and local authorities continue to support the event, they have confirmed that their financial capacity has been exhausted. Despite acknowledging the carnival’s significance, the government has thus far refrained from providing direct financial assistance.

Patrick Vernon, a cultural historian and Windrush campaigner, emphasized that the event transcends entertainment. “Notting Hill Carnival is a vital cultural institution that reflects the diversity, creativity, and resilience of British society. It must be treated as such,” he said. Glenda Caesar of the Windrush National Organisation added that the carnival represents a living tribute to the contributions of Black and Caribbean communities in the UK.

With less than two months until the event, campaigners stress that time is of the essence. “Safeguarding the Notting Hill Carnival is not simply about preserving a tradition, it is about upholding a legacy,” said McKenzie. “The government must now act decisively to ensure that this cornerstone of British cultural life endures.”