

Dublin supports capital's St. Patrick's celebrations

DUBLIN has pledged its support for a huge St. Patrick's Day celebration in London next year.

The Irish capital's Lord Mayor Michael Mulcahy has given his backing for the massive celebration in Trafalgar Square on March 17.

His pledge came during a visit to Dublin by London Mayor Ken Livingstone to outline plans for the St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

Mr Livingstone said the event would be a major cultural event and would grow every year.

He said: "The Irish are the largest ethnic minority in London and over a century or more have helped to build London.

"Nobody who grows up a Londoner grows up ignorant of some degree of Irish culture.

"The more we strengthen those links now that we are moving towards a federal relationship between our two Governments and countries the better."

Mr Mulcahy pledged his full support for the celebrations.

He said: "I'm the Lord Mayor who never says no. Whatever Ken wants, we'll give him."

The London St. Patrick's Day

event is being organised by Smurfit Media — publishers of The Irish Post — Mr Livingstone's Greater London Authority and Irish community groups around the capital.

Dublin's Fire Brigade band will lead the major parade from Westminster Cathedral to Trafalgar Square following a morning Mass.

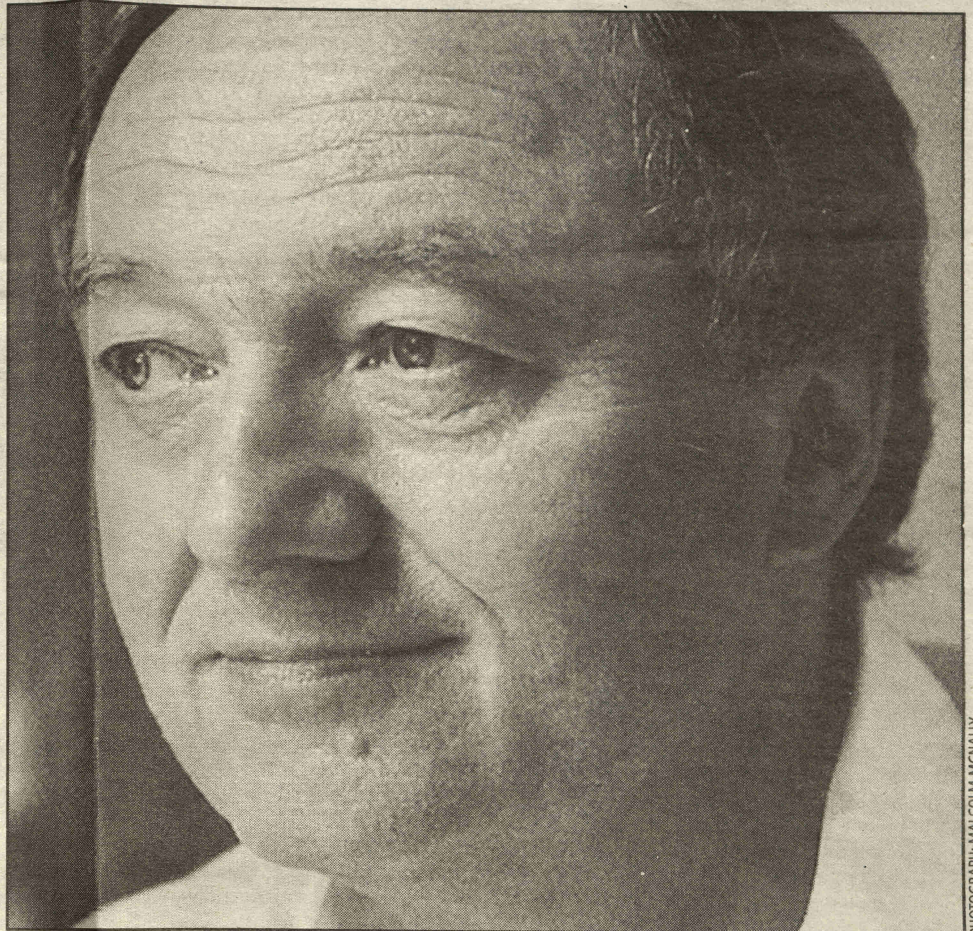
The celebrations will then get into full swing in the square with a main stage featuring high-profile acts from the world of Irish music culture and dance plus various food, drink, arts and crafts stalls.

The 2002 parade is the first officially-backed St. Patrick's Day event in London and is planned as a huge family day out and a showcase of the best of Irish culture.

Mr Livingstone's visit also saw him open Dublin's live animal Nativity crib at the Mansion House in Dawson Street.

The crib — featuring live animals including sheep, goats and donkeys in a life-size stable — raises money for the Lord Mayor's charity.

Mr Livingstone also compared notes with Mr Mulcahy on problems the pair are facing in their cities such as housing and traffic congestion.



Ken Livingstone: London's celebrations would be a major cultural event.

PHOTOGRAPH: MALCOLM MCNALLY