

## People Power – Still Going Strong in Leeds!

The Half Marathon is one of the biggest events on the Leeds sports calendar, but the 2008 running was almost cancelled after Leeds City Council announced it would not be holding the annual 13.1 mile road race for the first time in twenty two years, in order to focus all attention on the 10 kilometre Jane Tomlinson Run For All.

Athletes and running clubs across the city protested, disappointed by the Council's decision, especially as Leeds already has another 10 kilometre race, the Abbey Dash; whereas the Half Marathon is the only run of its kind in the city, after the Leeds Marathon was axed in 2003 when police refused to issue a future licence because of organisational difficulties.

The people power displayed by Leeds' athletic contingent was overwhelming – a campaign was spearheaded by the Yorkshire Evening Post and over one hundred letters and emails were sent to the City Council demanding the Half Marathon still go ahead. So, just days after announcing they were cancelling it, the Council reversed its decision and instead decided to just move the date of the Half Marathon to Sunday September 7th rather than in the usual month of May, to avoid a clash with the Jane Tomlinson event.

The council is now fully behind the rearranged event, and has in fact been congratulated for pulling out all the stops in working with running clubs, businesses and [hotels in Leeds](#), to make the most from the city-based race, in terms of raising Leeds' profile. The marathon effort included negotiating with the Kippax Harriers to rearrange the planned date of the Leeds Country Way run which was pencilled in for September 7th but will now take place on August 31st instead.

The route of the Half Marathon loops the north part of the city, taking participants all through Leeds City centre, past many of Leeds' major tourist attractions, shops and historic buildings, before ending with a finish in Millennium Square, where runners are greeted by the Lord Mayor.

Runners are now being encouraged to sign up to take part in this year's Half Marathon, before the deadline date of Friday 8th August. Application forms to register for the run can be downloaded from Leeds City Council's website, or alternatively, as of May hard copies are available from various leisure centres throughout the Leeds area.

The 2007 Half Marathon, held on May 13th, saw the most successful turn-out ever, with more than 5.700 runners taking part. It is estimated that around £500,000 was raised for charity from the run.

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### About the Author

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