

Dear Mayor Anderson,

As requested, I am setting out below The ACC Liverpool Group Board's position regarding the forthcoming AOC Europe event.

The ACC Liverpool Group opened Exhibition Centre Liverpool in 2014 to continue to secure existing and additional conference business and attract standalone exhibitions as part of its commitment to maximise the generation of economic impact for Liverpool and the wider City Region.

The staging of the International Business Festival that year was instrumental in establishing the profile of the venue and included the Undersea Defence Technology (UDT) event hosted by the exhibition organiser Clarion Defence & Security ("Clarion.") At the time, this defence and security event was well received and successfully delivered without any objections from local stakeholders. Following its success, The ACC Liverpool Group and Clarion, with the full knowledge of Liverpool City Council, continued to engage on future business development opportunities.

In 2018, The ACC Liverpool Group entered into discussions to host another of Clarion's events, Electronic Warfare Europe, which had previously taken place in Stockholm, London and Rome during its 25-year history. It has since been renamed AOC Europe to reflect its longstanding relationship with the Association of Old Crows and its sister event that takes place in Washington DC. The event explores aspects of cyber information security and communications that are vital to the defence of the UK and our allies around the world – a field in which the UK is an acknowledged leader.

The event was contracted in May 2019, being entirely consistent with the City's inward investment strategy and is estimated to deliver in the region of £1million in economic impact. It had been due to take place in June 2020 but, following postponement due to the Covid-19 pandemic, has now been rescheduled to 12 – 13 October 2021.

AOC Europe aims to connect organisations and individuals from government, defence, industry and academia to share information, ideas and technological advances to allow the development of sophisticated systems used to make the world a safer place. Speakers at the conference will include leading academics and world-class scientists and engineers. Topics for discussion will include techniques for radar location, plans for next generation helicopters and tactics for defence against unmanned vehicles attacks on our critical national infrastructure. Specialist speakers will provide insights into subjects such as quantum radar, edge computing and low power devices, all at the forefront of technological advancements in defence and security.

These events are not transactional, all exhibitors must adhere to the highest regulatory standards and any business conducted or discussed is subject to UK export laws. Attendees and exhibitors are assessed on a case by case basis; all applications are vetted and undergo the highest scrutiny to ensure strict compliance with all applicable rules, regulations, international treaties and laws.

The ACC Liverpool Group operates a campus of venues, which are available to be hired for both public and private events. All event enquiries received are carefully assessed as part of our enquiry validation process, which mirrors well-established and industry standard approaches to establish and review the content of an event. This includes ensuring events are from a regulated and recognised sector or industry as appropriate and consistent with inward investment strategies of the City and City Region.

The process is periodically reviewed and updated in line with any changes in industry approach or strategic policy. It was on this basis that the booking was taken.

There is presently no known legal basis to terminate the contract between The ACC Liverpool Group and AOC Europe in order to prevent the event taking place. Furthermore, in our informed view and collective experience of the industry, to terminate a contract unlawfully would have a devastating reputational impact on The ACC Liverpool Group's ability to secure business events to the City, given the significant decline in organiser confidence such action would cause. The resultant impact on The ACC Liverpool Group's future event numbers and economic impact generated would likely be significant.

We remain acutely conscious of our legal obligations and as Directors would not terminate the contract unless there were legitimate and reasonable grounds to do so. For clarity, the Directors of The ACC Liverpool Group have never knowingly unlawfully terminated a contract previously. If it was determined that we had unlawfully terminated any contract, we would likely face a claim for damages and potentially significant legal costs, with the additional prospect of a claim for specific performance of our contractual obligations.

I hope this helps to clarify our position.

Yours Sincerely



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Max Steinberg CBE, Chair of The ACC Liverpool Group

For and on behalf of the Board of The ACC Liverpool Group.