

City Hall Snubs St. Patrick's Parade

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Joyous lovers of Ireland waving English and Russian flags during a previous St. Patrick's Day parade.
Igor Tabakov

The city's traditional St. Patrick's Day parade has been canceled for the first time in a decade, raising speculation about the reasons behind the decision.

The Irish Business Club, which has organized the event since 1992 said it decided to replace the March 20 parade with an indoor song festival after extensive meetings with City Hall officials.

"Moscow City [Hall] has made it very clear over the last few months that reducing traffic congestion is a priority," the Club's chairwoman Avril Conroy said in a statement distributed by the Irish Embassy earlier this week.

Apart from traffic conditions, "unpredictable extremes in weather conditions this year" were a factor in preferring an indoor event, the statement said.

The parade has in past years been held along Novy Arbat with high-profile support from then longtime Mayor Yury Luzhkov, who occasionally attended in person.

Last year it moved to Bolshaya Dorogomilovskaya Ulitsa, a less central thoroughfare near the Kievskaya metro station.

This year, City Hall offered location even further from the center, the BSR Russia web site [reported](#), without elaborating.

The report said the real reason for canceling the parade was security concerns: "With the recent bombings ... it was not possible to get insurance," it said, quoting an unidentified "well-informed source."

No such concerns, however, impeded the Maslenitsa festival downtown, due to be opened on Vasilyevsky Spusk on Friday by Mayor Sergei Sobyenin.

City Hall denied that it was to blame for the decision. A spokesman told Interfax that the initiative to cancel the parade had come from the Irish side: "We forbade nothing," the spokesman was quoted as saying.

The St. Patrick's Day parade has been popular with Russians, who usually made up most of its more than 1,000 participants, and some of them are now trying to set up an alternative.

The Veresk cultural foundation, which runs the Saint-Patrick.ru web site and has been co-organizing the parades, hopes to get a smaller one going on Sary Arbat. "We are collecting signatures and will file a request with City Hall," foundation spokeswoman Yulia Podchufarova [said](#) Friday.

The official song festival will kick off at 7 p.m. at Dom Muzyki, near Paveletsky Station, on Sunday, March 20.

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