

Like choosing one

By **Kevin Keane**
and **Eamon Donoghue**

GARTH Brooks upped the ante with the Dublin city chief last night, after two of the country star's five Croke Park gigs were cancelled.

Brooks issued a late night statement declaring: 'It is five shows or none at all. To choose which shows to do and which shows not to do would be like asking to choose one child over another.'

His reaction followed a day of

HOW PROMOTERS BROKE OUTDOOR EVENT LAW

ALL outdoor concerts in Ireland expecting more than 5,000 attendees must get permission from the local council, making the phrase 'subject to licence' a standard warning on all radio, television and print ads for ticket sales.

Under the Planning and Development Act 2000, any public performance which takes place wholly

or mainly in the open air or even in a tent or temporary structure requires permission to proceed.

But the clause is normally a formality and although local authorities will frequently attach conditions to a concert - such as the times that the gig has to be finished by - outright refusals are almost unheard of.

The promoter of the Garth Brooks concerts, Peter Aiken, said this process doesn't happen in other countries.

'You don't need any licence - you just announce the event and the lord mayor or the city manager gives you permission straight away and it's on,' he said.

increasing alarm as distraught fans - 70,000 of whom had planned to travel from abroad - Dublin busi-

ness bosses and politicians criticised the decision to scrap the two concerts for which fans queued for

days to get tickets. One fan told how she had planned to bring her sister, who is battling cervical cancer, to the Monday night gig - now cancelled - but, blaming 'gluttony' by the GAA, she said the announcement was like a 'kick in the teeth'. Another told how she had spent almost €2,000 to travel from New Zealand.

However, Mr Keegan expressed no regrets when approached by the Irish Daily Mail last night.

He washed his hands of any responsibility with the curt reply: 'Take it up with the promoter.'

Emerging from his garage wearing a summer shirt and looking relaxed, despite the outcry across the media - particularly on RTE Radio One's Liveline - Mr Keegan told the Mail: 'We've made a decision and we've given a reason for our decision.'

He added: 'I am not putting the blame on anyone. We've made our decision, we're now out of the loop effectively.'

He said the council would cooperate if there's any alternative to Croke Park but failed to elaborate, adding only:

■ **THREE** quarters of Liveline listeners believe that it was wrong of Dublin council to pull the two extra Garth Brooks dates.

In a poll on RTÉ's Liveline, 74 per cent of people voted that it was wrong to cancel the extra dates while 26 per cent were happy with the decision.

Joe Duffy's Radio One show was flooded with irate listeners yesterday who look likely to miss out on a chance to see the country superstar at Croke Park.

Residents living near Croke Park also called in to defend their decision to take legal action against the five concert dates.

'We're not talking about that, we released a statement.' As it emerged that the cancellations of the gigs planned for Monday July 28 and Tuesday July 29 could cost the economy as much as €50million, Fianna Fáil's spokesman on Tourism Timmy Dooley called on the ministers for Tourism and for the Environment, Leo Varadkar and Phil Hogan, to act quickly and 'explore all the options open to them'.

He said: 'The decision to cancel the concerts will do nothing to promote Dublin or Ireland, and has the potential to damage our international image. Not only are tens of thousands of fans left angry and disappointed, many could also be left out of pocket having booked into hotels and B&Bs for the night.'

Furious fans rang Joe Duffy on RTÉ's Liveline to express their outrage, with one, Des from Tallaght, calling for Mr Keegan to quit.

He said: 'The fellow who made this decision should lose his job.'

Gina Quin of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce told RTE's Prime Time last night that the estimated loss to Dublin businesses was 'around €50million' and that was 'a conservative estimate'.

However, Eamonn O'Brien of the Croke Park Streets Committee accused the country music star of 'playing hardball' with his ultimatum.

The spokesman for the residents told the Mail: 'Garth Brooks doesn't decide the planning laws in Ireland.'

Hour before Brooks issued his warning, promoter Peter Aiken told of the pressure he is under from the singer to sort out the matter that had devastated 160,000 of the 400,000 fans who had hoped to see him live.

Mr Aiken: 'He is saying to me, give me



Will he be back?
Garth Brooks
at Croke Park
earlier this year

'HE COULD DO W

Colm Tobin

Garth Brooks should have made some friends in higher places.

PJ Gallagher

I got friends in no places where the residents drown and the council chases my shows away. #GarthBrooks

@LisaOreeBlock

Garth Brooks compares choosing which concerts to play to choosing a child over another. Um.. No. That's not the same.

Mazzy K @MazzyK

I see Garth Brooks is going all Sophie's Choice about 3 vs 5 nights of gigs

Foin Kelleher

No more shall we be defined by civil war politics. Instead, we shall be defined by where we stood on the #GarthBrooks saga. #crokepark

Gerry O'Connell

Seamus Darby, Larry Corbett and Owen Keegan - all stopped a five in a row at Croke Park. #Garthgate

Karl Carpenter

Dickie Rock would have got the 5 nights. #GarthBrooks

Lisa Kehily

I was only going to Garth for the night

a solution for the 160,000 people, he doesn't want to leave 160,000 people, it's not fair that 160,000 won't see the show.' He said cancelling two of the gigs put Brooks 'in an awful position'.

Speculation that the Aviva stadium could be used as a stand-in was scotched by Mr Aiken who described moving the concerts across the city as impossible for logistical reasons.

He told RTE News that the decision was unbelievable. 'I never thought it would happen, that's the honest truth. Not a day since they announced the shows did I expect that we wouldn't get the licence. I thought there might be a lot of conditions in it but I never foresaw that the licence would be knocked

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