

A photograph of the Tower Bridge in London, showing its iconic stone towers and blue-painted suspension cables and walkways. The bridge is partially obscured by the text overlay on the left. In the foreground, a pedestrian in a bright yellow shirt is running on the bridge's walkway. Several cars are visible on the bridge deck. The background shows the London skyline with modern buildings like the Gherkin under a clear blue sky.

# **Bridge House Estates**

## ***Bridging London Strategy***

### **2020 - 2045**

Annual Progress Report  
2020-21

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## FOREWORD AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are delighted to present the first Annual Progress Report for 2020 - 2021 of the Bridge House Estates (BHE) *Bridging London Strategy*, 2020 - 2045.

The publication of the *Bridging London Strategy* was a result of an in-depth Strategic Review focused on enhancing the charity's governance, management and administration, in order to ultimately increase BHE's reach and impact. The Review presented us an opportunity to reconsider and better articulate our future strategic direction. We committed to using the Strategy to better communicate our story and increase the awareness and understanding of our role in bridging and connecting London.

We are proud of what we have achieved in the first year of delivery against the strategy and are pleased to share with you this short Annual Progress Report which provides a summary of the excellent work done by our Board, staff and partners in the last year. It recognises our achievements for the year November 2020 to November 2021, learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic and reaffirms our commitment to connecting London – for the benefit of Londoners today and for generations to come.

The Progress Report also outlines the plans to develop a comprehensive performance framework to support with measuring the success of the Strategy over the long-term and sets out focus areas for delivery in 2022.

We look forward to continuing to share our progress over this exciting 25-year journey as we continue to bridge London and work towards a future where *every person in London becomes truly connected*.

**Dr Giles Shilson**

Chair of the Bridge House Estates Board

**Dhruv Patel, OBE**

Deputy Chair of the Bridge House Estates Board

# Strategic Objectives – *Bridging London*



## Our vision is that...

*'Every person in London becomes truly connected'*

## Our aims

To achieve our vision, we will deliver our charitable objects by taking a values-led approach of aiming to be:

Catalytic	Sustainable	Impact driven
We act as a catalyst for positive change in London through exemplary delivery of our activities and through our convening and influencing role.	We deliver our activities and manage all our assets in the most sustainable, ethical and responsible ways possible.	We place learning and impact at the heart of all that we do to ensure we achieve positive impact at scale, now and in the future.

## Defining success

We see success as building on our achievements and delivering our aims to become a:

***world-class bridge owner, charitable funder and responsible leader.***



# Bridging London: Annual Action Plan



## Annual Action Plan

In developing the *Bridging London* Strategy, we created a high-level implementation plan and a more detailed Year One Action Plan to ensure our vision for a connected London was converted into concrete, attainable and measurable steps. We will continue to review progress to drive efficiency and effectiveness and to share ideas, opportunities and learning across the charity. The high-level actions in the Strategy are designed to further the charity's objects and to meet our aims of being catalytic, sustainable and impact driven.

As part of the Year One Action Plan, several 'beacon projects' were identified as key deliverables to contribute to the success of achieving the Strategy's aims and overarching vision. Summary of progress made towards the 'beacon projects' can be found on pages 5-7.



## COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented impact on society as a whole, and on specific communities in particular, but also distinctively on the charity sector. The pandemic shone a spotlight on the value and importance of community resilience - therefore, our role in bridging and connecting London perhaps became more important than ever.

We had to become resilient and adaptable when delivering our Action Plan, working in even greater collaboration with others. For example, Tower Bridge was forced to close as a visitor attraction for a total of seven months resulting in a significant downturn in visitors. Although income was severely impacted, its potential was maximised by effectively engaging with a 'hyper-local' and Londoners market. Tower Bridge also adapted its strategy as a visitor attraction to remain 'digitally open' despite being physically closed.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented both challenges and opportunities in terms of delivering our overarching Strategy in 2020/21. This is particularly highlighted through the charity's involvement in the London Community Response (LCR), where funders came together incredibly expediently to provide coordinated funding to support groups responding to the needs of communities in the capital affected by the pandemic, and also through directly administering the London Community Response Fund (LCRF) (a restricted fund that operated within LCR as a 'pooled' fund and allowed donors to support the LCR programme where they did not wish to directly fund projects themselves).

Whilst the pandemic presented challenges, ultimately we have continued to make significant progress against the objectives set out in *Bridging London*<sup>4</sup>

# Aim 1: Be Catalytic - Beacon Projects



*We act as a catalyst for positive change in London through exemplary delivery of our activities and through our convening and influencing role.*

## 1 - Governance Changes

In the Strategy, we committed to keeping BHE's governance structure under review to ensure that the charity operates effectively and efficiently, and in a manner consistent with charity best practice.

Following an extensive review of the charity's governance, on 15 April 2021 the City Corporation, as BHE's Trustee acting by its Court of Common Council, formally constituted the Bridge House Estates Board (BHE Board) to have responsibility for all aspects of BHE's day-to-day management and administration acting under delegated authority on behalf of and under the oversight of the Court. The BHE Board consolidates oversight of administration of the charity's strategic and operational activities within one committee of the Court to support the charity's more effective administration and management. It also helps ensure that decisions taken can clearly be demonstrated to be in the best interests of the charity.

In July 2021, the BHE Board, remaining directly responsible for all other matters within its remit (including the maintenance and support of its five Thames bridges) established a Grants (sub) Committee to have delegated responsibility for matters relating to the charity's funding activities in the name of City Bridge Trust (in furthering its ancillary purpose). The Grants Committee met for the first time in September 2021.

The BHE Board is keeping the arrangements it has adopted for the charity's governance under review to ensure they are operating effectively. Work is ongoing in the implementation of the optimal operational arrangements for the charity, including the charity's own governing documents.

## 2 - Brand Positioning

In the Autumn of 2020, we initiated a project to develop a positioning statement and brand strategy that would better represent the charity's diverse functions and speak to audiences in a compelling way. As a result of the project, a new statement has been produced that enables us to communicate the charity's broader mission, scope and influence, whilst acting as an 'umbrella' brand that unifies and gives legitimacy to the distinct, yet related, purposes and activities of the charity.

The project continues to develop under the BHE Board's direction to create a coherent and captivating story. It seeks to build a strengthened brand to represent the charity, and increase the charity's engagement and impact in the future.



# Aim 2: Be Sustainable - Beacon Projects



*We deliver our activities and manage all our assets in the most sustainable, ethical and responsible ways possible.*

## 3 - Climate Action

In October 2020, the Court of Common Council approved the [Climate Action Strategy](#) for the City Corporation, as Trustee for BHE and also its wider functions. The Climate Action Strategy sets out three interlinked primary objectives to support the achievement of net-zero emissions, build resilience and champion sustainable growth. It also reinforces our commitment to be net zero by 2040 in our full value chain. In July 2021, alongside signing up to the [Funder Commitment on Climate Change](#), the BHE Board adopted the Year 1 Implementation Plan of the Climate Action Strategy programme, as relevant to the charity. The focus of activity for the charity is across six workstreams areas, which are:

- [Design standards](#) - ensuring all future capital projects meet the highest commercially viable standards for sustainable and low carbon design.
- [Resilience in buildings](#) - delivering the roll out of retrofit measures for assets that BHE is responsible for, ensuring they are resilient to changing weather conditions and environmental patterns.
- [Net zero in Investment Properties](#) - delivering carbon reductions and energy efficiency improvements in our investment property portfolio.
- [Financial investments](#) - developing fund and portfolio level net zero targets to reduce our emissions from our financial investments.
- [Purchased goods and services](#) - improving suppliers' performance in delivering low carbon and wider sustainability products and services.
- [Strategic Implementation](#) - developing a performance framework and dashboard to monitor progress against actions.

In support of the aims in the Climate Action Strategy, BHE continues to develop local plans to progress its aim of being sustainable in all its activities.

## 4 - Investment Strategy

The need for a separate Investment Strategy for BHE was identified through the BHE Governance Review as a priority to comply with the legal and regulatory need to set clear investment objectives for the charity. In January 2021, a 'Transitional' Investment Strategy Statement (ISS) was adopted for BHE, which set out the charity's current investment objectives, and also incorporated BHE's strategic objectives as set out in the Bridging London Strategy and Climate Action Strategy.

In 2022, we will focus on further considering the future management of BHE's investment portfolio and develop a more comprehensive ISS for the charity, to ensure we continue to responsibly manage our portfolio to the highest standards that support the delivery of the charity's purposes.





# Aim 2: Be Sustainable - Beacon Projects



*We deliver our activities and manage all our assets in the most sustainable, ethical and responsible ways possible.*

## 5 - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We are fully committed to promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in all of our activities and across our Board and workforce. We continue to work with our trustee, the City Corporation, to embed practices which reflect the values of the charity and which champion and advance DEI practices.

Specifically, the City Bridge Trust (CBT) team recently set up a DEI working group who developed a comprehensive DEI Action Plan in support of BHE's commitment. Key areas of activity include ensuring: 1) we invest time and resources in understanding and defining DEI; 2) we produce and review strategies that will implement DEI practices; 3) we collect, track and publish data on our own practices and performances; 4) we have a diverse governing Board (including our co-opted members serving on its Committees) and staff team; 5) we reflect and implement DEI practices in our funding activities; and 6) we express our DEI commitment, policies and practices publicly.

This work is also being carried out in collaboration with the City Corporation, as well as other funders through networks such as the Funders Coalition and the Funders for Race Equality Alliance. This ensures we share and learn from best practice. Other examples of embedding DEI practices into all of our work are illustrated throughout this progress report and we remain committed to prioritising implementing similar actions across all of BHE's activities in 2022, building on our existing progress.



# Aim 3: Be Impact Driven - Beacon Projects



*We place learning and impact at the heart of all that we do to ensure we achieve positive impact at scale, now and in the future.*

## 6 - Tower Bridge: Cultural and Learning Offer

Tower Bridge's approach following the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the charity's commitment to achieving positive impact at scale. Following the closure of the Tower Bridge visitor attraction on 17 March, it became 'physically closed but digitally open', providing meaningful online cultural content and learning resources for public engagement during lockdown. This included a hub for digital content, including articles on the history of Bridge House Estates, quizzes, short films and podcasts. Similarly, workshops and resources transferred to online, including a dedicated family activities hub. The Bridge's flagship session, *Raise Tower Bridge*, was adapted so that students have more opportunities to experiment and play with coding.

Tower Bridge has continued to be recognised for its world-class learning offer and it maintained *'The Sandford Award for Heritage Education'* led by the in-house Learning team in 2020. Prior to the pandemic, this team saw positive progress in terms of DEI within the visitor offer, including the provision of regular British Sign Language tours and Special Educational Needs workshops. Relaxed Early Openings in 2020/21, with a focus on providing an autism-friendly environment at Tower Bridge, interestingly saw significantly higher uptake than those provided prior to the pandemic.



## 7 - London Community Response/ Fund

Despite the London Community Response (LCR) and London Community Response Fund (LCRF)\* not originally being highlighted as a 'beacon project' in the Year 1 Action Plan, CBT's involvement in the emergency response to COVID-19 demonstrated how the charity's commitment to learning and impact continually shaped its funding priorities during the pandemic.

In the financial year 2020/21, CBT distributed £15.2m of BHE funding through LCRF alongside a further £13.1m received from other funders, totalling £28.3m. The LCRF continued funding into April 2021, bringing the total awarded to £31.4m across five waves of funding, accounting for 58% of the total grants made through LCR (£54.5m).

A detailed Learning Report was prepared in September 2021 pulling together an array of learning from the funding response, including from London Funders, the LCR's learning partners, equity partners and monitoring information. The Report seeks to share the learning from across all waves of the LCRF to help inform future funding decisions and ensure that the failures and successes contribute to future thinking. The successes include: building on cross-sector collaboration; taking an equitable approach; reaching more organisations and diverse communities than were previously funded by CBT; and, adopting a flexible and light-touch approach to grant management.

The CBT team has committed to learning and sharing as it develops future funding priorities, building in learning and insight into its decisions and seeking to influence wider funder behaviour. This approach role-models BHE's commitment to developing a learning ethos across the charity.

\*Definitions of the LCR and LCRF can be found on page 4.



# Governance: Oversight and Responsibility



## Member Governance

The BHE Board is responsible for considering, consulting upon, settling and keeping under review, matters of policy and/or strategic importance to BHE – this includes considering the charity's overarching strategy, *Bridging London 2020 - 2045*, which is approved by the Court of Common Council for the City Corporation as Trustee upon the recommendation of the BHE Board.

The BHE Board will receive an Annual Progress Report each year detailing progress made against the Strategy.

## Officer Governance

David Farnsworth, the Managing Director of BHE, is the senior responsible officer for the Strategy.

## BHE Task & Finish Group

The Managing Director of BHE is supported in the delivery of the Strategy by the BHE Officer Task & Finish Group, which is a cross-departmental body of the City Corporation with shared operational oversight of the BHE Strategic Governance Review and responsible for reporting updates and required decisions to Members. The Task & Finish Group is Chaired by Simon Latham, Director, Town Clerk's Office and Police Authority.

The Task & Finish Group plays a key role in supporting the implementation of outcomes resulting from the BHE Strategic Governance Review, including supporting the delivery and implementation of the *Bridging London* Strategy.

## BHE Task & Finish Group continued...

The Task & Finish Group is made up of officers from the following departments/ teams:

- BHE Directorate
- Environment Department
- City Surveyor's Department
- City Bridge Trust team
- Chamberlain's Department
- Comptroller & City Solicitor's Department
- City Remembrancer's Office

It is proposed the Task & Finish Group will transition into an Implementation Group from January 2022, to reflect that the BHE Strategic Governance Review is nearing completion and the focus will become solely on the implementation of outcomes, rather than reviewing matters and identifying recommendations for change.



# Performance and Future Delivery



## Performance

We are committed to measuring the effectiveness and impact of our work and the delivery of the Strategy. In Year Two, we will prioritise developing a comprehensive performance framework to measure our work over the long-term against a set of key performance indicators (KPIs). We will collect baseline and benchmarking data, meaning that in time we will be able to set targets and better report on the impact we are having over a prolonged time period. The KPIs will be aligned with the measures of success defined in the strategy, which are to become a world-class bridge owner, charitable funder and responsible leader.

Our ambition is for future reports to include detailed data against the agreed KPIs and targets.



## Future Delivery

Taking a long-term approach to the Strategy is vital to demonstrate our commitment to London and Londoners but also to ensure that the lasting impacts of the activities planned are fully realised.

Whilst many of the activities in our Action Plan will continue and develop, we will also spend the next year (2022) focusing on:

- Embedding a comprehensive BHE Leadership Team and continuing to review the resourcing needs across the charity to ensure the operational structure works in the best interests of the charity, and supports the creation of a strong team culture;
- Implementing the more modern, flexible and broader governance powers for the charity following the anticipated grant of a Supplemental Royal Charter, e.g. Total Return Accounting for permanently endowed charities and a new delivery model for social investments;
- Reviewing the Bridge Replacement Strategy and factoring in wider considerations that will inform the decision of when to replace the Bridges;
- Continuing to implement the recommendations from the *Bridging Divides* Interim Review and further considering our funding programmes;
- Considering the future management arrangements for the charity's investment portfolio;
- Further developing our brand positioning to ensure that BHE's story is understood by its stakeholders; and,
- Ongoing review of Member governance to ensure that it serves the charity's needs most effectively.





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