

Committee(s)	Dated:
Barbican Centre Board	19 January 2022
Subject: Management Report by the Barbican's Directors	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,12
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	n/a
What is the source of Funding?	n/a
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	n/a
Report of: Joint Interim Managing Directors, Barbican Centre	For Decision
Report authors: Directors, Barbican Centre	

Summary

- The Management Report comprises current updates under six sections authored by Barbican Directors.
- Updates are under the headlines of:
 - Joint Interim Managing Directors' Update
 - Programming, Marketing and Communications
 - Creative Learning
 - Operations and Buildings
 - Business and Commercial
 - Development.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Endorse Management's approach to the future activities of the Centre.

Main Report

1. REPORT: JOINT INTERIM MANAGING DIRECTORS' UPDATE

Not unexpectedly, our seasonal programme of activities has been significantly affected by the upsurge in Omicron cases. Although the theatre was closed for a few days, all our venues remained largely open during Christmas and the New Year.

Ticket sales remained strong until the week of the 12th December when returned tickets increased upon the usual number by up to 40%. However, audiences continued to attend.

Ticket sales were affected by demographics with attendance for concerts and activities with a younger audience holding up better. Overall, we are seeing a significant drop in attendance levels and a curtailment of business events and with an increasing number of front-line staff ill or isolating, there has been considerable pressure on keeping venues open. The dedication of some of our operational staff undertaking double shifts and coming in to work while on leave has enabled us to keep the building open.

We had an agreed two day 'fire-break' closure immediately prior to Christmas (apart from the library) due to the impact of Omicron on Barbican staff and those of the touring company. This helped considerably and in the first weeks on our January return, we have a full complement of staff front of house and are able to manage sickness better. There is a high level of compliance of mask wearing for audience and customers using the building and the level of support we offer customers to comply is at a suitable level.

Recent on-sales are variable although recently a contemporary concert on sale this week sold out in 20 mins (2,000 tickets).

Given the unpredictability of the current situation, we will need to manage operations tactically on a day-by-day basis, keeping our venues open but with public and staff safety uppermost in our plans.

Despite these challenges our work during the last few months, on EDI, the new creative vision, the Barbican Renewal programme and the financial plans to deliver these, sets up a platform for our business plan, to be shared with the Board in May.

2. REPORT: PROGRAMMING, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Programming

November saw strong audiences for all the film festivals that we hosted: *Fringe*, *Doc'n Roll*, *Palestine Film* and the particularly diverse in-house curated 'Jazz in the City' programme, which we have contributed to the *EFG London Jazz Festival*. We received lots of great press for these events across several publications including, *NEW*, *Uncut*, *The Wire*, *Time Out*, *BBC Radio London* and *Sight and Sound* to name but a few. Other highlights include *Alone*, Belarus Free Theatre's documentary followed by an in-person talk with some of the company founders and, our Netflix collaboration with the high profile screening of *Passing*, including live online participation of its leading stellar cast, *Ruth Negga* and *Tessa Thompson* and filmmaker *Rebecca Hall*. We also hosted *Oska Bright*, the world's leading learning disability film festival, with more work planned for 2022.

Despite strong reviews from the London media, The RSC's five star *Comedy of Errors* only played to half full houses and the company was unfortunately hit by Covid which saw performances from 15 to 23 December inclusive cancelled. They were able to resume the run from 27 December through to New Year's Eve.

In the Pit we premiered our co-commission of *First Light*, an immersive, intimate experience that explored the wonders of sensory development for very young babies and their adults, to extremely positive feedback from families. We will explore presenting this work for another season in the future.

The Noguchi exhibition exceeded its income target by early December 2021 and has been extended by 2 weeks through 23 January 2022. Shilpa Gupta's commission, which has also attracted high visitor numbers and a very positive critical reception, will close in the Curve on 6 February.

We received 5-star review for classical concerts, *Up for Grabs*, *Samantha Ege*, *The Carducci Quartet with Samuel West*, *Jean-Guihen Queryas* and *Jamie Barton*. In contemporary music the *Jazz Festival*, *Speakers Corner Quartet*, *Alfa Mist* and the collaboration with *Boiler Room* also gave outstanding performances.

Virtual Realms: Videogames Transformed continues its run at the Arts and Sciences Museum until 7 January, attendance increased as Covid restrictions in Singapore relaxed. The exhibition tour will continue to Perth in March. After a successful opening at the Forum Groninger, *Game On's* stay in the Netherlands has been extended from March to May 2022. The *Our Time On Earth* exhibition received its first press announcement in November and was featured in *Time Out* as an exhibition to see in spring 2022. *AI: More Than Human* closed at the Liverpool World Museum in November after a well-received 5-month run. The show is currently being installed at the Guangdong Science Centre and will open for the Chinese New Year.

The Communities and Neighbourhoods team, in partnership with Headway East London, delivered an incredible in person community gathering to a packed out audience in the Barbican Conservatory. The provocation for the night – Can We Be Artists? With panellists *Will Gompertz (Barbican)*, *David Tovey (Artist, One Festival of Homeless Arts)*, *Kate Adams (Project Artworks)*, *Chris Miller (Headway East London Resident Artist)*, *Ali Eisa (Autograph Gallery)*. Photos [here](#).

We distributed 650 Imagine Packs, our creative resources for elders at risk of social isolation. Packs included a lantern-making activity creating pieces for a public exhibition at local community festival, *Aldgate in Winter*.

Update on Digital

We have made significant strides with a number of exciting and energising audience and artist development projects which will take place online and on-site during the winter/spring period of 2022. We will be able to announce these project and project partners in the coming weeks.

In Marketing work is underway to review and update our 2016 digital strategy - with new priorities for a new Barbican.

In Cinema there are ongoing departmental discussions about how we shape our offer on Cinema on Demand going forward. We are in the final stages of our Cinema audience research project, and we continue to assess our resources in light of our return to previous levels of programming in venues. We continue to showcase both art house new releases and selected films from our specialised arts programmes while exploring possibilities of a free offer of shorts and content we're unable to screen in-venue.

Visual arts has updated the *Resonances Noguchi* residency with *Annie Jael-Kwan*, with more letters, a sound piece and a podcast. A short film about Noguchi was created using archival footage and we have also produced a video of *Yolande Yorke-Edgell* performing *Martha Graham's Lamentation* in the gallery. Also available online is a video walkthrough of Shilpa Gupta's *Sun at Night* and a BSL review of *How We Live Now*. Streamed live from New York, and exclusively to the UK through our website, *Taylor Mac's Hot Sauce...Booster!* delighted theatre audiences during the run up to Christmas. *Arifa Akbar*, Guardian Theatre critic, tweeted to her 9.5k followers; Just seen Taylor Mac@Barbican (on screen) and it's the best xmas show this year for me, maybe ever! Streaming tonight. SO recommended #covidproof #theatreathome Our online version of *Ballet Black's* double bill was mentioned in several reviews of the presentation at the Linbury and several media outlets reported that *Anything Goes* has been nominated for four What's On Stage awards

Live from the Barbican continued with an eclectic line up including, *Soweto Kinch*, *Up for Grabs*, *L'argeggiata* performing Monteverdi's *Vespers* and *Speakers Corner Quartet*. As part of our Public Programme, we launched [Nine Lives](#), an experimental series of audio portraits produced by The Liminal Space. It is a Wellcome-funded project which tells the stories of nine strangers as they try and make sense of the world around them through Summer 2021.

Future Planning

January sees a rich programme of exclusive screening events including *Breaking the Silence: Music in Afghanistan* alongside the benefit concert for Afghanistan in the Hall; the launch of our Experimental Film Strand which forms part of *Syrian Arts and Culture Festival*. We are also preparing to launch the marketing campaign for February's flagship season '*Homeland: Films by First Nations Directors*' part of UK/Australia season 2021/22.

In Music our classical 2022/23 season programming is almost complete, with the September 2022 to January 2023 portion aiming to be launched in Spring 2022.

We eagerly await 4 productions, as part of the *London International Mime Festival*, to be our first Theatre productions of the year. Two of these productions will be from France so we will be testing out new Brexit-related procedures and in the light of the current pandemic situation we wait to see if there will be covid-related entry restrictions on international artists.

When Noguchi closes on 23 January it will move to the Museum Ludwig in Cologne to open on 26 March, before travelling on to two further partner venues. Having been unable to open due to the pandemic, the *Michael Clark* exhibition will finally be able to open at V&A Dundee in March.

The next exhibition to be installed in Gallery will be *Postwar Modern: New Art in Britain, 1945–1965* - a timely reassessment of art produced in Britain during the twenty years after the Second World War. Timed to open as part of the events to mark 40 years of the Barbican, it will be accompanied by an ambitious public programme and a residency by associate artist *Abbas Zahedi*.

We will soon be able to share our first Story Collection pilot, where we have been working with 15 community members in paid roles, listening to and documenting more than 40 stories from peers who have participated in our programmes. We're excited to pull together all the learning and insights and to explore together what this means for the future co-design of our programmes.

As part of our 40th celebrations, The Bishopsgate Institute will stage a take-over the Curve from February to March 2022, they will deliver an archive installation of objects, ephemera and media, highlighting 40 moments and stories in London's LGBTQ+ history.

3. REPORT: CREATIVE LEARNING

Families

Our first post-COVID family day took place on 4 December, inspired by the *Noguchi* exhibition. 80 people took part in sculpture-making workshops in the Garden Room, inspired by shapes in the Conservatory. We welcomed over 200 people into the Conservatory and approximately 60 visitors to Squish Space, both of which were open for the event. We have also been welcoming a group of Afghan families into Squish Space during specially run sessions as part of the City's offer.

Schools

We held four school workshops with practitioners, Jude Owusu and Lucy Wray, in collaboration with the RSC during November and December, programmed in response to *The Comedy of Errors*. Over 100 students took part with very positive feedback from participating schools.

Young Creatives

On 11 December, 24 members of the Barbican Young Poets and Young Visual Arts Group presented four installation artworks on the theme of 'repair' in the Fountain Room. The works were created in just three weeks, making excellent use of existing resources. The installation was open to the public for 3.5 hours and welcomed over 100 visitors. This is the first time a collaborative project between the two groups has been attempted and proved a productive learning experience for all young people involved.

3.1 Preview and Planning

The Wellcome-funded residency, *Following the Breath*, is due to take place from 21-24 January 2022 led by artist, Sam Winston. As well as producing his own ink drawings to be displayed in the Conservatory, Sam will work with schools and community groups to create communal artwork on the connection between breathing and plants. There will also be a panel discussion with atmospheric scientist, Dr Stefan Reis, on 24 January.

Looking further ahead, we have hired six new Young Researchers to scope out the next iteration of the Creative Careers programme in 2022. We have also hired practitioner, Hannah Calascione, to manage the large-scale *Our Time on Earth* schools' programme. Hannah has extensive experience as a theatre practitioner and is also a trained horticulturalist.

4. REPORT: OPERATIONS & BUILDINGS

General Update:

Our buildings remain safe and compliant. Having had a successful run throughout the spring, summer and autumn quarters, we are now back into the Covid winter quarter. The periods of being open and carrying out shows and activities has brought the team back together, enabled us to practise all of the training that we rolled out during the lockdown, (including counter terrorism and customer care), and to carry out any onsite training and evacuations etc. We have prepared four scenarios for the winter period. Omicron is spreading significantly faster than previous waves, and our BCP scenarios are designed to get us through the winter period, ranging from UK Gov Plan B Plus to full closure of our sector. Should we have to close any venues or the venue as a whole, we will make best use of the time to maintain and enhance the national asset, and train our staff, as last time.

Operations:

Our Barbican Protect Project has continued, working with City Police and City Security. Our new Protection Operations Manager is in post and leading the continued rollout of training and review of security SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). Our new e-SOP training has been launched. Omicron is having a significant impact on front of house staff and Management, and our scenario planning allows for all scenarios. Customer feedback has continued to be excellent throughout the period.

Buildings:

We continue to work with City colleagues and contractors to maintain and enhance our asset. We continue to work on Barbican Renewal. The PSDS (Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme) project is well underway. Any lockdowns will enable us to further maintain and enhance our asset.

Staff and Workers (Casuals):

We had recruited around 100 additional casual workers during the summer and autumn periods to ensure that we could cope with the national staffing issues resulting from Covid. This has also helped with filling the gaps of any leavers, as our sector has reopened. All staff have been trained in areas such as fire, counter terrorism, and customer care. All staff have gained experience in the period between the Covid waves. We will continue to roll out online training and training on site where possible.

Next Steps and Horizon:

Our focus shifts to the Covid winter period. We continue to work to the principles agreed at the start of the pandemic. We remain flexible and will deploy our scenario plans as required over the coming quarter to ensure that we make the most of situations as they present themselves to us. We will remain flexible and opportunistic. We will continue to train our staff and maintain and enhance our buildings. We will continue to maintain the momentum with CWP and capital whilst we work towards Barbican Renewal. We continue to adopt the 'safety first' approach.

Thank you to staff and casual workers. Thank you to City colleagues and Members for enabling us to make the most of the opportunities presented to us, and to be in the vanguard of our sector.

5. REPORT: BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL

Business Events: Whilst Business Events, our Barbican and Searcys colleagues, continued to battle against staffing shortages, the past few months have seen an increase in events with weddings, dinners, conferences, talks, graduations, parties, filming and photoshoots.

We welcomed new conference clients including the Centre for Effective Altruism, along with regular clients such as 'Mind The Product', the world's largest product management conference, both with over 400 delegates, and on one day alone in October, with the assistance of many of our Barbican colleagues, delivered events for over 3,000 people. This included a first timer to the building - Coventry University - with around 2,000 guests attending 2 graduations. The graduations continued, with 8,100 attendees between the University of Law, London Met, Ravensbourne. And FANE continued their run with regular sell outs of up to 2,000 people at each of their 'in person with' events including appearances from Holly Willoughby, Alan Cummings and Annie Leibowitz.

The team were delighted to win the Sustainability Award at the annual London Venue & Catering Awards for the Centre.

The Omicron spread and consequent 'work from home' advice as of 8th December from Government has caused a number of events, particularly Xmas parties, to move from December into early 2022. Whilst this has not yet had a financial impact as most events had been prepaid, we are keeping a close eye on the situation, particularly as we have a busy January ahead.

Retail: We have had a positive few final months of 2021, with Christmas shopping in store boosting sales from November onwards. The Online Shop has been trading steadily, although with shops able to open this Christmas unlike last year, online spend has been slightly lower than we had hoped for, but this has been more than offset by those purchasing in person in store. This Christmas so far, we have seen an approximate increase of 79% in sales from 1st Nov to 16th Dec against 2020 (Foyer Shop and Online combined) but we are still approximately 20% behind for the same period in 2019.

Throughout the last few months, we have managed to overcome some of the staffing challenges we have seen impact operational departments across the centre, with the whole retail team working, when needed, on the floor to cover the operation. We are prepared for more instances of absence due to Covid as the new variant takes hold and becomes more prevalent.

Catering & Bars: After the huge critical and financial success of Anything Goes in all areas, the RSC's Comedy of Errors in the Theatre and lower than expected visitors to the gallery, exposed the nervousness of our traditional audience to public gatherings. Subsequently, the bars and restaurants have been very quiet during this period. Silver lining to this is that the staffing issues that had been a significant problem in previous months ceased to become an issue, giving all teams the opportunity to catch up and start planning for future projects and initiatives.

6. REPORT: DEVELOPMENT

As the 21/22 financial year draws to a close in March, the Development team are working with Trustees to help secure new corporate and individual supporters to help us achieve and exceed target.

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch), have approved a major grant to support the scoping and implementation of Barbican Futures, with particular focus on developing a robust impact measurement and evaluation framework for the organisation. Other recent successful grant applications include grants from the Idlewild Trust and the Leche Trust towards music and from Institut français du Royaume-Uni towards theatre.

Renewal conversations continue with our Corporate Members, and the team have updated Corporate Membership packages to introduce to members from 2022 onwards. American Express Foundation have also approved a grant towards our Creative Careers programme.

Since the last meeting, we have received a steady flow of Patron renewals and continue to grow our Exhibition Circles for upcoming shows including Postwar Modern, Soheila Sokhanvari and Carolee Schneemann. The team has also launched the public annual appeal, which spotlights our Young Creatives Programme (Each year this programmes offers mentoring, peer support and work opportunities for more than 40 poets, film programmers, visual artists, and curators aged 16-25). An email campaign was sent in parallel with Giving Tuesday, as well as a social media thread on Barbican channels and messaging on site, through our shops, bars and plasmas around the Centre.