

Committee(s) Barbican Centre Board	Dated: 17 May 2023
Subject: Creative Collaboration - update on Barbican Futures	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	
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: CEO, Barbican Centre	For Discussion
Report author: Karena Johnson – Head of Creative Collaboration, Barbican Centre	

Summary

Barbican Futures is the umbrella project created to explore the bold and ambitious ideas at the centre of the new creative vision set out by our Artistic Director in his roadshow presentations to Barbican staff in 2021. Funding was secured to explore some of these ideas from Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Arts Council England NPO extension year award. This paper provides a summary of the current findings and status of each of the initiatives.

Recommendation

That the Board NOTE this report.

Main Report

Background

A small, dedicated team was created to deliver this exploratory work and its scope was to explore workstreams that would feed into the Barbican's new direction. The workstreams were: Barbican School, Barbican International Exchange, Barbican International Summit, Barbican Masters, Barbican Ventures, Evaluation and Impact measurement.

In the time since the initial applications were made and now, the organisation has undergone a phenomenal amount of change particularly at leadership level. The department where this work was intended to sit was not yet formed Karena Johnson, as Head of Creative Collaboration, was not yet in post. The workstreams have evolved.

Current Position

Masters/ Future Producers (now renamed Barbican Creative Academy)

The Ambition was for the Barbican to support young people from every background to become future leaders of the UK creative industries, and build a more equitable, representative & dynamic arts workforce. Barbican Creative Academy will be our flagship new offer for young people, addressing skills shortages across the creative sector: a 3-to-4-year, full-time course of study and work at the Barbican, inspired by the medieval City of London Guild system. This unique course will be free, leading to formal qualifications, producing an annual cohort of 15 graduates.

Jess Mordsley, external consultant, was engaged to undertake research into what elements were needed to create a successful apprenticeship training course. She reviewed other programs, spoke to potential participants and employers. Exploring what the industry needs in its future workforce and conversations with potential supporters of the programme. The findings have informed the creation of a structure that is achievable with a view to starting in 2024.

Barbican School (now renamed Creative Curriculum)

The intention of the Creative Curriculum is to nurture creative skills from a young age, creating a new curriculum alongside the academic curriculum, based on co-creation, pupils' creative achievements and enterprise. Using our iconic environment including the buildings, public realm & work on our stages, we will offer pupils the space to be Creative, Curious and Collaborative. The Curriculum will be developed by co-designing and testing work with teachers and senior leadership teams as well as students, through new Associate School partnerships across Barking & Dagenham, Newham & City of London.

Responding to research including Ofsted's April 22 report identified skills gaps in school children due to high pupil & staff absences and pressure to focus on core subjects. The need to support students & teachers with life-enriching arts interventions is increasingly urgent.

We undertook an action research project which started with a three-day training course for arts practitioners, exploring ways to co-create lessons and teaching schemes around the National Curriculum rooted in their artistic and creative practices. Artists were paired with a teacher from one of the participating schools from Autumn 2022 to co-create lessons and teaching tools across subject areas including Maths and Sciences. Four artists were paired with primary teachers and four with secondary teachers. The experimental ideas and resources are being tested in the classroom. Teachers, creatives, and children will regularly reflect upon their experiences to define successes, failures, and challenges, led by external researcher Rachel Dickinson.

Barbican Ventures

The ambition of this stream was making spaces for creative businesses to thrive and grow injecting entrepreneurial creative practitioners back into the City of London in the spirit of the original guilds system. Being at the centre of a vibrant creative community that reflects the diversity of London. A focus group facilitated by an external consultant with an invited list of participants working in this area was

convened, to explore fundamental questions to develop the idea. Including, what can we learn from existing models for supporting creative entrepreneurs? What are creative entrepreneurs asking of these programmes? What are the signs of success for programmes supporting creative entrepreneurs? Who should Barbican Ventures be for? Who should we prioritise in recruitment?

This was the least developed of the workstreams and therefore bringing potential expertise and interested potential partners into the conversation at an early stage to inform and help shape what this could be was important. The connection of this workstream to the capital redevelopment and Barbican Renewal project also meant this would be a long-term project. It will continue to be developed over 23/24, in conjunction with Barbican Renewal.

Barbican International Summit

The ambition was to start global arts conversations around the major issues of our time: energy, climate emergency, security, financial security at an artist-led Arts Summit advocating and amplifying alongside global partners for these problems to be understood as interconnected & interdependent. In-person and digital connections, exchange and collaborate to reduce environmental impact. Waqas Ahmed, external consultant, was commissioned to develop a proposal for the summit.

The team explored delivering a follow-on to the climate summit held in conjunction with GLA and their global cities network in July 2022 but unfortunately the GLA had different priorities and our timing did not coincide with London Climate Awareness Week in June 2023. We refocused our attention on exploring which artists were within the Barbican family exploring these issues and how could these artists help the Barbican think about actions to tackle climate change. We commissioned two new works one from a collective ODO who also work as hosts and a digital work. We produced two workshops/ round tables which included staff who were interested in this space as well invited artists.

Barbican International Exchange

The ambition was to begin a new programme, to identify & connect arts professionals from like-minded global organisations, as well as independent artists & community members, to exchange jobs, collaborate and share conversation, knowledge & innovations. Nadine Patel, external consultant, was engaged to undertake research into what a staff exchange program might look like. She conducted interviews with staff across the organisation, looked at models in other arts organisations and did an audit and analysis of the Barbican's existing international networks.

Reflections are that the Barbicans networks are overwhelmingly western European and American. Recommendations from the research have suggested - broadening those networks more into the Global south, capitalising and nurturing existing networks and considering how a transparent and accessible staff program would work.

Evaluation and Impact measurement

The ambition is to develop a robust, organisation-wide impact measurement and evaluation framework, while working to scope and implement a new creative vision for the future. The project was reframed around the Creative Collaboration department. We have developed and piloted a new model for evaluation for the with the support of external consultants Cornish and Grey. The research has explored best practice within and outside the Barbican.

We have developed a Theory of Change for the department and teams. We have developed the evaluation model into an interactive toolkit to ensure that the process of monitoring and evaluating is robust but also engaging. The collaborative process has involved all staff through workshops and consultations.

The opportunity to pilot on a smaller scale, focusing on the area of our work with the most civic impact has been valuable. The process has enabled the department to start exploring the shared values in the work approach across teams and starting to imbed reflection as a vital practice.

Barbican Productions

Barbican Futures also included a project around developing our own IP, particularly in theatre and immersive experiences. This project was not included in the scope of the work of the Creative Collaboration team. This stream of work is being led by the Artistic Director and will be reported on separately under our new Strategic Framework.

Proposals and Next Steps for the Workstreams

International Exchange - will sit with the Director People, Inclusion & Culture to pursue later as it is a longer-term ambition but not a current priority for the organisation.

International Arts Summit - will sit with the Artistic Director to further explore whether the Barbican can meaningfully contribute and facilitate important conversations and build partnerships to deliver any events of this nature.

Ventures - will sit with the Artistic Director to explore the recommendations of the workshop and conduct an experiment in a donated space to inform how the 'shop front' part of the idea could work.

Creative Academy – Creative Collaboration will develop the foundation six-month curriculum in detail. Secure commitment from the Corporation for fully funded apprenticeships and an education/ training partner. Further explore what the jobs at the end could be and how they will be funded. Explore how to unify all the apprenticeships that the Barbican offer into this program. Explore fundraising opportunities.

Creative Curriculum - Creative Collaboration is pursuing a conversation with the Harris Federation a large academy group with 47 schools across London and a teacher training facility. Our conversation has revealed their interest in supporting

pupils to develop fusion skills – those creative problem solving and interpersonal skills at the heart of the initial idea.

We are exploring ways you adapt the summer term of the action research to include a Harris school to develop ways to teach this in short bursts that could be rolled out across the federation as part of building the partnership. We are also developing an offer for their teacher training and CPD on creative and effective communication to inspire creative teaching approaches. We intend to develop other partnerships to deliver a scalable program and explore fundraising opportunities.

Evaluation and Impact Measurement – Creative Collaboration will use the toolkit to review the project that we have decided to take forward and further refine that list. Imbed the process when developing new workstreams. Reframe the evaluation role within the department. Share learning with wider Barbican especially art form departments. We will also explore further fundraising opportunities.

Report author

Karena Johnson

Head of Creative Collaboration, Barbican Centre

E: karena.johnson@barbican.org.uk