

Committee(s): Barbican Centre Board	Dated: 15 November 2023
Subject: Annual Strategic Update for the Creative Collaboration Department	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	3,4,7,8,9,10
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
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: Claire Spencer, CEO Barbican Centre	For Discussion
Report author: Karena Johnson - Head of Creative Collaboration, Barbican Centre	

Summary

In January 2022, the Barbican Board and Corporate Services Committee approved the creation of the Creative Collaboration Department under the new post of Head of Creative Collaboration. The new department merged Barbican departments, Creative Learning, Communities & Neighbourhoods, Public Programming and Archive.

Karena Johnson joined as the Head of Creative Collaboration in September 2022 after 18 years as artistic director, leading three diverse and community-engaged arts centres, most recently Hoxton Hall. Her practice focuses on the virtuous circle between participant, artist, and audience, which is the experience she brings to realise the transformative drive to shift to an audience-centred programming approach across the centre.

This report sets out the first annual Creative Collaboration Department strategy.

Recommendations

The Board note the report.

Main Report

We are London's creative catalyst for arts, curiosity and enterprise. We spark creative possibilities and transformation for artists, audiences and communities – to inspire, connect and provoke debate. We are the place to be in this Destination City, where everyone is welcome. Our impact is felt far outside our walls and ripples before the experiences we offer – locally, nationally and internationally.

1. Creative Collaboration aims to extend the Barbican's traditional arts boundaries and contribute towards a diverse artistic programme by working horizontally across the art form departments, breaking down silos to develop younger and more diverse audiences and creatives engagement. The department brings together the best practices within communities, learning, public programmes, and archives work. The department's work is inspired by and built upon principles of collaboration, innovation, education, participation, and access and offers programming that provokes debate internally and in the wider sector.

Creative Collaborations vision

2. Creative Collaboration aims to be a catalyst for the Barbican's strategic and artistic vision, working across the centre with a multi-artform approach using all venues and spaces to program performances and experiences that centre less well-served audiences. The department will champion interdisciplinary work that connects new audiences to the Barbican, engaging with creatives, participants and users that better reflect the rich diversity of London. The department will support the Barbican to be more firmly rooted in its community, globally minded, connected and deliver on our civic purpose, which is integral to our strategic approach and impact. We aim to co-create joyful experiences that inspire, connect, and provoke debate.
3. What unifies the work of creative Collaboration is a focus on developing the next generation of audiences that will sustain the institution into the future. These are vital communities of interest that are currently not choosing the Barbican. The remit is an exciting space to collaborate and explore.

A new department structure

4. CC structure was created to deliver the ambitious goals of this new cross-artform department through a process of developing an understanding of current relationships across music, theatre, gallery and Cinema departments, alongside observations of the outputs of four departments and an action research team with complimentary but significantly different working practice and team cultures. Both informed the new department structure proposed and approved by the Board on June 23. Formal consultation with the team delivered an agreed new structure, which will be in place to start in January 2024.
5. We are currently in a period of phased recruitment to ensure we have the right skills to deliver ambitious goals, including arts programming at scale, which has not been a central function of the previous departments. Recruitment is starting with building a new senior team advertising roles Senior Producers for Learning

and Communities alongside a Senior Manager to strengthen the operational function of this significantly larger department. The restructure transition will include confirming fixed-term contracts into permanent roles and recruiting to entirely new positions, particularly around the programming strand. As is usual in restructuring, there will be unexpected movement as individuals decide if the journey is for them, so it is anticipated there will be a minor second phase of refinement of the structure as opportunities present themselves.

6. The department has reviewed all the projects to rationalise activity, mindful of creating deeper, high-quality engagement that this team can sustainably deliver. We have used the ACE transition funding to build on the initial work evaluation and theory of change work to develop a detailed departmental plan that connects to the Barbican Centre's strategic aims. During the process, some relationships are being reframed, some projects paused for reflection, and some projects ended.
7. A crucial part of developing the new department has been action research into new work areas. The future research team explored five workstreams: Barbican School, Barbican International Exchange, Barbican International Summit, Masters, Ventures, Evaluation and Impact measurement. The approach of testing and refining will be central to the department's practice to prevent mission creep and increase the impact of the work delivered.
8. The department is taking Barbican School, renamed Teacher Lab, forward from this action research phase in collaboration with Harris Federation, a large academy group with 47 schools across London and a teacher training facility. We are developing the program to increase creative practice in the classroom approach to core subjects. We are also developing an offer for their teacher training and CPD on creative and effective communication to inspire innovative, creative teaching approaches.
9. Masters/ Future Producers, now Creative Academy, is our enhanced apprenticeship program that will see a cohort of 10 young people who will embark on a 2-year training program at the Barbican Centre on pathways including producing and technical. The team will use the departmental toolkit to review the CC Department projects they have decided to keep and the will further refine the list as.

Creative Collaboration 2023 programme highlights

10. The year has focused on reflections on the participatory programs and interventions through arts programming as the departments transition into one cohesive department and the organisation learns to accommodate a fifth art form.
11. In spring, the *Young Barbican Takeover Festival* used six spaces across the Barbican over a day, welcoming 600 young people. The day included workshops from candle making to clowning and a dance class that resulted in a brilliantly joyous flash mob in the club stage foyer. There were performances throughout the day from musicians *Nok Culture Ensemble*, *Alice Boyd*,

Facesoul and *Reeta Loi*. We delivered *Lip Gloss*, an evening of poetry and music curated by Simon Armitage in the theatre. We launched our digital archive in collaboration with Google Arts, enabling people worldwide to interact with the Barbican's historic objects that have been in storage and not accessible to the public.

12. In summer, *differently various* exhibition in partnership with Headway East London, a charity that works with people who have acquired brain injury, was produced in the Curve gallery and seen by 5500 over nine days. I received rave reviews.
13. In the autumn, we trialled genre-bending events, including *Chagall Unlocked* electronica, dance, light, performance in the Pit. We produced *Nina Simone: Legacy* at Milton Court, which revisited Josette Bushell-Mingo OBE's 2017 international theatre production about her relationship to Nina Simone in *A Story about Me and Nina Simone*. The evening included a screening of the London premiere of a film about the production, *CALL NINA!* directed by Lamin Daniel Jadama, as well as a panel discussion on race activism and performance, and concluded with a live performance of Nina Simone's songs. The event was sold out.
14. Opening our late-night gig pilot series is *Greentea Selecta*, which sold out in three days. The following clubstage event in December is in partnership with *Bootylicious*, the longest-running Black LGBTQ club night in the country.

Participatory Program highlights

15. We delivered the National Open Youth Orchestra (NOYO) London showcase performance at Milton Court and established a new young creatives program, Changemakers. In September, we launched monthly mindful Mondays with a daytime offer for local schools to have classes in the conservatory, learning about climate change and ecology in a different environment through sound-making and self-guided tours. In the late afternoons, we invite local arts organisations to share and animate the space with the idea of its use as the City's park.

Cross artform Collaboration

16. We are collaborating with Gallery on the Francis Alÿs Spring 2024 show. At the heart of the Alÿs exhibition is his work "Children's Games" (1999 - ongoing), in which he has filmed children at play in various countries. The video work will be shown in the lower gallery, and in the upper gallery, the gaze will be reversed as we engage local children through collaborating with schools to curate Alÿs's drawings.
17. We collaborate with Cinema on Family Film Club, a weekly Saturday morning screening and the annual Family Film Week in October, where the team curate workshops to complement the film program to engage families in creative activities before the film.
18. The Chronic Youth programme begins in September by recruiting a group of nascent programmers, who meet regularly until they deliver their festival weekend in April. The project has become well known as an exciting

opportunity for young people taking their first steps into a film career and is used as a case study in Film London's resources for working with Young Audiences.

19. We collaborate with Cinema and Into Film Festival to deliver a minimum of two school screenings per term and include live speakers. This year's highlight was showing the Japanese anime title *Belle* for secondary schools and colleges, followed by a Q&A session with a designer on the film, Eric Wong, who gave great insight into the creative process and practical advice on non-traditional career pathways.
20. In the theatre, we are brokering much-reduced schools' tickets for *My Neighbour Totoro* to enable local schools who cannot afford the current £25 cost per child school price to engage with this extraordinary award-winning work. The offer will include workshops to complement this work to give the students an insight into the creative processes.

Future plans

21. 24/5 The next year is focused on establishing a new department culture, working in strands of focus that cut across teams, enabling greater Collaboration and strategic focus. (See the strands and the projects in the appendix identifying key collaborators.)
 - CC will collaborate with formal educators from primary through to higher education. We were working with schools to develop creative approaches to teaching and support the development of creative thinking, curiosity and compassion in learners. We will work with higher education institutions to create greater access to our archives.
 - CC participatory practices will collaborate with young creatives to develop their craft in a safe, supportive environment and network them in the cultural sector. The intention is to nurture new, more diverse voices to change the industry long-term. To create non-traditional, experiential pathways into the creative sector for those whose voices have historically been stifled or denied. Including establishing the Creative Academy, an enhanced apprenticeship program over three years providing training with pathways into creative producing, technical and business administration.
 - CC will collaborate with communities within a 20-minute radius of the centre to engage with people who have previously felt unwelcomed and uninvited to encounter art, to feel at home to make demands of the civic space to serve their culture needs better. To engage with families, artists and potential audiences who are local and share this iconic cultural institution more equitably.
 - CC will collaborate with artists by developing boundary-blurring public programming that challenges and changes artistic practice and audience demographics. We will develop a new generation of creative professionals drawn from our local communities. We will present artists that capture the zeitgeist, building the next generation of audiences.
 - CC will collaborate with artform departments to support them in developing intentional programming for younger and more diverse people. Supporting the

culture change transformation through endeavouring to normalise thinking beyond the Barbican's loyal and super-served current audiences.

22. The role of Creative Collaboration as invited provocateurs of the Barbican will be more regular in next year's programming. We will relaunch Young Barbican as a year-round regular program of workshops, skills building and networking opportunities, complimented by a robust membership that gives options for discounted entry into performances across the centre and shows intentionally programmed for younger audiences. Club stage events will also become a regular feature, moving from DJ events to include live gigs establishing a new informal venue. In the long term, this audience could inhabit the Ex-halls offer. The year will include a themed season across art forms inspired by an exploration of Pirate Radio, which will include residencies by community radio stations broadcasting live from the foyers, gigs, theatre, talks and a podcast series. Summer 2024 will also see a series exploring play to complement the Francis Alys exhibition and an opportunity to reconnect with hyperlocal families.
23. The year will also see the development and launch of the Creative Academy apprenticeship program. The year will also see the development of a strategic artist development program across art form departments, which will bring together the open labs in theatre and Cinema with the bespoke offer in classical music in Milton Court and a visual art, interdisciplinary offer to be created by CC.

Challenges and opportunities.

24. The withdrawal of the ACE NPO funding has the most profound effect on the CC department. Much of the funding went to the learning and participatory work and contributed to important free activities, including the Curve. Replacing and increasing this funding will be a primary focus.
25. The fallout of Barbican Stories and more recent challenges in this EDI space has consequences for a team that is outward-facing and engaged in building trust with communities directly affected by these discriminatory realities.
26. Both a challenge and opportunity are presented by Barbican's most racially diverse art department. The emotional labour these dedicated conviction-driven staff undertake is immense, and a duty of care and building sustainable work practices as we develop the new department is critical.

Corporate and Strategic implications

27. The future plans of the Creative Collaborations team support the delivery of the City's Corporate Plan by:
 - Contributing to a flourishing society. The CC programme has inclusive, co-design and collaboration as its heart – in terms of participants, artists and audiences that we work with. Our access and audience centred approach means we prioritise keeping admissions to events low to enable the widest access for a new demographic of

audiences to the centre. We are conscious of the impact of the cost of living crisis and the need to create greater access to cultural provision the departments focus on the civic engagement of the Barbican mean we are committed organising some free offers with our programs to support access to people locally.

Relevant Corporate Plan outcomes:

- People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
- Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need
- People are safe and feel safe
- People enjoy good health and wellbeing through engagement in the joyful collective experience of participating in a range of culture activities
- Supporting a thriving economy. We are committed to attracting the best talent to work for the team, recruiting for potential and encouraging and supporting all our team to be entrepreneurial in their approach to partnership working and income generation. A strategic partnership approach will enable us to share resources to make innovative projects. We actively seek new fundraising opportunities and work closely with the Development team to maximise opportunities for funder cultivation. We are in conversation with several Foundations, each with different areas of focus, including young people, education, artist development and communities.

Relevant Corporate Plan outcomes:

- We are a global hub for innovation in finance and professional services, commerce and culture.
- We have access to the skills and talent we need
- Shaping outstanding environments. Our cross-art form brief allows us to respond to new trends and we plan to stay nimble and flexible in a changes across the arts and culture sector. We work with other departments across the centre on exciting programmes and draw on each other's skills and experience.

Relevant Corporate Plan outcomes:

- We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration.
- Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained.

Financial implications

28. None

Resource implications

29. Refer to new departmental structure above.

Legal implications

30. None

Risk implications

31. There is some inherent risk with any public programming intended for younger and global majority audiences in an institution that has not always had the best track record in this area. We will be mitigated by rigorous systems in place to enable any higher-risk activities/content to be flagged to senior management during the development phase and monitored accordingly. It should be noted that failing to programme in the way we do – ambitious, daring and innovative – presents a reputational risk. Taking risks to realise a innovative, responsive and relevant programme, and build audiences for that programme that look more like our global city, is an important part of our vision.

Equalities implications

32. Refer to Equity, diversity and inclusion

Climate implications

33. Refer to Sustainability and climate change

Security implications

34. None

Conclusion: a note from Karena Johnson, Head of Creative Collaboration

35. The Barbican is going through an immense moment of transformation and recovering from the reputational damage of Barbican Stories. The decision to centralise audiences, participatory and collaborative practices in the strategy is a brave signal of change internally. Creating a new department with a horizontal way of working can set the foundation to be a sector leader in culture change in world-class arts centres which is an exciting prospect at an unsettled time as the organisation changes.

Appendix 1 - Creative Collaboration work strands

Report Author

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