



The Royal Docks Cultural Placemaking Strategy



The Royal Docks will be **the cultural engine** of London

Forewords



Justine Simons OBE
Deputy Mayor, Culture
and Creative Industries

Culture is London's DNA. London's theatres, galleries and music venues are renowned across the world. But it is the people, heritage and great diversity of London that are at the heart of its cultural riches.

The Royal Docks is an extraordinary place. Its industrial and trading history and the stories of past dockworkers and their families are complex and fascinating. Its enclosed docks were once the largest in the world. And its community is now one of the youngest and most diverse in the UK. For over 100 years the docks traded grain, tobacco, meat, fruit, and vegetables. By the 1880s, they were one of London's biggest bases for the cargo industry. But today, Royal Docks trades in ideas. Imagination is the currency of the 21st century.

The Royal Docks Cultural Placemaking Strategy is all about creativity, production and innovation. It will establish the area as a cultural engine, an ideas factory, a meeting place for creativity – open to all. It will bring new and much needed support to cultural spaces and creative production facilities, from studios to rehearsal spaces and from set building facilities to showcasing venues for the local communities. We know creative jobs are far more future-proofed, because you just can't automate imagination. That is why these spaces are critical to London's future success. They will provide jobs, generate economic activity and bring social benefits too.

The Royal Docks is putting creativity centre stage. It is inviting artists and creatives to make and present their work here – in the shadow of

the docks industrial and manufacturing past – and is placing culture at the heart of its vision as the capital's only Enterprise Zone. By doing so, the Royal Docks will lead the way as a global engine room and a world-leading location for unique and ambitious events.

The Royal Docks is at the centre of the Mayor's vision for the Thames Estuary Production Corridor, a collection of large-scale cultural and creative production facilities in east London and the South East. In London, the programme includes East Bank, the future world-class culture and education district on the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the historic 3 Mills Studios in Bromley-by-Bow and Eastbrook Studios, London's largest film studios being built in Dagenham East.

At the time of publication, the COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating impact on London's culture and creative industries, but despite all the challenges, London's creative economy is proving once again its resilience and must now be championed more than ever. Culture will play a central role in the economic and social recovery of London. Worth £58 billion a year before the pandemic, the UK's creative economy grew five times faster than the economy at large and provided one in six jobs in the capital.

I am confident that London's creative dynamism will rebound, but cultural organisations, artists and creative people will need to be at the heart of our recovery, which is why the Royal Docks vision for this new cultural destination is so timely and important.



Rokhsana Fiaz OBE
Mayor of Newham

As the Mayor of Newham and Co-Chair of the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone Programme Board, I am delighted to champion this ambitious vision for the Royal Docks as 'the cultural engine' for London. Newham has a rich cultural history, and the Royal Docks is a very special part of that. Once the centre of the United Kingdom's industrial economy and key to London's global positioning, the Royal Docks was also a vibrant social hub that served the resident community of workers and their families. Now, the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone is working with local people and businesses to regenerate the area and it is fantastic that arts and culture are at the centre of our plans.

People are at the heart of everything we do in Newham, and that message is clear throughout the Royal Docks Cultural Placemaking Strategy as it blends global artistic excellence with local community engagement. Our Newham community is one of the youngest and most diverse in the country, so it is not hard to find the best, the most fascinating, and the most enriching cultural experiences here. For instance, East Bank, opening from 2022 at Stratford's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, will be an internationally significant cultural development, whilst in other parts of Newham we have big plans to ignite community creativity that is bubbling away through projects like Newham Unlocked and Creative Newham.

Covid-19 has hit Newham hard, causing untold grief and damage to families and communities. However, the people of Newham have

remarkable spirit, ingenuity and a sense of unity, and our recovery and reorientation strategy is a chance to create stronger coalitions and equality of opportunity in the future.

One of the long-term challenges of the pandemic will be the impact on young people. Arts and culture can play a vital role in supporting young people to participate in civic life, as well as exploring their own creativity. I am particularly pleased that the Royal Docks Cultural Placemaking Strategy is prioritising young people through the development of a talent pipeline and by ensuring that children and young people will have voice alongside adults and artists in decisions about the cultural programme.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, this is an exciting time culturally in Newham, and as I look forward to the future of the Royal Docks, I feel a real sense of positivity in the cultural offer being proposed. The city and public at large should take comfort in knowing that the Royal Docks is a place where innovation is celebrated, and talent and ability are nurtured, to help ensure a vibrant future in London for culture and the creative industries.

Welcome

The size, situation, and significance of the Royal Docks, combined with cultural developments in its surrounding area, has the potential to make the greatest shift in London's cultural gravitational pull since the transformation of the South Bank in the 1950s.

The times in which we live are as momentous as they were when that took place. The events of 2020 – in particular COVID-19, the worldwide outcry against racism triggered by the murder of George Floyd, and Brexit – have impacted on communities, businesses, and the economic and political fabric of London and the United Kingdom in a way that has not been seen since the end of the Second World War.

The commitment and shared vision of the partners involved gives this project a drive and momentum that will allow it to cover incredible distance in a short time, particularly when we consider that the pace of physical change in major capital cities can often be drawn out.

It is for this reason that the Mayor of London and the Mayor of Newham have come together to call for a vision, mission and strategy that is clear, compelling, irresistible and ambitious.



This cultural strategy is intended to establish the direction of travel, the breadth of inclusion, and the scale of ambition for the future of the Royal Docks.

If we are to succeed, we must unite giant thinking with human energy.

We must embrace the height of global excellence that sets London apart, the depth of community engagement that has always characterised the Royal Docks, and the breadth of inclusion and representation that celebrates one of the UK's most multicultural boroughs.

Where have we come from?

The origin and history of the Royal Docks

For over a century the Royal Docks was at the very centre of the UK's industrial economy and key to the source of London's global positioning.

The docks were built in the mid-19th Century in order to transform trading and supply routes in and out of the capital.

They were an extraordinary feat of engineering, both the world's largest enclosed docks and the largest body of impounded water in Europe, and they quickly transformed the area into a global trading centre for the next century.

The Royal Docks history is etched on the post-industrial landscape and vast waterscape, whilst the stories of the people who gave it life – the dockers and factory workers, the families and publicans, the sailors and entertainers – are the stuff of legend. The area grew to be the most important manufacturing centre in southern England.

Decline in industry led to mass unemployment and emigration, and when the Royal Docks were decommissioned in 1981 the impact on communities was devastating. The future of the area was contested during various eras of planning, and historic communities became fractured and isolated.

While the water has become largely unused and the land around it has lost its vibrancy, surrounding Newham has grown to be one of the youngest and most culturally diverse boroughs in the UK, a leader in inclusion and forward cultural thinking.

The recent creation of the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone and the current collaboration of partners is poised to change the story of the Royal Docks forever, once again realising its potential as a vibrant part of East London.

Where are we going?

The vision: the Royal Docks will be the cultural engine of London

From its transformational role in the industrial revolution and international trading, to its present day position in one of the youngest and most multicultural boroughs in the UK, the Royal Docks represents a meeting point for global travellers and local residents, the place of the first steps and the triumphant returns for a million adventures.

A river runs by it, an airport flies through it, a community once built and cared for it: this strategy lays out the ways in which we will work with Royal Docks' communities to make that happen again.

As we head towards the bicentenary of one of the most extraordinary inner-city sites in the world, the Royal Docks cultural strategy aims to unite a complex past with a thrilling future, returning to its source in order to explore the graft and the genius, the work and the play, the people and the place that can redefine five square miles of quintessential London.

Inspired by its heritage and people, the Royal Docks needs to position itself in the minds of the world as the cultural engine powering London's creative economy. It must clearly establish itself as an ideas factory and physical creation centre, the "workshop of the world", where local and global creative innovation and production are supported and so flourish.

The Royal Docks will become one of the world's great creation centres: home to creative people engaged in the process of making extraordinary cultural work. We will develop spaces of all size and shape to be used as workshops, rehearsal spaces, artist accommodation, temporary and permanent venues and social spaces. We will unearth, invite, commission and support creatives in the making and presenting of their work in the Royal Docks: inspired and facilitated by the nature of the space.

We must take this once in a century opportunity to transform a vast and important part of London into one of the world's most vibrant crucibles for creativity.

This new cultural engine will be driven by its inclusive communities and fuelled by creativity, resulting in a new quarter that – like London itself – is a world leader in inclusion and diversity, open to everyone.

Where are we now?

The Royal Docks defining elements

This vision is created in the image of the three defining elements of the Royal Docks:

- The physical: a site of exceptional scale located in the most rapidly transforming part of London
- The narrative: a rich but complex history of trade, industry and empire
- The people: a place created through human endeavour, diverse communities and pioneering spirit

To realise our vision, we must celebrate and amplify these three elements, ensuring that culture is always at the heart of the Royal Docks.

The three constituencies

All our decisions and actions will recognise the value of serving the three major groups of people who will interact with the Royal Docks:

Local

The people of Newham and its surroundings who will invest their time and passion in making the Royal Docks the most fabulous place to be based, a place where they can earn a living, discover new interests and realise their dreams.

National

The people of the UK who will grow to love it as their new favourite area, made up of things that can only be seen, places that can only be found, and experiences that can only be had at the Royal Docks.

International

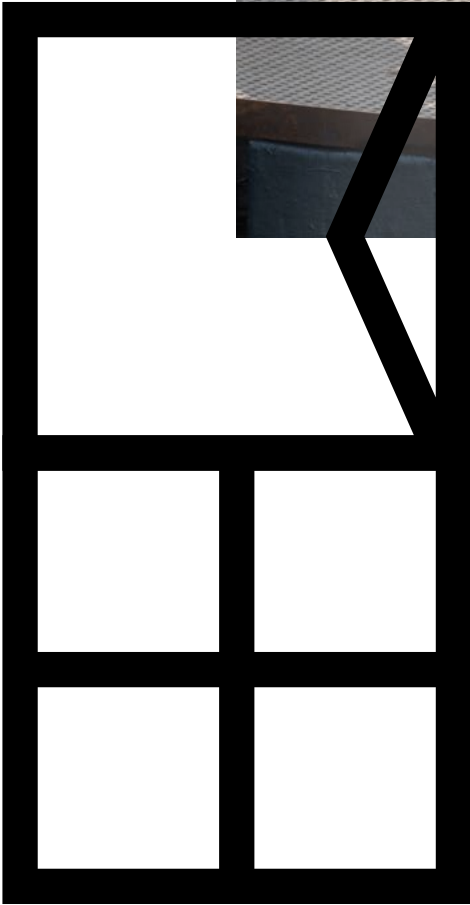
The people from around the world who will flock to work, play, explore or invest their time and talent in the area.

The Royal Docks: one and many

When seen as a whole, the Royal Docks is a singular, massive, overwhelming place.

On closer observation it is actually made up of a series of neighbourhoods. Identifying and strengthening these different areas will be vital.

Each has their own character, contexts and roles. Defining specific public spaces, creative industry clusters and mixed-use cultural character areas will enable the Royal Docks as a whole to flourish.



The water
Currently the Royal Docks’ vast waterscape is largely underused.

The Royal Docks’ greatest physical asset, the water, provides an opportunity to become Europe’s leading venue for water-based arts and events.

A new working boat yard and marina are to be built at Albert Island, the first along the Thames for many years. International boat shows and spectacular water events are planned as part of the Royal Docks cultural programme alongside day to day activities.

In 2021 we will commission a coherent water masterplan that will engage all stakeholders in a shared vision, creation/programming framework, management and infrastructure plan. This masterplan will identify potential cultural partners, artists and producers worldwide.

The land
Today the land that surrounds the Royal Docks is not used in a cohesive way.

There are major event structures including ExCeL London, The Crystal (soon to become City Hall) London City Airport and the neighbouring O2 Centre, plus smaller organisations and mixed-use buildings.

There are cultural and heritage assets such as the impressive Millennium Mills, locks, cranes, pump houses and wharfs, that demonstrate the Royal Docks heritage and bring character and distinction.

There are significant vacant tracts of land ready for opportunity, and of course massive amounts of public space with the potential to host site-wide events and activities.



The times

The times are absolutely right for this ambitious project, but they are not easy.

Culture and creative industries are clearly acknowledged as the 21st century driver, and before 2020 they employed one in six Londoners and contributed £58.4 billion a year to the economy.

Covid-19

During 2020 and 2021, Covid-19 has been devastating for individuals, communities, businesses, cities, and for the economy. Creative workers and the creative and cultural industries have been amongst the hardest hit. We do not yet know the full impact that this will have locally and on the Royal Docks in the future, but it is expected that one of the impacts will be to the talent pipeline and the confidence of young people to pursue careers in culture and creative industries: this must be an area of focus for us going forwards.

Diversity

Major events and experiences also changed the landscape in 2020. The worldwide outcry against racism, triggered by the killing of George Floyd in the USA, has highlighted the need for further action on this matter. The #MeToo movement has increased awareness of the vital importance of gender diversity and equality.

London and Newham are proud of their diversity and committed to the fight against racism and all forms of bigotry. They strive to be world leaders in developing new ways of addressing systemic and entrenched privilege in all its forms. At every moment and at every level we must demonstrate and deliver on our commitment to embed anti-racism and all forms of inclusive practices across the Royal Docks, and be a centre for debate, discussion and activism.

Post-2020 recovery

As a fast-growing sector and a major driver for the hospitality industry, the re-emergence of culture is crucial to London's recovery. The Royal Docks will play a leading role in re-establishing and growing London's cultural scene.

To achieve this, the Royal Docks must do all it can to become a place of unrestrained creativity and production, exciting to be a part of, limitless in possibility, open to everyone.

How do we get there?

The model of the South Bank

The Royal Docks – alongside East Bank and the Thames Estuary Production Corridor – will bring about one of the greatest civic transformations in modern London.

The first great cultural transformation in modern London was the South Bank.

In the years following the Second World War, the building of the Royal Festival Hall, the National Theatre and the BFI attracted great numbers of people to the area. Almost 50 years later they were joined by Tate Modern, the Globe Theatre, the Millennium Bridge and the London Eye. These institutions guaranteed even greater numbers, but the reason people returned regularly and stayed in the area was that alongside the epic was the intimate: a huge increase in the number of café's and bars, pop up galleries and shops, new workspaces and meeting areas, and of course year-round cultural activities in public space.

The development of other cultural spaces in London and around the world has followed the same pattern, from Brooklyn to Melbourne, from Berlin to Barcelona.

What was needed to bring about such transformation was a combination of the moment of need, extraordinary space, political will, major public and private resources, community engagement and a clear and ambitious vision.

The coming together of circumstances that led to the transformation of the South Bank in the 1950s – the need for recovery, the opportunity and the will – are matched in East London today.

The realisation of the vision



The three pillars

The Cultural Placemaking Strategy will be publicly realised through the implementation of three pillars, each of which will be devised with the three constituencies in mind:

PEOPLE DRIVEN BY CREATIVITY

Newham and London will love and embrace its Royal Docks, and creative people will see this as their home, where they are nourished, inspired and productive.

PROGRAMME FUELLING INSPIRATION

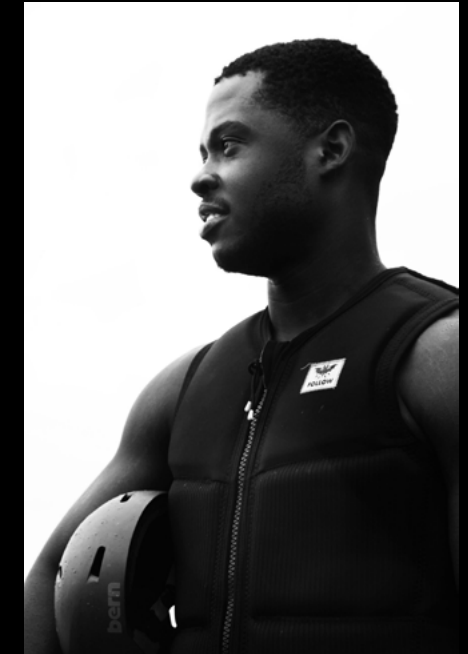
Events and activities will be commissioned and curated to attract, excite, and inspire all who engage with the Royal Docks.

PLACE THE ENGINE FOR CULTURE

The Royal Docks will be planned, developed and run as a space for creation, and its operating systems regularly updated to be fit for its changing use.

PEOPLE DRIVEN BY CREATIVITY

The Royal Docks Team will dedicate itself to ensuring that everything that is done in the area will be used as fuel for creativity, productivity and creation. Spaces and activities will be unpacked and learned from, so that the Royal Docks is a place where everyone has a part to play, where people connect, and where we nourish the communities, businesses, stakeholders and visitors.





The Royal Docks cultural ecosystem

The Royal Docks will invite everyone who connects with it to be an active participant in its cultural life. The place and the programme will be developed in a way that ensures that there is a thriving and constantly evolving cultural scene that lasts long beyond the Enterprise Zone.

We will place artists and creatives at the heart of the Royal Docks, ensuring that they are excited to be part of its ecosystem, and that local young people grow to see culture as a huge life opportunity for them.

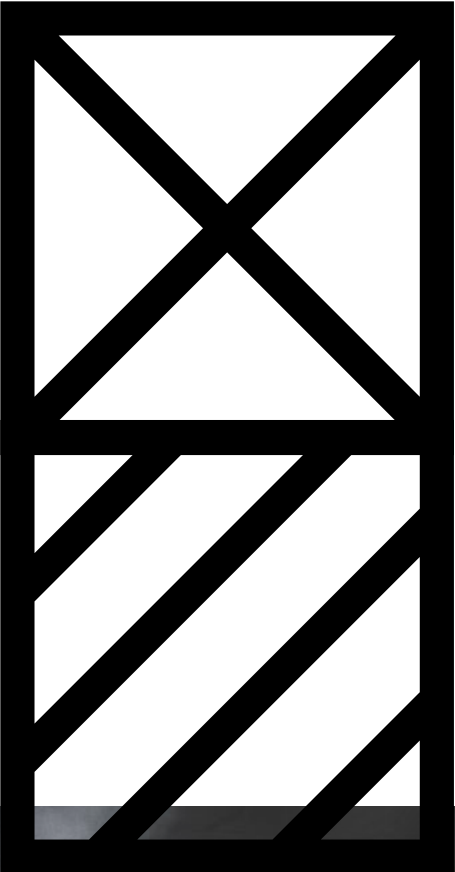
We will work with businesses as supporters of culture, helping them gain a competitive edge and employee loyalty, driven by being part of a vibrant area packed with creative people, and through commissioning artists and supporting local events.

In 2021 we will establish an active Cultural Network for creative organisations which will include opportunities for exchange, collaboration, and capacity building, and a 'Cultural Connectors' group. Open to all, this group will feed into programme ideas, help promote activities locally, and provide opportunities to get involved. A Programme Panel, made up of Cultural Connectors and artists will participate directly in decisions.

Growing the creative community

As a result of making the Royal Docks into a creation centre and a cultural engine, of repurposing existing spaces and developing new spaces in which creatives can physically make and develop extraordinary work, there will be a greatly increased community of creative visionaries and the extensive support teams necessary in the development of new work in the Royal Docks. The Royal Docks will create employment for skilled engineers, makers, artists, manufacturers, performers, and culture workers, whilst the programme made by the Royal Docks Team will support freelancers and individual creatives, setting a standard in terms of good practice, ensuring artists are paid well, and provided with development opportunities.

Everyone who is invited to make work, present work, develop ideas or experiences at the Royal Docks will be encouraged to participate in the Royal Docks creative community, making connections locally and sharing the extraordinary range of practical and intellectual skills that go into true creative production.



Talent pipeline

Supporting individual talent, ambition, entrepreneurialism and opportunity will be key to the success of the Royal Dock’s vision.

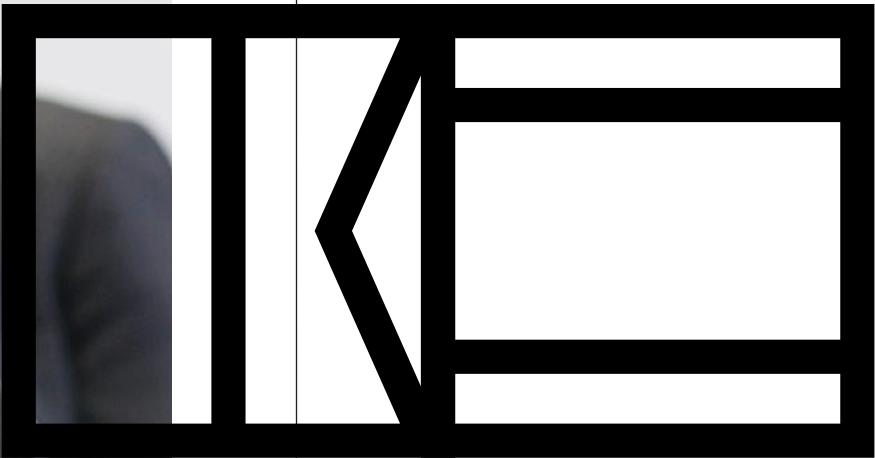
As one of the youngest and most diverse boroughs in the UK, Newham is teeming with potential, but whilst the people are vibrantly creative, formal statistics state there is low engagement with subsidised arts and culture. Music and culture is everywhere, yet is neither perceived as such nor caught in these statistics.

In feedback, young people say they rarely think that arts and culture might provide a viable future for them.



The Royal Docks will work in every way possible to counter that. We will work with schools and local organisations to provide cultural participation opportunities, skills and training. Our Cultural Network will support internships and work experience, and we will recruit young people to the Royal Docks’ Cultural Connectors group and Programme Panel.

The physical nature of the Royal Docks as a cultural engine and creative space will provide jobs and careers as well as creative opportunities. Culture and the arts require imagination and perspiration, both of which will be needed as creativity is brought to life in the Royal Docks through manufacturing and hands on production.



Business and strategic partners

The Royal Docks Enterprise Zone has provided pump-prime funding to support cultural activation in the short-term, but to ensure that our cultural vision is sustainable the Royal Docks Team will build strong relationships with local business and strategic funding partners. Funders such as Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and trusts such as the Paul Hamlyn Foundation are natural partners as are key local organisations who will benefit from the economic and placemaking benefits of an excellent cultural programme.

PROGRAMME

FUELLING INSPIRATION

We will make the Royal Docks an irresistible destination and an inspiring home, with a year-round curated programme of events and activities, driven by innovation and imagination, bringing international artists at the top of their game and the creators of the best sporting and interactive experiences.



Royal Docks Originals

We will commission, champion and showcase original and innovative works, spaces, exhibitions and experiences from the most relevant and imaginative creatives and impresarios, both from within the Royal Docks community and worldwide.

As the cluster of cultural organisations and creative practitioners grows, there will be an energy and talent emerging in the Royal Docks that will be in a perfect position to explore and ignite the sheer scale of the area, the industrial and manufacturing legacy, the beating pulse of its future.

For UK artists making work of scale and imagination here, the Royal Docks will become the launching point into the rest of the world, creating the opportunity to promote the Royal Docks internationally, and to explore ideas that are reflective of East London's rich and diverse cultural

positioning. It will provide a resource that is primarily only seen in other parts of Europe.

The Scene Nationale network of creation centres in France led to many of the world's greatest large-scale events, from the Sultan's Elephant to Place des Anges (aka The Feathers), from James Thierree to Compagnie Carabosse. The Royal Docks will provide the next generation of makers with what they need to create extraordinary work.

In 2021, we will commission an innovative, live, large-scale, family event as the centrepiece of our Royal Docks Originals Autumn programme and in 2022 we will commission a feasibility study for creating a monumental 'Aerial Art Park' in the Royal Docks celebrating the area's character and identity.



On the Royal Docks

Given that the 250 acres of water at the centre of the area is its defining feature, the waterscape provides an opportunity for the Royal Docks to become a major international centre for world-class water-based events and performances. The most exciting performing and visual artists, sporting events and installations from around the world will be inspired by the vast and unparalleled enclosed waterscape of the Royal Docks.

Spectaculars

The range of existing large-scale spectacular performances that genuinely incorporate water is fairly limited. Theatre Titanick from Germany, Iltopie Theatre from France, Walk The Plank from Manchester have all made excellent work that is designed to be performed in or on water.

We will address this paucity of work and give commissioning strength by forming a new consortium with other like-minded and similarly-endowed spaces around the world, a model inspired by the Major Festivals Initiative in Australia, or the Venues in The Round consortium that brings together the Roundhouse with circular arcs spaces in France and Germany.

Floating stages

The water and the land offer great potential for work placed on a floating stage. Future projects include high art and popular culture:

Performance: we are exploring the possibility of collaborating with London opera and theatre companies to produce large-scale performances. Models include Sydney Opera On The Harbour and Bregenz Festival. Sydney sees Opera Australia take to the stage for an audience of 40,000+ across 20 performances. Bregenz, a renowned music festival, transforms the small lakeside town in Austria into a cultural destination in which elaborate opera productions on a vast floating stage are famous ... for their spectacular set designs and performed to audiences of up to 7,000.

Music: we will collaborate with the Barbican and major commercial promoters, to curate a series of destination events across all genres, from classical to rock, indie to world, K-Pop to electronica.

Art on the water

We will animate the water with a range of visual and interactive arts projects, from small scale interventions to major landmark pieces that put the area on the cultural map. Projects such as Olafur Eliasson's waterfalls have demonstrated the impact and spectacle of large-scale interventions, whilst participatory projects such as Ayşe Erkmen's On Water offer a new way of experiencing the water.

Major events

The Royal Docks will of course be the site for some of the world's most significant water-based major events, and we will use this focus to develop complementary cultural festivals and programmes.



Our people and stories

We will champion and commission opportunities to explore the compelling story of the Royal Docks and the UK's complex stories of industrialism, global trade, and empire.

The stories and history of the Royal Docks (held by organisations including Tate & Lyle, University of East London, Port of London Authority and Eastside Community Heritage) provide a perfect backdrop against which to explore the future of London, seen in the light of both our complex industrial and colonial past, and our rapidly changing present.

Whilst the built environment is from a time gone by - heritage buildings, post-industrial landscape and working water - the individuals and communities who interact with it every day are incredibly diverse and culturally rich with a fascinating history.

We have an unmissable opportunity to explore the true complexities of our industrial and trade situation, British sea trade, international relations, colonialism and modern multicultural London. It will be vital that we find ways to have these conversations, to give the platform to the next generation, to give the microphone to under-represented voices.

We will build a consortium of organisations who are striving to be leaders in diversity but from different cultural standpoints, including partners in the UK and further afield.

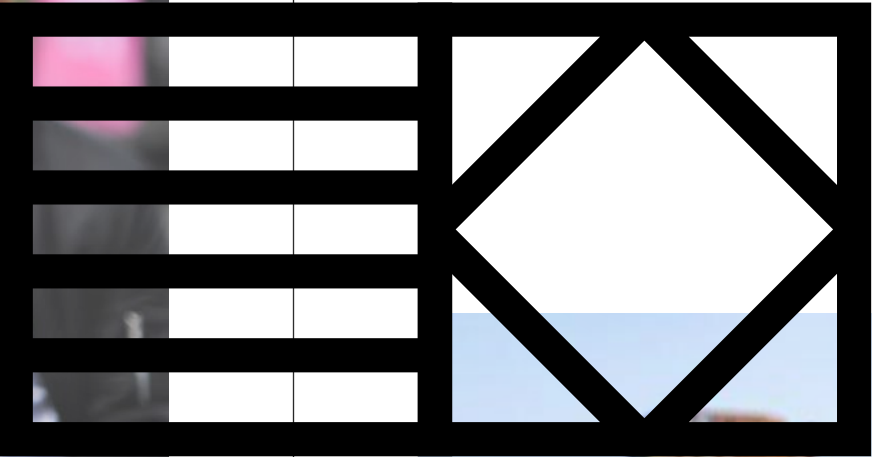
Dock local

The residents, the workers and the daily users of the Royal Docks will always be first in our minds and in our plans: we will devise a wide range of spaces, performances, activities and experiences tailored primarily for them.

After the docks closed in the 1980s thousands of people moved away, and the former network of cinemas, pubs, pleasure gardens, and music halls all but disappeared.

We will deliver a compelling, satisfying and diverse programme for the people who inhabit the Royal Docks. We will ensure that space and incentives are provided to the best creatives, venue and commerce partners, entrepreneurs and food and beverage providers. The result will be spaces to play, exercise, eat, experience all arts and culture, compete, and to socialise - meeting existing and new friends. From gigs on a Friday night to popular family events, from opportunities for everyday creativity and physical activities to being at the heart of the most spectacular elements of the programme. We will make the area one that everyone wants to be a part of, and that no one wants to leave.

Our Cultural Connectors' Programme Panel will select parts of this programme, whilst other elements, produced by the Royal Docks Team, will respond to local interests and subjects of appeal, such as a project we are currently conceiving entitled "A Green Street take over - Football, Fashion, Food collide at the Royal Docks".



PLACE

THE ENGINE FOR CULTURE

We will develop and run high quality infrastructure and a clearly communicated plan for creative production, innovation and programming in the Royal Docks, ensuring that the very best people and companies have the space and resources to hit their personal best.



The whole

The first step will be to repurpose what we have and identify what we need to establish a unique and high quality infrastructure for creative production, innovation and programming that celebrates the Royal Docks heritage, scale, character, and its spectacular waterscape.

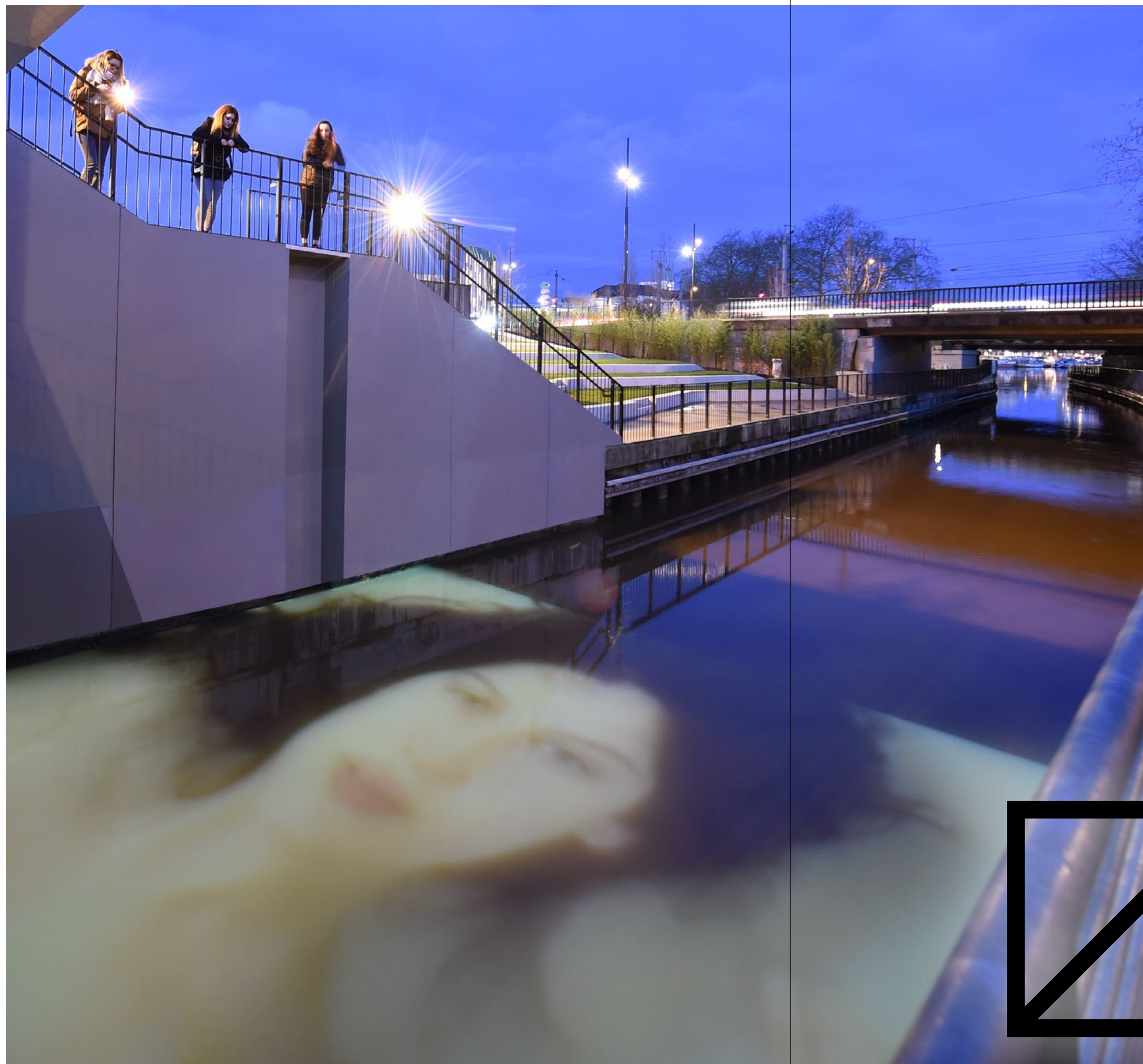
Royal Docks' strategic master-planning work, taking place in 2021, will support plans for our cultural infrastructure on land whilst an associated water masterplan for the Royal Docks will ensure a shared vision for the water.

Developing creative clusters

The Royal Docks has a number of emerging creative districts with huge potential. The area has increasing levels of affordable creative workplace, growing presence of cultural organisations, the University of East London, substantial creative investment, and plans for significantly improved connectivity.

By identifying the individual neighbourhoods, then investing in the qualities of each, they can attract future uses and activities that will strengthen local identity and character.





The place of choice for production

Given the amount of space that can be developed, the Royal Docks can position itself as a magnet for creative production, incubation and showcasing spaces and thereby promote local production to London and to the world.

We will establish the spaces, infrastructure and reputation so that world's greatest tech pioneers and creative innovators will imagine, develop, test, make, launch and trade their products, programmes and experiences.

Alongside workspace, creative and cultural organisations are attracted by opportunities within the Royal Docks cultural programme, including possibilities of new commissions and showcasing.

A meeting place for creativity

For international artists invited to make or present work at the Royal Docks, it will be their gateway into the world's cultural capital, meeting first its most diverse and vibrant communities, and from there allowing them to explore everything that London has to offer.

The Royal Docks will not only be a home from home for great creatives, but will also act as the meeting point for artists from around the world, and be the place where great collaborations are born.

We will focus on providing opportunities for talent development and demonstrate that 'London is Open' – welcoming, inclusive and culturally diverse.





How will we know when we have arrived?

Listening to the engine

We will know we have succeeded when the Royal Docks feels as vibrant as it did at the height of its shipping era. Behind every closed door you will hear the sounds of craftspeople, cultural engineers, creative genius and practical graft. The public spaces will be alive with performance and installations, art and experiences, people working and living and playing.

The whole area will thrum not only with music and stories, but with the industrial machinery and mechanical pulse that underlies the physical making of creative work. The buildings, the cranes, water and the land will all once again be brought to life in the engineering of cultural product.

The Royal Docks will truly feel like both an industrial and a cultural space: we will celebrate the fact that art is messy, creativity creates vibration, and that whilst not all mills are dark and satanic, they can still create the focus for the human energy and physical exertion necessary for the alchemy that turns base ideas into cultural gold.

Milestones in the first four years

2021

Laying our foundations

- Cultural Placemaking Strategy launch
- Public Art Strategy and Water Activation Plan developed
- Cultural Connectors and Creative Networks set up
- City Hall opens in the Royal Docks
- Covid flexible summer and autumns seasons delivered

2022–2023

Building our place

- Major cultural projects and meanwhile offers open in the Royal Docks
- Feasibility study for an Aerial Art Park
- 2022 anniversary programme and international water events

2024

Funding our future

- Royal Docks Culture charity established
- Fundraising strategy developed
- Commercial model and trading company set up

Appendices



The Royal Docks

This map shows the Royal Docks creative neighbourhoods in development, the area's relationship to the wider cultural infrastructure, and its transport links.

- 1

Royal Victoria – Family and outdoor events
Location of the new City Hall. Major public activation and outdoor events, crafts, food and beverage.
- 2

Custom House ExCeL – National gateway
New creative community, and key entrance for visitors for large-scale exhibitions, performance, and events.
- 3

Connaught – Activities and entertainment
Integrated play landscape, diverse water and sport activities, new entertainment venues.
- 4

Royal Albert Dock – International quarter
International business and creative centre with local opportunities and strong partnerships with UEL.
- 5

Albert Island – Boats, artists, industry
Artist workspace, future marina, and new industrial area.
- 6

North Woolwich – Social and creative
Community creativity, social centres, and celebrated histories.
- 7

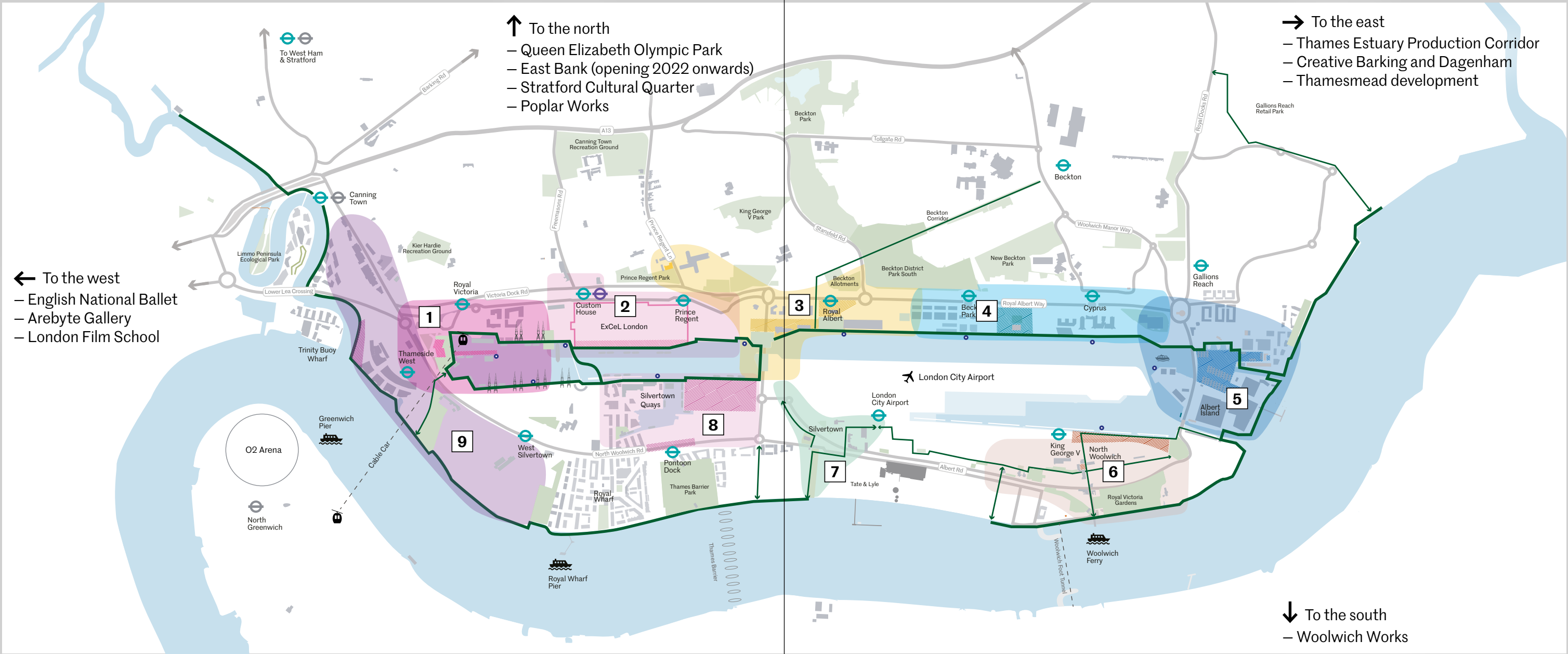
Silvertown – Industrial heritage and workspace
Key heritage buildings, creative workspace, and artist showcasing opportunities.
- 8

Silvertown Quays – Creative and cultural destination
London destination for culture and experiences, large scale events, and new venues.
- 9

West Silvertown – Creative industries
Mixed use neighbourhood for residential, making spaces, studios, and venues.

Transport Infrastructure

- ✈ London City Airport
- Major highways
- ⊖ Crossrail
- ⊖ DLR
- ⊖ Jubilee line
- ✈ Emirates airline
- ⚓ Woolwich Ferry/Thames Clipper
- Pedestrian Route/ Cycle Route



Community consultation

The consultation process that underpins this Cultural Placemaking Strategy involved 1,700 people, including local residents, community groups, cultural organisations, businesses, developers, landowners, Greater London Authority and London Borough of Newham officers and politicians. All share a readiness for change and ambition for the area.

Main findings – Communities

Participation
Royal Docks people have an history of activism and want to be involved in the cultural programme, delivering community projects and taking part in the decision-making. Respondents differed on their sense of how the local community is growing and changing, and the cultural programme is an opportunity to support social cohesion.

Place and programme
People felt strongly about their surroundings and, most of all, people want better infrastructure and public spaces including pubs, cafes and restaurants that provide for everyday social needs. There is a sense that ‘nothing happens here and there is nowhere to go’. People want the Royal Docks heritage and identity to be celebrated. Some people feel distanced by public art activities, and the Royal Docks programme needs to engage with local people in ways that are meaningful and reflect their cultures.

Access and information
Accessibility is a key issue including transport infrastructure, lack of local event information, and cost. While the waterscape is regarded as a defining feature of the area, it is also considered a barrier. Concerns over safety were the biggest single issue.

Young people
Young people said that culture is important in their lives; from music, to performance, to sport and fashion. But many do not go out or travel out of the area for entertainment. Whilst digitally fluent, for many technology is out of reach. Many young people talked about the negative impact of social media on their lives and about struggling with social and drug related issues. Local youth champions consider cultural participation as a potential route for young people to find a voice and place in the world.

Main findings – Businesses and Organisations

Place and opportunities
Businesses talked about the Royal Docks as a place made up of different character areas, each with distinct roles to play in the overall place narrative. There is much demand from local businesses and creative space providers for workspace opportunities. People also want to see the area becoming better connected through walking and cycling.

Programme
Many businesses want a ‘Big Idea’ culturally to help define the Royal Docks, also a programme of both regular ‘day to day’ activities and larger-scale events to draw in wider audiences. Several developers and businesses have meanwhile strategies and projects in development whilst local cultural institutions are considering expanding their offer and committing to a long-term future here.

Networks and information
Businesses want more opportunities for networking, and information sharing.

Other conclusions from the consultation that have informed this strategy are:

- That the big ideas will only work if the smaller scale, granular infrastructure is in place –the strategy needs to work both from the top down and the bottom up.
- Stakeholders need to know how they fit into the bigger picture - a cultural infrastructure masterplan will provide this.
- A broad definition of cultural placemaking including sport and leisure would be welcomed.

Wider context

Culture is driving the transformation of east London. The Royal Docks Cultural Placemaking Strategy has been informed by the cultural changes taking place in Newham, the emerging cultural strategies of neighbouring boroughs, and wider London cultural developments, and the Thames Estuary Production Corridor vision.

Locally

Newham is one of the youngest and most diverse boroughs in the UK and is committed to becoming a beacon for inclusive and transformative cultural activity. Its cultural sector includes nationally significant organisations such as Theatre Royal Stratford East and East London Dance, and dynamic organisations such as Rosetta Arts and Iroko. In 2022, East Bank, at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park will start to open with major cultural and academic organisations including Sadler’s Wells, the BBC, the Victoria and Albert Museum, UAL’s London College of Fashion and University College London. Rooted in the people and place of the Royal Docks, our programme provides a complementary offer, and the Royal Docks is already working in partnership with many of these organisations, benefiting from synergies and sharing opportunities.

Whilst Newham’s cultural scene is fast developing its population is measured by Arts Council England’s Engagement in Arts and Culture survey (2015-2017) as having significantly lower engagement in arts and culture than the national average. The Royal Docks is a partner in the Creative Newham initiative, led by Rosetta Arts, which is developing creative partnerships to better deliver arts across the borough. We are also working with London Borough of Newham to support projects such as Newham History Month.

Regionally

The Royal Docks is a member of the Thames Estuary Production Corridor a new programme uniting organisations and strategic bodies across east London, the north Kent coast and south Essex. The Royal Docks’ historic role as a centre of trade and production makes a fitting case for it to be an ‘Engine Room’ driving creative manufacturing and as a home for creative workspace. The Royal Docks is also a member of the Port of London Authority’s People and Places Working Group supporting delivery of the Mayor of London/Port of London Authority’s ‘The Case for a River Thames Cultural Vision’.

Nationally

The Royal Docks cultural programme will enhance London’s offer nationally and internationally through its compelling heritage and its exceptional waterscape. We are planning to develop the Royal Docks into a major international centre for world-class water-based arts and events, including spectacular installations, arts and music, boating events, and infrastructure such as floating stages. With a range of sites across the Royal Docks, international transport connections, and resident creative and production companies, the Royal Docks has the potential to host major international cultural events.

“

“London is one of the most culturally rich cities on the planet – with world class institutions and globally renowned talent... Yet too many Londoners are still missing out on the opportunity to access culture and the huge benefits it can bring.” ”

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, “Culture for all Londoners” Mayor of London’s Culture Strategy December 2018

The rich history of trade and industry; the vast scale and openness of the Royal Docks landscape; its pioneering spirit, global links and diverse people with varied cultural interests, tastes and sensibilities, make this an unlimited and unexpected space for interaction.

Investment in an original, relevant, innovative cultural programme made for and by its creative community will harness these characteristics, transforming the Royal Docks into an ambitious cultural district on a global stage with a unique perspective. The Royal Docks will be known as a place of imaginative, dynamic experiences that are rooted in its heritage, people and place. Its vast waterscape will provide an unusual opportunity for arts, music and events, whilst its heritage will provide opportunities to explore our complex trading history. The area’s young diverse population and our focus on talent development will provide an opportunity to spearhead priorities to address diversity within the creative workforce. Royal Docks will be at the forefront of inclusive place making and sustainable innovation.

Creative production and consumption will be intertwined as the Royal Docks develops into a cultural engine with connected and independent functions. Through investing in its cultural ecosystem, new work, the next creative generation, and making spaces, the Royal Docks will be an expansive creative centre. Spanning lab and test bed, workshops and fabrication, stage and showcasing the Royal Docks cultural programme will draw communities, businesses, and visitors alike to this extraordinary place, and put it on the map in London and the world.

Shared values

The following shared values will guide everything we do:

1

Strong Newham communities
Bring people together through cultural experiences and increase engagement to contribute to social cohesion and well-being. Ensure that the benefits of the Economic Enterprise Zone reach across the community.

2

Recognise and respect difference
Celebrate the international community of the Royal Docks and ensure that all cultures are reflected in the public realm and supported through infrastructure and shared experiences.

3

Be ambitious and be different
Sharing of resources, co-designing and co-producing will bring creative intelligence and imagination to the Royal Docks and grow the capacity to produce original, authentic world-class culture.

4

Breakdown barriers and be accessible
Ensure cultural activities are relevant and speak to local audiences to encourage engagement and discovery, reach out to the isolated and support integration of existing and new communities.

5

Sustainable in practice
Manage cultural production to have minimal impact on the environment, leading to lasting environmental benefits. Delivery through the careful and innovative use of natural resources.

6

Build for the future
Legacy for our work will be at the forefront of all we do, developing a sustainable future for the Royal Docks as a world-class cultural quarter.

Framework and governance

Making it happen needs concerted action through:

- Consultation
With the communities who have a stake in the area's future, inviting review and feedback to cement the ambition.

Engagement
With landowners, property developers and major business stakeholders, establishing goals and frameworks to take the strategy further.

Research
That will support opportunities, from spatial analysis to the water activation and public art strategy.
- Evaluation
Though capturing, measuring and evaluating impact and measuring performance against Royal Docks Success Framework

Business planning
That assesses and prioritises strategic opportunities, rationalising investment with a view to a long-term legacy.

Monitoring and reviewing
Our progress against defined targets and measured against process and delivery outputs and outcomes within The Royal Dock's Success Framework.

The boards

The three boards oversee the work of the Royal Docks Team

- The London Economic Action Partnership (LEAP)
The London Economic Action Partnership, chaired by the Mayor of London, works with entrepreneurs, business, and London councils to boost jobs and economic growth. The LEAP provides strategic oversight for the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone.

Royal Docks Enterprise Zone Board
The Royal Docks Enterprise Zone Board, co-chaired by the Mayor of Newham, oversees the progress of the Royal Docks Enterprise Zone Delivery Plan reporting to the LEAP.
- Royal Docks Officer Level Programme Board
Greater London Authority and London Borough of Newham officers meet bi-monthly to receive updates on the project and endorse lower level funding decisions.

Stakeholder engagement

Structures which exist and to be established include:

- The Royal Docks Networking Forum
The Royal Docks Networking Forum is a key mechanism for the Royal Dock's Team to formally engage partners and to update key stakeholders on activities being undertaken.

Cultural network
An active localised network is planned to support the cultural ecosystem through capacity building, networking, partnership and collaboration.
- Cultural Connectors and Programme Panel
Cultural Connectors will be a local group open to all interested in culture and the arts to support and get involved in the cultural programme. The Programme Panel, made up of Cultural Connectors and artists will participate in programming decisions and exploring new creative ideas.

Credits

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Additional material: Jonathan Holloway
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