

MAYOR OF LONDON

Marina Ahmad AM

Chair
London Assembly Economy Committee
C/o jack.booth@london.gov.uk

Our ref: MGLA270423-5880

Date: 9 August 2023

Dear Marina,

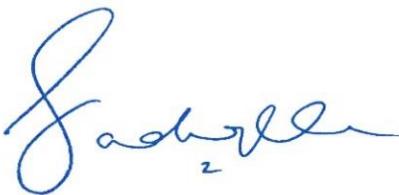
Thank you for the London Assembly's work on the recent 'Culture Off the Beaten Track' report.

Culture makes a difference to our lives and to the success of our city. At the grassroots, cultural organisations bring communities together and provide vital platforms for artists. As the Committee has noted in its report, smaller cultural organisations face many challenges, such as the development of networks and partnerships, to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

As Mayor, I have made supporting grassroots culture a clear priority – from new London Plan policies to getting crisis funding out to those most at risk during the pandemic. I want to create the conditions that enable the grassroots to thrive in the heart of our communities.

I thank you for the recommendations in the report. I have provided you with a response to each recommendation in the annex below.

Yours sincerely,



Sadiq Khan
Mayor of London

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Annex

Mayor of London's response to the recommendations of the London Assembly Economy Committee's report 'Culture off the Beaten Track'

Recommendation 1

The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should initiate the convening of a network of grassroots cultural organisations. This network should provide a space for organisations to develop connections, share experiences and explore opportunities for partnership working.

The Mayor runs a Skills Forum that brings together grassroots cultural and community-led organisations, led by the Culture and Community Spaces at Risk programme. The purpose of the Skills Forum is to build capacity and to create new partnerships between grassroots organisations. Up to 30 organisations at a time are invited to a series of workshops to network and share knowledge on ways to safeguard their spaces. Workshops include: engaging your local authority; effectively navigating the planning system; alternative business models; and reimagining governance.

The Mayor's Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm programmed a season of heritage trails, tours and events that celebrate the breadth of different cultural histories in London. It has now become a network of grassroots heritage practitioners. This network is now influencing other programmes, including this year's London Festival of Architecture.

Brent built and supported an Artist Network, made up of local artists and grassroots organisations for their year as London Borough of Culture – and are working to grow and develop this as part of their legacy.

Recommendation 2

The Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, and London & Partners should consult with London's grassroots cultural organisations on how best to include them in GLA initiatives to promote London's cultural sector, including through the Let's Do London campaign. This must include organisations outside central London.

The Mayor's 'Let's Do London' campaign 2021-22 supported recovery and attracted 850,000 domestic and international audiences back to the capital. Over 1,700 organisations and creative freelancers were involved in the programme, including organisations outside of central London, such as Battersea Arts Centre, Breakin' Convention, Play London and Tara Theatre.

The Mayor's Londoner focused 'Love London' campaign also promoted free and affordable events in London over the summer, autumn and winter last year and continued to do so into this year. A partnership with Art Fund offered a discounted three-month National Art Pass to visit grassroots museums and galleries across London. It also featured 'London Unseen' walking trails, incredible city histories as told by grassroots cultural organisations, communities and artists. This included events led by local organisations, including Bromley Library Lates, Hackney Flea Market, Crystal Palace International Film Festival, Hackney Museum and the London Short Film Festival 2023.

Untold Stories, a £1m fund that forms part of the Mayor's Commission for Diversity in the Public Realm, exclusively funded grassroots organisations, supporting over 70 projects that sought to diversify the stories told in London's public spaces. The Commission is also supporting 30 grassroots/independent community heritage practitioners to develop their work, deliver a free

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programme of walks and tours and form a robust network via the Mayor's London Unseen programme.

The Mayor's London Borough of Culture programme engages Londoners in creativity on their doorstep, prioritising work designed and led by local grassroots organisations, empowering communities and contributing to the increased health and wellbeing of residents. Over 2,200 artistic partners have been involved in the programme since its inception in 2017. London and Partners has helped to promote the grassroots activity programmed as part of London Borough of Culture.

Recommendation 3

When the Mayor next appoints members to the Cultural Leadership Board, he should prioritise appointing members from London's grassroots cultural organisations.

The Mayor's Cultural Leadership Board represents the spectrum of organisations and businesses that make up London's thriving cultural sector. Ahead of the last recruitment drive in 2022, an assessment was made of the board's current make-up, which identified experience of delivering grassroots and community-based arts and culture, especially to younger people, as one of three priorities to increase.

In addition, applications were encouraged from voices currently underrepresented on the Board, including the d/Deaf disabled community and those from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups. 122 applications were received, of which 21 were interviewed. Nine candidates were shortlisted for their strong grassroots and community experience. The shortlist also included nine candidates who qualified for interview under the Greater London Authority's (GLA) Guaranteed Interview Scheme.

All five new appointees brought strong grassroots experience. Biographies of [the Mayor's Cultural Leadership Board](#) can be found on the Board's webpage.

Recommendation 4

The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should lobby the Government to ensure that London's grassroots cultural organisations do not lose out as part of the redistribution of Arts Council England funding away from London, and to ensure that funding is distributed equitably to grassroots cultural organisations in London.

London's arts sector is now facing £56m worth of cuts over the next three years at a time when arts organisations already face a triple whammy of spiralling operating costs, soaring energy bills, and the impact of both the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis on audience figures.

The Mayor has met with the government, where he called on them to stop pulling support away from the capital – a false economy – as London is the engine of the UK's creative economy, contributing £13bn per year to the treasury in tax, which benefits the rest of the UK. He recently commissioned an economic report that explored the impact of the government's Levelling Up agenda on London, which will support future lobbying.

The Mayor's Culture and Community Spaces at Risk programme regularly surveys its database of nearly 1,400 cultural and community-led organisations to understand how factors such as

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government funding, the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis are impacting their sustainability. This data is then used to inform lobbying positions to the government to advocate for the support needed to ensure that these vital spaces can continue to operate in London.

The Mayor has repeatedly lobbied the government in writing and in person to reiterate his position that the redistribution of arts funding outside London is a devastating blow to the creative sector. The Mayor will continue to lobby the government on this issue.

Recommendation 5

The Mayor should extend the Culture at Risk Business Support Fund, and ensure that its new iteration is focused on helping organisations to remain on a sustainable financial footing, rather than addressing crises in the sector as they arise.

To help organisations improve their sustainability, previous funds such as the £2.3m Culture at Risk Business Support Fund, and the £750K for Community Spaces at Risk Fund, combined small strategic grants with in-depth business support to support organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns.

The Mayor's Culture and Community Spaces at Risk programme continues to take on extensive casework with the aim of moving organisations away from crisis and towards sustainability, learning from this work. For example, in response to the Arts Council England recently moving funding away from London, officers have developed financial resilience workshops specifically aimed at providing organisations with tools and data to diversify their income models to become more sustainable and respond to the additional pressures resulting from the cost-of-living crisis and continued rent increases.

Recommendation 6

As part of their work with a network of grassroots cultural organisations, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should consider how to provide support to these organisations in applying for funding from Arts Council England and other funding sources, and, in response to this report, should set out how they intend to do so.

The Mayor's Culture and Community Spaces at Risk Programme provides ongoing fundraising support to grassroots organisations. During the COVID-19 crisis, this was targeted at diverse-led grassroots organisations which were applying for emergency funding from Arts Council England. The programme also supported small diverse-led organisations applying for the Arts Council's National Portfolio Organisation funding, with fundraising support through workshops and one-to-one advice.

Recommendation 7

The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should take action to make available more permanent, affordable premises for grassroots cultural organisations. This should involve using the Mayor's planning powers to support small cultural organisations to access space in appropriate locations, not just on the high street, and providing advice and support to the organisations themselves.

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It is crucial that the capital's planning system enables cultural infrastructure to thrive. That is why the Mayor's London Plan is the most pro-cultural planning framework in the city's history, with specific policies aimed at protecting pubs and grassroots venues e.g. the Agent of Change principle and creative workspaces through Creative Enterprise Zones.

The Mayor's Culture and Community Spaces at Risk programme is the only GLA programme that focuses on safeguarding existing spaces across London, protecting their social and economic value. It occupies the vital, unique position of having a pan-London overview of the issues, risks and opportunities facing culture and community infrastructure.

Officers work strategically to support the development of new cultural space that is needed for London. They work with a range of organisations and particularly support projects that are led by or serve diverse communities, contribute to reducing carbon, represent specific types of infrastructure at risk in London, are innovative, or provide a new type of space that London needs.

The GLA manages a Space Register, where organisations can sign up for support in securing space. They are helped with advice and guidance, connecting operators with developers looking for tenants. The register was developed following a successful pilot, which included (i) the placement of grassroots organisation Queercircle into the Greenwich Design District at affordable rent, (ii) Supported Populo Living with tendering a 25-year affordable workspace lease that has been offered to a London studio provider, (iii) SET studios obtaining space with Landsec and, (iv) Chisenhale Arts supported with board and site development to secure their sustainability on site in the long term.

Officers are also piloting a Making Space for Culture Development Grant, which offers around three to four micro grants per year. These aim to support organisations to take on space, search for space or engage services that might develop their existing space. Some of the first grants have provided funding to grassroots organisations such as Intermission Youth Theatre, which transforms the lives of disadvantaged young people through Shakespeare.

Planning mechanisms can help to achieve more space for grassroots organisations. The Mayor's Culture Unit supports planning negotiations for referable applications to secure cultural space and supports cultural organisations with planning negotiations, for example with Section 106 Agreements. The team seeks to upskill planning and development professionals through toolkits and professional development. This activity sits alongside the Mayor's wider Good Growth by Design programme. For example, a Practice Note was produced, which sets out how to use Section 106 and other planning tools to achieve cultural space. It is worth noting that the government has, over the last two years, signalled some planning reform which, if progressed, would likely have an impact on the Mayor's ability to support such deals, so this continues to be a risk area for London's grassroots venues.

Additionally, officials have supported the development of local policy and tools that lead to new cultural spaces, for example, the Peabody Thamesmead Cultural Infrastructure Plan, Walthamstow Cultural Infrastructure Plan and the developing Ealing Cultural Infrastructure Plan.

Recommendation 8

As part of their work with a network of grassroots cultural organisations, the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should prioritise initiatives that promote diversity across the sector, including in relation to social class. This should start by exploring best practice from those grassroots organisations with a successful track record of growing diverse workforces and audiences.

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The Mayor's Culture Unit is running several pilot initiatives that are investing in a diverse creative workforce for the future. For example, in May, the Mayor launched 'Unpacking the Credits', a new programme of films, workshops and resources for young Londoners from all backgrounds to consider a future career in the capital's creative industries. The films showcase jobs in visual effects, publishing, theatre/stage productions, music, architecture, and design. The education resources include 12 lesson plans for teachers, parents, carers and guardians and will be distributed to secondary schools and education institutions across all of London's boroughs. It partners with HBO, Sony Music, Bloomsbury Publishing, Disney Theatre's The Lion King, Grimshaw Foundation and Yinka Ilori.

Another example is the Creative JobCentre pilot, which is testing the medium and long-term effectiveness of developing employment pathways between creative industry employers and JobCentres. It also provides a training programme that helps the progression from middle management to senior management for people from BAME groups.

Recommendation 9

The Mayor's creative academy hubs should work with grassroots cultural organisations in developing training courses, to ensure that they are addressing the skills needs of the sector. The hubs should also work with these organisations to ensure that they are benefiting from the apprenticeships and work placements being created.

The Mayor's Creative Academy works with organisations of all sizes in the screen sectors, including small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), to ensure that existing training courses are fit for purpose for the needs of the industry and to develop new training courses that are bespoke where necessary. The purpose of the Academy programme is to join up training providers with the industry so that the employers who are informing adjustments to the courses are benefiting from the apprenticeships and work placements. This also benefits the learners through greater choice and opportunities. The Mayor's Creative Academies will continue to respond to employers' skills needs at all levels, from grassroots to big companies, and make the connections with training providers needed to get the next generation of creatives into industry jobs.

Recommendation 10

The Mayor should promote his Good Work Standard to organisations within London's cultural sector. In response to this report, the Mayor should inform the Committee about the action he has taken to promote the Good Work Standard within the sector and to encourage cultural organisations to sign up to it.

The Mayor will continue to work hard to support these vital organisations as we build a better and fairer London for everyone following the pandemic and ongoing challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. The GLA is on the steering group for the Creative Industries subgroup of the Making London a Living Wage City Campaign. This group will be seeking to increase the number of organisations paying the real Living Wage across the city by engaging with key employers across the creative industries. The Mayor has also given support to Creative UK's Redesigning Freelancing work which will support the Good Work standard for the huge number of freelancers in the creative industries workforce.