

GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD2782

World Cities Culture Forum Leadership Exchange Programme 2026-27

Programme: Supporting Community, Cultural and Sporting Events in London

Executive summary:

The Supporting Community, Cultural and Sporting Events in London programme delivery plan sets out the scope of the World Cities Culture Forum (WCCF) project. This includes showcasing London projects on an international stage, including through cultural exchanges.

London successfully bid for funding to participate in five cultural exchanges in 2026-27. This is part of the WCCF Leadership Exchange Programme: a cultural exchange programme, and part of the WCCF project. This decision seeks approval to:

- accept up to £25,000 in funding
- spend this funding on the costs of participating in the cultural exchange programme.

Decision:

That the Executive Director Strategy and Communications approves:

- receiving up to £25,000 from World Cities Culture Forum Ltd (WCCF)
- spending the same in 2025-26 and 2026-27, to cover the costs of participating in the WCCF Leadership Exchange Programme.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Chandru Dissanayeke

Position: Executive Director Strategy and Communications



Signature:

Date: 19 January 2026

PART I – NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The World Cities Culture Forum (WCCF) annual programme was approved under cover of MD3417.
- 1.2. Annex 2 of MD3392 sets out the scope of the WCCF project (at paragraph 2.3). This includes showcasing London projects on an international stage, including through cultural exchanges.
- 1.3. To this end, London successfully bid for funding to participate in five cultural exchanges in 2026-27, as part of the WCCF Leadership Exchange Programme (LEP). London will host international delegates for a two-way city exchange with Barcelona. The city will also contribute, as a participant, to four other exchanges, hosted in different countries or online. Details of these are outlined in paragraphs 2.4 to 2.8, below.
- 1.4. Participation and hosting costs will be fully funded by the WCCF, with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies. In accordance with the delegation provided in MD3392 Delivery Plan – Supporting community, cultural and sporting events in London (at Decision 4 and paragraph 1.16), this decision seeks approval to accept up to £25,000; and spend the same on hosting costs, transport, accommodation and subsistence during the exchanges.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

- 2.1. The LEP launched in 2018, and is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies. It has delivered 11 exchanges, involving 22 cities and more than 185 participants. The programme gives city leaders, meeting at the annual World Cities Culture Summit, the opportunity to:
 - focus on specific challenges commonly faced by multiple cities across the network
 - share expertise and in-depth knowledge on a particular policy area.
- 2.2. London successfully took part in six exchanges between 2018 and 2023. Learnings included how to grow affordable creative space; and mapping cultural infrastructure in multi-city exchanges, which has had a big impact on the work of our Making Space for Culture team. Our new ReStage project is a result of learning how culture is helping drive zero-waste cities in New York. We hosted Buenos Aires, who learned about our London Borough of Culture project; this helped create the city's Barrios Creativos programme. New York was so inspired by visiting London, and learning about our Culture and Community Spaces at Risk programme, that it set up its own Culture at Risk Office the following year.
- 2.3. The LEP helps cities grow in confidence and ambition. It accelerates learning, and leads to new projects and policies being scaled in cities around the world. Below is a list of projects involving London, that have been awarded funding for the 2026-27 LEP.

How to pedestrianise the high street

- 2.4. With London's emblematic Oxford Street potentially set to become vehicle-free, this two-way exchange draws on Barcelona's existing experiences, including pedestrianising La Rambla. This will allow us to examine how best to transform major streets into walkable, viable and vibrant cultural destinations. As part of this exchange, London will host a delegation from Barcelona.

How to build a resilient night-time economy

- 2.5. This exchange will focus on approaches and collaboration to build a future-proof, inclusive night-time economy – one that places culture at the heart of a thriving 24-hour city. Participating cities include Amsterdam, Cologne, Dubai, Guangzhou, London, San Francisco, Stockholm and Toronto.

How to develop the silver economy

- 2.6. Participants from Guangzhou and London will deep-dive into the role culture plays in boosting the silver economy's potential, in a way that enhances quality of life for older adults. This work will drive resilient, age-friendly cities.

How to rethink commemoration in urban spaces

- 2.7. Amidst complex legacies of war, colonialism, migration and social justice, this exchange explores how cities navigate commemoration in public spaces; and how to represent conflicting narratives in the urban landscape. It will include representatives from Amsterdam, London, New York, Kyiv and Warsaw.

How to grow a successful film city

- 2.8. This exchange will explore strategies to foster collaboration and resilience between major film cities with shared industry challenges – from writers' strikes to emerging technologies, and growing global competition. This exchange will take place online over several sessions and will include participants from London, Los Angeles, New York, Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver.

3. Equality comments

- 3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Mayor and the GLA are subject to the public sector equality duty and must have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3.2. The LEP is delivered in line with the WCCF's Equality, Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policy. The programme operates a fair and transparent process, including oversight by an international jury that reflects the diversity of a global network. The programme also:
- encourages participation from representatives who reflect the diverse skill sets of city partners
 - fosters equitable relations, through structured collaboration and peer learning between participants from a wide range of cultures and lived experience.
- 3.3. The projects outlined in this decision will lead to opportunities that offer London social and economic benefits, in the following areas:
- the pedestrianisation of Oxford Street
 - the 24-hour economy
 - the health and wellbeing of older people, and creating an age-friendly city
 - representation, in public spaces, of Black people and their histories

- the resilience of the film economy – this work includes making the industry more diverse.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1. The project is part of the Mayor's Supporting Community, Cultural and Sporting Events in London Delivery Plan. It also relates to the following Mayoral policies:
 - Culture for All Londoners, the Mayor's landmark strategy for culture
 - A Vision for London as a 24-Hour City, the Mayor's strategy for nightlife in London
 - the London Growth Plan
 - Inclusive London, the Mayor's EDI Strategy
 - the London Plan.
- 4.2. All participation costs and activities will be tailored to funding amount awarded by the WCCF. This will mitigate any risk of overspend. The funding proposal to the WCCF included a contingency budget, to cover currency fluctuations.
- 4.3. There are no conflicts of interest to note for any of the officers involved in the drafting or clearance of this decision form.

5. Financial comments

- 5.1. Approval is requested to receive up to £25,000 from WCCF; and to spend the same on participation in the LEP. Receipt and expenditure will occur in 2025-26 and 2026-27.
- 5.2. All appropriate budget adjustments will be made.

6. Legal comments

- 6.1. The foregoing sections of this report indicate that the decisions sought concern the exercise of the GLA's general powers, falling within the GLA's statutory powers to do such things considered to further, or that are facilitative of, or conducive or incidental to, the promotion of social and economic development and wealth creation in Greater London. In formulating the proposals in respect of which a decision is sought, officers must comply with the GLA's related statutory duties to:
 - pay due regard to the principle that there should be equality of opportunity for all people
 - consider how the proposals will promote the improvement of health of persons, health inequalities between persons and to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development in the UK
 - consult with appropriate bodies.
- 6.2. In taking any decisions sought, the Director must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty – namely the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010; and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (race, disability, sex, age, sexual orientation, religion, gender reassignment) and persons who do not (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). To this end, the Director should have particular regard to section 3 (above) of this report.

- 6.3. The legal comments provided at paragraph 6.9 of MD3392 apply to this decision and related activity. Accordingly, officers must ensure that they are observed.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 7.1. It is expected that the project will follow the timeline outlined below.

Activity	Timeline
Receipt of grant funding (in stages)	January – August 2026
Participating in exchanges	April 2026 to March 2027
Hosting Barcelona delegation in London	Q2 2026-27
Final evaluation	June 2027

Appendices and supporting papers: None

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will be published either within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Strategic Programmes

Does this decision seek approval for activity falling within the remit of a programme delivery plan? YES

If YES, which programme/s does this fall within: Supporting Community, Cultural and Sporting Events in London

Part 1 – Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under the FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to confirm the following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Jacqueline Rose has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Shonagh Manson has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

Mayoral Delivery Board

A summary of this decision was reviewed by the Mayoral Delivery Board on 19 January 2026

✓

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Fay Hannan

Signature:

Date: 19 January 2026