

# Culture off the Beaten Track Report

Liberty Deptford Festival

## Key information

Publication type: General

Publication date: Thursday 27 April 2023

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## 1. Culture off the Beaten Track Report

The **London Assembly Economy Committee** is warning that small cultural organisations struggle to access long-term or affordable leases in London, with some having to move between various locations – restricting their ability to plan for the long term.

The arts and culture sector was severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and endured significant losses as a result. This is now being exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, which is a major concern for small cultural venues.

‘Culture off the beaten track’ refers to cultural organisations such as small museums, galleries, theatres and music venues, particularly those located outside of London’s Central Activities Zone.

This form of culture is often rooted in local communities and is distinct from the globally famous cultural institutions that are mostly located in central London.

Grassroots culture is integral to the success of London and the UK’s creative industries, as it can be where emerging artists, musicians and actors start their careers. However, a **report** published by the Committee raises concerns about the challenges facing the sector, including:

- Many small cultural organisations struggle to access long-term or affordable leases in London, with some having to move between various locations in London. This restricts their ability to plan for the long term.
- Small cultural organisations do not have large resources to dedicate to marketing and promotion and those located outside central London did not benefit from the Let’s Do London campaign, which focussed on the Central Activities Zone.
- Most organisations who gave evidence to the Committee had not had any interaction with the Deputy Mayor for Culture and the Creative Industries. Most had not interacted with the Mayor’s Cultural Leadership Board.

- The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should play a greater role in bringing small cultural organisations together, enabling these groups to network, share experiences and explore opportunities for partnership working.

The Vagina Museum, a venue that gave evidence to the Committee during a roundtable of cultural organisations, has had to leave its premises in Bethnal Green and is now the process of looking for a new home.

This is the second time that the Vagina Museum has had to find a new building to operate from, having been evicted from its previous site in Camden in 2021. This highlights the challenges that small cultural organisations face in finding affordable, long-term premises.

The report makes **10** recommendations in several key areas, including:

- The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should take action to make available more permanent, affordable premises for small cultural organisations. This should involve using planning powers to support these organisations to access space in appropriate locations, not just on the high street, and providing advice and support to the organisations themselves.
- The Mayor and the Deputy Mayor should initiate the convening of a network of grassroots cultural organisations.
- The Mayor, the Deputy Mayor, and London & Partners should consult with London's grassroots cultural organisations on how best to include them in Greater London Authority (GLA) initiatives to promote London's cultural sector.
- 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.

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