

GREATERLONDONAUTHORITY

Guidance for filming

Trafalgar Square, one of the world's most famous landmarks, may be just what you need for your next film location. The Square has been increasingly used for filming and documentaries and has established itself as film friendly location from small to major film shoots.

There have been several iconic characters filmed on the space including all three incarnations of the contemporary Sherlock Holmes from Benedict Cumberbatch in 'Sherlock' and Jonny Lee Miller in 'Elementary' to Robert Downey Jr in 'Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows'. In recent years we have seen the James Bond franchise liaise with the GLA to utilise the square as an establishing backdrop for London in both 'Skyfall' and 'Spectre'. We've also seen period recreations with 'A Royal Night Out' set during the 1945 VE night celebrations to contemporary action sequences with a bank heist escape for 'The Sweeney'.

Several science fiction and fantasy features have also used the space for transformative major sequences including 'V for Vendetta', '28 Weeks Later' and 'Captain America: The First Avenger'. In 'Night at the Museum: Secret of the Tomb' the world-famous lions on Nelson's Column came to life in a special effects chase sequence across the capital. The most spectacular productions included the landing of a helicopter on the square in the Tom Cruise feature 'Edge of Tomorrow' and the appearance of Matt Smith and the Tardis in the space in the Dr Who 50th Anniversary episode 'Day of the Doctor'.

The location has also been used by many UK and US television productions including 'Spooks', 'Hustle', 'Ugly Betty' and 'Legends' to efficiently establish scenes set in the heart of London.

All of this has been possible because of a dedicated and experienced team working closely with productions to fully realise the individual requirements of each shoot.

The Mayor's partnership with Film London

The GLA has worked hard to make the Square a film-friendly location as part of its overall strategy to support Film London and film makers working in the capital. London is a global centre for film and the filming that takes place on the Square provides world-wide audiences with iconic images of the capital.

As part of this support the GLA works closely with Film London and has signed up to the Location Filming in London [Code of Practice](#) (external website).

GLA Events and Lettings Team

All film requests are dealt with through a one-stop point of contact in the GLA's Events and Lettings Team. As well as high profile and complex film shoots, the team have worked on smaller film shoots for drama, documentaries and commercials and we are happy to discuss all applications to see what can be achieved.

Application process

Permission must be sought in advance for filming in Trafalgar Square. The first step is to contact the GLA (020 7983 4750) trafalgar.square@london.gov.uk to discuss dates and availability.

You should then complete and submit the relevant forms.

The GLA assess completed filming applications via the following steps:

- Availability confirmation and initial assessment of scale and any issues around public access for the shoot.
- Application form should then be sent to secure the requested time/date.
- Assessment by the GLA regarding application and plans submitted and confirmation of date requested and the agreed fee for the use of the square based on plans.
- When plans have been agreed by the GLA the filming is signed off and an authorisation letter is issued.
- Production company agrees to the terms and conditions set out in the letter and returns a signed copy to the GLA.
- Feedback from or to the GLA on any issues after the shoot is completed in the form of a debrief email.

Filming - practical guidance

Risk assessments and method statements:

For any activities which may be considered a risk to the public and those attending, there is a requirement for method statements and risk assessments. Activities can include stunts, effects or the use of camera cranes. A site specific COVID-19 risk assessment in line with Film London's Code of Practice will also be required.

Closure and management of the square:

To close any part of the square the GLA require site plans detailing areas for potential closure along with stewarding and barrier/hazard tape plans.

Byelaws and safety on the space:

There are byelaws in place on the square and written permission is required for any elements contained in the byelaws for filming/photography. A copy of the byelaws is contained in the application forms.

For any activities that may relate to the pigeons, fountains and Nelson's Column please provide detailed information on the proposal. There is a byelaw in place restricting the feeding of pigeons and the GLA instructs members of the public not to enter the fountains or climb on the lions or Nelson's Column for reasons of safety.

Sound levels:

If your production includes any playback material for the shoot such as music for a dance sequence, then please liaise with the GLA to assess. You must ensure that the LAeq (5 min) noise level does not exceed 79dB one metre from the nearest affected neighbouring buildings façade as determined by the GLA under the Premise License conditions for the Square.

High profile attendees and facilities:

If the production has high profile cast members the GLA will need to assess any crowd safety issues resulting from their attendance. If a production requires any cast trailers on site, the GLA needs to assess this alongside parking of any other essential vehicles for the production. Other options include hiring rooms in either hotels and bars very close to the Square and the GLA can provide contact details.

Children:

If any children are involved in the production on the square clearance must be given by the GLA and they must be supervised at all times by a parent or guardian or by registered supervisors. Any filming involving the employment of and performance by children (whether paid or unpaid) must be cleared through the Westminster City Council's Education Welfare Service and a performance license must be obtained. It is advisable to use children whose parents/guardians have given prior permission and signed a release form and have also been cleared through Westminster City Council Education Welfare Service.

Animals:

For any productions that involve the use of domestic animals or working animals' information must be provided to the GLA for assessment. Westminster City Council Environmental Health must be informed, and vet certificates provided.

With regards to the use of exotic animals it is unlikely that the GLA can grant permission under its policies on animal welfare.

Staging and infrastructure:

Any requests for vehicles, camera cranes, jimmy jibs, track way and cable to be placed on the square needs to be assessed by the GLA to ensure that the protection of the grade listed area, public access and safety of the public is not compromised.

Protection of the stonework is required, and the use of plywood or rubber matting is preferred where any infrastructure is in danger of marking or damaging the stonework. There is a 4-ton point load limit on Trafalgar Square and for all vehicles and camera cranes weight loading information is required for the Team to assess and grant approval.

If your event proposal includes a screen stage or any built infrastructure (such as an installation) on Trafalgar Square, the GLA will have to clear any infrastructure with regards to weight loading limits on Trafalgar Square.

Any infrastructure over one metre in height that is built on the square requires comment or clearance from Westminster City Council (WCC) Building Control and they may need to clear the infrastructure as a temporary structure.

If any staging or screens/cranes are truck mounted and pre-built, then this type of infrastructure does not require Westminster City Council Building Control clearance.

To check if your infrastructure needs temporary structure clearance please visit the Westminster website or call Westminster Building Control on 020 7641 7078. Westminster City Council usually requires four weeks' notice of any applications to install a structure on Trafalgar Square. The GLA will require a copy of written confirmation from Westminster City Council that the stage/infrastructure is cleared for installation on Trafalgar Square.

North Terrace:

The GLA gives permission for use of the main part of the square and Westminster City Council gives permission for use of the North Terrace outside the National Gallery. As you would expect, we work together on larger shoots that cover both areas. Please click on the site plan back on our webpage to see the areas managed by the GLA and Westminster City Council (WCC).

Fees and charges:

The basic fee for filming and photography on Trafalgar Square is £1000 (+VAT) per hour and is charged from arrival to departure from the square and on an hourly basis. This fee allows applicants exclusive use of the square for the agreed period and means that no other activities are authorised to take place during that time. A reduced rate is available for charities, students and some other smaller activities. The Heritage Wardens are on site 24 hours a day and contractor support is available on the square during general working hours which can include access to power, wet downs and cleaning on the square at an additional cost. Large film shoots will need to be discussed in detail as early as possible with the GLA.

Cancellation process:

There is a cancellation process and fee structure for filming, this is dependent on how close a cancellation is to the agreed date and whether time has been spent by the GLA on assessment of the application. Further information is included in the terms and conditions for the use of the square contained in the application form.

Public Liability Insurance:

A copy of Public Liability Insurance is required for the use of the square and the minimum requirement is £5 million cover value. For large scale or complex shoots £10 million cover value may be required and will be confirmed by the GLA during assessment of the application.

Copyright and waiver agreements:

With regards to copyright of any images produced on or of Trafalgar Square the GLA does not or will not request revenues from the broadcast or publication of any material filmed or photographed on the square by applicants.

GLA representatives are not permitted to sign any waivers or agreements with regards to the use of filming or photography on the square. The GLA grants permission to applicants to have an activity on the Square for the time agreed with the GLA.

Availability:

Mondays to Fridays are often ideal times for filming and photography due to the large number of events on the space at weekends and bank holidays. The quietest period on the Square during the day is in the morning if a shoot requires greater control of the space and the control of the public in the frame.

Sustainability :

The GLA aim to make all our events as sustainable as we can. In the run up to the London 2012 Games, we achieved the BS8901 standard in sustainable events.

City Hall's Events for London and Facilities Management teams are working to a standard that meets the requirements of ISO20121. This standard has been designed to help organisations make their events - and related activities, products and services - as sustainable as possible.

All City Hall events are delivered in line with our [GLA Events Sustainability Policy](#), which commits to:

1. Use energy efficiently and reduce carbon emissions from energy consumption
2. Reduce waste
3. Reduce the environmental impact of transport use
4. Support and promote the GLA Food Strategy
5. Promote and encourage diversity and inclusion
6. Respect and preserve our national heritage
7. Encourage the London Living Wage

These objectives set out how our events will help support mayoral strategy across a wide range of issues affecting London and help create a sustainable legacy.

We believe that these objectives also complement and support our duty to ensure that Trafalgar Square and Parliament Square is preserved as a vibrant public events space for future generations.

More information can be found within the GLA [Event Sustainability Policy](#)

Facilities at Trafalgar Square :

Heritage Wardens on site 24/7:

There are Heritage Wardens on site 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Wardens are key ambassadors on the Square, providing public information and ensuring public safety. They also act as a key contact for your shoot whilst on site and can provide advice on public access and act as a liaison between the other contractors located on the square.

Café/catering:

One of Trafalgar Square's best kept secrets is the café on the square, which has been designed to be an integral part of the Square and provides visitors with an intimate venue to enjoy a drink and snack in London's most famous public space. The GLA can put you in touch with the café management to discuss catering opportunities for your cast and crew also and confirm costs and rates for your production. This is especially useful for shoots with either a large crew or number of extras as the café provides food and drink on site.

If a production needs to bring a catering facility for cast and crew on site, they should liaise with the GLA to assess. [Note: the café is closed until further notice]

Public toilets:

There are public toilet facilities on site open from 9am to 8pm every day on the Square. These hours can be extended for early morning shoots at a cost, making it easier and cheaper for you with regards to toilet provision for larger shoots. [Note: due to enhanced cleaning schedule, the toilets are operating reduced hours and close for deep clean throughout the day.]

Power access:

Trafalgar Square has access to power on the Square, please contact the team for a site map detailing power specifications and location of power on the Square.

Water access and wet downs:

During contractor hours the GLA can provide access to water standpipes and provide wet downs on the space saving on the need to bring water bowsers with the production. This access is dependent on any government policies on water conservation such as hosepipe bans.

Fountains:

The fountains are in operation every day from approximately 8.30am to 11pm barring any maintenance that may be required. Our engineers are on site from 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday and four hours per morning at the weekend. The engineers can control the fountains and switch on and off at the touch of a button if needed. The fountains are interconnected and can only be switched off at the same time and not independently of each other. The GLA does not permit colouring or other chemical changes/additions to the water content of the fountains for environmental and safety reasons.

Parking:

There is limited parking available on site located on the South West corner of Trafalgar Square in exceptional circumstances for essential vehicles only. Other vehicles must park elsewhere and bring equipment to and from the space.

Feedback from film-makers

'We filmed a sequence on Trafalgar Square last summer as part of the London-based shoot for 'Get Him To The Greek'. Our application was received with an exceptional degree of pro-active positivity from the outset. However, I could not avoid a degree of nerves once it became apparent that our shoot – featuring Russell Brand – was to take place on a Friday evening. The shoot went off beautifully. We were able to both park and light on the square, marshal the public, and control the lighting effects on the fountains, all alongside the Anthony Gormley 'One and Only' living art installation on the 4th Plinth, and it was a delight to be able to include such a landmark location within our film as, inevitably, film-makers will hope to use it as a central motif long into the future. Many thanks to the team for all their hard work and enthusiasm.' Alex Gladstone, Location Manager

'I was fantastically impressed and grateful for the magnificent level of cooperation that we received from the Squares Management Team at the GLA with regard to our recent filming on Trafalgar Square for St Trinian's.

They assessed all our requests, some of which were slightly bizarre, with a positiveness and enthusiasm that was refreshing as well as helpful. The Heritage Wardens on the day were also fantastic.

It is important that filmmakers can feel confident in the reception that they will receive from the authorities that administer major London landmarks. Often these are the very reason that international filmmakers come to London to make their films which contribute so much to the indigenous film industry of the country and therefore to the economy as a whole. Trafalgar Square is certainly a landmark that welcomes film-makers and I look forward to filming there again.' Pat Karam, Location Manager