

Watermans Relocation Statement: February 2020

Background:

For over 35 years, Watermans has been providing a year-round programme of independent cinema, theatre, comedy, cabaret, exhibitions, workshops, festivals and more. We operate as a registered charity and social enterprise and any money we make is ploughed back into the community.

We now have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make a step change in what we can offer: to create an inspiring artistic and social hub for West London, with Brentford at its beating heart. The proposals for Watermans' relocation are not simply about a new building but about the kind of arts and creative scene we want in this area for the future.

The opportunity is to deliver a world-class arts centre that will put Brentford on the cultural map, ignite its economy and inspire its residents, as well as the visitors we attract from around West London. We have a vision for a venue that will simultaneously present an inspiring high-quality artistic programme, and be Brentford's living room, a community hub underpinned by Watermans' continuing ethos of inclusivity, diversity, humanity and a welcome to all.

But we don't simply want to transpose what we do in our current building into a new one. We want people to be inspired the moment they walk through our doors while feeling welcomed and at home. We want them to have an experience that they want to talk about. To do this the building must provide:

- A theatre suitable for world-class touring theatre, circus, live music and dance
- Two cinemas and a larger gallery to enable film festivals, live screenings and larger-scale exhibitions attracting top artists
- Social spaces for people to meet and relax, with fresh and exciting food and drink

And finally, we want a Watermans that will be financially self-sufficient so that we can provide our services for many years to come, and continue to operate as a social enterprise meaning that every penny is put back into the community.

Update on Progress

Watermans has been in discussions with the developer London Green and Hounslow Council, looking at a plan that would see our current site sold and redeveloped as flats in order to pay for our relocation to a state of the art new centre on the site of the old Police Station in Brentford town centre. This plan has been approved by the Council. However, it has been called in for review by the Secretary of State due to challenges by Historic Royal Palaces regarding the height of the flats planned on our current site. We expect this to be decided by the Secretary of State by the end of 2020.

If planning is approved at this stage, then Watermans will continue to work with the developer and council to agree the details of a deal. Only at a time when Watermans' Board is content that all its criteria - for a sustainable and exciting arts centre that meets the community's needs - have been met will a time frame be agreed on with the developer and council for Watermans to close and re-open on its new site. In the meantime, we are committed to building up our theatre programme

through our Friday Nights Live programme, investing in our current building - for example refurbishing the cinema seating, and growing our audiences across our whole programme.