



## Watermans Relocation Statement: April 2021

# Planning Permission for the Watermans Site is Upheld by the Secretary of State

### Background:

For over 35 years, Watermans has been providing a year-round programme of independent cinema, theatre, cabaret, exhibitions, workshops, festivals and more. We operate as a registered charity and social enterprise and any money we make is invested 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 developer London Green and Hounslow Council, looking at a plan that would see our current site redeveloped for housing in order to pay for our relocation to a state of the art new venue on the site of the Old Police Station in Brentford town centre. Planning consent had been agreed by the Council. However, it was subsequently 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. Following a Planning Inquiry, the Secretary of State has upheld the Council's Planning Consent so the development can now go ahead.

Watermans welcomes this decision. Our Board is fully committed to developing a sustainable and exciting new arts centre that meets the community's needs and we will now continue to work with London Green and the Council with the aim of agreeing a deal which we believe can deliver this ambition for Brentford.

We recognise that there are concerns in the community about Watermans moving to a new site, such as losing the river views and car park. But we must look to a sustainable future for Watermans that allows us to keep pace with changing audience expectations and to provide a truly world class arts centre for Brentford. We will now work closely together with London Green and Hounslow Council to realise that vision to ensure that Watermans can thrive for generations to come.

In the meantime, Watermans is committed to building up its theatre programme through our Friday Nights Live programme, investing in our current building - for example refurbishing the cinema seating and toilets - and growing audiences across every part of our programme.