



# CROYDON CREATES

OUR CULTURAL PLAN  
FOR CROYDON

2019 - 2023



# Croydon Creates

OUR CULTURAL PLAN FOR CROYDON 2019-2023

**CROYDON**

**CULTURE**

**COMMUNITY**

**CREATIVITY**

'The aim is simple – to create a place where people want to be'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Croydon Works, <https://croydonworks.co.uk/opportunities/1649/economic-growth>

# Contents

5

Introduction

6

A place where culture is for everyone

8

A place where people come first

10

A place with stunning,  
inspirational public spaces

12

A place that is full and dynamic

14

A place that celebrates  
its past and present

16

A place where cultural  
entrepreneurs and creative

18

Working with partners



BLOCO

BLOCO

BLOCO

BLOCO

JUST DO

adidas

# Introduction

We want culture to be at the heart of everything that we do in Croydon; to make London's fastest growing borough the exceptional place that people want to enjoy, live, work and visit.

We are ambitious and every day we see how Croydon is growing and transforming itself - and culture can drive that transformation to make Croydon an even more confident and successful place.

We want culture to be on every doorstep - that's our aspiration; in every locality, in every community, and in every life, because we know that culture connects communities, and creates vibrancy and opportunities for people to thrive.

Our investment in culture to date has shown huge return - it's changing the reputation of our town and highlighting how great Croydon really is. We make every penny of our investment into culture work for us, and it's paying off with our successful funding bids, in addition to rewarding and encouraging our residents through our Cultural Partnership Fund.

Our plan has six big ambitions for what we want Croydon to be:

---

**1. A place where culture is for everyone**

---

**2. A place where people come first**

---

**3. A place with stunning, inspirational public spaces**

---

**4. A place that is full and dynamic**

---

**5. A place that celebrates its past and present**

---

**6. A place where cultural entrepreneurs and creative businesses succeed**

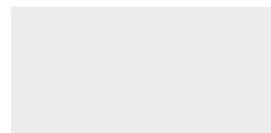
Each ambition connects to our priorities, strategies and development programmes - but we can't achieve these ambitions on our own. We need to make the most of the talent and potential in Croydon. Our partnerships are our lifeline and assets - the essential ingredients that will make Croydon an amazing cultural scene.

Croydon's Cultural Network, our local schools and colleges, the Arts Council and the Greater London Authority - are all key to creating a culture for Croydon that puts people, creativity and community at the centre.

Croydon has a lot to look forward to: a glorious restoration of Fairfield Halls; a revitalised Clocktower and Museum of Croydon; new pleasant public spaces; our music; our festivals; the Legacy Youth Zone; new initiatives for young people; Croydon winning the bid in becoming one of London's first Creative Enterprise Zone - new businesses investment and new homes being built: we are achieving a great deal.

Culture is part of our civic life. It's inter-connected with council services such as health and social care, leisure and parks - all directly benefiting from our revitalised cultural vision for Croydon.

We will be daring and disruptive - brave and different - challenging established norms and we will reach across all our communities so that everyone can contribute to, and share in, making Croydon's success.



**Cllr. Oliver Lewis,**  
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure & Sport



## ► A place where culture is for everyone

*'Culture is an essential part of society, and of our lives as a whole. It creates space for healing, expression and open-mindedness. It breaks down barriers, transcends boundaries and brings people together. Most of all, it gives us a voice, regardless of our background, which should always be championed. A world without arts and culture is a bleaker and more soulless one.'*

**Shaniqua Benjamin**

Poet & Founder of Young People Insight



Danny Beard performing at Croydon Pride

► We want culture to be on every Croydon doorstep; we want to see people come together to co-create, lead and participate in a wide range of relevant and community-driven cultural adventures that enrich and enhance the lives of all our residents. We want culture at the core of our communities, people to have a sense of ownership and opportunities to be open to everyone.

Fairfield Halls will open many new cultural experiences and creative opportunities, especially for young people. As Croydon establishes itself as a place for culture, it is providing a home for leading cultural organisations such as Talawa, the UK's leading black theatre company; Croydon's own London Mozart Players (LMP), the longest-established UK chamber orchestra; and Savvy Theatre - an inclusive, exciting, professional company - all committed to provide an offering for local people.

Croydon Clocktower will take on a new life, with spaces for culture where residents and visitors will be able to access, and engage with, something for free. Dynamic new spaces will include galleries; spaces for making, doing, and learning; our flagship library, the David Lean cinema - all presented seamlessly in one coherent facility.

We know that we need to create more opportunities for all neighbourhoods, and all generations to benefit from culture, but we know too that there are real barriers to participation, such as having money to spend on culture; the accessibility and affordability of child-care, cost of transport, or simply feeling 'it's not for me.' Our libraries across the borough's town centres and neighbourhoods are valued by our many different communities. They are centres for culture, with free and engaging programmes and activities for children and adults.

Creating opportunities for our young people is another key priority. We will work with partners such as the Local Cultural Education

Partnership, Legacy, Croydon College and the BRIT school to increase opportunities to experience culture and to perform, producing an eclectic array of locally-rooted, world-class festivals, concerts and exhibitions. Vulnerable children, through Croydon Music and Arts, can have free music lessons, instruments, holiday and weekend programmes.

Croydon's diversity is an asset and defining feature. Every community in Croydon is different to the next, be it a community of interest, place or faith. We need to make the most of our diversity and how all the cultures in our borough make up a rich mix.

Croydon has the highest overall population of all London boroughs. It has the third largest ethnically diverse population - 50.7% of Croydon's population (all ages) are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups. By 2025 this is predicted to be 55.6% BAME and 44.4% White.

Deprivation in the borough is a challenge. 10,261 people in Croydon live in areas considered to be within the 10% most deprived in the whole country. Deprivation is linked to mental health issues, low educational attainment and impoverished lives.

We need to ensure we make a rich and varied offer for all: that no one is left behind by creating cultural opportunities for everyone; opportunities that prevent feelings of isolation, that increase people's happiness and wellbeing; and that enables our residents to be the best that they can be.

## What we will do

- Ensure our residents can access rich cultural experiences as part of their everyday lives, so we see an increase in the number of participants in the borough's cultural offer.
- Support work that targets differently disadvantaged groups across Croydon through our grant aid and developmental opportunities
- Identify barriers to participation and challenges, so that activities can include everyone and monitor that change
- Embrace the diverse nature of our borough, supporting events that represent our various communities, such as Croydon PrideFest and Croydon Mela
- Expand our Libraries service offer to further improve accessibility, increase our cultural offering and implement of a programme of activities (Libraries Plan 2019-2029)
- Support small-scale and grass roots cultural activity from across the borough
- Make culture a significant element in borough-wide district regeneration plans
- Ensure that a significant part of Croydon's cultural offer remains free
- Put people and community ownership first, having our communities as active partners in programmes, exhibitions and collections of the Clocktower and Museum

## ► A place where people come first

*'This has to be about creating opportunities for Croydon people. If we do not connect up the opportunities that we've got with Croydon people - particularly our young people - then we will have failed.'*

**Jo Negrini**

Chief Executive, London Borough of Croydon

*'As an artist people are central to my dance making. A shared experience makes people feel they belong to a place and feel connected to each other. As a citizen of Croydon I create events that bring diverse communities together to enjoy dance and share in each other's joy.'*

**Anusha Subramanyam**

Dance Festival Croydon



Street Fit dance performers as part of Street Live

### ► People bring places to life - watching, doing, making, enjoying and learning. We want everyone to be able to take part in a cultural activity and we want our talented Croydon artists to make this happen.

Culture can make a difference to mental health and wellbeing, and reduce crime and disorder by providing purposeful activity and fostering a sense of emotional health and wellbeing. Culture has a significant role in combatting social isolation by bringing people together. From our work with local communities we know that street art helps to reduce anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping. We will align our cultural ambitions with other council services so our approach is cohesive and effective.

Croydon has one of the largest populations of under 25s in London and we want our borough to be a hub that nurtures new talent. Young people need to be the drivers of our culture, who embed the future of culture in the borough. We want them to create cultural experiences that inspire and enthuse them; to get involved in programming opportunities, volunteering, and apprenticeships. A fantastic example is Croydon's annual Youth Arts Takeover event, when young people run a large scale arts event for themselves. In 2019 the event will take place in the Fairfield Halls.

Our 'Legacy' OnSide Youth Zone, a world-class youth facility, will provide activities and opportunities for young people across the borough. Those aged 8-19, and up to 25 for those with a disability, can take part in over 20 activities every evening, with many cultural opportunities.

Our Youth Arts Fund provides opportunities for young people to lead and deliver cultural projects across the borough. We will source funding opportunities and sponsorship to extend this support. Croydon's successful £1million Youth Partnership Performance bid from Arts Council, is a 3 year programme that will impact on thousands of our young people, engaging them in the performing arts, both on and off stage.

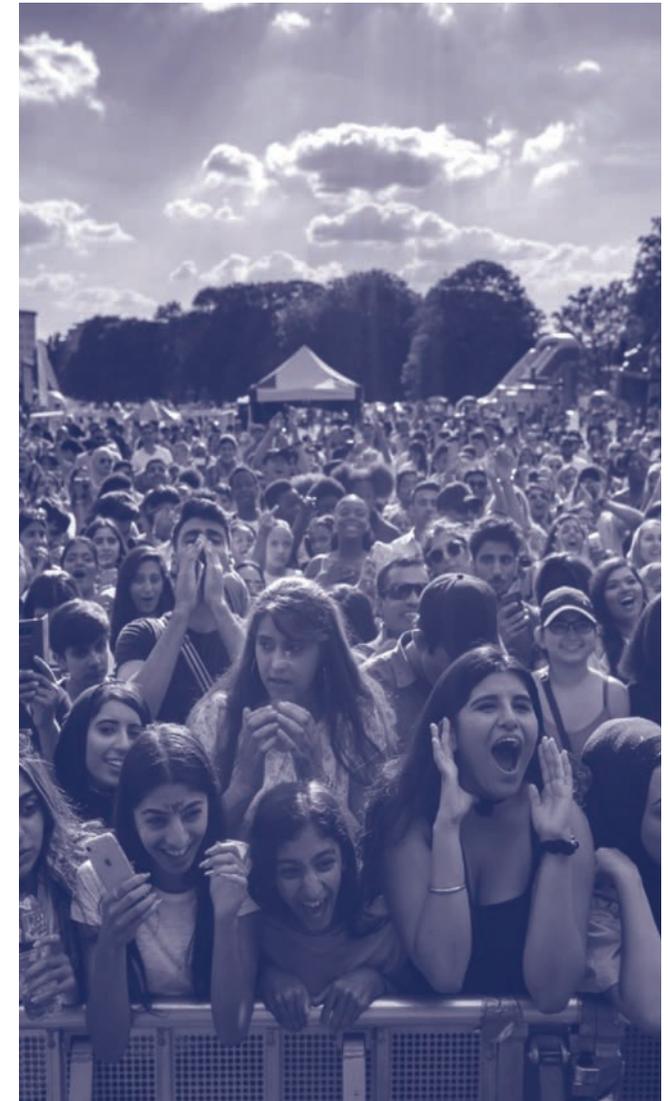
We know young people worry about their safety and their future.

Croydon's Choose Your Future campaign is about the community supporting young people to make positive choices, by creating new opportunities for them, supporting the borough's preventative approach to crime. We will support them in gaining employment through apprenticeships, internships and initiatives to learn about careers in the cultural and creative industries

The national 'Taking Part' participation survey data indicates a widening gap in participation between the White and BAME population. The cultural offer needs to be relevant to, and reflect the voices, needs and life-worlds of, Croydon's demographic.

### What we will do

- Provide children with access to cultural opportunities regardless of background, ability to pay, family history or current situation
- Work closely with community and voluntary sector organisations such as Legacy Onside Youth Zone
- Be the best Corporate Parent that we can be so all Children Looked After can engage with culture
- Work with schools, colleges and partners to provide cultural opportunities for our children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Support the Annual Youth Arts takeover festival, to increase in scale and profile
- Increase the number of apprenticeships and training for employment opportunities available across the Cultural Sector
- Continue to run our Youth Arts Fund



Crowd at Mela

## ► A place with stunning, inspirational public spaces

*'Street-level celebrations of culture and creativity in public spaces forge a 'bottom-up' approach to community pride, cohesion and regeneration which is far more sustainable and real than 'top-down' gentrification.'*

**Esther Sutton**

Public Realm as a platform for community and culture,  
Connected Croydon



Rise festival of street art 2018

► **Croydon is experiencing a time of unprecedented revitalisation: over £3bn will be invested in the borough, transforming its skyline, public spaces, high streets and local centres, and providing over 9,000 new homes.**

In this expanding and busy urban environment, culture creates a sense of community, identity and belonging, and Croydon is recognising and capitalising on the role of culture in regeneration, educational aspiration and economic prosperity.

We will create cultural interventions in unexpected spaces and at unexpected times. Croydon's dynamism and energy, and the sheer scale and scope of our ambitions, will make it a true cultural destination - turning round people's experiences of Croydon both day and night. Building on the recommendations in Think Night, the GLA's night time commission report, we will develop cultural programmes that form a significant strand of Croydon's evening and night time economy plan.

Culture will play its part in the huge investment of the Growth Zone, so every action resulting from this investment adds to Croydon's cultural identity and sense of place.

Over the next five years the route from East Croydon station to the town centre will be transformed by a series of new public spaces. This includes College Square (£10million) which will be the new setting for the revitalised Fairfield Halls full with people and cultural events. Plans for Queens Gardens include an outdoor performance area and for the Queens Square site a new scheme including an artist/designer/maker quarter and a brand new civic square fronting the Croydon Clocktower, providing an outdoor gallery for the Museum.

Enterprises like the Croydon Collection, our amazing collection of street art in the heart of the town, which is free to all and can be accessed 24/7, animates our streets and spaces. We will roll out the Croydon Collection across the whole borough working with local partners and communities as commissioners. Croydon's collection of street art is now celebrated as among the biggest in both the UK and in Europe, attracting a wealth of international

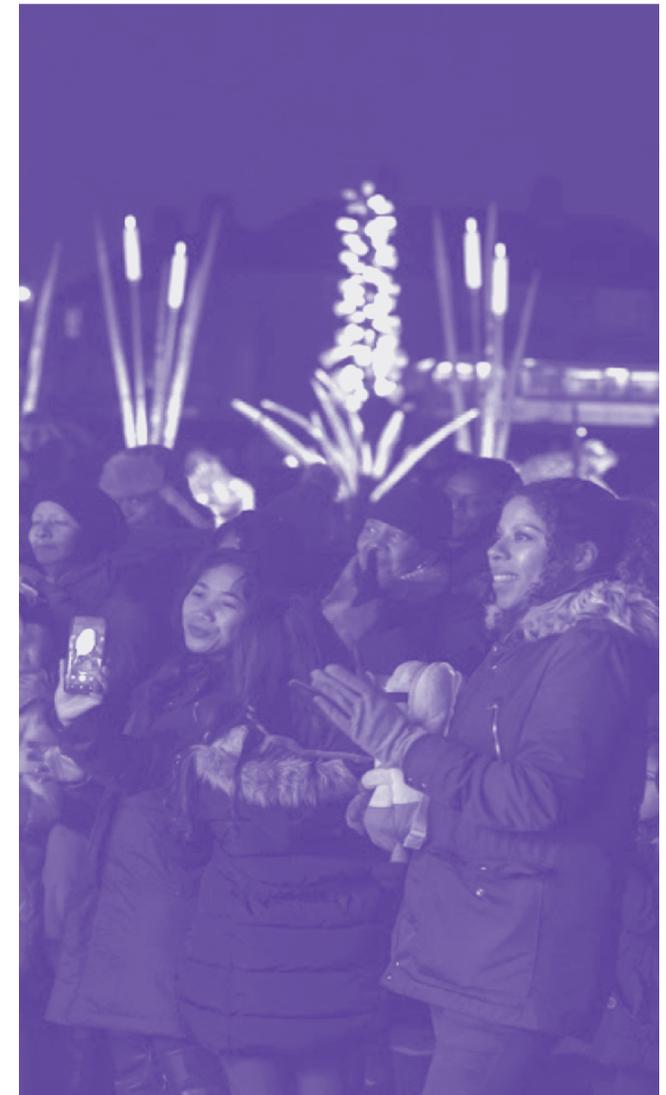
artists who want to be part of it, but, importantly, it's making people view Croydon in a new and positive way.

Our Croydon Lit lighting framework encourages lighting interventions that animate and enliven public spaces, improving the feeling of safety and creating a different landscape after dark.

Our parks offer fantastic spaces for cultural events from small scale community celebrations to large festivals. Our investments will continue to enhance our parks, to create more spaces for performance, such as the Bandstand at Wandle Park, and for community celebrations and events such as film screenings and concerts.

### What we will do

- Make the Croydon Collection the best and biggest collection of urban art in UK
- Rollout Croydon Collection across the whole Borough
- Extend the Museum of Croydon out into public spaces through temporary outdoor exhibitions
- Work with spatial planning to embed culture in development plans on both a temporary and permanent basis
- Lead the delivery of the Croydon Lit framework
- Contribute to the success of Croydon's night-time economy strategy
- Work through the Parks masterplan to increase and enable cultural activities in parks and open spaces
- Animate our public spaces day and night



Light festival event at Trumble Gardens

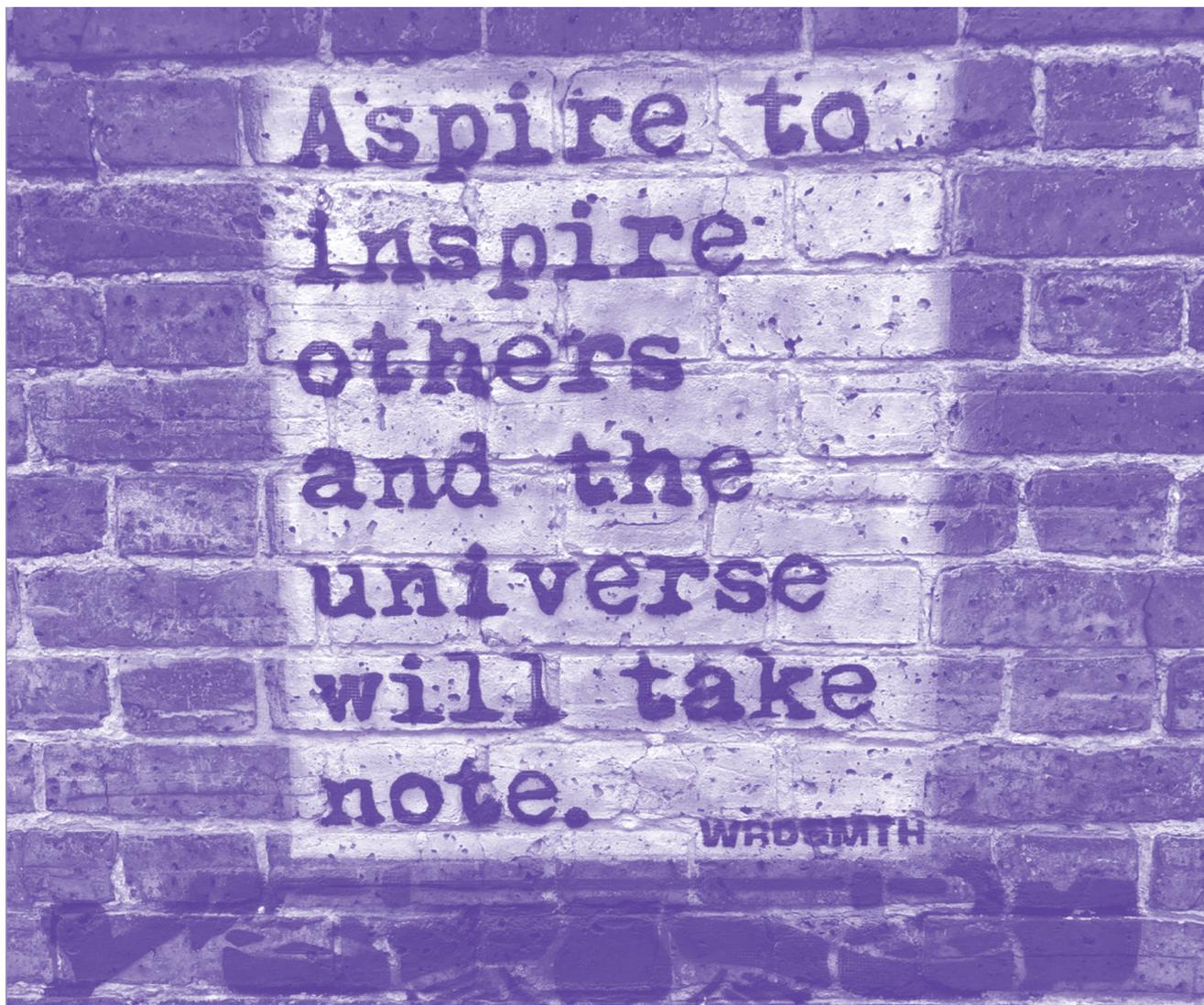
## ► A place that is full and dynamic

*'It's about that creation of place, it's about that pride, it's that re-emergence of Croydon as a viable location to live and do business; unearthing the culture and the excitement that we know exists'.*

**Steve Sanham**  
MD, Hub Developments

We want Croydon to be known as the borough with the ambition to make change happen. Culture is just one piece of the puzzle; but it's a big one. Everything we support will need to set out:

- **What will this do for the people of Croydon?**
- **How will this help to achieve Croydon's ambitions?**



Rise festival of street art 2018

► We aim for a full diary of cultural events that will engage Croydon residents all year round day and night – as well as making Croydon a destination for visitors. Croydon Music City, musicians, writers, street artists and poets will all bring vitality and creative energy to our borough-wide performance spaces, pubs, high streets, street market and buildings to develop and share creative works, to enhance Croydon’s evening and night time economy, and diversify the footfall.

We will nurture and grow our flagship events such as Croydon PrideFest and Croydon International Mela; the Youth Arts Takeover as well as our street parties; community big lunches; festivals. Our national and international partners, for example Dance Umbrella, give us a reach and profile that we cannot achieve on our own.

Croydon’s music education offer is strong but needs opportunities to platform performance - the live music scene in Croydon today is not as vibrant as it has been in the past.

We want to bring back the energy and opportunity for artists to celebrate Croydon’s significant home-grown grass-roots music scene, so it continues this valued tradition. A new Croydon Music Network, created with partners, will support live music programming across our venues and festivals and encourage new talent to emerge.

People need places to hold events, performances and festivals, so we will improve the quality and variety of venues available in Croydon and ensure that we have the right mix of spaces spread across the borough, enabling a diverse range of performing and visual arts to take place. Croydon is an environment which nurtures cross-arts and cross-cultural inspiration - this startling mix results in many artists going from niche to mainstream. We want to keep this spirit alive through lively and flexible spaces.

We want all our communities to be connected to, and accessing, the fantastic range of cultural activities taking place throughout Croydon. This means having provision across the whole of our borough and not just in the town centre: it means creating an offer in the town centre that everyone feels ownership of and is able to access.

Culture will be effectively and ambitiously used to champion our case for inward investment, a magnet for businesses to locate themselves and grow in a place with a strong cultural offer. Our emerging reputation as a place to live, work and visit will benefit from a strong and visible cultural offer. Fairfield Halls will have a tremendous positive impact on Croydon’s profile local economy, offering a full arts programme and providing conference and business event functions, that will help drive direct and secondary spend in Croydon.



Boxpark

## What we will do

- Become the ‘go to’ place for culture in the capital - becoming Visit London’s favourite place
- Set out to make Croydon respected locally, nationally and internationally as an ambitious and innovative borough.
- Leverage our cultural partnership fund to bring additional resources into the borough
- Support venues across the borough to provide a great cultural offer for our residents and visitors; with small- and large-scale cultural activity
- Support and facilitate the development of the Croydon Cultural Network
- Work with BH Live to ensure the best possible impact from Fairfield Halls
- Support culture to contribute to a successful evening and night-time economy
- Ensure a major and successful events programme contributes to our economy
- Develop and deliver Croydon Music City
- Build on the GLA cultural infrastructure audit to plan for Croydon’s future needs

## ► A place that celebrates its past and present

*'Our community is bursting at the seams with talent and people who dedicate their clock towers to make sure a new person at each hour strikes their full potential and is seen standing on the homegrown stage of Fairfield Halls.'*

*'So let's take the seeds and grow our trees, because among us is a forest and our roots are seeped into the soil of Croydon.'*

**Zhanai Wallace**  
The Garden of Croydon



Graphic illustration of the refurbished Fairfield Halls

► **Croydon's heritage is built into its very fabric - from brutalist architecture to the remains of the 12th century Old Palace. Our very identity as Croydon has been marked out through its people and place.**

We have some unique heritage assets such as Stanley Halls, Whitgift Alms Houses and schools, and Croydon Airport to work with as partners. We have one of the oldest historical societies in the UK still active with a 150 year track record and our Roman history is embedded in our name.

In a rapidly changing Croydon, the Clocktower redevelopment is at the heart of the town. It will house a new museum that will be a truly meaningful space to reveal Croydon's past, present and future, cohesively and dramatically. We want to create somewhere exceptional and extraordinary, to tell different stories that are relevant and matter to people - how society is changing, freedom of speech, equality, social justice, environmental action and immigration. We want to exceed the expectations of our visitors, to create memorable experiences that strike a chord with their lives.

We will champion access, participation, community co-creation, learning opportunities to bring the Museum of Croydon to the people of Croydon.

Fairfield Halls is a huge part of Croydon's heritage, and loved by our residents. It was desperately in need of significant refurbishment and repair, and £40million is being invested to return it to its 1960s splendour. This refurbishment will transform it into a world class arts centre; its operator BH Live, a social enterprise and charity, will see that it becomes profitable and its profits are fed back into the business model.

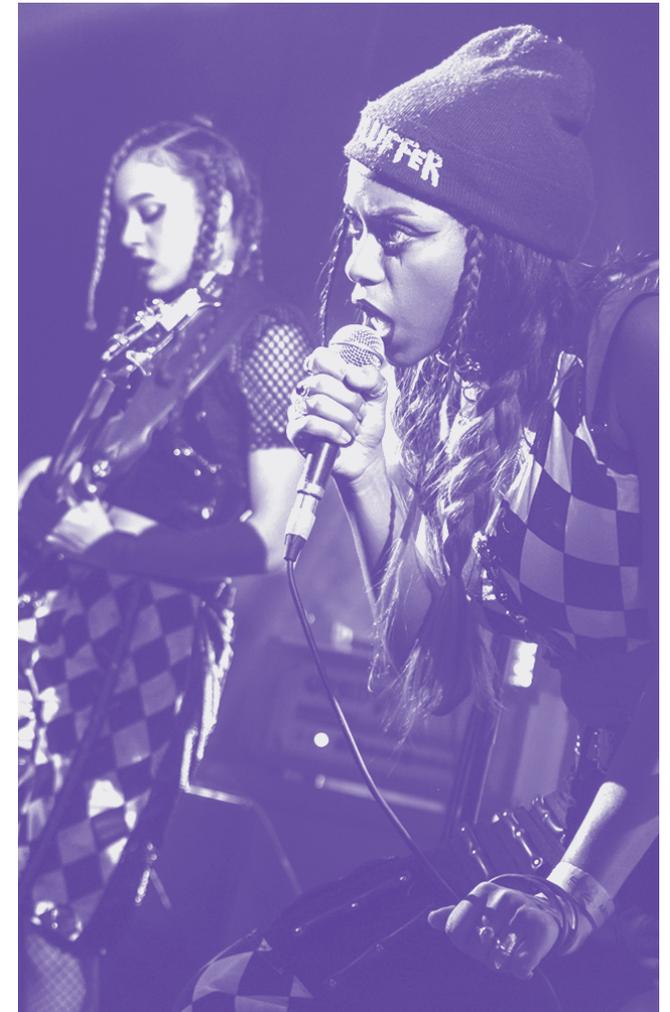
Our rich musical heritage is our real asset - we need to celebrate this in a very visible way. Croydon has hosted the biggest names in music history from Queen to David Bowie, Stevie Wonder to The Beatles, and from Dizzy Gillespie to The Rolling Stones.

It featured in the punk movement in the 70s; dubstep in the noughties and has driven the rise of grime and drill - and gives us acts such as Stormzy, Nadia Rose, Skream, Benga and, Krept and Konan. Working with Sound Diplomacy, we will build on this strong international musical heritage to support musicians today and in the future.

A rich cultural heritage contributes to our sense of self and community, it affirms our identity and helps us to build resilience.

### What we will do

- Develop the Clocktower and Museum of Croydon as the landmark that puts creativity and participation at the heart of the town's regeneration
- Make Croydon's heritage more visible by working with cross-cultural partners across the borough
- Make the Museum of Croydon the focus for achieving Croydon's cultural potential, by championing our cultural agenda in all developments
- Celebrate the links between contemporary culture and Croydon's music heritage through creating Croydon's music heritage trail
- Ensure the Museum of Croydon seeks out best practise in the sector, and becomes an advocate for inclusion and diversity



Nova Twins playing Cro Cro Land, photo by Jon Mo.

## ► A place where cultural entrepreneurs and creative businesses succeed

*'Croydon is experiencing rapid economic growth and seeing many major companies moving into the town - but economic success needs the support of cultural success as a key strand of its USP. Culture can change the perception of Croydon as a place to live and to invest in.'*

**Wei Jiao**

Deputy Development Director, R&F properties (UK) Ltd.



Artist Studio Company studio space

► Croydon is home to a diverse and growing creative and cultural cluster; creative industries in Croydon account for 837 businesses, 3,641 jobs, representing 6.2% of total businesses in the borough - but this is well below the London and UK average - and the creative economy is one of the fastest growing sectors in the UK.

The benefits of growing a vibrant creative industries and cultural sector to our local economy are significant; a strong cultural and creative sector means direct employment and secondary economic impacts.

Croydon is one of 6 newly appointed Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ) for London. For Croydon this sits mainly in the town centre at the very heart of the transformational change for the borough in South Norwood, on the Purley A23 corridor and in Thornton Heath. It will be crucial to the development and enhancement of all our creative industries including fashion, tech and new media, and our creative sector, especially the performing arts (particularly music) visual arts and designer makers. CEZ is key to supporting local artists, small businesses and communities by increasing affordable spaces for artists and entrepreneurs, and boosting job and training opportunities for local people; especially young people across Croydon.

Croydon Cultural Network has been a huge success, bringing together colleagues from the creative and cultural industries to discuss how to make improvements across the borough, to increase the size and health of our creative industries, as well as to provide opportunities for more collaboration. We will expand and enhance the Croydon Culture Network through new schemes and resources.

Croydon Music City will deliver new programmes, a music strategy and a new music industry network, more live music venues, a music heritage trail and new partnerships with music promoters and businesses.

Cultural activities can develop skills, knowledge and confidence in individuals which enhances their employment prospects and the apprenticeship and work experience opportunities are a key part of the CEZ delivery.

We will make Croydon a magnet for creative companies to grow and flourish. We are already seeing companies such as Talawa and Artist Studio company develop strongly and many more are predicted to follow.



Croydonites festival 2017

## What we will do

- Maximise the opportunities of the Creative Enterprise Zone programme to increase the size, and scope of our creative and cultural industries
- Establish the conditions and resources that make Croydon a hub for cultural and creative industries
- Expand and enhance the Croydon Culture network
- Deliver Croydon Music City; supporting venues and platforms for live performance, a music industry network, music heritage trail, support for arts
- Use culture to support our case for inward investment, improving Croydon's profile and ensuring an attractive cultural offer
- Support Fairfield Halls as a producing venue

# ▶ Working with partners

*'I have watched music save a friend. Drama build a character. Dance show emotion without words. And I have felt poetry change me. With arts being moulded into stepping stones for the young, with all the power that you have, expand those stepping stones into cemented steps to a successful future'*

**Zhanai Wallace**  
The Garden of Croydon

None of this happens alone, to succeed in our ambitions for the borough we will continue to foster relationships with external funding partners such as Arts Council and The National Heritage Lottery Fund whilst aligning our Cultural Plan with Croydon Council plans and strategies.





# CROYDON CREATES

OUR CULTURAL PLAN  
**FOR CROYDON**

2 0 1 9 - 2 0 2 3