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barbican

Barbican Centre and City of London Corporation seek ideas on future use of vacant exhibition halls

The Barbican Centre, in collaboration with the City of London Corporation, has launched an exercise to explore potential future uses of its two currently vacant exhibition halls, as part of the wider Barbican Renewal programme.

Barbican Renewal is a plan to ensure every part of the Centre's iconic site is restored, revitalised and relevant for future generations. Phase one focuses on the Foyers, Lakeside and Conservatory and this early-stage engagement activity relates to phase two.

Expressions of interest are invited from organisations across the creative, commercial and civic sectors with innovative ideas to bring these significant spaces back into public and productive use.

The halls are located at a key strategic site within the Square Mile at a critical axis between the new London Museum, Smithfield Market and the rest of the Barbican Centre as well as Guildhall School of Music and Drama. They cover approximately 9,500 square metres - the equivalent of 36 tennis courts - of unused space across two levels.

Once a home to conferences and commercial exhibitions, and a vital source of income for the Barbican, the halls have been largely dormant since 2010 and now offer a unique opportunity for repurposing within one of London's most iconic sites.

The Exhibition Halls are expected to be available for redevelopment from 2028. This soft market testing seeks ideas that align with the ambitions of the [Barbican Renewal](#) programme, the City Corporation's Destination City strategy, and broader objectives around sustainability, inclusivity, and public realm enhancement outlined in the City Corporation's [Corporate Plan](#).

Philippa Simpson, Director for Buildings and Renewal, says: *"Sitting at the heart of the cultural life of the City, the Barbican's Exhibition Halls offer an unparalleled opportunity to shape the creative and commercial future of the Capital. We are excited to explore the possibilities for bringing these extraordinary spaces back to life, and to work in closer dialogue with neighbouring sites and venues to bring new audiences to the Square Mile."*

Interested parties are invited to propose either joint or separate uses for exhibition halls 1 and 2. Proposals that incorporate meanwhile use, long-term models, or partnership opportunities are also welcome, particularly where they reflect cultural or creative value and activate the area for visitors and the local community alike.

The testing process will inform the next phase of strategic planning and future procurement. While the Barbican and City Corporation are not committing to any specific project at this stage, the exercise will help assess appetite, feasibility, and partnership potential. A questionnaire and information pack are available upon request. Site visits will also be arranged. The deadline for submissions is midnight 1 August 2025.

For further information please email: exhibitorhallsinfo@barbican.org.uk

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Notes to Editors

For further information please contact: Ed Horne, Senior Corporate Communications Manager, ed.horne@barbican.org.uk

Barbican press room

All Barbican Centre press releases, news announcements and the Communications team's contact details are listed on our website at www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room

About the Barbican

The Barbican is a catalyst for creativity, sparking possibilities for artists, audiences, and communities. We showcase the most exciting art from around the world, pushing traditional artistic boundaries to entertain and inspire millions of people, create connections, provoke debate, and reflect the world we live in.

We are an international arts and events centre rooted firmly in our own neighbourhood, collaborating with local communities and putting the City of London on the map as a destination for everybody. Central to our purpose is supporting emerging talent and shaping opportunities that will accelerate the next generation of creatives.

As a not-for-profit, we rely on the generosity of individuals and organisations, including our principal funder the City of London Corporation. Every ticket purchased, donation made, and pound earned supports our arts and learning programme and enables the widest possible range of people to experience the joy of the arts.

Opened in 1982, the Barbican is a unique and audacious building, recognised globally as an architectural icon. As well as our theatres, galleries, concert halls and cinemas, we have a large conservatory with over 1,500 species of plants and trees, a library, conference facilities, public and community spaces, restaurants, bars, and a picturesque lakeside oasis.

We're proud to be the home of the [London Symphony Orchestra](#), and a London base of the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). We regularly co-commission, produce and showcase the work of our other associates and partners including the [Academy of Ancient Music](#), [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#), [Boy Blue](#), [Darbar Festival](#), [Doc'n Roll Film Festival](#), [Drum Works](#), [EFG London Jazz Festival](#), [London Palestine Film Festival](#), [Serious](#), and [Trafalgar Theatre Productions](#).

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