barbican

Annual Review 2024–25

↗ *The Black Saint and The Sinner Lady* at the Barbican Theatre by Clod Ensemble & Nu Civilisation Orchestra © Jesse Olu Ogunbanjo

Welcome

This is a pivotal moment for the Barbican as we embark on a bold new chapter in our story.

Over the past year, we have made significant progress on our ambitious Barbican Renewal programme, a once-in-a-generation project to restore and revitalise every part of the Barbican Centre. The generous £191 million funding package secured from the City of London Corporation represents a vital investment in our future, enabling critical repairs and upgrades that will ensure that the Barbican continues to inspire and delight audiences for decades to come.

The Barbican Centre is central to the Square Mile's cultural identity. Every day, we present amazing work on our stages, public spaces or behind the scenes, reaching audiences across London, the UK and the world. As a leading arts institution, we have an incredible impact on the City of London, supporting its ambition to become a vibrant destination for culture and creativity, but we also drive economic growth and play a pivotal role in attracting businesses, workers and residents.

This year was also marked by exciting leadership changes. We welcomed three new Directors to the Barbican's leadership team: Devyani Saltzman (Director for Arts and Participation), Philippa Simpson (Director for Buildings & Renewal), and Beau Vigushin (Director for Audiences). Each brings a wealth of expertise and fresh perspectives to shape our future and deliver our shared vision.

I would like to thank the extraordinary Barbican team, our Board and our Trustees, whose commitment, efforts and passion are essential to our success. I am equally grateful to all the artists, partners and associates who bring the Barbican to life, and to the City of London Corporation whose long-standing support plays a vital role in making the Barbican such a unique venue.

My thanks also go to the family trusts, public and private grant-makers, businesses, individual donors and audience members whose financial support and belief in our mission ensure that we continue to thrive.

Finally, I want to thank David Farnsworth who has served as the Barbican's Interim CEO over this past year. His warmth, integrity, and inspiring leadership have been invaluable. He has strengthened the organisation and laid important foundations for the future. I now look forward to working with Abigail Pogson, our newly appointed permanent CEO, when she officially takes up her role in January 2026.

Together, we will ensure that the Barbican's next chapter is one of great possibility.

Sir William Russell
Chair of the Barbican Board

The Barbican is much more than an arts centre, it is a space for community and connection where everyone can feel welcome and inspired.

As I reflect on my year as Interim CEO, I want to celebrate the commitment, creativity and care of the people at the heart of the Barbican. Every day, colleagues across the organisation work tirelessly to ensure that our audiences and communities experience something truly special when they walk through our doors.

In 2024, we were proud to be named one of the top 20 most visited attractions in the UK (ALVA, 2024). This achievement does not only speak to the popularity of our iconic site, but also to the vision and dedication of those who bring it to life, creating memorable experiences and making everyone feel welcome.

It is difficult to choose a single highlight from the past year at the Barbican as every week brings something extraordinary. Our artistic programme has spanned music, visual arts, dance, theatre, cinema, immersive and beyond; we have connected with young people, local communities and emerging artists though our engagement work, and our commercial events, from weddings to film premieres and graduations, have brought vibrancy to our spaces. None of this would be possible without our funders and audiences, whose belief in the Barbican underpins our work and helps ensure that the arts remain open and accessible to all.

The past year has also been one of reflection and preparation. Laying the foundations for a major transformation period ahead, we refreshed our artistic vision, welcomed three new Directors and announced our ambitious Barbican Renewal project to repair and revitalise our buildings. As we balance change and continuity, we want to ensure that the Barbican continues to inspire, challenge and welcome audiences for generations to come.

I want to thank all the excellent staff, Board Members and Trustees at the Barbican Centre for their warm welcome. I also want to thank our partners, funders and all the artists and communities who have contributed to making this year so special. It has been a privilege to lead the Barbican during this remarkable year, and I look forward to working with the brilliant Abigail Pogson, the newly appointed permanent CEO of the Barbican Centre, to ensure a smooth transition.

David Farnsworth
Interim CEO

A year at the Barbican

1.5m
visitors

1m+
tickets sold

64,345
subsidised tickets for schools, families, young people and priority audiences

53,763
people engaged through community events and public programming

23,172
Martinis sold in our Martini Bar and Members' Lounge

16,490
Barbican logo tote bags sold in our shop

5,440
events and screenings

2,702
artists, companies and ensembles

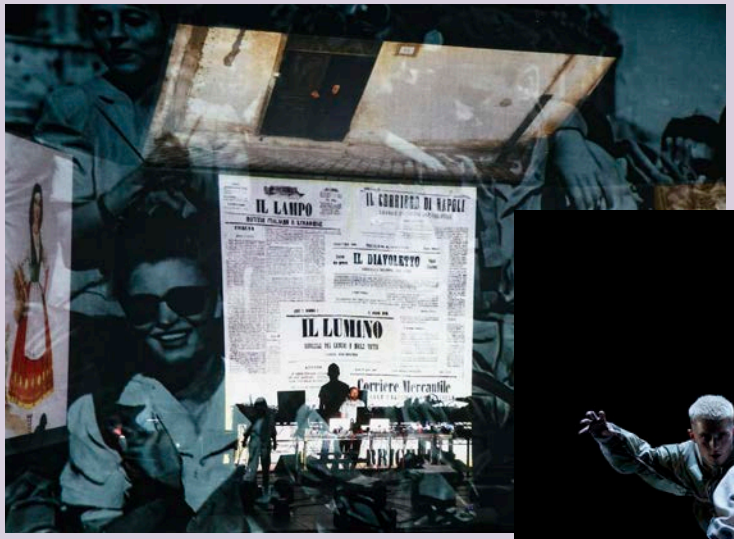
100+
countries and territories represented among our artists

In the top
20
cultural visitor attractions in the UK

And uncountable moments of joy shared on our site

↗ Arthur Verocai with Nu Civilisation Orchestra © Graeme Miall

Spring highlights



Max Cooper presents Seme

(April 2024)

Electronic musician and audio-visual artist Max Cooper brought to our stage the UK premiere of *Seme*.

Cycles by Boy Blue

(April–May 2024)

We hosted the world premiere of *Cycles* by our Artistic Associate Boy Blue, a Barbican co-commission which then toured to New York and across the UK.

'Dazzling hip-hop dance alchemy'
The Guardian

Ibrahim Mahama: Purple Hibiscus

(April–July 2024)

Purple Hibiscus, a new artwork by Ibrahim Mahama, transformed our Lakeside Terrace enveloping our iconic brutalist building with 2000 square meters of bespoke woven cloth.

Los Angeles Philharmonic/ Gustavo Dudamel

(June 2024)

Our International Orchestral Partner, the Los Angeles Philharmonic returned with superstar conductor Gustavo Dudamel for two landmark performances.

↑ Max Cooper presents *Seme* © Michal Augustini

↗ *Cycles* by Boy Blue © Camilla Greenwell

↖ *Ibrahim Mahama: Purple Hibiscus*, Installation view, Barbican Lakeside, 10 April 2024 – 17 July 2024 © Dion Barrett / Barbican Centre

↑Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic perform Beethoven's *Fidelio* with Deaf West Theatre © Ash Knotek

Summer highlights

Kiss Me, Kate

(June–September 2024)

Presented in association with Trafalgar Theatre Productions, the all-time classic musical *Kiss Me, Kate* premiered in our theatre for a 15-week run over the summer.

Queer 80s: Cinema on the Brink of Global Change

(June 2024)

As part of our Pride season, we presented ground-breaking 1980s LGBTQ+ movies from across the globe.

↑ *Kiss Me, Kate* at the Barbican Theatre © Johan Persson

↖ Era Vermelho Seu Batom, Brazil 1983, Dir Henrique Magalhães

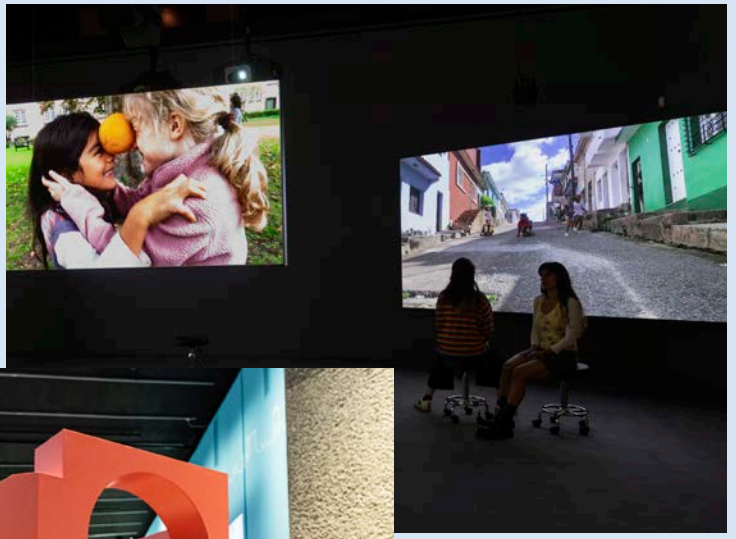
Francis Alÿs: Ricochets

(June–September 2024)

Internationally renowned artist Francis Alÿs turned our Art Gallery into an audiovisual playground with *Ricochets*.

'It's beautiful, it's inventive, it's necessary'

Time Out London



Our Street

(August 2024)

Our Curve gallery was transformed into a playful community space, inviting children and their grown-ups to come together and engage in creative activities.

↑ *Francis Alÿs: Ricochets*, installation view, Barbican Art Gallery, 27 June – 1 September 2024 © Jemima Yong / Barbican Art Gallery

↖ *Our Street* at the Barbican Centre © Jesse Olu Ogunbanjo

Autumn highlights

London Symphony Orchestra/ Sir Antonio Pappano: Season Opening

(September 2024)

Sir Antonio Pappano began his tenure as Chief Conductor of our Resident Orchestra the London Symphony Orchestra with the world premiere of a new work by Sir James MacMillan.

'New era begins with ghosts and great beauty'

The Guardian

The Golden Stool, or the story of Nana Yaa Asantewaa

(October 2024)

We hosted the UK premiere of Gorges Ocloo's acclaimed Ghanaian 'Afropera' project.

↖ Sir Antonio Pappano conducts the London Symphony Orchestra © Mark Allan

↑ *The Golden Stool* © Mark Allan

EFG London Jazz Festival 2024

(November 2024)

Once again, the EFG London Jazz Festival returned to the Barbican and brought extraordinary artists to our stage including trumpeter Charles Tolliver.

↖ Charles Tolliver celebrates Max Roach © Mark Allan

↓ Academy Award Winning writer and director Steve McQueen came to the Barbican to present *Blitz* © Barbican Centre

Blitz ScreenTalk with Steve McQueen

(October 2024)

Winter highlights

A Midsummer Night's Dream
(December 2024–January 2025)

We hosted the London premiere of the Royal Shakespeare Company's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* starring Mathew Baynton as Bottom.

← The Royal Shakespeare Company's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* © Pamela Raith

↓ Lil.Miss.Lady © Ali Wright

Lil.Miss.Lady
(February 2025)

HighRise returned to The Pit with Lil.Miss.Lady, a multimedia, interactive-rave-experience taking audiences on a journey into the history of Grime.

The Seagull
(February–April 2025)

Across 42 performances, over 46,000 attendees came to our theatre to see *The Seagull* starring Cate Blanchett, Tom Burke and Emma Corrin.

Noah Davis (February–May 2025)

Our retrospective of late American artist Noah Davis received outstanding reviews in *The Telegraph*, *The Times*, *The Observer* and other publications.

'A mesmerising heartbreaking retrospective'

The Financial Times

↖ Cate Blanchett in *The Seagull* © Marc Brenner

↑ Noah Davis at the Barbican Art Gallery © Jemima Yong

Developing our Audiences

This year, we strengthened our relationship with audiences and communities.

We are committed to ensuring that the Barbican remains a place where everyone feels welcome and inspired. Over the past year, we made progress in diversifying who comes through our doors, broadening access for young people, first-time visitors, and our local communities.

Our Young Barbican scheme continued to attract the next generation to the Barbican growing by 6% to reach 81,324 members. Alongside discounted tickets to exhibitions, new release films and live performances, our Young Barbican Nights and ClubStage events offered interactive and social ways for younger audiences to experience the Barbican. In March, the Young Barbican Takeover Festival brought emerging creatives together for a celebration of our multidisciplinary offer, with performances, workshops, talks, and networking sessions all curated by and for young people.

We also grew new and diverse audiences through our artistic partnerships, collaborating with artists from around the world to ensure that our programme reflects diverse stories and perspectives. Last year, Darbar became one of our official Artistic Associates, and we once again hosted the Darbar Festival of Indian Classical Music. Other highlights included hosting the Black British Book Festival, Europe's largest celebration of Black literature, reaffirming our ongoing commitment to platform underrepresented voices.

This year, 25% of our audience were first-time bookers, 8% travelled from abroad, and 13% came from the City of London itself. These figures highlight both our global reach and our local roots: the Barbican is proud to be a place where London meets the world, and where creativity connects people across borders, backgrounds, and generations.

81,324
Young Barbican members

25%
were first-time bookers

13%
of bookers from the City of London

← Toya Delazy performing on the Barbican's ClubStage
© Beth Knight

Increasing Access and Opportunities

Increasing access to world-class cultural experiences and creative opportunities is central to our mission.

In 2024/25, we worked closely with schools and colleges to embed arts and creativity across the national curriculum, offering a wide range of cultural learning experiences. Our Conservatory Days, film screenings, and school visits encouraged young people to see the Barbican as a place where they belong, while our backstage tours and careers days helped open up pathways into the arts, including here at the Barbican.

We also continued to support emerging talent through our Young Creatives programme. In 2024, our cohort of 12 Young Film Programmers curated the ninth edition of the Chronic Youth Film Festival, attracting over 500 attendees. Meanwhile, 23 writers aged 16 – 29 took part in our 2024 Young Poets programme, developing their craft, creating new work and performing at the Barbican. Alumni from previous Young Poets cohorts also remained involved, returning to perform as part of several events across our programme, including a special performance in our Art Gallery where they shared new work in response to our landmark Noah Davis exhibition.

Finally, we reinforced our commitment to inclusive programming, presenting events accessible to all and reflecting the experiences and interests of our local communities. In August 2024, we transformed the Curve gallery into Our Street, a free, participatory playground where children and grown-ups were able to unleash their creativity and connect through play and activities. Designed in consultation with local school children and London artists, this vibrant community space attracted over 20,000 visitors and hosted various events ranging from creative workshops to lates and street parties.

347
young artists and creatives connected with creative opportunities

180
family events reaching **32,692** children, parents and carers

71
schools engaged across our free learning activities

1,783
students and **238** teachers engaged across our free learning activities

← Our Street at the Barbican Centre
© Jesse Olu Ogunbanjo

Building a Sustainable Future

Our vision for a sustainable future rests on partnership, creativity and careful stewardship of resources.

While the City of London Corporation remains our principal funder (representing 38% of our total income), the Barbican operates under a mixed business model that balances public investment with income from ticket sales, grants, fundraising, and commercial activity.

Philanthropic and corporate partnerships, along with visitor giving and membership support, continue to play a vital role in sustaining our work. We are deeply grateful to the grant makers, individual donors, members and corporate supporters whose commitment goes far beyond financial contributions and reflect a shared belief in the power of the arts to connect and inspire people.

Commercial events also make an important contribution to our cultural programme. In 2024/25, we hosted a wide range of conferences, talks and celebrations in our spaces. Those events created lasting memories for thousands of attendees, including 19 weddings and 62 graduation ceremonies, and positioned the Barbican as a unique venue for high-profile international gatherings. Highlights included the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat (CTBUH) International Conference, showcases for London Fashion Week 2024, and Fane talks featuring influential voices such as astronaut Tim Peake.

Like many organisations across the cultural sector, we continue to navigate a challenging financial landscape. However, by innovating and diversifying our income streams, we will ensure that the Barbican can realise its ambitions and continue to create memorable experiences for our audiences.

366 business events generating over

£5m

24,800+
students from 11 universities attended graduations on our site

£2.1m
generated by our retail activities

£3.1m
generated across our bars and cafe

£3.4m
from donations, grants, sponsorships and memberships

← Young Barbican Takeover Festival 2025 @ Alice Denny

Our People

We are making efforts to become a more diverse and inclusive organisation where everyone feels welcome, valued and supported.

In October 2024, we launched a new staff network for Parents, Carers and Guardians, bringing the total number of staff-led diversity networks to five. They all played an active role in shaping our internal culture, hosting events and activities to bring colleagues together and mark key moments, including Black History Month, Pride Month, and World Menopause Day.

Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team worked closely with our Global Majority Network to develop an Anti-Racism Action Plan and partnered with Hustle Crew to deliver anti-racism training to 448 Barbican colleagues, including senior management and our Board. We also established a new EDI forum to encourage more open dialogue and collaboration across the Barbican.

448
members of our staff received anti-racism training

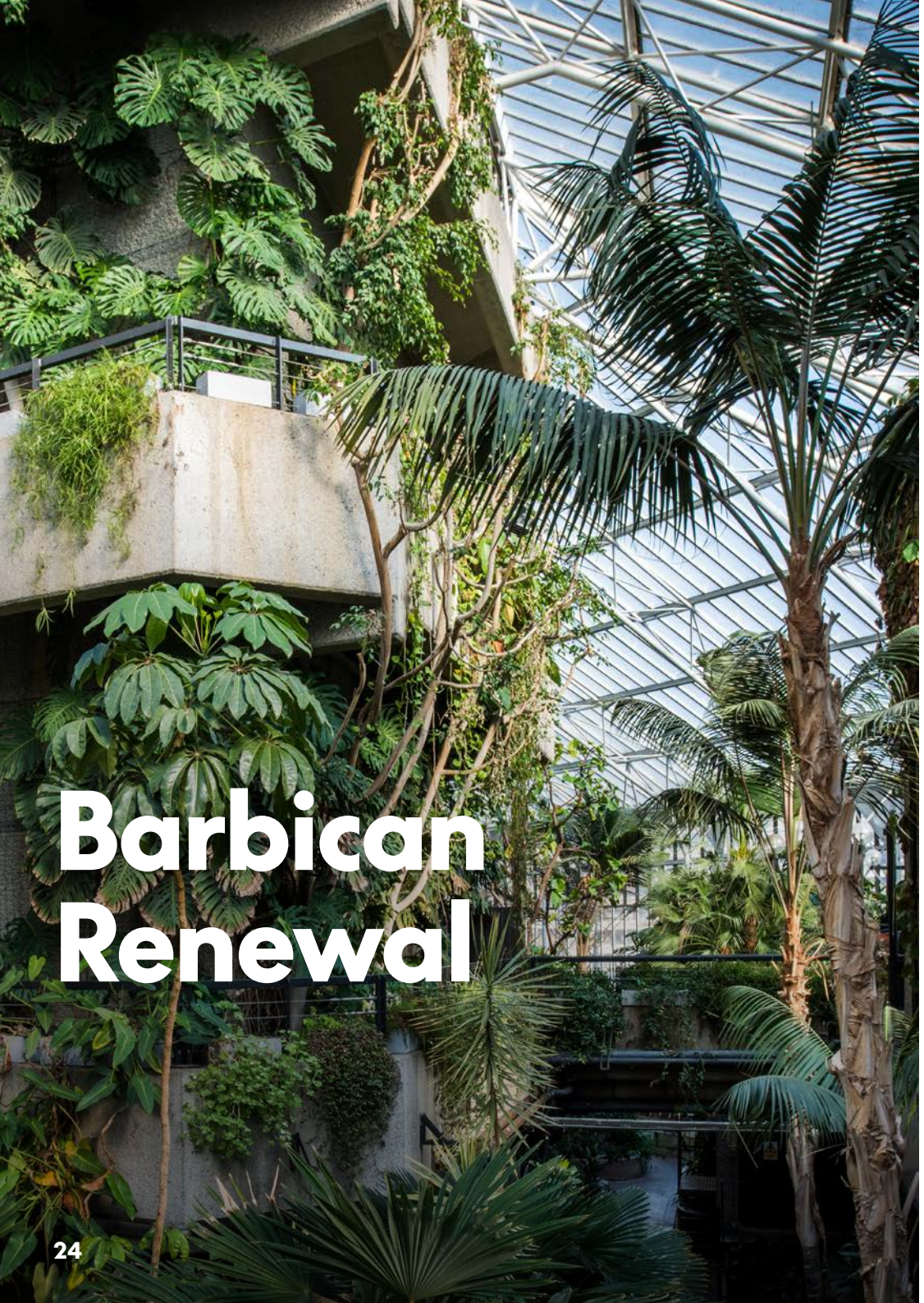
18
managers went on courses about inclusive leadership

5
active Barbican Diversity Networks

Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion into everything we do is a shared responsibility that requires continuous and deliberate action rooted in insight and knowledge. A core priority has been improving how we collect and use EDI data. To support this, we have developed a dashboard with enhanced data quality that can be used as a tool for planning, recruitment and decision-making. Reflecting our commitment to knowledge-sharing, we have also collaborated with peer cultural organisations to strengthen best practice across the sector.

← Marta Lowcewicz, Head Gardener of the Barbican Conservatory © John Kelly

↑ Our Barbican Women Network © Sisi Nipannan



Barbican Renewal

This year, our plans for Barbican Renewal took centre stage as we made significant progress to ensure that every part of our site is restored, revitalised and relevant for future generations.

Since 1982, the Barbican has been a place where art, ideas, and communities meet, but decades of use have deteriorated our beloved buildings and spaces. Barbican Renewal is a once-in-a-generation project that will ensure that our Grade II listed centre and wider site remain fit for the future. At the heart of Renewal is a commitment to celebrating the architectural vision and heritage of the Barbican, with a programme of conservation and upgrades to bring our buildings back to their best, open up our spaces to all and reduce our environmental impact.

The past year marked the completion of the masterplanning phase as well as important progress on Phase 1 of Barbican Renewal, which focuses on our iconic Foyers, Lakeside, Conservatory and restaurants. In December, the City of London Corporation generously approved £191 million to support Phase 1 (2025-2030), building on its earlier £25 million investment in urgent works. While this funding is transformative, it represents around 80% of what is needed for the full five-year programme. We are now actively fundraising to secure the remaining investment and complete the restoration of these vital public spaces.

From the start, public participation and community engagement have been central to this project. Phase 1 has been informed by an in-depth co-design process, working with 24 young Londoners over six months to embed the voices of future audiences into our plans. In January 2025, we held a major public consultation, sharing proposals and imagery with audiences, residents and stakeholders. The response was overwhelmingly positive, with 89% of respondents supporting our overall vision.

Barbican Renewal is critical to safeguard one of the world's great cultural centres. By revitalising our spaces, we will ensure that the Barbican continues to thrive as a civic, cultural, and creative hub, making a lasting impact for generations to come.

← The Barbican Conservatory
© Max Colson

£191m
received from the City of London Corporation for Barbican Renewal, representing **80%** of the total funds needed

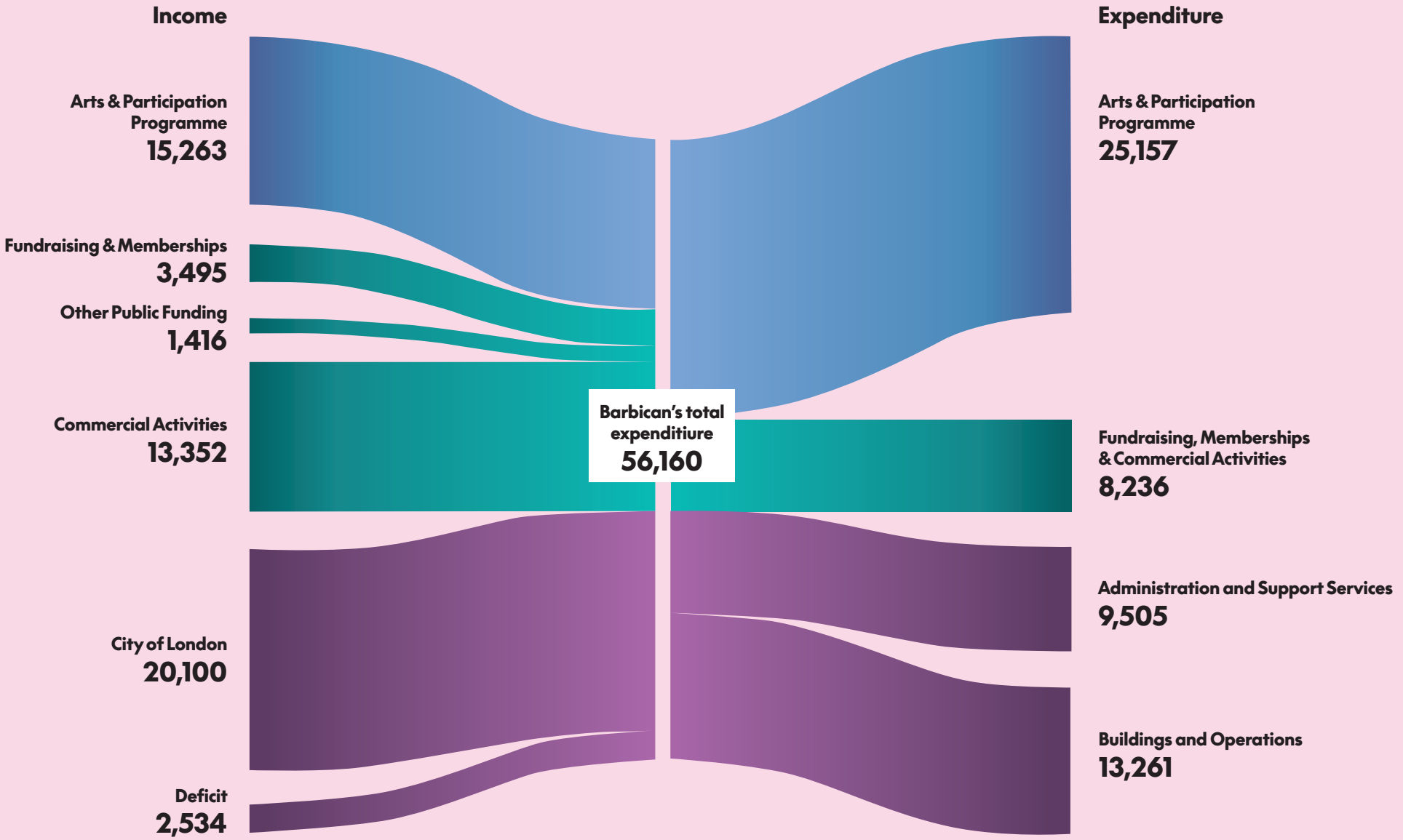
498
responses to our public consultation

89%
of public support for Phase 1 of Barbican Renewal

24
young Londoners involved in the co-design of the project

Barbican Financial Review

All numbers in £000s



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Barbican Financial Review

Year ended 31 March 2025

	2024/25 £000s	2023/24 £000s	2022/23 £000s
Income			
Arts & Participation Programme	15,263	12,980	12,311
Public Funding (exc. Barbican Renewal)	21,516	19,045	19,661
- City of London	20,100	18,515	18,391
- Tax Relief	1,416	257	517
- Arts Council England	0	274	753
Donations, grants, sponsorships and memberships	3,495	2,602	3,316
Commercial activities	13,041	11,781	10,660
Other	311	455	400
Total income	**53,625**	**46,863**	**46,347**
Expenditure			
Arts & Participation Programme	25,157	20,368	19,181
Buildings and operations (exc. Barbican Renewal)	13,261	11,512	13,301
Donations, grants, sponsorships and memberships	1,129	1,023	881
Commercial activities	7,108	7,063	5,424
Other	9,505	7,231	7,220
Total Expenditure	**56,159**	**47,198**	**46,658**
Surplus/(Deficit)	(2,534)	(334)	(311)

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With thanks

Directors
David Farnsworth, Interim CEO
Ali Mirza, Deputy Interim CEO and Director of People, Culture and Inclusion
Jackie Boughton, Director of Commercial
Natasha Harris, Director of Development
Devyani Saltzman, Director for Arts and Participation
Phillippa Simpson, Director for Buildings and Renewal
Beau Vigushin, Director for Audiences

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BBC Symphony Orchestra
Academy of Ancient Music
Darbar Arts Culture Heritage Trust
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Los Angeles Philharmonic

Artistic Associates
(Theatre & Dance)
Boy Blue
Trafalgar Theatre Productions
Royal Shakespeare Company

Artistic Associates
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The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre

↗ Ibrahim Mahama: *Purple Hibiscus* © Dion Barrett / Barbican Centre

↖ The Barbican's Outdoor Cinema © Dion Barrett