

Barking & Dagenham

A NEW CULTURE & HERITAGE STRATEGY

PEOPLE

+

PLACE

+

CREATIVITY

=

POWER

2024

2030

A NEW CULTURE & HERITAGE STRATEGY

Barking & Dagenham

New Town Culture workshop with Arc Theatre and young people using social care services in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Photo: Jimmy Lee

**This strategy sets out the vision and action plan of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's Culture & Heritage Service over the next 5 years. In it we lay out our approach to collaborate closely with local people, cultural practitioners and organisations across civic society and creative sectors, and how we aim to deliver our work more effectively across Council departments and services.**

**In developing this strategy — comprised of six objectives and a corresponding detailed action plan — we have focused on three key areas:**



# PEOPLE

Artist Helen Cammock performing in Barking and Dagenham Council Chambers as part of Radio Ballads, a collaborative project by New Town Culture and Serpentine Galleries. Photo: Jimmy Lee

**Barking and Dagenham is a vibrant and diverse Borough, with a strong, evolving history we are proud of. As our local community grows and changes, we must continue to adapt our Culture and Heritage provision to meet the needs of everyone, ensuring all local residents feel welcome across our cultural and heritage, and are reflected in the programming and policy initiatives we deliver.**

**PEOPLE**



# PLACE

Students of Sydney Russel School enjoying themselves on 'Parsloes Memphis', a playground designed by artist Eva Rothschild in 2021 as part of the Council's Becontree Forever programme commemorating the centenary of the Becontree Estate. 'Parsloes Memphis' was co-commissioned by the Council and Create London, funded by London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy. Photo: Jim Stephenson

**The Culture & Heritage Service's key sites Eastbury Manor House, Valence House Museum, Archives and Local Studies Centre, the Women's Museum and the Galleon Arts Centre each hold within them the potential to courageously celebrate the intersection of identities, experiences and perspectives represented through our community. These sites are fertile platforms for fostering creativity and building understanding amongst local people.**

**Barking and Dagenham is also at the heart of the Thames Estuary Cultural Production Corridor, with a number of creative clusters focused on research, experimentation and advancements in new technologies emerging on the ground — from the international Eastbrook Studios and UCL's state-of-the-art research laboratory PEARL, both located at Dagenham East, to the Ice House Quarter and Linton Road arts and culture zones in Barking.**

**PLACE**



# CREATIVITY

New Town Culture creative practice workshop with social care staff in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Photo: Jimmy Lee

**We believe creativity plays a positive role in building a stronger society and in improving the lives of local people.**

**Beyond our sites, our programming, advocacy and policy focused initiatives cover key areas of Libraries Commissioning, sustained work in education, skill development and social care, and partnership building that fosters resilience, infrastructure and community development, amongst other areas. With the promise of a thriving hub of cultural production and research activity interconnected with the wider UK arts sector within reach, the key role the Council will play is to ensure this expanded cultural ecosystem is positively experienced in the lives of residents of the Borough.**

**CREATIVITY**

**PEOPLE**

**+**

**PLACE**

**+**

**CREATIVITY**

**=**

**POWER**

# THE CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP GROUP

Culture Canvas London founders Sèverine Howell-Meri and Kimberley Okoye participate in the inaugural B&D Soup, a regular idea-sharing and project-pitching networking dinner for Cultural Partnership Group members. Photo: Cultural Partnership Group

The Cultural Partnership Group (CPG) is a dynamic network uniting over 150 creative individuals, groups, and organisations in Barking & Dagenham. Initiated by the Council more than a decade ago in dialogue with the local creative community, more recently the CPG has received grant support through Arts Council England allowing the group to grow as an autonomous, collaborative hub committed to fostering an inclusive and vibrant cultural community.

By providing innovative programs, workshops, and bespoke sessions, the CPG has the potential to empower its members with the resources, training, and support needed to drive artistic innovation, address social challenges, and transform the region into a thriving cultural destination. Through its vision and values, the CPG will continue to shape a new and collective governance structure, working to promote open communication, diverse creative expressions, and active community engagement, making it a cornerstone for cultural development in the area.

## **THE CULTURAL PARTNERSHIP GROUP**

**1**

**Objective**

**Ensure culture and  
creativity are a powerful  
force to shape change  
in our borough**

**Objective**

**1**

1

## KEYWORDS

Objective

Local Needs, Collaboration,  
Community, Creativity,  
Advocacy, Place Shaping,  
Empowerment

Objective

1

**Corporate Plan Key Priority:**

Residents benefit from inclusive growth and regeneration

# HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

▶ **EMPLOY** complex, curious approaches reflecting the intersecting identities of local people at all stages of life

▶ **OUR** statutory responsibilities for accessing data and delivering Libraries Commissioning across all of our work in the Culture and Heritage Service, providing safe, inclusive spaces, programming and public services equitably to all

▶ **ENSURE** best practice in meeting our legal and statutory obligations to protect and care for our heritage sites, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, listed buildings and their historic significance for the benefit and continued use for residents and visitors

▶ **DEVELOP** accessible, high quality creative programming by using commissioning models and community participatory approaches that reflect the cultural heritage and broad range of lived experiences of local people

▶ **ENSURE** that barriers to participation and engagement are removed so that long-term access to cultural and heritage sites, programming and activities are available to all

▶ **DEVELOP** an open narrative and engagement with our community to better understand post-colonial legacies

▶ **WORK** with communities to develop contemporary collecting programme that is reflective of the borough and informs our future collections policy

# THE WOMEN'S MUSEUM

Family workshop at the opening weekend of the Women's Museum, March 2024. Photo: Miatta Coomber

Opened on International Women's Day in March 2024, the Women's Museum is a new social and cultural space adjacent to the historic Barking Abbey ruins, in the heart of our town centre. Through its socially-engaged programme of activities, events and exhibitions, the Women's Museum is building an evolving mandate to platform ideas, issues and histories relating to women, girls, trans and non-binary communities, both from the borough and beyond.

As the programme further develops, the space continues to become accessible to colleagues working across creative and social practices, hosting workshops like **Go Girls!** led by the Council's Vulnerable Adolescent Service and Arc Theatre's girls' empowerment programme **Raised Voices**, alongside artistic interventions and community gatherings.

# 2

**Develop vibrant cultural infrastructure across the borough, ensuring residents have access to arts, heritage and culture in their everyday lives through inclusive, community-centred schemes**

**Objective**

**Objective**

# 2

2

## KEYWORDS

Objective

Resilience,  
Buildings & Natural Environment,  
Conservation,  
Access & Inclusion

Objective

2

### Corporate Plan Key Priorities:

Residents benefit from inclusive growth and regeneration.

Residents live in, and play their part in creating, safer, cleaner, and greener neighbourhoods.

# HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

▶ **RESILIENCE** building and committing to the care of our collections (in line with recognized standards and statutory, legal and ethical requirements, as set out in the Museum Accreditation Guidelines and Archive Accreditation Guidelines), heritage green & blue spaces and cultural infrastructure including addressing conservation issues, resourcing, access and climate emergency

▶ **ACTIVE** fundraising and ongoing development of sustainable, long-term financial and operational models across sites and programming strands

▶ **COMMIT** to investing in our staff's knowledge and specialist skills to ensure strong custodianship of our cultural infrastructure into the future

▶ **WORK** more collaboratively with local communities, civic society sectors and departments across Council areas to improve our services including partnering more closely with: Parks and Environment, Sustainability and Climate, Public Realm, Highways, Assets, Communications, Homes, Environment & Communities, Be First, Reside amongst others

▶ **DEVELOP** better consultation pathways for local residents to feed into the development and change happening within the borough, to ensure we shape and protect our cultural assets into the future

▶ **WORK** with key partners to foster innovative, high quality cultural infrastructure to meet our full potential as a Creative Growth Cluster in London, supporting inclusive growth with our partners in the film, food, education and museum industries

▶ **ENSURE** the care and conservation of the listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments are maintained to the highest standards in line with best practice, to meet the needs of Conservation Management Plans, Government Indemnity Scheme, Quinquennial Reports, VAQAS, Vision & Masterplans, Loan Agreements

# CONSERVATION OF OUR BUILT AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Valence House Museum's **Dig for Victory** garden contains a replica Anderson Shelter, vegetable patch, wildflowers and mural by artist Jake Attewell, made in collaboration with school children from Robert Clack School. The mural **Mr May's Garden** depicts the arrival of farmer Thomas May to the Dagenham area in 1879 when he turned the grounds of the historic Valence House into a successful market garden which sold produce at the London Markets. Photo: Ann Marie Peña

From late 2024 onwards, improvements will be taking place across Valence House and grounds as part of a funded programme of conservation and restoration works. The Council will be investing capital funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Levelling Up Funding and the Arts Council England's Museum Estates Development Fund to improve our important heritage for local communities and future generations. This funding, along with our own investment, will ensure the protection and care of our built and natural heritage and help to meet the Council's carbon neutral commitment.

Valence House is a unique heritage asset and the only surviving manor house in Dagenham, dating back to Medieval times. Works include restoration of the 13th Century moated enclosure to restore natural habitats and biodiversity, urgent roof repair works to the Visitor Centre and Local Studies Centre & Archives, and conservation investigations which will allow us to better understand the Medieval timber fabric of the Grade II\* listed building.

## **CONSERVATION OF BUILT AND NATURAL HERITAGE**

# A HOUSE FOR ARTISTS

Still life drawing class, part of A House for Artists' free civic and cultural programme of activities and workshops for the local community. Photo: Julia Foresman

A House for Artists is an ambitious, socially-engaged project which seeks to address the urgent need for affordable, long-term housing and workspace for creatives living in Barking and Dagenham. Winner of the RIBA Client of the Year Award for London and the Neave Brown Award for Housing in 2023, A House for Artists was designed by architects Apparata and co-commissioned London Borough of Barking & Dagenham and Create London.

The building - delivered by Be First Regeneration and supported by the GLA - offers 14 resident artists reduced rent in exchange for providing free creative programmes to the local community from a communal ground floor space. This approach tests new possibilities for social housing models in the borough, piloting new models of how community needs can be met and challenging existing operating frameworks. A House for Artists also considers different strategies to meet the needs of an evolving creative sector.

## **A HOUSE FOR ARTISTS**

# 3

Objective

**Support delivery of the borough's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, ensuring we support the three key themes: "best start in life", "ageing well" and "living well"**

Objective

# 3

3

## KEYWORDS

Objective

Health, Wellbeing,  
Children & Young People,  
Structural Inequalities,  
Intergenerational

Objective

### Corporate Plan Key Priority:

Residents are safe, protected, and supported at their most vulnerable.  
Residents live healthier, happier, independent lives for longer.

3

# HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

▶ **DELVE** deeper into our work in care services by growing and building resilience in our New Town Culture programme and the Women's Museum, focusing particularly on our work with Women and Girls and in Youth Justice.

▶ **WORK** in close partnership with key external partners and national stakeholders to deliver ambitious, high quality initiatives which build on the burgeoning culture sector in the borough

▶ **ACROSS** our programming strands we will build on the borough's health and wellbeing agenda, using cultural and creative approaches to address and reflect our key priorities

▶ **PRIORITISE** inclusive, intergenerational programming throughout the calendar year for people both young and elderly, reflecting both the needs of our older residents and our current data which shows we are the youngest borough per capita in the country

▶ **IMPROVE** access to Heritage Green spaces to provide healthy, pleasant and safe environments for people of all abilities at all stages of life

▶ **DEVELOP** operational models that meet the needs of our community at all life stages, recognising the role of our heritage and cultural venues as key community hubs, supporting access, engagement and participation

# NEW TOWN CULTURE

New Town Culture creative practice workshop with social care staff in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Photo: Jimmy Lee

New Town Culture is a curatorial project based within the operational heart of Barking and Dagenham Council. Working directly at the intersection of contemporary art practice and social care services, the programme has led to systemic changes in how social care and youth justice is practiced in the borough.

Having developed acclaimed partnership projects with local and national cultural organisations, curators and artists, New Town Culture has become a platform for commissioning groundbreaking training, research and tools, including a new MA Course Module in Creative Social Work with Goldsmith's University. As the project evolves in the coming years, New Town Culture will continue to embed this work within Children's and Adults Care and Support Services within the council, to help bring culture and creativity into the daily practices and systems of social care and civic society.

# 4

**Champion the creative sector  
on the ground by supporting  
growth and skill development  
for culture and heritage  
organisations, staff, and  
individual artists working  
in the borough**

**Objective**

**Objective**

# 4

4

## KEYWORDS

Capacity, Growth,  
Advocacy, Pathways,  
Good Practice,  
Empowerment

Objective

Objective

4

### Corporate Plan Key Priorities:

Residents are supported during the current Cost of Living Crisis.  
Residents prosper from good education, skills development, and secure employment.  
Residents benefit from inclusive growth and regeneration.

# HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

▶ **UNDERTAKE** collective approaches to organisational and individual development led through a new collaborative framework initiated by the Cultural Partnership Group

▶ **ONGOING** support for creative sector skill development schemes which benefit local residents and wider culture and heritage communities

▶ **SUSTAINED**, long term fundraising campaigns and partnership building to further develop our curatorial, commissioning and programming strands that benefit the creative sector on the ground



# PEN TO PRINT

Year 10 school children from Barking and Dagenham and their teachers at the Hay Festival in Hay-on-Wye, Wales, taking part in the global festival of stories, ideas and new possibilities. Photo: Pen to Print

Pen to Print is a creative writing programme embedded directly in Barking and Dagenham's library services, providing a safe and collaborative environment for writers, poets and storytellers at all levels of experience to gain access to free events, classes and workshops. As an Arts Council England funded National Portfolio Organisation, over the past decade Pen to Print have curated Barking and Dagenham's annual literary festival, ReadFest, which has brought a diversity of acclaimed writers, journalists, thinkers and storytellers to the borough including Lemn Sissay (Let the Light Pour In, 2023) and Dr. Janina Ramirez (Femina, 2022).

Over the years Pen to Print have continued to create a supportive community of storytellers who, through a varied programme, have gained invaluable social and professional skills. Their Write On! suite of publications continues to offer editorial experience and volunteering opportunities for aspiring writers and journalists, whilst Pen to Print's annual Young People's Writing Retreat offers local students the opportunity to stay at the Council's Trewern Outdoor Education Centre in Herefordshire, and take part in the global-reaching Hay Festival of Literature and Arts.

**5**

**Build our strategic approach  
to bring visitors to our borough,  
sharing our cultural initiatives  
more widely and linking  
to broader creative sector  
networks across London  
and the UK**

**Objective**

**Objective**

**5**

5

## KEYWORDS

Objective

Audiences, Participation,  
Networks, Communication,  
Public Realm

Objective

5

**Corporate Plan Key Priority:**

Residents benefit from inclusive growth and regeneration.

## HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

▶ **IMPROVE** our communications and work with local organisations to network our approach sharing our local creative sector's vibrant culture and heritage offer

▶ **LINK** to wider creative and heritage sectors through the development of strong partnerships with wider London and UK organisations and networks

▶ **SUPPORT** the development of new public realm, green and blue infrastructure design and wayfinding initiatives to improve the experiences of residents and visitors to our borough, working in partnership with Be First, Parks Commissioning, local community partners and internal council stakeholders



# COMPANY DRINKS

Photo: Company Drinks CIC

Company Drinks is a community space and cultural enterprise based in the Outdoor Bowls Club in Barking Park. Referring to themselves as “Good Company” and “an ecosystem that is shaped by the interests of its users, members, collaborators, and the seasons”, Company Drinks has developed as a community-centred, supportive network in which resources and knowledge are shared alongside the co-production of food, drinks, art and social projects.

A deep commitment to social change and supporting sustainable livelihoods is evident through Company Drinks’ innovative model for co-working and sharing space. Keeping a sustained focus on nurturing local culture and the living world, the users of the site collectively refer to themselves as the Dandelion Circles, and together they share access to a production kitchen, a club room and a community garden, where their work has a positive impact on the wellbeing of communities from the borough and beyond. With funding and support from BD Giving and Lankelly Chase (2020-2023), Company Drinks previously tested programmes of participatory funding for members of the Dandelion Circles to come together, learn skills, access resources, plan collaborative working systems, and identify shared goals and values for co-existing in Barking Park together. Over the coming years this work will continue to inform and inspire social and cultural practitioners on the ground throughout the borough.

## **COMPANY DRINKS**

# 6

**Develop a robust, high quality creative offer for people at all life stages through formal, informal and work-based learning, ensuring residents have access to engaging opportunities and stronger pathways to careers in the creative industries.**

**Objective**

**Objective**

# 6

6

## KEYWORDS

Objective

Learning, Skills, Pathways,  
Careers, Creativity, Inclusion,  
Systemic Change,  
Volunteering

Objective

6

### Corporate Plan Key Priorities:

Residents prosper from good education, skills development, and secure employment.

# HOW WILL WE DO THIS?

▶ **ENSURE** all children and young people in our borough's schools visit our heritage sites to learn about the borough's culture and heritage through our Sandford Award winning Heritage Education Programme

▶ **CONTINUE** development of our sector skills initiatives supporting residents to access good jobs and careers in food, film and other creative industries, working in partnership with industry partners, creative practitioners and educational organisations both in the borough and beyond

▶ **CONTINUE** to work with our university partners, such as Goldsmith's, University College London and Queen Mary University London to deliver students placements and our MA Course Module in Creativity and Social Care through our New Town Culture programme

▶ **SUPPORT** the ongoing development of our National Portfolio Organisation Pen-to-Print to ensure residents at all life stages have access to high-quality writing, reading and related programmes

▶ **WORK** closely with the Culture Education Partnership and creative sector partners to develop alternative education provision for young people at risk of exclusion from school



# OUR HOUSE

**Inspiring Futures: LBD Cultural Education Partnership** workshop at Eastbury Manor House, with students from Jo Richardson Community School and professionals from Wow! Marketing Ltd. Photo: Martin Russell

Our House is a 3-year research and delivery project funded through Arts Council England's Place Partnership scheme, which explores how alternative education provision can be transformed through creativity and social practice. Working innovatively across the Council's Education, Culture and Heritage Services, the project takes place in schools across Barking and Dagenham, as well as two historic heritage spaces - Eastbury Manor House and Valence House Museum and Archives. Taking a collaborative approach with local artistic partners Green Shoes Arts and Ideate Education, the project will culminate in a new, robust creative offer for alternative education, and a youth archive created by the young people involved in the three year research and development process.

Seen as a step change to how the Council embeds creativity directly in within our alternative education provision, Our House, working with New Town Culture, will deliver continuing professional development opportunities for council, partner organisations and school staff, covering topics such as radical safeguarding and working with SEND young people, while also offering hands on workshops for young people from the borough. Through Our House, hundreds of students will have the opportunity to not only visit local heritage spaces, but to take them over with their own creative expression.

## **OUR HOUSE**



# BECONTREE BROADCASTING STATION

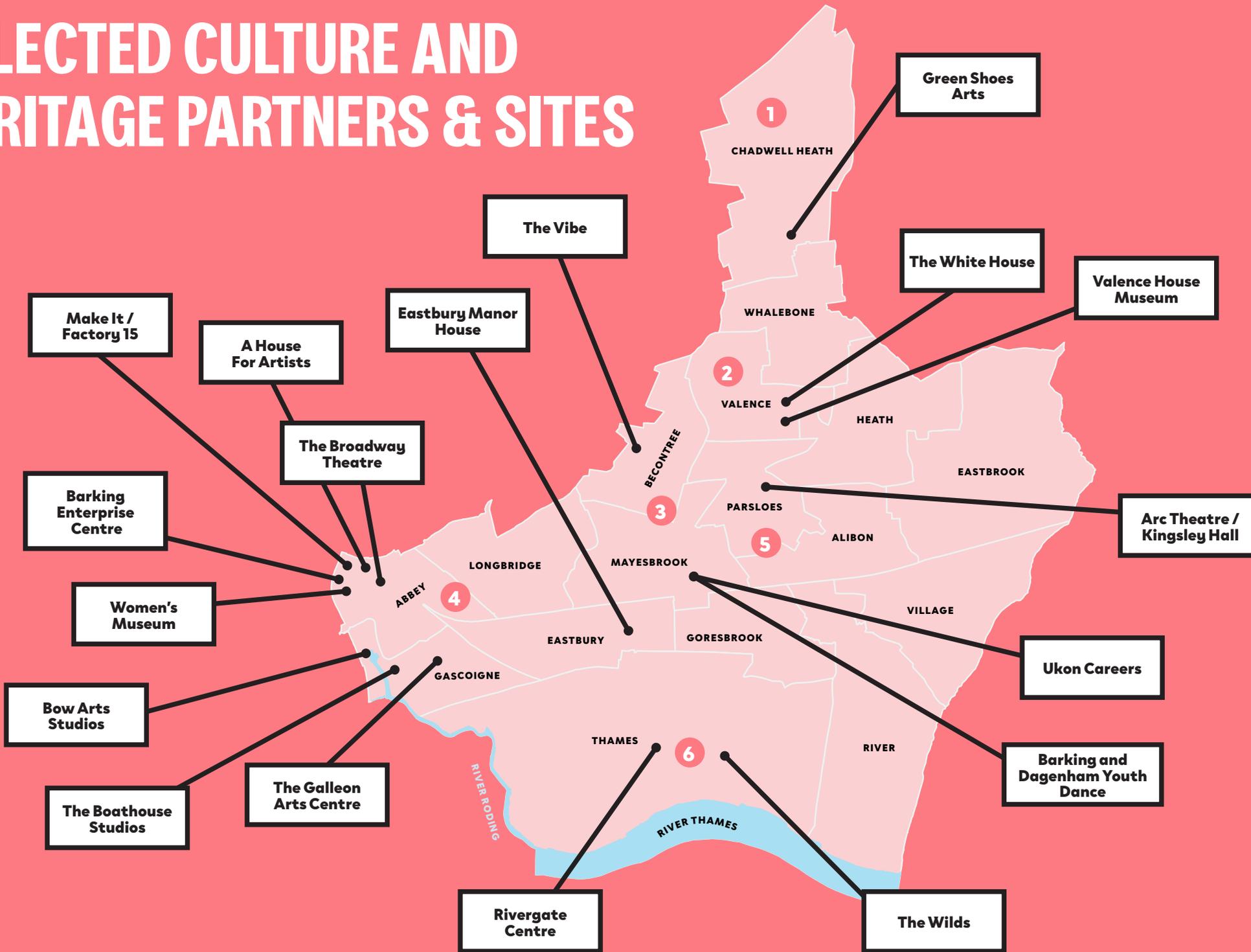
Live street interviews with residents, performers and organizers at UKON Careers' Barking and Dagenham Carnival are conducted by Becontree Broadcast Station's Victoria Machar. Photo: Ann Marie Peña

Following a pilot phase with Serpentine Galleries and Artist-in-Residence Joe Namy, Becontree Broadcasting Station was co-created in 2021 with Barking and Dagenham residents as part of our Becontree Forever centenary programme, rolling out as an online platform to amplify the lived experience, social and creative expressions of our diverse communities. At its core, Becontree Broadcast Station is designed to unlock the creative capacity of local people to make, produce and experience art irrespective of their age and background.

As it continues to grow over the next 2 years, the station will continue to evolve through an iterative process of co-design and co-creation, ensuring residents of the borough have meaningful opportunities to learn new skills, while building a greater sense of community agency and ownership. To date Becontree Broadcast Station has trialled a paid traineeship scheme, and piloted collaborations with a huge array of local partners including: Mayesbrook Primary School, Ab Phab Youth Club, This Girls Ability Youth Club, Arc Theatre, BD Project Youth Club, and the Council's own flagship New Town Culture programme which saw young people in safeguarding services, including refugees and asylum seekers, learn new skills and share their stories.

## **BECONTREE BROADCASTING STATION**

# SELECTED CULTURE AND HERITAGE PARTNERS & SITES



- 1 Chadwell Heath and Whalebone Community Hub
- 2 Valence Community Hub
- 3 Mark's Gate Community and Family Hub
- 4 Barking Learning Centre Community and Family Hub
- 5 Dagenham Learning Centre Community and Family Hub
- 6 Thames Community Hub

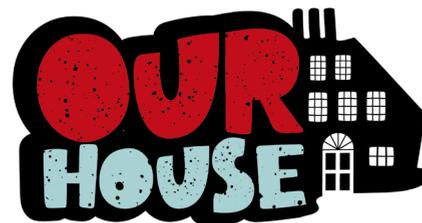
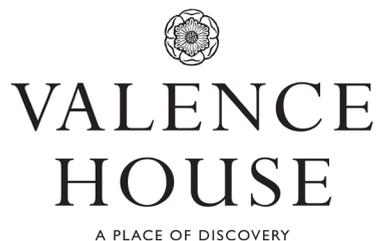
**The Culture and Heritage Service will deliver on our six Strategic Objectives through a detailed Action Plan of our activities from 2024 through 2030, laying out our programmes, services and ongoing commitments to residents. The Action Plan will be updated regularly to reflect emerging priorities, ongoing partnerships and evolving contexts within the borough, ensuring our work continue to meet the needs of local people, cultural practitioners and the organisations we partner with across civic society, education and creative sectors.**

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD ACTION PLAN](#)

**OUR ACTION PLAN**



**WOMEN'S  
MUSEUM**



**Barking &  
Dagenham**