



# OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL 2023 EVALUATION REPORT



In partnership with







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Photography: Sonny Malhotra



**227K TOTAL ESTIMATED VISITS**  
**122K SPONTANEOUS VISITORS**  
**105K REGISTERED VISITORS**  
**(+52% VS 2022)**



**61% OF VISITORS FELT**  
**MORE CONNECTED TO**  
**LONDON**



**51% VISITORS SAID IT**  
**GAVE THEM A MORE**  
**POSITIVE VIEW OF LONDON**



**98% OF VISITORS**  
**ENJOYED THE FESTIVAL**  
**AND WOULD RECOMMEND**  
**IT TO OTHERS**



**85% OF VISITORS HAD**  
**NEVER ACCESSED THESE**  
**SPACES BEFORE**



**90% OF PLACES FEATURED IN**  
**THE FESTIVAL PROGRAMME ARE**  
**NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**  
**YEAR-ROUND**



**60% OF CONTRIBUTORS**  
**TOOK PART TO STRENGTHEN**  
**LINKS WITH THEIR**  
**COMMUNITY**



**£7 MILLION DIRECT**  
**VISITOR SPEND IN**  
**THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

**“**  
**It is essential,**  
**invaluable and a**  
**true gift for the**  
**people of London.”**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Was this the best Open House Festival yet? Not just the big numbers achieved across the whole of London, but the quality of experience seems to suggest it was. We like to describe our much-cherished festival as an agent of community cohesion, wellbeing and learning. Across every Borough of London, 710 people opened their places to an estimated **226,858 visits**, who spent around **£7m in the local economy**.

Those are the quantitative numbers, and the qualitative were even better - a stunning **98% enjoyed their visit**, and the same number would recommend it to friends. **61% felt more connected to London** as a result of the festival and **51% said it improved their view of London**. The most common feelings visitors reported during their visit were **interested (83%), curious (72%), connected to London (61%) and impressed (61%)** but also **happy (60%)** and included and connected to other people (57% combined).

And 54% were up for learning more, they said Open House Festival encouraged them to research one or more of the buildings or areas.

Many will have noticed the reappearance of iconic buildings such as BT Tower and 10 Downing Street and in the introduction of new buildings such as Tower Bridge Moorings. In total, we put together **18 different collections and 14 special neighbourhoods** and most visitors used these to plan their festival. Our range of new Guest Curators and City Curators ensured that new, diverse and younger voices added depth of interest and new perspectives to the places that were featured and the stories told. Our Guest Curators explored themes such as food and how connecting architectural spaces with diasporic eateries within the city can change our experiences of a neighbourhood. Similarly, the City Curators produced collections and events that championed lesser known architectures within the city.





Measured against our mission to make London more accessible, it's worth noting that **90% of places weren't freely open to the public normally**. But we note that only 4% of visitors said they had disabilities mapped against the London average of 16%, this is an area for us to investigate in future.

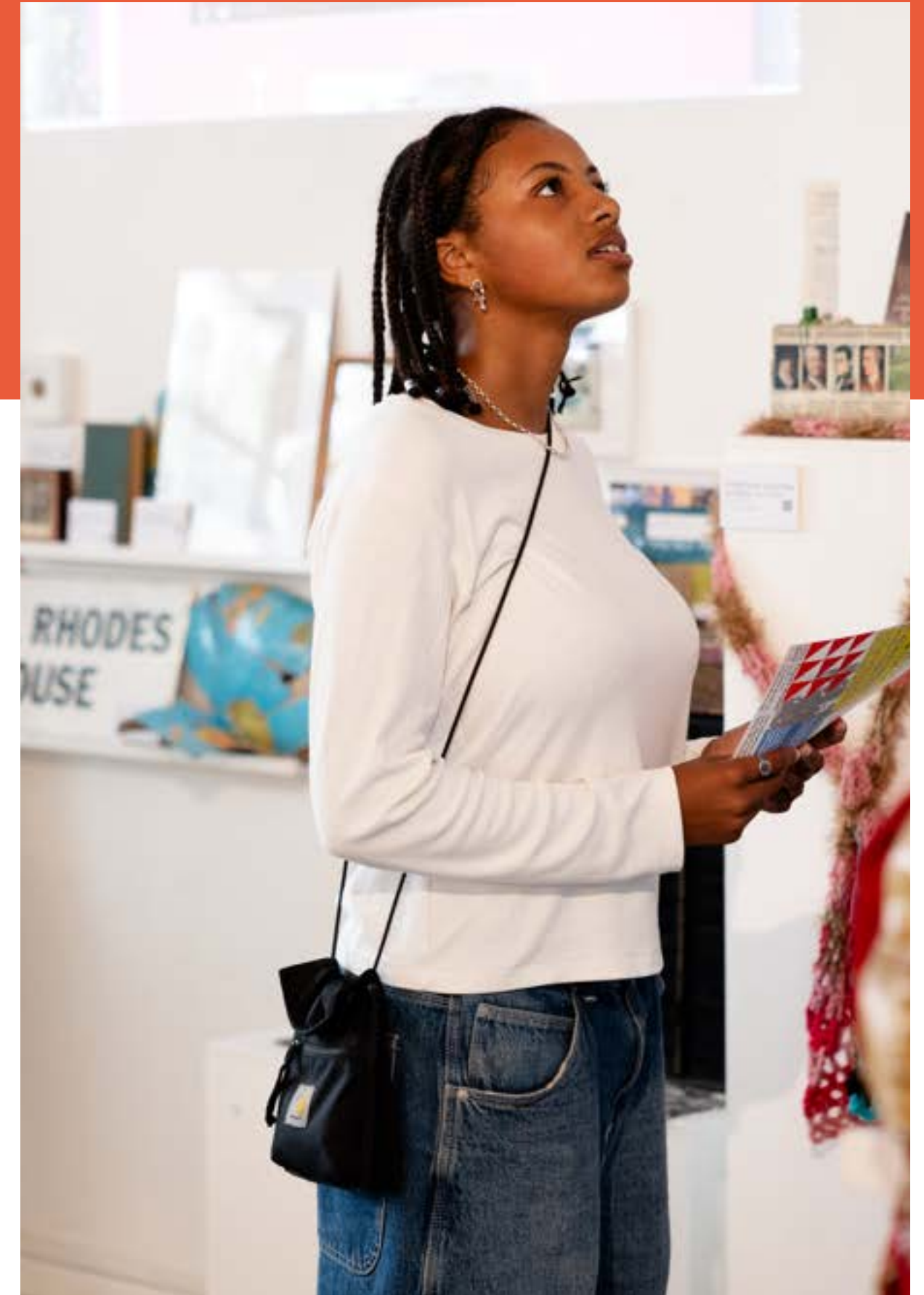
Open House Festival is a collective effort and our thanks go first to the 710 contributors who opened their places and ran events, we couldn't do it without you! We hope that this year's contributors pack, online surgeries and updated registration system made your lives easier, we take heart that **90% of you would recommend engagement with Open House Festival!** We must also thank the London Boroughs, the local authorities across London who provide their local expert knowledge and time to ensure the festival is tailored to local needs and their annual subscription to keep the festival free to enter.

Thanks to the 700 volunteers for giving up their time and enthusiasm to support the festival events, including the tight team of office volunteers who answered hundreds of queries, approached previous participants and even boxed up the contributors' pack for postage.

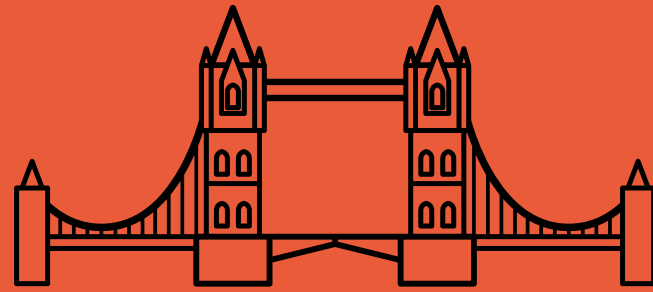
And last but not least, we must give thanks to our new headline partner Airbnb, their generous support enabled us to support contributors and promote the festival on a wider scale than ever before. We share the philosophy of welcoming strangers into our homes and providing local community experiences.

*London is indeed a city best shared.*

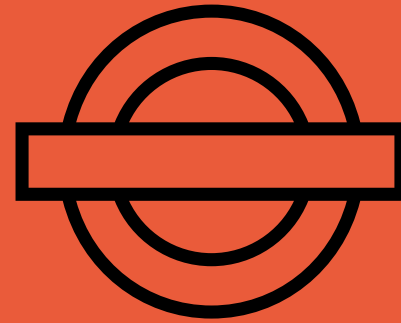
Celia Mead, Simon Vickery, Hafsa Adan,  
Chris Fisher and Kira Wheeler  
**Open House Festival Team**



**“It reminded me that hidden behind unassuming facades, there is extraordinary, architecture, and stories.**



**78% OF VISITORS WERE LONDONERS**



**90% OF VISITORS USED SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT**



**86% OF VISITORS HAD NO ARCHITECTURAL SPECIALISM**



**54% OF VISITORS SAID THE FESTIVAL ENCOURAGED THEM TO RESEARCH BUILDINGS AND/OR AREAS**



**302K UNIQUE USERS TO THE OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL WEBSITE (+17% vs 2022)**



**90% OF CONTRIBUTORS WOULD RECOMMEND TAKING PART**



# VOLUNTEERING

Over 700 people gave their time to volunteer at this year's festival. In many cases, contributors would not be able to take part without this support, so we depend on a volunteer community that is very engaged with the festival and its mission.

We have a dedicated cohort of volunteers who support us year on year, but we are also making progress on growing and diversifying that pool. **27% of this year's festival volunteers** were getting involved for the first time, up from 20% last year, while **21% were from diverse backgrounds,**

**compared to 17% last year.** While there is undoubtedly much more work to do here, this year represents a move in the right direction.

Respondents to our survey repeatedly emphasised the ways in which taking part as a festival volunteer deepened their sense of connection to the city and to other people.





**“ I saw a fascinating building and met interesting people.”**

**“Re-energised my love for London.”**

**“Very inclusive! Great experience!”**

**“I am a Londoner, so I love learning about the buildings that fascinate me across the city every year during Open House Festival. Becoming a keystone supporter and being a volunteer in the festival every year has only deepened in a very satisfying way my engagement with London's built environment.**

**”**







# CURATORIAL DIRECTION

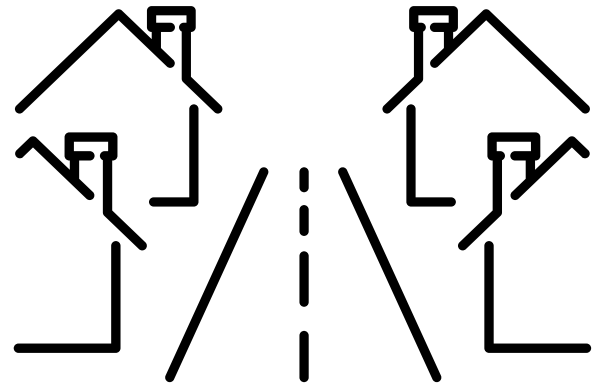
There were **18 different collections** in the festival this year. The Guest Curators made up six of these collections and the City Curators made up three.

Through their collections, our Guest Curators explored themes such as **food, housing, community and decolonisation** and how we can engage with these themes through the buildings and spaces in our city.

The inaugural City Curators cohort curated three collections and three events which ran during the festival. These collections and events were the culmination of three weeks of workshops, research and curatorial exploration in their respective chosen themes.

Programmes such as Guest Curators and City Curators as well as the festival collections are a popular way for visitors to explore the programme. It is an engaging and digestible way for festival goers to plan their visits based on themes, typography and areas of interest.

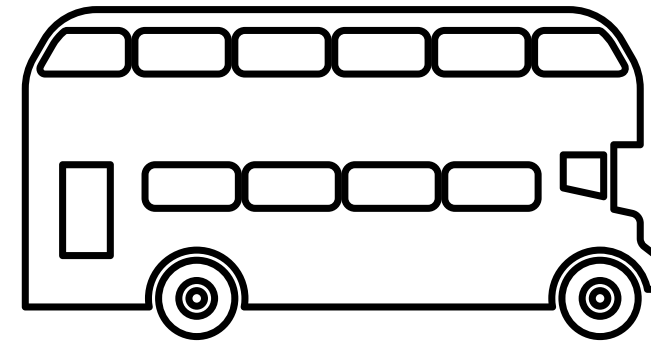




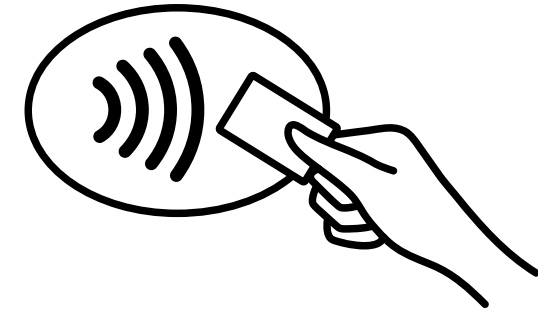
**71% OF VISITORS SAID THE  
MAIN REASON TO VISIT AN  
AREA WAS THE FESTIVAL**



**72% OF VISITORS DID OTHER  
THINGS AS WELL AS THE  
FESTIVAL WHILE VISITING**



**90% OF VISITORS USED  
SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT  
TO VISIT EVENTS**



**AVERAGE DIRECT SPEND WAS  
£31 PER VISITOR  
(INCLUDING TRAVEL)**



**There is so much more to London than we usually have a chance to experience, so having this festival is one great way of learning more about this glorious city.”**

**“I feel like the iconic elements of London rarely let you in....And then there's this magic window, and suddenly you get to enter this parallel universe.**









# BOROUGH PARTNERS

The Open House Festival is able to open buildings across each of the 33 London Boroughs because we work in partnership with these local authorities, identifying the different strategic priorities, whether cultural, tourism, community cohesion, or simply increasing footfall, learning, diversity or sustainability. Our charitable business model is built on the modest annual subscription contributed by the London Boroughs, so that both visitors and their local contributors who open their buildings can do so free of charge.

This year culture, heritage and regeneration officers became co-curators on our database,

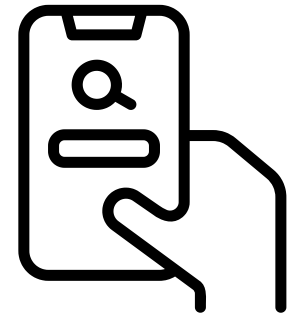
helping us to recruit new buildings and identifying potential 'neighbourhoods'. In total we created 14 neighbourhoods and two Borough based collections together. Vanessa Norwood was guest curator for the City of London with a wonderful collection of beautiful sustainable buildings. An amazing 16% of visitors claimed to have visited City of London festival openings. In Enfield, local officers created an Industrial Collection to fit with their strategy. Croydon was London's Borough of Culture and put extra effort into a great collection, while Hounslow experimented with a new Neighbourhood in Brentford, as well as Isleworth, Haringey curated no fewer than three new

Neighbourhoods, Bruce Grove, Tottenham Hale and Wood Green.

The Greater London Authority (GLA) curated the Mayor's Good Growth Collection. This was a selection of 13 best practice, innovative regeneration projects supported by the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan's £75 million investment programme in London's communities. Open City made short video reels of each, the first seven gained 115,995 views by late September, published across Tiktok, Twitter and Instagram.



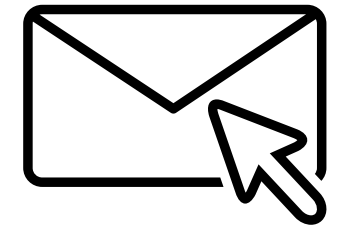
# NEIGHBOURHOODS



**37,338 USERS OF THE  
NEIGHBOURHOOD  
COLLECTIONS PAGE OF THE  
FESTIVAL WEBSITE**



**60% OF VISITORS SAID THEY  
USED THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND  
/ OR COLLECTIONS WEBPAGE TO  
PLAN THEIR VISITS**



**NEIGHBOURHOOD  
COLLECTIONS SHARED WITH  
OUR 66K SUBSCRIBER VIA  
EMAIL NEWSLETTERS**

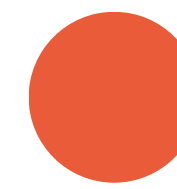
Festival neighbourhoods enable visitors to travel between different Open House Festival events by foot, ensuring they can visit multiple venues in one day with ease, whilst browsing the surrounding area along the way.

First trialled in 2022, for this year's festival there were 16 neighbourhood collections across eight different London boroughs, including this year's London Borough of Culture, Croydon.

The neighbourhood collections pages of the festival website attracted 37,338 unique users on the website throughout the festival. All neighbourhood collections were shared with our 66,000 email subscribers.



# BOROUGHES



= HAD AN ARRANGED OHF NEIGHBOURHOOD/S



## BARKING & DAGENHAM

Highlight: Regenerational Trail



## BARNET

Highlight: 1923 Northern Line Extension



## BRENT

Highlight: BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir



## BROMLEY

Highlight: Clockwise Offices at Bromley Old Town Hall



## CAMDEN

Highlight: Winscombe Street 1960s Terrace



## CITY OF LONDON

Highlight: The New Museum of London



## CROYDON

London Borough of Culture  
Highlight: South Norwood Library



## EALING

Highlight: Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery



## ENFIELD

Highlight: Bloqs Factory



## GREENWICH

Highlight: East Greenwich Fire Station



## HACKNEY

Highlight: 195 Mare Street



## HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Highlight: William Morris Society, Kelmscott House





### HARRINGEY

Highlight: Harringey New Council Homes Exhibition



### HARROW

Highlight: Harrow Old Speech Room Gallery



### HAVERING

Highlight: The Round House



### HILLINGDON

Highlight: Baitul Amn Mosque



### HOUNSLOW

Highlight: Hounslow Sri Guru Singh Sabha



### ISLINGTON

Highlight: Tours of the National Youth Theatre



### KENSINGTON & CHELSEA

Highlight: Royal Chelsea Hospital, Home of the Chelsea Pensioners



### KINGSTON UPON THAMES

Highlight: Kingston Library



### LAMBETH

Highlight: Waterloo City Farm



### LEWISHAM

Highlight: DEEP SPACE





## MERTON

Highlight: Wimbledon Windmill



## NEWHAM

Highlight: East House, The Story of a Self Built Home



## REDBRIDGE

Highlight: Valentines Mansion and Gardens



## RICHMOND UPON THAMES

Highlight: Pope's Grotto



## SOUTHWARK

Highlight: The Secret Garden Flat



## SUTTON

Highlight: Whitehall Historic House



## TOWER HAMLETS

Highlight: Neuron Pod at Queen Mary University of London



## WALTHAM FOREST

Highlight: Havant House 53



## WANDSWORTH

Highlight: Alton Estate



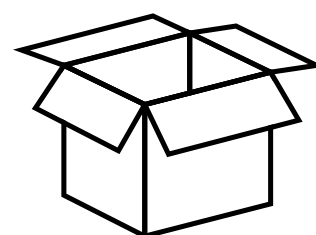
## WESTMINSTER

Highlight: National Portrait Gallery Architecture Tour

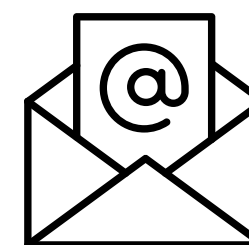




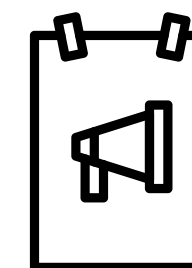
# MARKETING & COMMS



**630 contributor packs  
shared across London**



**42% average open rate of  
Open House Festival emails  
(219,523 opens)**



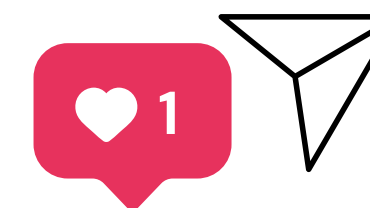
**22,751,023 total estimated impacts  
from Tube advertising campaign**



**Featured on the Guardian, Timeout,  
the Evening Standard, Wallpaper  
Magazine and BBC News**



**94.5k video views on Tiktok  
79.2k unique users on  
Tiktok\***



**71.2k reach on Instagram  
49% increase in engagement\***

\*from when the festival programme went live





# LESSONS AND NEW IDEAS FOR 2024

We are committed to being London-wide and free to visit - we think this drives the scale of the festival. To continue to achieve this, we will endeavour to work with every London Borough to understand local strategies and together curate collections and even more Neighbourhoods which meet their needs and unique aspects. In some places we may be able to create special themed collections, supported by extra marketing. We will offer Boroughs bidding for London Borough of Culture extra support.

We have something special to bring to London in terms of social impact and developing measurable improvement in growing their love of London and sense of belonging, as well as the sheer enjoyment, so we will look at new ways to develop and celebrate those outcomes.





We want to excel at providing access, beyond our expertise in opening the doors to normally closed places - we will address the low numbers of visitors identifying as having a disability, relative to the London population, starting with further analysis of the issues and bringing in specialist advice. We will look at how our initiatives animating festival sites and supporting young people from under-represented communities to access the programme might be developed further.

We deepened our relationship with contributors in 2023 after a few years of disruption, through online surgeries and the Contributors pack, and we will find ways of doing more to create and support a community of contributors, who learn from one another too.

Guest Curators provide a bold and diverse range of voices and the City Curators programme engages young people from our education programmes, we will find new Guest Curators and expand our City Curators next year.

We secured iconic buildings into the festival again, indeed the ballots were oversubscribed by many thousands - next year we will identify yet more iconic buildings to take part in the festival again or for the first time.

We aimed for 600 buildings in the festival and overshot by 110, but still “sold out”!



In 2023 we prioritised the website over print, and focussed on making it as user friendly as possible - our research told us that 78% found it user-friendly but there were suggestions from 19% of visitors for improvements, especially around search. And we received just a few comments on the lack of a printed guidebook, suggesting that a fit-for-purpose website is indeed the preference of the great majority of visitors. Producing video reels for the Greater London Authority showed there is a huge appetite for video and we will try to build in more of this alternative form of access.

This year we made good progress in recruiting younger, more diverse volunteers for the festival. For next year, we will be looking at new channels through which to engage younger volunteers in particular.

Behind the scenes, 81% of contributors found registration and listing straightforward, but 15% did not, so we will endeavour to simplify and communicate our curatorial criteria and approval process, offer more online surgeries and improvements to our processes in a timely manner. In some places, despite being almost completely booked out, we became aware that bookers did not always show up. We will look at ways to ensure these visiting opportunities are not wasted. We will further support “drop-ins” as a method of maximising visits.

And finally, to reflect on the evaluation process itself, we worked with an independent evaluator who constructed surveys that were interesting to complete and therefore received more response, as well as providing actionable outcomes which will feed into the wider charity's strategies. We think it might even help teach others good practice, so next year we'll get going earlier on our surveys and share them in advance!





# PARTNERS

Thank you to all Open House Festival 2023 partners, your support keeps us going!

## Headline Partner



## Partners

Foster + Partners

MARGARET HOWELL

Christina Smith Foundation

MAYOR OF LONDON

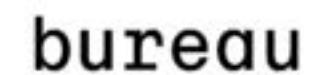


ALLFORD HALL  
MONAGHAN MORRIS

## Borough Partners



CROYDON  
www.croydon.gov.uk





# EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST IN SPONSORSHIP OR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OPEN HOUSE FESTIVAL 2024



Want to be part of our iconic festival through:

- warm brand awareness
- strong reach across London
- measurable social outcomes - from wellbeing, belonging, community building, sustainability to learning and discovering
- cultural impact
- or something else to suggest with Open City?

Please talk to us about how you can be involved:

[celia@open-city.org.uk](mailto:celia@open-city.org.uk)

**OPEN HOUSE  
FESTIVAL** 

[www.open-city.org.uk](http://www.open-city.org.uk)

Charity No. 1072104.