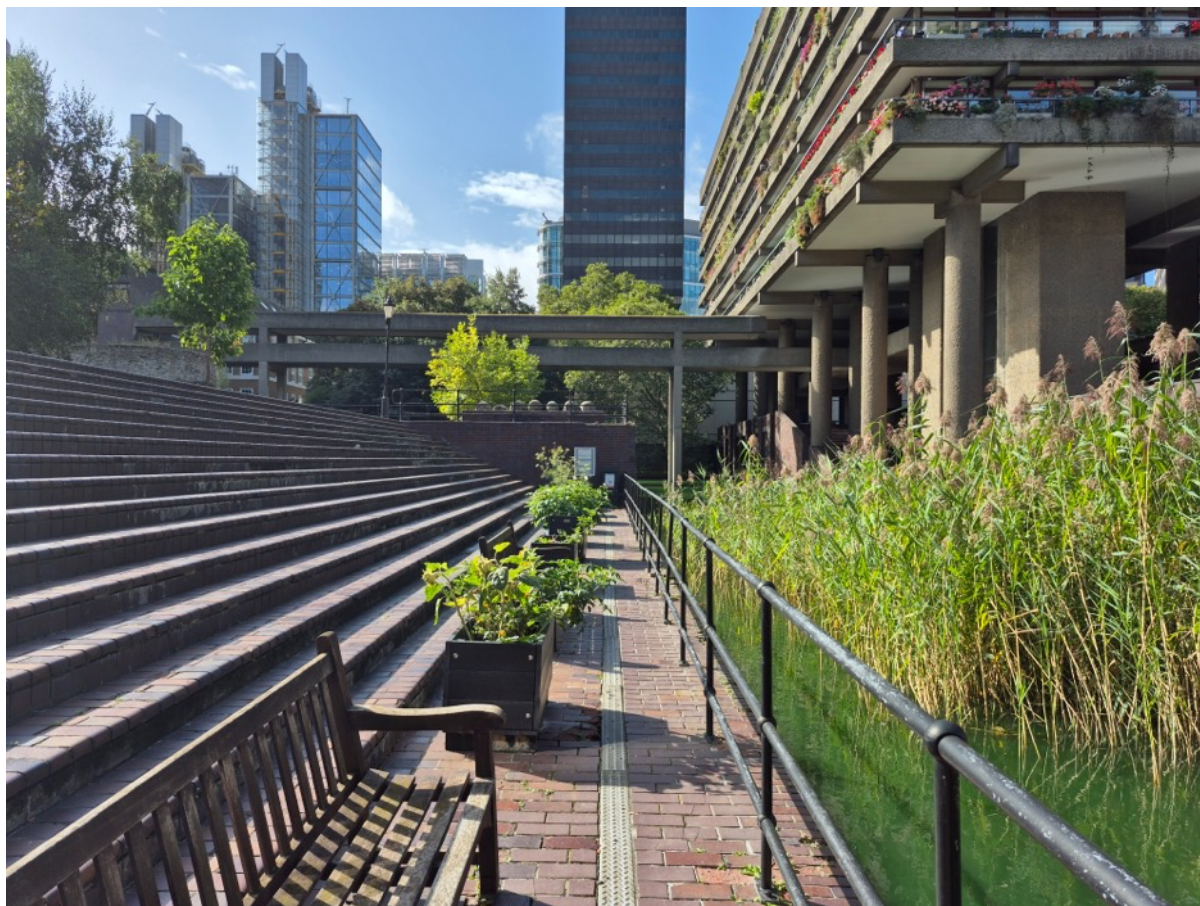


Open Call Seeds in the City



Urban Farm, City of London Girls' School

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The Commission

London Festival of Architecture (LFA), powered by NLA – London’s built environment community, is partnering with Culture Mile BID to commission the design, fabrication and installation of a temporary community pavilion in the City of London. Working in close collaboration with City of London Girls’ School (CLGS) and St. Giles Cripplegate Church, we are commissioning a team to develop an experimental structure within the iconic Barbican Estate, where both institutions are located.

We are inviting emerging architects, landscape architects, designers and artists to propose a pavilion that will act as a flexible, civic space for community-led activity during the London Festival of Architecture, in June 2026. The winning team will design a structure capable of supporting a diverse programme of uses, including talks, creative workshops and educational sessions focused on food growing, planting, sustainability and climate change.

Proposals should use the temporary pavilion as a testing ground for new spatial, material and programmatic ideas. Designs should incorporate a greenhouse element and storage for basic tools and growing materials, enabling hands-on learning and practical community use. The temporary pavilion will also act as a prototype, informing the design and function of a future permanent structure that could remain in situ on the terrace as a hub for ongoing community activity.

This competition has two rounds. Four teams will be shortlisted for Round 2, each receiving an honorarium of £500 + VAT to develop their design proposals. The winning team will be confirmed in March 2026 and awarded a total fee of £50,000 + VAT to develop a fully costed, feasible design for the structure.

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Context

Culture Mile BID is the newest Business Improvement District within the City of London beginning its 5-year tenure in April 2023. It represents the area stretching from Farringdon in the west to Finsbury Circus in the east, and is home to cultural icons such as Barbican Centre and the future London Museum, as well as hidden gems including St Bartholomew The Great, London's oldest surviving church, and some of the last surviving sections of the 2,000 year-old wall that once surrounded the City of London.

Since launching in April 2023, the Culture Mile BID has been delivering a £9 million programme of investment backed by local businesses. From major public realm enhancements and climate resilience projects to destination marketing campaigns, the BID is strengthening Culture Mile as a vibrant, sustainable and creative district in the heart of the City of London.

Culture Mile BID Inspiring Places – Placemaking and Public Realm Improvements Programme

Over the last 6 months as part of a wider programme of public realm improvements, guided by Culture Mile BID's [Public Realm Vision and Strategy](#), the BID Placemaking team has delivered its first phase of greening enhancements in key spaces around the Culture Mile area. The BID is now developing phase 2 of the greening programme. St. Giles Terrace is identified in the Public Realm Vision and Strategy as a priority area for short-medium term improvements such as adaptable, mobile greening interventions, temporary seating and public art and community activations such as book fairs and gardening events.

In summer 2025, the BID was approached by the City of London School for Girls seeking support to expand their self-developed urban farm. Since February 2025, CLSG has piloted a small-scale urban farm to demonstrate the potential of a project of this nature to engage and educate stakeholders on the food supply chain and its connection with climate action, health and biodiversity. The pilot has been implemented by stakeholders (staff & students) within the school.

The urban farm currently includes 10 planters growing a variety of fruit and vegetables, a compost bin and an air quality monitor, all situated at the base of the steps on St. Giles Terrace. Development and stewardship of the urban farm is led by the school's head of sustainability and supported by St. Giles Cripplegate Church and members of a Barbican resident group. To date, any food grown in the planters has been used by the school canteen in school meals, or to demonstrate the variety of uses of ingredients using sample plates.

Incorporated into its next phase of greening enhancements, the BID will work with the school to support the expansion of the urban farm with additional planters and other infrastructure ([outline of CM BID led greening with images](#)). The primary objectives for expanding the farm for the students and the wider community are:

- **Enhance Teaching/Learning:** To provide first-hand experience of the food supply chain from farm to plate
- **Develop Green Skills:** Opportunity to develop practical food growing skills
- **Improve Wellbeing:** Working outdoors with nature
- **Build a vibrant local community:** Working with St. Giles Church and Barbican residents, local businesses and other community greening groups

LFA2026

The London Festival of Architecture (LFA) is back for a month-long celebration of architecture and city-making in June 2026. All Festival activity for 2026 will focus on the theme of **Belonging**.

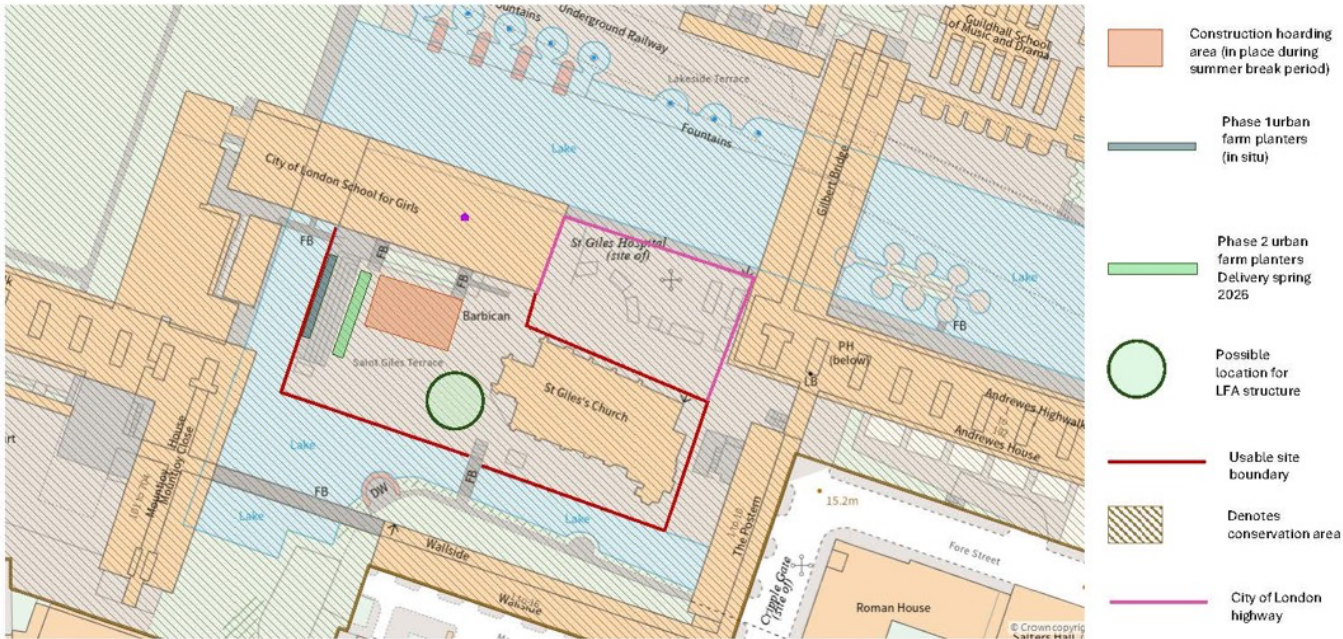
With activity happening across London, the Festival will once again be platform for conversation, testing new ideas, promoting emerging talent, helping shift us towards a more equitable, sustainable city.

We live in a time of stark contrasts – of people, places and ways of thinking. And within this it is all too easy to fall into traps of anger, pessimism or passiveness. None of which lead to healthy, thriving, and safe cities. LFA2026 aims to be a platform for hope and belonging, a space to reimagine connection, and a vehicle for change in our city.

We want LFA2026 to be more than a moment. We hope it will plant seeds that grow long after June has come to a close – whether that be skills, ideas, and connections. We hope organisers can begin to rewild grey parts of the city, reclaim neglected streets, and show what happens when lived experience and professional expertise work together to create spaces in which people can belong.

In response to the LFA2026 theme of 'Belonging' and building on the CLGS Urban Farm and Culture Mile BID's ongoing greening programme, we are inviting proposals for a pavilion that brings people together, activates the terrace, and explores new ways to connect communities, nature, and learning in the heart of the City.

The Site



St. Giles Terrace Site Area

St. Giles Terrace is located within the Barbican Estate, which includes the Barbican Centre, St. Giles Cripplegate Church, City of London Girls School, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the iconic tower blocks that are home to the almost 4000 Barbican residents.

The terrace area is surrounded by the lake and overlooked by residents on all sides. The terrace is within a conservation area, and both the school and church are listed buildings.

While the terrace is a large space, there are constraints which will impact the location and scale of any proposed structure and access to it.

As the terrace is surrounded by residents, activities will only take place during daytime or early evening hours.



Possible Location for Community Pavilion



City of London Girls' School & Existing Urban Farm

Design Requirements

Overall, the key objectives of the project are to deliver a community pavilion that:

- **Responds to the LFA2026 theme of Belonging** with consideration of the contrast of the history and heritage of St. Giles Terrace, its surrounding environment and its contemporary use.
- **Builds a vibrant, connected community:** the urban farm implemented by CLGS and other greening enhancements delivered by Culture Mile BID aim to encourage awareness, increase understanding and encourage ongoing dialogue about how we can collectively contribute to a more sustainable, equitable environment and society. We want this installation to be a platform for connection beyond the June festival period.
- **Facilitates learning and creativity:** the pavilion structure is intended to be a pilot for a fixed, permanent hub that could sit within the terrace site. The approach to its form and function should be flexible enough to accommodate experimentation and a diverse programme of activities through the festival period.

All design proposals should consider the following requirements:

- **Accessibility:** the space should be as inclusive as possible, and the structure should aim to facilitate access for wheelchair users and those less physically able.
- **Flexibility:** as mentioned above, the pavilion is intended as a multi-purpose structure and should be as adaptable as possible to different uses.
- **Security & Safety:** any enclosed sections of the structure should be lockable when not in use. We cannot fix into the ground or building walls so consideration should be given to suitable ballast and mitigation of wind loads.
- **Mobile:** the structure should be relocatable as we may be required to relocate it on the terrace, dependent on other activities.
- **Weighting:** the structure should be self-standing with no fixtures to the ground and weighted sufficiently.
- **Weatherproof:** any enclosed sections of the structure should be weatherproof.

Further guidance:

- Designs should consider material and design quality.
- As this is an experimental structure, you can use salvaged materials if they are safe and fit for purpose.
- Materials should be as sustainable and locally sourced as possible.
- Interventions must be safe for public use (deter anti-social behaviour and not encourage sleeping, skateboarding or acting as a bike stand).
- Interventions should not block fire hydrants, fire exits, utility covers, street signage, or any other emergency access.
- Designs should require minimal maintenance, be easily kept clean, litter-free and in good condition.

- The structure should remain fixed and stable in daily use, and must not be capable of being moved, lifted, or repositioned by members of the public. Any relocation would be undertaken under the supervision of Culture Mile BID.
- The winning team will need to support any licencing or planning requirements for the activation of the pavilion.
- Risk Assessment and Method Statement (RAMS) will be required for installation.
- You are encouraged to consider how materials could be repurposed or retained as part of the design of a more permanent structure.
- Although the intervention is designed to be temporary, designers are encouraged to plan for its afterlife — through re-homing, reuse, CSR initiatives, or recycling.
- Following installation, the pavilion will be owned by Culture Mile BID. It is intended to remain in place throughout June 2026, with potential to extend over the summer. The winning team will support its deinstallation at the end of use.

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Budget

The total budget available for this project is £50,000 + VAT. This needs to include all fees, fabrication, installation, deinstallation, other capital costs and contingency. Minimum contingency within the budget should be 10%, although we recommend allocating 15% contingency in your stage 2 submission, if shortlisted. The budget outlined includes a 12.5% design fee for the appointed team to cover on-going design fees and other costs required to deliver the concept. If your practice is not VAT registered, you will need to consider this when preparing your budget.

The winning team will be expected to undertake the following tasks:

- Provide a feasible and on-budget design intervention that is robust enough to be in the public realm for its duration.
- Consult with key stakeholders, including Culture Mile BID, the City of London Girls School (CLGS), St. Giles Cripplegate Church, residents and businesses, and other community and cultural organisations.
- Project management and delivery of the winning design.
- Lead and/or support in up to four engagement activities associated with the activation of the winning design.

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Submissions requirements

This competition has two stages.

This first stage submission should be single PDF submission of no more than 10-pages and maximum 5MB and include the information below. Alternatively, you can submit your application in another format (e.g. video) but the content should not exceed the equivalent of a '10-page limit'.

Your submission should include the following:

Your experience:

- Brief biographies of all the project team.
- A 200-word description about your practice along with any relevant technical and consultation experience acquired through previous projects.
- A selection of relevant previous work, including images.

Your response to the brief. Please provide reflections on the following prompts:

- The overall design brief - why you are interested in being involved in the project and what are your initial reactions to the brief?
- Your initial vision for the project
- Your approach to the LFA2026 theme of 'Belonging'

You can submit your response to these prompts in any format. For guidance, this should be (equivalent to) a short paragraph of max. 300 words per prompt or 90 second video per prompt.

No design work is required for the first stage.

Shortlisting

Submissions will be shortlisted by the judging panel. Four shortlisted practices will then be invited to develop a design concept based on the information laid out in this open call and will be awarded an honorarium of £500 + VAT each. The work required for the second phase of the project will be reflective of the honorarium sum.

At shortlisting, the second stage submission should include:

- Maximum 10-page PDF explaining your proposal to be shared with the jury for review, prior to interview. Your submission should (but is not limited to) include:
 - Detailed design drawings (we accept a variety of formats including hand or computer drawn 3D design visualisation)
 - Key construction details drawn to scale, with key dimensions noted
 - An outline of all materials, budget*, delivery and fabrication process
 - An outline proposal for potential programming within the structure, with delivery supported by Culture Mile BID
- PowerPoint presentation for the purposes of judging.

*If your practice is not VAT registered, you will need to consider this when preparing your budget.

Submission information

For any questions about the competition or submission process, please email:

info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org

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Eligibility

The competition is open to emerging architects, landscape architects, designers and artists. We welcome collaborations; however, the project must be actively led by a named emerging architect, designer or creative.

Applicants need to fulfil at least two of the following criteria to be eligible for this competition:

- being no more than ten years post-graduation from your most recent degree or professional qualification
- be under 40 years of age
- have set up your practice or collaboration within the past three years
- be part of a practice in which the majority of members of your team for this competition meet the first two criteria

The judges strongly encourage submissions from, or collaborations with groups who are underrepresented in architecture.

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Deadline and submission details

- Deadline for first submission is Midday, Thursday 22nd January. Submissions received after time this will not be considered.
- To send your expression of interest in a PDF format go [here](#).
- The PDF should be no more than 5MB and 10 pages (both portrait or landscape are acceptable)
- You will receive an email confirming the receipt of your submission.

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Schedule outline

Submissions open: Thursday 18th December

Submissions closed: 12:00, Thursday 22nd January

Successful shortlisted teams notified: w/c 2nd February

Site visit with shortlisted teams: 10:00-12:00, Thursday 5th February

Round 2 submission deadline: 12:00, Thursday 5th March

Final judging / interviews: w/c 9th March

Winner notified: w/c 16th March

Design Development: March – April

Fabrication: April – May

Project Install: 30th – 31st May

London Festival of Architecture: 1st – 30th June

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Judging panel

Aman Kanwar, Head of Sustainability, City of London Girls School

Bamidele Awoyemi, co-founder, bafalw

Clarisse Tavin, Group Manager Major Programmes and Projects, City of London Corporation

Fr. Jack Noble, Rector, St. Giles Cripplegate Church

Rebecca Crofton, Placemaking Programme Manager, Culture Mile BID

Rosa Rogina, Associate Director of Partnerships, NLA and Director, London Festival of Architecture (Chair)

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Judging criteria

Round 1

At round one expressions of interests will be given two scores:

- **Practice/team profile (60%)**

Does the team have skilled professionals for delivering the proposal in line with eligibility outlined in the Open Call? Does the team have a diverse set of skills and experience? Are the previous work experiences and/or their work methodologies and wider design aspirations relevant to the competition? Does the team proposed align with the eligibility criteria stated in the brief?

- **Initial vision/response to the brief (40%)**

Does the proposal's initial written reflection to the brief suggest innovation, surprise and creativity? Does it explore a new and original way to use and engage with the area? Is the team thinking beyond possible barriers or restrictions, and pondering how they might be broken down? Is the vision something which could be developed into an appropriate and achievable scheme for the area, in line with the brief?

Round 2

At round two design proposals, budgets and supporting documentation will be assessed on five criteria.

- Overall Design (30%)
- Costs and Feasibility (25%)
- Safety and Equity (15%)
- Sustainability and Longevity (15%)
- Contextual Design and Public Engagement (15%)

Our evaluation criteria are alignment with [New London Agenda](#) – NLA's framework for best practice in city-making. The jury will be assessing submissions on the criteria above as well as the six pillars of placemaking set out in the agenda.

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Access

Accessibility, diversity and inclusion are core values of the NLA at all levels of our organisation, and we are committed to delivering projects that are representative of the whole city and can be enjoyed by everyone. At the same time, we recognise that there are still significant barriers for groups in our society to be able to enjoy and participate in festival activity.

We will support with any resources and adjustments for anyone who needs it, to make applying for this role easier e.g. alternative document formats, interpreters, hybrid meetings. In the application form you will be asked how we can support you throughout the process; this will not influence your application.

www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org/access/

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Further information

- Submissions will be judged on originality, demonstration of creativity, relevance to the brief as well as feasibility and how the proposal works in the context of the site.
- To process entries to this competition we will share your application, and any associated personal data provided on the application with our jury and competition partners.
- All applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application, but due to the volume of submissions we may not be able to provide feedback to entrants individually.
- Applicants may not be assisted in any way in their submission by members of the judging panel, the client body, organisers, members of their family, close business associates or employees.
- The ownership of Copyright of the design will be in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, that is Copyright rests with the author of the submitted design.
- All designs remain the intellectual property of the designer however the winning design will itself when built will be the property of Culture Mile BID.
- Please bear in mind the project requires a fast turn around and may have peak moments when your practice will need to dedicate sufficient staff to deliver the project on time, to budget and to the high standard expected by all stakeholders.
- If your practice/collaboration is appointed to deliver the project it will need to have the following insurance: Employers Liability, Professional Indemnity, Public Liability.
- Significant efforts are made by all stakeholders of the project to ensure wide media coverage.
- NLA reserve the right to use images from the submissions for promotional purposes in press, social media and publications. All endeavours will be made to ensure accurate accreditation.

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Useful links

[London Festival of Architecture](#)

[Culture Mile BID: Public Realm Vision and Strategy](#)

[Culture Mile BID: Greening Programme](#)

[Culture Mile BID: Public Realm Vision & Strategy](#)

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Contact

Follow this [link](#) to submit your entry. The link will take you to an external platform [zealous.co](#)

For general enquires please contact: info@londonfestivalofarchitecture.org

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Disclaimer

The competition organisers are not liable for lost, misdirected, or late entries. Decisions of the jury represent their professional judgments and all decisions are final. While it is the intent to construct the winning scheme, the organisers reserve the right to not proceed with construction for any reason. Material submitted by you shall be your sole responsibility, shall not infringe or violate the rights of any other party or violate any laws, contribute to or encourage infringing or otherwise unlawful conduct, or otherwise be obscene, objectionable, or in poor taste. By submitting such material, you are representing that you are the owner of such material and/or have all necessary rights, licenses, and authorization to distribute it.

Commissioning organisations



The London Festival of Architecture (LFA) is a month-long celebration of architecture and city-making, taking place every June across London. Our mission is to act as a vehicle for change by making discussions around architecture more accessible, testing new ideas, and promoting emerging talent, all with the aim of creating a greener, healthier, and more equitable city. For everyone interested in shaping the future of London, the Festival unites industry professionals, students, and Londoners to collaboratively engage with and create positive change in our city's unique neighbourhoods. LFA is run by NLA, London's built environment community – a cross-sector membership organisation for everyone committed to shaping a better city.

www.londonfestivalofarchitecture.org

Twitter: @LFArchitecture

Instagram: @LondonFestivalofArchitectureOfficial



The **Culture Mile Business Improvement District (BID)** is an area brimming with cultural creativity, commercial vibrancy and a strong sense of community, the area is home to globally famed institutions such as the Barbican Centre and the future Museum of London (reopening in 2026), as well as hidden gems including St Bartholomew The Great, London's oldest surviving church, and some of the last surviving sections of the 2,000 year old wall that once surrounded the City of London.

Through its initial 5 year term, the Culture Mile BID will inject up to £11m into the local area, working in partnership with its levy-paying member businesses as well as the public sector to deliver a range of ambitious projects including major public realm enhancements, agenda-setting green and climate resilience initiatives and high-profile destination marketing campaigns.