

Arts pop ups in London regeneration zones: from King's Cross and Tottenham to the Royal Docks summer festivals are knitting new communities together

Summer arts events are proving vital in knitting together London's new regeneration zone communities.

RUTH BLOOMFIELD | 7 days ago | 0 comments

The best arts events in London's regeneration zones this summer



Since it closed for business in the Eighties, few Londoners have set foot in Royal Albert Dock, a huge but hidden section of the east London waterfront just south of City airport.

But all that is changing, as the dockside transforms into a pop-up performing arts venue as part of the [Greenwich+Docklands International Festival](#).

The free annual festival drew 50,000 people last year, linking communities and giving Londoners a glimpse of new districts to come.

The 2019 festival launched at the dock last week with a sound and light installation and will close there on July 6 with a concert and fireworks display, giving audiences a preview of work to redevelop the site into a new business district.



From £385,000: one-bedroom flats in the new Royal Albert Wharf district in E16 with two-bedroom flats from £532,500. Notting Hill Genesis (020 3672 4988)

As well as offering Londoners free access to the arts, Bradley Hemmings, festival artistic director, says: “It brings people to a part of London they would not normally go to. Humanising and animating public spaces is very important. When you open up a space people are absolutely astounded at what is there.”

Hemmings founded the festival in 1996 when he was a [Greenwich](#) council arts development officer. The aim was to link the area with isolated Canary Wharf through the arts.

There was no Jubilee line extension then, so getting from Greenwich to Canary Wharf involved a creepy trek through the foot tunnels at Greenwich or Woolwich.

There was no Millennium Dome, either, while Canary Wharf was a desolate collection of office blocks almost empty in the evenings and at weekends.



From £120,750: a 35 per cent minimum share in a flat in The Refinery, E16

“The transformation of the area since then has been phenomenal,” says Hemmings, who went on to co-direct the Paralympics Opening Ceremony and gain an MBE for services to the arts.

The festival has certainly played a big part in knitting together newly formed communities. “You might never see the people who live next door to you but what is wonderful is that when you sit next to them in an audience, you talk.”

What's on at the Greenwich + Docklands International Festival?

The Greenwich + Docklands International Festival is running for three consecutive weekends, with this Friday marking the start of the second weekend.



The event kicked off with *Daedalum – Architects of Air*, a spectacular installation that allows visitors to move through a series of cave-like domes and tunnels illuminated by coloured lights.

The experience is likened to walking within a stained-glass window and has been shown in more than 40 countries around the world, seen by more than three million people.

The festival closes on July 6 with *Cristal Palace*, which will transform Royal Albert Dock into a “glittering outdoor ballroom” with musicians seated in a chandelier-style structure suspended above the site.

Developers, councils and housebuilders are increasingly providing and funding “meanwhile” performance spaces on building sites that can otherwise be unused for years while they wait for planning permission – thus providing, at low cost, a boost to local arts scenes and raising the profile of London’s new neighbourhoods

Wembley Park's new theatre

At [Wembley Park](#) a new theatre will open this summer. James Saunders, chief operating officer of developer Quintain, says holding a range of public events is “a central part” of the area’s regeneration.

- Nimby's and dysfunctional planning hinder Mayor's grand housing plan
- The best spots to live along the Thames and London's hidden waterways
- London's Northbank set to be the capital's major new regeneration hub

Outdoor live music and film screenings “have helped bring the area to life and create real buzz”.

Saunders adds: “We are recruiting for our first ever cultural director and as we look forward to celebrating Brent London Borough of Culture next year, our ambitions continue to grow.”

The open spaces at Wembley Park (wembleypark.com) will become an alfresco arts centre this summer, with performances from some of London’s top buskers, plus open-air film screenings in Arena Square.

King's Cross arts events

An exceptional model of how regeneration should work, King's Cross has been the scene of some truly memorable events that have helped bring its new streets to life, notably Lumiere London which uses light art to turn the entire area into a nocturnal art gallery.



£2 million: a [three-bedroom flat](#) in Gasholders, King's Cross N1C

Dozens of free events planned this summer, including live streaming of Carmen and The Marriage of Figaro from the Royal Opera House by the banks of Regent's Canal, plus free concerts at Coal Drops Yard and Kings Place (kingscross.co.uk).

Tottenham: music by the marshes

Further north, The Drumsheds is a new events venue in four giant interlinked warehouses and 10 acres of outdoor space on an old gas works site in [Meridian Water](#), next to [Tottenham Marshes](#).

Earlier this month tens of thousands of music lovers attended the annual Field Day festival there.

The event drew 60,000 young Londoners to a part of the city they'd almost certainly never heard of before, but which over the next few years will be the focus of a £6 billion regeneration.

Meridian Water is getting thousands of [new homes](#), plus schools, shops, cafés and restaurants.

Enfield council hopes it will become a lively destination, served by the newly opened Meridian Water train station.

Field Day, The Drumsheds' inaugural event, was run by the same team behind Printworks London, the monster club in a former printing plant in another regeneration zone, Surrey Quays.



£6 billion regeneration: Meridian Water in north London is getting thousands of new homes plus shops, restaurants and schools

“Fundamentally the purpose of The Drumsheds is to firmly place Meridian Water in the consciousness of Londoners,” says Nesil Caliskan, leader of Enfield council.

“It will be two years before the first homes are built so we’re aiming to promote Meridian Water through the positive energy of culture and creativity.”

Thamesmead Festival

The [Thamesmead](#) Festival gives audiences a chance to take what might well be their first look at this regeneration hotspot south of the river.



From £68,750: a minimum 25 per cent share of a flat at The Reach, Thamesmead SE28 ONY

The event launched earlier this month and goes on until the start of August (thamesmeadnow.org.uk).

The programme of music, theatre, art installations and sporting events is being held at parks and in the town centre.

White City Theatre

A former BBC car park in White City is being turned into a theatre with two auditoriums and a capacity of 2,000, which will host theatre, musicals, dance and immersive productions for the next three years before the site is redeveloped as offices and shops.



£765,000: a [one-bedroom flat for sale](#) in Wood Lane, London W12

The [Troubadour White City Theatre](#) will open in July 2019 and be operated by the team which ran the award-winning [King's Cross Theatre](#) at the site that is now Google's London headquarters. ■

Follow us on Twitter [@HomesProperty](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)

More about: | [London](#) | [property](#) | [New homes](#) | [Royal Docks](#) | [Greenwich](#) | [arts](#) | [Wembley Park](#) | [King's Cross](#) | [Tottenham](#) | [Meridian Water](#) | [Thamesmead](#)

Show comments ↓