Culture Mile Business Improvement District

Annual Report 2025/26

CULTURE MILE
Business Improvement District

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Chair's Foreword

As Culture Mile BID completes its third year, I am delighted to reflect on another year of progress, partnership and ambition for this extraordinary part of London.

Culture Mile is a place unlike any other. Its remarkable history, world class cultural institutions, thriving businesses and diverse communities create a distinctive character and an enormous opportunity. Our role as a Business Improvement District is to bring these strengths together, investing in the places, experiences and connections that make this an exceptional place to work, live, visit and do business.

Throughout 2025/26, we have continued to turn that ambition into action. From progressing our Public Realm Vision & Strategy and investing in greener, more welcoming spaces, to strengthening our street cleansing and ambassador services, we have remained focused on the everyday priorities of our levy-paying businesses while looking ahead to the area's long term future.

This year has also marked an important step in the BID's development as we moved from management by Primera to an independent, in-house model. Building on the foundations established over our first three years, this gives Culture Mile BID greater autonomy and the ability to respond directly to the priorities of our levy-paying businesses. I would also like to thank Primera for their important contribution to establishing and developing the BID.

Our cultural programme has gone from strength to strength. Partnerships with the Barbican, the London Sports Festival and the return of The Jazz Social have brought new energy and audiences to Culture Mile. The inaugural Vibrance Festival, a partnership with the Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the City Corporation, demonstrated the potential to transform familiar spaces through creativity and imagination. Alongside these larger scale experiences, our community events, heritage celebrations and business engagement programmes have helped build the relationships and sense of belonging that are fundamental to a successful neighbourhood.

Partnership has been at the heart of everything we have achieved. I would particularly like to recognise the City of London Corporation, whose leadership and continued collaboration are vital to the transformation of the Square Mile. Working alongside the City, our cultural partners, businesses, residents and community organisations, we are helping deliver a shared vision for a more vibrant, inclusive and economically successful destination.

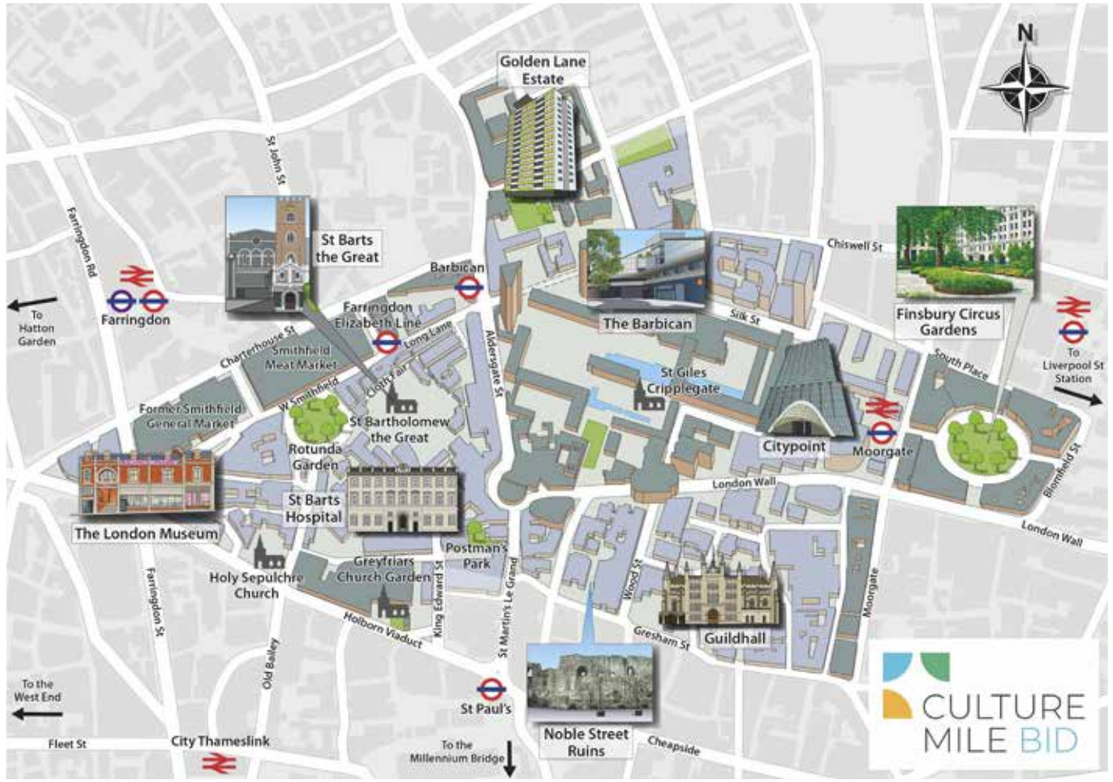
Looking ahead, we enter our fourth year at a particularly exciting moment. The opening of the new London Museum at Smithfield in November 2026 represents a once in a generation opportunity for Culture Mile and the wider City. As the Museum's Destination Partner, we are proud to play our part in welcoming new audiences, supporting local businesses and ensuring the benefits of this landmark development extend throughout the area.

None of this would be possible without the commitment of our levy payers, Board, Steering Groups, partners and dedicated BID team. I would like to thank them all for their energy, expertise and continued support.

There is much to celebrate, and even more to look forward to. Together, we are creating a Culture Mile that honours its remarkable past while embracing the opportunities of the future.

Andrew Smith,
Chair, Culture Mile BID

The BID Boundary



Introduction from CEO

As Culture Mile BID enters its fourth year, we find ourselves at an important moment in our development.

The past three years have been about establishing our presence, building relationships and demonstrating the value that a Business Improvement District can bring to this extraordinary part of London. Now, as we look towards our first renewal ballot in 2027, our focus is firmly on building upon those foundations and shaping an ambitious vision for the next five years.

There is already much to be proud of. From our ambitious public realm strategy and investment in safer, greener and more welcoming streets, to an increasingly confident cultural programme that brings new audiences and energy to the area, Culture Mile BID has demonstrated what can be achieved through collaboration. We have built meaningful partnerships with the City of London Corporation, major cultural institutions, businesses and community organisations, while delivering practical services that make a difference to the everyday experience of working, living and visiting here.

But perhaps our greatest achievement has been bringing together organisations and individuals who might not otherwise have worked alongside one another, creating a shared sense of purpose and ambition for Culture Mile.

Looking ahead, the opportunities are considerable. The opening of the new London Museum at Smithfield represents a transformational moment for the area, while the City of London Corporation's ambitions for culture, public realm and economic growth provide an exciting context for our own plans. We have a vital role to play in ensuring that Culture Mile continues to evolve as a distinctive cultural and commercial destination, attracting investment, supporting businesses and creating opportunities for everyone who spends time here.

As we prepare for our renewal ballot in 2027, listening to our levy payers will be central to shaping what comes next. Their priorities, alongside the lessons of our first term, will inform a clear, ambitious and deliverable plan for Culture Mile's next five years.

Having joined Culture Mile BID at such a pivotal moment, I am excited by both the progress already made and the potential still to be realised. With a committed Board, an ambitious team and an exceptional network of partners, we have every reason to approach this next chapter with confidence.

Aoife Leach
Chief Executive, Culture Mile BID

Inspiring Places 2025-26

Public Relam Vision & Strategy

Building on the launch of our Public Realm Vision & Strategy in November 2024, we worked closely with the City of London Corporation and partners to explore priority improvements at West Smithfield, Coleman Street and the Barbican Gateway. This work helped shape opportunities for a greener, safer and better connected Culture Mile.

West Smithfield Placemaking

Ahead of London Museum's opening, we worked with the City of London Corporation and the Museum to explore interim public realm improvements around West Smithfield, including seating, greening, lighting, wayfinding and public art. Consultation with our steering group and an approved £30,000 project appraisal helped develop the proposals and strengthen collaboration with partners, including discussions about creative hoarding around the annex development.

Barbican Gateway

Working with the Barbican Centre and design practice Assemble, we undertook design and scoping work to explore a more welcoming arrival and clearer connections around Aldersgate and Beech Street. The work examined wayfinding, lighting and public realm opportunities, while helping identify spatial constraints and the stakeholders needed to inform future improvements at this important gateway.

Coleman Street

We supported the City of London Corporation in developing proposals for a safer, greener and more pedestrian-friendly Coleman Street. Options included wider footways, planting, seating and potential timed vehicle restrictions. As an important route through Culture Mile, the project aims to improve the experience for businesses, workers and visitors. Looking ahead to 2026/27, we will continue to support stakeholder engagement, feasibility and design work, place activation during potential timed closure trials, and exploration of a freight and servicing consolidation tool with the City Corporation.

London Festival of Architecture

In partnership with London Museum, we supported Unheard Voices of the City, a public art installation by POoR Collective at St Bartholomew's Hospital celebrating the people who keep the City moving after dark. We also progressed the design competition for a new installation at St Giles' Terrace for London Festival of Architecture 2026, attracting 50 submissions. Competition development began in 2025/26, with installation delivery planned for the following financial year.

50

Design competition submissions for the St Giles' Terrace installation at London Festival of Architecture 2026

13

Festive lighting installations. Illuminating streets, landmarks and public spaces across Culture Mile

5k+

Lights Trail maps distributed and downloaded

Over 2,500 printed maps and 2,500 digital downloads

3

Major public realm projects progressed: West Smithfield, Coleman Street, Barbican Gateway

Property Owner Group

Over the last two years, the BID and its Property Owner Group have built a collaborative network focused on development impacts, public realm improvements and opportunities for ground floor activation. During 2025/26, we began developing creative content and wayfinding for construction hoardings at two major developments. The group continues to explore ways to connect buildings and the spaces between them through local placemaking and cultural activity.

Ground Floor Use Strategy

In 2025, Culture Mile BID joined the City of London Corporation and other City BIDs in commissioning a Ground Floor Use Study. Designed to provide an evidence-based framework for innovative and adaptable ground-floor uses across the Square Mile, the study will help inform our work with developers, property owners and asset managers to activate spaces and improve the surrounding public realm.

Festive Lighting Scheme

Building on our first area-wide festive lighting scheme, we expanded the programme for winter 2025/26 with 13 installations across Culture Mile. Returning favourites were joined by new displays, including Coleman Street and Moorgate, creating a welcoming seasonal atmosphere. A dedicated Lights Trail map, developed with local partners and property owners, attracted more than 2,500 printed distributions and over 2,500 digital downloads, encouraging visitors to explore the area and support local businesses.

Creative Meanwhile Use

We continued to explore ways to bring vacant and underused spaces to life through cultural and community activity. Working with property owners, developers and creative partners, we progressed meanwhile-use opportunities, including plans for Broad Street Place, demonstrating how temporary activation can support businesses, attract audiences and contribute to the area's cultural identity.

London in Bloom Silver Gilt Award Winner

Sustainable Environment 2025-26

Greening Project

Working with public realm specialists Publica, we progressed our programme of greening and biodiversity improvements, building on the Public Realm Vision & Strategy. Planting at Long Lane and St Bartholomew's Hospital helped bring greenery and seasonal interest to busy streets, while further opportunities were identified through a green infrastructure audit. The programme focused on sustainable planting, biodiversity and improving connections between existing green spaces, laying the foundations for further investment across Culture Mile.

Street Ambassadors

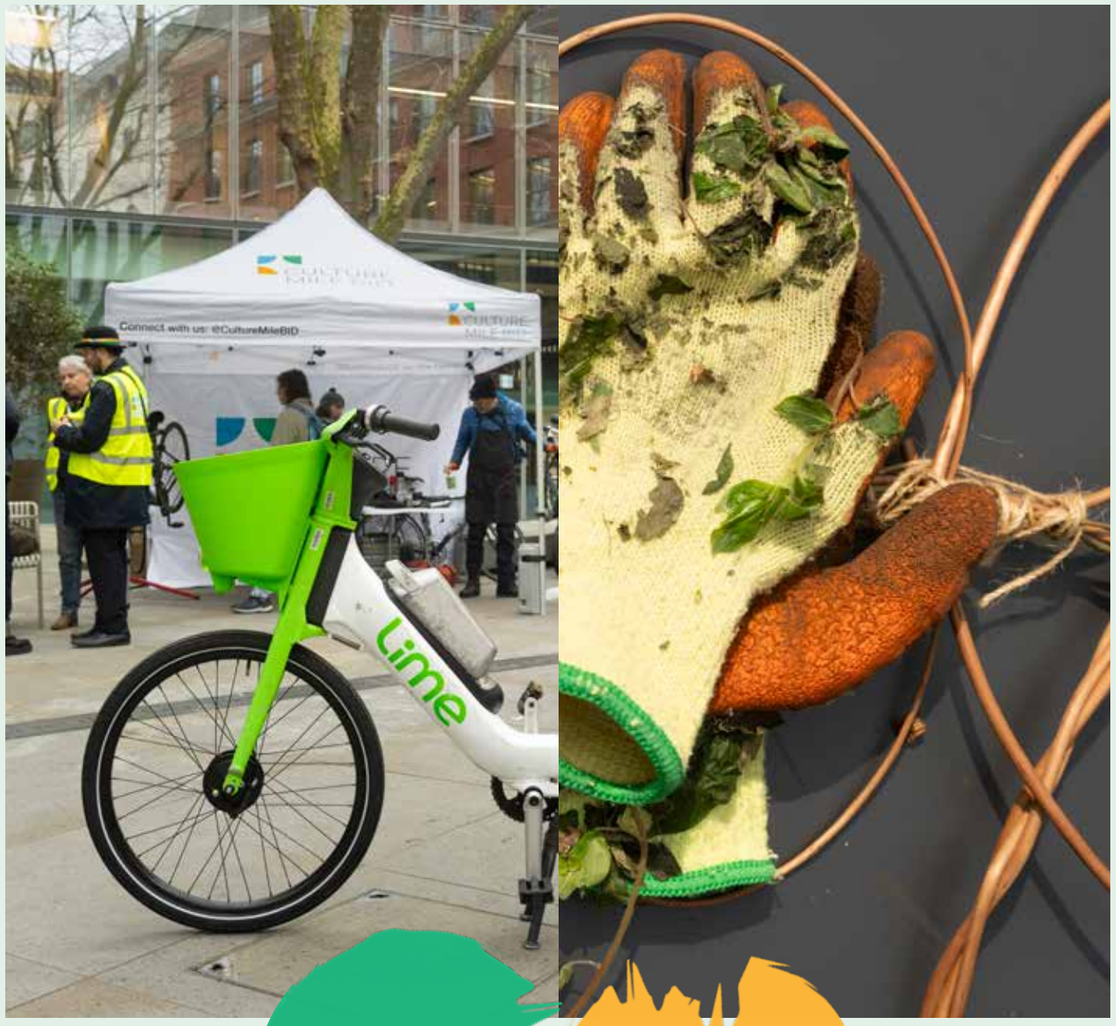
Our Street Ambassadors continued to play a vital role in maintaining a cleaner, safer and more welcoming Culture Mile. Through regular monitoring and reporting, the team identified environmental issues including graffiti, fly-posting, abandoned bicycles, litter and street cleansing concerns. Working closely with the City of London Corporation and its partners, the service provided valuable on the ground intelligence, helping to identify recurring hotspots and target improvements where they were most needed.

London in Bloom

Culture Mile achieved a Silver Gilt award at London in Bloom 2025, scoring 79 points and coming within six points of Gold. The judges recognised planting at Long Lane and St Bartholomew's Hospital alongside community-led projects at the Barbican Wildlife Garden, Cloth Fair Hidden Garden and Golden Lane. The award celebrated the collective efforts of the BID, residents and local partners to create greener, more biodiverse and welcoming spaces.

Enhanced Street Cleansing

Responding directly to concerns raised by businesses, we developed proposals for an enhanced street cleansing service in partnership with the City of London Corporation and Veolia. Using intelligence gathered by our Street Ambassadors, the project identified priority hotspots for litter, graffiti, pavement staining and fly-posting, particularly around transport hubs, hospitality areas and busy pedestrian routes. A proposed six month pilot was developed to supplement the City's existing cleansing provision and provide more responsive support for the area's changing needs.



52,557
Miles logged through Love to Ride by January 2026

14,467
Abandoned hire bike and scooter reports by Street Ambassadors

Clean City Awards

We continued our support for the City of London Corporation's Clean City Awards Scheme, working alongside Fleet Street Quarter BID to champion environmental leadership among local businesses. Through sponsorship of the Communication and Engagement Award, we helped recognise organisations making measurable progress on sustainability, resource efficiency and climate action, while encouraging smaller businesses to access the scheme's practical resources and knowledge sharing opportunities.

Greener Travel and Deliveries

We continued to encourage sustainable travel and more environmentally responsible business practices. Through the Love to Ride platform, Culture Mile businesses and workers were supported to choose cycling for commuting and everyday journeys. By January 2026, participating riders had logged more than 4,600 journeys covering over 52,000 miles. Alongside this, we progressed collaborative discussions around freight consolidation and more efficient servicing and deliveries to reduce unnecessary vehicle movements and improve the pedestrian environment.

Connected Business Community 2025-26

Business Engagement

Our Street Ambassadors strengthened their role as a vital link between the BID and its business community, completing 1,619 business visits, a 65% increase on the previous year. The team also recorded 418 informal business interactions, sharing information, gathering feedback and connecting businesses with BID services and opportunities. Expanded operating hours, including evening and seasonal coverage, helped ensure a more visible and responsive presence across Culture Mile.

Community Fund

Our third annual Community Fund awarded £60,444 to 15 local projects, supporting arts, education, wellbeing, inclusion and environmental improvements. Delivered in partnership with ActionFunder, the programme reached an estimated 10,478 people and involved 197 volunteers. Projects ranged from music and creative learning for young people to swimming, community gardens, cancer support and activities bringing residents together. All 13 projects submitting completed impact surveys reported meeting or exceeding their goals, demonstrating the value of grassroots investment.

Community Safety

Working closely with the City of London Police and local businesses, we expanded our programme of safety and crime prevention activity. Highlights included Operation Reframe, engaging over 350 people in conversations around bystander intervention and women's safety, alongside personal safety classes, conflict management, cyber security and counter-terrorism training. Mobile phone marking pop-ups reached more than 600 people, while business based crime prevention hubs engaged a further 320. Our Safety and Security Alliance continued to inform activity, ensuring local concerns shaped a practical and responsive programme.

1,619
Business visits, up 65% year-on-year

70,585
Visitors welcomed, up 39% year-on-year

£60k+
Community Fund grants awarded

10,478
People reached through Community Fund projects

Business in the Community

We strengthened connections between businesses, charities and community organisations through volunteering and social impact opportunities. Working with the VOCES8 Foundation, our Postcards from Culture Mile initiative connected corporate volunteers with primary school children, encouraging writing, creativity and connections between the City and its neighbouring communities. Seven levy-paying businesses committed approximately 150 volunteers, demonstrating the enthusiasm of local organisations to contribute their time and skills.

We Can Be

For a second year, Culture Mile BID supported the Lord Mayor's Appeal's We Can Be programme, helping young women explore career opportunities in the City. Through workshops, workplace visits and conversations with business professionals, the initiative challenged perceptions of careers in finance, law and other sectors. Our involvement included connecting local businesses with the programme and supporting opportunities for young people to develop confidence, aspirations and professional networks.

Knowledge Exchange

Building on the success of our inaugural Knowledge Exchange programme, we continued to bring businesses together to share expertise and develop skills, leveraging the wealth of knowledge and experience within the Culture Mile. In October 2025, we partnered with Ridgeflow Performance to deliver Managing for Success and Wellbeing, a free CPD-accredited training day exploring practical leadership and workplace wellbeing through elite sports principles. Alongside four neighbouring City BIDs, we launched a partnership with SEEDL, giving businesses free access to 200+ live online professional development courses. Through these initiatives, the Knowledge Exchange is helping businesses access valuable expertise, invest in their teams and strengthen connections across Culture Mile, while reflecting our commitment to creating a supportive, collaborative business community.

Supporting Hidden Workers

Through our Community Fund, we supported Speak Street's programme helping migrant workers in cleaning, facilities and other often-overlooked roles develop their English language skills. Delivered through workplace-based learning, the project helped participants build confidence, communicate more effectively with colleagues and access wider opportunities, reinforcing our commitment to a more inclusive and connected business community.

Community Fund 2025-26

Investing in Communities. Creating Opportunities

Our third annual Community Fund continued to make a meaningful difference across Culture Mile, investing £60,444 in 15 grassroots projects supporting arts and culture, education, wellbeing, inclusion and stronger community connections.

Delivered in partnership with ActionFunder, the programme supported organisations working directly with people who live and work in Culture Mile, from young people discovering music and creativity to residents accessing vital wellbeing support and opportunities to connect.

Reflecting our commitment to Arts for All, this year's Fund placed particular emphasis on breaking down barriers to cultural participation, supporting creative experiences for young people and opening up new opportunities for communities to engage with the area's rich cultural offer.

The impact extended far beyond the funding itself. Projects reached an estimated 10,478 people, supported by 197 volunteers who contributed their time, skills and energy.

The Community Fund continues to be a powerful force for positive change across Culture Mile, creating opportunities, strengthening connections and making a real difference to people's lives. Its success demonstrates the extraordinary impact of investing in our local communities, helping to build a more inclusive, vibrant and connected Culture Mile for everyone.

722

Piano and violin lessons through Music School at Golden Lane

40

Disabled swimmers supported through WeSwim, Barbican Group

3k+

Visitors to the Jewish Square Mile history exhibition

24

Weekly Drum Works sessions, involving more than 50 people

500k
Visitors to the Barbican's Feel the Sound

Cultural Destination 2025-26

Barbican Partnership

Our partnership with the Barbican continued to bring world-class cultural experiences to Culture Mile. As Destination Partner for Feel the Sound, an immersive exhibition attracting 500,000 visitors, we helped support a programme of installations transforming the Barbican's public spaces. We also returned as Destination Partner for the hugely popular Outdoor Cinema, which welcomed 7,043 visitors, achieving 98% capacity across 11 screenings. Together, these partnerships strengthened Culture Mile's profile as a cultural destination and encouraged visitors to explore the wider area.

London Sports Festival

Working with our friends at Central London Alliance, we brought the London Sports Festival to Guildhall Yard, with the support of the City of London Corporation. Football and basketball transformed the historic setting into an exciting, inclusive sporting destination, offering free coaching, corporate challenges, accessible activities and opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to participate. The activations attracted more than 1,200 attendees, introducing new audiences to the Square Mile and demonstrating how its public spaces can be reimagined.

Midsummer Fayre

Our Midsummer Fayre returned in July, celebrating Culture Mile's rich history through two days of entertainment and activities at St Alphage Church Ruins and Postman's Park. From medieval-inspired experiences and archery to live performances and family-friendly activities, the programme brought heritage to life in two distinctive settings. More than 1,050 people engaged with the Fayre, encouraging workers, residents and visitors to discover some of the area's lesser-known spaces.

Pride Party

As part of Culture Mile on the Street, we transformed Aldermanbury into a vibrant outdoor Pride celebration. Live performances, music, food and drink brought businesses and communities together, with 250 attendees enjoying the evening. More than 84% of surveyed visitors worked in Culture Mile, demonstrating the appetite for inclusive, after-work cultural experiences and the potential of temporarily reimagining streets as places to gather and celebrate.

8.5k+
Unique visitors to Vibrance Festival

18k+
Attendances across major Culture Mile BID events and partnerships

6k+
Visitors to The Jazz Social

The Jazz Social

Our partnership with Serious and BGRE saw the return of The Jazz Social to Citypoint as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival. Transforming a vacant retail space into a lively music venue, record shop and social hub, the two-week residency welcomed over 6,000 visitors and featured more than 130 artists. With free and affordable performances, workshops and emerging talent, the project demonstrated the power of cultural meanwhile use to attract new audiences and animate the area beyond traditional working hours.

Festive Celebrations

Our winter programme brought communities together through a series of seasonal events and experiences. Highlights included the Lights Trail launch at St Bartholomew's Hospital, the first Christmas tree switch-on in Guildhall Yard, community carols at St Giles' Cripplegate and popular creative workshops. As headline sponsor of the Guildhall Christmas Market, we supported the British Red Cross in delivering a record-breaking event, attracting over 3,000 visitors and raising more than £190,000 gross for the charity.

Culture Mile Walking Tours

Our walking tour programme continued to uncover the fascinating stories, people and places that make Culture Mile distinctive. From fashion and Black History to ghostly tales and hidden heritage, our guided walks encouraged visitors to explore the area's cultural richness and discover new perspectives on familiar streets. Popular tours sold out, attracting workers, residents and visitors while strengthening connections with local heritage and cultural partners.

Vibrance Festival

The inaugural Vibrance Festival, in partnership with Guildhall School of Music & Drama and the City Corporation, brought Culture Mile to life during January 2026 through an ambitious programme of light, sound and immersive experiences. Transforming familiar public spaces into unexpected cultural destinations, the festival attracted over 8,500 unique visitors and generated more than 17,000 interactions. The programme demonstrated the power of creative placemaking to animate the area during the quieter winter months, attract new audiences and support the evening economy.

Celebrating Culture Mile's Heritage

Throughout the year, we worked with cultural and community partners to celebrate the stories and traditions that make Culture Mile unique. A VE Day 80th anniversary picnic welcomed nearly 500 people to Smithfield Rotunda Garden, while events exploring Windrush and the NHS brought important personal histories to new audiences. Our programme also included the return of Bartholomew Fayre, celebrating the area's extraordinary heritage through performances, talks and guided experiences.

London Museum Partnership

We were delighted to support the launch of London Museum Studios in May 2025, bringing a new creative and cultural space to Smithfield ahead of the Museum's much anticipated opening. Providing a platform for exhibitions, events, creative collaborations and community engagement, the Studios offered an exciting first glimpse of the Museum's ambitions for its new home. Through our growing partnership with London Museum, we helped connect the Studios with local businesses and communities, supporting the development of Smithfield as a vibrant cultural destination at the heart of Culture Mile.

Footfall and Economic Performance

Culture Mile continued to demonstrate strong growth in visitor numbers and economic activity during 2025/26, significantly outperforming the wider Square Mile across all key measures of footfall, transactions and spend.

According to the City of London Corporation's Destination City Dashboard, footfall increased by 32% year on year, compared with 7% across the wider Square Mile. Transaction volumes grew by 13%, more than double the City-wide rate of 5%, while the spend index increased by 6%, compared with just 0.6% across the City.

These impressive results reinforce Culture Mile's growing appeal as a cultural and commercial destination, with increasing visitor activity translating into greater economic opportunities for local businesses. They also establish an important baseline ahead of the opening of the new London Museum at Smithfield, providing an opportunity to measure the impact of this landmark cultural investment.

Working closely with the City of London Corporation, we will continue to use shared data and insights to inform our programmes, attract new audiences, encourage visitors to stay longer and maximise the economic benefits for businesses across Culture Mile.

+32%
Footfall growth vs +7% across the Square Mile

+13%
Transaction growth vs +5% across the Square Mile

+6%
Spend index growth vs +0.6% across the Square Mile

Source: City of London Corporation Destination City Dashboard, rolling 12 month year on year performance.

Governance, Board and Team

Governance

Culture Mile BID is managed by a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, overseen by a Board of Directors representing businesses and organisations from across the BID area. The Board provides strategic direction and oversight, supported by steering groups aligned with the BID's key priorities. The Executive Team is responsible for delivering the BID's programmes, projects and day to day operations.

The BID's current five year term runs from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028.

Looking Ahead: A New Management Model

From 1 April 2026, Culture Mile BID moved to a new in-house management model, building on the strong foundations established through its partnership with Primera Corporation. This next chapter in the BID's development sees a directly employed Executive Team overseeing day to day operations and delivery, supported by the continued strategic oversight of its business-led Board.

The new structure provides greater flexibility and opportunities to strengthen relationships with businesses and partners, respond to local priorities and build on the BID's achievements as it looks ahead to the 2027 renewal ballot.

Board

The Board of Directors provides leadership, expertise and oversight, ensuring that the BID remains accountable to its levy-paying businesses and delivers against the priorities established in its Business Plan.

Board 2025-26

Andrew Smith (Chair)	Broadfield Law
David Banks (Vice Chair)	Phillips 66
Andrew Heald	Baird
Beau Vigushin	Barbican Centre
Charles Knight	Barts Health NHS Trust
Ruth Hoy	DLA Piper
Sian Brittain	Guildhall School of Music & Drama
Krupa Patel	Legal & General
Rajeev Shaunak	MHA McIntyre Hudson
Angeli Ganoo-Fletcher	PRP Architects
Alex Grossick	Deutsche Bank

Income and Expenditure

The Culture Mile BID Ltd. Income and Expenditure to 31 March 2026.

Income	Total £
BID Levy Income	3,165,020
Voluntary Income and Sponsorship	22,500
Total Income	**3,187,520**

Expenditure	Total £
Sustainable Environment	247,794
Connected Community	447,636
Inspiring Places	520,897
Cultural Destination	906,571
Staffing and Overheads	336,153
Total Expenditure	**2,459,051**
2025-26 Surplus	728,469
2024-25 Closing reserves	2,438,168
Surplus carried forward to 2026-27	**3,166,637**

Culture Mile – where the past meets progress to spark new cultural moments

CULTURE MILE
Business Improvement District

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