

ALEXANDRA  
PALACE



2020 ANNUAL REVIEW

# INTRODUCTION

**2020 tested us all in ways that few could have imagined. This review is a chance to take a look back over the most challenging of years. Coronavirus lockdown restrictions meant closing the Palace for extended periods. Events and activities were cancelled or postponed, and with it the income we rely on to care for our site has been lost. The future of the Park and Palace has, at times, been in the balance.**

There was, and is, no blueprint for how to navigate the pandemic. Yet, against the odds, we have found ways to deliver our charitable objectives and support our diverse community, provide entertainment and respite at a time when it has never been more important to do so.

We've embraced new technology and reimaged our spaces to deliver world class arts and entertainment. Record numbers have visited the park. The Palace has supported the pandemic response efforts, providing space for testing and emergency supply distribution. We took our Creative Learning programme online. We've received vital support from individuals, organisations and Government, who have recognised the benefits and opportunities we bring to people, the economy and our wider industry. We've formed new partnerships and lent our voice to our sector at a time when it's suffering.

We want to reflect on this year of crisis and change, during which the People's Palace has proudly lived up to its name ■

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# ENRICHING LIVES

By adapting and growing our programmes we provided significant benefits to people in our local community and beyond.

It was a busy, bustling start to the year. Throughout January and February we welcomed gig goers, theatre lovers, ice skaters and thousands of park users. We hosted world championship sports events and major exhibitions. Older people, vulnerable people, young carers, schools and families participated in Creative Learning activities onsite.

## The pandemic, of course, changed everything.

The first national lockdown saw the Palace closed to the public in March. But, in-keeping with our history, shutting our doors didn't mean we stopped working.

We immediately welcomed local charities in need of facilities to site. A distribution centre was set up in our Great Hall with Haringey Council and Edible London and our kitchens opened for Compassion London to prepare meals for vulnerable people across the city.

We worked with musicians to stream performances and host video shoots, so that we could keep entertaining millions online when we couldn't do it in person.

We found new ways to raise income, for example by encouraging charitable donations from people parking in our car parks.

## It was a time to reimagine and think on our feet.

With the easing of some lockdown restrictions in spring and summer, and blessed with 196 acres of park and a seven-acre Palace, we began a range of socially distanced events. Our small team was at the forefront of the cultural sector's willingness to find ways to entertain people. We welcomed throw-backs, such as the drive-in, and founded new projects, such as The Terrace that safely welcomed 17,000 people to the Palace.

As we adapted to restrictions and accelerated our events and activities, we continued to support the community. The Paddocks car park housed a covid-19 testing centre throughout the autumn and winter, helping to test thousands. Our ice rink ran specially designed sessions for public and professionals alike.

## WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE

- **First World War:** commandeered first as refugee centre, then repurposed as an internment camp, the entire Park and Palace were closed to the public for seven years.
- **Second World War:** Troops and anti-aircraft guns were stationed at the park denying public access. Ally Pally supported wartime clothing collection and a distribution centre. The transmitter mast's role of 'beam bending' to throw enemy aircraft off target was highly successful in protecting London and a contributing factor in the Battle of Britain.
- **1980 fire:** on 10 July 1980 the Palace was devastated by fire for the second time in history. A massive restoration programme took eight years, before the Palace was reopened in 1988.



**We welcomed the local community to show their support for Black Lives Matter on our South Slope. And the Palace was regularly, spectacularly, lit-up in solidarity with the NHS and professionals across the cultural sector.**

Throughout 2020, the Park came into its own, providing a vital green space with profound well-being benefits. We're proud that we kept the Park open every day for people to exercise and escape. In total there were over five million visits across the year, almost 70% more than usual. With this popularity came an unwanted spike in litter. But this too, like so many challenges we faced, had a positive response, with hundreds of local community volunteers stepping forward to help our overwhelmed park team clear tonnes of rubbish. We were delighted that our new park volunteers and the Friends of the Park have been recognised with a Hero Award from the Heritage Alliance.

We took the major step of taking our Creative Learning programme online, so we could continue to engage with older, isolated and vulnerable people, families and schools in a time of social distancing.

Key projects, such as the Alexandra Palace Children's Book Awards and our Summer Creativity Camps were repurposed for online audiences. Resource packs were made for home-schooling parents.

New projects were created to reach out into the community. Our Little Window Therapies sessions, for example, funded by Children in Need, saw us team up with artists and theatre professionals, to put on a series of socially distanced performances at local care homes.

**We adapted, tried, tested, learned and never stopped. And many of the new projects we created will become mainstays of our programme well into the future.**

**FEEDING THE COMMUNITY  
- CASE STUDY -**

During the height of lockdown, instead of leaving the Palace kitchens empty, they were offered as a base for Compassion London, a charity providing food parcels to vulnerable people across London. Founded by Leon Aarts, a veteran of working in the Calais refugee camps, Compassion London made an astonishing 500,000-plus meals. The organisation also had a beneficial impact on an ever growing number of volunteers. One volunteer, Becky, said that working at the Palace had been the ideal way to put her spare lockdown time to good use:

**“ I love coming and meeting people. Food waste and hunger are problems I've always cared about, too, so this was an opportunity to combine a number of interests. ”**

Fellow volunteer Naomi Clucas, added:

**“ Now I come in every day and it's just the most amazing feeling, seeing thirty-five beautiful people, all working together to help others. ”**

Between April and September, the motorbike group run by our onsite security team even helped deliver the meals to people's doors. ■

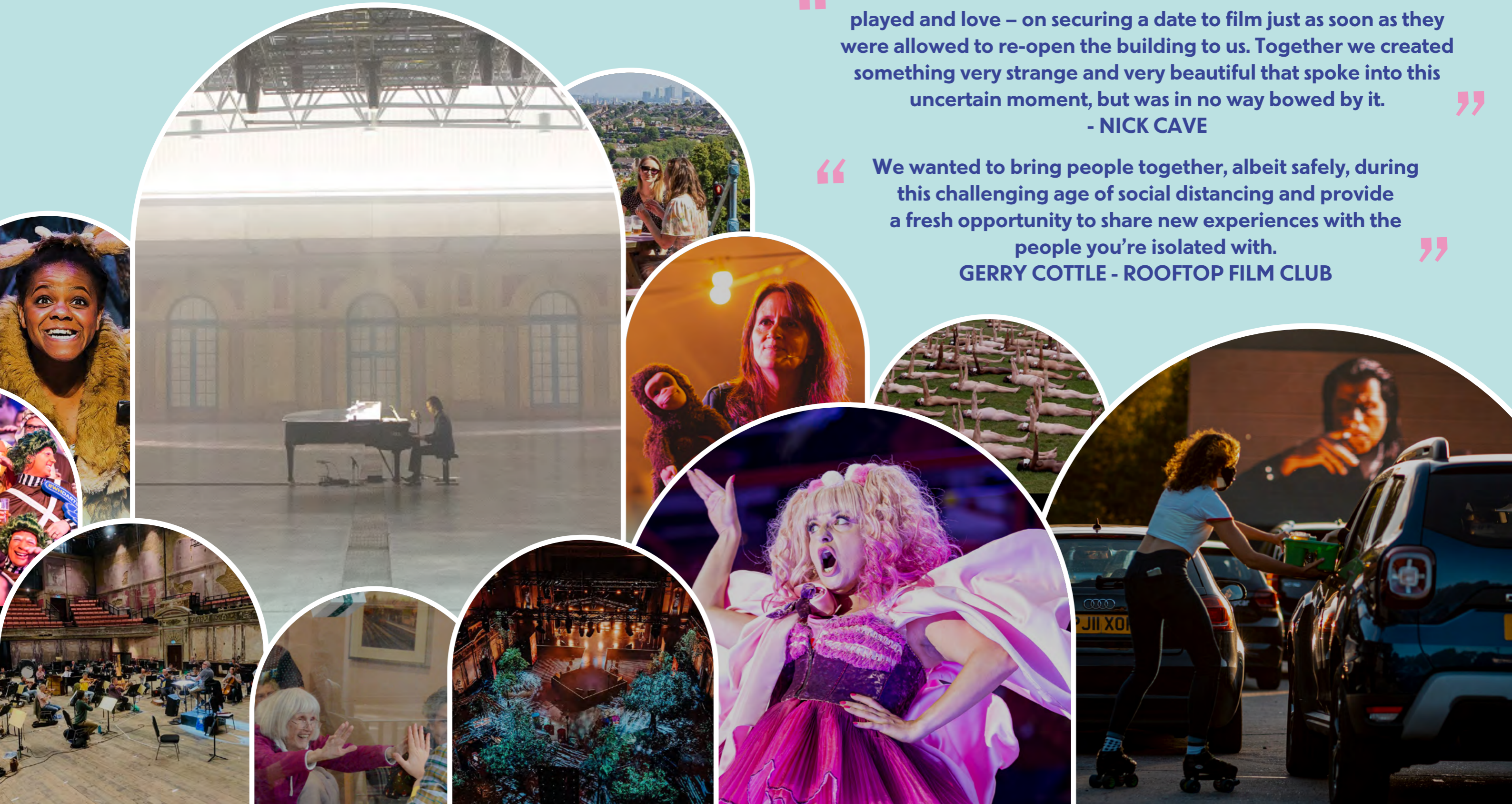


# GREAT EXPERIENCES

With the world locked down for so much of 2020, the cultural sector, against the odds, stepped up to bring people a slice of escapism and enjoyment. We're proud to have played our part, with the Palace having hosted some cultural highlights of 2020.

“ We worked with the team at Alexandra Palace – a venue I have played and love – on securing a date to film just as soon as they were allowed to re-open the building to us. Together we created something very strange and very beautiful that spoke into this uncertain moment, but was in no way bowed by it. ”  
- NICK CAVE

“ We wanted to bring people together, albeit safely, during this challenging age of social distancing and provide a fresh opportunity to share new experiences with the people you're isolated with. ”  
GERRY COTTE - ROOFTOP FILM CLUB



# FOREVER



*Never in living memory have we had to work so hard, simply to ensure the Park and Palace survived. Not only did we achieve this, we made improvements along the way.*



In February we officially opened the new Creativity Pavilion in the East Court. The state of the art space will be home to the Creative Learning programme, but can also be adapted to house private events, exhibitions and film screenings. It is the latest stage of the ongoing restoration of the Palace and a statement of intent for the future.



From March, the daily operation, security and safety of the site became a critical priority. We also had to maintain the condition of the Park and Palace so that we were ready to run events and activities if and when the opportunity came – a major undertaking at a time when there were so many obstacles to generating income. To support this, we were successful in securing fundraising investment including a £500,000 emergency grant from Haringey Council and £2.9million from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund, via the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



Our approach was not just short term survival. Investment and our programme of work focussed on making us more resilient for the future. Improvements were made to the ice rink, heating power systems, flooring and the roof.

In the Park we planted new trees and created a pond in the Grove. Throughout the year our work in the Park saw us retain our Green Flag status, for the thirteenth straight year, and our Green Heritage Award for the eleventh year in a row. We also picked up three Gold Awards from the London in Bloom awards.

In addition to physical improvements, we strengthened our organisational structures and practices. We were awarded an industry accreditation to recognise the progress we've made to support deaf and disabled visitors. This follows more than two years work with disability-led charity Attitude is Everything. Inspired and educated by the Black Lives Matter movement we launched a new internal diversity and equality taskforce, to ensure our corporate practices supported the need for fair opportunity and representation.

Meanwhile, we have progressed our plans to charge for car parking at the Palace, securing approval from the Charity Commission, and in doing so creating an important new revenue stream. We have continued to strengthen our volunteering programme. Tens of

thousands of visitors will have benefited directly from the contribution and passion of our volunteers, particularly community groups, families and people living with disabilities and dementia. Our archive is developing positively, with a particular focus on building our online catalogue, allowing more people to learn about our fascinating past and, perhaps, gain greater appreciation of how a seismic year such as 2020 can shape us. We have also launched our first ever Young People's Panel, to ensure there is a stronger input from young people into our event and learning programmes.

The impact of this year will continue to be felt for years, particularly financially. We will be a different organisation going forwards, but a better one for it. ■



## SECURING INVESTMENT - CASE STUDY -

In December, we received one of the largest grants from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage. The award helped to offset the significant financial impact the pandemic had on the Park and Palace. It recognised our role as one of the nation's largest independent venues and the positive impact the charity has on our sector and visitors. This includes contributing £170million to the wider economy each year and providing 20,000 work opportunities.



“ Alexandra Palace is a cultural icon in London and has allowed us to witness so many legendary moments over the years. I am delighted that we have been able to support the site through our unprecedented Culture Recovery Fund so it may continue to make history for years to come. ”

Heritage Minister, Nigel Huddleston:



“ Ally Pally is so many things - an iconic music and arts venue, a vital hub for sport and cultural events and a beautiful green space with parkland the whole community can enjoy. Knowing its doors can stay open and that the music will play on is just wonderful. ”

Lauren Laverne, broadcaster:



# LOOKING FORWARDS

**We hope 2021 is a better year for all of us.**

At Alexandra Park and Palace we're preparing a fantastic programme, so when the time is right we are here to offer events, activities and learning opportunities that enrich people's lives.

With your support, we can continue to restore and repair the Palace, improve the Park, grow our creative learning programmes, champion arts and culture, support our local schools and communities, and establish a thriving cultural hub that contributes to the local economy and supports people to realise their potential.

**The opportunity is huge and we would love you to join our efforts to make sure the Park and Palace thrive now and forever.**

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