

Taking forward the Farrell Review: Promoting our architectural excellence internationally

Position paper, March 2015

Introduction and context

One of the recommendations in the Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment was that: *“We should celebrate the very significant success of built environment design in this country and secure London’s role as the global capital of architecture for the long term whilst spreading the benefits to other cities.”*

It went on to recommend that an International Festival of Architecture be developed, proceeding or kicking off the London Festival of Architecture (LFA). This needs to be *“led by the sector and supported by Ministers and the Mayor, and would showcase the UK’s built environment professions to an international audience in the same way the Olympics drew attention to our sporting achievements”*.

This paper sets out the current position and planning to take this forward, thus developing a cohesive international strategy.

Taking this forward

It is a timely and important ambition, since the rise of the creative industries in the UK economy is highlighting the significant importance on the wider creative sector. Since the late 1990s, various creative sub-sectors have stealthily developed an international focus (such as London Design Festival, London Fashion Week, etc.) but architecture has not yet set out its stall.

The task in hand has been to explore how this could develop, what such an international festival cover, and what is its added value, promoting London – and the UK – in the appropriate way to the appropriate audience. Initial thoughts for a ‘cities’ focus have changed, as there is a plethora of conferences and initiatives that focus on cities across the globe, and we need to differentiate ourselves.

Recognising the strengths and plans of the various architecture and built environment groups and organisations, LFA has scoped out the developing international plans for 2015. Organisations include:

- British Council
- Design Council
- Design Museum

- New London Architecture
- RIBA (International)
- Vision London
- World Architecture Festival

RIBA International has significant plans centred around hosting the Commonwealth Architects Association (CAA) 50th Anniversary and General Assembly in 2015, and alongside this will be putting on an International Conference celebrating CAA's first 50 years and also looking to the future. The programme will consist of a series of exhibitions, receptions and conference days to honour CAA, and one theme is 'Designing City Resilience'.

Date: 15-18 June

World Architecture Festival (WAF) is coming to London for the first time in June 2015. Hosted by the University of Westminster, WAF London will celebrate international, game changing architecture, best practice and design innovation. WAF London will also provide the first opportunity for the public to preview the world's best building and the foremost architectural practices that have been shortlisted to present their projects to the high profile, international jurors at the WAF Awards in Singapore in November.

Date/venue: 24 to 27 June 2015; P3, University of Westminster

Vision London is a new annual event for architects, clients, suppliers and specifiers, where these communities can come together to discuss, debate and showcase the latest innovations and developments in architecture, design and the built environment. It will include a programme with Embassies and showcase emerging international architectural practices, as well a wide-ranging seminar programme.

Date/venue: 2-3 June; Olympia London

British Council will build on its successful International Architecture Showcase 2014, a series of residencies where ten international architects were paired with ten UK practices to work on ideas for sites across Poplar, London.

London Real Estate Forum will be taking place again in June and will be an opportunity for hosting and showcasing to the international visitors.

Date/venue: 10 - 11 June 2015, Berkeley Square, Mayfair

Shaping a coherent programme and developing the LFA international dimension

LFA is delighted to announce that both in response to FAR and because of our own objectives, we are developing an international strand to the festival, which will build year on year. This will include a 'focus country'. Irish Year of Design 2015 is the international partner for LFA's inaugural Focus country.

In addition, and given the wealth of activity already underway, it has been decided to build on these opportunities, creating an 'umbrella'; presenting an holistic programme with a strong international dimension throughout June 2015. The goal is to take a stealth approach to building the international programme, in which the festival would expand over the coming years, in the same way as the London Design Festival built its profile and reach over a time.

The current planned events will be complemented by some additional elements – whether this is a high level debate, a diplomatic conference involving politicians. There are several complementary threads that run through the current plans, and these are being worked up further to create a unifying theme.

As such, the aim for 2015 is to build a critical mass of activity, with a range of opportunities to entice overseas participants to London, whether by offering a platform – in the same ways as filmmakers travel to Cannes to showcase their work – or to engage in the debates, shows and exhibitions that will be part of the month long programme. An important element of this will be promoting the skills and work of the UK built environment industry.

While much of this activity is in London, there are a variety of networks outside the capital that can be invited to shape a regional offer, and both Design Council and RIBA has offered to assist with this outreach.