

Open House London 2009 'Celebrate the Capital's Architecture' Review

Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

Introduction

Open House London, the Capital's largest architectural festival, took place on 19-20 September.

The initiative is a simple but powerful concept: hundreds of great buildings of all types and periods opening up their doors to all, completely for free.

This unique opportunity to access and understand architecture challenges Londoners to look at everyday buildings anew, and communicates the value of well-designed architecture to everybody who uses it.

Good design can mean more attractive environments, stronger communities with a sense of ownership and pride in their local area, and new financial investment. Well-designed buildings and public spaces are vital in creating and sustaining a vibrant city.

2009 was our 17th year, and on a bigger scale than ever before.

The event was supported by over 20 sponsors and supporters, and 31 London Boroughs.

Over 275,000 people attended over 700 buildings and architectural walks and talks.

The most important built environment issues were profiled including housing and design for climate change.

Communities came together to learn and explore in their own area and further afield.

Blockbuster queues formed all over London, testament to the extraordinary regard held for the initiative.

Architects shared their expertise at many of the sites.

3000 volunteers supported the event with over 16,000 hours.

Open House as an organisation is committed year-round to raising the standard of London's built environment by opening people's eyes and minds to the impact of good design.

Open House's ongoing work with young people, planning councillors and other decision-makers advocates good design and inspires people to demand high-quality places for current and future generations.



Visitor responses in 2009

"Open House London gives me a very strong sense of belonging to and being proud of London."

"The event shows how architecture plays a vital and positive role in defining the use of the space and creating a local area that responds to our needs."

"Open House London has made me realise how important it is to have public spaces and environments where people can interact and engage with each other. More arts-focused and community-focused spaces where people can eat, drink, learn, enjoy culture and then talk about it with each other are needed."

Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

How is the initiative important for Londoners and for London's stakeholders?

A summary is given below, and 2009 programme highlights follow:

- London's largest showcase of **architecture, design and regeneration** and reflects the vibrancy of our creative and cultural industries.
- As one of the capital's largest cultural events Open House London offers substantial opportunity for **engagement in the arts**.
- Advocates **co2 reduction, community involvement, improved health, good housing, and well-designed public realm** by showcasing exemplars.
- Brings professionals from the design sector, councillors, property owners and business leaders face to face with the community in a **unique exchange and flow of information**.
- Encourages **stronger, cohesive, active and empowered communities** through civic participation, volunteering and skills improvement.
- Encourages **ownership and pride** amongst communities by creating the opportunity to explore the city's normally inaccessible architecture and examining the value of good design.
- Welcomes all sections of the community, celebrates **cultural diversity and equality**, and provides the **equal opportunity of free access for all**.
- Engages **children and young people** with their built environment through special activities.
- Encourages **adult health and wellbeing** through walking and cycling initiatives.
- **Promotes London** both to residents and visitors, boosting the local economy.
- A powerful and respected brand with huge marketing reach and with which a wide range of organisations and bodies are associated.
- Open House is experienced in **partnership-working** with the property, architectural, regeneration, sustainability, cultural and education sectors in order to deliver our programmes.



The Rt Hon Nick Raynsford, MP

"Open House has performed an exceptional service in raising the profile of London buildings and public spaces, and raising awareness of their value."

Peter Bishop, Director, Design Development & Environment, London Development Agency

"London's unique architecture forms a vital part of London's identity and history. Open House provides the opportunity to explore some of our greatest buildings."

Robert Noel, Chairman, Westminster Property Association

"Open House gives us the excuse to feast on our architectural heritage and learn about an individual building's place in our national history and life today."

Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

How does Open House London explore the way we plan, design and build our cities?

In 2009, we showcased examples of good architecture and design that have revitalised neglected areas, provided new housing, creatively approached public space and the integration of art commissions, improved wellbeing and created stronger communities.

Housing exemplars

Housing delivery that achieves the quality and quantity of homes that London needs is reaching a critical point. **28 examples of housing projects** and developments new and old (including social housing) were showcased in the event to show how these challenges are being addressed.

Developer East Thames also hosted an exhibition in their new HQ in Newham, 'Homework: Design in Social Housing 1979-2009', which explored the **history of social housing** and how vibrant communities are created and greener objectives met. It included a section on the Open House My City Too! youth engagement programme and the Inside Out initiative for East Potential exploring through an interactive game the relationship between young people and the built environment, and their right to 'be safe, enjoy and achieve'.

Art and Places

Several events focused on **art and places** and the redevelopment of areas. In Hackney, a sold-out talk at 20 Dalston Lane explored how art could enhance the public realm of the area and reflect its creative identity as with the wheatfield installation at Dalston Mill. At Greenwich Peninsula there were tours of the area including the public realm and artists' commissions. In Lambeth a talk by architects and artists was given about the planned Peckham Space and how it's responding to its surroundings.

London 2012 Olympics

The East of London is an area undergoing massive **regeneration**, and **tours of the Olympic site were taken up by an unprecedented 4000 people** wanting to find out about the largest scale regeneration projects in recent history, and one that will hold benefits for all of London. The event is the single annual opportunity for so many Londoners and visitors alike to visit the site. 100 volunteers alone helped support this individual event and received a personal thanks from **Olympic Delivery Authority Chief Executive David Higgins**.

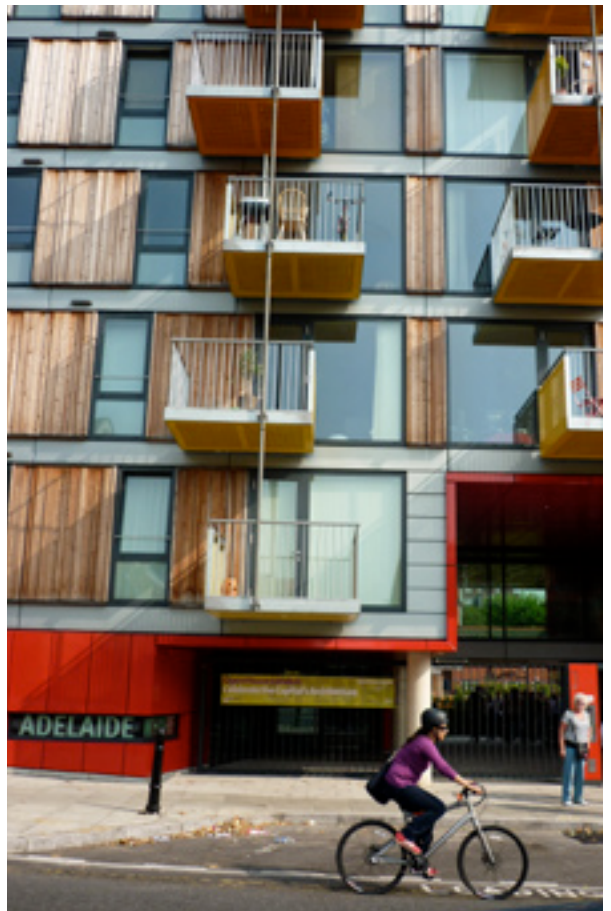
British Waterways also helped unpack the role of canals and waterways in delivering **London's infrastructure needs**. An event at the Prescott Lock near the Olympic site showed how the mechanism will offer a sustainable transport link for the 2012 games and beyond.

Open House Polls

As part of the lead up to the event, we also encouraged thought and debate about some of the design challenges that resonate with all Londoners through a **series of polls**.

The High Street Poll investigated opinions on the design of their local neighbourhood, specifically their high street. It found that **90% of Londoners thought that the design of their local high street could be improved**.

For our school design poll, when asked "Has the government's **Building Schools for the Future** programme made a difference to date?", 99% of respondents agreed that it had.



Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

How does Open House London help to show how London is becoming more sustainable and environmentally aware?

Open House helped to look at innovation in green design in 2009 on a greater level than ever before.

Green Building Exemplars

We showcased **126 buildings with eco features**. There was more opportunity than ever before to find out how we can build in a greener way whilst integrating design, whether through new build or retro-fitting existing buildings. 16% of visitors had an interest in sustainable buildings.

Green Design Poll

Our **poll** for the public and for sector professionals was developed in association with **sustain' magazine** and the **UK Green Building Council**. The responses are informing our ongoing research on sustainability. The public poll found that **70% of people think the UK is lagging behind the rest of Europe on green building**. Cost was perceived to be one of the biggest challenges to greening buildings.

Sustainability Media Partner

Sustain' magazine, the only dedicated UK magazine for sustainability, business and the built environment, was the media partner for our sustainability programme and ran a Critics Choice piece on the best sustainable buildings to see.

How does the event also encourage adult health and wellbeing as part of living sustainably?

A number of cycling and walking initiatives encouraged London's citizens to be active and explore their city. **35 architectural walks in all corners of London** were led by local experts and historical and civic society members.

Walking

The **Camden Architecture and Walking mapguide** showed how to walk central Camden year-round, get healthy, see some Open House buildings and lead the way in making a greener, cleaner, well-designed city. It was launched as part of **Car Free Day** in Camden on 11 September and created by **LB Camden's Transport** team in partnership with Open House and **Legible London**. Open House also had a stand at the Car Free Day event on Great Queen Street to showcase our work to walkers, cyclists and the transport sector. 10,000 copies were available in advance of and during the event and were very well received.

Cycling

Open House visitors were invited to **devise a bike-friendly route** between Open House buildings and support cycling as the sustainable, convenient, attractive travel option for London. These were entered into a competition to find the best route and the winning entry, 'Riding the Green Route' going through Westminster, Hackney and Southwark, is downloadable year-round.

Open House was also marketing partner for the **Mayor of London's Skyride** event which took place on the same weekend, encouraging Londoners to get on their bikes and experience central London car-free, and then cycle to some Open House buildings.



John Alker, Head of Advocacy, UK Green Building Council
"Where do you start with the architecture on offer in Open House London? There is such quality and diversity, both new and old. It's also heartening to see the growth of sustainability – green building – not as some optional extra, but as integral to the overall concept of good design"
Visitor

"Open House London makes me realise why reducing carbon emissions has to start to take priority because of the urgency of the issue and the demonstrably bad performance of so many buildings."

Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

How does Open House London encourage children and young people to learn about their built environment and to develop a sense of ownership of it?

Family activities

Scores of families came to City Hall, the Blue Fin Building and Westminster Academy to take up our challenge to design and make their own versions of London's architecture and new visions for a sustainable London adding to the huge 1:200 scale model of London's riverside created by the Open House Eco City summer school. The programme was supported by the University of Westminster, GF Smith and Edding. Young Ambassadors from our My City Too! programme volunteered at these activities, providing them with skills and giving them a new way of interpreting the subject. Work created during Junior Open House, our education programme for primary schools, was also exhibited at City Hall.

Families were also invited to collect a new Architectives trail map from locations all around the riverside, follow the trails and complete the activities over the weekend to discover, explore and investigate London's architectural gems. This is the first stage of a new programme supported by The London String of Pearls.

With 35% of visitors aged 30 or under, we succeeded in attracting an even greater number of younger people than in previous years.

How does the event encourage stronger, cohesive, active and empowered communities?

Open House London is a large-scale cultural event that works on a local level, from the participation of people in events in their local area, visiting spaces normally inaccessible to them, but also through volunteering and skills improvement with one of the biggest volunteering programmes for a single event in London.

- Over 275,000 visitors made 380,000 visits to buildings, making this one of London's largest arts participation events.
- Visitor figures were up by 30% in many areas, particularly outer. 60% of buildings reported higher visitor numbers than in previous years.
- Museums and galleries featured in the event experienced higher footfall and a wider range of visitors than normal.
- On average, 48% of the audience explore buildings in their local area. A further 40% travel to other areas of London with the remainder UK-wide or international.
- 58% of building owners thought that their visitors were more culturally diverse than ever before.
- 95% of building owners thought that their visitors were asking insightful questions, evidencing that a level of learning and self-informing is taking place that is growing year on year.
- 50% of visitors said that the event made them think differently about London, by encouraging them to look at buildings around them.
- 3,000 people gave up their time as volunteers to make the event happen.
- 700 of these were stewards and guides trained by Open House. 46% of our volunteers gave their reason for getting involved as personal learning about the subject, closely followed by helping others learn more, and being in



Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

What else was new and interesting this year?

Accessibility initiatives

Blind and partially sighted people had the opportunity to go on **VocalEyes audio described tours** of Haberdashers Hall, BBC Bush House, Foreign Office and the Johnson Building. An accessibility and best practice briefing was held for the volunteers. Architects supporting the tours found the experience very rewarding, and created special small models which helped to explain the shape of the building. The programme was supported by **The Greater London Fund for the Blind**. Open House also worked again with disability information service **Artsline** to provide online access information for the event.

Competitions

Our **Photography Competition supported by Samsung** on the theme of 'Juxtaposition' encouraged visitors to look at buildings a more thoughtful way and to think about interpreting qualities of space. Categories for different age groups included one for children. The latest digital camera prizes were provided by Samsung. Entries were judged by an expert panel, renowned architectural photographers Grant Smith and Morley von Sternberg and Guardian picture editor Marissa Keating. The Telegraph and Metro published winners results.

Our **Hotel Stay Competition supported by Grosvenor House Hotel** had over 500 entries. The winner had an overnight stay for two at the hotel over Open House London weekend.

Pre-event talks

Several talks in the run up to the event extended the programme and examined specific themes in more depth. **Margaret Howell** hosted her annual talk and exhibition at her Wigmore Street store, this year celebrating **Twentieth Century pool and lido design**, 'Celebrating the Modern Swimming Pool' on Thursday 17 September. Author **David Littlefield** explored how old buildings can live powerfully in the imagination in his talk '**Re-imagining Buildings**', fittingly held at Wiltons Music Hall and attended by 300 people.

London Night Hike

The fifth annual Maggie's Cancer Caring Centres and Open House London Night Hike took place on Friday 18th September 2009. It was a **record breaking event** with 2000 hikers taking on the 20 mile challenge, visiting 7 Open House buildings by night and supporting the value well-designed spaces have on our well-being. A special **site-specific light installation by BDP architects at Battersea Power Station** celebrated design, space, light and of course the Maggie's cause to support those diagnosed with cancer.

Opening reception

The **launch** was hosted by the **Royal Courts of Justice**. Keynote speeches were given by **Munira Mirza, Director of Policy for Arts, Culture and the Creative Industries at the Greater London Authority, The Rt Hon Nick Raynsford, MP and Robert Elms, BBC London Broadcaster**. Hundreds of stakeholders and supporters attended.

Open House around the world

The programme also precedes the Open House New York, Open House Dublin and Open House Galway events which follow our concept. They are now in their 7th, 4th and 1st years respectively. It is also London's independent contribution to the European Heritage Days initiative, and is preceded by the nation-wide Heritage Open Days.



Boris Johnson, Mayor of London

"I'm delighted to support Open House London 2009. Experiencing a building in the flesh can help to understand, appreciate and critique it. Open House London hopes to inspire everyone to explore the Capital and take an interest in good design for generations today and into the future."

Richard Rogers, Lord Rogers of Riverside CH

"Open House is a wonderful concept trying to help break down the barrier between the architectural profession and the public by explaining what architects do and how buildings are designed and built."

Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

Marketing campaign overview

Print and marketing materials and distribution

- **150,000 Event Programmes** with full event info, quotes from experts, and highlight events/activities. These were available in local libraries across London. 30% of our visitors saw the event publicised in their library. Programme cover featured sponsors logos.
- **60,000 Poster-Fliers** as advance publicity with highlights of the event based around issues and themes. Featured sponsors logos.
- **10,000 copies of Camden architecture and walking guide** as a special project on sustainable travel.
- **100,000 graphic postcards** on the Boomerang distribution network to reach younger demographic.
- **Wide distribution network of print publicity to reach broad audience including:**
Hundreds of cultural venues, bars, cafes, cinemas, healthclubs, 350 Local Libraries, 700 Buildings and properties of all kinds, 150 Architecture Practices, 600 Volunteers, Architecture Colleges, Tourist Information Centres, Press, Sponsors and supporters, Architecture/Art bookshops, Open House Info Points at key central buildings, Travel information centres, Camden car free day.
- **100 4-sheet posters on CBS Outdoor sites across London Underground** to raise awareness / call to action for those that know and to attract new and younger audience, and to target outer boroughs. Web stats went up by 10,000 on the launch day of the campaign, 10% of visitors saw copies of the posters, and it had very good stand out. **CBS Outdoor supported our marketing campaign** by providing half of the sites with inkind support.
- **600 banners** for participating sites to announce the event.

E-marketing campaign

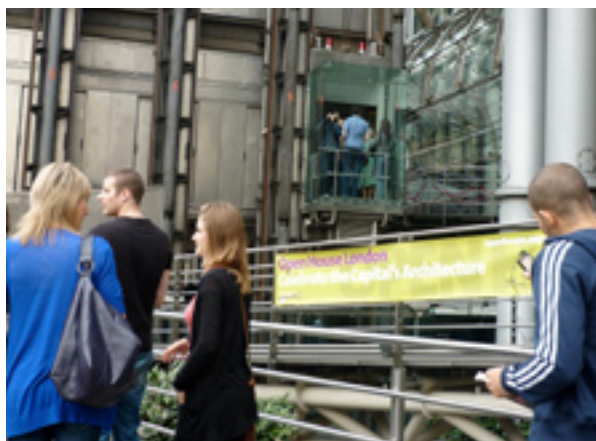
We managed customer relationship marketing with all existing visitors – maximising online and direct communications with those who have attended events or visited buildings. A **timetabled campaign to over 20,000 people** allowed us to cover all key messages, highlight buildings and events within each borough and promote sponsors and partnership activity.

We also set up **social networking groups on Facebook and twitter**, cultivating members to reach a new younger audience, encourage word of mouth, community forums and ambassador championing. This now represents over 1000 additional people in our community network. We also ran regular alerts to the groups in the run up.

Open House website

The website was another resource with the full programme listings, an interactive search facility, and further information on buildings such as photos, factsheets.

- An incredible **1,040,185 visits were made to the website**. This represented a **32% increase on 2008**. The website is used by 60% of visitors.
- **Google returned over 800,000 results for the 2009 event**.



Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

Media and PR overview

Our media strategy for broad editorial coverage included using imaginative story angles such as the special activities, photo stories, broadsheet features, getting into free titles to reach a young audience and ethnically diverse, consumer and specialist magazines to reach influencers and decision-makers and industry peers, listings entries in print and online, local press relations, nurturing key friendly writers, using quotes and recommendations of 'experts', and recognising that attracting new audiences often requires different media placement.

Media Partnerships

We developed high profile **Media Partnerships** with BBC London radio, Architect's Journal, Wallpaper* magazine, and Sustain' magazine to give guaranteed and comprehensive publicity through dedicated web features, magazine features, newsletters, Facebook and Twitter and through special promos.

- **BBC London** ran programmes on the Robert Elms Show every day in the run up to the event, plus breakfast and drive time broadcasts.
- **Wallpaper* magazine** hosted a special microsite with content, images and plans on select buildings.
- **Architect's Journal** ran a Critics Choice pieces in an issue of the magazine and online, together with a competition to win places at star buildings and regular tweets.
- **Sustain' magazine** ran a Critics Choice piece on the best sustainable buildings to see.

Other National feature highlights

Time Out, Sara O'Reilly, 17/9/09

Daily Mail, 'Going through the keyhole to learn about the capital's architecture', Sebastian Lander 18/9/09

The Sunday Times, 'We've been expecting you', 13/9/09

Evening Standard, 'A design free for all', Philippa Stockley, 16/9/09

Quantitative media evaluation for 2009

	Total
No of articles	512
Circulation	493,577
ACE Value £'s	716,097
PR Value £'s	2,148,301

This represents a **63% increase in coverage** on 2008. The media sector in which we have most increased coverage is **local press** for which we achieved **156 articles**, in order to drive awareness amongst local residents of the event on their doorstep. Press releases gave borough and sponsor recognition.



Open House London 2009

Celebrate the Capital's Architecture

Event sponsors

Open House is very grateful to the following organisations whose sponsorship, support and partnerships make the event possible:

Media Partners



Westminster Sponsor

Property owner supporters

Thanks to 700 property owners, representatives and organisers for their incredible goodwill and energy.

Volunteer support

Thanks to the architectural profession and the 3000 volunteers giving up their free time.

Family Events Sponsors



The London String of Pearls



London Night Hike Partner

Supporters & Partners

Talk & Exhibition Sponsor



MARGARET HOWELL



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- p4 Eco-house tour, Culford Road tour, Car Free Day in Camden
- p5 Summer Eco City, Brookhill Childrens Centre – Yvonne McSherry, looking at a plan
- p6 Foreign Office – Richard Thomson, Talk at Wiltons Music Hall, Robert Elms speech at launch
- p7 Programmes at City Hall, Tube poster at Bond Street, Banner outside building



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