

UNDERBELLY AND THE EARLS COURT DEVELOPMENT COMPANY ANNOUNCE THE LAUNCH OF LONDON WONDERGROUND AT EARLS COURT

20 APRIL 2021



- An outdoor “Staycation Sensation” for London this summer with free entry to the huge festival site.
- Outdoor bars, street food, live shows, bandstand performances, vintage fairground rides, family activities & West London’s only ‘city beach’!
- Underbelly’s iconic upside-down purple cow tent, Udderbelly, will graze at London Wonderground this summer and is joined by a 1,000 capacity big top.
- Amazing programme of live shows will be announced in May, including a “Best of the Edinburgh Festival” season of comedy, circus and family performances.
- Site designed to be COVID-19 secure with distancing measures in place if required

Underbelly, one of the UK’s leading producers of large-scale city centre events and live entertainment, is today delighted to announce the launch of **London Wonderground**, a major new summer festival on the site of the former **Earls Court 2 Exhibition Centre**. The festival is a unique collaboration and partnership between Underbelly and The Earls Court Development Company, the company responsible for delivering a fresh plan for the Earls Court area, formed of a partnership between developer Delancey, Transport for London and APG.

Free to enter and running throughout the summer from **15 July to 26 September**, London Wonderground at Earls Court will feature live shows, spectacular al fresco bars, a sumptuous range of street food, vintage rides, live music and DJs on the Wonderground bandstand and the magnificent Earls Court **City Beach**. London Wonderground will be the ultimate “staycation playground” for Londoners, offering a host of free and ticketed events, a great outdoor atmosphere and something to do for all ages.

In recent months, The Earls Court Development Company have been asking the local community what they would like to see happen on the site in the immediate term, and found that there was clear support for an initiative like this, with local polling indicating that over two thirds supported the idea of temporary theatres and food markets coming to the site. The London Wonderground is a response to what local people have asked for, designed to create a summer of fun in Earls Court, before the longer term plan for the area is consulted on and shaped with the community.

For further information, please contact:

Jamie Hodge

Head of Marketing & Communications
The Earls Court Development Company
Tel: +44 7707 289 107
jamie.hodge@
theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com

Dee McCourt

Director
Borkowski
Tel: +44 7803 726 543
underbelly@borkowski.co.uk

Sophie Ingham Clark

Communications Manager
Delancey
Tel: +44 7784 228 739
sophie.ingham-clark@delancey.com



A major programme of circus, comedy and family shows will champion the spirit and quality of the world-renowned Edinburgh Festival Fringe and will bring a “Best of the Edinburgh Festival’ season of performances to Earls Court this summer. Shows will be performed in two indoor venues; Udderbelly, the iconic upside-down purple cow which returns to London for the first time in five years, and a 36m Big Top. Both venues will accommodate reduced seating capacities in the event that social distancing measures are still required.

The initial programme of shows will be announced and go on sale at the end of May.

London Wonderground continues Earls Court’s rich history as a home of live events and entertainment. From the site’s inaugural use as a showground in 1887, to the Great Ferris Wheel of 1895, to the Earls Court 1 and Earls Court 2 Exhibition Halls of more recent years, this site has been at the heart of some of London’s most iconic events, concerts and attractions for over a hundred years. London Wonderground will occupy the former Earls Court 2 part of the site, with access from Empress Place off Lillie Road, to create a true, modern day showground of entertainment and fun for all Londoners this summer. There will also be a training academy run on site, with young people able to participate in a live events skills training scheme for local residents.

The festival offers free entry to the site and affordable ticket prices for the rides and live entertainment programme, with most shows running for an hour without an interval. The whole site, including the performance venues, can be easily adapted to incorporate any necessary social distancing measures and London Wonderground will have a robust COVID-Secure operational plan for customers and staff.

Alongside the opening of London Wonderground will be the activation of a new temporary public space opposite Earls Court Underground Station, where the entrance to the former exhibition centre was. This space on Warwick Road will be people to enjoy, and will be curated by the Kensington + Chelsea Festival alongside Underbelly, who will bring forward local artwork to display there.

The opening of London Wonderground at Earls Court is subject to successfully securing planning and licensing permission for temporary events from the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

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please contact:

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The Earls Court Development Company is excited to be hosting London Wonderground as part of our wider plans to bring the Earls Court site back to life this summer. Following a year of being stuck at home, we can’t wait to bring fun to the area, bringing people back to Earls Court whilst also supporting existing businesses and creating new jobs and training opportunities – all in a COVID secure way.



Rob Heasman
CEO
The Earls Court Development Company



Ed Bartlam and Charlie Wood, Directors of Underbelly, said: *“London Wonderground is without doubt one of our most exciting and ambitious festival creations to date, and it feels so in the spirit of the heritage of Earls Court to be launching it as we come out of the pandemic. We’re dancing on toes on hot coals in our excitement to give people that live entertainment experience again and to play our part in bringing some much-needed fun and socialising back to people’s lives this summer. London Wonderground at Earls Court will do just that, with something for everyone, free entry to the site and a jam packed programme of live shows to make you smile, laugh and gasp. Add to that, outdoor food and drink, vintage rides and even a beach, and we think London Wonderground can truly become London’s staycation destination this summer. Let’s all have some fun.”*

Rob Heasman, CEO of The Earls Court Development Company, said: *“The Earls Court Development Company is excited to be hosting London Wonderground as part of our wider plans to bring the Earls Court site back to life this summer. Following a year of being stuck at home, we can’t wait to bring fun to the area, bringing people back to Earls Court whilst also supporting existing businesses and creating new jobs and training opportunities – all in a COVID secure way. These plans have been shaped by our conversations with the local community who have told us they want to see the site activated in time for summer, and we will continue to harness the spirit of collaboration and celebration with our neighbours”*

Cllr Stephen Cowan, Leader of Hammersmith and Fulham, said: *“I am delighted to welcome this world-class attraction to Hammersmith & Fulham. The history of this site is one of exhibitions and festivities, and I am pleased to see plans to build on that legacy by bringing it back into use this summer. Fun is a core human need and The London Wonderground at Earls Court will be just the tonic that Londoners need.”*

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**Ed Bartlam and Charlie Wood
Directors
Underbelly**



Notes to Editors

About Underbelly

Underbelly is a UK based live entertainment company specialising in the creation, curation and management of large-scale cultural events and festivals with a particular focus on city centres. Established in 2000 at the world-renowned Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Underbelly has since produced events in locations from theatres to roundabouts in London, Edinburgh and Hong Kong.

Our current London events and festivals include Underbelly Festival, StreetEat, which was one of the first outdoor COVID safe events, Christmas In Leicester Square and Christmas in Trafalgar Square (both for Westminster City Council). We are also the event production partner for WestEnd Live in Trafalgar Square (on behalf of Westminster City Council and Society London Theatre) and Pride in London, the second largest one day event in London.

In Scotland, we produce Underbelly at the Edinburgh Fringe, programming and presenting 200 shows per day across 24 pop-up theatres and 5 outdoor sites, Edinburgh's Christmas and Edinburgh's Hogmanay Festival (both for City of Edinburgh Council). In 2020, in lieu of live events, we produced FareWell for the online Edinburgh's Hogmanay celebration which was watched by over 6.5 million people.

We love creating fantastic and unique pop-up events. We love entertaining. We love creating something for all ages and all tastes to enjoy. Most of all, we love live entertainment and events. In 2019, we sold over 1.4 million tickets to events and productions that we produced and welcomed more than 9 million people to our event and festival sites.

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About The Earls Court Development Company

The Earls Court Development Company is the new Earls Court-based business, responsible for driving the development of the Earls Court masterplan forward on behalf of Earls Court Partnership Limited. The Earls Court Partnership Limited owns The Earls Court Development Company and is the joint venture between Delancey (on behalf of its client fund and the Dutch pension fund manager, APG) and Transport for London (TfL). The majority interest in the site was acquired by Delancey (on behalf of its client fund and the Dutch pension fund manager, APG) in December 2019.

The Earls Court Development Company's ambition is to seek a new visionary masterplan for the site, that stitches the Earls Court back into its local area and sets a new global standard for a sustainable, vibrant mixed-use development. The Earls Court Development Company's vision extends over an area of 40 acres. Following the handing back of the West Kensington and Gibbs Green estates (the estates) to London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, the estates will not be included in the masterplan. There is now a clear opportunity for a fresh approach at Earls Court with the former exhibition centre sites cleared ready for development. Our programme of meanwhile and temporary uses for the land and derelict buildings we inherited will bring life back to parts of the site from this summer, with further announcements to be made in the coming months.

www.theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com

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