

RELEASE

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Creative Land Trust celebrates first new studios and calls for additional investment to provide more affordable workspace

On Wednesday 22 March, investors, developers, artists, studio providers and funders celebrated the opening of the new Wallis Road Studios, in Hackney – the first studios funded by Creative Land Trust and a vital step in creating affordable workspace for creatives in the capital.

Artists are the engine of London's world-leading creative economy, yet London is facing a shortage of affordable workspace for creatives in the city. Creative Land Trust was founded by the Mayor of London, Arts Council England, Bloomberg Philanthropies and Outset Contemporary Art Fund, to secure London and the UK's status as a global leader in creativity and culture by supporting artists and creatives with permanent space.

Wallis Road Studios will provide a 33,000 square foot ground and basement floor space, creating up to 180 long-term, affordable studios. Cell Studios and Mainyard Studios have been selected to operate the space. The site is located in the Mayor's Hackney Wick and Fish Island Creative Enterprise Zone.

Wednesday's celebration event was also an opportunity to learn and debate more about how Creative Land Trust can be supported to create more sites for affordable workspace. Guest speaker Sir Nick Serota, Chair of Arts Council England, spoke about the importance of artists and creatives at the heart of a community and the role that affordable workspace can play in helping create dynamic high streets and town centres.

A panel discussion between Deputy Mayor for Culture and Creative Industries Justine Simons OBE and artists Adelaide Damoah and Haroon Mirza explored the importance of workspace for our creative economy, and the challenges with accessing it.

The Deputy Mayor explained that the Mayor is committed to doing all he can to support affordable workspace in the capital. Although data shows that artists workspace has increased slightly between 2018-2022, we must not be complacent, as less than 7% of studio providers own the freehold sites. This means that these spaces are more vulnerable as landlords may decide to break or not extend existing leases.

Creative Land Trust has secured £4m investment from the Mayor of London and £2m from Arts Council England. Bloomberg Philanthropies have also come on board to fund the Trust, extending their commitment to empowering artists and local communities through innovative, city-led cultural programmes. Since the establishment of the trust, further funds of £2.5m have so far been raised from other sources to help acquire additional affordable workspaces, including an impact loan of £700,000 from Nesta's Arts & Culture Impact Fund.

At the close of the event CEO of Creative Land Trust Gordon Seabright announced a call for investment in the form of sites or financial support. You can get involved by donating premises or land or by funding a new building.

CEO Gordon Seabright said: “Investment in Creative Land Trust will help to further its work in ensuring that the artists and creative workspace remain part of London’s landscape and support our thriving ecosystem of artist’s and freelance creatives”

Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: “Our culture and creative industries contribute almost £60 billion to the economy every year and play a key role in driving forward our economic and social recovery, but we know artists are facing pressures from unstable leases and rising rents. It is vital that we provide affordable workspaces for creatives and artists across the city so that they can thrive.

“Investing in the creation of affordable workspaces across the capital generates important economic and social returns for our city. That's why I helped found the Creative Land Trust and why I encourage others to invest in the crucial work they are doing as together we build a better London for everyone.”

Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council England, said: “Working alongside the Mayor of London, Bloomberg Philanthropies and Outset Contemporary Art Fund, the Arts Council is pleased to be a founding partner of Creative Land Trust and to support its mission to provide artists with new and affordable workspaces. As well as helping artists, creatives and makers thrive and develop their practice, Creative Land Trust is helping energise and strengthen places like Hackney Wick by embedding these workspaces across the city to create better and more creative high streets.”

Outset Contemporary Art Fund said: “Artists’ studios are far more than just physical places of work; they are centres of creative exchange, education and mentoring, and serve as socio-economic hubs with their own supply chains and communities. Having invested in and championed the provision of affordable workspace for 20 years, Outset is delighted to be celebrating today the launch of Wallis Road Studios, the first major acquisition in the Creative Land Trusts’ portfolio of properties. This transformative investment brings together the real-estate, arts and public sectors to find a permanent solution for affordable creative workspace in London, offering an essential step forward in our journey to protecting our creative ecosystem in perpetuity.

Ends

Notes to Editors:

The Creative Land Trust team is available to speak with anyone who might be interested in finding out more about how to transfer sites to the charity or contribute finance. Please contact info@creativelandtrust.org.