

# ***London Borough of Bexley***

## ***News Release***

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Sir Peter Bazalgette backs Bexley's London Borough of Culture bid**

Sir Peter Bazalgette - lead on the independent review for the Government into the Creative Industries, Chairman of ITV, president of Crossness Engines Trust and former chair of Arts Council England - has pledged his firm support for Bexley's bid to become London Borough of Culture.

Sir Peter Bazalgette provided a personal message to an audience at a special business and key stakeholder event at Hall Place earlier this week (21 November) via video. In giving his wholehearted support to Bexley's bid, he talked about the power of arts and culture, in its intrinsic value, but also in its ability to build community identity and cohesion. He talked about the way culture delivers enormous social benefits, how it supports education and skills and of the significance of the creative economy. He also noted how Bexley is perfectly positioned to be at the centre of the emerging Thames Estuary Cultural Production Corridor opportunity.

The event was attended by key partners including Peabody, Bow Arts, Nutkhut and Wildworks as well as representatives from businesses, schools, creative practitioners and voluntary sector groups from across the borough. Key partners in the bid, Bird College and Rose Bruford College were there to pledge their support and Bird College students also provided the evening's entertainment, with technical support from Rose Bruford. During the event, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, Environment and Leisure, Cllr Peter Craske also announced that internationally famous writer and illustrator Quentin Blake has also pledged his support for Bexley's bid.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE said; "I am extremely grateful to Sir Peter for his strong endorsement of our bid. He has strong historical family links with the borough and, as his speech illustrated, like us he has an obvious belief in Bexley as London Borough of Culture. And it is amazing to have Sir Quentin Blake on board. We also welcome Ajay Chhabra's support. Ajay, the artistic director of Nutkhut and the London Mela and a Cultural Advisor to the Mayor of London, was raised in Bexley and is as a key champion. With such cultural heavyweights in our corner we can't help but feel optimistic!

Cllr Craske said; "As a community in Bexley, we are immensely proud of our unique cultural gems and celebrate the borough's legacies, from our splendid historic buildings of Danson House and Hall Place to our inspiring cultural icons, including Roald Dahl, Quentin Blake, Boy George and Kate Bush. Not only do we recognise

Bexley's rich history but we also appreciate our contemporary public art and performing arts traditions. The London Borough of Culture year will be our opportunity to share these fantastic assets with the rest of London and beyond."

"Bexley is home to two internationally renowned further education institutions - Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance and Bird College - in addition to our three amateur theatres: Erith Playhouse, the Edward Alderton Theatre and The Geoffrey Whitworth Theatre."

Marcel Baettig, Chief Executive of Bow Arts, spoke at the event, suggesting that Bexley's ambition to become London Borough of Culture represents a tremendous opportunity for all creatives in the borough to really make a difference.

He explained how Bow Arts in partnership with Bexley, have already started a new local tradition - a Christmas lantern parade, which encourages young people to show their creative flair through a number of drop in workshops. "The response and talent has been overwhelming" he said. The 'Let it Glow' parade and art and crafts fair will be held in the Broadway on Thursday 7 December from 5pm.

Ajay Chhabra said, "Bexley has been home to three generations of my family, from Fiji via India. Growing up in between the river and the railway line in the North of the borough with its rich heritage of migration amongst the marshes, the natural environment, flow of the river and the rhythm of the railway continues to be at the heart of what I look forward to bring to Bexley and its cultural jewels."

The Council officially launched its bid to become London's first ever borough of Culture last month. If successful, Bexley and another winning borough will be awarded more than £1million from the Mayor of London to shine a spotlight on what makes them special and unique, using creativity and the arts to celebrate their distinctive character. Visit [www.bexleyculture.london](http://www.bexleyculture.london) to find out how to get involved and #backthebexleybid at @whatsoninbexley

You can also vote for Bexley in the ITV poll on the **ITV website**. Don't delay! Please show your support today at <http://www.itv.com/news/london/2017-06-30/which-borough-should-be-named-london-borough-of-culture/>

Sir Peter Bazalgette's video is available to view here <https://youtu.be/UWqCy4abOjg>

