

PRESS RELEASE

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A celebrity creative collaboration brings together the business world with fashion and garden design to turn a theatre in London Bridge into an urban oasis.



Artist impression of proposed design

A celebrity creative collaboration bringing together the worlds of fashion and garden design is set to transform a theatre in London Bridge into an urban oasis. World renowned British fashion designer Zandra Rhodes has teamed up with garden designer and TV presenter Joe Swift to create a linear ‘pocket park’ at the Greenwood Theatre on Weston Street, London Bridge, in SE1.

Project organisers Team London Bridge and Cityscapes have joined forces with King’s College London, Network Rail and The Mayor’s Pocket Parks Programme to bring some much needed greenery to the area, reinventing a cultural hotspot and creating another landmark in this pioneering part of the capital.

Built in 1975, the Greenwood Theatre is located moments from The Shard, Borough Market and Bermondsey Street. The site is surrounded by exciting, cutting edge new developments and the 70’s facade now seems at odds with the thriving creative community that now surrounds it. Currently used by King’s College London for student productions, the theatre will overlook a major entrance to the new look London Bridge station when completed, turning what was a backstreet into a place to meet and enjoy.

By turning this grey environment green, Team London Bridge will be making good their promise to make better and more sustainable use of public spaces, a vision shared by The Mayor’s Pocket Parks Programme which aims to deliver 100 new or enhanced pocket parks across London by March 2015.

The plans will not only dramatically improve the streetscape but will reduce flooding, provide seating, increase biodiversity and make the theatre appeal more to the wider community. The scheme joins a

growing network of small, often hidden, pocket parks around London Bridge that the community have rallied together to bring about.

With the support of Southwark Council, Joe and Zandra will work alongside Cityscapes to make it a centrepiece of their 2014 landscape design festival.

Zandra Rhodes, who is based at the nearby Fashion & Textile Museum, stated, *'The London Bridge area is becoming very vibrant and exciting! Once, one could only go to the London Dungeons and look down the lonely railway tunnels to Sweeney Todd land! Then I persuaded Riccardo Legoretta to design the Fashion and Textile Museum, which many regard as the initial starting point of The Regeneration!*

Since then has come The Shard and the total rebuilding of London Bridge station. The area is thriving and exciting! With many people moving into here to live and many more walking through to the restaurants and station, it is essential to both green and liven-up all the 'dead' areas so that it becomes a pleasure to pass through, regardless of the weather. The Greenwood Theatre has been a large brick eyesore for many years, so when I was approached to work with Joe and enliven this space I jumped at the chance! I felt we needed colour to spread "sunshine" into the area, and the plants to make it a fabulous place to sit and linger in. It really is a lovely exciting project.'

Of the scheme, Joe Swift said, *'We are embracing the London microclimate to grow an eclectic and varied mix of plants including some exotics to provide plenty of all year round interest, colour and scent. The aim is to give the Greenwood Theatre and surrounding area horticultural depth and a strong identity to stimulate those who use it and pass by.'*

Team London Bridge working with Cityscapes, The Architecture Foundation and Southwark, also created the nearby, Gibbon's Rent community garden in 2012, which has just won the prestigious Society of Garden Designers 'Designing for Community Spaces' Award.

A public meeting will be held locally in March to discuss plans with the community. Details will be advertised on teamlondonbridge.co.uk.

ENDS

EDITOR'S NOTES

- 1) Team London Bridge's vision is: *'To provide services, information, connections and support to make London Bridge the capital's best managed and desirable business destination.'*
- 2) Team London Bridge was created in 2005 after rate-paying local businesses voted to create a Business Improvement District (BID) and pay into a community fund.
- 3) Cityscapes is a garden festival that takes place in London. Organised in partnership with the South Bank and Bankside Cultural Quarter, it aims to bring a creative new approach to the way urban parks and gardens are designed, through the creation of temporary and permanent gardens. Cityscapes was founded by Darryl Moore and Adolfo Harrison of Moore Harrison Land Design.
- 4) Useful resources:
Cityscapes www.cityscapes.org.uk
Fashion & Textile Museum www.ftmlondon.org
Mayor's Pocket Parks Programme <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/greening-london/improving-londons-parks-green-spaces/pocket-parks>
Greenwood Theatre www.kcl.ac.uk/greenwood
Joe Swift www.joeswift.co.uk
Network Rail www.networkrail.co.uk

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