

Capital Development Case study:

Black Cultural Archives



Founded in 1981, the Black Cultural Archives is a national institution whose mission is to collect, preserve and celebrate the heritage and history of Black people in Britain.

Its unparalleled and growing archive collection offers insight into the history of people of African and Caribbean descent in Britain. The bulk of the collection is drawn from the twentieth century to the present day, while some materials date as far back as the second century. The collection includes personal papers, organisational records, rare books, ephemera, photographs, and a small object collection.

In July 2014, following a successful £7m capital campaign, Black Cultural Archives opened the UK's first dedicated Black heritage centre in Brixton, London. This new location enables the organisation to provide greater access to its archive collection, dedicated learning spaces and an exciting programme of exhibitions and events that explore British history from a unique perspective.

Heritage Centre

Black Cultural Archive's new heritage centre is located on Windrush Square, in the heart of Brixton. Steeped in history, Windrush Square is historically named after the *Empire Windrush*, which docked in Tilbury in 1948 carrying her passengers on their pioneering journey from Jamaica to Britain.

BCA has transformed Raleigh Hall, a Grade II listed Georgian building in central Brixton (declared at risk in 1992), into a space dedicated to preserving and celebrating Black heritage in Britain. The £7-million project retains aspects of the building's original historic features, in addition to a newly designed annexe to create a purpose-built archive and heritage centre accessible to the public.

The project received a £4.5m Heritage Lottery Fund grant, £1m investment from the Mayor of London and £910,000 from Lambeth Council, which also gifted the building to the archive on a 99-year lease. Other supporters included Foyle Foundation, Bloomberg, Biffa Award and Garfield Weston.

Facilities

- Exhibition space
- Research facilities including reading room and reference library
- Dedicated spaces for informal and formal learning
- Secure and environmentally controlled archive strong room compliant with the British standard 5454:2000 allowing us to continue to safeguard our collection for future generations
- Café and shop
- Courtyard for outdoor eating and special events
- Spaces for events, seminars, meetings and community use

The Background story - Press extract: 'Black Cultural Archives unveils new centre in Brixton' *The Guardian*, 29 July 2014 (bold added)

*...At the beginning there were just eight of them gathered in a small shopfront on Brixton's Coldharbour Lane. But last week, after a **33-year long battle**, the permanent home of the Black Cultural Archives finally opened its doors to the public to a gathered crowd of thousands.*

The Archive, built with a £4m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and through a partnership with Lambeth council, sits in the heart of Brixton... The total cost was £7m; it was also given £1.2m by the London mayor's office and further donations from other organisations including Bloomberg and Lambeth council...

*...The original founders of the archive fought **two failed campaigns** to try to raise funding for a permanent building for their ever-growing collection. **Even after getting the approval from Lambeth council to use the abandoned Raleigh Hall in 2006, it took another six years to fight for lottery funding and finding donors for the extra £3m that was needed** to make the building fit for purpose.*

*For [Centre Director] Paul Reid, who joined the organisation as director in 2006, **the journey of the organisation from a small shopfront to a multi-million pound archive and exhibition space has been long and fraught**. Yet, he said, the success of the opening which was attended by figures from Benjamin Zephaniah to Sol Campbell and Zadie Smith, below left, proved that the telling of black history, and moving it into mainstream consciousness and conversation is as important and relevant an issue now as it was when the Black Cultural Archives first came into being...*

