

PRESS RELEASE

(EMBARGOED until 30 October 2023)

London to host World Design Congress 2025

(London, UK. 30 October 2023)

For the first time in over 50 years, London will play host city for the World Design Organization (WDO)®'s World Design Congress – putting London at the heart of the global design community.

The UK Design Council led the bid that will bring the prestigious event to the capital in September 2025, with support from UKRI, the Greater London Authority, the Mayor of London, DCMS and many leading design institutions.

The 2025 theme, Design for Planet, is inspired by the Design Council's mission to place planetary needs at the heart of design and will showcase some of the most innovative design solutions from British designers.

Last hosted in London in 1969 and attended by H.R.H. Princess Margaret, the return of the congress highlights London as a key player in the global design community.

World Design Organization's (WDO)® biennial World Design Congress is coming to London for its 34th edition in September 2025, marking the first time the UK has hosted the "Olympics of design" since 1969, when the event was attended by H.R.H. Princess Margaret.

The Design Council, the national strategic advisor for design, against strong competition and was selected following a unanimous vote from the WDO Board of Directors, and included support from UK government and some of London's leading design institutions. Previous host cities have included Tokyo, Mexico City, Cape Town and Seoul.

The global design event will take place from 17-19 September 2025 to run in conjunction with the London Design Festival – putting British design on the forefront of the global design stage.

The event will put a spotlight on the UK's design economy; a sector currently growing at twice the UK average, contributing £97.4bn in GVA to the UK economy and employing over 1.97 million people. London continues to be a powerhouse for design, home to a third of all design businesses in the UK.

The Design Council intends to make the World Design Congress 2025 in London a festival-like celebration of the best of British design – including elements such as exhibitions, workshops, talks and more which will be available for the design community and the public. The Design Council is proud to be curating a moment that shines a light on British designers from across the country. Big name British designers will be headlining the three-day event – such as Thomas Heatherwick and Anya Hindmarch, alongside providing an opportunity for emerging talent to take the stage.

The event is not intended to be a trade fair – it is a moment for learning, exhibiting, connecting, and celebrating design. Dubbed the 'Olympics of Design' by Design Council CEO, Minnie Moll – this will be the key global design moment of 2025.

The theme will be Design for Planet following the Design Council's mission and recent festival, which brought together over 6,000 members of the global design community. The win and theme highlights the crucial role that design can play to address the climate crisis. The theme calls for designers, and commissioners of design, to put the planet at the heart of their work to help reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity.

London was originally host to the 6th World Design Congress in 1969 - held at the Southbank Centre and was attended by almost 1,000 delegates from 39 countries, featuring H.R.H. Princess Margaret as the guest of honour.

The bid for 2025 was supported by a collective of key design-focused organisations including London Design Festival, the Design Museum, Design Business Association, the Creative Industries Council, the Royal College of Art, University of Greenwich, as well as government support from UKRI, the Greater London Authority, the Mayor of London and DCMS.

Minnie Moll, CEO of the Design Council said:

“We’re delighted that London has been chosen as the host city for 2025. Over 50 years on from the last event, this shows the long history we have for pioneering design talent in the UK. An exciting opportunity to harness the power of global design for good, this prestigious event will welcome hundreds of people from the design community around the world to London.”

Design is not separate from being one of the causes of climate change, but is in a unique position to help fix the problem - helping people make informed choices around circularity, modularity, materiality, repairability and lifecycle analysis. The World Design Congress will be the must-attend moment for 2025, full of optimism and innovation for the future.”

David Kusuma, President of World Design Organization said:

“The last time we brought the World Design Congress to the UK in 1969, the world was a very different place. We are delighted to be entrusting the Design Council to deliver an outstanding global event that showcases the very best of the UK’s design, innovation, research and education excellence that demonstrate how we can tackle the climate crisis.”

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan said:

“London has always been a thriving hub for world-leading design and I’m delighted that we have been awarded the honour of hosting the World Design Congress 2025. It will be an excellent opportunity to showcase the talents of our creative community, as leaders from across the world unite to put design at the heart of our efforts to address climate change. We all have a role to play in creating a more sustainable world, and I will continue to do all I can to support the industry as we build a greener and more prosperous London for all.”

Culture Secretary Lucy Frazer said:

“The UK has a long history as a home of great design, launching careers and taste-defining movements across the country. We want to maximise the potential of today’s creative talent, and the return of the World Design Congress to London will be the perfect opportunity to showcase the best of British design on a global stage.”

Thomas Heatherwick, Designer, founder of Heatherwick Studio said:

“London isn’t just the heart of creativity in the UK, it’s arguably the most imaginative place in the world. And in this time of crisis, we need more imaginative thinking than ever. For too long creativity has been the missing ingredient in the urgent conversations about the future of our planet. Having the World Design Congress in London in 2025 will be the excuse for brilliant designers from across the globe to come together and inspire the different revolutions we desperately need, to make the world a better place for everyone.”

Anya Hindmarch, Designer said:

“London is the most creative city on the planet, and so it feels apt for it to host the World Design Congress. Creativity will inevitably play a major part in solving our planet’s challenges. It seems to make total sense therefore, to gather the world’s most creative thinkers together for this purpose.”

Ben Evans, CEO of London Design Festival said:

“London has shown itself again to be one of the world’s design capitals. We are the proud home to many of the world’s leading design institutions and we have produced a unique international network of artists, designers, creators and innovators. We are excited to work with the Design Council to make the World Design Congress 2025 an unforgettable moment for designers everywhere.”

Sebastian Conran, Designer said:

“London is the ideal location for the World Design Congress 2025 as it has always been a centre of excellence for world leading Design and Innovation and its diverse community has never been more creative than it is today.”

Dr Paul Thompson Vice Chancellor of the Royal College of Art said:

“London is home to the top two highest ranked Art and Design Universities in the world. We are proud that the WDO have chosen the UK capital for their prestigious event and we look forward to partnering with the Design Council to make it an incredible success.”

Professor Christopher Smith, Executive Chair of the Arts and Humanities Research Council said:

“The Design Council has led the world through its standard setting, its international connectivity and its convenorship. In 2025, it will bring the world of design to the UK. Design is the key to unlock the most difficult challenges and the most exciting opportunities of our times. UKRI is proud to partner with Design Council on a moment of vital change and hope, when research and innovation from across the world will continue to design a sustainable future for us all.”

Jane Roscoe, Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost at the University of Greenwich said:

“We are delighted that the bid has been successful. It has been exciting to join up with other members of the London community to bring the World Design Congress to the capital for the first time in 50 years. We are looking forward to playing a key role in the event and are excited that our Greenwich community will have access to the best design companies and employers. It is a great chance to showcase our amazing facilities, research and our highly creative students and graduates.”

The Design Council’s event and lead up campaign will showcase inspiring examples of where design is making a difference, proving what is possible and profiling London’s incredible design talent. Running in conjunction with the internationally regarded London Design Festival, delegates will have the chance to experience London’s full design potential during their visit.

The London designation was officially announced at last night's close of the 33rd World Design Assembly, , hosted in Tokyo, Japan.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editor:

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For further information please contact: designcouncil@modusbpcm.com

About the Design Council

The Design Council is the UK's national strategic advisor for design, championing design and its ability to make life better for all. It is an independent and not for profit organisation incorporated by Royal Charter. The Design Council uniquely works across all design sectors and delivers programmes with business, government, public bodies and the third sector. Their work encompasses thought leadership, tools and resources, showcasing excellence, and research to evidence the value of design and influence policy. Their Design for Planet mission was introduced in 2021 to galvanise and support the 1.97 million people who work in the UK's design economy to help achieve net zero and beyond.

Design for Planet Festival 2023 was held on 17 and 18 October at the University of East Anglia and streamed live to audiences globally.

#DesignForPlanet

www.designcouncil.org.uk

About World Design Organization

World Design Organization (WDO)® is a globally recognized non-governmental organization with UN consultative status that aims to promote and advance the discipline of industrial design and its power to enhance economic, social, cultural and environmental quality of life. Founded in 1957, WDO services over 200 member organizations around the world, engaging thousands of individual designers through their innovative programming and initiatives that champion 'design for a better world'.

WDO.org
