



Meeting Title	Kenwood Events Public Consultation
Date	9 April 2026
Location	Lecture Theatre, Kenwood House
Presen	Beth Stone – Head of Visitor experience & Engagement Commercial Director, (BS)
	Simon Cranmer – Kenwood General Manager, (SC)
	Jack Brill – Operations Director, London (JB)

1. Introductions

Present EHT management introduced themselves to the guests.

Jack Brill, Operation Director London, (JB) and Beth Stone, Head of Visitor experience & Engagement Commercial Director, (BS)

Simon Cranmer, Kenwood General manager (SC) provided a summary of the last season's events and shared the listed events scheduled for the coming season.

- Easter and Summer quests
- Corporate hires and weddings in the Kitchen garden
- Barcode festival
- Financial Times
- How the Light Gets In
- Winter events Father Christmas

2. Winter 2025 events

2.1. Christmas at Kenwood – Halloween and Neverland trail, delivered in partnership with RG.

It was noted that ticket sales across the two events totalled approximately **73,000**, representing a strong level of visitor attendance. RG Live had decided not to continue operating the event at Kenwood in future years. It was understood that the decision was based on the company's assessment of commercial viability rather than any specific concerns relating to Kenwood.

It was acknowledged that the light trail presented operational challenges and placed additional pressures on the site and its resources.

SC noted that the withdrawal of RG Live provides an opportunity to review Kenwood's approach to seasonal events and to consider whether a similar Christmas offering should be delivered in the future, and if so, in what format.

2.2 Father Christmas – Following last year's feedback Father Christmas will return to the Old Kitchen this year. Almost sold out and very well received.



3. New Season Event (Spring Summer 2026)

- 3.1 Easter and Summer quests** - Easter Quest had commenced and was once again being delivered within the Flower Garden. The self-guided trail included an Easter egg reward for participants and provided educational information on Easter traditions and chocolate prize. Positive feedback had been received from visitors, and the activity continued to be a popular family offering. In addition, the site organised an Easter Workshop, attracting approximately 160 children. The event was reported to have been very successful and well attended.
- 3.2 Members' Week** programme, which will take place from **23 to 31 May**. It was noted that Members' Week is a national initiative designed to thank members and supporters through a programme of complimentary events held across the country. Bookings for all events will open on **20 April** and are expected to be in high demand.

The following events are scheduled to take place at Kenwood:

Walk and Talk of the Grounds – 29 and 30 May
From Primeval Forest to Designed Landscape – 26 and 27 May
Robert Adam Tour
Gardens Tour – 31 May

Members were encouraged to visit the website for further information and booking details. It was also noted that a range of events would be available at other sites nationwide. The member events continue to be delivered throughout the year as part of the wider public engagement programme.

3.3 Weddings and Corporate Hires in the Kitchen Garden

The annual summer tipi hire operation within the Kitchen Garden would continue as planned. Three weddings have been confirmed across three separate weekends, together with one additional event being delivered by the new in-house catering provider Elior. Elior will be responsible for managing the tipi hire in future.

3.4 House Events

SC updated guests on an upcoming SARABAND concert which is the first of the Painted Ladies series of free string concerts. The first concert will be held in the House on 28th June.

Two combined organ and strings concerts scheduled are for 19 July and 13 September. The Chamber Organ was tuned and will be played for the first time since approximately 2010.

- 3.5 Barcode festival – 2nd July 2026.** Event infrastructure build starts on 24th June and will be on site until 7th July. The event continues to support the retail sector and local food banks and has proven successful in previous years.
- 3.6 Outdoor Theatre Programme** - both events will take place on the Half Moon Lawn and will be managed directly by the House team.

- **The Pirates of Penzance** (Gilbert and Sullivan operetta), Illyria Theatre – 5th August
- **Othello**, performed by The Lord Chamberlain's Men – 23 August

- 3.7 Financial Times – 5th September**, with build and breakdown activities taking place between 29 August and 8 September.



Events team in discussions with the FT regarding opportunities to strengthen collaboration with the House and enhance visitors' engagement. English Heritage will also have presence at the venue for the duration of the event.

- 3.8 How the Light Gets in festivals** The date for the 2026 event is yet to be confirmed but is expected to take place later in September, following the conclusion of the Financial Times Live Festival and associated breakdown activities on 8 September.

- 3.9 Black History Month, October** - Dido Belle performance. The programme will comprise of a screening of a short film alongside a dramatic performance, building on the success of the Dido Belle event delivered in December of the previous year.

SC also noted plans for a free public reading of a new play about Dido Belle, scheduled to take place in June. The event will provide an opportunity for the playwrights to gather feedback from audiences to inform the development of the work.

- 3.10 Halloween Half-Term Programme.**

This year's Halloween programme will be part of a wider national family-friendly English Heritage Halloween programme. The activity will be similar to the Easter trail programme and is intended to provide fun experience for local families during the half-term period.

Guests welcomed the proposed approach and noted the focus on local families and seasonal engagement activities.

- 3.11 Father Christmas - December weekends.** One of the most popular events at Kenwood consistently selling out each year. The event is scheduled to return and will once again be hosted in the Old Kitchen.

- 3.12 Christmas Concert** – Delivered in collaboration with Kenwood staff, volunteers and Friends of Kenwood. Same format as the event held in the previous year following December's Friends of Kenwood Sunday lecture. The performance will take place outside the House.

4. Actions from the previous meeting

- 4.1 Views at the Viewpoint** - SC informed the guests that he has received an update from London Properties Curator regarding a query concerning the views at the viewpoint area being blocked by the events boneyard. It was confirmed that the current arrangements do not breach any relevant legislation or protected view requirements.

- 4.2 Alternative location for events base** – It was further noted that alternative locations had been considered. However, the current location remains the only suitable option, particularly in light of efforts to avoid further disruption to visitor parking arrangements.



Q: Members raised concerns regarding the condition of the ground within the vehicle and backstage compound area. It was noted that the ground is approximately half a metre lower than the surrounding ground level. **Action:** SC will refer the issue to the Landscape Manager for London for review and consideration within the grounds maintenance.

5. Q&A from the audience

Q: A guest asked whether the events programme generates a profit and contributes towards the cost of operating Kenwood.

A: It was confirmed that the larger commercial events make an important contribution to the site's finances and help support the ongoing operation and maintenance of Kenwood. Guests were advised that while exact figures were not available at the meeting, and certain financial information may be commercially sensitive, the larger venue hire events are primarily intended to generate income, whereas nationally programmed events are focused more on enhancing visitor experience.

Q: A guest noted that the John Singer Sargent exhibition was very successful and asked whether there were plans to deliver a similar exhibition in the future.

A: SC responded that there is interest in developing similar exhibitions and partnership projects, potentially linked to forthcoming centenary Bequest anniversary. Plans are still at an early stage, however it was agreed that the previous model had worked well and could provide a basis for future programming.

Q: Positive comment shared by a member of the audience regarding a smaller scale events taking place at Kenwood and their focus on the local community and visitor experience.

A: SC thanked for the feedback.

Q: Helen Payne, Friends of Kenwood (HP) noted that the question of how much income is generated by large-scale events has been raised consistently during the public consultation meetings over the past years.

HP added that, historically, varying levels of financial information had been shared during consultations. On some occasions figures had been provided, whilst at other times it had been suggested that such information could not be disclosed due to commercial sensitivity.

HP asked that consideration is given to providing more financial information. HP felt that previously shared cost of running Kenwood was very important and valuable as it puts the income generated from large scale events into context. HP noted that the EH and Kenwood would benefit from sharing the costs associated with maintaining and operating the site.

HP further explained that the public consultation meetings were established as a requirement following changes to the events licence to provide an opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to discuss the impact and benefits of the large-scale events held at Kenwood.

Action: EH management team confirmed that they would investigate what information could appropriately be shared to provide broader financial information regarding Kenwood's operating costs and the financial contribution of commercial events can be presented to the local community at future public consultation meetings.

Q: Attendees commented that greater financial transparency would help the public to understand the decisions relating to commercial events and venue hire activities. It was noted that, without access to relevant figures, it can sometimes be difficult for stakeholders to understand these decisions.

Q: Another member expressed support for the comments made regarding the provision of financial information.

As an example, a member referred to the second-hand bookshop, noting that it had reportedly generated a positive level of income during the year despite operating on a relatively simple model and suggested that could be expanded through specialist support and the introduction of higher-value antiquarian books, which might increase revenue and attract a wider audience of collectors and visitors.

A: JB noted that the second-hand bookshop has generated approximately £86,000 over the past five years, with income increasing year on year.

SC added that the Properties Curator Kristian Kaminski (KK) already assists in identifying books of higher value and liaise directly with specialist book dealers to maximise income.

SC advised that one option under consideration is the recreation of the second-hand bookshop experience within the festival site, providing an opportunity to showcase the offer to a wider audience and potentially generate additional income during the event.

Q: Another member of the audience noted that the City of London Corporation is increasingly seeking external donations and charitable funding following changes to its own funding arrangements. It was suggested that there may be a risk of overlapping approaches to potential donors and sponsors, and that coordination between organisations could help avoid competition for the same sources of funding.

A: EH representatives advised that, whilst it may not be appropriate to disclose income generated by specific events or individual contracts, there may be scope to provide broader information on the overall income generated through third-party events and venue hire activity. It was agreed that this approach could provide greater transparency whilst maintaining commercial confidentiality.

Action: Such information had not been prepared for the current meeting but would consider what summary financial data could be provided in future.

BS noted that as a charitable organisation, English Heritage is placing increasing emphasis on fundraising activity and is continuing to develop relationships with sponsors, donors and philanthropic supporters.



Q: A member noted that the local area benefits from a strong network of community groups and suggested that these organisations could support Kenwood's fundraising and increasing awareness of donation opportunities. EH welcomed the suggestion and agreed that greater engagement with community groups could help strengthen fundraising activity and broaden support for Kenwood.

JB further noted that English Heritage is currently reviewing and resetting its approach to site-based donations across the organisation. The site's previous "tap-to-donate" facility had been removed and EH is currently working on a more suitable replacement.

Q: A member of the audience asked whether the successful John Singer Sargent Exhibition had covered its costs.

A: JB advised that the exhibition had generated a significant income and delivered substantial publicity and wider benefits for Kenwood.

HP, (FOK) noted that research undertaken as part of the Kenwood Master Plan had indicated that only 3% of Kenwood visitors were English Heritage members, reflecting the site's free admission model and strong local visitor base. It was reported that the John Singer Sargent Exhibition significantly exceeded this benchmark, with almost 50% of exhibition visitors being English Heritage members. In addition, English Heritage membership sales increased by approximately 300% during the exhibition period, demonstrating the exhibition's effectiveness in attracting new audiences and encouraging membership uptake.

HP said that the exhibition was financially successful, with its costs fully covered through income generated by the project. The Friends of Kenwood generated just over £100,000 and this income will be reinvested to support the delivery of future exhibitions and cultural programming at Kenwood.

HP concluded by thanking Kenwood's operations team for their support and hard work during the exhibition.

Q: A guest pointed out that Kenwood free entry associated challenges are experienced by many museums and galleries, particularly in London. It was noted that such institutions are often required to identify alternative revenue streams and suggested targeting audiences beyond the local area should remain a priority.

A: JB agreed and noted that comparisons with major national museums should be viewed in the context of differing funding arrangements as many national museums receive significant levels of government support, whereas English Heritage operates under a different funding model and must generate a substantial proportion of its own income. JB continued to add that Kenwood does not have access to the same level of resources and infrastructure available to some larger national institutions, which can benefit from significant public funding and major philanthropic support.

HP, FOK commented that Kenwood is situated within one of London's most affluent areas which offer a significant potential to increase income through charitable giving, sponsorship and philanthropic support.



HP further noted that, given the number of questions and comments raised during the meeting regarding fundraising, greater involvement from English Heritage's fundraising and development teams would be welcomed and asked this to be feed back on to these departments. **Action**

A: JB advised that English Heritage continues to engage with Government regarding the financial sustainability. It was noted that Kenwood is subject to statutory and policy constraints which prevent the introduction of admission charges, and that this forms good grounds for the ongoing discussions about future funding arrangements.

It was also added that reliance on Government engagement alone would not be sufficient and emphasised the importance of pursuing a broader range of income-generating opportunities, including sponsorship, philanthropy, charitable giving and other forms of external support. All agreed.

Q: A member of the audience asked how events at Kenwood are marketed and whether there are opportunities for local stakeholders to support promotional activity. Questions were also raised regarding the level of marketing resource available and how visitor numbers might be increased.

A: SC responded that responsibility for marketing third-party venue hire events primarily rests with the event organisers. It's been acknowledged that there is scope to further develop the marketing of events delivered directly by Kenwood. It was noted that recent activities, including the Easter Trail, had been successful, but attendance levels have not yet returned to those achieved in previous years, and there is a need to rebuild audiences and awareness.

SC noted that Kenwood launched its own dedicated Instagram account during the previous year, providing new opportunities to engage directly with audiences and promote events locally. SC explained that marketing relies on support and prioritisation from central English Heritage marketing teams. However, it was noted that Kenwood remains one of English Heritage's most visited sites and therefore continues to receive significant attention within wider marketing plans.

The group discussed the importance of targeted marketing and audience development in increasing visitor engagement and supporting the long-term sustainability of Kenwood.

HP noted that during John Singer Sargent Exhibition, great amount of information was shared with schools nationally which proved not to very effective. During the exhibition the FOK approached local schools that had proved particularly successful. EH stressed that focused effort to engage schools in the local area generated stronger results and encouraged participation from nearby primary schools.

It was agreed that targeted marketing, tailored to specific audiences and local communities, may often be more effective than broader national campaigns.

Reference was made to Lauderdale House that regularly offers family activities and creating an expectation among local community that there will be something to do. HP noted that



families often look at their website when planning weekend activities and suggested that Kenwood should be destination for regular family-friendly events and activities.

It was also noted that ongoing seasonal and family-focused programming should be inspired by the distinctive character, history and landscape of Kenwood, helping to create experiences that are unique to the site and encourage repeat visitation.

JB agreed and advised that English Heritage has recently appointed a London Community Engagement Manager, who is now working across London portfolio. They had already supported the delivery of the Easter craft activities programme, which had been well received by visitors.

BS advised that work is underway to create a wider range of practical resources and activity toolkits for front-line teams. These materials are intended to support the delivery of simple, engaging activities, including self-guided trails and hands-on experiences, which can be implemented more easily and consistently across the site.

Q: A guest asked for an update on the display that brought together the two Vermeer paintings and commented that it had been an imaginative and significant exhibition, although they felt it had not received as much publicity as it deserved.

A: SC noted that it was difficult to get exact number on this as it was not a separately ticketed exhibition. However, anecdotal feedback from staff and volunteers indicated that the display had been popular and had attracted visitors specifically interested in seeing the paintings together.

Q: A member praised the presentation and interpretation of the display, noting that it had successfully appealed to a broad audience.

Q: Discussion also took place regarding publicity for the exhibition. Attendees suggested that wider press coverage, particularly across London and specialist arts audiences, may have increased awareness and attracted additional visitors.

A: EH representative agreed to forward the feedback to the English Heritage's national press team works

SC concluded the meeting and thanked all for their time and input.



ENGLISH
HERITAGE

MINUTES