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## Property Week, 23/10/24

ECDC hires creative director to restore Earls Court to the 'global stage'

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**The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) has appointed a creative director to resurrect the area's "rich history of entertainment and wonder" and restore the West London neighbourhood to the "global stage".**



Zoe Dando, creative director, ECDC.

ECDC has appointed Zoe Dando from Merlin Entertainments, the company behind theme parks and attractions such as Alton Towers, Legoland and Sea Life, where she held the role of global head of marketing and creative since 2018.

Prior to Merlin, Dando served as the head of creative at ESI Media for two years and spent 10 years at Metro as senior marketing manager.

Dando will be tasked with reviving a globally renowned entertainment offering at Earls Court as part of a **£10bn+ redevelopment masterplan** for the area, proposals for which were **submitted last month**.

"We want to make this place as special as Earls Court was as a destination which entertained the masses, whether it was a big band, a royal tournament or the boat show, it was the place to see the spectacular," Rob Heasman, chief executive of ECDC, told *Property Week*.

"I have always had the belief that we needed that creative flair in the business to ensure that we were really focusing not just on the hard realities of development, but that more and more people want to see experiences and enjoy these spaces, that's why we have brought Zoe on board."

Dando said she was drawn to the opportunity to reimagine the "incredible history" of Earls Court and its former exhibition centre and pleasure grounds. "As soon as I saw the project I wanted to be involved in it, it's such an amazing opportunity to create something special," she told *Property Week*.

“The vision of a global destination, a melting pot of art, performance and culture: these are all the things I am passionate about.”

The Earls Court redevelopment will see around 4,000 homes, 20-acres of new public open and green space, plus 2.5m sq ft of workspace delivered on the site, if approved.

However, Dando said there would be more to the site, adding: “I want to bring that rich history of entertainment and wonder back to life and put it back on the global stage.”

Invoking the area’s long history as an entertainment venue, she said: “I used to come here myself for concerts and home shows and loved it.”

Earls Court’s eponymous pleasure grounds first opened in 1887, hosting wonders such as the 300 ft “Great Wheel”, one of the world’s first Ferris Wheels, and a 70 ft water chute. The Earls Court Exhibition Centre, as one of the country’s largest indoor arenas, was opened in 1934 and ran until its closure in 2014.

Heasman added: “I remember coming to see shows at Earls Court. The minute you came out of the tube and crossed that zebra crossing, you had this sense of arrival that transported you somewhere special. When you crossed back at the end of the night, you would be talking about the memories you had made. Fundamentally, that is what we are trying to create here again.”