

London Eye could become permanent under plans proposed by owner Merlin Entertainments

The London Eye could become a permanent fixture on the capital's South Bank under new plans being proposed by its Dorset-based owner. Poole-headquartered Merlin Entertainments, which owns and operates some of Britain's biggest attractions, has confirmed it is taking steps to secure the landmark's future.

Created in celebration of the millennium, the Eye's planning permission includes a condition which requires Lambeth Council – the local planning authority – to decide whether the attraction can be retained beyond 2028. Merlin Entertainments is looking to discharge the planning condition so the Eye can be kept in place permanently, it said.

Mike Vallis, Merlin's divisional director for Midway Attractions in the UK, said the Eye had seen a "significant" return of visitors following the pandemic – and remained one of the "top go-to destinations" for people visiting the country.

"The London Eye is a UK success story with a global reach," he said. "When it first opened at the turn of the century, no-one could have envisaged it would become synonymous with all that is great about our capital city. As the capital's most-visited paid-for attraction, it continues to be enjoyed by millions of guests every year, it is now time for us to secure its long-term future through this application to Lambeth Council."

The London Eye has attracted millions of visitors since it was built, and is the backdrop of the capital's New Year's Eve fireworks, which are returning this year after a hiatus due to

Covid. Mr Vallis added: “Following the recent announcement by the Mayor of London that the New Year’s Eve fireworks will be returning to the Eye at the end of this year, it is clear that this attraction has a revitalised place at the heart of the capital’s cultural life. Now is the time to ensure the Eye can be enjoyed for generations to come.”

Merlin Entertainments, which announced the [appointment of a new chief executive](#) last month, is currently engaged in pre-application discussions with Lambeth Council and will be submitting a discharge of condition application in spring 2023. The council will then assess the continued acceptability of the London Eye in the location.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan added: “The London Eye is established as one of our capital’s most recognisable visitor attractions, and is a must-see destination for tourists from at home and abroad. It is fantastic news that Merlin Entertainments is bringing forward plans for the Eye’s permanent future to secure its place as an integral part of London’s long-term visitor offer.”

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