



PRESS RELEASE

Paris, December 4, 2025

Havas strengthens its experiential marketing arm, Havas Play, with UK-based Bearded Kitten acquisition

Award winning experiential agency Bearded Kitten was Brand Experience Agency of the Year at the Campaign UK Agency of the Year Awards 2022

Bearded Kitten will sit in Havas Play UK as part of Havas Media Network UK and be known as 'Bearded Kitten, part of Havas Play'



Left to right: Joana Ferrão, Chief Creative Officer, Bearded Kitten; Barney Sutton, CEO & Founder, Bearded Kitten; Nick Wright, CEO, Havas Play UK; and Patrick Affleck, CEO of Havas Media Network UK & Ireland.

Havas has acquired multi-award-winning experiential agency Bearded Kitten, strengthening its ability to deliver best-in-class brand experiences for clients in the UK and worldwide. This move bolsters Havas Play's global proposition, providing added scale, creativity and production expertise in experiential marketing valued at \$128.3bn globally.

Founded in 2007, Bearded Kitten has forged a powerful reputation for delivering immersive, end-to-end brand activations and experiential marketing campaigns for

some of the world's most iconic brands. Bearded Kitten currently works with Netflix, Unilever, Intuit, L'Oreal, Twitch and Beavertown and a number of existing Havas Media Network UK clients including Red Bull, Pokemon, Google and Disney.

The 45-person agency strengthens Havas Play with specialist expertise in immersive experience design, prop-making and theatrical production, alongside deep sector knowledge spanning entertainment, retail, and luxury. This integration is the next evolution of Havas Play UK, creating a 200-strong brand experience powerhouse backed by the agency's global scale to deliver fully connected and immersive experiences for brands that want to earn their place in culture.

Bearded Kitten will be rebranded as 'Bearded Kitten, Part of Havas Play', and will continue operating from its current premises. Founder Barney Sutton will join the Havas Play leadership team reporting into CEO Nick Wright.

Yannick Bolloré, Chairman and CEO, Havas, said: "Bearded Kitten consistently ranks among the top experiential agencies worldwide. We are thrilled to welcome Barney Sutton and the entire team at Bearded Kitten to the Havas family. Their creativity, craft and proven track record will help us capitalise on the experiential marketing boom. The acquisition of Bearded Kitten is a statement of our ambition to scale our Havas Play offering globally."

Patrick Affleck, CEO of Havas Media Network UK & Ireland, said: "Experiential is back in high demand and growth, and Bearded Kitten's creativity and craft set the benchmark for what best-in-class looks like. Bringing them into Havas Play supercharges our ability to deliver bold, immersive experiences that earn brands a meaningful role in culture. This is an exciting new chapter for both them and us as we look to deliver breakthrough work for our clients."

Nick Wright, CEO of Havas Play UK, said: "Experiential has always been front and centre in our offering, and with Bearded Kitten now part of the team, we can supercharge and scale this even further. Their arrival unlocks bigger, bolder ideas driven by integrated thinking and seamless delivery through one fully connected team. With Bearded Kitten's award-winning experiential craft and robust in-house production capabilities, we can deliver best-in-class brand experiences at the heart of integrated campaigns, across every brief."

Barney Sutton, now CEO of Bearded Kitten, part of Havas Play, said: "From our first conversations with Havas, we knew it was the right fit. We've been particularly selective about potential partners, but Havas Play instantly felt like the missing piece. We're still very much Bearded Kitten, the same people and culture, but now with the scale and resources of Havas Play behind us. We couldn't be more excited for this next chapter!"

Experiential marketing facts

- Global spending on experiential marketing is valued at \$128.3 billion ([PQ Media](#)).
- Fortune 1000 marketers: 74% plan to boost experiential budgets in 2025 ([EventTrack](#)).

- 80% of companies increased their experiential marketing budgets recently, allocating between 10–30% of total marketing spend ([Gradient](#)).
- According to the IPA's Bellwether Report, UK marketing budgets for events and experiences surged 23.1 % in Q1 2024, the fastest increase in 11 years, followed by a 17.2% gain in Q2, and a projected +18.7% surge for 2024–25 ([IPA Bellwether](#)).
- Overall, the UK Experiential Marketing market is growing at around 8–9% annually ([Plimsoll UK](#)).

Bearded Kitten Awards

AGENCY

- Gold Winner – Brand Experience Agency of the Year – Campaign UK Agency of the Year Awards 2022
- Highly Commended – Event Team – Campaign Experience Awards 2023
- Highly Commended – Event Team – Campaign Experience Awards 2024
- Winner – Best Creative Events Agency 2020 – East London” – SME Greater London Enterprise Awards 2020
- Winner – Employer of the Year – CN Agency Awards 2021

INTUIT MAILCHIMP: FROM: HERE, TO: THERE

- Winner – Brand Experience B2B – Campaign Experience Awards 2024
- Winner – Best New Conference – Conference & Event Awards 2024

SITU LIVE

- Winner – Best Shopfitting/Fit-Out Award – Creative Retail Awards 2022
- Winner – Best New Store – Retail Week Awards 2022
- Winner – Best New Retail Concept – MAPIC World Awards 2022
- Winner – RTIH Editors Choice Award – RTIH Innovation Awards 2021#

BATTERSEA POWER STATION - RELAUNCHING AN ICON

- Winner – Venue Experience – Campaign Experience Awards 2023
- Highly Commended, Creative Event of the Year – Campaign Experience Awards 2023

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About Havas

Founded in 1835 in Paris, Havas is one of the world's largest global communications groups, with nearly 23,000 people operating in over 100 markets and sharing one mission: to make a meaningful difference to brands, businesses, and people. To meet the needs of its clients, Havas has developed a seamlessly integrated strategy and operating system, Converged.AI, fusing all its global expertise, tools and capabilities, to create, produce, and distribute real-time, optimized, and personalized marketing solutions at scale. With inspired human ideas at the heart of this unique model, supercharged by the latest data, technology and AI, the teams work together with agility and in perfect synergy within Havas Villages to provide clients with tailor-made solutions that support them in their positive transformation. Havas is committed to building an inclusive and equitable workplace, that prioritizes the well-being and professional development of its talents. Further information about Havas is available at www.havas.com.

About Bearded Kitten

Bearded Kitten is a global creative experience agency. Operating from London, Lisbon, and Sydney, the agency works with clients worldwide to deliver award-winning experiences, from brand activations and festivals, to full-scale immersive experiences and conferences. Bearded Kitten's integrated approach combines strategic thinking, creative expertise, and in-house build capabilities, enabling the team to concept, fabricate, and execute projects end-to-end.