

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Economy and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee – 6 February 2024

Subject: Factory International – Manchester International Festival 2023 and Aviva Studios opening season

Report of: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

Last year was a crucial year which saw significant milestones achieved for Factory International and Manchester International Festival. MIF23 took place over eighteen days between 29 June and 16 July 2023, for the first time in its history in and around Aviva Studios, and in other venues across the city.

Highlights included Yayoi Kusama's exhibition "You, Me and the Balloons" in the Warehouse space of Aviva Studios, Festival Square and its free programme on the stage outside Aviva Studios on the bank of the River Irwell, and performances by Angelique Kidjo, Alison Goldfrapp and many others.

On the eve of the festival opening, Factory International also hosted a reception of Manchester's Lord Mayor on 27 June for delegates of the International Society for the Performing Arts mid-year congress which took place in Manchester between 27 and 30 June.

On 18 October, Aviva Studios officially premiered "Free Your Mind", a spectacular live event directed by Danny Boyle and written, choreographed and composed by a world-class creative team which ran from 31 October until 5 November. This was followed by "The Welcome", a cultural celebration to invite Greater Manchester residents through the doors of Aviva Studios to experience and explore the building, with activities ranging from live performances to immersive installations. "The Welcome" was curated by Factory Assembly, a group of Manchester residents who worked for two years on the programme which ran between 11 and 19 November.

"Lost and Found" was Aviva Studios' first Christmas family show. The world premiere stage adaptation of Oliver Jeffers' award-winning children's book was a heart-warming, magical story of friendship and loneliness, following the journey of a little boy who one day finds a penguin on his doorstep. Adapted and directed by BAFTA award-winning director Will Brenton, the show featured a live, original soundtrack from musician and composer Gruff Rhys.

In December, the venue welcomed gig-goers with its first round of high-capacity music events, with 10,000 attendees over three nights. Over two nights, musician, songwriter

and singer Johnny Marr and his band were joined by a 30-piece orchestra for an expansive celebration of the last decade of Johnny’s solo body of work. Led by conductor Fiona Brice, the orchestra was assembled by Johnny Marr specially for the event and is composed of musicians from across the North. Later in the week, a homecoming show for the Manchester based hip-hop and soul duo Children of Zeus brought a host of special guests and Manchester talent.

Recommendations

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the information in the report.

Wards Affected: All

<p>Environmental Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Factory International’s Environmental Sustainability Policy and five-year Action Plan set out how the organisation will contribute to the city’s Zero Carbon target, both in the delivery of the festival and in operating Aviva Studios. Progress is reported annually against a series of targets, milestones and key performance indicators. Aviva Studios aim to be carbon neutral by 2028, and for the first time, Factory International trialled a pilot scheme of e-cargo bikes for use during the festival. The next steps include establishing systems and monitoring to accurately measure the operational footprint at Aviva Studios to set a baseline by 2024 and plot a realistic path towards the aim of becoming carbon neutral. Factory International will test emerging technology as it arrives, including renewable energy systems, battery storage and alternative production materials. Factory will introduce Zero to Landfill and No Single-Use Plastics policies soon.</p>
<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion</p>	<p>Factory International’s Equality Action Plan consists of a set of actions to drive the charity’s ambitions around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for its workforce, artists, audiences, and participants. They include creating an accessible experience reflecting the diversity of Manchester, creating opportunities and improving life outcomes, establishing people practices that support the workforce and its wellbeing, and removing systemic barriers to training, education and employment. These actions are reviewed quarterly, with progress updates tabled as a standing item on Factory International’s board agenda. The target for 2023-24 is to complete 85%</p>

	of actions, which has already been exceeded at 87%.
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Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy /Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Factory International and Manchester International Festival support economic growth by significantly raising the city’s profile, drawing in national and international visitors, and attracting inward investment by positioning Manchester as a leading cultural city with an ability to showcase major large-scale events. MIF23 was a flagship event in an important year for culture in Manchester (see Annual Culture Report) and contributed substantially to the ongoing cultural recovery of the city. MIF23 generated £39.2million of economic activity in Manchester, compared to an economic impact of £19.5 million in 2021. Over the next decade, Aviva Studios is projected to generate £1.1billion to the city’s economy and create or support 1,500 direct and indirect jobs.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city’s economic success	Factory International continues to boost employment and volunteering opportunities, with 218 staff members (or 210 Full-Time Equivalents) and 488 volunteers. The Factory Academy continues to work with industry partners to provide pathways to training and employment for Manchester residents.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Factory International’s creative learning team, through its Neighbourhood Organisers and Community Partnership programmes, continues to raise awareness in communities and develop pathways for residents to engage with the festival offer. 1,164 children and 25 schools were involved in creative opportunities during MIF23, as well as 157 adults and 58 children across 16 sessions as part of the Community Engagement programme. 20% of audiences across MIF and the Aviva Studios opening programme were Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse. The company’s permanent staff team includes 28% of colleagues that are Black, Asian or Ethnically Diverse, 16% are Disabled and 53% are female. Amongst board members, 47% are Black, Asian or Ethnically Diverse, 11% are Disabled, and 44% are female.

<p>A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work</p>	<p>MIF23 drew 325,300 visitors, including 83,000 visitors to the new Festival Square. It is a significant part of the city’s cultural offer with a reach into communities that it both broad and deep, through its creative learning programme, including schools’ outreach. In addition, 3,500 people tuned into MIF23 to watch live content from 36 countries during the festival, with 700,000 visits to the Factory International website which represents an increase of 135% on MIF21. 19,000 people read and watched content on Factory+, Factory International’s digital content strand.</p> <p>Factory International’s Environmental Sustainability strategic objectives are included in its business plan. Progress with these objectives is monitored and reported internally on a quarterly basis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing and embedding environmental sustainability best practice and innovation into models for developing and distributing work. • Equipping the creative workforce of the future with skills and understanding to effect positive change around sustainability. • Showcasing extraordinary environmental sustainability for the building and inspiring change in our audiences.
<p>A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth</p>	<p>At MIF23, 24 countries and 55 cities from across the globe were represented by 145 guests and 101 organisations. Through the “International Weekend” for curators, presenters, artistic and executive directors, programmers and producers attended MIF23 and almost 150 of these international key players from a range of artform experiencing Manchester and Manchester-based productions, while creating and strengthening industry connections. A reception by the Lord Mayor was held two days before the festival opening for delegates of the 2023 International Society for the Performing Arts mid-year congress in Manchester.</p>

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

The Council provides annual funding support of £1.5million to Factory International. This was agreed for a 10-year period as part of the 2020-21 budget proposals and is part of the Council's commitment to match the £9.8million annual ongoing revenue support for Factory International from Arts Council England and other government grants to run Aviva Studios and deliver Manchester International Festival.

Financial Consequences – Capital

The report does not address the construction of Aviva Studios and associated capital expenditure.

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Background documents

The following documents disclose important facts on which this report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the officers above.

Festival Impact Report, Manchester International Festival 2023, Factory International (2023).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report gives an overview of the information and data relating to Manchester International Festival 2023 and the opening season of Aviva Studios from October to date. The report does not address the construction of Aviva Studios and associated capital expenditure.
- 1.2 Previously, impact and evaluation reports on individual festivals were provided to the Council's Community and Equalities Scrutiny Committee biennially before a funding request for subsequent festivals was tabled at the following Council's Executive. With the introduction of a 10-year annual funding commitment between the Council and Factory International in 2020/21, this process has changed accordingly.

2. Background

- 2.1 The report is based on the Festival Impact Report and Economic Impact Report on MIF23, produced by Factory International and The Audience Agency respectively. The section on the Aviva Studios opening season (Item 5) is based on Factory International's analysis of delivery against its own strategic objectives.

3. The impact of MIF23

- 3.1 MIF23 took place over eighteen days from 29 June until 16 July. In its ninth year, the festival is held biennially in various public spaces and venues across the city. In 2023, it took place in and around Aviva Studios, nine years after the then Chancellor first announced investment in the new cultural venue as part of the Autumn Statement 2014 in the context of plans for a wider Northern Powerhouse, as well as other venues across the city.

Overview

- 3.2 MIF23 featured 29 productions and over 400 ticketed performances and drew 325,300 visitors including 174,700 attendees to free events and 83,000 visitors to Festival Square. It saw an increase of 7% in first-time visitors.
- 3.3 In terms of economic activity, MIF23 and its attendees spent £39.2million in the city of Manchester while £26.4 million of new money was spent in the city (please see sections 4.1 to 4.4 for information on the methodology).
- 3.4 Overall, Aviva Studios is projected to generate £1.1billion for Manchester's economy over the next decade and create or support 1,500 direct and indirect jobs in the process.
- 3.5 It was the most diverse festival to date, with 21% of visitors identifying as having a global majority background.

- 3.6 88% of visitors rated the overall quality of events as excellent or good.
- 3.7 Aviva Studios proved to be a significant draw, with 42% wanting to see and experience the new venue.
- 3.8 86% stated that they would or probably would attend a future event and 10% have already booked tickets, as part of in-person surveys of attendees at Aviva Studios during MIF23.

Artistic programme

- 3.9 This section provides some selected examples of the 29 performances and exhibitions of the MIF23 programme across 14 venues and the streets of Manchester. It aims to illustrate the breadth and variety in terms of art forms, subject matters and the international partners involved in commissioning work premiered at MIF23.
- 3.10 Yayoi Kusama's "You, Me and the Balloons", a large-scale exhibition of Kusama's kaleidoscopic, psychedelic and colourful work was presented in Aviva Studio's Warehouse space, throughout the festival and into the summer until 28 August.
- 3.11 Artist Risham Syed's "Each Tiny Drop" at Mayfield Park opened the festival with a mesmeric experience inspired by ancient practices and river rituals from South Asian Cultures.
- 3.12 Director Sarah Frankcom, actor Maxine Peake and movement director Imogen Knight adapted Kay Dick's dystopian 1977 novel "They", with a run of after-hours readings at John Ryland's Library.
- 3.13 Artist Ryan Gander's "The Find" was a city-wide coin finding expedition which created a lot of excitement. The coins, designed by Gander as collectable artworks, lucky charms and decision-making tools rolled into one. There were three designs to collect, hidden in key locations across the city, left on park benches, walls, steps, in food courts and libraries or in parking ticket machines, as an invitation to go out and explore.
- 3.14 Composer Philip Venables and director Ted Huffman adapted the 1977 cult book "The Faggots and their Friends" by Larry Mitchell and Ned Asta as a performance of theatre, dance and song with a queer lens which was performed at HOME and co-commissioned by Factory International, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Bregenzer Festspiele, the Southbank Centre and NYU Skirball in association with Holland Festival.

- 3.15 Ryuichi Sakamoto's "Kagami" was a mixed-reality concert, made in collaboration with Tin Drum studio and in association with The Shed (New York City) and Factory International for Manchester International Festival of a selection of the late composer's compositions.
- 3.16 German theatre company Rimini Protokoll's "All Right, Good Night" was an exploration of the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 against the loss of a father to dementia, a coproduction with HAU Hebbel am Ufer (Berlin), Volkstheater (Wien), Factory International for Manchester International Festival, Kuenstlerhaus Mousonturm (Frankfurt/Main), and PACT Zollverein in (Essen, Germany).
- 3.17 Choreographers Sharon Eyal and Gal Behar (LEV Dance Company), London-based record label Young and DJ Ben UFO created "R.O.S.E", a night of dance and music at New Century Hall, commissioned by Factory International, Park Avenue Armory (New York) and Sadler's Wells (London).
- 3.18 Artist and hip-hop pioneer Benji Reid created "Find Your Eyes", an autobiographical performance combining photography, choreography and theatre, commissioned by Factory International, Internationaal Theater Amsterdam and Black Achievement Month and Taipei Performing Arts Center.
- 3.19 Festival Square was located for the first time in the outdoor spaces at Aviva Studio, towards the banks of the River Irwell. 84,000 visitors across 16 days were attracted to the free programme of live music and performances. From late-night DJ sets and family-friendly fun, experimental classical concert to spoken word and bands. The daily and nightly programme featured performances from 683 artists and hosted 16 hospitality and corporate events attended by 720 VIPs and guests.

International reach

- 3.20 One of Factory International and Manchester International Festival's key ambitions is to bring Manchester and Manchester-made productions to the widest possible audiences world-wide and in turn, invite the world to take part in its programming. MIF23 had more international participation than ever before, with 55 cities, 145 guests and 101 organisations from 34 countries across the world represented. Visitors and co-commissioning organisations were welcomed from places as diverse as Berlin, Hong Kong, Perth, Goa, South Carolina, Kaohsiung, Warsaw, Paris and Sharjah.
- 3.21 MIF23 hosted the "International Weekend" from 30 June until 2 July 2023 for curators, presenters, artistic and executive directors, programmers and producers from across the world. The aim of the Weekend is to bring together current and potential partners from around the world to experience the festival,

encourage them to work with Factory International and develop a reputation as one of the major meeting points and hubs on the international festival circuit.

- 3.22 Attendees of the 2023 International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA) mid-year congress in Manchester were welcomed on 27 June to the Lord Mayor Cllr Yasmine Dar's reception for delegates at Aviva Studios, an evening which provided an opportunity to experience the building as part of a guided tour and an invitation to attend the festival which opened two days later. The ISPA congress itself was attended by 393 people from 58 cities and 45 countries.

Community Engagement

- 3.23 Through the Factory Engagement Programme, multiple pathways were offered to residents to connect with MIF23, including community partnerships with organisations in Ardwick, Blackley and Wythenshawe alongside the Festival's flagship Neighbourhood Organiser programme which connected hundreds of residents to the offer.
- 3.24 Acting as a conduit between local communities and Factory International, the Neighbourhood Organiser programme targets a range of areas including Wythenshawe, Crumpsall, Gorton, Blackley, Longsight and Moston.
- 3.25 Meanwhile, the Community Partnership Programme engaged with 157 adults and 58 children across 16 sessions during MIF23, working with community organisations across the target wards in Manchester and Salford (see 3.24) to increase awareness of the offer and ensure that residents' voices were heard and reflected, with a focus on lifelong learning and encouraging the independent exploration and discovery of new skills and ideas.
- 3.26 During the festival, 1,164 children and 25 schools in Greater Manchester were involved in creative activities. Factory International's creative learning team worked with three secondary schools from Manchester and Salford on a Yayoi Kusama-inspired fashion project which culminated in a fashion show at Festival Square where the students shared their Kusama-inspired creations made from upcycled clothes and household waste.

Artist development

- 3.27 Developing the next generation of artistic talent in the city and beyond is at the core of Factory International's mission. In total, 178 artists benefitted from a development opportunity at MIF23, 80% of whom identify as Black, Asian or Ethnically Diverse. Throughout all this work, Factory International prioritise support to artists from groups underrepresented in the sector.
- 3.28 Each year, Factory International selects people working in music in Manchester to benefit from commissions, talent and business support. Eight Factory Sound

artists were given the opportunity to perform on stage at Factory Square. The scheme provides financial support of up to £1,000 for Greater Manchester residents working in the music industry, to support recording, promotion, live events, and equipment. There is also peer-to-peer support to help development, opportunities to connect with industry figures, and to perform at Factory International events.

- 3.29 The Factory International Fellowship supports artists at a transitional stage in their career to stretch their practice. Six Factory International Fellows were embedded into the development of flagship commissions across MIF23. The scheme provides financial support of up to £4,000, shadowing Factory International commissions, participation in programming and producing, mentoring and curatorial opportunities.
- 3.30 An additional 43 Manchester-based artists were invited to meet and network with 40 international arts promoters during International Weekend (see 3.21).

Widening public agency and co-creation

- 3.31 One of Factory International's core values is that embedding the widest range of ideas, opinions and suggestions into the creation of its work improves overall outcomes. A key part of this is listening and responding to residents across Manchester who volunteer their time to meet regularly and contribute to Factory International's Public Forums.
- 3.32 "The Welcome" took place over nine days and was a programme of cultural events and celebrations to invite Manchester residents through the doors of Aviva Studios to experience and explore the building and activities ranging from live performances to immersive installations, which ran between 11 and 19 November. "The Welcome" was curated by Factory Assembly, a group of Greater Manchester residents who worked for two years on the programme.
- 3.33 The Young People's and People's Forum comprise a diverse section of Manchester residents. Responding to their suggestion to create an impact report to help participants share the difference they have made, Factory International followed residents' advice and helped produce such a report. 86% of Forum and Factory Assembly members surveyed rated their experience as excellent or good, 82% agreed that they had developed or learned a new skill and 81% agreed that being involved in the programmes has improved their health and wellbeing.

Volunteering

- 3.34 MIF23 saw a record number of volunteers helping the festival: 428 volunteers selected from a record number of applications completed 2,753 shifts, totalling

9,000 hours. 96% of volunteers rated their experience at MIF23 as excellent or good while 91% of audiences rated MIF23 volunteers as excellent or good.

- 3.35 Volunteer opportunities are now available year-round at Aviva Studios and there is a rolling volunteer recruitment programme underway, with the next recruitment stage for venue volunteers opening on 5 February and running until 10 March 2024.

Talent development

- 3.36 Factory Academy, Factory International's flagship talent development scheme launched in 2018, had a significant impact on MIF23. The programme was set up to give young people from Greater Manchester opportunities to learn new skills and get a taste for working in the creative sector, regardless of their background or previous experience.
- 3.37 Over 1,000 learners have taken part in the Factory Academy programmes to date, 48% of whom have gone into employment in the creative sector. In the current financial year there are 246 Factory Academy students and 86% report a protected or underrepresented characteristic.
- 3.38 MIF23 gave the Factory Academy students the opportunity to create content, work with the teams creating, curating and bringing the festival to life during the weeks leading up to and during the festival.
- 3.39 Highlights from the programmes delivered during this year's festival alone included Intro to Producing, Future Cultural Leaders and the return of Factory Academy's Future15 Festival Intern programme and Future15 Facilitator training programme. These created direct pathways into employment during MIF23 for 29 Greater Manchester residents of which 69% are from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority backgrounds.
- 3.40 Fifteen students were guaranteed paid front-of-house roles, providing them with an income whilst studying and an integral role at the festival. As part of their learning experience, they also had the opportunity to spend time shadowing at a range of prestigious Manchester organisations, including the Royal Exchange Theatre, HOME and Manchester Museum. These hands-on experiences allowed them to gain insights into the various facets of the creative sector and understand the different pathways and challenges faced by aspiring cultural leaders.
- 3.41 In addition to Factory Academy, 18 local schools brought a total of 500 pupils along to Yayoi Kusama's "You, Me and the Balloons" to inspire the next generation about careers in the creative and cultural industries.

Access and sustainability

- 3.42 MIF23 presented work highlighting underrepresented communities such as the LGBTQIA+ community, people with lived experience of homelessness, featuring multiple diverse and international artists with a strong focus on community engagement, some of it through making shows accessible to school children and residents living in Manchester wards ranked highest in Indices of Multiple Deprivation.
- 3.43 Factory International's access team programmed over 50 access-performances across the MIF23 programme, including captioned, audio-described, BSL interpreted and relaxed presentations.
- 3.44 Over 3,500 people tuned into MIF23 to watch content live from 36 countries, with 700,000 website visits throughout the festival period which represents a 135% increase on MIF21, with 19,000 people reading and watching content on Factory+, Factory International's digital content strand. The latest content includes artist conversations on video and podcast, behind-the-scenes videos, performance recordings, editorial takeovers with programmes focused on writing, games, and digital video content.
- 3.45 Factory Assembly, the group responsible for curating "The Welcome" at Aviva Studios in November, includes representation from nine Greater Manchester wards and meets approximately 20 times a year with MIF's curatorial team and Artistic Director. In diversity terms, 64% Factory Assembly members are from backgrounds other than White British, 64% are female including trans female, 18% identify as disabled, and all age groups are equitably represented.
- 3.46 Factory International's Environmental Sustainability strategic objectives include:
- Developing and embedding environmental sustainability best practice and innovation into models for developing and distributing work.
 - Equipping the creative workforce of the future with skills and understanding to effect positive change around sustainability.
 - Showcasing extraordinary environmental sustainability for the building and inspiring change in our audiences.
- 3.47 In order to manage the company's carbon footprint, during the opening year of the venue, Factory International is establishing a robust building performance monitoring baseline to support clear and achievable carbon reduction targets. This will lead to monthly monitoring reports of building energy usage.

4. The economic impact of MIF23

- 4.1 This analysis is based on the Economic Impact Report produced by The Audience Agency for Manchester International Festival on MIF23. The figures

were generated using the West Midlands Observatory Economic Impact Calculator.

- 4.2 For the purpose of the report, economic activity refers to the overall amount of money that was spent by members of the public during MIF23. This includes money spent by participants and attendees to take part in, and money spent by Factory International delivering the festival. Not all economic activity can be categorised as economic impact.
- 4.3 Economic impact refers to “new” money that has been “injected” into the economy of the Geographic Area of Interest (from outside this area) that would not have been present had the festival not taken place. For example, all money spent by participants and attendees who live within the Geographic Area of Interest is excluded from the economic impact estimate, as money spent by this group of people is viewed as money which would have been spent in the area’s economy with or without the festival. Furthermore, only money spent by participants and attendees who were motivated to visit the area because of the festival is included.
- 4.4 Similarly, when it comes to working out the economic impact associated with spend by the organisation(s) delivering the project, only money sourced from funders based outside the Area of Interest that is spent on services and products provided by individuals and organisations based inside the area counts as economic impact.
- 4.5 Evidence suggests that MIF23 generated around £39.2million worth of economic activity in the Manchester. The estimated impact on Manchester was £26.4million.

Output – economic	
Total number of participants/attendees	186,798
Total number of visits generated by event(s)	94,178
Total number of visits generated by event(s) which involved visitors staying in paid accommodation	19,729
Total participant/attendee spend	£33,774,592
Additional spend by participants/attendees (attributable)	£20,356,749
Total spend by delivery organisations (attributable)	£5,376,399
Additional spend by delivery organisations (attributable)	£795,768
Total economic activity	£39,150,991
Total economic activity (before multiplier)	£21,152,517
Total economic activity (after multiplier)	£26,440,646

Output – jobs	
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Number of volunteers who worked on the project	428
In-kind contribution made by volunteers (£)	£48,252
Number of full-time jobs created	22
Number of part-time jobs created	0
Number of full-time jobs created (for local people who live within the Area of Interest)	3
Number of part-time jobs created (for local people who live within the Area of Interest)	0

5. The opening season of Aviva Studios

- 5.1 Manchester’s landmark new cultural venue, Aviva Studios, the new permanent home of Factory International, officially opened to the public on 18 October with the premiere of “Free Your Mind”, a large-scale immersive performance based on the Matrix films presented across the building’s ultra-flexible spaces.
- 5.2 Ahead of the official opening, two milestones of major communications campaigns took place in June 2023: the announcement of the landmark naming rights partnership with Aviva and the launch of Manchester International Festival. Aviva Studios formed the centrepiece of the 2023 Manchester International Festival (29 June – 16 July), offering the public the first opportunity to preview the building with a major exhibition by leading international artist Yayoi Kusama in the Warehouse, concerts in the Hall and a series of free events in Festival Square.
- 5.3 Together, these milestones generated a significant amount of coverage, cementing the ongoing status of the city-wide festival as an important part of the UK cultural calendar, and introducing the OMA-designed venue as a new global cultural institution and an essential destination for local, national and international visitors.
- 5.4 In the lead up to the official opening, the communications campaign continued to encourage informed and balanced coverage of the new landmark cultural centre and its opening programmes in the media, through both traditional channels and digital platforms. The press teams at Factory International, the Council, Arts Council England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport worked on a successful selection of opening press events, as part of the opening PR campaign. Key dates included an architectural press preview with full building tours and photography on 13 October, an opening press briefing event for news, arts and lifestyle press on 18 Oct, and a press night for critics as well as VIPs and stakeholders on the evening of 18 October.
- 5.5 Summary of performance indicators and reach from June 2023 to 5 January 2024 for Aviva Studios:

- 315,662 visits to Aviva Studios
- 35% of visitors to “The Welcome” were Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse
- 8% of audiences recorded having some form of disability and access need
- 32% of visitors came from Manchester
- 32% of visitors came from Greater Manchester
- 36% of visitors came from the rest of the UK

Free Your Mind

5.6 “Free Your Mind” which officially opened Aviva Studios on 18 October was a spectacular live event directed by director and producer Danny Boyle and written, choreographed and composed by a world-class creative team. It featured a hip-hop choreography by Kenrick ‘H2O’ Sandy; a score by composer Michael ‘Mikey J’ Asante, co-founder of Boy Blue; staging by world-leading designer Es Devlin; alongside words from acclaimed writer Sabrina Mahfouz; and costumes by fashion designer Gareth Pugh. The show ran from 31 October until 5 November 2024.

5.7 The audience feedback was very positive and 94% of bookers rated their overall experience as either excellent (68%) or good (26%). More than three quarters (78%) reported that the event exceeded their expectations and just under nine in ten (89%) reported that they would attend a similar event in the future. What the audience said:

“Not sure I have the words. It was just wonderful all round. I loved how the various spaces were used, the quality of the design and performances and how various parts of Manchester’s glorious history were woven into the story. I’ve never seen anything like this before and wonder if I will again.”

“The show was unique in utilising the venue space, very daring, interactive and immersive. I felt I was part of the show.”

“Incredible show. Definitely exceeded expectations. Great value ticket as I have disability and am unwaged so normally struggle to afford to see shows.”

“We brought a youth group from Blackpool. 10 young adults with experience of homelessness. The whole experience totally blew their minds.”

5.8 “Free Your Mind” received an extremely positive media response, with a high number of four- and five-star reviews including in The Guardian, The Times, The Telegraph and the Manchester Evening News. The flexibility of Aviva Studios was mentioned in many reviews and a repeated word to describe the show was as a “triumph”.

- Observer, 4 stars: "genuinely popular and artistically sophisticated... a triumphant beginning for a new artistic endeavour."

- The Times, 4 stars: “bold and articulate, fiercely aggressive in the fight scenes, punchy and visceral”
- The Telegraph, 4 stars: "epic, intimate, flagrantly dramatic"
- The Guardian, 4 stars: "the coolest party of the year... it's a showcase for the venue, comprising two parts, a stylish auditorium and the 21-metre-high hangar-like Warehouse space, thus like the show itself split into something conventionally theatrical and something far more novel and arresting... a fresh blast of spectacle as well as an urgent entreaty to wake up."

- 5.9 Over the official launch weekend, Factory International featured in 573 items of coverage online and in print and 352 items of broadcast coverage, with highlights including BBC Breakfast, BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio 4 (Today Programme), LBC, Hits Radio, and BBC News at 6 and 10, as well as bulletin news items on BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 3, BBC Radio 6 Music, and around 50 regional stations across the UK from Cornwall to Orkney.
- 5.10 From September to November 2023, in the lead up to and immediately following the official opening of Aviva Studios, there were over 1,500 mentions of Factory International and Aviva Studios in the press across 39 countries. Approximately 27% of the coverage was published or syndicated internationally with 15% of the coverage coming from the United States including a review of the venue's opening show “Free Your Mind” in the New York Times. Local media accounts for around 17% of coverage with BBC Radio Manchester and the Manchester Evening News covering the venue and opening programme more than any other outlet.
- 5.11 Factory International has featured in over 10 hours of broadcast content across regional, national and international TV and radio in this period. Locally, BBC North West and Granada Reports broadcast multiple extended reports covering the venue opening and BBC Radio Manchester covered the stories of local people participating, performing and curating activity as part of the venue's opening season, over multiple days of dedicated programming that is still ongoing.
- 5.12 A partnership with Dazed Media saw extensive online coverage for “Free Your Mind” both in the online magazine and across their social channels reaching over 2 million people, predominantly under the age of 35. Other key coverage ahead of the show opening included The Times publishing a major interview for their Saturday Review supplement with the creative team Danny Boyle, Kenrick H2O Sandy and Mikey J Asante and the Guardian publishing a gallery of rehearsal images.
- 5.13 A major documentary feature from BBC World Service (In the Studio) and BBC Imagine was broadcast later in 2023, documenting the making of “Free Your Mind” and the opening of the building. The BBC also broadcasted a full length recording of “Free Your Mind” on BBC2 on New Years Eve.

The Welcome

- 5.14 “The Welcome” was a programme of cultural events and celebrations to invite Greater Manchester residents through the doors of Aviva Studios to experience and explore the building and activities ranging from live performances to immersive installations. “The Welcome” took place over nine days between 11 and 19 November and was curated by Factory Assembly, a group of Greater Manchester residents who collaborated for two years on the programme.
- 5.15 Highlights included “Afrique en Cirque”, a high-energy celebration of Guinean culture, “Deep Flow”, a mass participation movement event by Manchester’s Company Chameleon and a takeover of street culture of the venue and grounds with a showcase of street artists, a drum and bass line-up, BMX and skate demo performances.
- 5.16 “The Welcome” saw an estimated 11,690 visits to Aviva Studios during the nine-day period. Based on our survey data, around one half of these visits were made by first-timers, who had not experienced any previous festivals or events at Aviva Studios.
- 5.17 What the audience said:
- “Live music, friendly safe atmosphere. Sense of a good community, different ages all welcomed.”
- “The space, atmosphere, buzz, variety of events and topics to explore, amazing international context, community engagement, friendly and welcoming.”
- “It feels welcoming and easy, not pretentious which I really appreciate. Very friendly staff and a great space.”
- “The diversity of the audience, the relaxed atmosphere”
- “Loved the whole atmosphere of people coming together and learning something new”
- 5.18 The community-led curation of this event was reflected in the diversity of visitors, with 35% identifying as Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse. It was also a significantly younger audience than usual, with more than half of visits (52%) made by people aged under 35 years old.
- 5.19 Reasons for visiting during this period were varied, but around half reported attending specifically for a free event or workshop, with many citing a specific event they were looking forward to. Others were looking to experience the new building or just spending time in the Social with family and friends. When asked whether they would visit again in the future, two thirds of visitors surveyed

reported that they would definitely visit again (or had already bought tickets for an event) and a further 25% thought that they probably would.

5.20 Press coverage:

- BBC Radio Manchester's report on "The Welcome" featured Lorraine Ballentine who explained the creative process of curating the welcome as part of Factory Assembly and artist Leeroy New was interviewed on the creation of his Balet Spacecraft sculpture.
- Secret Manchester included "The Welcome" in their round-up of 15 Wonderful Things to do in Manchester at the weekend.
- Manchester's Finest and About Manchester also showcased "The Welcome".

Lost & Found

5.21 "Lost & Found" was a magical stage show of Oliver Jeffers' Lost and Found, adapted by renowned children's TV and theatre producer Will Brenton. Original music composed by Gruff Rhys, the guitarist and vocalist of Super Furry Animals. It officially premiered at Aviva Studios on Thursday 14 December.

5.22 Factory International is currently processing the audience research from this event which finished on 5 January. Approximately 1,700 school children and teachers from around 30 schools experienced the event. More than half of the bookers had not booked an event with Factory International before.

5.23 What the audience said:

"It was magical. It kept the pupils engaged throughout - they were entranced!"

"Best production I've took my class to in 9 years of teaching!"

"The venue was great, the performance was superb (I am paying full price to take my grandsons during the Christmas break), I loved the interaction with the seagulls. It was wonderful!!!!!"

"I didn't really know how the book could be adapted and it was magical. My children aged 2 and 1 were captivated and engaged from the outset. It was interactive and just beautifully produced. I could have cried it was so magical. We were all enthralled."

5.24 Press coverage & reviews

- [The Stage](#) (4 Stars): "Irresistible"
- [Financial Times](#) (4 stars) "It beautifully presents one of the quintessential elements of festive stories that enraptures the young and melts even the most glacial adults"

- [The Guardian](#) (4 Stars) “catchy songs and breezy fun”
- [Theatre reviews North](#) (4 stars) “Our critic (aged five) declared it “double thumbs up”
- [Manchester Evening News](#) (5 stars) “It opens young eyes and minds to the possibilities of what can be achieved in theatre.”
- [The Reviews Hub](#) (5 stars) (syndicated in [London Reviews](#)) “It is tempting to describe Lost and Found as perfect for young children but actually it is simply perfect
- Manchester Theatres, 5 Stars: "Lost and Found has a magical aura, igniting the joy of connection, friendship and imagination - a must watch for all the family".
- Live Art Live: "suitable for all children including any with neurodivergency or other sensory triggers. This is the first family show to feature in the programming at Factory International and it sets the bar high for future productions."
- North West End, 5 stars: “an absolute triumph in immersive storytelling”.

6. Manchester City Council support for the Festival and Aviva Studios

6.1 The Council provides annual funding support of £1.5million to Factory International. This was agreed for a 10-year period as part of the 2020-21 budget proposals and is part of the Council’s commitment to match the c. £9.9 million ongoing revenue support for Aviva Studios / Manchester International Festival from Arts Council England and other government grants. while Greater Manchester Combined Authority contributes £99,000 per annum.

6.2 The ten-year funding arrangement is being delivered in two parts: an interim agreement prior to the completion of Aviva Studios, followed by a longer-term management agreement for Factory International which is due to start on 1 April 2024. The Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods, Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer and the City Solicitor are currently finalising the terms of these arrangements, which include a detailed set of performance targets and indicators addressing:

- all areas of the building’s operations and staffing
- cultural activities and events
- the wider work by Factory International in its delivery of the biannual Manchester International Festival inside Aviva Studio and across the city
- community based, training and talent development programmes
- Zero Carbon monitoring, reductions and training

7. Performance against strategic objectives (2023-24, Quarters 2 and 3)

7.1 The Factory International Board receives a report each quarter detailing the company’s performance against its strategic objectives which were set during the business planning process in December 2021 and were reviewed prior to this

financial year. A series of Key Performance Indicators were set at the same time as measures of progress against its objectives.

7.2 Some key indicators from the opening three quarters of the Financial Year:

- 20% of audiences were Black, Asian, or Ethnically Diverse (against a target of 17%)
- 20% of audiences took an affordable ticket option (against a target of 15%)
- 5,587 school children have been engaged with (against a target of 2k) of which 3450 children were from 35 Manchester schools
- 13k participants on engagement programmes (against a target of 3k)
- 420 artists have benefitted from artist development programmes (against a target of 200)

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the information in the report.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Festival Impact Report 2023, Manchester International Festival 2023, Factory International (2023).