

## **Appendix 10: Manchester City of Literature Update**

This report is a summary of activity carried out under the UNESCO City of Literature designation since the last report to Scrutiny Committee in January 2023.

The report gives an overview of the commitments to UNESCO and the benefits the designation brings; the governance model for Manchester City of Literature, the independent organisation that coordinates the designation, and its vision, achievements and impacts for residents, local writers and for international initiatives.

It also shows how high-quality community celebrations such as Festival of Libraries have impacted on wellbeing and engagement for residents (59.7% reported improved wellbeing; 37% will visit their libraries more often and 47% will encourage other people to visit and use libraries). It shows how Manchester City of Literature has generated an additional £250K+ of external investment in literary activity in the city and supported and created new partnerships. It shows how Manchester is contributing to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **Background to Manchester City of Literature**

31 October 2023 was the sixth anniversary of Manchester being designated a UNESCO City of Literature. Manchester's successful application to become a UNESCO City of Literature was led by Manchester City Council, The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University (the 'Commissioning Partners'), working with a range of literature sector partners from across the city.

The new independent organisation established in 2019 to coordinate the designation became a registered charity in 2020.

The designation, which is awarded to Manchester City Council in perpetuity (subject to successful review every four years), brought Manchester into a global network of (now) 350 UNESCO Creative Cities across seven creative fields: literature, design, crafts and folk arts, media arts, film, music and gastronomy. There are (now) [53 Cities of Literature](#) across six continents.

### **Commitments to UNESCO**

Member cities of this UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) recognise the value - economically, socially and environmentally - of placing creativity and culture at the heart of their sustainable development. The City Council retains a key role in the realisation of the UNESCO designation, including a commitment to UNESCO to strengthen participation in cultural life and to integrate culture into city strategies to meet the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This global plan for a sustainable future where no one is left behind shares many features with Our Manchester and other Council policies.

The Council was the lead applicant to UNESCO for the designation in 2017 and will retain responsibility as the official holder of the designation in perpetuity. Manchester is also bidding to be a UNICEF Child Friendly City and a UNESCO City of Lifelong Learning. It is important for success that all three initiatives are strongly aligned.

The UNESCO designation links with a range of other strategic priority areas, including but not limited to: international; skills development; children and families; economic development; social inclusion; and community cohesion.

Now the charity is established City Council officer level involvement has changed from a leadership and initiation role towards grant monitoring to safeguard our investment; partnership working on shared priorities and initiatives; and support for the Council's representative on the Board.

Manchester is required to attend two international conferences with other Creative Cities each year to share the city's best practice and exemplar creative projects on sustainable development. At the Annual UNESCO Conference, attendance by a senior political figure from the city is required. The cost of travel for this is paid for by Manchester City of Literature.

#### Benefits

- Whilst there is no funding attached from UNESCO, the designation and active participation in the UCCN is already bringing a range of benefits to the city for example:
- Raised profile of the city and its cultural offer regionally, nationally and internationally;
- Raised profile of the city's publishing sector and related creative industries, attracting new businesses and inward investment;
- A stronger voice in policy development on the international stage, and opportunities for sharing best practice, with regards to culture and sustainable development;
- Development opportunities for local residents and cultural organisations such as international artist exchanges and residencies;
- Increased potential to lever new funding into the city for cultural activity, including work that promotes literacy.

#### **Vision and Governance Model for Manchester City of Literature**

Manchester City of Literature's vision is to create *an innovative, distinctive, equitable, globally connected city of reading and writing, where diverse voices are celebrated, creative talent and industries are nurtured and where literary activity changes lives.* The ambition is for Manchester City of Literature to be owned by the whole city, with literary organisations empowered to develop and promote Manchester's literary and cultural offer through a consistent but diverse collective voice and shared branding.

Manchester City of Literature has already helped support, connect and add value to existing activity; encouraged partnership working and joint fundraising; raised the profile of the sector; ensured the city's active participation as a member of the UCCN; and enabled Manchester's diverse range of voices to be represented and celebrated, with everyone in the city benefiting from the designation.

The values that underpin the designation are:

- Distinctive – creating distinctive cultural experiences inspired by Manchester's unique, radical character and rich cultural heritage whilst looking to the future;
- Inclusive – celebrating the rich diversity of voices in the city, building on the strengths of Manchester's people and widening participation in literary activity;
- Transformative – developing skills, nurturing creative talent & transforming lives;
- Connected – linking and supporting literary activity and enabling collective advocacy for Manchester's literary community and international collaborations;
- World-leading – a beacon for high quality, culturally democratic, truly diverse literary activity.

A Board of Trustees oversees the work of Manchester City of Literature and ensures it delivers its charitable objectives and obligations to the Commissioning Partners. Following an open recruitment process, Manchester writer Zahid Hussain was appointed as the first Chair of the Board. Each of the Commissioning Partners nominate a trustee for the Board: currently Cllr Luthfur Rahman for Manchester City Council; Professor Jess Edwards for Manchester Metropolitan University; and Professor John McAuliffe for the University of Manchester. They are joined by 6 Community Trustees selected via open recruitment.

There is a staff team of four (2.6 FTE): Ivan Wadeson, Executive Director; Hawwa Alam, Community Engagement Manager; Jo Flynn, Partnerships and Communications Manager, and Rachel Fallon, Operations Manager. Freelance project staff are engaged for funded initiatives such as Festival of Libraries.

### **Manchester City of Literature Partners**

Manchester City of Literature works with and through a partnership network of over 30 organisations including HEIs, publishers, writing agencies, libraries, festivals and booksellers. Manchester City of Literature has continued to grow the Partnership Network with publishers Bent Key and Honford Star and bookshop The House of Books and Friends joining the Network. In this period, Manchester City of Literature issued 12 monthly newsletters sharing news and events from across our Partnership Network and hosted over 14 Network meetings bring literary partners together: 38 organisations attended in this period. Events including working with schools with a presentation from First Story, collaborative work with publishers, on literature centres including a presentation from the Wheeler Centre in Melbourne and on writer residencies including a presentation from Ljubljana City of Literature.

Partners: Manchester City Council, Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Manchester, the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre, the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Bent Key, Carcanet, Central Library, Centre for New Writing, Chetham's Library, Commonword, Comma Press, Creative Manchester, Elizabeth Gaskell's House, Flapjack Press, Fly On The Wall Press, Honford Star, House of Books and Friends, John Rylands Library, MACFest, Manchester Children's Book Festival, Manchester Libraries, Manchester Literature Festival, Manchester Poetry Library, Manchester University Press, Manchester Writing School, Muslim Writers North, Pariah Press, Poets & Players, Read Manchester, Saraband Press, The Portico Library, Working Class Movement Library and Young Identity.

### **Manchester City of Literature Project Activity**

Manchester City of Literature highlights the city's literary and cultural strengths to local residents and to global stakeholders. Through programmes and projects, it amplifies the city's strong history of literary expression and free speech, its linguistic diversity, its world-class literary education, its vibrant creative industries sector, its innovative spirit and its ambition to ensure more people engage with culture than ever before. Independent research by The Audience Agency showed that in 2022, 1 in 5 of Manchester residents were aware of the UNESCO Creative City designation. A selection of community projects include:

### **International Mother Language Day (IMLD)**

IMLD is an annual celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. Since 2018 over 12,000 adults and young people have engaged with IMLD events created by partners including Manchester Libraries, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester, Community Arts Northwest, Instituto Cervantes and Comma Press. The [programme of IMLD events for February 2024](#) features over 22 events including a multilingual writing exhibition about textiles and identity in Central Library from 12 February. The Threads exhibition features nine other Cities of Literature Reykjavik, Granada, Leeuwarden, Wrocław, Melbourne, Odesa, Tartu, Exeter and Nottingham alongside work from Manchester writers Keisha Thompson and Hafsah Aneela Bashir.

### **Multilingual City Poets**

To further promote Manchester's linguistic diversity, three Multilingual City Poets were appointed in February 2021 to create new poetry in English, Urdu, Arabic and Spanish. In 2023 poems were created about [Manchester's history of protest](#), [Gaza](#) and on the South Asian diaspora contribution to UK life (the latter to be premiered at Manchester Indian Film Festival in May/June 2024).

### **Festival of Libraries**

This is a unique Festival in the UK that celebrates the role of public, heritage, specialist and medical libraries. 2023 saw the third edition of the Festival across Greater Manchester. In 2023, there were 111 events and exhibitions over 5 days, from 7-11 June. For the five days of the Festival, footfall in libraries was 58,000+ people and 5,120 people attended individual, bookable in-person events or exhibitions. High profile appearances at this year's festival included Poet Laureate Simon Armitage with a masterclass at Manchester Central Library, author and presenter Nadiya Hussain in Rochdale, and drag artist Cheddar Gorgeous at Chetham's Library.

The independent evaluation showed that 98% of visitors agreed that libraries are an essential community service. 74% felt the Festival had shown them their library had more to offer than they had previously thought. 50% said they would now encourage other people to visit and use libraries.

*"My children hugely enjoyed it. The poet was brilliant and really knew how to connect them to the content."*

*"The staff were really welcoming and it was nice to spend time with my son in the library."*

*"Such friendly staff, lovely and informal. Thank you so much for doing this event, we enjoyed it!"*

*"Truly amazing, well-organised and presented event. Beautiful building and very welcoming ambience."*

Two MA students from the University of Manchester undertook placements on the Festival of Libraries creating digital content including bespoke family tours and trails.

## **Schools Writing Trail**

The Manchester City of Literature Schools Writing Trail showcased the 'best of the best' of student writing, offering a city centre literature trail in parallel with Manchester's Festival of Libraries.

[The Schools Writing Trail](#) was an indoor and outdoor exhibition of some of the very best student writing in Manchester. Over 100 young writers were featured, writing in 12 languages, with 152 pieces of writing. The Trail was a walkable constellation of young voices connecting community arts centres, schools, universities, and libraries with over 40 schools in Greater Manchester. The Schools Writing Trail project was a celebration of the young writers who are a vibrant part of what makes Manchester a UNESCO City of Literature.

There were 6 locations in the city centre where audiences could read work that was generated from 8 Manchester-based initiatives: First Story's Connect Event, Z-Arts Story Stars, The Portico Library's annual Sadie Massey and Art of the Book awards, the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester's annual Schools Writing

Competition, Manchester Metropolitan University's annual Mother Tongue, Other Tongue competition, Saturday Club and, in conjunction with the Comino Foundation, Comino Poet in Residence program.

### **NHS Windrush Untold Stories**

Working alongside Manchester City of Literature Community Champion, Jackie Bailey, Manchester City of Literature devised [an exciting programme of workshops for African Caribbean NHS workers \(past and present\)](#) and their families and communities to explore their experiences of contributing to the NHS Story. This was in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University and the parallel [NHS Untold Stories programme](#). NHS staff took part in a series of workshops led by industry-leading writers including Shirley May, Micah Yongo and Keisha Thompson to develop writing to be exhibited at the Manchester Poetry Library. Following the initial workshop phase, seven NHS Windrush Stories writers received follow up mentoring to develop their work. They worked alongside the writers who delivered the initial workshops to prepare their writing for publication and exhibition. The creative work spanned genres including poetry, creative journaling, fantasy and music.

### **Re: Sound**

Manchester City of Literature secured a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant to deliver this project to allow young people in Manchester to connect with heritage through audio creativity. Manchester City of Literature and Unlocking Our Sound Heritage (part of Archives+) brought together six Manchester-based sound artists with six Manchester community groups to bring audio heritage and local history to life through dynamic soundscaping, collaging and music. The community groups were Afrocats, KYSO Talent Group, Pendleton Sixth Form College, The Sebene Project, Young Identity and 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

### **Stories of Gorton**

Local residents were recruited to explore [Gorton by walking its streets and sharing stories](#) about the neighbourhood. Five residents accompanied writer Sarah Butler each month between September 2022 and March 2023. Each month a different person led the walk around the parks, houses, work places, neglected corners and vanished buildings of the neighbourhood. Writing created during the project was collected together [into a pamphlet](#) published in June 2023 and [shared at the Festival of Libraries](#).

### **Our Stories LGBTQ+ Conference**

[Our Stories in November 2023](#) championed the bold steps publishers are making to advance equality, to amplify the stories of LGBTQ+ writers and illustrators and to explore routes into publishing for aspiring authors. By bringing together young people, writers and illustrators working in every form of literature, and publishing folk

from the UK and Ireland, Our Stories sparked a conversation with the industry, and made steps to empower the next generation of LGBTQ+ writers and illustrators to take up pathways into publishing.

A selection of international and writer residency projects:

### **17 Books for 17 Sustainable Development Goals.**

With this digital campaign delivered in December 2023, we highlighted a book associated with Manchester each day on our social media platforms which ties in with a UNESCO Sustainable Development Goal.

### **International Mother Language Day in February 2023**

International activity included:

- A collaborative multilingual chain poem called 'Words from the Childhood Home'. Anjum Malik, a Manchester-based poet who writes in Urdu and English, began the poem with a four-line stanza on the theme of 'the childhood home'. Each following poet was then asked to respond to the previous stanza in their mother tongue, with a translation into English. Eight other UNESCO Cities of Literature took part: Dunedin, Edinburgh, Heidelberg, Lviv, Melbourne, Montevideo, Nottingham and Tartu
- Post-COVID Cities', a comic art exhibition from Angoulême City of Literature, shown during IMLD in Central Library featuring artwork from Nanjing, Quebec City, Reykjavik, Bucheon, Slemani & Angoulême. Alongside the exhibition, films were screened from Tartu, Nottingham and Reykjavik Cities of Literature
- Four other UNESCO Cities of Literature programming events in their city for IMLD: Bucheon, Norwich, Edinburgh and Gothenburg

### **Tartu European Capital of Culture 2024**

Manchester writer David Hartley was selected to represent Manchester as Writer in Residence with Tartu City of Literature for a collaborative project for the city's European Capital of Culture programme in 2024. The residency saw David Hartley paired with Estonian artist Henri Hütt. They worked together during David's residency in Tartu to create a collaborative work called A Forest Of Ink And Skin to be shown in Tartu as part the 2024 Prima Vista International Literary Festival for the European Capital of Culture programme. Parallel to this project, David Hartley and Henri Hütt will be working with other Manchester and Estonian artists on The Embassy of Utopia, a two-day event for Festival of Libraries in June 2024. Taking place in Central Library, The Embassy of Utopia invites the people of Manchester to take the stage and share their vision for the future of our city.

### **Slamovision 2023**

Manchester City of Literature was represented at the Slamovision global poetry slam in November 2023 by Esther Koch. Esther went head-to-head with entries from eight other Cities of Literature; Exeter, Iowa City, Kuhmo, Tartu, Dublin, Ljubljana, Nottingham, Quebec City and Vilnius. The event was hosted in person with livestreaming by Nottingham City of Literature. Esther Koch won Slamovision for Manchester meaning Manchester City of Literature will host the 2024 final.

## **Writer Residencies and Presentations**

For the Festival of Libraries 2023, award-winning Icelandic Auður Ava Ólafsdóttir was hosted [by the John Rylands Library for an in-person writing residence](#). Auður returned to Manchester in October 2023 to talk about the residency and her work as part of Manchester Literature Festival.

Manchester writer [Bria Cotton was selected for a virtual residency](#) with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Australia in November 2023. Bria will be working with them virtually to explore the collection and create new original work as part of her residency, supported by Melbourne City of Literature. The residency will also include opportunities for meetings with all the writers in residence and facilitated further connections with Melbourne as a City of Literature.

Three Manchester artists were featured in events in Quebec City, Canada, alongside the annual Cities of Literature conference. Writer Yusra Warsama wrote and recorded a poem which was featured in a thirty-minute soundtrack to [Multivox, an outdoor dance piece for 29 performers](#) which was the opening event of Quebec's literature festival Quebec En Toutes Lettres.

A [public art exhibition called Toponymy](#) showed new and different stories for where a city's name comes from. Manchester City of Literature commissioned a new original text from writer Shamshad Khan and an illustration by Audrey Albert, explaining and expanding on the origin and the meaning of how Manchester got its name. The exhibition opened in September 2023 in one of the main squares in Quebec and will move around to other outdoor locations until October 2024.

## **Global Profile and Influence**

The Manchester City of Literature team attended the [annual UNESCO Cities of Literature Conference](#), hosted by Quebec City of Literature over five days in October 2023. Manchester shared a best practice case study on the Schools Writing Trail. Manchester City of Literature representatives have also represented the city in global showcases in person in 2023 including in Gdansk, Bremen and Bucheon.

Manchester was also represented on the [UNESCO UK Sites Illustrated Map](#). For the first time a map bringing together all of the Biosphere Reserves, Creative Cities, Global Geoparks and World Heritage Sites across the British Isles that are waiting to be discovered has been published. Manchester is one of the 58 sites represented



and took part in this national and global tourism development project supported by the GREAT campaign and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

### **UK Ambassador to UNESCO**

In July 2023, Manchester City of Literature coordinated the visit to Manchester of Anna Nsubuga, UK Ambassador to UNESCO. Together with James Bridge, Secretary-General of the UK High Commission to UNESCO, Anna visited Central Library, The Portico, Manchester Poetry Library and John Rylands Library meeting reps from University of Manchester, Man Met Uni and literary organisations. She had a tour of Central Library and Archives + with Neil MacInnes and on the second day of her visit she gave a keynote address at the ISPA Conference organised by HOME and Manchester International Festival alongside Cllr Rahman.

### **Securing Additional Investment**

Manchester City of Literature has been highly effective at leveraging investment into Manchester's literary sector. Since 2020, Manchester City of Literature has secured over £337,000 of new investment into literary activity from Arts Council England, National Lottery Heritage Fund, British Council, Granada Foundation and corporate sponsors, with a decision on an additional £98,660 due in February 2024.

### **Conclusion**

This report shows the impact of the designation on Manchester since 2020 and the multiple benefits delivered to residents and local creative industries. It shows how the city is living up to its commitments to UNESCO and how the opportunities that the designation bring are being realised.





The Schools Writing Trail at Central Library and Z-Arts Hulme.



NHS Windrush Untold Stories



Re:Sound community groups on stage in Central Library.





Toponymy Exhibition in Quebec City



## International Partnerships and Presentations 2024

### Threads Exhibition | 12 February - 23 March

Organised by Manchester City of Literature, features 9 other UNESCO Cities of Lit: Reykjavik, Wrocław, Melbourne, Exeter, Granada, Nottingham, Tartu and Leeuwarden.

### International Mother Language Day | 21 February

Online Panel discussion with Manchester, Leeuwarden and Gothenburg Cities of Literature.

### Rising Tide at Pearse Street Library, Dublin | 22 February

Manchester's Slamovision winner Esther Koch appears the bill at this Dublin City of Literature spoken word night.

### Not Just Words: Reading for Odesa | 24 February

Readings of classic and contemporary Ukrainian literature in solidarity with Odesa and Lviv Cities of Literature. Events taking place in Manchester Central Library and simultaneously in Dublin, Edinburgh, Exeter, Krakow, Kuhmo, Iași, Lviv, Melbourne, Nottingham, Reykjavik, Tukums, Wrocław.

### World Poetry Day | 21 March

Manchester will contribute to this global celebration alongside UNESCO Cities of Literature.

### Granada Book Fair, Spain | 19 - 21 April

Manchester is the guest city at the Granada Book Fair taking part of three days of events and workshops.

### A Forest of Ink and Skin at Prima Vista Literature Festival, Estonia | 11 May

Manchester writer David Hartley & Tartu artist Henri Hutt have created a performance piece as part of Tartu's European Capital of Culture programme on Estonian folklore, the natural world and storytelling as a power for good.

### Bremen | 8th June

Manchester's Multilingual City Poet Jova Baglioli Reyes will feature at this German Poetry Slam Evening as part of Poetry on the Road Festival.

### Festival of Libraries 2024 | 13 - 16 June

- MONUMENTS from award-winning Québec poet and performer Vanessa Bell in which voices, texts, photos and videos meet around a real territory, Newfoundland, and an imagined road trip.

- The Embassy of Utopia is a two-day open forum of utopian-themed speeches and sharings as the people of Manchester share their vision of the future of the city alongside UK and Estonian artists.

-Danish Comics exhibition from Art Bubble Festival gives an overview of the history of Danish comics and then introduces nine contemporary artists from Denmark in an vivid and accessible way. The exhibition is in English and Danish.

-From Ink To Action and Collectives For Change are two comic art exhibitions in partnership with Lakes International Comic Art Festival featuring artists from from Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria.

### Annual Conference of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network

1-5 July   
Braga Portugal

### Annual Conference of the UNESCO Cities of Literature

21-25th October  
Edinburgh, Scotland

### Slamovision | Date TBC

Poets from across the Cities of Literature network compete in a Eurovision-style slam, hosted by last year's winner Manchester.

