

CULTURE RECOVERY PLAN



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL



Councillor Luthfur Rahman
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR
SKILLS, CULTURE
AND LEISURE

FOREWORD

Manchester is recognised as the second most-visited city in England, after London. Our world-class cultural organisation, enviable music and events offer, and our reputation for creativity and diversity are the reasons people want to visit the city. We want to keep it that way.

Unfortunately, many in the sector – theatres, music venues, museums, galleries, and the creative and technical teams, as well as the freelancers who work with them – are facing tough times ahead. They will be some of the last to reopen and return to operating at capacity. The sector is in dire need of support to prevent the loss of income to the city, the loss of jobs, and the loss of Manchester’s cultural and creative buzz.

That is why I have convened the Manchester Cultural COVID Recovery Board to work with the sector to develop a sector stabilisation and stimulus plan. It is why I am making the case to the Government for significant resources to be allocated to Manchester, to back our recovery plan.

Of course, cultural renewal isn’t just about culture; it is about much more. As part of our wider visitor economy, the cultural economy supports employment in the hospitality, night-time and retail sectors. It is about people and society. The impact our cultural and creative sector has on our society is something we have long recognised and championed. It includes community and cultural festivals, groundbreaking international work addressing current issues, and citywide events that

celebrate Manchester’s uniqueness and diversity. Despite the difficulties our local cultural partners are currently facing, I have been so impressed that they have continued to be concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of residents. I know they are already thinking about how they can support and engage with communities in recovery – and I thank them for that.

The Council has been working closely with Arts Council England, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and others to support organisations to stay afloat over these past difficult months. However, without further support from the Government and others, the future looks bleak.

This document summarises the post-COVID-19 position for the cultural sector in the city, the challenges it is facing, the stabilisation measures it requires and, of course, the contribution our creative partners can make to the city’s economic and social recovery. We can all support this plan in different ways: by advocating for the sector; telling people why culture and arts are important to you and to the city; and by making investment in the sector, whether that is grant aid, sponsorship, or simply buying a ticket.

I hope you will join me in keeping the lights on for Manchester.

COVID-19 CULTURE CRISIS

By mid-March 2020, all our arts and cultural venues were closed – with slim prospects of any fully opening soon. It could be late autumn by the time they're back, and then only with social distancing.

The impact is huge, and it now falls to every decision-maker in every sphere to realise the brilliant potential in supporting the recovery of Manchester's cultural sector as we emerge from the COVID-19 emergency.

We must have – and we must all support – a comprehensive recovery plan for arts and culture, because Manchester is the beating heart of the region's cultural sector. Our galleries, museums and cultural venues usually teem with visitors, confirming us as the nation's cultural centre outside the capital.



Best Exhibition:
ZArts – A World inside a Book

CULTURE CENTRE STAGE

In 2017/18, the city's cultural organisations generated over £137million – £41million of which was direct employment. These organisations reached more than 4.4million people, and they are just in the organisations the Council helps to fund. Add the rest, and the case for the importance of the cultural sector for the economy, society and place-making is obvious.

Arts and culture were key to our growth pre-COVID-19, and they'll be crucial to our recovery too. They're what makes Manchester the city it is. They are our reputation. They're what bring people here. Getting our arts scene up and running gets our economy back on track. Putting arts and culture centre stage says Manchester is open for business and leisure – locally, nationally and internationally.

It says:

“Manchester is confident, positive and fighting these new economic threats with all its old creativity and flare.”



Young Creative: Olivia Lee

HEALING CULTURE

More important still: this is the must-not-miss moment for inclusive growth post-COVID-19 – this sector delivers entry-level jobs and levels up educational achievement for disadvantaged residents. It brings neighbourhoods together in mutual understanding. It proudly showcases the diversity in our communities.

This sector can counter the social damage done by lockdown – to mental health, jobs, training and education. It will do so because we're leaders in boosting health through the arts, in reaching and involving audiences that become excluded, in using culture to teach, inspire and bring strangers together – to commemorate, remember, celebrate and, most importantly, find hope and joy in our neighbourhoods as well as the city centre.

All this is waiting to enhance Manchester's recovery.

CULTURE SHOCK

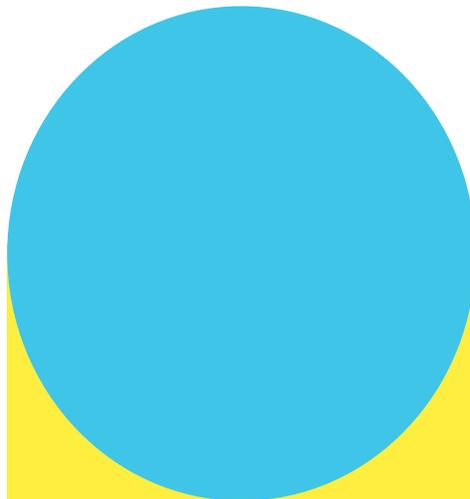
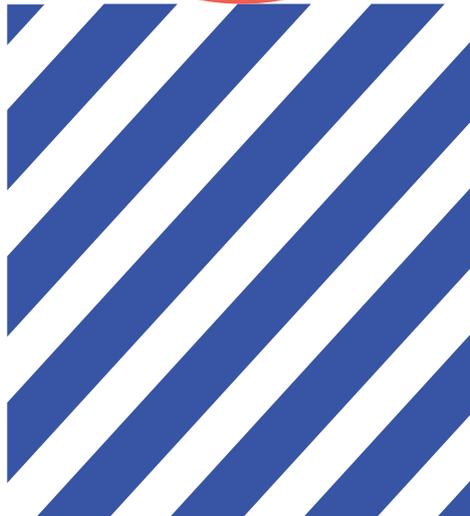
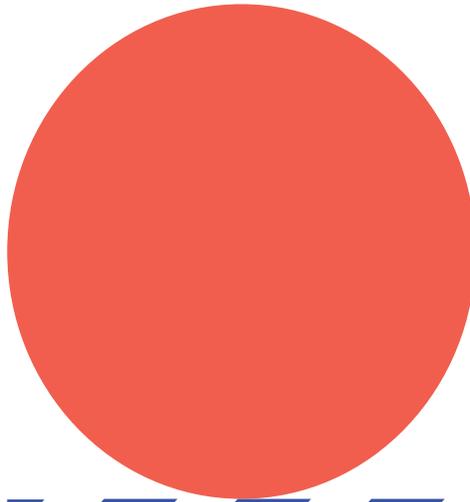
Yet we need to be realistic. The sector will be one of the last out of a devastating lockdown.

This is devastating because arts and cultural organisations are about mass gatherings – something we can no longer take for granted. As social distancing is likely to be here until the end of the year or beyond, some arts and cultural organisations are unlikely to survive. Others will need fundamental changes to what they do and how they do it.

The domain of freelance artists and creatives – vital to our city's creative health – is now damaged, possibly devastated, clearly threatening their ability to support the recovery of our communities and economy.

This harm goes wider – into the creative industries sector and its web of shared people, supply chains and the cross-fertilisation of ideas and content.

Now, more than ever, we need this sector's power to help our residents understand their history – what Manchester means to the world, and what it means to be part of Manchester.



TOWARDS RECOVERY

Yet we can recover. Arts and cultural organisations – large and small – shared their knowledge and supported one another in lockdown, working hard to stabilise their businesses and also offering something to audiences and participants.

We found some kind of cultural organisation in every part of our city in 2018 – offering their own thing to a range of people and communities. They can help make sure the recovery reaches everyone equally.

They're now looking at a recovery programme.

It has to be influenced by the release of the national lockdown, so for planning we're using this estimated lockdown timeline (highly likely to change) as a flexible guide:

June/July 2020

Limited returns to work in some buildings, but with social distancing. No public allowed in buildings.

August – December 2020

Limited, phased relaxation of social distancing for galleries, museums etc, and possibly cafes and restaurants.

January 2021

Further relaxation of social distancing for cinemas, theatres and concert venues.



Inspiring Innovation:
HOME Unlimited Theatre and RashDash

CULTURE CHALLENGE

A national survey has looked at what audiences and participants want, and how the pandemic has influenced the way they behave. People may not return to their previous behaviour.

However, we know the sector is resilient. Its creativity and inclusiveness will find solutions to the economic, social and place-making challenges. Creatives will provide ideas, as well as hope, joy and moments of remembrance, celebration and togetherness. They will bring communities and neighbourhoods together and support young and vulnerable people.

The spirit of sharing in the artistic and cultural community has grown stronger in lockdown. So we can work with one another – and with audiences and participants – as equals, in new and trusting ways to create, together as much as possible, the recovery plan.

Uncertainty about the easing of social distancing is also an opportunity. Organisations may have time, space and kit – maybe people – yet be unable to commit to projects for large audiences or other earned income. This could be the chance for projects that support communities and artists who are prone to be excluded, to recover and reimagine the future.

Summing up, the challenges are:

1. The sector will be badly damaged at all levels by lockdown.
2. The recovery period will be influenced by the extended lockdown.
3. Audiences' and participants' attitudes, values and – more importantly – needs are changing.

The opportunities are:

1. Arts and culture have a vital role in the recovery.
2. A collaborative, supportive, diverse community of artists, creatives, audiences and participants can help to co-author a deliverable, inclusive recovery plan.
3. Space, time and resources to rethink and reimagine.

APPROACH AND STRUCTURE

We need the plan quickly, so we must agree a conceptual structure for it.

We propose three stages, each of which increases access and participation, and works in environmentally sustainable, low-carbon ways.

Short term

Stabilisation and quarantine – April to June 2020 (approx.)

- + Stabilisation of businesses, reducing costs and ensuring they can plan for recovery
- + Getting info on Government support for cultural organisations and freelance creatives.

Short-term quarantine programme

- + Develop new work
- + Support artists and creatives
- + Keep in touch with audiences
- + Support vulnerable people
- + Develop talent.

More than twenty-five arts and cultural organisations in the city are providing online. See more on this.

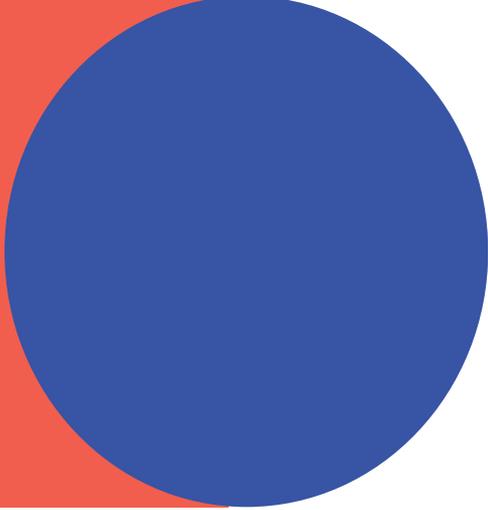
<https://secure.manchester.gov.uk/info/500361/coronavirus/7928/coronavirus/23>



Company Chameleon in partnership with 42nd Street



Culture and Education:
Royal Northern College of Music



Medium term

Restart, Repair and Rethink – June to December 2020 (approx.)

A flexible programme that can respond to changing health and economic circumstances. Focus on communities and the arts and cultural sector, building towards Un-Lock and the beacon event – MIF 21 (see below).

Development of thinking and new models for the future.

In a different world, what needs repair and what needs rethinking?

- + What do communities and neighbourhoods need and want?
- + What are audiences' concerns?
- + How will artists make and present work and respond to this?
- + How do we build on our strengths and networks here and abroad?
- + How do we resist xenophobia?
- + How do we learn and share learning with others here and abroad?
- + How do we engage and support those worst hit by lockdown?

We'll develop this conversation with communities, artists, audiences and our networks to understand the impact COVID-19 has had on future re-engagement with arts and culture. An artist-led conversation with communities and schools will cover the future they want, rebuilding audience confidence – particularly with the most vulnerable – resulting in events for Un-Lock.

Long term

Un-Lock: Creating the New Normal – December 2020 to end of August 2021

Programme of events, projects and interventions across the city. At its core will be Manchester International Festival (MIF) 2021, which will support the recovery of our communities and neighbourhoods, and build a sustained message that the city is open and embracing the future.

January – April 2021

Coming out of Restart, Repair and Rethink, smaller gatherings will build audience engagement with an inclusive tone, and promote resident engagement while profiling the city's international outlook, standing for peace, hope, fairness and inclusion.

May – September 2021

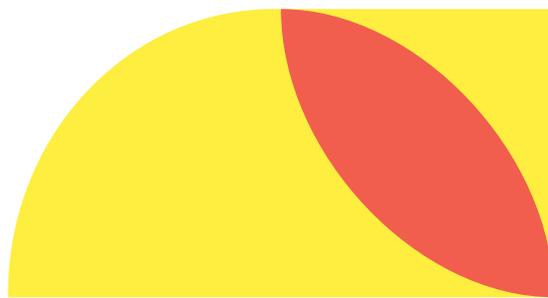
This will be a significantly more open and less socially distanced phase – Do It Differently A Culture-Led Response to the COVID-19 Crisis, Summer 2021. Opens with (possibly reimagined) Manchester Day Parade. MIF in July is the heart of this phase – the major pillar in the whole recovery programme, and a beacon for work in earlier phases. End this programme segment with Festival of Manchester, late August.



Circus House

Additional points:

- + Get maximum leverage from the artistic strengths of the city, particularly of music through Music Cities Network, and of literature through UNESCO City of Literature.
- + International networks such as UNESCO City of Literature, Music Cities, Danish partnership, Euro Cities and twin cities should feed into the programme.
- + Libraries – a major physical and creative resource – should play a major part in all dimensions of this recovery.
- + Consider bringing co-ordinated promotion of Christmas 2021 into this plan.
- + Build all this into a co-ordinated marketing and PR campaign targeted at residents and regional, UK and international markets.



HOME