

## **GM LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

**SUBJECT:** The Feasibility of the Manchester Digital Channel

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### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

The Manchester Channel was a concept created by a Greater Manchester Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) member, Lou Cordwell. In September 2014, Jaywing was appointed by the LEP to conduct a scoping exercise for the development of the 'Manchester Channel'. In September 2015, O&O reviewed the business case and recommended a series of actions.

In March 2016, the LEP requested Marketing Manchester to undertake a feasibility study to assess the private sector appetite and potential public funding opportunities for the Manchester Channel. The Manchester Channel proposal outlined by O&O consultants required at least £500k in year one including the allocated £95k of LEP funding. It was envisaged that funds could be raised via private and public sector contribution and would cover the project costs such as support staff, distribution, IT and web activity needed to underpin the Manchester Channel.

The priority themes of science and technology; creative/digital and media; arts, culture and sport have been highlighted. The overall outputs are 12 pieces of content per year to improve the perception and depth of offer that Manchester wants promote globally.

### **2.0 Objectives of the Manchester Digital Channel**

As previously presented, the objectives and aims of the Manchester Channel are as follows:

- To build and change perceptions of Manchester
- To achieve cut through by building international recognition for Manchester's key world class areas of excellence
- To show Manchester innovative, diverse and international city. The creation of this unique digital channel is a demonstration of Manchester's modern and innovative instincts.

The O&O recommendations suggested to start small and grow; have a web presence and drive traffic to support future monetisation; that alternative funding models were needed in addition to advertising revenues; and to utilise existing resources rather than 'new' to reduce costs.

### **3.0 Progress Update**

In order to approach commercial funders and to progress public sector bids the following three success criteria are required to facilitate the conversation and benefit potential conversion. An update is provided against each below.

- a) Demonstrate what is meant by Manchester Digital Channel content.
- b) Identify who might support the Manchester Digital Channel and what are the potential stories.
- c) Address feasibility recommendations

#### **a) Develop a proposition and an example of Manchester Digital Content.**

It was thought that a piece of Manchester Channel content was needed to help exemplify what is meant by world-class international content and the power of this content in helping change perception of Manchester with influential international businesses.

#### Update

As a result of ESOF and the European City of Science an opportunity to bring to life a science story and also Manchester's infamous ability to adapt and innovate has come to light. The Peppered Moth story is being created for ESOF by Universal Everything, a digital art and design company that produce high end commissions, installations and artwork content for clients all over the world. The story depicts the history of the Peppered Moth and the amazing evolution and revolution story and its connection to Manchester with reference to the first industrial city.

Before the industrial revolution in Britain, most Peppered Moths were pale with black speckles across the wings and easily camouflaged against the lichen on tree trunks where they rested. However, as a consequence of airborne pollution in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a rare genetic mutation which caused the moths wings to blacken became widespread. The first black Peppered Moth was recorded in Manchester in 1848 and by 1895 98% of Peppered Moths in the city were black. The species had adapted to the increased soot in their habitat as a result of the Industrial Revolution, the black moths were more likely to survive as they were camouflaged, while the white variety became more vulnerable to predators. This

process of natural selection also worked in reverse, when as a consequence of the Clean Air Act and reduced pollution in the mid-twentieth century the moths evolved again to become pale.

The moth's transformation over time mirrored Manchester's transformation. As a city that has undergone, and continues to undergo, radical transformation, the effects of that transformation on people and the world around them are as relevant today as they were in the industrial revolution.

The Peppered Moth is a story that demonstrates links to Manchester as the Original Modern city. It is a story of environmental change, fragility and resilience. It shows that things can change for the worse, but it is possible, sometimes, to restore them if people commit to change. The story of the moth works both in terms of science (and certainly scientific literacy), and in terms of metaphor and creativity.

### **Proposition**

The objective is to connect this powerful science story into an art form that could be promoted digitally. Ocean Media have been approached to assist and have provided the use of their digital screens and following discussions with Peter Saville, Professor Brian Cox has been recruited to provide the voice over. In July, the story of the Peppered Moth will be created to give a memorable and shared experience that will inspire audiences locally and internationally.

This will be a demonstration of what is meant by world-class international content for the Manchester Channel to facilitate approaches to commercial partners and funders for investment to do more. The total cost is £35k which has been funded by Marketing Manchester (£15k revenue and grants) and investment from ESOF (£20k) to provide a tangible example to present to potential sponsors. No LEP funding has not been spent to date.

### **b) Identify who might support the Manchester Digital Channel and what are the potential stories.**

Secondly, a list of potential commercial sponsors and potential funding streams is being developed so they can be approached with some examples and ideas for content and story's that the Manchester Channel would focus on that benefit specific priority themes.

### Update

A list of potential sponsors has been created and initial conversations with partners and funding options have begun e.g. the three Universities and the GREAT funding lead.

Although initial conversations are promising, it is felt the Peppered Moth content is needed to help propel this element and justify the requests for investment.

### **c) Address feasibility recommendations**

Finally, some work on the platform and the distribution mechanics that the Manchester Digital Channel would benefit from in response to the feasibility recommendations.

#### Update

#### **Research and Insight**

Marketing Manchester has recently invested in a digital benchmarking exercise and conduct research to inform the brief that will drive the below digital transformation. This research has further endorsed the priorities for digital content and the Manchester Digital Channel outputs. Research highlights include:

- Mobile is essential
- Inspirational content is equally if not more important than information
- Content is king – well written, inspiring content, strong images, video that draws people in and has to be shared
- ‘Push and distribution’ of content is vital and will rely on many channels and not any one website – partners, digital endorsers and influencers are key in pushing our content to reach the international audiences we aspire to impact

#### **Digital Development**

The Manchester growth Company has allocated £80k to support a Digital Transformation including an update to the VisitManchester.com and InvestinManchester.com websites and the creation of new digital platforms to support sectorial theme such as science, digital/tech and media. This will be the website depository for the Manchester Digital Channel alongside the push mechanics already in existence such as social media and e-bulletins/webinars used to promote to business and contacts around the globe.

#### **Push Channels**

Following on from the existing Ocean Media relationship and supporting activity for translation of the story of the Moth into a digital format and bringing it to life on the large digital screens, further discussions are being held to review other options Ocean Media can do in-kind to support Manchester Channel activity.

Another avenue that is being explored is the opportunity to leverage the Visit Britain relationship with the BBC Worldwide channel and this need for content to help push messages out to international audiences.

## **4.0 Options**

Three potential options for The Manchester Digital Channel are outlined below and the LEP is requested to provide direction on the preferred approach.

### **1) Full approval to progress, subject to commercial match**

Deliver the Peppered Moth example and use this to attempt to attract the full £400k sponsorship required to match the LEP investment to progress the project this year and address the feasibility recommendations. If this sponsorship target cannot be reached, the project does not progress and the LEP investment is not required.

### **2) Incremental phased approach**

Use an element of the LEP investment to develop a more bite-sized approach and develop three more Manchester Channel stories/pieces of content to move this project forward and develop more momentum and examples to help secure future investment. £30k of LEP investment matched with £150k would support resources to generate three more story ideas and distribution to develop the next phase. If this investment is secured and the project successful, a phase two would draw down the remaining LEP investment (£65k) and seek the remaining investment match (£350k).

### **3) Terminate project**

Based on current environment, the GM LEP may wish to reallocate the funding and this is no longer a priority.

## **5.0 Recommendation**

In the current climate, Marketing Manchester would recommend option two, a phased approach, is the optimal solution to take forward.

For options one and two, it is also recommended to appoint a nominated GM LEP Member to lead a small steering group and govern the project.

## **6.0 Next Steps**

Depending on the option the GM LEP want to pursue, then Marketing Manchester would rather progress the project, meet with potential partners and discuss in more detail funding for The Manchester Digital Channel and/or specific content creation that supports the priorities of the themes and start to shape potential stories. Or terminate activity.