

GM LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Item No. 10

SUBJECT: Manchester Science Festival

DATE: Monday 17th July 2017

FROM: Sally MacDonald, Director, Museum of Science and Industry

Executive Summary

In 2016 Manchester hosted the EuroScience Open Forum and took the title European City of Science. A year-long, city-wide celebration of science culminated at the 2016 Manchester Science Festival, and involved a wider range of partners than ever before. There is a real opportunity to build on this network to encourage science engagement across the city region's communities and to cement Manchester's reputation as a Science City.

The LEP input is requested on how best to maximize this opportunity.

What is Manchester Science Festival?

The Festival began in 2007 as a small, experimental event. It has grown steadily over 10 years to become this country's most popular and inclusive science festival. The Festival takes place each year over 11 days around the October half-term Holiday, and is a playful, creative and surprising celebration of science, including immersive science experiences, exhibitions, citizen science projects and performances taking place across the city region.

The Festival is produced by the Museum of Science and Industry, which is now part of the Science Museum Group. The Group's overall vision is to inspire futures by growing science capital in individuals and society, and the Festival is one of the key strands of that activity.

We describe the Festival as 'part laboratory, part playground'. Our vision is to be the most bold, creative and ambitious science festival in the UK and to be internationally recognized for creative science engagement and putting science at the heart of culture.

The Festival programme encourages visitors of all ages to immerse themselves in meaningful and accessible scientific experiences; from messy experiments to engineering-themed comedy routines and lively environmental debates. We always include subject matter that is topical, widely relevant and sometimes controversial. Recent events have included a public panel debate on fracking, a science comedy stand-up about menstruation and art commissions calling attention to climate change. We try to programme in appropriate and unexpected venues, to illustrate that science is part of everyday life. One year we staged Downpour – a high pressure, interactive street game tackling a devastating flooding crisis in Manchester – at Manchester Youth Hostel. We held a pop up painting studio exploring 200 years of vision research at Manchester Eye Hospital. And another year we staged a cabaret style show on the science of gambling at Manchester 235 Casino. Last year's Festival featured a 'sleep lab' tent in the Arndale Centre, raising awareness of Circadian rhythms and the health benefits of good sleeping habits.

Partnership is absolutely critical to the success of the Festival. The involvement of scientists, researchers and STEM professionals in universities and businesses across the region is crucial to the planning and delivery of the programme. Many of our key programming partners have supported the Festival since the beginning.

Key statistics for 2016

- J Over 136,000 visits to 284 events in venues across the city region
- J Involving 88 partners: 48 cultural partners, 25 academic partners; 10 business partners, 5 community organizations
- J A platform for over 1,000 scientists, researchers, artists and curators to engage audiences across Greater Manchester with science
- J 80 volunteers contributed over 2,000 hours to supporting Festival events
- J 57% of Festival visits were made by Greater Manchester residents, 38% by people from other parts of the UK and 5% were international
- J 62% of Festival visits were made by girls or women. This is particularly positive in view of the need to attract more women to STEM careers.
- J 42% of visits were made by people from lower socio-economic groups. This is extremely unusual among science festivals
- J 15% of visits were made by people from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic background
- J 11% of visits were made by people with an access requirement

Moving beyond the numbers, we have several stories of the Festival changing lives.

Amy Mather's first visit to Manchester Science Festival aged 11 was a turning point for her. In 2013, she was named European Digital Girl of the Year. See her blog:

http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/amy-mather-/stem-as-i-see-it_b_11662154.html

Who funds and supports the Festival?

The Festival is underwritten and partly funded by the Science Museum Group.

Our objective has been to raise around £200,000 from external partners, which represents approximately 75% of the cost of staging the festival.

Siemens, have supported the festival since 2011, most recently engaging as headline sponsor, and several major companies have sponsored us year on year. Our many business sponsors are mostly in the STEM field and see the Festival as an excellent way to raise the profile of STEM among families and to encourage more young people to consider STEM careers. Several of our sponsors also get involved in programming and in volunteering at events. All our universities are involved in supporting events and activity and the University of Salford is currently our Lead Education sponsor.

Future Vision

Our vision for the Festival is to continue to grow in reach and profile. We particularly want to build on the Festival's social inclusivity within the city region, increase family audiences, extend events and participation across Greater Manchester and to grow the numbers and proportion of family visitors, and visitors from BAME backgrounds.

At the same time, we want to grow the Festival's national and international profile, through partnerships with key organisations such as the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the British Council. Increasingly we are asked to advise other festivals nationally and internationally. In the last two years, we have responded to requests from Bradford, Cambridge, Winchester and Hull and internationally from Polytech (Russia), Athens and Brazil's Museum of Tomorrow. But we know there is potential to grow the Festival's international content and profile.

Request for advice

As we shape our plans for the Festival's development in the coming years, we would very much welcome the input of the LEP. We would appreciate the opportunity to hold follow up consultative conversations with one or two LEP Board members to help shape our plans and to ensure that they are in tune with emerging strategies for Greater Manchester.

This year's Festival programme will be announced in early September, and will launch on 18 October and run until 29 October.