



Press release — 12 January 2018

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## MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL APPOINTS CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER TO LEAD ON BUSINESS PLANNING AND OPERATION OF THE FACTORY

### PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE INCLUDES LEADERSHIP ROLES AT MCFC, EVERTON FC AND RUGBY LEAGUE

Alex Byars is to be the Chief Operating Officer (COO) for Manchester International Festival (MIF), leading on business development and operation of flagship new cultural venue The Factory. Delivered in partnership with Manchester City Council, The Factory will be run year-round by MIF.

Alex comes to the organisation from the Rugby Football League, where he was Strategic Consultant, following appointments at Everton FC, Manchester City FC and Deloitte. He takes up the COO role at the end of February 2018.

This new role is a key part of the expanded executive team, which will be steering the organisation through a period of unprecedented growth as The Factory takes shape.

John McGrath, Artistic Director and CEO, Manchester International Festival and The Factory: *'We are delighted to be welcoming Alex to the MIF team at this exciting time of transition. As our new Chief Operating Officer, Alex will be concentrating on business planning for The Factory, and getting us ready for the year-round challenge of running this extraordinary new space. His wide-ranging experience in the world of sport and finance will be a fantastic addition to the company's skills.'*

Alex Byars: *'As a biennial festival, MIF has quickly established itself as a key live event in the international cultural calendar. I am delighted to be joining MIF at this exciting time, to help lead and develop the organisation as it plans and prepares for the opening and operation of Factory.'*

Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council, said: *'Alex's appointment comes at a key moment in the development of The Factory - which will be far more than just another arts venue. With an economic impact that will be considerable - creating or supporting 1,500 full-time jobs and adding £1.1 billion to the city's economy over a decade - The Factory will both entertain and train people of all ages, and will provide a world-class space for people to meet, exchange ideas and learn new skills.'*

Alex Byars' appointment follows a number of new additions to the MIF board. MIF is currently recruiting at all levels, for details visit [mif.co.uk/jobs](http://mif.co.uk/jobs)

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Notes to Editors

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## Alex Byars

An accomplished business leader with a background in first-tier sports finance, Alex has a broad range of experience in strategic business planning, financial management, governance, commercial contract negotiation and the profitable operation of large public venues.

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Alex has worked in Manchester and the North West for almost 20 years, starting his career as a chartered accountant at Deloitte, where he led strategic and advisory projects across several sports in their Sports Business Group.

He left Deloitte to become the inaugural Commercial Finance Executive at Manchester City FC, where he was finance lead for all commercial activities and developed the business plan for the expansion of the Etihad Stadium.

Alex was then appointed as the Director of Strategic Projects at Everton FC, where he led all stadium related activities, including an appraisal of the options for developing Goodison Park and the selection of key advisors for Everton's proposed new stadium.

In his most recent role at the Rugby Football League, Alex was the Interim Finance Director and the Executive Lead on the creation of a new facilities strategy for the sport.

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## The Factory

Where the art of the future will be made

The Factory is a flagship new cultural venue led by Manchester City Council in partnership with the team behind Manchester International Festival. Designed by world-leading architects Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), founded by Rem Koolhaas, The Factory will be OMA's first major public building in the UK.

On opening in 2020, The Factory will introduce the most exciting global artists to audiences of up to 850,000 a year, in an extraordinary world-class facility. Dance, theatre, music, opera, visual arts, popular culture and innovative contemporary work incorporating multiple media and technologies will come together in groundbreaking combinations. With space for the world's greatest artists and thinkers to make, explore and experiment and for communities and individuals from Manchester and beyond to meet, exchange ideas and learn new skills, The Factory is a major intervention in the international cultural scene.

The Factory will capture the extraordinary vision, diversity and potential of Manchester's cultural life. Inspired by the pioneering work of Manchester International Festival (MIF) the programme will focus on premieres of ambitious new work by the world's leading creators, developed in partnership with local, national and international co-producers, giving audiences in Manchester the chance to see inspiring new work first, before its global journey. MIF will run the space year-round, while continuing to deliver the city-wide Festival every two years.

The Factory and its artists will work with and within communities right across Greater Manchester, bringing the region's many different populations together – inviting local people to help reimagine what a cultural space can offer. The Factory presents a singular opportunity to build a creative learning culture into a world-class arts organisation from the start. A wide-ranging programme of participation, learning,

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debate and collaboration will be developed with local people, and mentoring and development opportunities for emerging artists will sit alongside an ambitious training programme for people from all backgrounds; developing skills for employment in the cultural and creative industries in the UK and internationally. The economic impact of The Factory will be considerable, creating or supporting 1,500 full-time jobs and adding £1.1 billion to the city's economy over a decade.

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The Factory will be defined by its versatility. Hosting everything from major exhibitions to epic concerts and extraordinary installations and performances, the large warehouse space will have capacity for audiences of 5,000 standing, but it will also be easily configured into more intimate spaces. The adjoining theatre space is similarly flexible, with room for around 1600 people, and can be connected to the warehouse to form a single, super-sized venue of 7000+, where artists can imagine, create and present works of unmatched daring and ambition. Open 364 days a year, The Factory's foyers and extensive outdoor space will house interactive performance, debate, food events and more, becoming a new kind of meeting place for visitors, staff and artists.

The Factory is situated in Allied London's new St. John's neighbourhood, formerly home to Granada TV and next to the Museum of Science and Industry, who will be an important collaborator for The Factory. St. John's is being designed with a focus on cultural enterprise, creation and production, and The Factory will be at its heart.

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**Manchester International Festival (MIF)** is the world's first festival of original, new work and special events, staged every two years in Manchester, UK. The next edition will take place 4 – 21 July 2019.

MIF launched in 2007 as an artist-led festival presenting new works from across the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture. MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including **Björk, Steve McQueen, Robert Wilson, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, Jeremy Deller, Wayne McGregor, Maxine Peake, Boris Charmatz, The xx, Zaha Hadid Architects, Thomas Ostermeier, Damon Albarn, Punchdrunk, Elbow and Marina Abramović.**

MIF works closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations internationally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible and ensures that work made at MIF goes on to be seen around the world. The Festival also works widely within Manchester with a new initiative called My Festival – a community of creative people from all backgrounds, ages and corners of the city who are forging closer connections with MIF.

MIF's Artistic Director & CEO is John McGrath. John was previously the Founding Artistic Director of National Theatre Wales where he won an international reputation for large-scale site-specific works, digital innovation, international collaboration and extraordinary community involvement.

MIF is a registered charity. Alongside funding from Manchester City Council and Arts Council England, MIF also receives income from ticket sales and co-commissioning partners; from other public bodies; from private sponsorship; from charitable trusts and foundations and from individual donations.

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