

# LOWRY

**MAKING CULTURE COUNT**

**MAY 2024**



**AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE LOWRY**

# LOWRY

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# FOREWORD

The Lowry is more than just an Arts Centre. It is a beacon of culture, creativity and connection in the heart of Salford, rooted in our mission to empower people from all backgrounds to experience culture on their own terms.

Since it opened almost 25 years ago, The Lowry has welcomed 18.5 million visitors through its doors – a gateway to a world of opportunity, stories and community for everyone.

This report captures what matters to us most: the positive impact that we have on our local area and communities. It illustrates how the people of our city and beyond have shaped our organisation and how we in turn have helped shape our communities.

It aims to capture the diversity of programmes and activities that The Lowry offers, demonstrating the economic and social benefits to local communities, the region, the rest of the UK and beyond.

Finally, it shows how The Lowry has played a foundational role in the wider regeneration of Salford Quays, acting as a cultural anchor for regeneration which contributes £1.3 billion to the UK economy.

This thriving hub for media, culture and arts outside the capital is a blueprint for how our regions can be reinvigorated and renewed to ensure that communities and local economies flourish.

In developing this report, we have consulted with a wide range of stakeholders from staff and trustees, artists, young people, audiences and community groups to politicians and funding partners.

We have gained insight into the experiences, views and perceptions of over 2,000 residents of Greater Manchester and beyond through empirical, independent market research.

Our findings highlight the diversity of The Lowry's contribution to the arts and culture sector as a whole.

This is a sector which is under threat. From digital distractions to funding cuts and the shadow of the global pandemic, the industry remains fragile. Set against this backdrop, The Lowry has shown what is possible with relatively low public subsidy; only 6% of our revenue comes from public funding.

In a challenged and changing world, characterised by financial hardship and a crisis of arts funding, creativity offers hope for communities, a catalyst for regeneration, and the key to unlocking the potential of young people.

This is what drives us. This is a place where creativity empowers people with curiosity and confidence. Where connections are forged. And where communities are strengthened.

You can read the full Lichfields social and economic impact report [here](#).



JULIA FAWCETT OBE,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE LOWRY

**"This is a place where creativity empowers people. Where connections are forged. And where communities are strengthened."**

Julia Fawcett OBE, Chief Executive of The Lowry

# MORE THAN AN ARTS CENTRE

## THE LOWRY'S IMPACT

The success of The Lowry's impact is rooted in connection, community and creativity.

It is witnessed through a deep-seated commitment to the region, a passion for creating opportunities for young people, and longstanding and meaningful partnerships with other institutions, the public sector, businesses and the wider creative sector.

The positive outcomes observed in this report highlight the huge economic and social contributions made by The Lowry, with relatively small amounts of subsidy.

This wide-reaching impact can be seen and felt across Salford, and the surrounding areas – on people, placemaking and economic prosperity.



**"The Lowry is a force for good in Salford and it was a vital catalyst for the regeneration of the area. It is a place that is first and foremost for the people."**

Paul Dennett, Mayor of Salford, and Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester



### PEOPLE

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

**22,000**

underserved people engaged in 2022/23

**£1M**

of funding secured for artists of the future since 2009

**6,000**

hours of engagement in 2022/23

**£22.4M**

in social value in 2022/23



### PLACEMAKING

A CULTURAL AND URBAN REVOLUTION

**18.5M**

visitors hosted since 2000

**94%**

of visitors find The Lowry inspiring

**£86.6M**

in visitor spending per annum

**£1.3BN**

GVA generated by Salford Quays annually



### PROSPERITY

DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH OF SALFORD

**£47.7M**

GVA per annum across the UK

**£32.91**

ROI for each £1 of public funding in 2022/23

**576**

jobs created in the North West and 649 jobs across the UK

**102.3%**

increase in ROI since 2013



# IMPACT SPOTLIGHT - PEOPLE

## BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS



The Lowry empowers and brings communities together by using creativity as a vehicle for social change. Its arts, employability, and community programmes are a lifeline to thousands of young people who are underserved, stigmatised and excluded.

In 2022/23 alone, 22,000 people took part in The Lowry's participation programmes. These offer transformative experiences that harness creativity, enabling young people to develop the tools to overcome life's barriers and build their own futures.

The Lowry believes that sustained investment in artist development brings results and has made a values-led decision to commit resources over an extended period to developing artists, giving them the resources they need to make new work.

It is also committed to deep-rooted connections with arts organisations, local businesses and schools, charities, voluntary groups, corporate sponsors, local authorities and the wider creative sector.

**"I will always find The Lowry such an inspirational place. To see The Lowry's success given the limited funding it receives is phenomenal. If you want to build a social footprint around arts, culture and creativity anywhere around the world, I struggle to think of a better example of how to do that. It's a powerful place."**

Sir Rod Aldridge OBE – Chairman, The Lowry, Aldridge Foundation



Rite of Spring: Artist – Foteini Christofilopoulou, Copyright – © Foteini Christofilopoulou





Over two thirds of visitors (68%) felt their visit to The Lowry gave them a deeper understanding or appreciation of the arts, rising to three-quarters (75%) of those with special access needs. 61% felt inspired to be creative.



### ARTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

The Lowry's flagship programme for long-term, in-depth creative engagement. The programme connects with young people experiencing adversity, providing them with the support and opportunities to explore their own self-expression and creativity alongside high quality artists, learning new skills, improving their wellbeing, reducing social isolation and anxiety, and accessing potentially life-changing opportunities.

**"Before I came to The Lowry, I was so quiet, I wouldn't talk to people. My confidence has grown so much that now I can talk to anybody. I always needed someone to support me, but now I can stand on my own two feet and be my own person."**

Amy, young adult, former Arts for Social Change participant who is now a paid facilitator, helping a new cohort of young people

**"My favourite thing about Speak Up is how comforting and kind everyone is. I also think this because everyone makes me feel welcome. Speak Up is so fun, inviting and truly an amazing adventure I feel so proud to be part of. Feeling connected is awesome and incredible. It has made my life worth living."**

Student, Speak Up

### SPEAK UP & NATIONAL THEATRE CONNECTIONS

A partnership with the National Theatre working with Greater Manchester secondary schools. It connects young people and teachers with local artists, co-creating artistic responses to issues that are most important to them and challenging the world that they live in. There have been over 8,500 attendances at Speak Up sessions and events with over 1600 young people. The Lowry also hosts The National Theatre Connections festival, presenting performances by young people with the support of professional artists and writers.

### SCHOOLS OUTREACH AND CREATIVE EDUCATION

The Lowry runs multiple projects to increase local schools' abilities to deliver impactful creative education. In 2022/23 these programmes reached 10,221 participants and delivered around £3.2 million in social value benefits to local schools and students.

The Creative Learning programme supports schools to experience sessions with artists and professionals which promote creativity, confidence and build transferable skills. The Teachers Network brings teachers together to discuss the challenges schools face and how The Lowry's offer can be shaped in response.

The Lowry has also engaged thousands of children through arts challenges and competitions, like the Creative Writing Challenge and The Copley Prize, an annual art competition for primary children.

**"Our curriculum has been enriched by working with Lowry. The benefits for the children were immense and we are hoping this will build year on year. It has really raised the aspirations of the children and opened their eyes to what is possible. Many of them would never have engaged with anything like that."**

Rosemary Hince, Head Teacher, St Joseph's RC Primary School, Salford

85%

85% of visitors rated their experiences at The Lowry highly for cultural enrichment and 62% rated their experiences highly for learning something new.

YES: YOUTH  
EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS

Programmes which support young people aged 13–25 from Salford who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) to develop their confidence, skills and potential through work-based learning. These programmes reached 746 young people in 2022/23 alone, generating an estimated £970,000 in social value through improvements to wellbeing and quality of life.

The Lowry achieved this through creative projects like the YES Drama group for young adults with learning disabilities to placements and backstage technical theatre workshops which provide work-related learning, practical skills and help young people to become work-ready or progress onto other training.

**“Operation Mincemeat would not exist without the generosity, vision and knowledge of The Lowry. Emerging artists need institutions and teams like The Lowry now more than ever.”**

David Cumming, Felix Hagan, Natasha Hodgson and Zoe Roberts, Spitlip

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT &  
OPERATION MINCEMEAT

Since 2009 The Lowry has helped to secure funding of £1,000,000 for artist development, supporting the health and vitality of the arts sector. Through programmes such as Developed With The Lowry and Associate Artists, 65 artists and companies have created new work which has gone on to tour regionally and nationally. One example is Operation Mincemeat, winner of the Olivier Award for Best new Musical 2024, a new West End musical slated to go to Broadway with a UK tour to follow in 2025. The company behind the production, SpitLip, have been part of The Lowry’s artist development programme for more than a decade.



**“The Lowry is one of the National Theatre’s most important and longstanding national partners, helping to inspire younger generations across Greater Manchester to participate and engage through the power of world-class theatre. Our colleagues at The Lowry are key influencers in the decisions we make to continue to grow and strengthen our regional audiences.”**

Alice King-Farlow, Director of learning and National Partnerships, National Theatre

Gulafshah’s journey with The Lowry started in 2018 when she was referred by her social worker to Lowry Young Artists, where she quickly demonstrated her creative talents. Galufshah started on the YES programme in 2021; she had been living on her own in Salford, she was NEET and experiencing feelings of isolation and depression. She would stay up all night and then sleep all day as she felt she had no reason to get up.

The Lowry offered her a paid internship assisting Young Leaders, supporting young people to create their artwork in weekly sessions. Gulafshah is creative, loves exploring art and is highly capable in the right circumstances. The Lowry provides a space where she can be herself and which enables her to be honest about her feelings and anxieties. With a sense of responsibility, a boost to her self-esteem and some structure to her week, her entire demeanour has changed. She is building her skills and taking on more responsibility with the goal of becoming independent and gaining long-term employment.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## REACHING UNDERSERVED & EXCLUDED COMMUNITIES

# 87%

87% of visitors from Salford and Greater Manchester felt that The Lowry has a positive impact on the local community.

## YOUNG PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Since 2013, The Lowry has engaged young parents through creative play, fostering the development of healthy relationships and positive parenting. Lowry also offers Creative Family sessions; free artist and self led activities for babies, early years and families to take part in messy play, dance, storytelling and more. These programmes have reached 13,650 participants, delivering around £11.5 million in social value in 2022/23.

The Lowry's Young Parents Programme engages Young Parents under 25, offering projects in partnership with Salford City Council, Salford CVS, and the Family Hubs. The Lowry also offers the Booth Charities Family scheme which invites families and children with disabilities or additional needs to see Relaxed Performances for free with food and creative activities.

## MAKING THE ARTS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The Lowry has targeted attendance from local residents who may otherwise not feel like the arts is for them, recognising local areas of high deprivation and exclusion. In 2022-23 alone, The Lowry brought the magic of theatre and arts to the doorsteps of around 2,900 Salford residents.

The 'Our Lowry' scheme for residents of Salford is free to join and provides discounted tickets and free events at The Lowry throughout the year. The scheme had over 16,500 members in 2023 and sold almost 10,000 heavily discounted tickets to a range of shows representing a subsidy of nearly £220,000 on tickets for Salford residents.

The Lowry has created engagement groups including Show Selectors, and The Galleries Steering Group, which bring local residents from diverse backgrounds to work alongside theatre programmers and gallery curators to make arts and culture accessible to everyone. These co-designed programmes redistribute power, enabling group members to develop skills, take control of the budget and make decisions about which art or theatre to present and where to showcase it. Group members help The Lowry to shape its programmes, approaches and practices to remove barriers for local people. These groups work alongside the Community Connectors, who identify and support under-represented communities and encourage people to step into The Lowry for the first time.



**"This project is just magical. We are getting families facing adversity talking about what they want to see change in their community but through the creative activities they are engaging with our community centres and hubs which has been non-existent since the pandemic recovery."**

Family Hub Coordinator

## THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING

Every year, hundreds of people give their time to The Lowry and its initiatives, acting as ambassadors and promoting its programme of work. These volunteers are the face of The Lowry to make sure that each visitor's experience is seamless and memorable. As part of its community engagement programmes, volunteering has helped local people develop new skills, make friends, and provide a sense of purpose.

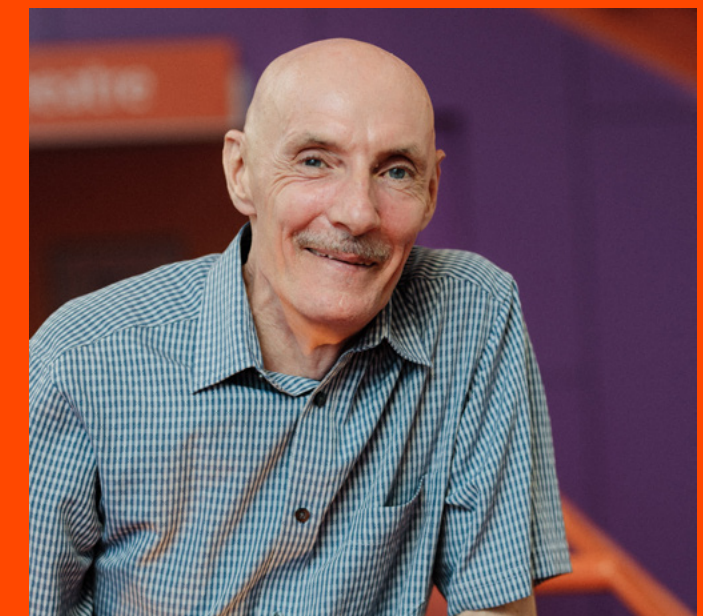
## GRAHAM, 66

Graham lives in sheltered accommodation and was one of The Lowry's Show Selectors. Struggling through the pandemic he was referred for food support as he was undergoing treatment for prostate cancer and was struggling with the cost of living. As Graham recovered, he felt anxious about going out and had been isolating himself.

As part of the Show Selectors, Graham brought the show Human Nurture to a local high school, which gave light to sensitive issues. "For some of those kids it could have been their first time experiencing theatre. It opens their eyes to the options that are out there for them too."

Since engaging with the project, Graham has continued some of the friendships made and has felt much more confident to get out, meet new people and do things he has never done before.

**"It was an opportunity to start getting out again and to meet new people. It's important that projects like this continue, giving Salford people a real chance to experience the arts and enable more people to benefit from the space."**





# OUR IMPACT - PLACEMAKING

## A CULTURAL AND URBAN REVOLUTION



The creation of The Lowry was one of the first attempts in the UK to place a cultural institution at the heart of a social and economic regeneration project and since it opened in 2000, The Lowry has been the heart and soul of an area which has dramatically transformed over its lifetime.

Shining a light for arts and culture in the heart of Salford, it is a space for everyone and the most visited cultural attraction in the North West. Yet The Lowry's contributions to Salford, Greater Manchester and beyond extends far beyond the realm of the arts.

From attracting visitors and tourists to Salford, generating employment opportunities and kick-starting the development of MediaCity and the wider area, The Lowry has provided a sense of belonging and the foundation for new opportunities.

It is the home of some of the UK's most exciting creative, tech and media organisations, from incubators and start-ups to established businesses such as Ericsson and Kellogg's. Most importantly, The Lowry is the beating heart of a re-energised place for happier, more skilled and confident communities.



DARREN GRICE, DIRECTOR OF  
CULTURE, SALFORD

**"So much of what The Lowry brings to Salford is not inside that building. It helps the city to be a place where the arts and culture are created and nurtured. The Lowry plays a really important role in telling the story of Salford, and they always do it in a way that is sensitive and responsive to local people and places."**

Darren Grice, Director of Culture, Salford



Ailey 2: Artist - NIR ARIELI





SALFORD QUAYS  
& MEDIA CITY

The Lowry’s power as a ‘place-maker’ is demonstrated by having acted as the leading catalyst for what is now established and nationally recognised as MediaCity, home to the northern headquarters for The BBC and ITV Studios.

Today, MediaCity stands as Salford’s main creative, digital and tech hub and was identified as one of 47 creative clusters identified by the UK’s 2018 Sector Deal for the Creative Industries.

The Lowry played a vital role in the creation and continued success of the UTC@MediaCityUK, a University Technical College offering 300 14–18 year olds with a unique experience to learn and develop practical skills in TV and film, digital publishing, graphics and design, radio and audio, and interactive media and gaming. It was awarded the number one performing UTC sixth form in the country in 2023.



Photo credit: Craig Morrison

**“The Lowry provided the catalyst for all development around it... for the BBC coming and the birth of MediaCity.”**

Josie Cahill, Chair, We Invented the Weekend festival



Photo credit: Craig Morrison



THE PUBLIC REALM - QUAYS  
CULTURE & LIGHTWAVES

The Quays Culture programme immerses audiences in new and exciting exhibitions that are inspired by its surroundings, with a focus on technology, creativity and digital innovation, presenting a range of local and international talent within the public realm. It is the result of a partnership initiative between The Lowry, Salford University, MediaCityUK, Quayside, Salford City Council and the GMCA.

Presented by Quays Culture, Lightwaves is an annual outdoor light installation festival that animates and transforms Salford Quays and Media City every winter. The festival has been running for ten years and has attracted more than 200,000 visitors from all over the country to experience a showcase of illuminated artwork with thought-provoking, surprising and playful pieces from established and emerging local, national and international artists.

The free festival links different public spaces across the Quays through a variety of interactive displays that celebrate the well-renowned digital creativity of the city.

WE INVENTED THE WEEKEND

The Lowry is one of the founding partners of We Invented the Weekend, an outdoor festival of the very best of Salford culture that celebrates the pleasure of free time.

The festival’s programme incorporates theatre, art, sport, dancing and music and The Lowry has been influential in ensuring a diverse range of performances and creative workshops are on offer to celebrate the excellence of Salford’s creative community at a regional, national and international level.

In 2023, We Invented the Weekend attracted 60,000 visitors to the festival over the two days – the largest ever footfall to MediaCity and Salford Quays – and generated over £3.2million for the local economy. A quarter of attendees were from outside Greater Manchester, highlighting the significant appeal of the festival to a diverse audience from across the region and further afield.

**“We Invented the Weekend could not have happened without The Lowry wrapping its arms around it and supporting it from the very beginning. The talent, commitment and passion they bring to the table has been fantastic and instrumental to the success of the festival.”**

Wayne Hemingway MBE



# IMPACT SPOTLIGHT - PROSPERITY

## THE ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE LOWRY



By stimulating the rebirth of Salford Quays in Greater Manchester, The Lowry has brought with it the creation of a new economy. The positive effects on local businesses, employment opportunities, and the overall vibrancy of the region underscore the vital role cultural institutions play in fostering a thriving local economy.

The Lowry has a disproportionately significant impact in terms of its economic contribution. It supports nearly 650 jobs nationally and generates around £48 million GVA annually, all of which is delivered with unusually low levels of public funding.

While the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on visitor numbers in its first two years (after re-opening between 2020-2021), The Lowry has since seen an increase in visitors to 940,000 in 2023/24, and is thriving.

The Quays regeneration offers a blueprint for successful regional regeneration and today contributes £1.3 billion in GVA to the economy, 99% more than in 2001.

### VALUE FOR MONEY

The Lowry delivers incredible value-for-money. Public funding represents only around 6% of its income over the past decade compared to 48% for similar arts and cultural organisations.

£47.7M

The Lowry's National GVA contribution

ROI

of £32.91 for each £1 of public funding in 2022/23.

102.3%

increase in ROI since 2013

66%

increase in national economic output since 2013

### INCREASING LOCAL AND REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT

The Lowry's work not only enriches the cultural fabric of Salford but also supports a diverse range of skills to make it all possible. Skilled technicians, curators, marketeers, volunteers and many other teams collaborate to bring arts and culture to life.

576

full-time jobs in the North West and 649 FTE jobs across the UK

22%

increase in supported employment since 2013

200%

increase in The Lowry employees since 2019/20

85%

of The Lowry's employees live within Greater Manchester

### A HOME FOR ARTS AND CULTURE OUTSIDE THE CAPITAL

The Lowry acts as a magnet for tourists and arts enthusiasts, drawing local, national and international visitors to the Salford area.

860,000

visitors in 22/23, 18.5 million since 2000

£86.6M

spent by visitors in 2022/23

85%

visit The Lowry once per year

£73.7M

of economic impact from visitors per year



# LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This report is testament to 25 years of connection, community and creativity. At the heart of what was once a derelict dockland is now a thriving home for arts and culture, happier communities with more opportunity, and substantial economic prosperity.

In charting The Lowry’s role in regenerating Salford over the decades we hope to provide inspiration and a best-in-class example of what hope, aspiration and commitment can deliver.

First, The Lowry succeeded as the cultural institution at the centre of one of Europe’s largest and most successful regeneration projects. Today, it is a blueprint for how arts, culture and creativity can engage underserved communities and create the next generation of artists.

So much of what The Lowry has achieved has been done in spite of challenging circumstances, from the COVID-19 pandemic, to severe arts cuts and an ongoing cost of living crisis. Yet these issues, which

threaten the fabric of local communities, served to create even greater opportunity for The Lowry to make a positive impact.

The findings in this report speak for themselves, and should offer undeniable proof of the impact that arts and culture venues can have on improving places, people and their prosperity.

Looking to the future, The Lowry’s commitment to the people of Salford will remain, and its growing presence within the wider arts and culture sector will continue to be leveraged to celebrate Salford’s cultural heritage on the national and international stage.

By fostering new partnerships, expanding outreach programs, and embracing digital culture, The Lowry can further extend its economic and social impact, solidify its role as a catalyst for economic and community development, and look to the next 25 years of making culture count in Salford.

people and community groups, to politicians and funding partners, all to ensure that as many views and stories as possible as to what The Lowry represents are captured.

Additionally, to supplement this research, Lichfields appointed an independent bespoke market research company to explore in depth key aspects of the social impacts of the Lowry experienced by visitors, audiences and groups across 2,000 residents of Salford and Greater Manchester.

**A full version of the findings and report from Lichfields is available [here](#).**

# METHODOLOGY

The findings presented in this report come from a comprehensive social and economic analysis carried out by the leading economic and planning consultancy Lichfields.

The methodology uses three primary, industry-standard, sources:

- For economic impacts, “Contribution of the arts and culture industry to the UK economy” produced by Centre for Economics and Business Research [CEBR] on behalf on Arts Council England;
- For social impacts, the Homes and Communities Agency HACT] Social Value Bank®; and
- For tourism impacts, the STEAM Tourism Data Model.

As an integral and critical part of the research, Lichfields also consulted with a wide range of stakeholders from Lowry staff and trustees, young



WITH THANKS TO  
AL/  
Philanthropies

LS Lowry’s *Going to the Match*,  
1953 purchased by Lowry thanks to a  
generous gift from AL Philanthropies.



**LOWRY**