

Press Release  
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# Design Council celebrates the power of planet-positive design at festival in Manchester



The Design Council yesterday launched the fourth edition of its award-winning Design for Planet Festival 2024 in Manchester – inviting designers, design studios and businesses to collaborate for a net-zero future.

Opened by Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester and Minnie Moll, Chief Executive of the Design Council - in partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University - the free-to-attend festival highlighted the city's rich urban and industrial design history.

Leading voices - including celebrated fashion designer and *The Great British Sewing Bee* presenter, Patrick Grant - joined delegates in talks, discussions and workshops to underline the important role designers play in generating solutions for the climate crisis.

**In a collaboration with ethical campaigning clothes brand, Community Clothing, and Manchester Metropolitan University, a display of banners crafted by students repurposing offcut materials was unveiled as part of the festival opening.**

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The Design for Planet Festival is the Design Council's flagship event, forming part of the Design for Planet mission: to galvanise the 1.97 million people working in design across the UK to design our way to a net zero world and beyond.

Launched in 2021, the festival brings together the whole design sector – from AI and digital systems, to fashion and architecture – inspiring action around climate-positive design and showcasing the latest regenerative design innovations. Bringing global attention to the UK's leadership in design and its role in addressing the planetary emergency, in the lead up to the World Design Congress in London 2025.

*“The notion of Manchester as a green city region, the UK's leading green city region, remains at the heart of our vision. If you want a modern economy by 2038, we need better homes for people, better jobs for people, better transport for people, better communities for people. We believe in designing for planet – the more that we put quality green spaces in the heart of our new regeneration, the more attractive we make it a place to live.” – Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester*

*“There's something innately human about trying to make things well. It makes us feel good to produce something of quality and it makes others enjoy the object when they know that it is being created with care. Craft, and teaching craft – textiles, pottery, metal work – is fundamentally important because if we don't know how to make things, if we don't understand quality ourselves, then we cannot make good choices when we buy them.” – Patrick Grant, Founder, Community Clothing*



The UK's third largest green economy – a city with an ambition for inclusive, green growth and a thriving design industry, Manchester's position as the world's first industrialised city

has left the region's heritage deeply intertwined with its architectural and design landscape. In collaboration with Manchester School of Art, the festival's *Planet-Positive Business* theme highlighted and discussed how the design industry can use sustainable product lines and circular design principles to unite efforts with businesses to address the climate crisis.

Key voices within the design sector came together to discuss topics such as retrofit as a catalyst in urban architecture, regenerative growth in design enterprises and how circular design could transform Manchester's fashion scene. Speakers included celebrated fashion designer and *The Great British Sewing Bee* presenter, Patrick Grant; Associate Architect at Purcell, experts in architectural retrofit, Purcell, *Gemma Birchall*; and Creative Director at Faith in Nature and Co-creator of Nature on the Board, *Simeon Rose* – with opening remarks delivered by Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester.

*“Retrofitting isn't a new concept; we've been adapting our buildings throughout history. The greenest buildings are the buildings that already exist.” – Gemma Birchall, Associate Architect, Purcell*

*“We need to do things differently. We need to think about the challenge that our industry and consumption driven culture has resulted in, the challenge for the planet. It's not enough to design for planet, we need to design better for planet and we need to do so collectively.” – Martyn Evans, Director of Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University*

*“One of the key takeaways for us today is that we must take responsibility as designers – we need to be able to speak the language of business, we need to understand the value of our work and to prove the powerful value of design.” – Minnie Moll, Chief Executive, Design Council*



As part of the festival, Manchester Metropolitan University worked with Community Clothing to open a display of banners crafted by students using offcuts from the ethical campaigning clothes brand. Repurposing 40 boxes of surplus-to-requirement fabric from Community Clothing, students from the University's Manchester School of Art were tasked with

designing and creating the banners to be showcased at the Design Council's Design for Planet Festival. With a letter combination spelling 'radical thought space' and individual designs responding to the theme of 'planet positive', the banners were designed and individually pieced together from eclectic fabric offcuts, then pinned and hand stitched.

The Design for Planet Festival was attended by 5,000 delegates from all areas of design, with the online programme streamed to an audience spanning 110 countries around the world.

The conversation will continue at the World Design Congress in London 2025. More details will be released in the new year.

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## ENDS

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## IMAGES

Images can be found [here](#).

### Notes to Editor:

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### About Design Council

The Design Council is the UK's national strategic advisor for design, championing design and its ability to make life better for all. It is an independent and not for profit organisation incorporated by Royal Charter. The Design Council uniquely works across all design sectors and delivers programmes with business, government, public bodies and the third sector. Their work encompasses thought leadership, tools and resources, showcasing excellence, and research to evidence the value of design and influence policy. Their Design for Planet mission was introduced in 2021 to galvanise and support the 1.97 million people who work in the UK's design economy to help achieve net zero and beyond. In September 2025 the Design Council will host the prestigious World Design Congress as a catalytic moment in driving the sector towards designing for planet.

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### About Manchester Metropolitan University

Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, is the second oldest art school in the UK (established in 1838), and one of the most comprehensive. It is housed in purpose built, state-of-the-art, award-winning buildings, and includes the [Department of Art and Performance](#) (including the [Manchester School of Theatre](#)), [Department of Design](#),

[Manchester School of Architecture](#), [Manchester Fashion Institute](#) and the new [School of Digital Arts](#). In addition to Manchester School of Art, the university is also home to [Manchester Poetry Library](#) and the [Manchester Writing School](#), integral to Manchester's status as a UNESCO world [city of literature](#).

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### **About World Design Congress**

The prestigious World Design Congress is coming to London for the first time in over 50 years. The 34th edition will be hosted by the Design Council at the Barbican Centre for 1,000 in-person delegates and global online attendees. The World Design Organization's two-day event takes place every two years, gathering together the international design community and thought leaders from business, research and education to discuss and debate design issues of global importance. The theme for 2025 will be Design for Planet. The effects of climate change are more evident than ever and design has a crucial role to play to help reduce carbon emissions and increase biodiversity. This is a moment to convene and accelerate design's power in building a regenerative future for all.

[Find out more here](#)