

# MANCHESTER AS AN INTERNATIONAL CITY

## CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

It's always hard coming at the end, when everyone's already itching to go - or ask questions - and most of the good lines and boasts have already been taken.

So, I'll spare you mention of Manchester United or perhaps these days Manchester City, and I'll try and give you another perspective. I'll also spare you lots of flashy graphics – though we have them – about the size and globally ambitious nature of my business, the *Manchester* Airports Group. We own and operate Stansted, Bournemouth, East Midlands and the little airport about 10 miles south of here that is the main international gateway for over 20 million people, bringing and taking them from Atlanta to Abu Dhabi, Nice to New York and Hamburg to Hong Kong, our new direct route to China, which is where a lot of my colleagues are as we speak, selling Airport City as a premier international business location. But I'm not going to do all that.

I think we all know that when we compare ourselves to our real peers, not Leeds and Liverpool, but Barcelona, Munich, Amsterdam, we do fall some way short of being as international as we would like, and as international as we once were. Notwithstanding the companies that have been talked about, the massive magnet our universities are for international students, the crowds that fly in to see the football teams I'm not going to mention and of course the Manchester International Festival, this place once demonstrably threw its doors open to the world, begged people to come, hung its hat on the open borders and international trade that made our fortune.

Granted that then mobility was nothing like it is today, but businesses are really just people. Trade is managed by people, tourists are people and good ideas, intellectual property, economic value is all made, maintained, stored, developed or exported by the talented people that dot the world: a few here, but most there, elsewhere, who are increasingly mentioned in hushed tones, as a bit of a problem, that talent, that if we want to be more international – and if we want economic prosperity, growth, thriving businesses we do want to be more international – that talent we need to come and visit, work, live and settle in a much more cosmopolitan city.

My hobby of the last months has been researching my family tree. My great uncle, Jack White, got the Victoria Cross in the first world war, for jumping into the Bosphorus, under fire on both sides by the Ottomans, turning the boat around by its steel rope and swimming the boat, against the current to safety, saving 17 men, of which one was an officer. Today, one of his grandchildren have breathed new life into the old factory he used to manage in Salford, making it one of Manchester's great textile manufacturing success stories. He, and 40 or 50 others of his generation, are part of the positive fabric of this city. Now Jack White, or Jacob Weiss as he was born, was an international, his parents from Russia and Austria.

There are not many people here today who, if you shake your family tree hard enough, won't find someone who came with one of the many waves of Irish immigration, or Scots; Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigration after the war, from the Caribbean, from Kenya. They didn't come with Cathay Pacific, but they came here from Hong Kong, from Cyprus or, going back, with the Vikings, Normans. Even Angles and Saxons were what we'd call today G. Back in antiquity came Romani in

the Middle Ages, and Romans before them. This very spot, the Hilton hotel, was the Roman crossroads that first marked out Manchester as a place.

Arkwright, who invented possibly the greatest discovery to come out of Manchester before Graphene, was born in Preston. Our erstwhile Graphene Nobel prize winners were from rather further afield: the Dutch-Russian Andre Geim and Konstantin Novoselov from Russia. They joined an incredible pantheon of 25 Nobel Prize winners associated with the University of Manchester – of which just 3 were natives.

Manchester gains in every way from this influx of talent and of internationals' energy and industry. So it was that Alan Turing developed software for the first computer, having moved to the city aged 34 and John Dalton came at 26 to undertake his pioneering work on atomic theory. New Zealand-born Ernest Rutherford took that a step further having moved here aged 37, and German-born Charles Hallé arrived aged 29 and founded our Hallé orchestra. Most of the successful cities Manchester needs to emulate and learn from have such fluid populations. 36% of New Yorkers are foreign-born; more than a quarter of Manhattan residents have lived there for fewer than five years, so it is maybe no surprise that New York's now-ex Mayor Bloomberg said that the "single most powerful step" that could be done to stimulate job growth in his city would be encourage more immigration. He wants foreign graduates to be allowed to stay, to remove all caps on skilled workers, to lure foreign entrepreneurs and investors to the city. WE should too. We should want more.

40% of the top 500 US companies (still the richest economy in the world) were started by an immigrant or their child. They together employ more

than ten million people. Every day we're not working on that says Bloomberg, "is a day we inflict a wound on our economy". The reason for their ability to create millions of jobs is simple, they "are dreamers and risk-takers who are driven to succeed". As in New York, so in Manchester, where today more than ever economic growth needs the best and the brightest from around the world, as the decline of the industrial city put an even higher premium on international individuals – migrants, who bring not only hard skills, ideas and capital, other experiences and ways of working and the connections that a successful city needs to other cities across the globe and the people in them, to buy our goods and services and to visit us and spend money here, and work and live and settle.

There is fierce competition for the world's global talent pool and here's a comparative advantage we can have, a marginal influence that can lure people here. We can say we want them to come, we want to be international, we want to hear other languages on the metro, our rich cosmos of over 200 languages spoken in the conurbation. We are proud of that and we will compete hard to make our welcome stronger, our incentives more powerful, the society that receives them more open, more tolerant, more welcoming. There lies a messaging for Manchester. As our peers close, we should open. How much more powerful that message in a world where others are simultaneously muting what we are starting to shout about. That's our international comparative advantage. Let's seize the ground.

Join the battle to bring the world to Manchester. Say we support you, John, in your quest for international students, loudly. Not only for the hundreds of millions of direct economic benefit the city receives from their presence but for the massively disproportionate effect that brighter

students that stay have on economic growth: Silicon Valley was built on spin-outs from Stanford University. Where will Graphene Valley come from ?

And any economist and brand consultant will tell you about path dependency. You must have something genuine to build on. Manchester was built on openness. We have such a weapon to use, ruthlessly. It was the *Manchester* School of Richard Cobden and John Bright that invented the laissez-faire liberalism of free enterprise and free trade that made Manchester one of the first great global cities (original modern if you want). It was no co-incidence that Cobbett settled here, that Engels spend his formative years here.

So it's time to come out. Let's be loud and let's be proud. Let's celebrate what to be international really means and let's roll out the welcome mat, activate that comparative advantage. Build and they will come ? Get them to come and they will build. We led the way through invention and innovation, but the channel through which our prosperity sailed was trade, our openness to the world, which we fought for, it was once our signature policy, and if we made it so again, all the evidence suggests we would benefit. It may be our most powerful tool to make Manchester more competitive in this global economy in which we live.

So, I am delighted to celebrate Manchester as an international city with you, and I hope we might do it a whole lot more in the near future.

Thank you !