

# Press release: Great North Run joins next year's Great Exhibition of the North

The Simplyhealth Great North Run – the world's largest half marathon – will form part of the finale of next year's Great Exhibition of the North, Culture Secretary Karen Bradley announced today.

The mass-participation race, which attracts 57,000 runners a year, will be the centrepiece of the Exhibition's final weekend in September 2018.

The Great Exhibition of the North is set to be the biggest event in England next year. The Exhibition, supported by £5 million of Government funding, will showcase the best of art, culture, design and innovation across the Northern Powerhouse.

Karen Bradley, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

"The Great North Run is a British sporting institution that has raised the profile of Tyneside across the world. It is a fantastic example of how events like these can change a city's culture and I am thrilled it is partnering with the Great Exhibition of the North.

"The race will be the perfect finale to the three month Exhibition, which will celebrate the very best of art, design and innovation across the whole of the North of England and help boost investment and tourism in the region to leave a lasting legacy."

Brendan Foster, founder and chairman of The Great North Run, said:

"2018 will be another milestone year for the Simplyhealth Great North Run as the centrepiece to the Great Exhibition of the North's final weekend.

"The region is at the very heart of mass-participation running and this partnership should help to inspire even more people to get active and take part in running, the most accessible and inclusive sport of all."

Newcastle and Gateshead's world-class venues and unique outdoor spaces are hosting the Exhibition, which will feature a summer of amazing exhibits, inspired technology, and cutting edge culture.

The space suit worn by astronaut Helen Sharman when she visited the Mir Space Station will be on display in the North of England for the first time. It will be exhibited at the Great North Museum alongside a range of star items, including the last piano John Lennon ever played.

Sharman, from Sheffield, was the first British astronaut and the first woman to visit the Mir Space Station in 1991. The 22lb suit she wore after being

selected from over 13,000 applicants to represent the British Juno Mission has never been displayed in the North before. It has been loaned by the Science Museum and will be one of the star exhibits at the Great North Museum next year.

Helen Sharman said:

“It’s fantastic to see that the Sokol space suit from my 1991 journey to the Mir Space Station will feature in the Great Exhibition of the North 2018. I’m delighted that the loan of my space suit by the Science Museum Group will help the Great Exhibition of the North to celebrate the many incredible scientific, technological and cultural contributions made by northerners. I hope that the story of a young person from Sheffield becoming the first Briton in space will inspire young visitors to believe that they too can achieve something completely unexpected.”

[Find out more about the the Exhibition](#)

Also on display will be John Lennon’s Record Plant Piano that featured on Double Fantasy, the last album he released before his death in 1980. The piano, which has also been used by the likes of Bob Dylan, Lou Reed, and Elton John, has been loaned by The Beatles Story visitor attraction in Liverpool.

Martin King of The Beatles Story said:

“Any exhibition of great things from the North of England should reference The Beatles, or at least one of them. John Lennon’s favourite piano from his New York years featured on many of his solo works and, poignantly, was the last instrument he ever played. We hope visitors will look upon it and think about the four lads from Liverpool who are still, 50 years on, considered to be the world’s greatest ever band.”

Sir Gary Verity, Chair of the Board for the Great Exhibition of the North, said:

“The programme highlights we’ve announced today reflect what an exciting event the Great Exhibition of the North will be 2018. We’re telling the story of the North through its people, music, art and inventions.

“Never before have pieces such as Helen Sharman’s space suit and John Lennon’s Record Plant Piano been on display together in one venue. They’ll be joined by many more iconic objects from across the North. We’ll also be celebrating the North of England’s strengths in digital, health and innovation, and how Northern inventions continue to shape the world we live in.

“Today’s announcement is just a flavour of what people can expect when the Great Exhibition of the North takes over the buildings, streets and public spaces in NewcastleGateshead next summer.”

Visitors will be able to discover the story of the North of England through three walking routes themed around art, design and innovation, beginning at

the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Sage Gateshead or Great North Museum: Hancock.

The BALTIC will present the best in Northern contemporary art including a new solo show from Turner Prize nominee Michael Dean. The Newcastle-born artist is renowned for creating sculpture out of words, using everyday materials such as concrete, steel, soil and sand.

The Sage Gateshead will commission an animated, musical adventure called "Seven Bridges", developed by composer Ed Carter and children's television script-writer Katie Simmons. Set along the River Tyne to Dunston Staiths, the film will be presented live with music from the Royal Northern Sinfonia and introduce children to the architectural and engineering landmarks of the region.

The Exhibition will highlight the North's strengths in key sectors, including digital, health innovation and energy, as well as profiling great Northern innovations such as Graphene, which was discovered by scientists working at the University of Manchester in 2004.

It is expected to attract an additional 1.2 million visitors to Newcastle and Gateshead and bring a £184 million boost to the North East, showing how cultural investment can benefit and inspire entire communities.

For more information visit [www.getnorth2018.com](http://www.getnorth2018.com)

-ENDS- Notes to editors:

- Ian Blatchford, Director of the Science Museum Group, said: "It's a pleasure to support the Great Exhibition of the North 2018 with two remarkable objects telling the story of the north's contribution to the global development of space research and railways. Both Stephenson's Rocket and Helen Sharman's spacesuit are hugely significant objects in our collection and with over 150 years between them, they tell the story of the UK's continuing scientific prowess."
- The Great Exhibition of the North was first announced by Government in April 2016 and a competition was launched to secure £5m of government funding to stage the exhibition.
- In October 2016, NewcastleGateshead was selected to host the Great Exhibition of The North; NewcastleGateshead Initiative (NGI) led the bid and is the lead delivery partner for the Exhibition, working closely with colleagues at Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, BALTIC, Sage Gateshead, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and a board chaired by Sir Gary Verity.
- The Newcastle and Gateshead programme for the Great Exhibition of the North 2018 will span three months, opening over the weekend of the 22 June 2018. It will celebrate innovation and creativity across Northern England and will help boost investment and tourism, while leaving a lasting cultural and economic legacy.
- Ambitious plans will use the whole destination as the stage, with a newly commissioned creative programme taking place in a range of venues and outdoor spaces across NewcastleGateshead. Further details on the

content will be announced in the coming months.

- NewcastleGateshead Initiative is a destination management and marketing agency; a public-private partnership supported by Gateshead and Newcastle City Councils, working with around 170 private sector partner organisations. It's mission is to inspire people to visit, and to live, learn work and invest in Newcastle and Gateshead and the wider region.

## The Great Run Company

The Great Run Series is the world's favourite run with over 230,000 participants a year taking part. The events programme stretches across the UK from Aberdeen to Portsmouth offering a full range of distances from 5k through to the half marathon. A full range of online training services are available from Great Run Training. Great Run Local is a series of weekly events staged in our key cities. All designed to provide the support and advice for participants of all abilities to achieve their personal goal.

To find out more about the events and services provided by Great Run and its partners visit [www.greatrun.org](http://www.greatrun.org).