

27 May 2022  
Jodrell Bank, Cheshire, UK

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



# MAJOR NEW ATTRACTION OPENING AT JODRELL BANK

**The First Light Pavilion, Jodrell Bank's highly-anticipated new attraction, is set to open to the public on 4th June 2022.**

The stunning new building is at the heart of the **£21.5m First Light Project**, supported by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund**, which aims to open up the inspirational history of Jodrell Bank by engaging visitors with the fantastic stories of its pioneering scientists and their ground-breaking feats of science and engineering.





The launch of the new Pavilion will firmly establish the **Jodrell Bank** site, which is part of **The University of Manchester**, as a major UK cultural destination, fitting for its uniquely multi-dimensional status as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**, national visitor attraction, cultural icon, and globally significant scientific research facility.

**Eilish McGuinness, CEO of The National Lottery Heritage Fund** said: *"Jodrell Bank is truly a unique heritage site, of national and international importance. The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded £12.5 million so that the site's powerful human stories of curiosity, exploration and discovery could be shared with the public. The stunning new building will have a fantastic impact, delighting and inspiring every visitor."*

**David Rutley, MP for Macclesfield**, added: *"The opening of the First Light Pavilion will be a remarkable moment not just for Cheshire and the North West but for the whole of the UK. Visitors from across the nation will be able to come here and celebrate the pioneering spirit of endeavour that this much-loved site has come to represent."*

The concept for the new building was an original idea developed by **Jodrell Bank's Professors Teresa Anderson and Tim O'Brien** who have passionately spearheaded the project since its inception.

**Professor Teresa Anderson, Director, Jodrell Bank Centre for Engagement** said: *"After years of planning, we are thrilled to finally be able to welcome visitors in to our new First Light Pavilion. This moment will mark a whole new chapter for Jodrell Bank."*

The First Light Pavilion was designed by international architecture firm **HASSELL** to respond sympathetically to its unique surroundings. The striking building takes the form of a grass-topped 76m diameter dome which cleverly mirrors the shape and scale of the landmark Lovell Telescope.

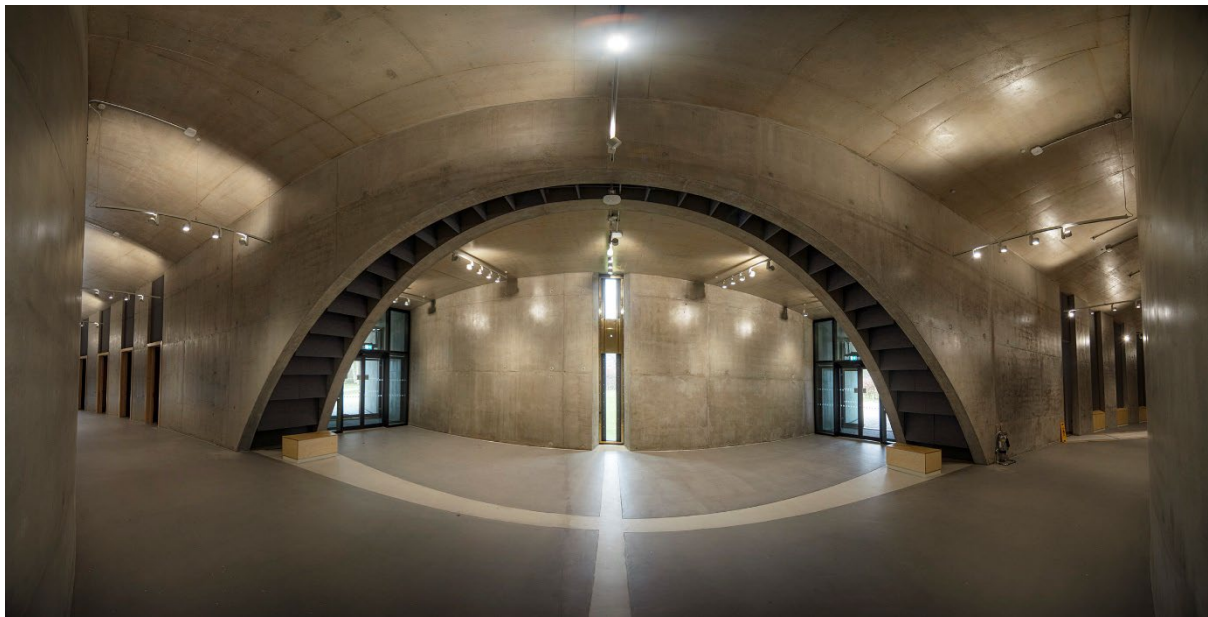
By maintaining an age-old tradition of building structures that express our relationship to the skies above us, the building also makes reference to ancient sites such as Stonehenge and Newgrange, by aligning with the sun via a meridian line cut through the dome's entranceway.

27 May 2022  
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Facing due South, a slim vertical window right in the centre of the building invites the sun to shine through a finger of light that moves across the entrance foyer as the day goes on, acting as a giant sundial.



**Diana Hampson, Director of Estates and Facilities at The University of Manchester** said:  
*"This is a truly visionary build and a wealth of brilliant people have come together to bring it to life. The ambitious design has been expertly realised by the construction team at Kier and we couldn't be more proud. We can't wait to see it open to the public."*

Inside the new Pavilion, visitors will be able to engage with the site's rich heritage in a brand new permanent exhibition. Created by leading exhibition designers **Casson Mann**, **The Story of Jodrell Bank**, will bring to life the fascinating history of the site which dates back to 1945 and the birth of a whole new science: the exploration of the Universe using radio waves instead of visible light. Jodrell Bank's story continues through the height of the Space Race and the tensions of the Cold War, to today's new discoveries and world-leading research.



27 May 2022  
Jodrell Bank, Cheshire, UK

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Exhibition audiences will be able to see a range of fascinating archive materials brought together for the first time including audio, film, dairies, letters, plans, notebooks and photographs. Highlights include a number of personal items belonging to Jodrell Bank's founder, Sir Bernard Lovell including his school report and family photographs. While mostly digitised, physical items will also be on display including a large section of the telescope gear rack.



The actual fabric of the exhibition will make innovative use of parts of the iconic Lovell Telescope. 15 4m high panels taken from the underside of the Telescope during its recent renovation will serve as the backdrop to interactive projected animations created by the award-winning digital media studio **Squint/Opera**.

Far from traditional displays of words, pictures and static objects, this highly interactive exhibition will weave archives and artefacts together with animations, projections and experiences. Visitors will be able to sit back in a deckchair to experience the thrill of a meteor shower, see like a snake, and even try 'driving' a radio telescope. Once visitors have explored this exhilarating space, they'll be tasked with a quiz where successful completion will allow them to set off a projected meteor shower across the breadth of the exhibition.

27 May 2022  
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Meanwhile, visitors will also be able to experience vivid planetarium-style shows in a custom built auditorium, complete with a curved projection screen and an impressive 9 digital projectors.

The state-of-the-art **Space Dome** will offer every visitor an immersive audio-visual experience with a specially commissioned film about the history of Jodrell Bank, narrated by Professor Brian Cox.



27 May 2022  
Jodrell Bank, Cheshire, UK

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And finally, the 130-seat **First Light Café**, complete with a stunning terrace overlooking the **Jodrell Bank Arboretum** and a fresh menu using seasonal and sustainable produce, will also open. Serving breakfasts, lunches, cream teas and more, the cafe will champion a host of local and artisan produce -from Goostrey gooseberries to Cheshire cheese!

All this complements Jodrell Bank's existing visitor offer and audiences will still be able to enjoy the thrill of getting up close to the giant **Lovell Telescope**, experimenting with the science of radio astronomy in the site's current indoor and outdoor exhibits, or exploring the extensive Jodrell Bank Arboretum and browsing the ever-popular **Jodrell Bank Shop**.

**First Light at Jodrell Bank is supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the UK Government (DCMS), The University of Manchester, and a number of kind donors including the Wolfson, Garfield Weston, Denise Coates, and Stavros Niarchos foundations.**

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## IMAGES:

Images are available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1chl8qflznxi5n/AAAKuhmEEG8L3x8OKrIYjjnta?dl=0>

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

### About Jodrell Bank

Founded in 1945, Jodrell Bank's inspirational story includes revolutionary scientific discoveries, amazing feats of engineering, the dawn of the Space Age and the creation of the Grade I listed Lovell Telescope, an icon for British science and engineering. The site is proudly owned by The University of Manchester and is part of The Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics a world-leading science research institute, and The Jodrell Bank Centre for Engagement, a multi award-winning centre for excellence in public participation and engagement with science, culture and heritage. Jodrell Bank was inscribed by UNESCO on the World Heritage Site list in 2019 in recognition of its internationally significance science, heritage and cultural impact.

[www.jodrellbank.net](http://www.jodrellbank.net)

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### **About The University of Manchester**

Jodrell Bank is part of The University of Manchester and helps deliver the University's vision to advance education, knowledge and wisdom for the good of society. The University of Manchester, a member of the prestigious Russell Group, is the UK's largest single-site university with 38,600 students. It has 20 academic schools and hundreds of specialist research groups undertaking pioneering, multi-disciplinary teaching and research of worldwide significance. The University is one of the country's major research institutions, rated fifth in the UK in terms of 'research power' (REF 2014), and has had no fewer than 25 Nobel laureates either work or study there.

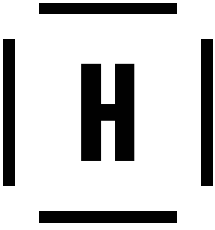
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### **About The National Lottery Heritage Fund**

Using money raised by the National Lottery, we Inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, National Lottery players have raised over £43 billion for projects and more than 635,000 grants have been awarded across the UK.

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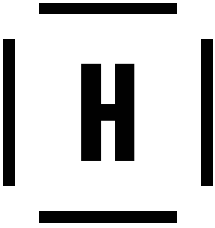
## **FIRST LIGHT PAVILION BY HASSELL AT JODRELL BANK BRINGS SPACE EXPLORATION TO LIFE**

The First Light Pavilion by Hassell will transform the visitor experience at the world-famous Jodrell Bank Observatory, bringing radio astronomy principles to life for the thousands of people who visit the site every year.

The First Light Pavilion is at the centre of the overall regeneration of Jodrell Bank and Jodrell Bank Observatory and forms the focal point within the new site-wide masterplan. Jodrell Bank looked to Hassell to help transform the visitor experience into an inspirational journey of discovery through the site. As the largest and most significant public building, the pavilion is designed to capture the curiosity of space enthusiasts and communicate the scientific adventure, exploration and breadth of discovery within astronomy.

Home to one of the world's largest and most powerful radio telescopes, the iconic Lovell Telescope, Jodrell Bank is at the forefront of using radio waves to explore deepest space. The Observatory, located in the heart of the Cheshire countryside in the North of England, has a world-leading reputation for scientific research, making ground-breaking discoveries in the fields of quasars, pulsars, gravitational lenses and satellite tracking.

In recognition of its internationally significant heritage, science and cultural impact, Jodrell Bank Observatory, which is set within an arboretum landscaped by the first Director of Jodrell Bank, Sir Bernard Lovell, was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2021. It has also been inscribed on the World Heritage List.



The Pavilion has been designed to celebrate both the site's heritage and the very beginnings of radio astronomy and takes the form of a grass-covered dome, integrated into the surrounding landscape. Its circular shape responds to the arboretum and references both the shape and exact size of the 76.2m diameter dish of the Lovell Telescope. Designed to protect and enhance views across the site, the Pavilion sits seamlessly within the natural setting of the arboretum, where visitors can roam freely and provides an elevated viewpoint across the parkland.

In addition to taking inspiration from the site itself, Hassell was influenced by a range of sculptures, structures and natural landforms from around the world, ranging from ancient monuments such as Newgrange in Ireland, to the renowned circular Fuji Kindergarten in Tokyo.

The Pavilion is arranged over a single storey, contained within a concrete shell structure, which when exposed inside the Pavilion interior, offers a sweeping plane of concrete, curving around the exhibition and auditorium core. The Pavilion's entrance is a dramatic curved concrete screen with its axis due south to reflect the arc of the sun. Two separate screen walls guide visitors to the entrance evoking a sense of exploration and discovery. A single glass slot is cut out of the south axis, illuminating a meridian line cast onto the floor within the minimal, contemporary entrance space.

At the heart of the building is the exhibition and the auditorium, encased within a cylindrical 'drum' in the centre of the mound. Hassell has worked closely with exhibition designers, Casson Mann, on the design of the highly immersive circular exhibition space and auditorium. Inside the space, visitors will circulate clockwise through a series of interactive displays which will tell the story of the site, the history of radio astronomy and modern astrophysics, the dawn of the Space Age and the creation of the Lovell Telescope. The exhibition re-uses sections of the original 1957 observation dish from the Lovell Telescope to form the backdrop and projection surfaces, creating a unique visitor experience.

The 150-seat capacity auditorium 'pod' features a screen that follows the shape of the drum shell and curves over the seats to create a dynamic and immersive projection space. The multi-media room houses special exhibitions and caters for night-sky projections, as well as educational lectures and live links to other science facilities. Exiting the drum gives way to a café and circular courtyard, cut into the mound so that its orientation aligns to the First Light's tracking of Russia's Sputnik at 102° from Azimuth. As visitors leave the Pavilion, an historical avenue of trees frames the giant Lovell Telescope in the distance, inviting them to explore further across the site.

Given the location of the building and its potential impact on the existing ecology, environmentally sustainable design forms a key element of the project. It represents an energy efficient scheme, in harmony with its natural surroundings, with a high performing envelope for insulation, air tightness, and surface water attenuation.

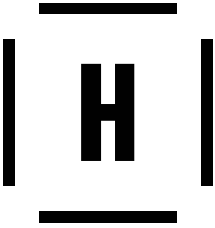
Hassell Principal, Julian Gitsham, comments:

"The completion of the First Light Pavilion marks a new era for Jodrell Bank. It will introduce new generations to the rich history of the site and the wonders of radio astronomy," Julian says.

"The Observatory team has been totally committed to developing the site in a way that is sensitive to its heritage, yet transformational in its future impact. To have been part of this team is an exceptional opportunity for Hassell. We have embraced the challenge to push the boundaries of design to deliver what will undoubtedly be a truly exceptional experience for all who visit this remarkable site."

Hassell recently completed the SKA Global Headquarters, also located at Jodrell Bank. The SKA Organisation is an international science project that operates in the field of radio astronomy and is headquartered at the Observatory.

**ENDS**



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## **ABOUT HASSELL**

Hassell is a leading international design practice with studios in Asia, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Our purpose is to design the world's best places – places people love. We do this by combining strategic insight with creative design to unlock the social, cultural and economic value of places. We collaborate with the best minds in research, industry and design worldwide and we're committed to making a positive impact on communities and our environment. Recent projects include Riverside Green and Park Avenue Central, Central Green Forest Park in Beijing, HSBC in Hong Kong, Sixty Martin Place in Sydney, First Light Pavilion at Jodrell Bank in the UK, Resilient South City in San Francisco, WA Museum Boola Bardip and the new Sydney Metro North West and Melbourne Metro projects.

Website: <https://www.hassellstudio.com>  
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### **First Light Pavilion**

The multi-award-winning First Light Pavilion at Jodrell Bank was delivered for The University of Manchester. The building, which has the largest reinforced concrete dome in Europe, creates a first-class attraction sharing Jodrell Bank's place in the history of astronomy.

### **The Challenge:**

The First Light Pavilion is a Heritage Lottery Fund-supported initiative that aims to conserve and restore the heritage at the Jodrell Bank site and create a spectacular new visitor space to display the history of Radio Astronomy.

Jodrell Bank Observatory is the world's earliest radio astronomy observatory still in existence and was awarded UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 2019. This project will enable its award-winning Discovery Centre to provide visitors with the context for that new status and to share and celebrate the stories of its scientists and engineers, and the pioneering work that has, and continues to be, conducted there.

### **The Solution:**

The main structure of the First Light Pavilion is an in-situ concrete dome which is then buried beneath earth and seeded to appear as a "hill" in the arboretum of the Observatory. The delivery of this project included constructing the first concrete dome in the UK in over 25 years and is one of the largest concrete domes in Europe.

Our Kier project manager brought together experts from several fields to construct a full-scale prototype, allowing for the different phases of the dome construction to be further analysed and tested. Sustainability has been at the forefront of this project including rainwater harvesting from the site cabins for boot and tool washing; re-using and recycling waste wherever possible; removing excess excavation material in the building works to reduce number of vehicle movements; ecology protection including tree protection, the installation of bird and bat boxes and use of scarecrows to keep nesting away from construction areas; and using a local supply of ethically sourced topsoil. Throughout the project Kier monitored and minimised the use of natural resources and carbon footprint reporting and off-setting.

### **The Impact:**

The new pavilion offers new visitor facilities including an exhibition gallery that explains Jodrell Bank's unique and inspiring history, an immersive projection auditorium, and café.

The grass-covered dome shaped building has a number of cutaways, including the Pavilion's entrance built into a curved concrete wall designed to reflect the arc of the sun. Two separate walls that guide visitors in, with a single glass slot cut out at the centre, illuminate a meridian line cast onto the floor at the entrance, echoing a history of astronomy in architecture.

Leaving a local legacy was important on this project including giving site tours to visitors to Jodrell bank, creating local jobs (20), 24 educational engagements, seven meaningful work experience weeks and 87% local procurement.

The project has already won two North West Regional Construction Awards for Innovation on the project and winning the Sub-Regional Project of the Year Award (Cheshire, Wirral and Warrington).



**Celebrating innovative pioneers: Casson Mann's transformational  
new exhibition tells the human story of Jodrell Bank**



***Jodrell Bank Observatory is poised to open a new permanent exhibition by Casson Mann at its UNESCO World Heritage Site in Cheshire, England. On 4th June, 2022, visitors will be able to engage with the fully immersive and interactive exhibition 'The Story of Jodrell Bank', in the new purpose-built First Light Pavilion.***

Part of a £21.5m project to open up the inspirational heritage of Jodrell Bank to a new generation of visitors, the world class exhibition is housed in a new building designed by architects Hassell Studio. Conceived together, the exhibition and pavilion have been designed as one holistic presentation of the inspiring, human



story of the pioneering observatory, home to the Lovell Telescope, the largest steerable radio telescope of its time and an icon of science and engineering.

Immersing visitors within a panoramic array of the Lovell Telescope's original curved steel panels, Casson Mann's exhibition uses object displays, interactive exhibits, projection mapped media and AVs to create a self-directed journey in which each visitor's experience will be unique to them. To bring the curated collection of archival material and interactive exhibits to life, the look and feel of displays are drawn from the working environment of the Post War- and Cold War-era Jodrell Bank, evoking the materiality, colour palette, graphics and finishes of the historic site.

In this environment, visitors will be able to learn about the pioneering individuals who developed a new field of science, discover how they built the world's first radio astronomy site and explore the cosmos by 'driving' the radio telescope that detected quasars, pulsars, black holes, and tracked the rocket path of Sputnik 1 and later space probes.

Casson Mann's relationship with Jodrell Bank began in 2014 when commissioned to undertake the visioning study (HLF Stage1) for the First Light Pavilion. Led by Roger Mann, the team proposed immersing visitors within a panoramic array of enormous curved steel panels, at the core of a circular building of the same 76-metre diameter as the Lovell Telescope.

The panels are the original metal surface of the telescope - the Grade I listed building that gives Jodrell Bank its UNESCO World Heritage status. Working with Jodrell Bank prior to the telescope's refurbishment, Casson Mann saw an opportunity to save and repurpose parts of the original 1957 dish as the fabric of the exhibition: at over 4-metres high, the authentic, heavily patinated panels now become the projection surface which maps both the earthly histories of pioneering Jodrell scientists and the cosmic sphere which they revealed to humankind. This exploded digital canvas of heritage metal connects visitors to the original telescope and shares its stories of extraordinary phenomena beyond human vision.

In 2016, Hassell joined the project and in collaboration with Jodrell Bank and Casson Mann further developed this unique concept for the First Light Pavilion. Complementing Casson Mann's vision for the interior, Hassell designed a building in dialogue with the site's heritage and cosmic mission, taking the form of an inverted dome of the same diameter as the Lovell Telescope dish.

*"It has been a privilege to tell this extraordinary and quintessentially British story of how an amateur astronomer pioneered a new field of science in the Cheshire countryside. Use of the original telescope skin lends the First Light Pavilion particular*

*gravitas, weaving the heritage steel into the fabric of the exhibition in a unique and poetic way. A serious historical artefact that has been salvaged for this remarkable display, the dish fragments reveal not only their own story, but the story of our place in the Universe. The history the dish was witness to now plays out across its surface.” – Roger Mann, co-founder and director*

This highly immersive exhibition weaves archives and artefacts together with animations, projections and interactivity. Visitors can crawl into a black hole, climb into a flying saucer, and see like a snake. They will be empowered to drive the Lovell telescope themselves from a ‘control desk’, and can even launch a ‘digital Sputnik ’ to traverse the length of the exhibition. “The nature of this kind of high-level interactivity means that every single visitor will experience their own completely unique version of the exhibition.” - Jodrell Bank

### **Exhibition focus and content**

A celebration of the social history of Jodrell Bank, ‘The Story of Jodrell Bank ’ at the First Light Pavilion tells how the pioneering work of Sir Bernard Lovell and his team of scientists began in 1940s and continued through the Cold War and Space Race eras of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, and indeed today.

The exhibition is divided into a series of chapters. Brought to life through audio, film, diaries, letters, plans, notebooks and photographs, interactive and projected media, highlights include a number of personal items belonging to Jodrell Bank’s founder, Sir Bernard Lovell and the ‘Blue Book’, detailing the original proposal for the Lovell Telescope. While mostly digital, physical items will also be on display including a large section of the telescope gear rack (itself originally from a First World War battleship, Royal Sovereign) and one of the telescope’s operational computers.

Visitors can explore how Lovell and his team recorded visible cosmic phenomena while sitting in deckchairs at midnight, surrounded by gooseberry bushes in a site originally intended for botanical studies. Cross referring these observations with signals from RAF surplus radar equipment, Jodrell Bank scientists proved the efficacy of this technology and engineered the largest steerable radio telescope in the world at the time.

Ends

### **Team Credits**

Concept, Scenographic Design and Interpretation: Casson Mann

Creative Director: Roger Mann

Lead Design Director: John Pickford

Senior Designer: Justin Wilson

Designer: Eleonora Francica

Interpretation: Kirsty Kelso

Architecture: Hassell Studio

Lighting: DHA Designs

AV Hardware: Electrosonic

AV Software Design: Squint/Opera and ISO Design

Exhibition Contractor: Realm Projects

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[Casson Mann](#) is a leading exhibition, museum and interior design practice with studios in the United Kingdom and France. Transforming space, content and media into beautiful, engaging environments, we work on projects at all stages, from concept to completion. Our services include: museum, exhibition, installations and interior design; interpretive strategies; visioning; masterplanning; concepts and art direction for multimedia. Recent projects include the [Holocaust Galleries](#) at Imperial War Museum London, UK; [Pressoria](#), Aÿ-Champagne, France; [Nottingham Castle](#), UK; [Hintze Hall](#) at Natural History Museum, London, UK; and opening in 2023 Musée National de la Marine, Paris, France.

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