

GM GREEN CITY REGION PARTNERSHIP

Date: 16th OCTOBER 2020
Subject: GREEN SUMMIT 2020 REVIEW
Report of: Director of Environment, Mark Atherton

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide a post Green Summit review, including the organising Team's experience of delivering the first large scale, GMCA virtual summit and provide recommendations to enable future delivery of impactful, virtual events.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Partnership is asked to:

- Note the recommendations and provide feedback on their own experience of this year's virtual event.
- GMCA will commence planning and development of Green Summit 2021 with the assistance of experts on the Communications Challenge Group, in line with the aims of COP26 taking place in November.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Due to the current pandemic, circumstances dictated that the format of year's Green Summit event was to go virtual. Planning had already commenced for a live event to take place in-conjunction with the GM Youth Combined Authority at the Bridgewater Hall on 29th September.
- 1.2 Consequently, it was agreed in June by the Mayor and the GMYCA, to begin planning a four-day virtual event, with the added challenge of the planning team working from home. Four days would ensure that enough time would be dedicated to feedback progress against the Five Year Environment Plan and provide the capacity for all Challenge Group and Five Year Plan Forum partners to be part of this year's event.
- 1.3 The aims of this year's event were to: demonstrate the work achieved by partners from the last 12 months; highlight work to be commenced over the next year and announce important project work which has been successfully funded within the city region.

2. CONTENT PROCESS AND PRODUCERS

- 2.1 It was agreed that each day would feature a Five Year Environment Plan Theme alongside further sessions which would promote the region's environment work on a national and international stage.
- 2.2 The Environment Team were keen to continue planning the event with the involvement of the GM Youth Combined Authority, ensuring the voices of young people were being listened to and that content was relevant and amplified our young ambassadors. Monthly meetings took place with North West Youth Focus to ensure that lines of communication with the YCA remained open during lockdown and that agreed objectives were being actioned.
- 2.3 To ensure that the event featured content which was relevant to delivery of the Five Year Plan and promoted the unpaid work of the many partners who are members of the many Challenge Groups and forums involved in delivering action across the region, the Environment Team invited content contributions via Challenge Group meetings and a proforma 'brief' in July. The team were pleased to report that we were overwhelmed by the generosity of partners in returning such rich content and their additional offers to ensure inclusion in the event.

- 2.4 The event featured 47 external speakers on live Q&A panels and over 40 hours of filmed content from over 100 contributors. Most content is subtitled and will be available for viewing on the event website until the end of December. After this date, relevant content will then be transferred over to the refreshed www.gmgreencity.com website creating a lasting online legacy of the event.
- 2.5 An open invitation was given to partners to put forward sessions and spotlight content which represented the work undertaken. Partner organisations nominated the best people they had to speak on the given topic. The event planning team therefore had less control over the content/speakers than in previous years.
- 2.6 Careful consideration is given every year to reflect the diversity of the region's population. However, it continues to be a challenge to curate an agenda which both truly reflects the hard work of our partners with the rich diversity of our region's population.

3. PROCUREMENT OF DIGITAL EVENT MANAGEMENT COMPANY

- 3.1 Due to size of the event to be undertaken, and the relatively 'new' nature of delivering online events, it was deemed necessary to seek a specialist organisation which could provide the expertise to deliver the hosting and development of the event microsite alongside 'live' features of the Green Summit.
- 3.2 GMCA Communications & Engagement Team procured 'Make Events' during July. This set in place an extremely challenging timeline to procure filmed content from partners in good time for it to be uploaded on to the event website and produce a dynamic programme within agreed dates.

4. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

- 4.1 GMCA Communications and Engagement Team were tasked with developing a communications plan and executing channels of engagement. Two press releases were produced: launching the event and the week prior to the event with a social media assets pack was created.
- 4.2 The Green City Challenge Groups and other partners were called upon to support the event's communications by channelling messages through their networks with Green Summit social media assets. This channel provides the 'trusted' endorsement of the partners supporting the event, as well as access to a wide range of databases and social media networks.

- 4.3 The Green City Region subscribers list comprising over 1300 members, all received an early notification to the event as well as a final email promoting the registration link to the event.
- 4.4 The majority of social media messages regarding the event were channelled by the Environment Team through the @GMGreenCity Twitter account. Due to the pandemic, access to the GMCA @GreaterMcr and Mayor's Twitter accounts was limited. Feedback from the event has been very positive. Throughout the four days we had 5465 visitors to the Summit, 10,077 site sessions and, on social media, Green Summit posts were seen 372,000 times.
- 4.5 The GMCA Engagement Team will be analysing the registrant data to breakdown sectors and demographics of the event's audience and identify areas for targeting for future events.
- 4.6 The Environment Team are planning to continue to utilize the content provided by partners by migrating this across to the planned GMGreenCity.com website and developing a communications plan to highlight themes and relevant content.

5. **SPONSORSHIP**

- 5.1 Additional funding to support the event proved to be a challenge this year. With an unexplored format and limited opportunities to promote a brand, sponsorship revenue was limited to two 'Headline' sponsors: Electricity North West Ltd and the University of Manchester and Royce Institute. Suez UK, kindly sponsored Wednesday, the Waste & Resources and Building day.

6. **GREEN SUMMIT SESSIONS**

- 6.1 All days featured an inspirational keynote address and special workshops produced by the GM YCA. There were also brief updates from the Challenge Group Chairs across all themes. The days concluded with live Question and Answer sessions with questions submitted throughout the day via the event platform and social media ensuring as much two-way engagement as possible.
- 6.2 Monday 21ST September – Natural Environment and climate adaptation
The sessions featured during Monday helped GMCA and stakeholders look ahead to the changes and challenges that the Environment Bill will bring forward – including a keynote speech by Emma Howard Boyd (Chair, Environment Agency). The day showcased some of

the key projects partners are carrying out across the region to engage people across GM in their natural environment. The day concluded with an engaging Q&A with key environmental leaders across GM, hosted by a high-profile weather presenter.

6.3 Tuesday 22nd September – Green Transport and Energy

The day was split between the two themes of green transport and energy and had an additional four external webinars. Two webinars hosted by MIDAS featured the themes, 'Future Mobility – Accelerate your transport innovations in Greater Manchester' and 'Energy Investment Opportunities: Powering Green Energy Solutions in Greater Manchester'. Anthesis and Electricity North West hosted a view from the future and Made to Move hosted 'Where next for cycling in Greater Manchester?'. The keynote address came from Greater Manchester's Cycling and Walking Commissioner, Chris Boardman and the day featured two live Q&As.

6.4 Wednesday 23rd September – Waste & Resources and Building

The day's content was split between the two themes, and commenced with a keynote address from the CEO of Suez Recycling and Recovery UK, John Scanlon. The day featured two MIDAS hosted webinars around the themes 'Sustainable Construction' and 'A Circular Plastics Economy for GM'. The Carbon Literacy Project hosted a webinar 'How to engage your people on climate action' and the Growth Company hosted a panel discussion around 'what a green city region means to SMEs and why should they care'. Showcase project sessions were produced by partners Eunomia, University of Manchester, University of Salford, UKGBC. GM Public Health and Social Care and a new, retrofit project 'Retrofit Get In' which is retraining unemployed theatre workers in retrofitting.

6.5 Thursday 24th September – Build Back Better

The majority of sessions taking place on this day were 'live' and so featured the element of risk and reality of guests joining the zoom sessions on time and coping with any technical issues. The day was launched by a welcome address from the Mayor which was closely followed by our headline speaker Professor Brian Cox, in conversation with the Mayor and a member of the GMYCA. There was a live 'Build Back Better, the journey to a green recovery' hosted by the Mayor and featuring high level speakers from a range of sectors including the UK's High Level Climate Champion, Nigel Topping. Lunchtime launched the GM Local Energy Market project featuring films from all partners and a live Q&A session. The main event for the afternoon was an International Mayors panel, hosted by Deborah Seward, Director of United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) featuring Mayors from Boston, Barcelona, Porto, Oslo and GM.

7. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The lessons learnt so far include:

- 7.1 Joint procurement of a digital event management company ensuring clarity of the brief and plenty of time to ensure information governance compliance (for attendee registrations);
- 7.2 Full visibility and input of the communications and engagement plan – ensure all target audiences are communicated via a variety of channels, online and ‘off-line’ including groups and organisations not usually part of the sector, using social media channels which are not usually used and associated with the combined authority eg. Instagram and TikTok;
- 7.3 Four days proved to be a challenge to produce a full day of dynamic content on limited resources. It was also difficult to ensure consistent engagement levels. A one day event, with a mix of live and pre-recorded content and 20-minute sessions may be more suitable for this media, with most high-profile sessions booked for either first thing in the morning or early evening to ensure a live viewing audience.
- 7.4 Ensure all partners are aware of content format guidelines to ensure compliance with accessibility guidelines and provide time to ensure transcription and subtitling. Review the file sharing platform for submitting content over 15MB – Huddle proved to be time consuming and available by invite only.
- 7.5 Agree and lockdown the programme two weeks prior to the event in order to produce and promote widely in good time.
- 7.6 Continue to seek inspirational environment ambassadors from the region who represent people from a black and minority ethnic background and whose actions and work reflect the aims and aspirations of the 5-Year Environment Plan for Greater Manchester.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 The Partnership is asked to:

- Note the recommendations and provide feedback on their own experience of this year’s virtual event.
- Note that GMCA will commence planning and development of Green Summit 2021 with the assistance of experts on the Communications Challenge Group, in line with the aims of COP26 taking place in November.