

GREATER MANCHESTER GREEN CITY REGION PARTNERSHIP

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Subject: IIPP Update on Greater Manchester’s Mission-Based Approach

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to outline the main discussions and recommendations from a workshop led by UCL’s Institution of Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) on 19 November 2020.

The workshop explored potential areas of learning and improvement that could be taken forward by GMCA’s five Challenge Groups responsible for delivering activity across the city-region to support Greater Manchester’s clean growth mission.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board is recommended to:

- Note the progress made since setting up the Challenge Groups and their facilitation over the last year, being organised digitally from March 2020 in line with Covid-19 restrictions.
- Note the observations and learnings made about the Challenge Groups during the first year of the mission’s implementation that have been analysed by IIPP.
- Note and comment on the recommendations for the Challenge Groups, particularly with regards to dynamic metrics and strengthening the culture of innovation.
- Note and comment on the recommended changes for the mission’s governance structure, particularly with regards to the function of the Green City Region Partnership Board.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Information on mission-oriented innovation policy can be found in:

[Missions: A Beginner's Guide](#)

This report takes learning from the Better Regulation Executive report:

[Alternative policy evaluation frameworks and tools](#)

5-Year Environment Plan for Greater Manchester 2019-2024:

https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1986/5-year-plan-branded_3.pdf

Technical Report for GM IPR: A Mission-Oriented Approach to Clean Growth

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/public-purpose/publications/2019/sep/mission-oriented-approach-clean-growth>

1. BACKGROUND ON THE MISSION-BASED APPROACH

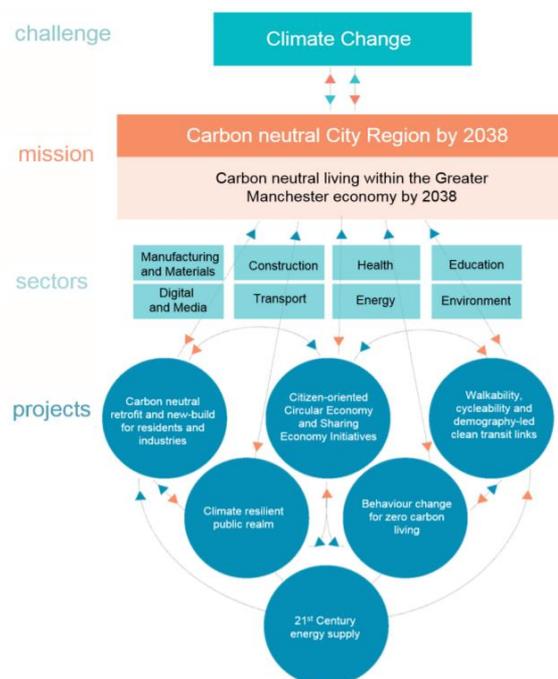
Mission-oriented innovation is a new approach to innovation. It encourages government to take on a market-shaping role, rather than a market-fixing one, and direct the market by transforming the focus of investment towards societal 'grand challenges.' Missions define an ambitious goal at a high level and use this to create a long-term policy landscape that mobilises various actors to engage in bottom-up experimentation across sectors. Whilst missions set the direction for a solution to a grand challenge, they are not created to specify how to achieve a successful outcome. Instead, missions stimulate the development of various solutions intended to meet grand challenges by enabling actors to take risks and experiment together to develop innovative solutions.

There are five criteria for the development of missions that address grand challenges¹:

- Be bold, inspirational with wide societal relevance;
- Set a clear direction – targeted, measurable and time-bound;
- Be ambitious but realistic;
- Encourage cross-disciplinary, cross-sectoral, and cross-actor innovation;
- Involve multiple, bottom-up solutions.

Greater Manchester has taken up mission-oriented innovation for its ambition to become a carbon-neutral city-region by 2038. This mission, and the activities developed to support it, were kick-started by a research collaboration with UCL's Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (IIPP) in 2018, which generated the hypothetical mission roadmap below.

Figure 1: Mission Roadmap for Greater Manchester – Carbon neutral living by 2038



Source: IIPP's technical report for the GMCA Independent Prosperity Review

¹ Mazzucato, M. & Dibb, G. (2019) "Missions: A beginner's guide". Available online at https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/public-purpose/sites/public-purpose/files/iipp_policy_brief_09_missions_a_beginners_guide.pdf

2. METHODOLOGY: MISSION CHALLENGE GROUPS

The mission-based approach's primary delivery mechanism are five 'Challenge Groups,' comprised mainly of external stakeholders with GMCA support. The Challenge Groups are:

- Low Carbon Buildings
- Energy Innovation
- Sustainable Consumption and Production
- Natural Capital
- Communication & Behaviour Change.

Membership in the Challenge Groups is voluntary and a combination of businesses, academics, NGOs & charities, Local Authorities, and representation from GMCA. The Challenge Groups meet quarterly and are charged to liaise with GMCA policy officers to stay up to date, plan and structure work activities, and act as a sounding board to GMCA. Within each Challenge Group are several 'Task and Finish' groups – responsible for delivering initiatives that contribute towards fulfilling the group's objectives. The Task and Finish groups may be relevant to more than one Challenge Group and are intended to have a finite duration, concentrating activity to support an acute objective and adjourn once that defined objective has been met.

Through the 'Practice-based learning in Cities for Climate Action' (PELICAN) project, IIPP has observed the Challenge Groups over the previous year. We have analysed how the Challenge Groups have tried to co-create innovation through bottom-up experimentation and identified key aspects and activities of the groups that may become obstacles to progress if unaddressed. Whilst some of the Task and Finish groups have been working to deliver short-term projects, much of what the Challenge Groups were envisioned to do is support medium and long-term innovation activities that could support non-linearity, feedback loops and tipping points that, if achieved, will accelerate advancements towards the mission. To support the Challenge Groups to succeed in meeting this objective, we produced two *Observation Reports* as 'critical friends' to analyse Challenge Group activities and offer recommendations for how the groups could be improved.

3. WORKSHOP SUMMARY & OUTCOMES

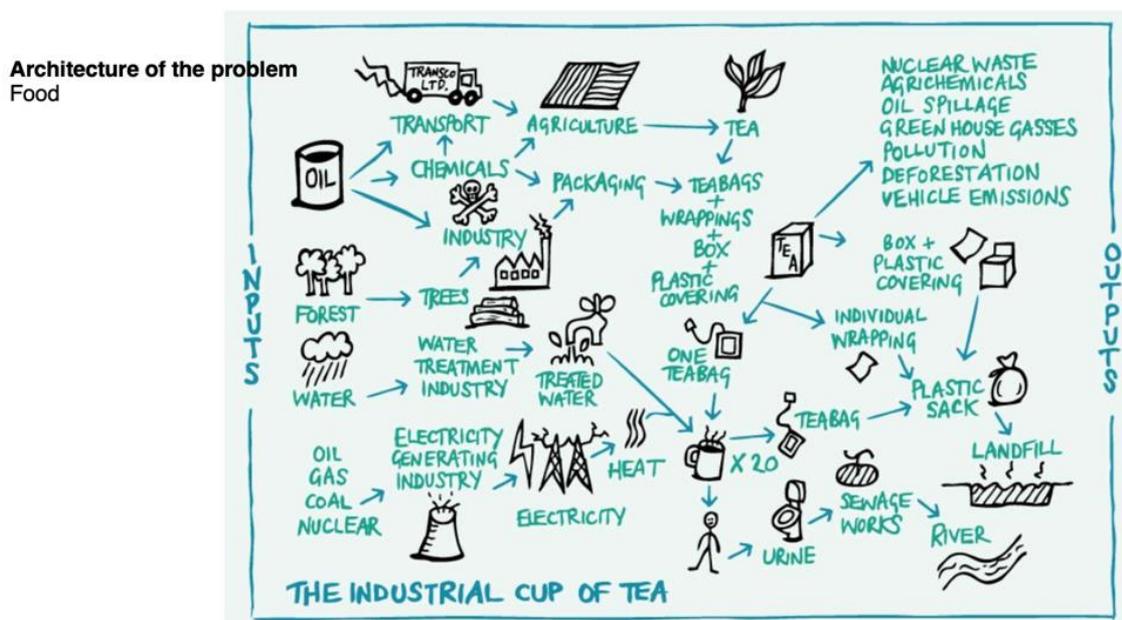
Following our observation reports of the Challenge Groups over this last year, IIPP facilitated a workshop on 19 November with the chairs and co-chairs of the Challenge Groups and GMCA policy officers represented in the groups. This workshop was designed to reflect on the Challenge Groups' activities in the first year of the mission's implementation phase and for IIPP to provide recommendations for how the groups might take different approaches in the future to improve their effectiveness. The interactive workshop focused on exploring three main themes: metrics, stakeholders, and collaborative problem-solving.

Metrics: The workshop's metrics portion focused on exploring what types of tracking measures and key preference indicators are appropriate for capturing and evaluating progress on the mission.

First, IIPP shared learnings from a recent study they produced for the Department of Business, Environment and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on '[Alternative policy evaluation frameworks and tools](#).' The most relevant finding from this study was examining the difference between utilising static efficiency quantitative metrics to track progress on the mission versus developing dynamic appraisal and evaluation tools to monitor qualitative advancement. At present, the Challenge Groups predominately use quantitative key performance indicators to monitor progress towards achieving the mission. These indicators are not well suited to monitor missions because they cannot assess non-linear processes; there may not be appropriate static metrics that can meaningfully evaluate the wholistic nature of the carbon-neutral living mission; and it can be difficult to aggregate relevant data across organisations. IIPP shared examples of projects that developed dynamic evaluation tools, such as the Swedish Innovation Agency Vinnova's project on [developing a sustainable food system for school meals](#) through shifting supply chains through the leverage point of school meals (see Figure 2, which takes the same approach to systems change through tea bags). The session discussed the need to make metrics visual, and bring the narrative of achieving or missing metrics into the lives of citizens in Greater Manchester.

During the discussion, several workshop participants echoed the importance of creating dynamic appraisal and evaluation tools. One participant stated, “my worry...is that we have no way of knowing whether we’re on track with the mission or not...we’ve got to make sure that the theory of change is right.”. Whilst there is a need to measure the Challenge Group’s project delivery activities, the current mission metrics are not equipped to evaluate long-term problem-solving activities that support the innovation chain needed to meet the ‘emissions gap’ highlighted in the 5-Year Environment Plan. There was also discussion of the scope of activity that could be captured under the mission metrics – and a suggestion that all activity taking place in GM in the direction of the mission should be included as a mission achievement – “let’s talk about the leverage of what’s been done in the project...and in the wider economy...and say ‘Look at what Manchester has achieved’”.

Figure 2. Reshaping the food system, source Dan Hill, Vinnova



Stakeholders: During the stakeholders discussion, GMCA team and IIPP explored the systemic characteristic of Greater Manchester’s clean growth mission that requires proactively engaging with a broad range of stakeholders throughout the city-region. GMCA has successfully activated many key stakeholders in the mission already through the Challenge Groups that they had existing relationships with. For the mission to evoke impact across Greater Manchester’s economy, the Challenge Groups will need to begin enlisting new stakeholders in the mission. New stakeholders could be designed to reflect an inclusive and diverse group of representatives, as well as including knowledge from across the ‘innovation chain’ that the Challenge Groups are aiming to impact, and there was a suggestion to expand the use of personas that has been going on in the GMCA waste and communications team to think about missions. A participant expounded on this sharing, “if we were to break down the whole picture of what we’re trying to achieve...we could reach a wider footprint if they (the Challenge Group partners) were actively bringing their networks with them...That could help us then engage other actors who have the ability to make bigger change happen.”.

Figure 3. Example of persona use by the United Nations Development Programme in Southern Thailand²



Collaborative problem-solving: Finally, the workshop explored the concept of collaborative problem-solving and its importance for implementing the mission. This part of the workshop examined whether the governance and institutional framework are currently sufficient to achieve the mission’s ambition. Delivering Greater Manchester’s clean growth mission and becoming carbon neutral by 2038 requires risk-taking and bold experimentation to meet the ‘innovation gap’ highlighted in the 5-Year Environment Plan. The Challenge Groups have, in part, been designed to facilitate this directed innovation to take place through collaborative problem-solving activities. IIPP diagnosed that “initially...there was very much a sense

² Available at: <https://medium.com/@undp.ric/informing-the-new-normal-what-we-have-learned-from-listening-to-southern-thai-communities-cdf8ecc2753e>

(within the Challenge Groups) of experimentation and ...a reconfiguring of how different organisations within the groups can work together.” As the Challenge Groups move into the new year, there a need to ensure they retain their earlier dynamic experimental culture to support problem-solving whilst simultaneously supporting delivery.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on IIPP’s analysis of the Challenge Groups discussed at the 19 November workshop, we recommend the following actions be considered:

The Challenge Groups take active measures to retain their creative, dynamic characteristic needed to address the scale of the, whilst delivering actions that reduce emissions:

- Capacity is required to support the robust innovation chain needed to address the emissions gap. “You need to innovate and try new things at the same time as scaling up those things that you know already exist.” The Challenge Groups could evaluate their own actions across a ‘twin track’, ensuring they are focusing on present impact and the long-term innovation activities that will enable the required scale of impact.
- Adopt dynamic metrics that can track the progress of non-linear slow problem-solving activities needed for innovation. “The Challenge Groups work in situations of inherent uncertainty.” Evaluating progress with the right metrics can help carry out tasks in this environment and register the risks involved with unpredictability.
- Utilise qualitative, dynamic metrics to “tell a good story...that everybody inside the government and wider stakeholder groups can get behind and understand what’s going on.” This can also help ‘build a movement’, bringing non-expert actors into the delivery of the mission.

The Green City Region Partnership Board take on a more active, challenging role within the mission’s governance structure:

- The Green City Region Partnership Board could adopt a more critical relationship with the Challenge Groups, scrutinising their decision-making and actions to ensure the direction of the Challenges Groups are aligned with the mission and enable policy change. Additionally, the Challenge Groups and the Green City Region Partnership Board could engage each other more collaboratively, “bringing problems to each other” and mutually supporting action across the hierarchical boundaries.
- The Green City Region Partnership Board could take the voice of a high-level ‘critical friend’, being “more challenging of officers but also of each other, calling out inaction where performance isn’t good enough, and telling the politicians in the room what they need to be championing” to support systemic policy change.
- The Green City Region Partnership Board could formalise its relationship with the Challenge Groups and other bodies within the mission governance structure by agreeing a “ways of working or formal agreements document” that transparently encourages a culture of “holding each other to account” and “challenging when we think work is going in the wrong direction or needs correction.” This formal document would support a shift in mindset, enabling Green City Region Partnership Board members to take on an approach of friendly critique and constructive challenge.