

GM GREEN CITY REGION PARTNERSHIP

Date: 12th March

Subject: CHALLENGE GROUP PROGRESS UPDATE

Report of: Mark Atherton on behalf of Challenge Group Chairs

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The purpose of this report is to outline the progress made by the 5 Year Environment Plan (5YEP) Challenge Groups in developing their key priorities through Task and Finish Action groups.

The accompanying presentation provides an updated overview of the Challenge Group priorities and how these are being delivered through Task and Finish Groups.

At their last meeting, many of the Challenge Groups reflected on the work of the previous twelve months and began to develop thinking about priorities for 2021/22. An updated work programme for the Challenge Groups will therefore be presented at the July Partnership meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Partnership is asked to:

- Note the progress in developing the Mission Based Approach and the associated Challenge Groups and Task and Finish Groups activity.
- Note that updated work programmes will be presented to the July Partnership meeting.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Mark Atherton: mark.atherton@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

1.0 BACKGROUND

The 5YEP Challenge Groups have now all met at least six times and have established key priority areas to be addressed by the Task and Finish Groups. Their progress is being supported and monitored under the Mission Based Approach, as set out in the Five Year Environment Plan and Local Industrial Strategy.

2.0 COMMUNICATIONS AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

- **Key Messages** group has discussed how partners in the Green City Region can “speak with one voice” when communicating action which supports the Five Year Plan. The symbol of the Green Bee was agreed as the most appealing symbol of the Green City Region to businesses and individual carbon generators and we now have permission to use the symbol from Manchester City Council.
- **Case Studies** group will ensure we have powerful stories which appeal to our target audiences. Challenge group members have started to feed in case studies and a framework is being agreed for recording and collation. Partner case studies will be featured on the new Green City Region website and represent the broad range of environmental work carried out across the region making an impact on the Five Year Environment Plan.
- **Talent and Ambassadors** led by the BBC and GMCA has identified influential spokespeople who will speak on behalf of and be supportive of GM Green City work. Care is being taken to ensure that spokespeople reflect the diversity of the region and feature people who have an appeal across all audiences and sectors.
- **Behaviour Change** led by the Carbon Literacy Project, has looked at best examples of behavior change in GM, identified key gaps and looked at target groups. Carbon Literacy training, focused around communicating the climate emergency, is pending for all Communications Challenge Group members. A bespoke piece of work, with key stakeholders has commenced on citizen engagement and sustainable lifestyles to develop a work programme for the next year.
- **Covid-19 key messages** sub group has been set up to discuss some of the urgent messaging regarding Covid-19 recovery and how the messaging will be executed.
- **Green Summit** sub group to be established to review the 2020 summit and start preparation for the next green summit in 2021.

This group is now looking forward to the following year and it’s priorities after successfully development of branding and key messages. The group will focus on amplifying messages that come out of the other challenge groups and creating specific campaigns.

3.0 ENERGY INNOVATION

- **Energy Transition Region (ETR) and Energy Innovation Agency**, a partnership between the three universities, SSE and Bruntwood has formed a steering group which, having agreed a governance structure, is developing suitable Terms of Reference and a collaboration Agreement acceptable to all parties. Role profiles for the two senior posts have been agreed, and subject job evaluation results will enable recruitment to commence early March. In addition, work has started on the messaging, USP development and value propositions to support the Business Development Lead once recruited.
- **Solar PV activity across the region.** As previously reported, we are aware of 7+MW of planned solar PV installs through the Energy Systems Catapult ERDF funded project.. The GM Solar Together homeowner project has now completing the final installs, with cr1MW of generation and storage capacity installed leveraging circa £1.1m. A further 8.2MW of solar PV is proposed under the GMCA-led Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme project (see 4.0 for further details). It is also understood that two GM schemes have applied for Rural Community Energy Funding to install circa 6MW of Solar in the city region. A paper has been prepared outlining the proposed approach to the development and delivery of GM-wide low carbon energy generation pipeline and route to market. It will be presented at the Decarbonising of Public Estate and the Programme Delivery Executive – 5YEP meetings in March.

4.0 LOW CARBON BUILDINGS

- **Retrofit Accelerator (RFA)** - a discussion paper outlining the approach and required work packages has been presented internally within GMCA obtaining approval to commission a study into consumer insight focused on demographics, complimenting current stock condition modeling. This work has identified 3 market segments, who together represent 31% of GM homeowners, who would be open to messaging and taking action on retrofit. It also gives insights into which messaging will have most impact in which groups. Work has now started on the establishment of a procured vehicle which will exercise the functionality of the RFA, and it is envisaged that the relevant discussion paper will be completed and reviewed by the end of March.
- **Skills Group** - led by GMCA and supported by a number of partners has developed a GM Retrofit Skills Action Plan. The plan sets out an informed short, medium, and long terms skills plan, matching skills support with employment demand, which supports the development of retrofit skills at the correct scale to ensure employment opportunities are achieved. Using ESF Skills for Growth the GMCA Work and Skills Team have started to implement Short Term Skills Action Plan, which is key to developing high quality retrofit skills, with progress taking place in the following areas:
 - A programme of Retrofit training worth approximately £1.5 million, funded through ESF Skills for Growth will be commissioned imminently. This package will offer a variety of training focused on upskilling existing trades and professionals within employers and has been developed to respond to the current scale of skills need regionally.
 - This commission will also pilot CPD for skills providers who lead construction provision within their institutions. This CPD will focus on upskilling these skills

providers in retrofit but also to carry out pilot projects to embed retrofit skills delivery within curriculums and carry out a feasibility study for their organisation to understand the capital resource they would need to deliver new content and training for retrofit skills at scale.

The above activity is part of a long-term plan to grow retrofit skills alongside the market. Intelligence from this initial skills commission will inform future retrofit skills development and feed directly into the Retrofit Accelerator.

- **Public Buildings** led by GMCA a consortium of 15 partners (10 Districts, GMP, GMFRS, TFGM, MFT and RNCM) submitted a bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation scheme for £80.7m grant funding of public sector building energy retrofit measures (energy efficiency and generation). A formal Section 31 grant offer from BEIS for very close to the full allocation was received at the end of February. Procurement activity is now being mobilized with a view to all schemes being delivered by end of Sept 2021. This was the largest bid into the fund and its success demonstrates the strength in GM collaboration. In parallel to this, £450k of grant funding from the Low Carbon Skills Fund has also been secured to support delivery of the PSDS projects and the production of Building Energy Decarbonisation Plans, which will be used to map a pathway to expedite decarbonization of the wider public sector estate.

5.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Implementation of the GM Tree & Woodland Strategy (All our Trees)** led by City of Trees - The Trees for Climate initiative is a 5-year government funded programme of tree planting. In December, City of Trees had confirmation of Defra to deliver the first year of this activity and a programme of c. 90ha of tree planting for 2020/21 is underway. Following completion of year 1 of planting in the spring, City of Trees will engage with partners on sites for year 2 and beyond and seek confirmation of future funding allocation from Defra. If approved, this will allow a further scaling up of tree planting activity in Greater Manchester that would exceed City of Trees' current target of planting 1m trees over the lifetime of the 5 Year Environment Plan.
- **DEFRA GM Peatland Restoration Pilot** led by Natural England and GMCA – final report on the GM Peat Pilot Report has been produced and will be incorporated into work by Defra on its England Peat Strategy and Lowland Peat Taskforce. *With the approval of the final report, this Task and Finish Group has been closed.*
- **Natural Course** – work is underway on planning Phase 4 of the project, which begins in the autumn. The second round of consultation for improvement projects on the River Irk is underway and river habitat surveys of Whittle Brook are being carried out. Work is also underway to identify a new supplier for the GM study of micro-plastic contamination. On embedding a natural capital approach, TEP have now been commissioned to develop a natural capital user guide for key stakeholders and will be a one stop shop for all resources produced to date including the natural capital accounts and ecosystem services opportunity mapping.

- **Support local authorities in implementing Biodiversity Net Gain** – A webinar was held in February focused on BNG in Greater Manchester and had over 250+ attendees from local authorities, developers and other interested stakeholders. To follow that up, bespoke CIEEM accredited training is being delivered for local authority planners, concluding in March, to raise awareness and knowledge of BNG and its implications for Greater Manchester. GM BNG Guidance has also been updated and issued. The GMCA is also seeking to commission work to understand how it can support local authorities and partners to bring forward proposals to deliver off-site BNG.
- **Nature Recovery Network** – since the confirmation of the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot in August, significant work has been carried out to map existing habitat and species distributions across GM and to engage with a wide range of stakeholders and members of the public on their priorities for nature's recovery. This is currently being brought together into a prioritised set of outcomes, which will then be mapped, with all this information being brought together into a final strategy by the summer.
- **GM Environment Fund** – partners across GM, working through the umbrella of the GMEF, were successful in securing £1.8m of funding from the first round of Defra's Green Recovery Challenge Fund in December. In addition, Suez is putting its £200,000/year social value contributions through the GMEF. Both of these, though in particular the Green Recovery Challenge Fund, will provide for resource to develop the GMEF further and attract further funding. Focus is currently being placed on a bid to the Environment Agency's Investment Readiness Fund in order to support taking forward pilot investment models around habitat banking and carbon offsetting. Work on governance and communications (including a website) is also ongoing.
- **IGNITION** – IGNITION partners have been working with Jacobs, Finance Earth and United Utilities on a revised business model. It was found that a model relying solely on surface water charging reductions was not sufficiently robust to be able to attract private investment due to the regulatory constraints on United Utilities being able to guarantee savings for a sufficient period of time to provide payback. A revised model, focusing on areas of most concern for United Utilities as regards surface water flood risk, is being pursued and a shortlist of sites is being arrived at and prioritized for ground-truthing by Groundwork. A comprehensive review of future funding streams took place in September, with an action planning session taking place in October to focus on neighbourhood scale SuDS, parks and green spaces and green roofs. At the University of Salford, Phase 1 of the Living Lab was launched in October. Work on Phase 2 (large-scale NBS) has started and is due to be launched in the summer.
- **Environment Vision** – Natural Environment Toolkit Launched in the run up to the Green Summit and a review session was held with partners on 26th January 2021. Additional toolkit resources have been created by Creative Concern as part of the Defra Peat Pilot. A short survey will be carried out to understand how residents and businesses view the toolkit and what actions they will take from it. GMCA is also linking up with Marketing Manchester to discuss sharing case studies, storytelling around the natural environment and furthering reach of campaign on the Visit Manchester website. *This activity has been incorporated into business-as-usual work, so this Task and Finish Group has been closed.*

- **Social prescribing** – following a successful bid led by the GM Health and Social Care Partnership, GM was selected as one of 7 national pilots to trial the delivery of green social prescribing over the next two years. £500,000 of new funding was secured and will include delivery of 3-5 locality trials together with an overarching programme of support to scale up and share the learning. A call for submission of projects to deliver on this closed in February and proposals will now be analysed.

6.0 SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

- **Procurement policy drivers/interventions** is working to identify carbon hotspots, priority sectors and contracts to target. It will look at `redlines` to include in contracts e.g. carbon neutral travel to work, local supply chain and good employment charter. A study is about to commence on how local levers can be used to encourage people and businesses to take more environmentally sustainable actions in Greater Manchester. This includes all local levers including legal, regulatory and policy control and could include procurement protocols, local authority taxes and levies and the use of `soft power`.
- **Public Sector Plastic Pact** will develop a common approach for targeting single use plastic consumables and plastic packaging across GM public sector and hence, remove inconsistency, and inform the development of authority led plastics strategies across GM. A draft report with recommendations has been produced and will be considered at a Heads of Procurement meeting in the near future.
- **Food** - work to look at supply chains is about to commence with STaR and AGMA Procurement to explore procurement avenues within catering and schools and work has resumed to create a Greater Manchester Food Strategy.
- **Circular Economy resource flow mapping** has commenced with University of Manchester to capture material flows within the City Region.

7.05 YEP IMPLEMENTATION FORUM

- **Review of Mission Based Approach activity** – received presentations and provided feedback on:
 - Low carbon and natural environment funding bids
 - Low carbon skills action plan
 - UCL- IIPP review of Challenge Groups
- **Green Summit and COP26** – provided feedback on the Green Summit/COP26 including content, structure and format.