



Greater Manchester Green City Region Partnership

Date: 27th January 2022

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.

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 for 22/23 will be presented to the July 22 Partnership meeting (AGM).

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1.0 BACKGROUND

The 5YEP Challenge Groups have now all met at least eight 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

Whilst the Group hasn't met since the last meeting, the Group will be focusing on the following areas:

- **Key Messages** – This will continue to be an ongoing area of development for the group. Once agreed a schedule of social media promotions will be produced. These messages will also compliment the messages within the Green Cities website.
- **Behaviour Change** – The bespoke piece of work continues to be developed with key stakeholders which focuses on citizen engagement and sustainable lifestyles to develop a work programme for the next year.
- **Green Summit 2022** – Work has already commenced, led by GMCA, to develop the 5th Green Summit which will be supported by the Communications Challenge Group to ensure the event reflects the Green City Region.

3.0 ENERGY INNOVATION

- **Energy Innovation Agency**

The Energy Innovation Agency which comprises of the three universities, SSE, Hitachi EU, The Growth Company and Bruntwood has ratified the Consortia Agreement, Terms of Reference and nominated Board member representation. On an interim bases the Board will be chaired by Peter Emery CEO of Electricity North West. The Director and first Business Development Manager are now in post and

are developing the business plan with the aim of a launch event in April, following the inaugural partner board meeting in March.

- **Trafford Energy Park**

Enabling works have been completed on site to establish the development platform for the Cryobattery and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Projects. It is intended that full construction for the Cryobattery commence in Q1 2022 and for the BESS in Q3 2022. The planning process for the Trafford Green Hydrogen scheme continues with final determination due imminently. During Q4 2021, Carlton Power responded to the government consultation on the UK Hydrogen Strategy, the final version of this is due for publication in Q1 2022 and will establish the criteria and support mechanisms for Hydrogen projects. In addition, advanced discussions have taken place to put in place Letters of Intent (LoI) with potential hydrogen offtakers with Lols to be signed in Q1 2022.

- **Hydrogen Innovation**

The Hydrogen innovation strand has culminated into a series of propositions.

Innovation GM – A proposal to develop a translational research facility by working with businesses based on market demand study in progress by ManMet Uni. The facility will be focused on working at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4-9. Various locations across Greater Manchester are currently being appraised, the project will be aligned to the Innovation GM vision. The purpose is to create a national centre focused on fuel cell and Electrolyser industrialisation.

Task and Finish Group – At GMCA level we have a cohort of businesses now focused on hydrogen and fuel cell deployment across the region. The local green hydrogen GMCA vision was shown at the Energy Innovation Challenge group which was received positively and will be shared as a final draft to support the task and finish group which will start looking at regional projects and impacts to 2038.

Strategy and Policy – The GMCA approved strategy will be reissued with amendments agreed by TfGM and GMCA to support national hydrogen strategy ambitions.

- **Go Neutral**

GMCA's smart energy call-off framework has been tendered and is currently in a standstill period. Assuming no challenge we will finalise the award to successful bidders this month with a view to the framework being ready for use by February 2022. The focus of the framework is solar PV and battery storage, with options for electric vehicle charging infrastructure under council funded or third party funded options. Work is ongoing with the districts to prepare portfolios of council-owned assets to take to the framework from Feb '22 onwards.

4.0 LOW CARBON BUILDINGS

- **Retrofit GM**

The Task force has now completed the development of the Retrofit GM Action Plan – Accelerating the renovation of Greater Manchester Buildings. This is currently with designers prior to publication. The report includes a comprehensive implementation plan with almost 100-time limited actions to drive forward this significant opportunity for the City Region. These actions are being driven forward by the relevant subgroups looking at Skills, Finance and Delivery (Buildings and Energy Innovation Challenge Groups). Work is ongoing to develop task and finish groups to own and drive forward the specific workstreams under these three headline pillars.

- **Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme**

Phase 1A of the scheme was completed on 31 August 2021. Over £2m was invested on energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures for 116 privately owned and 212 socially rented homes in Greater Manchester. This includes 132 External Wall Insulation, 101 Solar PV, 36 Air Source Heat Pump and 63 Window and Door installations.

We are now delivering Phase 1B and Phase 2 of the scheme until 30 June 2022. 52,220 letters have been sent to eligible homes across Greater Manchester in Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) bands E, F and G occupied by residents with a combined gross annual household income of less than £30,000. This has resulted

in 2,542 leads that are currently being processed. 909 Retrofit Assessments have been completed and a further 793 are booked. 43 installations have been completed with a further 33 booked.

- **Low Carbon Skills**

Skills and Labour Market Intelligence Report for Green Economy due for release end of January 2022. The research has been assembled after extensive employer engagement and research into the key areas of skills needs in the Green Economy. It is categorized along the lines of: Low Carbon Buildings, Transport, Energy, Waste, and Natural Environment. The report will give several recommendations for the skills system, including GMCA as commissioners, skills providers in both Further Education and Higher Education, and employers in the sector. The research will be used as a basis for local skills policy for the Green Economy, ensuring GM's workforce is equipped with the right qualifications and skills to work in key Net Zero industries.

- **Public Buildings**

The delivery phase of the GM Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme is nearing completion with a deadline of 31st March 2022. The funder has confirmed they are willing to allow a discretionary extension of time for those projects that cannot complete by 31st March 2022, but no later than, 30th June 2022. There is currently an estimated £6m underspend on the programme which is currently planned to be spent on additional battery storage. Work is underway with partners to identify suitable projects.

GMCA coordinated two combined partner bids into Phase 3 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. The single year bid for circa £21.5m project value (£17m grant) is currently under technical review by Salix and we are responding to clarifications. A decision on the application is expected by Feb '22. The multi-year bid for circa £9m project value (£3m grant) is due to undergo technical assessment.

- **Heat Pump Accelerator**

The HP Task and Finish Group has developed a Myth Buster which looks to address the key myths and misunderstandings about Air Source Heat Pumps. This document has sought input from the group, LA Development Control and Environmental Health Officers as well as the wider Energy Innovation Challenge Group. Work continues to hone this document before publication on the GMCA's web site (as an independent source of information). In addition, GMCA officers are engaged with planning and environmental health colleagues to support what is likely to be a significant increase in the deployment of the technology over the coming months as the new grant schemes become established.

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. CoT has been working with the 10 GM districts and other landowners to develop this season's Trees for Climate planting programme. The pipeline for 2021/22 currently totals 70.45 gross hectares, approximately 93,500 trees. Since the easing of Covid restrictions volunteer engagement has started to increase and this will ramp up significantly with this winter's planting programme. As part of this, the Mayor launched GM's status as a Champion City under the Queen's Green Canopy initiative in December.
- **Natural Course** – A Phase 3 (April 2019-September 2021) Interim Report was submitted to the EU on Monday 10th January 2022 and work has now started on Phase 4 (which runs to the end of March 2024). A request for quotation for consultants to survey invasive non-native species (INNS) in the River Irwell catchment will be posted on the GMCA procurement portal in late January/early February 2022. Draft designs have been produced for habitat improvement and flood risk mitigation works at the Stanney Brook site of biological importance (SBI) in Rochdale. The annual Winter Wetland Bird Blitz (survey) will take place on the River Irwell on Sunday 23rd January 2022. Field sample locations for a study of

micro plastic contamination of GM rivers have been agreed with Manchester and Rochdale Councils.

- **Support local authorities in implementing Biodiversity Net Gain** – Defra consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain published and GMCA will be engaging with key stakeholders in preparing a response. Biodiversity Net Gain Off Site Needs and Supply Assessment proposals agreed with GMEU and due for sign off by Natural Course PMO. Biodiversity Net Gain update paper presented to Directors of Place meeting on 11th January highlighting key issues for delivery with a follow up report to be considered by Green City Region Board on 7th February followed by GMCA in March. Joint Biodiversity Net Gain Implementation Team and Local Authority Biodiversity Net Gain Implementation Group meetings continue to be held on a regular basis.
- **Nature Recovery Network** – The draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy produced as part of the GM pilot was published in October, with mapping outputs already available on Mapping GM and from GMEU. GMCA responded to the national LNRS LNRS consultation and discussions have continued with Defra/Natural England to discuss GMCA's role as Responsible Authority under roll-out of the policy later this year.
- **GM Environment Fund** – Green Recovery Challenge Fund Projects progressing well and preparing for evaluation/ end of project reports. Brochure of 'Shovel-Ready' projects is at draft stage and due to be finalised by Feb 2022 so that this can then be used to secure further legacy funding. Suez R4GM grant funding administration continues and preparation for launch of round 2 has started. Mayors Green Spaces Fund development in progress aiming to launch in April 2022. Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund Round 1 pilot continue to be delivered to secure future investment opportunities at Chat Moss in Salford for delivery of carbon credits biodiversity net gain unit. NEIRF Round 2 bid being developed in collaboration with Cheshire Wildlife Trust to bring forward additional habitat bank proposals, BNG delivery mechanism and capacity.

- **IGNITION** – the project is preparing for its conclusion at the end of April. Activity is focusing on:
 - Finalising a business case for a pipeline of SuDS retrofit projects at public estate sites in GM, co-funded by a range of organisations with an interest in reducing surface and sewer flood risk and delivering wider benefits. This would provide a next step in seeking to upscale and mainstream investment in SuDS retrofit.
 - Finalising work to develop the investment case for other nature-based solutions interventions, including:
 - SuDS retrofit in the public realm for flood risk reduction.
 - Investing to save via green roofs.
 - Green regeneration of retail sites.
 - Parks foundations to increase funding into parks and green spaces.
 - Place-based approaches for the creation and maintenance of new parks.
 - Finalising a planning support tool to identify priority areas for green infrastructure implementation.
 - Maximising the NBS Living Lab at the University of Salford for communications activities and data collection.

These will all be reported on at a final event taking place at the end of March.

- **Social prescribing Pilot Programme** continues to progress, taking referrals and delivering programme across all localities. As of the end of 2021, the programme has taken 224 referrals and worked directly with 99 individuals. There are now 46 organisations involved in delivery which is expanding its reach into new areas and continually working with new green destinations to build capacity. There has been a significant drop in referral numbers since October, a reflection of the colder weather impacting participation as well as disruption from Covid-19. There have been challenges around increasing referral pathways into clinical mental health teams and the Mental Health Trust and so direction and support from senior managers is required.

- **NCG indicators** – a comprehensive set of indicators for the natural environment has been collated that will help the group measure its progress against the 5YEP.

6.0 SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

- **SCP Plan**

The Challenge Group has reviewed the first draft on the plan and will further review the final draft prior to submission to the Combined Authority for approval in March.

- **Reduce Food Waste**

An element within the Reduce Food Waste Priority is the set a Good Food Vision for Greater Manchester. The Food Vision has been finalised by the Good Food Board and work is currently on-going to develop a work programme and toolkit along with setting up relevant working groups to deliver the key actions within the vision.

Other elements that the Challenge Group will be focusing on over the coming year will be sustainable food procurement and reducing food waste through a lifecycle approach.

- **Local Levers**

Work has been carried out to shortlist six priority areas for the group to focus upon. These include sustainable procurement, waste management and local planning and will look to maximise the use of all local levers available including legal, regulatory and policy control to contribute to the delivery of the 5 year Environment Plan.

- **Circular Economy** – the group is considering the recommendations within the SCP plan and will look to work together to develop a delivery plan and will be the main focus of a challenge sub-group for the next year.

- **Public Sector Plastic Pact** developed 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. An action plan will be developed alongside catering managers and heads of procurement.

7.0 5YEP IMPLEMENTATION FORUM

- **Review of Green City Region activity** received presentations and provided feedback on:
 - Challenge Group work programme
 - COP26 Next Steps
 - Green Infrastructure and Urban Planning

The group has also reflected on its role in supporting delivery of the 5YEP and these changes have been reflected in the Terms of Reference.