



## **GM GREEN CITY REGION PARTNERSHIP**

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> March 2022  
Subject: CHALLENGE GROUP PROGRESS UPDATE  
Report of: Mark Atherton on behalf of Challenge Group Chairs

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### **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 will be presented to the July Partnership meeting.

### **CONTACT OFFICERS:**

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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 Communications Group will be focusing on the following areas:

- **Key Messages** – This will continue to be an ongoing area of development for the group. Work has commenced with other challenge groups so explore how the Communications Challenge Group can raise the profile and aid the delivery of their programmes.
- **Behaviour Change** – 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 5<sup>th</sup> Green Summit which will be held at the Lowry on 17<sup>th</sup> October. The Challenge Group will support and develop proposals to raise the profile of the event to see if we can further our reach in promoting the Summit.

## 3.0 ENERGY INNOVATION

- **Energy Innovation Agency**

Having ratified the consortia agreement and appointed an interim Chair, the first Board meeting has been set for the 28<sup>th</sup> March. The draft business plan is being finalized for Board approval at the inaugural meeting with a launch event planned for April 28<sup>th</sup>,

which will both launch the Energy Innovation Agency and its first innovation Challenge on commercial retrofit. Agency staff have started to engage with innovators and a portfolio of clients is being developed.

- **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 will commence in Q1 2022/3 and for the BESS in Q3. 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 LoIs to be signed in Q1 2022.

- **Hydrogen Innovation**

**Innovation GM** – As part of InnovationGM, a proposal to develop a new translational research and development facility in Greater Manchester focused on Green Hydrogen and Fuel Cells has identified businesses both national and international. The initial study has been completed and is supportive of the establishment of this type of facility in Manchester and has established market demand. The new facility will be focused on working at Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 4-9. Location and market demand appraisals are still ongoing as the purpose is to create a national centre focused on fuel cell and Electrolyser industrialisation built to facilitate key themes and areas of investment within the hydrogen value chain. The project will also align to the wider Northwest vision of Hydrogen with projects like HyNet to ensure complementarity.

**Research** – An academic collaboration to work on key challenges identified across the hydrogen value chain with a Chair appointed (Professor Nigel Brandon – Imperial College). This group will focus developing a national work program with institutions, from across the UK. Organisations are being invited to contribute and build strength into the Manchester ambition of a national facility as the proposal evolves based on the expertise they can bring to the identified themes. The group will also support

industrial activity and advise on infrastructure to support the proposal and UK ambitions.

**Task and Finish Group** – At GMCA level we have a cohort of businesses now focused on hydrogen and fuel cell deployment across the region, but this now requires **National alignment**. The innovation and use case opportunity will align to the work that the Catapult Network and Carbon Trust are doing on accelerating and supporting a UK hydrogen economy. We will align our Greater Manchester opportunity to ensure they are developed alongside other national considerations.

**Strategy and Policy** – The GMCA approved strategy is aligned to the vision of local green hydrogen and will be aligned to support national hydrogen strategy ambitions and timelines. The vision of local green hydrogen in Greater Manchester will be shared across a number of stakeholders nationally.

#### **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 2,682 qualifying leads that are currently being processed by E.ON. 1,468 Retrofit Assessments have been completed and a further 43 are booked. 158 installations have been completed with a further 154 booked and 82 in the process of being booked.

In addition, Cara Energy Performance Solutions and LMF Energy Services have recently been procured to provide additional delivery capacity. They have received 276 qualifying leads and completed 160 Retrofit Assessments and 124 Technical Surveys with installations programmed for April, May, and June.

- **Low Carbon Skills**

Skills and Labour Market Intelligence Report for Green Economy has been released. 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

- **Heat Pump Accelerator**

The HP Task and Finish Group has developed a Myth Buster-tool kit. It looks to address the key myths and misunderstandings about Air Source Heat Pumps. The tool-kit consists of documents which can be utilised by GM LAs on their respective websites to assist GM residents when considering installing heat pumps. The tool kit has received input from LA Development Control and Environmental Health Officers as well as the wider Energy Innovation and Building Challenge Groups. Work continues to hone the tool kit 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.

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**Key challenges/barriers**

- Short term funding cycles
- Confused messaging around decarbonisation of heat
- Supply chain capacity
- Data – understanding the actual performance of buildings and what could / should be done
- Consistency (or lack of) approach to planning

## **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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 BNG Consultation launched and draft GMCA response prepared for review by local authorities and partners. Biodiversity Net Gain Need and Supply Assessment commenced in January and is being delivered by GMEU. Biodiversity Net Gain Offsetting Paper considered by Green City Region Board on 7th February and due to go to GMCA Executive on 25th March.
- **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** – Final stages of the Green Recovery Challenge Fund programme with projects aiming to complete capital works and evaluations by the end of March. Preparations for Mayors Green Spaces Fund continue with Community Enablers workshop held on 1st March to begin the process of recruiting prior to launch. A shovel-ready projects brochure bring finalised with consultants Creative Concern ready for publishing early March. Suez R4GM grants round 2 launches 1st April which will now be an online process. Application for Defras NEIRF Round 2 including proposals to set up a Greater Manchester Biodiversity Net Gain Investment Facility.

- **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** – the programme is coming up to halfway through the two-year timeline. The numbers of referrals continue to grow, though did see a slow down over December and January due to poor weather. Green social prescribing is one of the core pillars of the new Live Well model being designed through GMCA and GMHSCP. This is a mayoral manifesto commitment to do beyond social prescribing and ensure there are quality community offers in every community. This should lead to future funding, though is still in the design stage. Future funding is being sought through mental health commissioning and pilot programmes are aiming to be tested with GMMH and Pennine Care. Capacity has grown at the local level with new organisations and projects being brought into the infrastructure to ensure better access to a host of interventions, all of which will improve access to natural spaces for the wider community.



- **NCG indicators** – a comprehensive set of indicators for the natural environment has been collated and was updated for the NCG meeting in early March.

### **Key challenges/barriers**

- Biodiversity Net Gain – Educating members and Officers , optimising the potential to keep the income within GM. Ensuring we have attractive receptor sites for developers to allocate net gain credits.
- Skills Gap. This is all new and we have a skills and resource gap in managing these new approaches.
- Much of our programmes has been based on successful applications for grants , trials and tests but we need to get these mainstreamed as grants will not continue into the future.
- We need to lobby DEFRA for clarity on whether we are able to blend some of these new financial sources to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Programme. It is also clear that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should be the guiding document in allocating such funding. ( ELMs and BNG)
- In terms of natural carbon and local offsetting opportunities we need DEFRA to provide clarification on natural carbon, for example we have significant quantities of lowland peat in GM and the Carbon Code was developed for upland peat.
- Finally, in terms of the innovative work being undertaken with sustainable urban drainage (SUDs) it is imperative for the right to connect to sewers be reviewed so that new approaches to SUDs become the norm.

## **6.0 SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION**

Currently a review of the SCP Challenge Group is taking place due to the Group no longer having a Chair and Vice-Chair. The working groups have continued, however, to make good progress in key areas.

- **SCP Plan**

The draft SCP Plan, a copy of which is on the agenda, has been completed and is going through governance arrangements prior to approval by the Combined Authority in the near future.

- **Reduce Food Waste**

Working with the Good Food GM Board work has commenced, since the finalisation of the Good Food Vision, to draft an action plan. The SCP Food sub-group will be focusing on two key areas food waste and sustainable food procurement.

- **Circular Economy** – a working group led by MMU, will be looking how we can move businesses to circular economy business models through a Business-to-Business platform. In addition, we are also in process of developing a roadmap to a circular economy for textiles.

- **Public Sector Plastic Pact** – work is due to commence with a newly reformed sub-group which will bring together public sector bodies (universities and local authorities) to benchmark how much single use plastic is still within the public estate and subsequently develop an action plan alongside catering managers and heads of procurement, to meet their pledges to eradicate avoidable single use plastics by 2024.

## **7.05YEP IMPLEMENTATION FORUM**

- **Review of Green City Region activity** received presentations and provided feedback on:
  - Overview of lobbying asks to Government work
  - Communications plan/approach
  - Bee Net Zero

The group are reflecting on the long list of lobbying asks provided during the meeting and will feedback on these to GMCA.

The group offered support in acting as a sounding board for audience specific communications work as it is developed.

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.

### **Key challenges/barriers**

Scale of action – how can we collaborate to really scale interventions in the immediate term. How can the group support this?

Fully understanding and utilising all the levers we can use at a city region level, understanding how to achieve our ‘lobbying’ asks and be successful in driving action from the sub-national level that exceeds the national pace.

## **8.0 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.