



Action Plan: Strategic Communication for GM Business Board: 23/24
Delivered by Marketing Manchester and GMCA

Background/Context

This 2023/24 Action Plan outlines a rolling programme of activity for communications and content provision in support of GM Business Board priorities from April 2023-2024. The Plan is designed to be reactive and responsive to changes and challenges at local and national level; a plan that will develop and evolve.

In March 2022, the government concluded a LEP review which resulted with the publication of *'Guidance on integrating Local Enterprise Partnerships into local democratic institutions'* which anticipated that "LEPs will eventually fully integrate into local democratic institutions in line with our mission to offer a devolution deal to everywhere that wants one by 2030". In response Greater Manchester proposed a new model for the future of the GMLEP and its integration into GMCA. The new model, which proposed that the GM LEP name change to GM Business Board, ensured that GM builds upon its already integrated model by maintaining a strong business voice at the heart of Greater Manchester's governance arrangements.

This Action Plan therefore reflects the new operating model of the GM Business Board – maintaining a strong business voice, centred on its key deliverables; focused around the three main agendas: *Environmental: Making Greater Manchester the UK's Leading Green City Region; Social: Supporting all people in the city-region to achieve their full potential and Governance: Tackling Inequalities to make Greater Manchester the UK's most Diverse and Inclusive City Region.*

The programme of work outlined will support the unique partnership model of GMCA/GM Business Board leadership through a shared vision for the city-region. This is set out within the Greater Manchester Strategy, the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy and the Greater Manchester International Strategy. Activity will seek to position Greater Manchester as a city-region that can support UK economic recovery and growth, maintaining a strong business voice, while leading green growth and innovation and tackling inequalities. Marketing Manchester and GMCA Communication/Media and Public Affairs teams will work together to deliver this activity.

Key Themes and Messaging

Communications activity throughout the year is structured to support the activity of the GM Business Board in communicating the following:

Overarching:

- Environmental: Making Greater Manchester the UK's Leading Green City Region;
- Social: Supporting all people in the city-region to achieve their full potential
- Governance: Tackling Inequalities to make Greater Manchester the UK's most Diverse and Inclusive City Region.

Long-term responsibilities:

- Driving Innovation
- Stimulating new economic opportunities in priority sectors
- Private sector investment in skills
- Good employment to support growth
- Attracting private capital investment into the city

Reacting to short-term issues, for example:

- Cost of living and cost of doing business crisis
- Maintaining business confidence
- National and/or political issues that impact GM businesses

The GM Business Board members will drive delivery through a number of affiliated groups. Communications will support the following activity:

Priority	Lead Member/Affiliated Group	Deliverable
Innovation	Chris Oglesby Chair of Innovation Greater Manchester	Helping create an innovation ecosystem across the city region which will drive our frontier sectors; support productivity in all parts of the economy via innovation adoption; and generate solutions to societal issues such as achieving net zero

Net Zero	Steve Connor Chair of Bee Net Zero	Ensuring all our businesses are on a journey to Net Zero by making Greater Manchester the easiest place in the UK to become a net zero business
Real Living Wage	Lou Cordwell Chair of the Living Wage City Region Action Group	Supporting businesses in becoming the first city region to pay all employees a real living wage
Economic Resilience	Economic Resilience Group	Ensuring issues affecting the resilience of GM's businesses and economic networks are fully understood and emerging responses are developed and debated
Marketing and International	Mike Blackburn Chair GM International Marketing Advisory Board	Promoting Greater Manchester to our identified global, national and local audiences as a place to visit, invest and do business to boost Greater Manchester's ambitions
Business Support	Vanda Murray Chair of Business Support & Finance Advisory Board	Understand and respond to the needs of entrepreneurs and businesses to start, and grow; addressing productivity, inclusivity, and environment sustainability, via the Growth Hub and working in partnerships with public and private sector.
Investment Finance	Miles Rothbury Business Finance Advisory Group	Ensuring that finance needs of businesses and market finance gaps are understood. Improve the signposting of available finance in GM (public and private) to support business start-up and growth as well as attracting new finance solutions to GM.
Addressing Inequalities	Vimla Appadoo GM Good Employment Charter	Working with business to address inequalities and improve wellbeing by raising employment standards across Greater Manchester for all organisations of any size, sector or geography
Skills	Justin Kelly GM Employment and Skills Advisory Panel	Ensuring an integrated employment and skills ecosystem that is demand led by employers building Greater Manchester's economic growth through the skills and talent development of its people.

Target Audience and Reach

Activity will target senior UK Government officials, academic, scientific and business leaders both locally and nationally who can corroborate, support and amplify Greater Manchester's reputation in delivering economic activity unlocking prosperity.

Reach: A focus for 23/24 will be to identify key distribution channels to increase audience for voice and presence of GM Business Board and high-profile placement of key messages. Activity will include identification of distribution channels providing greatest reach to the following target audiences:

- **Business** - Greater Manchester priority and growth sectors, Greater Manchester SME's.
- **Government** - Greater Manchester MP's with an economic and business remit. Treasury / DSIT / DBT / DLUHC / Sector portfolio ministers
- **Investors** - National and International target markets – Europe, USA, China, India, Japan and UAE in line with the International Strategy
- **Greater Manchester Stakeholders & residents** - Introduce and inform the people who live in the city-region about their Greater Manchester LEP.

Governance

Guided by a Steering Group (comprising GM Business Board Chair/board members), Marketing Manchester and GMCA communications colleagues will deliver a rolling programme of strategic and tactical communications support emphasising the role for Greater Manchester in enabling UK economic growth, the UK's levelling up agenda, innovation, and green growth.

An update report will be submitted to every Business Board and a quarterly communications item will be added to the agenda to allow a more detailed update and discussion. The action plan including outputs will be updated and reviewed monthly.

Delivery

Both Marketing Manchester and GMCA will work together to deliver this strategic and tactical communications framework. Marketing Manchester will lead on content curation, events and digital elements of this work, developing and delivering strategies to achieve standout for key sector narratives and overarching themes. GMCA communications colleagues will lead the media relations and public affairs elements of this activity, with an emphasis on the profile of the GM Business Board and ensuring that Government / stakeholder engagement is supported by clear and consistent communications.

Marketing Manchester and GMCA will work alongside colleagues at MIDAS, The Growth Company, Industry, Local Authorities and Academic partners to collaborate in the creation and delivery of the areas of activity summarised below and provided in the action planner at Annex 1.

Areas of Activity

- **Content:** Planning and execution of a suite of strategic content for use and promotion via the GM Business Board Insights section and other key channels. The aim is to produce original content, including Insight articles, social video production, and social media assets. *Led by Marketing Manchester.*
- **PR and media relations:** Increased proactive PR and media relations activity will be delivered in support of the GM Business Board Economic Strategic Communications. Activity will include the development of relationships with key media and make journalists aware that Business Board members will be available for relevant print/online/radio/TV interview opportunities within their areas of expertise. Activity will also promote success in workstreams linked to Business Board meetings. Relevant GMCA media releases will also include quotes from Business Board members in GMCA/BB releases around Greater Manchester economy/business/enterprise/digital. *Led by GMCA*
- **Think Pieces / Op-Ed's:** Providing expert insight to important business/economic issues. These would be placed with target media and shared with the Business Board Network and on the GM Business Board website. *Led by GMCA and Marketing Manchester.*
- **Develop and deliver GM LIS priority sector-specific Promotional campaigns:** (health and social care innovation, advanced materials, digital sector, low carbon), in collaboration with industry and academic partners. Targeting key UK national and sector media with a rolling programme of content highlighting Greater Manchester economic strengths, with messaging nuanced towards economic recovery. *Led by Marketing Manchester/MIDAS*
- **Website and thematic content development:** Continued delivery and development of gmbusinessboard.com. Including rolling content on Insights section of the website, with development of a new form of content marketing to highlight priority themes and stories, including in depth articles, video storytelling and associated social media. *Led by Marketing Manchester*
- **Social Media:** Maintenance and delivery of social media posts via the GM Business Board channels, including Twitter and LinkedIn. Develop content to increase interest and engagement in these channels. *Led by GMCA and Marketing Manchester.*
- **Support for GM Business Board hosted events:** Support for GM Business Board business focussed events will be developed and delivered focusing on business support and exploring and informing key sector themes and activity. *Led by Marketing Manchester*
- **Public Affairs:** GMCA will lead the public affairs elements of this activity, with an emphasis on the profile of the GM Business Board and ensuring that Government / stakeholder engagement is supported by clear and consistent communications. Opportunities for public affairs activity to align with the content and events elements of this work will be identified. *Led by GMCA*

Communication & Engagement with LEP Board

- Monthly LEP Board Update report
- Weekly newsletter including key stories/comms to share
- Social media pack. Scheduled GM Business Board social media plan, to include generic economic posts and posts highlighting key strengths within local authorities.

KPIS and Evaluation

The following KPIs are suggested:

- To deliver at least 15 packages of bespoke content creation, to include video, thought leadership, social media posts for own channels.
- Media coverage in top tier media (FT, Guardian) leading sector media titles; monthly coverage in regional business/local media (MEN, North West Business Insider) x 10
- 6 x thought leadership articles for GM Business Board leaders;
- Sector themed campaigns (to include news creation, PR, social media, content): innovation, green, digital and tourism
- Opportunities to See (OTS) 10million
- 20% increase of social media followers to GMLEP channels including Twitter and LinkedIn

Impacts and outcomes will be evaluated through the Government Communications Service Framework and presented to the steering group on a regular basis.

Annex 1: Current Action Plan – N.B. Action Plan is flexible and subject to change as opportunities emerge

Date	Activity	Details of project	Outline of communications plan
May 16-18	UKREiIF	The UK's Real Estate Investment & Infrastructure Forum. Held in Leeds.	Greater Manchester presence led by Marketing Manchester. Participation in panel events, social media activity from Business Board channels.
June TBC	Foundational Economy Innovation Fund	First phase of FEIF projects announced.	Press release announcing first tranche of funding for FEIF projects. Interesting stories/projects highlighted through more detailed case studies. Social media activity.
Ongoing	Business Board – rebrand	Transition from LEP to Business Board.	Changes across Business Board's digital presence, including new logo, changes to website and social media accounts.
June 19 – 24	Good Employment Week	Good Employment Week – week-long celebration of Good Employment movement in GM.	Support and amplify Good Employment Charter social media, PR and comms activity throughout week.

		Links to Living Wage City-Region ambitions.	
TBC – check-ins at regular intervals over next 12 months	Innovation Accelerator	Communications around outcomes from the GM IA projects.	Build on relationships already established with project partner comms leads. Amplify their updates and announcements and use opportunities to promote wider GM IA programme. Using IGM website as primary channel.
June 23	Business Board – thought leadership	Topic: Transport.	Led by GMCA. Thought leadership piece published on Business Board website and shared on social channels. Potential to accompany with talking heads video piece (produced by MM).
July TBC	Business Board – thought leadership	Topic: Culture and its role in GM economy – using MIF as news hook	Led by MM. Thought leadership piece published on Business Board website and shared on social channels. Potential to accompany with talking heads video piece (produced by MM).
July 6	Living Wage Champions	Living Wage Foundation’s annual Living Wage Champions awards hosted in Manchester. Links to Living Wage City-Region ambitions.	Event hosted at National Football Museum in Manchester. Support LWF with organisation of event, comms activity including press release and social media in the build-up and for the event.
July TBC	Bee Net Zero – solar campaign	Encouraging GM businesses to join the “rooftop revolution” and install solar on their premises.	Press release, social media assets and video, paid social media marketing, collaboration with Solar Energy UK (TBC)
July/August TBC	Business Board – thought leadership	Topic: Addressing Inequalities – TBC depending on “deep dive” delivered at Business Board meeting.	Led by MM. Thought leadership piece published on Business Board website and shared on social channels. Potential to accompany with talking heads video piece (produced by MM).

September TBC	Business Board – thought leadership	Topic: Economic Resilience – TBC depending on “deep dive” delivered at Business Board meeting.	Led by GMCA. Thought leadership piece published on Business Board website and shared on social channels. Potential to accompany with talking heads video piece (produced by MM).
September TBC	Innovation Accelerator – GM launch event	Launch event for GM projects – providing positive reset moment, promote projects and partners locally, and providing opportunity for Government to engage with the GM portfolio. Potentially aligned with (but not contingent on) Ministerial visit.	Organisational support for event. Venue TBC – partner to provide in kind. Content and social media activity during and post-event.
September 27-28	London Real Estate Forum	Annual forum bringing together leaders from the industry, public sector, government, investment and business communities, to drive sustainable investment and development in cities.	TBC - Greater Manchester presence led by Marketing Manchester. Participation in panel events, social media activity from Business Board channels.
October 1-4	Conservative Party Conference	Annual party conference returning to Manchester.	TBC – opportunities for engagement around CPC. Oscar Lynch and MM to attend CPC planning calls being convened by CA public affairs team.
October TBC / ongoing	Labour party engagement	Engagement with Jonathan Reynolds MP – Shadow SoS for Business and MP for Stalybridge and Hyde	TBC – either tied to party conference or at another date – could involve invitation to meet with Business Board.

November TBC	Business Board – thought leadership	Topic: International Marketing – TBC depending on “deep dive” delivered at Business Board meeting.	Led by MM. Thought leadership piece published on Business Board website and shared on social channels. Potential to accompany with talking heads video piece (produced by MM).
December TBC	Innovation Greater Manchester	“One year on” event for Innovate UK MOU signing.	TBC - event following up last year’s launch event at the GEIC.
Q4 TBC	Foresight reports	Publication of Foresight reports – developing GM response to opportunities and challenges raised in Independent Prosperity Review.	TBC
January 2024 TBC	Business Board – thought leadership	Topic: Business Support – TBC depending on “deep dive” delivered at Business Board meeting. (DR)	Led by GMCA. Thought leadership piece published on Business Board website and shared on social channels. Potential to accompany with talking heads video piece (produced by MM).
March 2024 TBC	Business Board – thought leadership	Topic: Investment Finance – TBC depending on “deep dive” delivered at Business Board meeting.	Led by MM. Thought leadership piece published on Business Board website and shared on social channels. Potential to accompany with talking heads video piece (produced by MM).
March 8-16 2024	SXSW 2024	Annual conference and festival held in Austin, Texas focusing on	Greater Manchester presence led by Marketing Manchester. Participation in panel events, social media activity from Business Board channels.

		tech, film, music, education, and culture.	
March 12-15 2024	MIPIM 2024	Global real estate and investment exhibition, conference and networking event, held annually in Cannes.	Greater Manchester presence led by Marketing Manchester. Participation in panel events, social media activity from Business Board channels.