

GM GREEN CITY REGION PARTNERSHIP

Date: 20th January 2020

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 Five Year Environment Plan (5YEP) Challenge Groups in developing their key priorities and subsequent Task and Finish Action groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Partnership is asked to:

- Note the progress in developing the Challenge Groups and Task and Finish Action Groups

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1.0 BACKGROUND

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

2.0 COMMUNICATIONS AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Two meetings of the Communications Challenge Group have now taken place. The first meeting focused on a workshop to develop a high level GMCA narrative to support environment work taking place across the city region. Membership of the group was discussed to ensure that the group was representative of the diverse GM 'green family' and from organisations and individuals who have an interest in developing positive sustainability communications within the region.

Items agreed and discussed at the second meeting, which took place on 17th December, included agreeing the terms of reference, understanding the remit of the group, which crosses over all the current challenge groups, and reviewing how the group could influence communications over the next six to twelve months.

All group members agreed to take part in Carbon Literacy training, focused around communicating the climate emergency, during January. Suggestions, for future Task and Finish Groups, though not agreed, include:

- developing 'ethical' guidelines for GMCA to ensure appropriate future sponsorship agreements;
- supporting GM wide campaigns e.g. Solar Together, Big Clean Switch
- influence the direction of the GMCA Environment Communication Plan for the next 6-12 months; and
- developing a specific engagement plan around a GM School Environment Package (which includes fabric measures and eco learning opportunities).

3.0 ENERGY INNOVATION

The Energy Innovation Challenge Group has now met twice, with over a dozen organisations from across suppliers, academia, technology and consultancies. The group has agreed 5 action areas with a Task and Finish focus on:

- Identifying Infrastructure capacity and constraints
- Developing an Energy Transition Region proposal
- Completing a Land and Property Assessment
- Hydrogen Strategy
- Base line heat loads current and future
- Identifying quick wins from baseline
- DSO transition
- Designing a Local Energy Market

4.0 LOW CARBON BUILDINGS

The Low Carbon Buildings Challenge Group has now met twice, with attendance from 16 different organisations and 18 individuals. The group has agreed a number of priorities and established 4 Task and Finish action groups focusing on:

- RSL Business Case development – to overcome the known barriers to retrofit uptake.
- Commercial DEC's piloting – to test in use performance rating/certification.
- Skills – seeks to overcome the skills gap to retrofit.
- Retrofit Accelerator – understand the activity required to support the deployment of a retrofit accelerator.

Each of the task and finish action groups have met at least once and will feedback their initial findings to the challenge group on January 27th.

5.0 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Natural Environment Challenge Group has established Task and Finish Action Groups set up to address the Challenge Groups five key priorities:

5.1 Priority 1 – Land

- All Our Trees – signed off by GM Forest Partnership and is in its last run of consultations before it goes to design, it is expected to be launched early New Year.
- DEFRA GM Peat Pilot – Natural England assessed land cover of Chat Moss lowland peat complex and have calculated CO2 equivalent emitted. NE assessed condition of upland peat across GM with a focus on sites at Winter Hill and above Stalybridge.

5.2 Priority 2 – Water

- Natural Course - Phase 3 EU funding received by Environment Agency on 24.12.19: approx. €3M to cover the North West region for the duration of Phase 3 to September 2021. This includes Dales Brow sustainable drainage scheme in Salford and natural flood management features created at upstream locations in New Mills, Smithills & Rochdale.

5.3 Priority 3 – Biodiversity

- Biodiversity Net Gain – Task and Finish Group met for last time in November and Local Planning Authority Roadshows have been delivered. These highlighted significant opportunities to test and deliver BNG through LPAs and developers in next 2 years.

5.4 Priority 4 – Investment

- GM Environment Fund – soft market testing has now been carried out to identify organisations with sufficient interest and capability.
- IGNITION – work packages progressing: year 1 annual report submitted; GI baseline under development; citizen engagement survey underway; technical consultancy support appointed; 'Living Lab' co-design in advanced stages with phase 1 tender issued.
- Investment Readiness Fund – design work has commenced and the inception meeting has been held, it is to be delivered over the next 12 months.

5.5 Priority 5 – Engagement

- Environment vision – a toolkit is being designed with consultants, to be launched at the NCG Conference.
- Urban Pioneer – review of progress commissioned for impact and evaluation ahead of project completion and final meeting of Task and Finish Group in March 2020.

6.0 SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

The SCP Challenge Group held their second meeting on 9th December 2019 to build upon the work of the first meeting on 2nd October 2019. The group covered Circular Economy and Waste, Becoming Responsible Consumers and Reducing Unnecessary Food Waste. The session delved into the barriers and potential solutions into how best to move each of the areas forward:

6.1 Circular Economy and Waste

- It was highlighted that there was a gap within commercial waste flows data within GM and having a better understanding could lead to Circular Economy opportunities;
- Tackling packaging, particular plastic packaging should be a priority through innovation, research and working with stakeholders;
- Further analysis was required to fully understand the potential impact of England's Waste Strategy, which is currently being consulted upon.

6.2 Becoming Responsible Consumers

- Behavioral change was agreed to be critical to enabling consumers to become more responsible and this could be potentially achieved through promoting different buying options, media campaigns, promoting reuse and waste prevention and raising awareness through carbon literacy.

6.3 Reducing Unnecessary Food Waste

- With 70% of food waste being within households, the Group discussed different types of campaigns that could be used promoting waste reduction and recycling and potentially what work could be done with schools, and other stakeholders to reduce food waste.

From the work of the two Challenge Group meetings, a Strategic Framework for the SCP Plan is in the process of being developed and will be discussed at the next meeting on 22nd January 2020 and proposed actions for the forthcoming year should be able to be populated and agreed by the Group.