

## LOW CARBON HUB BOARD

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> July 2017

**Subject:** GM LOW CARBON HUB COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE 2017-2018

**Report of:** Mark Atherton, GM Asst Director Environment

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on progress on the GM Low Carbon Hub's (LCH) communication pathways, including the integration of its work with an existing GM website 'On the Platform', hosted by Creative Concern, and to provide proposals for 2017-2018.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board is requested to note proposals to:

- Work with national and local GM partners on a pathway of events culminating in a Green City Region Summit;
- Continue to work with GMLCH website presence 'On the Platform' increasing brand visibility via social media channels and ensure online searches are optimised; and
- Increase collaboration with regional academic institutes: supporting communications activity and raising awareness of related research work.

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<b>TRACKING/PROCESS</b>		
Does this report relate to a Key Decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution or in the process agreed by the AGMA Executive Board	No	
<b>EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN</b>		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the AGMA Scrutiny Pool on the grounds of urgency?	NA	
AGMA Commission	TfGMC	Scrutiny Pool
NA	NA	NA

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. One of the LCH's main aims is that: "Low emission behaviours will become embedded into the culture of our organisations and lifestyles." Rather than communication being seen as a stand-alone activity in the team, over the last 12 months we have ensured that communications are considered and included in all environment and low carbon projects by project managers from the on-set. In doing so, the team are now confident at providing daily social media updates and supplying content for the LCH's news website, ['GM Low Carbon Hub on the platform'](#). This has resulted in a jump in the number of followers over the year from just over 400 followers to 721 and a variety of articles posted demonstrating the breadth of sustainability work undertaken in GM.
- 1.2. The communication target outlined in the GM Climate Change and Low Emission Strategy (CCLES) Implementation Plan 2020 is "To provide information, knowledge and incentives to enable Greater Manchester's organisations, residents and communities to act on climate change, and understand the issues and opportunities that affect them." The last 12 months has seen an increase in collaboration with partners and stakeholders on current projects / initiatives, sub-group meetings, events, funding bids, sharing good practice and government consultations. These relationships can only strengthen and increase the awareness of our work through joint communications.
- 1.3. The LCH will continue to increase engagement with residents, business and community groups on the CCLES key messages to support behaviour change and acceptance of unfamiliar technologies, by:
  - Promoting the GM Climate Change Strategy to wider UK and international audiences in order to raise profile and encourage partnership investment;
  - Increase the public's awareness and understanding of environment and low carbon projects and the economic, social and health benefits (such as clean air, good food, well-being and cheaper bills), to a variety of audiences (including residents, businesses and community organisations).
  - Progress and actively engage partners and residents on a pathway to the Mayor's proposed Green Summit.
  - Continually improving the co-ordination of communication between all sectors and themes to develop shared responsibilities and goals; and
  - To provide informed incentives to enable Greater Manchester's organisations, residents and communities to act on climate change, environmental improvement/protection and to understand potential impact (eg through the Clean Switch Campaign) and opportunities in a format and channel that is widely preferred by the targeted audience.
  - Work with and/or through existing or emerging GM engagement mechanisms and synergise LCH communications within the GMCA family.

## 2. WORKING WITH GMCA COMMUNICATIONS:

- 2.1 There is now a larger, central GMCA communications team, working for the Mayor and his Executive. We hope that it can now provide the LCH with the opportunity to work with a greater team resource, benefitting from their shared knowledge and experience across media sectors. We will ensure that the new press team is notified when proactive media relationships with trade press is required.
- 2.2 It is anticipated that the public profile of the GM Mayor will provide the low carbon / green city region with a regional and national platform which we have been unable to fully

achieve previously. With the appointment of the new GM Mayor and newly appointed lead for the Green City Region, Cllr Alex Ganotis, we have an exciting opportunity to work with them, regional stakeholders and national experts on the lead-up to a proposed Green Summit to declare a new, accelerated ambition for GM on the green economy and carbon neutrality.

2.3 Over the last 12 months, the LCH have circulated ten news releases which have featured the previous LCH Chair, Paul Dennett. The team benefitted from the direct contact and expertise provided by Salford City Council's dedicated press officer. Light-touch support was provided from the GMCA press officer whenever the Interim Mayor was included. A circulation list of suggested media specific to the LCH and environmental sustainability was passed on to Salford to try and ensure news was targeted to appropriate publications.

2.4 The GMCA Environment/Low carbon pages are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that the most up-to-date information regarding projects, meetings and research documents can be accessed centrally from the official portal.

### **3. PREVIOUS YEAR'S COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

Last years' communications activity included:

- Maintaining and updating a more informal external web-presence via GM LCH Platform site: July 16 to March 17 - 11394 page views across 5432 user sessions and 4027 users. 65 features/articles from diverse range of contributors
- Quarterly LCH e-bulletin: 4 bulletins emailed to approximately 800 email subscribers with bulletin going direct to inbox. Plus 820 from LCH internal database.
- Increase in social media reach, June 2017: 721 Twitter followers & 1818 tweets compared to this time last year: 404 Twitter followers 723 tweets
- Ten press releases, limited number of stories published. Continue to work with GMCA Press Officers to ensure targeting of stories.
- Print (and pdf): Board Member Portfolio reviewed and reprinted by Marketing Manchester. GM Environment Report 2016 and EU Transnational funds in GM Case Studies booklet produced for general circulation. All printed documents available online.
- External communications undertaken promoting international carbon commitments, compacts and disclosure initiatives – GM one of 53 fully compliant Compact of Mayors cities out of 654 committed.
- Various event, digital and copy writing project work for: GM Smart Communities, RESIN, Natural Capital and Green Deal for Communities.
- Exhibition attendance at European City of Science Conference, Low Carbon Network, Green Homes exhibition promoting low carbon (energy) projects, in particular NEDO (GM Smart Communities) Engaging sector professionals and informed visitors
- GM Local Authority Low Carbon Leadership Engagement event – 20 April 2017 which attracted – 62 attendees, officers and elected members.

### **4. PROJECTS FOR 2017-18**

The priorities for GM LCH Communications in 2017/18 include:

- Subject to agreement, develop a task group to support the Mayor’s Green Summit; identify opportunities with stakeholders, residents and business to engage and listen. Information on the environment and climate change impact in GM will be exchanged.
- Finalise sponsorship funding proposal with participating LCH Board member organisations – small scale ‘crowd-funding’ to support communications from within the Low Carbon Hub family. We propose to deliver new activities and support related activity with the additional income. Such activity may include support events in the lead-up to the Mayor’s Green Summit, branded event collateral, dedicated articles on partner’s organisations, their commitment and sustainability values. To include a coordinated and supported twitter campaign. All participating partners to have their logos on all designed (and printed) publications.
- Ensure all GMLCH strategies, research and reporting information is up to date, accessible online and optimise utilisation.
- Ensure regular flow of articles from contributors for “on the platform” website, offering a variety of content. Aim to publish a minimum of 5 articles per month. All articles tweeted and posted on LinkedIn group. Continue collaboration with website hosts Creative Concern to include project specific pages, add discussion buttons to appropriate features.
- To maintain a communications network database ensuring GMLCH information is circulated to appropriate target audience.
- To develop a new Natural Capital Group website to support the Local nature Partnership and delivery of the Urban Pioneer project
- To provide communications support for other GM Environment Team projects (see Annex 1).

Our proposed targets for 2017/18 include:

<b>Online activity:</b>	<b>Actual 2015/16</b>	<b>Actual 2016/17</b>	<b>Target 2017/18</b>
<b>Annual users of GMLCH ‘Platform’ website</b>	2401	4027	6000
<b>Increase number of Twitter ‘followers’</b>	404	721	1000+
<b>Increase monthly Twitter profile visits</b>	107 average	500 average	700+
<b>Increase membership of GMLCH LinkedIn Group</b>	N/A	49	150+

## 5. ESTIMATED PROPOSAL COSTS

In addition to retaining some expertise within the GM Environment Team, partly funded through projects, the indicative costs of the proposals outlined above are:

<b>Description of Goods/Services</b>	<b>Estimated Unit Cost (excl VAT)</b>
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<b>1</b>	Creative Concern: Management of GMLCH website, including editing, copywriting and general support	£5095.00
<b>2</b>	Creative Concern: Management of quarterly e-bulletin (27 hours)	£1400.00
<b>4</b>	GM Environment Report 2017 (Marketing Manchester)	£400.00
<b>5</b>	GMLCH Member portfolio info (Marketing Manchester)	£400.00
<b>6</b>	Green Summit 'pathway' campaign: events, collateral and print	£6000.00
<b>7</b>	Development of Natural Capital website	£5000.00
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£18295.00</b>

## **ANNEX 1:**

### **Additional Project Funded Communications Activities**

Unless specified, the cost of undertaking these activities is met through existing staff resources.

1. GM Smart Communities – NEDO
  - a. Website – Maintain for remaining 12 months. - £75
  - b. Press release – Project wrap-up, success, lessons learned and legacy for the future –
  - c. Proposed final events October / November 2017 - £2000
  
2. RESIN (ICLEI)
  - a. Update RESIN dissemination tracker monthly on GM’s attendance at meetings and conferences.
  - b. Prepare newsletter articles for quarterly RESIN newsletter. Consult GM group for updates on project progress and extract highlights. Forward on finalised newsletter to contact list within GM. Promote newsletter link wherever relevant to increase direct sign-ups. Promote via social media and “GMLCH on the platform” website.
  - c. Coordinate updates on project deliverables as per output timetable. Issue press release or short news piece to present results and contextualise as RESIN progress and direct benefits to GM.
  
3. Domestic Building Projects:
  - a. Support Communications of Clean Energy Switch, LEAP Energy Advice and ECOFlex. Press release, website article and social media. £10K Advertising
  - b. Support further work with Project Manager on raising awareness of the links between domestic building quality, health and fuel poverty
  
4. Natural Capital:
  - a. Develop project brief for GM NCG stand-alone website to support Urban Pioneer key driver: connecting people with nature. £5K
  - b. Drive social media campaign using Visit Manchester content highlighting Greater Manchester’s greenspaces, leisure and volunteering opportunities. Intended that website with also host University of Manchester’s ‘MEMO’ map.