LOW CARBON HUB BOARD

Date: 6th July 2018

Subject: MISTRA URBAN FUTURES PHD UPDATE

Report of: PROFESSOR BETH PERRY, ACADEMIC DIRECTOR, REALISING JUST CITIES PROGRAMME (UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD) & RYAN BELLINSON, PHD CANDIDATE (UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the work of the PhD candidate supported by Mistra Urban Futures and the University of Sheffield in partnership with the GM Low Carbon Hub. The PhD candidate is working to better understand and improve engagement with citizens and civil society groups. This PhD candidate’s work has been aligned with the 2018 & 2019 Mayor of Greater Manchester’s Green Summits.

The PhD is funded as part of an innovative scheme to explore how new approaches to funding and supporting post-graduate research can balance academic excellence with relevance and impact. Mistra Urban Futures’ overall aim is to explore how co-producing knowledge with different urban stakeholders can help realise more just cities, which are accessible, green and fair.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board is recommended to:
• discuss and feedback on the update
• note the value and contribution to date of the partnership in supporting participation leading up to and at the 2018 Green Summit
• note the plans for integration of learning within wider GMCA processes

CONTACT OFFICERS:

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1.0 BACKGROUND

Between 2012-2015 the Greater Manchester Low Carbon Hub (GMLCH) worked with a team of international academics and practitioners to develop a comparative understanding of the governance, policy and knowledge-related challenges in urban sustainability. The work highlighted the gap between city-regional decision-making organisations and residents in the city-region. It recommended that the GMLCH act on improving the mechanisms and processes for communicating and engaging with citizens in Greater Manchester. It also highlighted the need to integrate online mass communications with tailored face-to-face interactions.

The Realising Just Cities programme, led by the Urban Institute at the University of Sheffield, is part of an international centre for sustainability with headquarters in Gothenburg, Sweden called Mistra Urban Futures (www.realisingjustcities-rjc.org). Together, the partners have supported a PhD candidate, Ryan Bellinson, to take forward these recommendations and further build on the initial study.

Ryan has been embedded with the GMCA Environment Team where he helped organise the 2018 Mayor of Greater Manchester’s Green Summit. The work to date has also been supported by Beth Perry, through her role as a participant in the Green Summit Steering Group.

This paper highlights progress and achievements to date and the agreed work programme for Ryan over the next year to explore new co-productive climate change and environmental policy development opportunities.

2.0 PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

Ryan assumed the role in October 2017. For the first three months, he worked with the GMCA Environment Team on developing public engagement channels to help inform the 2018 Mayor of Greater Manchester’s Green Summit. In January and February 2018, the Ryan supported engagement with a wide public audience and gathered feedback during listening events - over 40 small events that gathered detailed feedback from representatives of all 10 councils that reflected diverse viewpoints. Beth further supported this process through the Green Summit Steering Group, especially providing insight and input around the wider communications and engagement approach.

In March 2018, a paper was tabled by Beth for the Green Summit entitled ‘Designing a co-productive and participative Green Summit’. Following sign off, additional funds were allocated from the Realising Just Cities programme to support breakout rooms for greater engagement with delegates, to share results from the listening events and get further feedback on key actions and future agreement. Ryan led the organisation and delivery of this process.

In the months following the 2018 Mayor of Greater Manchester’s Green Summit, Ryan has worked with GMCA Environment Team to analyse the feedback gathered at the Green Summit. He has also supported the development of an ongoing engagement strategy (see Section 3).

Whilst conducting the above activities, Ryan has developed an academically robust proposal for the PhD in collaboration with Mark Atherton. Drawing on the learning from
the Green Summit process, Ryan developed a set of questions and methods, with input from Mark and the University of Sheffield supervisors. In June 2018 Ryan’s academic proposal was also confirmed by the relevant University department as meeting necessary academic standards and he has passed through to the full PhD delivery phase.

3.0 FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Ryan will now embark on a new set of tasks in collaboration with the GMCA Environment Team, pending the PhD’s successful University of Sheffield ethics approval. This role will include four key aspects over the next year:

1) Supporting the engagement of specialist and technical practitioners in the policy process

Ryan will support the engagement of specialist and technical practitioners by assisting to oversee the GM Low Carbon Hub’s thematic work groups. The practitioner work groups will be given specific tasks that follow up on the outcomes of the 2018 Mayor of Greater Manchester’s Green Summit and will help support future action. Ryan will help define each working group’s tasks and develop digital infrastructure to allow the groups to communicate virtually.

2) Supporting the engagement of civil society organisations and citizens

Ryan will support the engagement of civil society organisations and citizens by overseeing and further developing On The Platform, a digital public engagement tool that is currently in use. Ryan will support On The Platform’s transition from a one-way communication blog to a dynamic two-way conversation space. This will ensure that a wider range of experts can contribute to the work of the LCH through virtual conversations. Where possible, this role will include the use of appropriate offline face to face engagements.

3) Supporting communication and interface with digital engagement tools

Ryan will support communication and interface with digital engagement tools through the above two actives. Firstly, practitioner work groups will be supported offline using the communication app ‘Slack’ - a computer and mobile app that combines functions found within email, WhatsApp and Google Drive. Ryan will support setting up the various Slack ‘channels’ and encouraging the delivery of action. Second, Ryan will support On The Platform by working with developers to add new functionality to the website, commissioning content and moderating public conversation.

4) Developing an understanding of the broad climate change and environmental governance network as it is currently constructed and support the effort to widen the network.

Ryan will develop an understanding of the climate change and environmental governance network by conducting a stakeholder analysis. This will be done utilising census data, survey data from the GM Low Carbon Hub and GMCA and other public demographic data that is publicly available. Ryan will assist efforts to widen the
governance network by supporting engagement actives related to the 2019 Mayor of Greater Manchester’s Green Summit.

4.0 INTEGRATION WITH WIDER GMCA PROCESSES

The Realising Just Cities programme is testing and learning about many different ways to get citizens and civil society engaged in decision-making. We have a range of projects which use different methods – from citizens juries, to photovoice methods, to participatory walks and exhibitions – to develop spaces for collective problem solving. The topics we work on include housing, spatial planning, procurement, digital decision-making, savings, food justice, care at home, the roles of councillors and energy democracy, for instance. We are assembling a strong evidence base of different ways of when (and when not) to put co-production into practice.

Building on our role in the Green Summit, we have initiated a wider conversation with the GMCA at a strategic policy level. We are developing a proposal for sign off with the Wider Leadership Team, to work with GMCA to support internal capacity building and learning about co-production. The lessons from the Green Summit process to date and in the future will be part of this process.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board are recommended to:

- discuss and feedback on the proposal
- note the contribution and value to date of the partnership in supporting participation leading up to and at the 2018 Green Summit
- note the plans for integration of learning within wider GMCA processes