

GM HOUSING FIRST, PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION

Date: 23/10/2025

Subject: Update on Strategic Infrastructure Priorities

Report of Peter Emery (Independent Chair Greater Manchester Strategic Infrastructure Board)

Purpose of Report

This paper provides a briefing on the Greater Manchester Strategic Infrastructure Board (SIB) and priorities for 2025/26.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

1. Note the contents of the paper and priorities.
2. Identify specific issues or areas where members would like to receive additional information and briefings on.

Contact Officers

David Hodcroft: david.hodcroft@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

1. Introduction/Background

Purpose and Role

- 1.1 Established: 2019, to address the 11 critical infrastructure challenges identified in the [Greater Manchester Infrastructure Framework](#).
- 1.2 Purpose: To convene strategic-level organisations responsible for Greater Manchester's infrastructure, provide strategic oversight, coordinate responses, and identify interdependencies across the region's infrastructure landscape.
- 1.3 Accountability: The SIB is accountable to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Business Board (formerly the Local Enterprise Partnership).

Membership

- 1.4 Membership comprises:
 - Chair (since 2024) Peter Emery (see Annex A)
 - Permanent Members: United Utilities, SP Electricity North West, Cadent, Environment Agency.
 - Other Representatives: Chief Resilience Officer (Greater Manchester Resilience Forum), Directors of Place and Environment (GMCA), Chair of the Digital Infrastructure Advisory Group.
 - Invited Participants: National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA), Homes England, Natural England, National Highways, Network Rail, Transport for Greater Manchester, National Grid, National Energy System Operator (NESO).
 - Governance: Meets quarterly, with the Chair appointed by GMCA approval. Membership and leadership are reviewed at least every two years.

2. Priorities for 2025/26

- 2.1 Strategic Priorities:

- Maximising Devolution: Transitioning from a nationally driven system to one led locally by GMCA, with enhanced transparency and accountability.
- Strengthen GMCA Input: Into company plans, regulatory reviews, and regional constructs (e.g., National Energy System Operator).
- Deepen Links: With regulators and government departments (e.g. Defra Sir Jon Cunliffe review of the water sector/Water White Paper/Future Flood Funding)
- Tactical Initiatives: Build on progress through: Streetworks Pilot, Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) and Integrated Infrastructure Pipeline.

2.2 Challenges and opportunities (identified in 2024) to mature ways of working

1. Strengthen collaborative working and integrated approaches across organizations to break down silos and promote shared learning.
2. Enhance project and pipeline coordination by establishing joint planning forums and shared systems for tracking progress.
3. Strengthen communication channels and escalation processes to ensure timely and effective information sharing and problem resolution.
4. Foster a culture of innovation and efficiency by actively seeking opportunities for improvement and adopting best practices.
5. Align regulatory frameworks with local priorities by engaging with national bodies and advocating for flexible, responsive policies.

2.3 Recommendations for Future Action to implement in 2025/26

1. Project Management-Led Approach: Integrate project management principles, establish a “lessons learned” bank, and focus on strategic outcomes.
2. Centralised Coordination Framework: Designate single points of contact, create working groups for joint projects, and develop a strategic communication plan.

3. Strengthen Engagement with Regulators: Formalise engagement, contribute to regulatory reviews, position GM as a testbed for innovation, and advocate for regulatory flexibility and data sharing.

2.4 Headline actions from the October Board meeting (chair will present at the meeting):

1. Input for Stronger LRF Trailblazer Programme (Resilience)
2. Escalation of Infrastructure Gaps and Challenges
3. Partnership Maturity and Terms of Reference
4. Strategic Engagement and Alignment
5. Integrated Pipeline Development
6. Infrastructure Delivery Plans supporting Local Plan
7. Engagement with Economic Regulators and Government Departments
8. Feedback on AI Growth Zone Bid and Data Centre Strategy

Annex A

Chair's Biography: Peter Emery

- **Background:** Over four decades in energy and infrastructure, with leadership roles in Esso, ExxonMobil, Drax Power, and as Chief Executive of Electricity North West.
- **Key Achievements:** Led Drax's transformation to a major renewable generator, chaired the White Rose Carbon Capture and Storage Project, and oversaw the transition of Electricity North West to a Distribution System Operator model.
- **Current Roles:** Chair of the SIB, Chair of the Greater Manchester Energy Innovation Agency, Board member of Innovation Greater Manchester, and non-executive roles at Network Plus, Adven, and Enfinium. Vice Chair of the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.
- **Expertise:** Recognised for leadership in energy transition, stakeholder engagement, and infrastructure innovation. Fellow of the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining.