



## **Greater Manchester 5YEP Partnership**

Date: 22 January 2026

Subject: Challenge Group Updates

Report of: Challenge Group Chairs/Vice Chairs

---

### **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to outline the progress made by the Challenge Groups in supporting delivery of the Five Year Environment Plan (5YEP).

### **Recommendations:**

The Partnership is asked to:

- Note the progress in developing the Mission Based Approach and the associated Challenge Groups.
- Consider any particular issues raised by the challenge group chairs or vice chairs.

### **Contact Officers:**

[Mark.Atherton@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:Mark.Atherton@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

[Robyn.Smith@greatermanchesrer-ca.gov.uk](mailto:Robyn.Smith@greatermanchesrer-ca.gov.uk)

## **1.0 Introduction**

The purpose of the Challenge Groups is:

- Deliver the 5YEP work programme
- Report back on progress and key challenges/barriers to the Green City Region Partnership
- Work in collaboration with other challenge groups to identify cross cutting issues.

The new Five Year Environment Plan committed to continuing the Mission Based Approach whilst refreshing the governance and delivery system. The challenge groups have provided feedback on the mission-based approach and how it can be improved going into delivery of the new 5YEP. The challenge group work programme and task and finish groups reflect the feedback and next steps for delivery are outlined below.

## **2.0 Bee Net Zero**

### **Overview**

The BNZ Board have received updates from Chris Taylor of the Broadway Initiative on the government's future plans for business support on sustainability, from Chris Fletcher of the GM Chamber on the Local Skills Improvement Plan, and from TfGM on the Local Transport Plan (and how the BNZ board can feed into the delivery plan consultation). The Board have also looked into how to potentially work with Mayoral Development Corporations (MDCs) on business engagement and sustainability, Marketing Manchester's work on the Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) Index, and the next stages of the Local Industrial Decarbonisation Plan (LIDP) project at Stakehill industrial estate in Rochdale. Note that Steve Connor (Creative Concern) left the partnership following October's board meeting, with the interim Chair being Laura Percy (Muse Developments)

## **Task and Finish Group Updates**

- Comms & Engagement – first meeting held on 28-Nov, where it was agreed that activity needs to be based around a four-stage engagement funnel (awareness -> interest -> action -> advocacy). Immediate priorities and next steps are to refresh the BNZ website, map the group's networks and activity, and create a commercial retrofit campaign. Next meeting: 20-Jan
- Industrial Decarbonisation – first meeting held on 21-Nov, where it was agreed that the group needs a place-based focus treating businesses as partners rather than customers, seeing what can be achieved over the next 12 months with a “Start small, scale later” approach. Immediate priorities and next steps are to compile a longlist of businesses to engage on priorities to discuss and finalise at the next meeting on 30-Jan
- Green Skills – first meeting held on 03-Dec, where it was agreed that a system-wide and place-based approach is required, co-designing data-led interventions with employers and providers. Proposed initial focus areas are organising events, direct engagement with and referrals into businesses (e.g., for placements), and sense-checking research & consultations, to be discussed at the next meeting on 23-Jan
- Supply Chain Development – kick-off in-person workshop to be held on 26-Jan, where partners will discuss how they can help deliver against relevant priorities set out in the GMS Delivery Plan, Five-Year Environment Plan 2025-2030, and the Low Carbon Sector Development Plan

## **Next steps**

- Next BNZ board meeting on 04-Feb (confirmed agenda items: (i) Green Economy's sector mapping research; (ii) update on next steps following Deloitte's retrofit study)

## **3.0 Low Carbon**

### **Overview**

A new agenda structure has been adopted for the challenge group meetings. The meetings will alternate focus between Aim 1 and Aim 2 of the 5YEP alongside

updates from the task and finish group leads. The last meeting focused on Aim 1 Energy Infrastructure with presentations on GB Energy, the North West Local Power Plan and the commercial rooftop solar offer. This provided updates at a national, regional and local level.

### **Task and Finish Group Updates**

- Low Carbon Heating in Industry Group – the group held it's first meeting ahead of the challenge group and four key areas emerged: grant funding constraints, skills and training, resident engagement planning and innovation. As a way forward, GMCA will take the lead on the grant funding aspect. For the innovation and skills/training themes, members have been encouraged to reach out directly to the social housing colleagues who attended, as these issues may be best addressed in one-to-one conversations. It is vital to the success of the Industry Group that members actively take the lead on themes most relevant to their own delivery. Regarding the resident engagement plan, a task and finish group has been proposed to maintain momentum in addressing the key issues.
- Community Energy Group – the work programme for this group is being developed based on the outcomes from Carbon Coops work on community energy. The membership list is also being developed and a meeting will be held in the next 2 months.
- Hydrogen Strategy Delivery – this group will continue on from the

### **Next steps**

- The challenge group will continue to develop the task and finish groups ensuring that they meet at least quarterly.
- The next meeting of the challenge group will focus Aim 2 Buildings.

## **4.0 Natural Capital Group**

### **Overview**

The latest meeting of the NCG focused on several agenda items including Offsite Biodiversity Net Gain, Cyan Lines, IPBES 12 Session Ecosystem Services, LNRS Delivery and the Green Summit.

### **Task and Finish Group Updates**

As part of the LNRS update options for group structure, governance and delivery focus were presented. The proposals included thematic working groups, outcome-based hubs, and streamlined structures. Members raised concerns about the capacity to resource multiple subgroups and the risk of siloed working. Suggestions included focusing on outcomes, simplifying structures, and leveraging existing partnerships to avoid duplication and maximise delivery. The need to integrate with wider strategies and social outcomes was highlighted and an outcomes-based approach that integrates nature recovery with broader social objectives such as health, skills, and community engagement was suggested.

### **Next Steps**

- The GMCA team will take on board the governance feedback and develop the new governance structure and task and finish groups.
- ELMS was highlighted as an item to bring back to the next meeting.

## **5.0 Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)**

### **Overview**

The SCP Challenge Group has paused meeting while the governance arrangements and membership are being reviewed and refreshed. A meeting will be held with existing group ahead of the next Partnership to get approval from the current challenge group members. The updated arrangements include greater alignment with the Communications Challenge Group and the Bee Net Zero Board to deliver the 5YEP actions for residents and businesses alongside new task and finish groups.

### **Task and Finish Group Updates**

Four task and finish groups have been identified to support delivery in this area: construction, public sector levers, plastics and textiles. Alongside these the GM Food Board has been set up and held its first meeting.

### **Next Steps**

Approve and agree the new governance arrangements and set up initial task and finish group meetings.

## **6.0 Green Communications Delivery Challenge Group**

### **Topics discussed**

The last challenge group meeting continued to focus on campaign sharing and amplification and further development of the challenge groups.

### **Future priorities/work/topics**

- Supporting 5YEP communications.
- Continuing to utilise each other's channels and networks to amplify communications. A formal system has been developed to keep track of upcoming campaigns and events.
- Work on delivery of the sustainable lifestyles programme of work, setting up new task and finish groups when they are needed.
- A newsletter is being developed to engage with the new contacts collected through the green summit workshop.

### **Next steps**

The challenge group will continue its focus on campaign sharing and supporting green summit delivery. It will also support future work on sustainable lifestyles being developed as part of the ongoing behavioural insights research.

## **7.0 5 YEP Environment Forum**

### **Topics discussed**

- Following on from previous requests from the Forum a deep dive on transport and air quality was presented by TfGM.

- An overview of the Q2 progress report was presented
- Feedback on a suggested community event was provided.
- The Hydrogen Strategy Consultation that has now gone live will be highlighted to the Forum.
- 

**Next steps**

- The Forum will be encouraged to support the upcoming community focused event and ongoing community engagement.