

GMCA Low Carbon: Generation & Storage Projects

Community Energy

Schools Solar

Steven Hassall

Schools Solar Programme

Phase 1 Collective Procurement

The GM Powering Our Schools campaign has two parts:

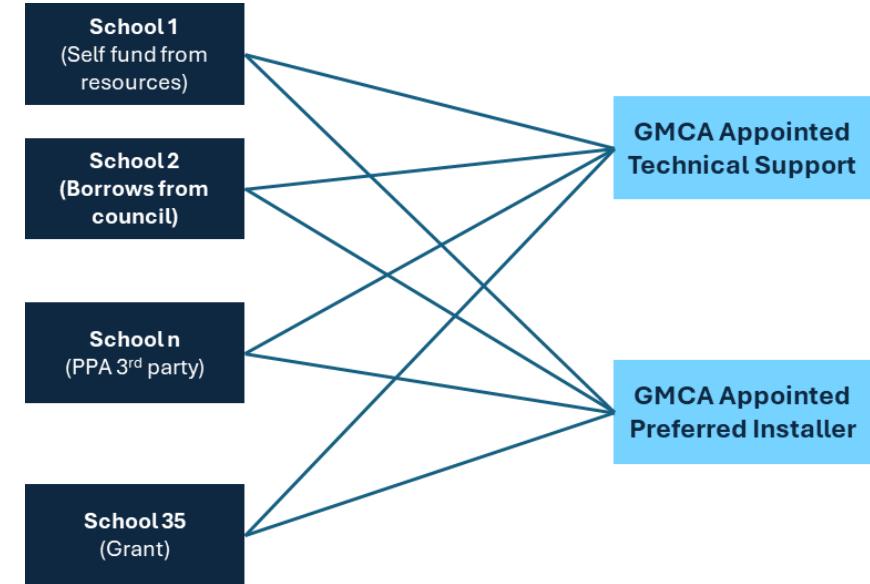
1. **Resources** to help empower any school on deciding whether to install PV and to signpost to an accredited installer for those wanting to 'go it alone'.
2. Solar power **collective purchase offer** that publicly funded schools can register interest to participate in.

Resources

Resources include guidance, case studies and a solar PV calculator. All schools can access these resources that are hosted on dedicated webpages on the Green City Region [website](#). The website also advertises the opportunity to register interest in the collective purchase exercise.

Collective purchase exercise

For publicly funded schools GMCA is offering a centrally managed collective purchase exercise via the GM Go Neutral procurement framework. Centralised resources will support the schools and LAs throughout the process from expressing an interest through to installation and commissioning (slide 7). This approach builds upon the previous successful GM Solar Together collective purchase exercise for homeowners that achieved a circa 30% discount on panel prices.

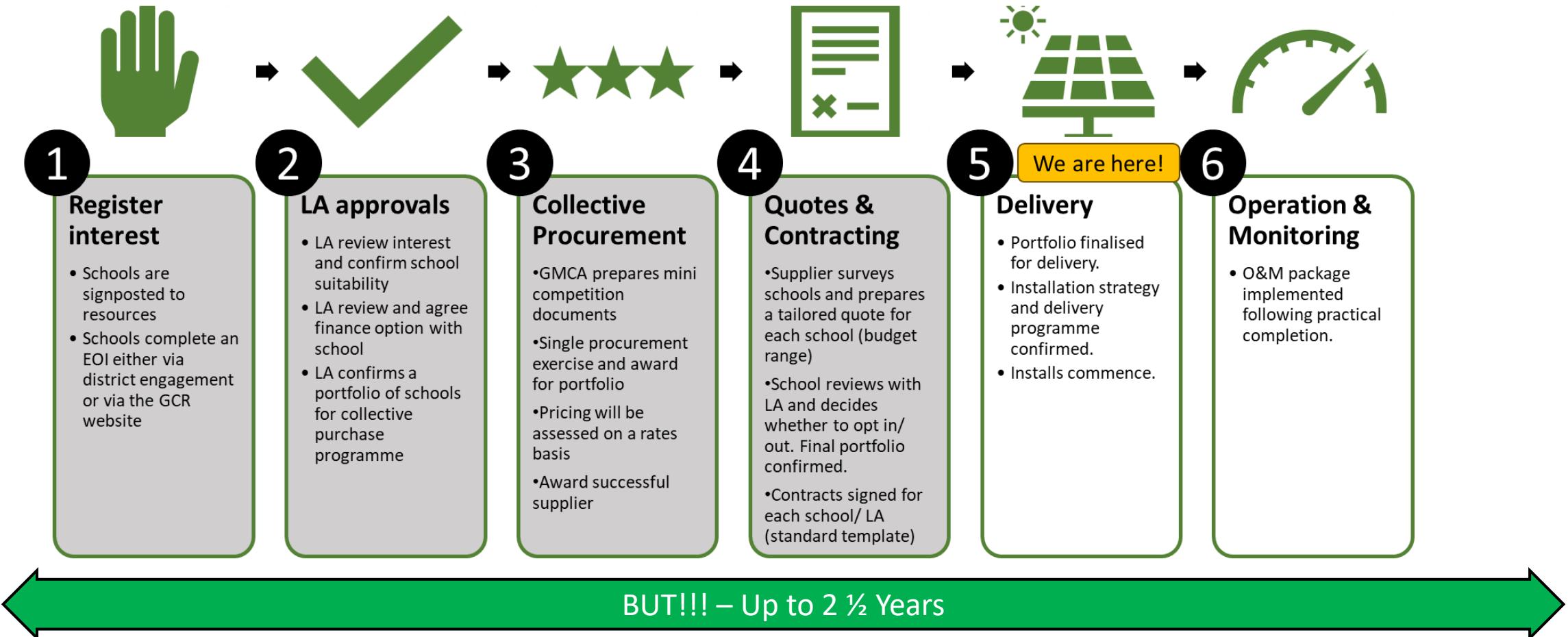


Re-cap: What is Powering our Schools?

- Collective purchase initiative to increase uptake of rooftop solar PV on schools across Greater Manchester
- Facilitated by GMCA and supported by local authority partners
- Barker Associates appointed as Owners Engineer and contracts administrator
- NPS Solar awarded 'Preferred Bidder' status to undertake design and installation
- 35 schools signed up to install solar in this pilot phase



The Collective Procurement Customer Journey



What progress have we made so far?



**Worthington Primary School, Trafford
(Trafford Council)**
Self-funded - £30k cost
Payback in <4 years
Annual generation 30Mwh
Annual savings £8k



**Longsight Community Primary, Manchester
(Big Life Trust)**
Self-funded - £37k cost
Payback in <8 years
Annual generation 33Mwh
Annual savings £5k



**Unity Community Primary, Manchester
(Big Life Trust)**
Self-funded - £60k cost
Payback in <7 years
Annual generation 66Mwh
Annual savings £9k

Installations also completed at: St Paul's C of E Primary and St Augustine's C of E Primary, Manchester

GREATER MANCHESTER <small>DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT</small>	Programme Manager	Project Manager
	Steven Hassall	Charlotte Brown
Project	Powering our Schools	
Report for	Energy & Public Decarbonisation Project Board	
Reporting period	December 25	

Key Risk	Completed Mitigation	Impact	Escalation
Pipeline disruption due to school drop out (limited capacity to engage, changing financial position)	Continued engagement with schools, CA/LA support to reduce resource burden, development of alternative proposition (PPA)	Medium	No - managed at delivery level
Programme delays to existing pipeline due to Treasury pausing PPAs for academies	Engaging with DfE – we have shared draft PPA docs which we think satisfy concerns; Prioritising other schools in pipeline; Applied to MRF to de-risk	Medium	Not at this stage



What challenges have we experienced along the way?

The programme has been running for 2 ½ years and while it achieved low install prices (collective procurement worked we believe) the customer journey is very slow and the programme admin cost very high.

Key challenges:

- **Loss of local champion** - Stakeholder buy-in changes as staff turnover
- **Budgets change** – funds get reallocated over time
- **Rigid decision-making process** – governing bodies generally meet once per term
- **Prospect of academisation** - has raised uncertainties for schools and local authorities

Each of these needs to be unlocked and built into future programme phases but **funding** is key

Behind the scenes

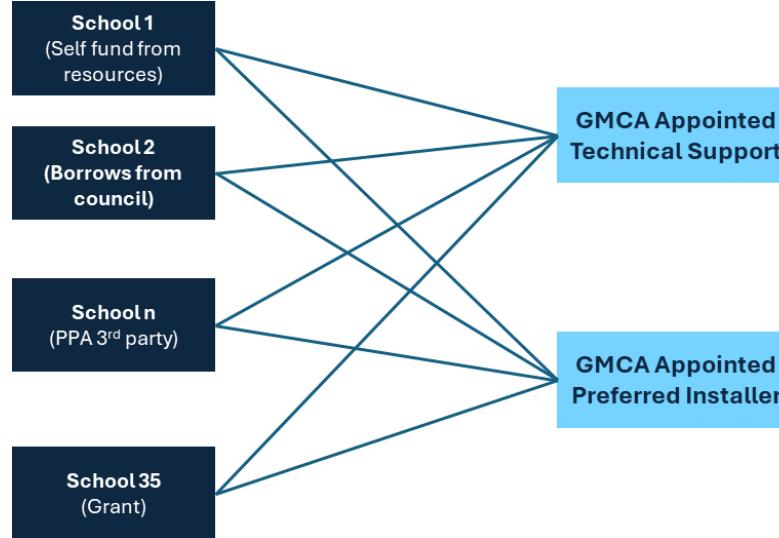
Key questions we've been considering:

- 1400 schools across GM – how can we accelerate decarbonisation and what are the funding options available for different types of schools?
- How does academisation need to be considered? Is it even a risk?
- What additional interventions could be offered to schools?
- What additional support would schools and local authorities benefit from?
- How can we improve, accelerate and streamline the ‘customer journey’ for a school?
- Who are the key stakeholders that need to be engaged from day 1?

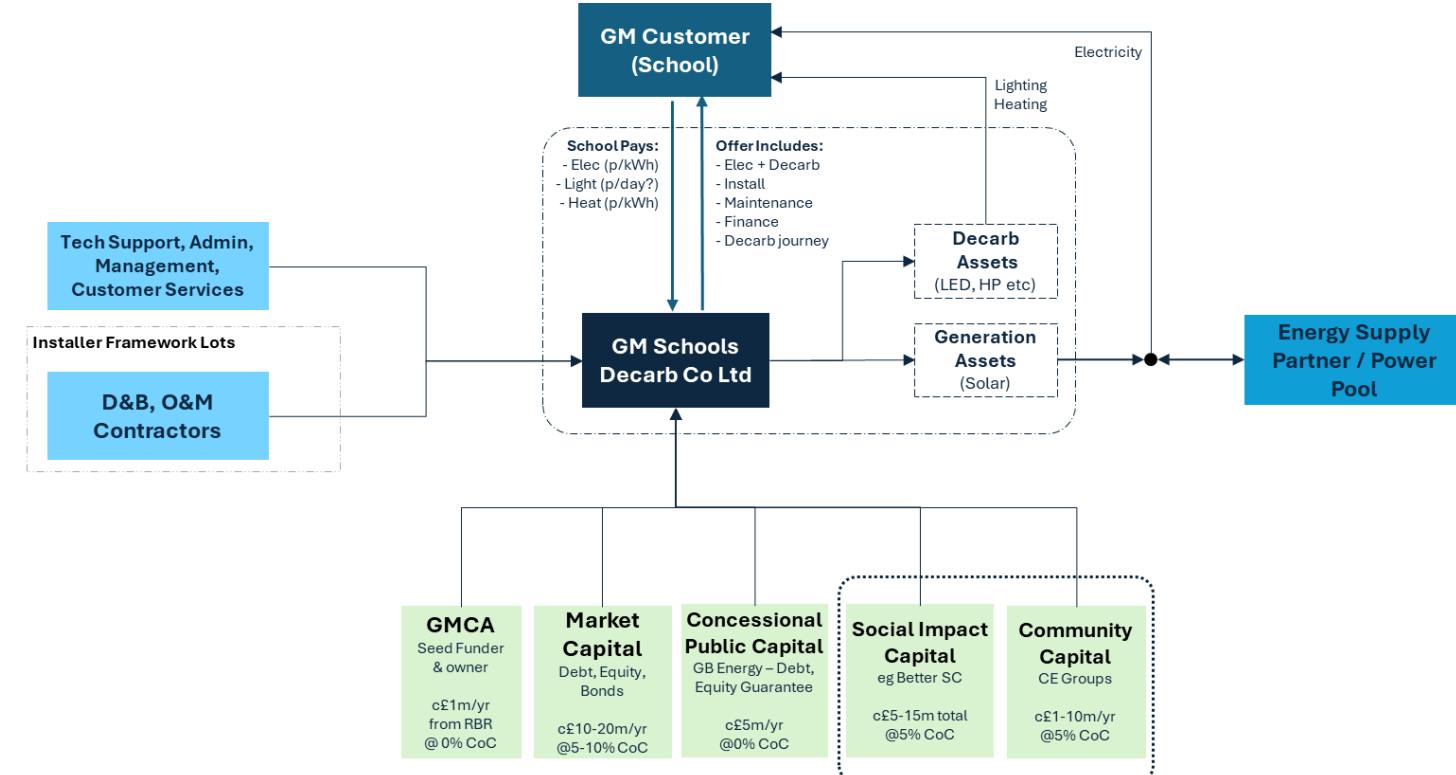
Schools Decarbonisation Proposition

Powering our Schools Phase 1 & 2

Phase 1 Approach – Bulk Procurement with Technical Support



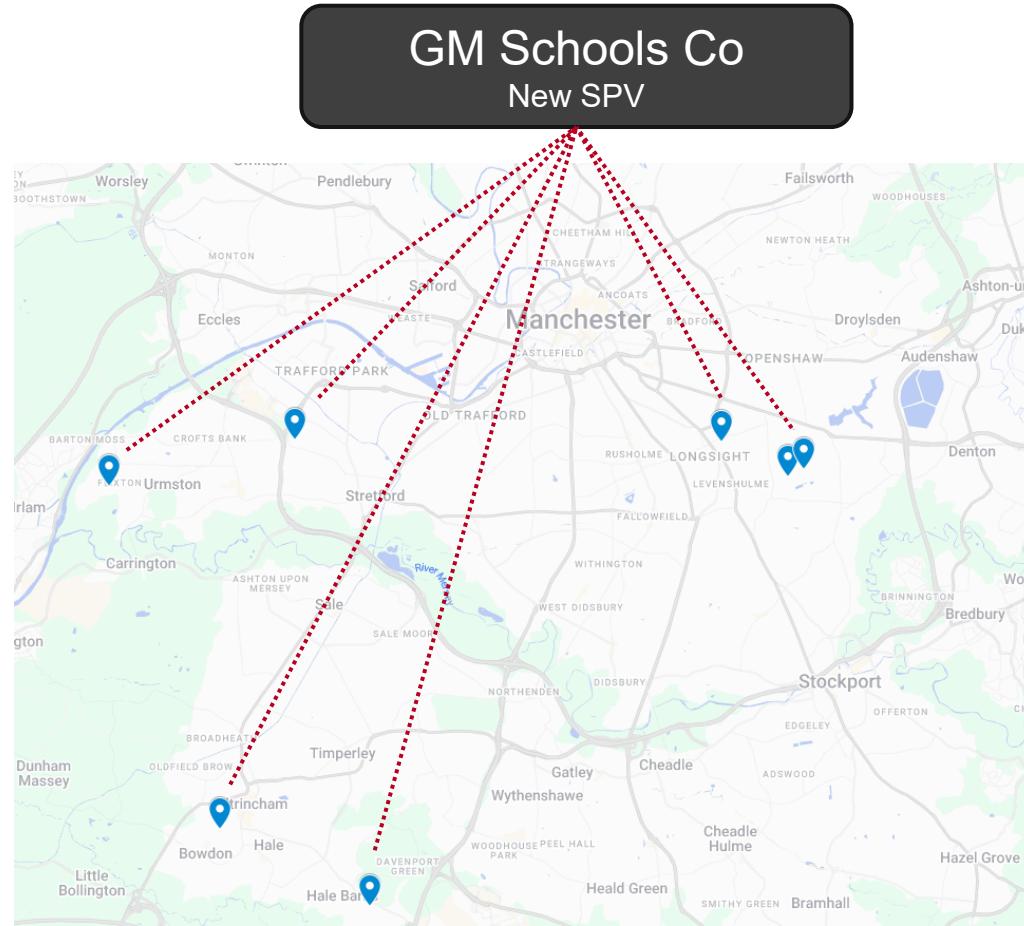
Phase 2 Approach – Complete services & finance proposition for solar & decarb through SPV



MRF 2 – Second Round – GMCA Fund for Schools PPA

In the first round of MRF, GMCA is the grant recipient. We will be procuring assets that will be installed on schools to sell power.

This is acting as a pilot for our new schools decarbonisation proposition that we are developing - with income from this leveraged and recycled to invest in future schools through our new schools delivery vehicle.



Our school client for this pilot is Brighter Futures Academy Trust.

Total installation size is 1MW and a total investment of £750k

Projected savings on energy bill from the tariff will be c£1million over 20-years

School	kW	p/kWh
Gorton Education Village	535	11
Rushbrook Primary Academy	103	15.7
Acre Hall Primary School	74	16.6
Stanley Grove Primary Academy	63	15.6
The Orchards	34.32	17.3
Altrincham Grammar School for Girls	145.6	18.5
Elmridge Primary School	49.92	21

GM Community Energy & Public Sector Collaboration

What is the role for community energy in Greater Manchester and can the public sector support it

Draft Report

Steven Hassall
Programme Manager (Low Carbon), GMCA

Purpose and Motivation

- **Purpose:**
 - Understand how GMCA can partner with community energy sector - to accelerate clean power - crowd in local capital.
 - The report identifies where CE fits, how it complements municipal action, and what enabling steps unlock scale.
- **Motivation:**
 - The **Local Power Plan** (LPP) opens a window to grow municipal & community energy and formalise collaboration across GM's institutions and VCSE sector.
 - How can the sector spend £400m per year investment from LPP
- **Focus:**
 - **Test public–community partnerships as delivery models** for energy infrastructure—starting with practical, near-term interventions (standard templates, mapping, match-making, PPAs).
- **Outcome:**
 - A prioritised action plan, rooted in case studies and interviews, with specific opportunities, barriers, and enabling actions to move from pilots to a repeatable model.

**Carbon
Co-op** **REGEN**



Community Energy : State of the Sector Greater Manchester 25 years of activity

Produced by

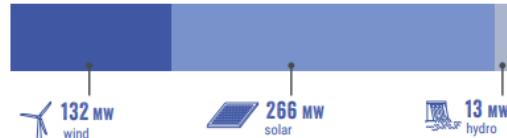


Community energy in the UK 2024

RENEWABLE ENERGY GENERATION

UK TOTAL RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY CAPACITY

411 MW capacity



UK TOTAL RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY GENERATION

575 GWh produced in 2024 equivalent to powering **212,963** domestic households for a year



Our survey has evolved over time so not all the statistics were gathered in earlier years

ORGANISATIONS AND PEOPLE

COMMUNITY ENERGY ORGANISATIONS IN THE SECTOR

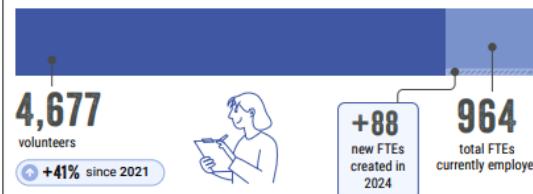
614 organisations +24% since 2021



ORGANISATION STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

212,960 members +46% since 2021

WORKFORCE

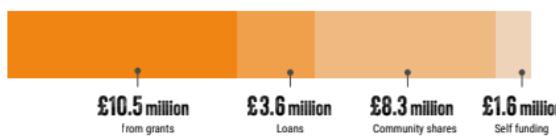


FINANCE

TOTAL ORGANISATIONAL TURNOVER

£68.5 million turnover

£24 million secured



FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO LOCAL ECONOMY

£24.5 million contributed to local economies from organisational expenditure and community benefit funds

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

£1.86 million in bill savings



CE in Greater Manchester (since 2012)

12 Organisations

1.1 MW Solar + Hydro

c£2m Solar + Hydro

5% Average Returns

State of the Sector

Composition of Organisations

CE in Greater Manchester
(since 2012)

Organisations 12

Capacity 1.1 MW

Investment c£2m

Rate of Return 5%

Community energy organisation	Primary Activity	Current installed capacity (kWp)	Latest annual generation (MWh)
CORE Projects Society Limited	Generation (new entrant)	Feasibility stage	N/A
Greater Manchester Community Renewables	Generation (solar)	730	535
Greater Manchester Treestation	Biomass production	N/A	N/A
Middleton Community Power (reg. under Middleton Co-operating)	Generation (new entrant)	Feasibility stage	N/A
Oldham Community Power Ltd	Generation (solar)	220	150
People Powered Energy Limited	Energy reduction (public sites)	-	-
People Powered Retrofit Ltd	Energy reduction (domestic)	N/A	N/A
Saddleworth Hydro	Generation (hydro)	51	317
Society for the Reduction of Carbon (Carbon Co-op)	Energy reduction (domestic)	Feasibility stage	N/A
Solar for Schools CBS	Generation (solar)	30	22
St. John's Sunshine	Generation (solar)	3.7	2
Stockport Hydro Limited	Generation (hydro)	68	220
Total		1.1MWp	1.246GWh

CE Opportunities in GM

Rooftop Solar PV (Public & Commercial)

Opportunity: £100-200m in public and up to £300m in commercial

Public-good & community buildings: schools, leisure, health, civic, faith, community hubs.

What unlocks it: standard PPA/lease pack, recognised models, public joint venture, pre-approved installer framework.

Small/med ground-mount & wind (sub-5 MW)

Opportunity: Direct wire study ongoing

Can't connect solar over 5MW currently.

Asset class could work for community energy in partnership with public sector or direct wire

What unlocks it: Challenge to find cost effective land/connection and public procurement

Larger assets with shared ownership (>5 MW)

Shared Ownership Means: A defined community stake in a larger developer-led project—typically via (a) **equity slice** in the project SPV, (b) **revenue-share** linked to output, (c) a **community bond**.

Benefit: Community brings local capital and support

What unlocks it: standard recognised investor friendly models and political support

Partnership & Intervention Options

Categories 1 to 3

Capacity & Coordination

Stand up a **GM Community Energy support/coordination body** to act as a front door for LAs, estates, and CE groups; provide advice, templates, and light-touch project assurance.

Convene a **CE taskforce/working group** (GMCA, LAs, CE orgs, DNO, NHS/education estates, NW Net Zero Hub)

Examples: staffed helpdesk; quarterly CE forum; region-wide pipeline tracker and RAG dashboard.

Funding & Finance

Commission options and launch a **GM CE Fund** covering feasibility, start-up costs, and micro-grants to accelerate early-stage origination.

Create a **PPA enablement package**: standard term sheets, guidance on direct/virtual/sleeved PPAs, and access to a panel of legal/financial advisers;

Explore a sleeved-pool model under a regional accelerator.

Project Origination & Tools

Establish a **matchmaking service** that connects CE groups with public/community estate owners (schools, leisure, health, dioceses, housing associations) and private hosts with strong community ties.

Build a **city-region rooftop PV mapping tool** for public and community buildings with roof suitability, irradiance, ownership, grid notes, and indicative business cases.

Examples: quarterly “sites-to-projects” brokerage events; inbound site nomination form; pre-screened site lists for each LA.

Partnership & Intervention Options

Categories 4 to 6

Standardisation & Process

Publish a **template suite**: PPAs, leases, O&M/maintenance schedules, and due-diligence checklists; include sector-specific annexes for schools and health.

Issue a **procurement playbook** with three model routes (light, standard, complex), decision trees, typical timelines, and data-room requirements to reduce cycle time.

Examples: server hosted documents with version control; financial mods standard heads of terms; model risk register and QA plan.

Policy & Planning

Adopt **GM-wide planning guidance** that recognises CE schemes, clarifies information requirements, and streamlines small-scale renewables where community benefit is evidenced.

Embed **shared-ownership** or community-participation asks in local policies and the regional energy strategy to signal expectations to developers.

Examples: planning note/SPD addendum; checklist for community participation statements; officer training pack.

Investment, Engagement & Profile

Coordinate **share-offer amplification** and a **place-based fundraising platform** to mobilise local investors and keep capital circulating in GM.

Reinstate a **peer-learning and showcase** series (e.g., a quarterly forum) to share case studies, templates, and performance dashboards.

Examples: “Invest in Your Borough’s Power” campaign assets; media toolkit; standard impact dashboard (savings, CO₂, community funds).

Next Steps – Fundraising Capacity Building

A targeted grant to support development

Overview – A short, practical project to assess and then kick-start a Greater Manchester Community Energy and Capital intermediary that links GMCA, local community energy groups, public sector asset owners and partners (e.g., GBE Local) to accelerate renewables delivery and unlock local investment.

Project Modelling & Requirements – Rapid “for instance” modelling of typical schemes (starting with PV on schools), producing case studies and a requirements matrix covering functions, operating model, capital needs, risk profile and mitigation requirements to define what the intermediary must do.

Investor & Platform Research – Targeted research and interviews with finance platforms and sector experts to map realistic sources of capital (community, retail, social, institutional), assess fundraising capacity in Greater Manchester, and set out options for a GM-owned/managed fundraising platform versus using existing platforms.

Governance & Corporate Models – Desk research and practitioner engagement to test governance structures (e.g., community benefit society, JV/SPV/CIC-linked models), clarify roles between delivery and finance entities, and identify what's needed to collaborate effectively with public sector partners.

Options, Pilot & Business Plan – An options analysis that scores models against the requirements matrix, followed by phase 2 work to commission specialist advice, run an early pilot capital raise (potentially via an interim vehicle), and deliver a costed business plan and action plan to establish and scale the intermediary.

Recommendations

The Partnership is requested to comment on:

Schools Solar Programme – do you see value in the proposition and the new approach and would you be interested in supporting this?

Investor & Platform Research – Are you in agreement that the community energy sector in Greater Manchester needs support and do you agree with the approach we are suggesting