

September 2020

GMCA and the Climate Emergency

A guide to accompany the
Mayor's Green Summit



By Climate Emergency Manchester and
Supporters

Introduction

This guide is produced by Climate Emergency Manchester for citizens of Greater Manchester interested in GMCA action on climate change. It is intended to accompany the Mayor's Green Summit running ([online](#)) from 21st - 24th September 2020. This will be the third Green Summit. The first (2018) set out ambitions; the second (2019) launched a plan. This third summit should be 'the implementation one'. From this summit on, we really need to talk about delivery as a priority. It is the first summit since the GMCA's declaration of a climate emergency in July 2019; there should be a sense of urgency.

Purpose

The guide aims to help all those watching, participating or wanting to participate to frame queries and ask tough questions. It is offered in the spirit of 'challenge' and 'pushing us to go further' that Mayor Andy Burnham encouraged at last year's summit. Firstly, it suggests ten points to look out for - we need public scrutiny. Secondly, it sets out some observations on the feasibility of the 5-year environment plan, though does not seek to provide a comprehensive assessment of GMCA progress to date. Thirdly, it provides a very short introduction to GMCA, along with a basic glossary and timeline.

We do not want re-announcements or double-counting, or previous pledges quietly retired. With these resources, we hope that even those who have not previously engaged with these issues at the City-Region level can start to question and critique.

Ten things to look out for at the summit

Tweet if you hear the following @climateemergmcr

1

Mind the Gap – The Gap was the surprise guest at last year’s summit. The Gap is the difference between the commitments being made by GM and the projections provided by the Tyndall Centre (‘science based’) and the SCATTER analysis tool of what GM needs to do to keep within its carbon budget. In other words, the GAP is an acknowledgement that the 5-year plan is currently set to fail...only as it has just begun.

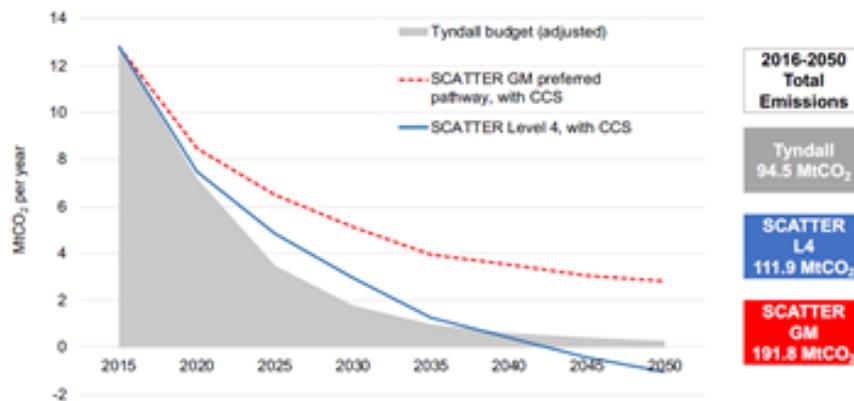


Figure 1 – Potential Carbon Reduction Pathways for Greater Manchester; Source: Anthesis

The Gap: GMCA Environment Plan, Executive Summary (p.4)

2

Innovation – What we are relying on to solve ‘the gap’. One year on from announcing that something-yet-to-be-discovered would make the plan viable, we are looking out for a little more specificity (or realism).

3

Numbers - Listen out for the use of ‘plain English’ numbers. Fine words without figures get the crowd going, but do not take account of the scale of the challenge. At the same time, dense statistics alone can boggle. State clearly, for example, how many homes need heat pumps and how many have been fitted so far?

4

Pilots - Are the initiatives announced still (one year into the plan) pilot projects? If so, when will they scale up to deal with the issue at a regional level? There are lots of projects being 'showcased' at the summit, but we need to remember the importance of delivering at scale.

5

European funding – How many of the actions showcased are dependent on EU project funding? Reliance on EU funding is a risk; the extent to which future UK projects can receive EU funding is currently uncertain.

6

Practitioners and Trade Unions - Following on from a question posted directly to the Mayor at the 2019 summit, by a representative from the construction industry, how are GMCA engaging practitioners? And are Trade Unions on board?

7

Case studies from other cities - Attendees will likely hear at least one of the following lines (or variations thereof): 'leading the way', 'first and fastest', 'doing things differently'. Maybe this rhetoric matched the first two summits. Now that we are onto delivery, and now that many other cities and city-regions have climate action plans, it would be interesting to learn of examples when Manchester is learning from others.

8

Meaningful involvement of young people - This year's summit is co-hosted by the Youth Combined Authority. This is to be commended. But attendees of all generations should look out for 'youthwashing' and ensuring that the young people present are given a meaningful platform. There are even some more pragmatic pledges that could be made. For example, promising to pay all young people who speak at GMCA events for their time.

9

Relationship with the ten local authorities - Previous green summits have focused on bringing people together. This is great, but many citizens remain unclear about the powers of the Combined Authority beyond 'convening'. What are the policy levers that it can pull? . A clear explanation of how the GMCA plan relates to that of the ten other local authorities (each of whom have their own plans, and emergency declarations) would minimise confusion... and reassure fears that foot-dragging by any one council will not hold back the whole Combined Authority.

10

Justice - The words 'justice' 'just' and 'fair' are entirely absent from the 5-year environment plan. How will GM ensure that the most vulnerable people and communities are not further disadvantaged?

Delivering the 5-year environment plan

Why this could be the great challenge

The Climate Emergency Declaration and the Environment Plan include important targets on carbon emissions, transport, energy, buildings, and climate change adaptation, and they guide the work of the GMCA and its partners. The targets have been criticised in some quarters for insufficient ambition, not least because of the gap between GM targets and the Tyndall centre's projections of what Greater Manchester's fair contribution to climate mitigation should be.

However, the bigger risk could be in failure to deliver the targets in the plan, especially as coronavirus threatens to derail progress (e.g. delays to planned Clean Air Zones). The lockdown conditions suppressed emissions such that "If the current level of emissions were to be maintained for the remainder of the year, Greater Manchester would (for the first time) be on track to meet our Climate Change commitments of carbon neutral by 2038" (2020 GM Climate Emergency Update, p.3). But can Manchester continue to deliver progress towards climate neutrality and other environmental targets amid the serious health and socio-economic challenges presented by Covid-19?

The rhetoric of the green summit will rightly be about 'building back better', placing the environment and climate neutrality at the centre of the response to the crisis. But will there be pressure from other areas to water down or ignore commitments, and can this be resisted?

For example, as those watching Manctopia will know, property development in the city is a huge and lucrative but also risky business. Will the promised construction standards for energy efficiency and low carbon heating in new builds be carried through in the GM Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment, or might developers pressure for this to be dropped to reduce risk of bankruptcy or mothballing?

These issues, like the ongoing problem of Manchester Airport, can put the GMCA and its Local Authorities in a bind as they seek to reconcile climate and environmental targets with political and economic pressures elsewhere. Civil society groups will need to lobby for changes to be delivered, and must scrutinise progress over time, if the important aims set out in the glossy plans are to be delivered.

A very short introduction to GMCA

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is the devolved combined authority of the 10 local authorities in Greater Manchester. It is made up of 11 members (indirectly elected councillors) derived from the councillors of Greater Manchester's constituent authorities, together with the Mayor of Greater Manchester.

It is a strategic authority with powers over public transport, skills, housing, regeneration, waste management, carbon neutrality and planning strategy. Functional executive bodies, such as Transport for Greater Manchester, are responsible for delivery of services in these areas.

The Mayor of Greater Manchester has far less power than the Mayor of London. He does not currently have many regulatory levers that give him the power to act. He has to largely lead by consent.



Timeline of GMCA action on climate

May 2017 - Election of Andy Burnham as the inaugural mayor of Greater Manchester. Manifesto promises a Mayor's Green Summit within a year of the election.

March 2018 - First Mayor's Green Summit

October 2018 - February 2019 (consultation, 'springboard report').

March 2019 - Second Mayor's Green Summit; launch of GMCA 5-year environment plan

July 2019 - GMCA declares a climate emergency

June 2020 - Climate Emergency Declaration Update and first 5-year Environment Plan annual report

September 2020 - Third Mayor's Green Summit

October 2020 - GM will launch a delayed consultation on Clean Air Zones

November 2020 - Eight-week public consultation opens on GM's Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment

May 2021 - Mayoral elections (rescheduled, due to COVID-19)

2027 - End of the current 5-year environment plan. By this point we need to have already made the largest and fastest cuts to CO2 emissions.

2028 - Date by which all new builds must be zero-carbon

2038 - GMCA target for carbon neutrality

Glossary

Anthesis

Sustainability consultants, with offices in Manchester. They use and developed the SCATTER tool for city-level GHG emissions reporting and target setting.

CAZ

Clear Air Zone, a proposed area in which HGVs, LGVs, buses and taxis are charged to enter the zone if they did not meet nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) emissions standards. Private cars would not be charged. Although a UK government directive, Greater Manchester CAZ was set to be the largest in the county. Its introduction has been pushed back due to coronavirus.

GMPF

GMPF - Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) currently invest around £1.8 billion in polluting fossil fuel companies such as Shell and BP (around 7.5% of their holdings) and have been hugely resistant to divestment. It claims carbon neutrality by 2050.

You can read more about the campaign by Fossil Free GM to persuade GMPF to divest in their briefing for GM councillors on GMPF response to calls to divest from fossil fuels.

GMSF

Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, a plan for how the city-region should develop. It covers the period up until 2037 and so has far-reaching consequences. Consultation on GMSPF closed in 2019. Now renamed Greater Manchester's Plan for Homes, Jobs and the Environment, a fresh round of consultation on the 2020 launch will begin in November.

TfGM

Transport for Greater Manchester, responsible for the Metrolink tram system (not buses). In terms of transport, pollution is measured in grams of carbon dioxide produced for every passenger kilometre travelled. As this is much lower for trains and trams (44g and 54g) than buses and cars (99g and 123g), trams are important in reducing carbon emissions. TfGM are aiming to be zero carbon by 2040 but awareness is growing (at least in private) that its plans are not going to be sufficient.

SCATTER

Online tool to help Local Authorities to plot possible pathways for emissions reductions. The tool was funded by BEIS and developed by Nottingham City Council, but has been further piloted by GMCA. Now used by the majority of Local Authorities (and only LAs can access).

About CEM

Climate Emergency Manchester is a non-partisan group campaigning for better policies around climate change, and better implementation of existing policy.

We have a petition for a seventh scrutiny committee of Manchester City Council which anyone who lives, works or studies in Manchester can sign. We need your help to get more signatures on this.

Please #Share #Sign #Join.

We have a list of ideas for how you can help out on our website.



We also have a growing "Active Citizenship Toolkit", to help individuals and groups figure out what skills, knowledge and relationships they have and they need, and how to close the gap.

Get in touch with us

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