



# Briefing paper on the **Climate Change “Action” “Plan”** progress report to NESCC, 10th February 2021

by Climate Emergency Manchester, for the benefit of Councillors and citizens

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## Introduction

This briefing paper examines the “progress” report on the Climate Change Action Plan (to be discussed at Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee, Wednesday 10th February 2021).

The report gives the impression that there has been “significant progress.” This is most emphatically not the case, beyond the usual bureaucratic measures of bidding for more money and busy work.

In the introduction councillors are told

*“The Council had already adopted a science-based carbon budget for Manchester of 15 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> between 2018 and 2100 following analysis by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research. This also committed the city to become zero carbon by 2038 at the latest.”*

They are NOT told - anywhere in the 50 pages they are asked to scrutinise - that an official report issued last July conceded that in **the last two years the City has burnt through a quarter of the entire budget for the 21st century**. There has been NO emergency meeting of Executive members or council officers in response to this failure. Instead, seven months later, a short report comes to Neighbourhoods and Environment, a report that is an exercise in bland public relations, rather than a declaration of crisis. This is a total abrogation of responsibility.

The introduction continues with the claim

*“The Plan builds on over a decade of previous activity which has seen the Council’s direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduce by 54.7% between 2009/10 and 2019/20.”*

Those emissions reductions are not primarily due to action by the Council. Tory austerity, as well as blighting the lives of millions, also forced the Council to cut staffing from 10,000 to 6,000, sell off many buildings and cut services. This, combined with the partial decarbonisation of the Electricity Grid, has led to the majority of reductions boasted of above. Telling the truth about these reductions is a necessary precursor to effective action in the future.

- Even with a generous interpretation of what is proposed by 2025, only half the required carbon savings are visible.

- **There is no quantification (in tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>) of city-wide emissions or reduction measures related to how the council is helping the city becoming zero carbon by 2038.**
- Buried in the report (4.43) is the stark admission “A ‘Skills for a Zero Carbon Economy’ group was established and met in March 2020, however, this work has not been progressed any further due to the major capacity issues resulting from the Council’s response to COVID-19 including working on the food response and business grants programme.”
- There is incomplete and dispersed reporting on the progress against the actual content of the Climate Emergency Declaration - surely a dashboard of green, yellow or red for each of the 23 actions is not beyond the capacity of officers to produce?

## Recommendations

Manchester City Council should :

- **Create a seventh scrutiny committee, of equal standing to the existing six, so that climate change is scrutinised more than every seven months or so, for 30 minutes at a time.**
- **Tell the truth about the source of its own emissions reductions.**
- **Explain why the use of a quarter of the city’s carbon budget for the rest of the 21st century is not considered worthy of mention in over 50 pages of progress updates.**

### Disclaimers

This briefing paper is not intended to pre-empt or undermine the role of Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee or the independence of its members. The questions are by no means an exhaustive list.

## Questions

1. How will the Civic Quarter Heating Network known as ‘tower of light’ be zero carbon considering it’s powered by fossil mains gas and would be in operation for at least 25 years?

- **4.10** “The project hopes to achieve a reduction of 1,600 tonnes per annum”, but will still continue to emit CO<sub>2</sub> as long as operational and remain gas powered. Is this being highlighted as a risk to conflict with the zero carbon 2038 target?

2. How will MCC prioritise the spending of the £750k Round 1a & 1b funding won under the Green Homes Grant for privately owned properties?

- **4.12** *“The Council’s £500,000 funding bid to the Government Green Homes Grant Round 1a has been successful and a further £250,000 bid to Round 1b has been submitted as part of a Greater Manchester Combined Authority bid for privately owned properties.”*
- Assuming 2.33 people per household and a population of 520,000 in [Manchester](#) and [GM Poverty Action 2018](#) statistics that 15.5% of households are in fuel poverty, there are approximately 35,000 households in Manchester in fuel poverty. The LSOA with the highest fuel poverty rate is Rusholme with 40.1%.
- How many private properties are anticipated to benefit from the green homes grant funding that MCC has secured?
- How will you prioritise households in fuel poverty?
- Who will deliver the scheme grants and by when?
- Have you had discussions with Carbon Coop and the work they are doing around retrofit in Manchester?

3. It appears that no other areas apart from the City Centre and Wythenshawe will benefit from £5m of funding from the Government Active Travel Fund with the majority of funding going towards city centre schemes.

- **4.15** *“Manchester will receive £5.5 million of funding via the Government Active Travel Fund. £4 million will be spent on the City Centre Triangle...”*
- Why was it not deemed appropriate to allocate any of this active travel funding out to other wards where provisions are so poor?

4. How much money is being spent on an external specialist to support the Council’s new Staff Travel Plan?

- **4.17** *“The Council’s new Staff Travel Plan has been delayed as a result of staff in HROD being required to support the response to COVID-19 but is now being prioritised with the support of an external specialist.”*
- Who is this external specialist?
- How will success be monitored and what metrics are in place?

5. How much additional capacity with the Manchester Climate Change “Agency” have in place by March 2021?

- **4.36** *“Additional capacity for the Manchester Climate Change Agency is being put in place and the new structure and posts have been approved by the Council’s Personnel Committee.”*

- Beyond the Director and crowd-funded Youth Champion, how much additional capacity will MCCA have in FTE? What would be the total FTE of MCCA?
- Have you discussed with candidates about how the new Director would make MCCA financially sustainable in the next two years? What happens if it is not financially sustainable?

## 6. How soon will the ‘Skills for a Zero Carbon Economy’ group restart its work?

- **4.41** ‘Skills for a Zero Carbon Economy’ group was established and met in March 2020, however, this work has not been progressed any further due to the major capacity issues resulting from the Council’s response to COVID-19 including working on the food response and business grants programme.
- What do you mean by as soon as possible in 2021? When will there be staff available to restart this work if it is so important to the Economic Recovery and Investment Plan?

## 7. Do you have any estimates as to what effect the emerging priorities for 2021/22 will have upon CO2 emissions specifically for the city?

- **5.0** The activity delivered since March 2020 has put in place solid foundations for the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan. A number of large scale projects have been progressed and funding bids have been submitted, however, COVID-19 has inevitably resulted in some delays to projects due to capacity issues.
- There are no estimates at all within this section of the report as to how these projects set a vision or pathway for city-level emission reductions to be in line with a 2038 zero carbon target.

## 8. Carbon Literacy

- The report mentions **(1.3)** “*the continued roll out of staff and member Carbon Literacy Training*”  
Given that the goal was all councillors and staff would be carbon literate by the end of 2020 the numbers quoted - 961 staff and members have been certified - are not impressive. What was the number in March 2020? .
- “We are on track to achieve the 1,050 required to reach Silver accreditation by then. The annual Carbon Literacy Project awards have been pushed back from Spring 2020 to Spring 2021 in recognition of the challenges posed by COVID-19.”
- So, has the goal for a carbon literate council has been... abandoned?

## 9. Presentation of data

- Why does the report (e.g. Table 2) persist with presenting percentages rather than absolute tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>? There was an explicit promise not to do this, since percentages are easily gamed - this should be clearly linked to the 2038 zero carbon budget.

## 10. Total lack of action with Young People.

- *Engagement with young people in the city has continued building on the successful large scale events in summer 2019 and January 2020 which have been reported to the Committee at previous meetings. The Manchester Youth Council have now developed a Climate Charter and a Climate Wheel and a shadow youth executive is now in place.”*
- Beyond the confines of the Youth Council, what has been done?