

LOW CARBON HUB BOARD

Date: **15th July 2016**

Subject: **GM LOW CARBON HUB COMMUNICATIONS 2016-2017**

Report of: **Mark Atherton, GM Director of Environment**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The long-term intention of the LCH is to become more public focused and accessible, with a greater ability to involve stakeholders including local businesses, the public and community groups in democratic decisions, on how and where projects and funding can be delivered in GM.

The LCH would like to engage Greater Manchester's 2.7 million residents on reducing their carbon footprint and welcome ideas on collaborating with partners from within the low carbon sector on channels and opportunities to communicate positive low carbon messages cost effectively.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an update on progress on the GM Low Carbon Hub's (LCH) communication pathways. To update members on the integration of its work with an existing GM website 'On the Platform', hosted by Creative Concern, and to provide proposals for 2016-2017.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is therefore recommended that the Board agree to:

- Continue with website presence 'On the Platform' however, ensure that the GMLCH brand is more visible via a new URL, social media channels and ensure online searches are optimised
- Continue with the quarterly GM LCH News bulletin sent from the 'platform' website and seek to increase recipient list via contacts from forums, exhibitions and conferences.
- Update GM LCH Board Members printed information sheet
- Continue to build on social media pathways with more effective use of existing accounts. (Including Twitter and LinkedIn pages)
- Collate Greater Manchester framework of press contacts, sustainability stakeholders and community / citizen groups for engagement activities that would include awareness raising and consultation of existing work streams and proposals.
- Updating and circulation of the GM Environmental Annual Report.

CONTACT OFFICERS:

Contact Officer: Tina Bugliosi, GM Environment Team Comms Lead
Tina.bugliosi@neweconomymanchester.com

TRACKING/PROCESS		[All sections to be completed]
Does this report relate to a Key Decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution or in the process agreed by the AGMA Executive Board		No
EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN		
Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the AGMA Scrutiny Pool on the grounds of urgency?		[Please state any reasons here]
AGMA Commission	TfGMC	Scrutiny Pool
15 th July 2016	[Date considered at TfGMC; if appropriate]	[Date considered/or to be considered at Scrutiny Pool; if appropriate]

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The CCLES has an objective to say “Low emission behaviours will become embedded into the culture of our organisations and lifestyles.”

The general aim of the last 12 months has been to improve LCH communications on current projects / initiatives, sub-group meetings, events, funding bids, sharing good practice and government consultations.

- 1.2 Original communication objectives outlined that the LCH should be improving engagement with a wider audience on the key messages to support behaviour change and acceptance of unfamiliar technologies by:

- Promoting the GM Climate Change Strategy to wider UK and international audiences in order to raise profile and encourage partnership investment;
- Highlighting the benefits of low carbon investment including job and skills opportunities;
- Continually improving the co-ordination of communication between all sectors and themes to develop shared responsibilities and goals; and
- Work with and/or through existing or emerging GM engagement mechanisms.

- 1.3 In addition to the above objectives, LCH communications for this year aim to:

- Soft launch and raise awareness of the Climate Change and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan
- Continue to integrate LCH communications within GMCA family
- Increase awareness and understanding of low carbon projects and benefits to a variety of audiences (including residents, businesses and community organisations) that are proposed and being undertaken in an accessible, interesting format appropriate to the audience.
- To provide the information, knowledge and incentives to enable Greater Manchester’s organisations, residents and communities to act on climate change, and understand the issues and opportunities that affect them in a format and channel that is widely used by the targeted audience.

2.0 INTEGRATION WITH GMCA COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

- 2.1 The GMCA low carbon pages are reviewed to ensure that LCH pages are updated regularly and offer the most up-to-date information regarding projects and meetings from a central portal.

- 2.2 News releases are now circulated via the GMCA press officer. A circulation list of suggested media specific to the LCH and environmental sustainability has been passed on to try and ensure news is featured in appropriate publications. Further suggestions by the board of ‘sector specific’ media are welcomed by the LCH Communications Officer.

- 2.3 A key communications project that is proposed for 2016 is the launch of an online ‘Citizen’s Environmental Pledge’ scheme that would propose small actions that would make a measurable difference to reduce an individual’s carbon footprint. Actions would draw from a GM report that highlighted where big differences could

be made ensuring that each action would have a tangible impact on reducing GM's carbon from individuals.

- 2.4 Such an ambitious scheme would benefit greatly from the support and expertise from within the GMCA Communications Team with a wide-reaching communications plan. A proposal for a website has been forwarded to the GMCA Mayor's Office to seek communications support.

3.0 COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

3.1 Previous Year's Activities

In 2015-16, the Low Carbon Hub has undertaken:

- Consultation of the Climate Change and Low Emissions Strategy, activities included 17 presentations and feedback sessions, 4 themed workshops and a large consultation event on 17th November. Nearly 200 online consultation responses were also received.
- GM LCH Platform site: 8929 page views across 3703 user sessions and 2401 distinct users. 211 number of features/articles
- Quarterly e-bulletin: 4 bulletins emailed to 800 email subscribers with bulletin going direct to inbox
- Social media: 404 Twitter followers 723 tweets
- News releases: 8 Press stories released, limited number of stories published. Reach: varied, mainly online publications Manchester Evening News, Environment Expert, Fresh Business Thinking, Edie.net, Business Green, Place North West, Manchester Matters, Rochdale Online, Wigan Today. Continue to work with GMCA Press Officer to ensure district press offices are picking up the news releases where relevant.
- Print: Board leaflet reviewed and reprinted by New Economy and Marketing Manchester. A3 Sustainability Project Map printed/pdf – this to be utilised in demonstrating the diversity and scale of the many environmental projects and buildings within GM.
- External communications relating to international commitments, compacts and disclosure initiatives
- Project based work including communications for: GM Smart Communities, Life IP, RESIN and Green Deal for Communities.

3.2 Project for 2016-17

The general GM LCH Priorities for the coming year include:

- Potential creation and launch of GMCA citizen pledge website, integration into current website pages
- Work with European City of Science organisation team to promote low carbon projects, in particular NEDO (Smart Communities) – press releases on website, stand at European Science Open Forum with speaking slot
- Ensure all GMLCH strategies and reporting information is up to date and utilised wherever possible
- Progress sponsorship funding proposal with LCH Board members – A paper that proposes modest 'crowd-funding' options to support communications from within the Low Carbon Hub family.
- To trial a GM Environment Team briefing paper for Chief Executive Officers to enable awareness raising of current projects.

- Launch Climate Change and Low Emissions Implementation Plan and ensure accessibility on all platforms (GMCA & On the platform). Press and social media to raise awareness.
- Work with Manchester Museum, to promote DIMMER and Smart Communities technology and innovation via 'Climate Control' exhibition running from May – Sept 2016
- Ensure regular flow of articles on external “on the platform” website, offering variety of content.
- To work with website hosts Creative Concern to revise format and feel of LCH pages (new URL, including project pages, add discussion buttons to appropriate features).
 - To publish a minimum of 5 articles per month.
 - To try to increase annual visitors >2400 (Jan 2015-Apr 2016)
- To optimise all relevant social media opportunities and support all partner’s communications on social media platforms.
 - Increase Twitter followers and profile visits.
 - Aim to increase followers from 400+ to 500+ by optimising trending hashtags and regular information feeds from the GM Environment Team.
 - Profile visits to increase from average of 107 per month to 200
 - Create Greater Manchester Environmental LinkedIn Group to direct more traffic to LCH website(s).
- To develop a communications network ensuring GMLCH information is circulated to appropriate target audience.
- Communications support for other GM Environment Team projects (see Annex 1).
- To plan GMLCH external communications and events with opportunities arising from political calendar where pre-election rules allow.

4.0 ESTIMATED PROPOSAL COSTS

In addition to retaining some communications expertise within the GM Environment Team, partly funded through projects, the indicative costs of the proposals outlined above are:

	Description of Goods/Services	Estimated Unit Cost (excl VAT)
1	Creative Concern: Management of GMLCH website, including editing, copywriting and general support	£4,560.00
2	Creative Concern: Management of quarterly e-bulletin (27 hours)	£1,500.00
4	GM Project Map leaflet: print and digital	£1,132.60
5	GMLCH Member portfolio info (Marketing Manchester)	£300.00
6	GMLCH Large Exhibition Stand	£950.00
7	Citizen Pledge Website	£5,000.00
8	Team Media Training	£1,000.00
	TOTAL	£14,442.60

Annex 1:

Project Priorities

1. GM Smart Communities – NEDO

- a. Website – Review, refresh, promote
- b. Press releases – ‘Half-way there’ (released March 2016, limited visibility) proposal for fuel / bill data PR in Autumn when project has tangible outcomes.
- c. Proposed events and exhibitions:
 - i. European Science Open Forum – 24-27 July & European City of Science & Festival Week 22-29 July
 - ii. Greenbuild Expo
 - iii. Low Carbon Networks and Innovation Conference – 11-13 October, Manchester Central
 - iv. Chartered Institute of Housing Conference June 2017
 - v. National Federation of ALMOS - April 2017

2. RESIN (ICLEI)

- a. Update RESIN dissemination tracker monthly on GM’s attendance at meetings and conferences.
- b. Prepare newsletter articles for quarterly RESIN newsletter. Consult GM group for updates on project progress and extract highlights. Forward on finalised newsletter to contact list within GM. Promote newsletter link wherever relevant to increase direct sign-ups. Promote via social media and “GMLCH on the platform” website.
- c. Coordinate updates on project deliverables as per output timetable. Issue press release or short news piece to present results and contextualise as RESIN progress and direct benefits to GM.
- d. Promote ‘Open European Day’ event via social media. (March – July 2016?)

3. Life IP

- a. Ensure GM branding input
- b. Support all communications activities. Provide copy for press release updates and circulate via GMCA press office and social media

4. Green Deal Communities

- a. Communications of project’s final report and outcomes: Press release, website article and social media.
- b. Support further work with Project Manager on raising awareness of the links between domestic building quality, health and fuel poverty