

**LOW CARBON HUB BOARD**

Date: 07<sup>th</sup> October 2016

Subject: Proposal for GM to be designated a Defra Pioneer City Region

Report of: Mark Atherton, GM Director of Environment

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**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

Defra will publish a 25 Year Plan in 2017 and a preceding National Framework Document in November 2016. Within the Framework Document, Defra has identified Greater Manchester as one of four national Pioneer areas. This report provides an outline of the scope of the Pioneer initiative and proposals for GM to be designated as a Pioneer City Region within the Defra Plan.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Board is requested to:

Note the contents of the report and agree the next steps, including production of the finalised Urban Pioneer scoping document and governance arrangements.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

Annex 1 – Draft Greater Manchester Urban Pioneer Scoping Document

<b>TRACKING/PROCESS</b>		<b>[All sections to be completed]</b>
Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution (paragraph 14.2) or in the process (paragraph 13.1 AGMA Constitution) agreed by the AGMA Executive Board:		No
<b>EXEMPTION FROM CALL IN</b>		
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?		Defra are due to launch the Framework Document for their 25 Year Plan in November 2016. It is in this document that Greater Manchester will be named as the Urban Pioneer.
AGMA Commission	TfGMC	Scrutiny Pool
Low Carbon Hub 07 <sup>th</sup> October 2016	N/A	N/A

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 DEFRA is currently developing, for a 2017 release, a 25 Year Environment Plan (25YEP) to set out the Government's long term vision for Britain's environment. In November 2016, they intend to publish a Framework Document, as a forerunner to the final plan, to be used as a consultation tool with businesses, the public and wider stakeholders.
- 1.2 As part of this they are looking to: develop better data and tools, connect everyone to the environment, work with local people and partners, find new approaches to funding and develop rules and regulations that work for the needs of our country to support the economy and improve people's lives, putting the environment at the heart of decisions to achieve ambitious outcomes for everyone. Defra understand the importance of acting at the most effective scale and want to work, test and develop this new approach via a series of differently targeted 'Pioneers' or Pioneer Areas. The Pioneers will demonstrate the power of systemic, data-driven, joined-up working to deliver great places for living.
- 1.3 There will be four Pioneer Areas nationally; a river catchment, an urban area, landscape, and a marine area. This geographic variety will ensure that the trialling process of the 25 year approach is rigorous and comprehensive, and that it works across all parts of the country. They have identified GM as the urban Pioneer or Pioneer City Region. This work will directly support the Natural Capital<sup>1</sup> Theme of the GM Climate Change and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan (CCLES).
- 1.4 Although they will operate in different areas, all of the Pioneers will:
  - Produce 'joint plans' for creating environmental improvements, which Defra and key local players derive together, to enhance environmental, economic, and health and wellbeing benefits.
  - Be data driven – building on existing local knowledge, looking at key indicators and how they can be improved locally;
  - Use the most cutting-edge analysis of natural capital<sup>1</sup>, where possible, linking this to novel financing mechanisms;
  - Engage local people and encourage local decision-making that delivers regional, national, and even international objectives.
- 1.5 In order for the Pioneers to be successful, they must: have a clear and ambitious strategic purpose to get integrated delivery off the ground; take place in areas with existing communities of interest, who are willing and able to take action; have strong local leadership and analytical capability; and focus on places which have critical decisions or plans to make in the next 12-24 months will allow us to see the long-term benefits of the Pioneers. Greater Manchester has all of these attributes, with a well-established Local Nature Partnership (the GM Natural Capital Group) already feeding in to the development of the

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<sup>1</sup> Natural capital is the nation's stock of "environmental assets"; the elements of the natural world such as land, forests, water, soil, air, minerals and oceans that provide benefits to people.

Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and the upcoming refresh of the Greater Manchester Strategy.

## **2. CURRENT POSITION AND NEXT STEPS**

- 2.1 GM Officers have worked with Defra and their Arms-Length Bodies (ALBs) to develop a draft Urban Pioneer scoping document (Annex 1). This is currently work in progress and covers draft proposals around; the approach, governance arrangements, delivery and timeline.
- 2.2 Further work will need to be undertaken with GM Environment, Housing & Planning, TfGM and GMWDA officers, plus other stakeholders, to complete the required detailed scoping document. This will then be submitted to the local urban pioneer decision making group for approval.
- 2.3 Once this has been completed and agreed it will then become 'The Urban Pioneer Plan' which will have a three year lifespan (to 2020). It is intended to launch in December 2016.
- 2.4 In addition to the ongoing preparation of the draft Scoping Document, discussions are also taking place between officers from the GM Environment Team, the Chair of the Natural Capital Group and the Environment Agency around the governance arrangements that are required for delivery.
- 2.5 Once the governance arrangements have been agreed and the local urban pioneer decision making group set up, a priority task will be to agree the Urban Pioneer scoping document.

## **3. OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS**

### **Opportunities**

- 3.1 The Pioneer is an invaluable opportunity for 'two-way learning'. It will tap in to local intelligence and expertise at the same time as making environmental data available to communities, local authorities, businesses and other partners.
- 3.2 The Pioneer provides the opportunity to put natural capital accounting into practice, trial new technologies and share innovative approaches. Pioneers will encourage local organisations to understand the health of their immediate and surrounding environment, and allow them to see real, tangible effects of good management.
- 3.3 The benefits and risks (e.g. flood risks) that environmental features create for their residents and businesses will come to life, as will the contribution natural capital makes to the productivity, resilience, and desirability of towns and cities. Measuring the benefits we get from these assets in a consistent way will help us all better assess the cumulative impact of our decisions and potential trade-offs and opportunities. Pioneer projects will also bring together

government, businesses, charities and local people to test integrated decision making on the ground.

- 3.4 The Pioneer will directly support the delivery of the GM Climate Change and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan, particularly the Natural Capital Theme. Specifically, Urban Pioneer status could support delivery of actions:
- M26 – Improve the management of our key CO<sub>2</sub> sinks, targeting activity on our key habitats.
  - E18 – Identify funding to support Natural Deal skills development.
  - A11 – Develop GM's natural environment evidence base and local priorities and consider as part of GMSF production.
  - C15 – Engage communities in natural capital activities as a mechanism to connect them with nature and understand the role of natural capital in combating climate change.

## **Risks**

- 3.5 The distinction of being identified as an Urban Pioneer City Region will mean that greater national attention will be on Greater Manchester. There is reputational risk associated with this should the Pioneer not be perceived as successful, largely for Defra and their ALBs, but also for GMCA. However, the Pioneer is intended as a trial and success should be measured on the learning taken from its undertaking.
- 3.6 There are no legal obligations placed on GMCA as a result of being identified as a Pioneer City Region.

## **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Defra has advised that it is unlikely that areas designated as Pioneers will receive additional Defra funding per se. However, as the whole principle of being a Pioneer is to assess how Defra and Defra's arms-length bodies (Environment Agency, Forestry Commission and Natural England) can work more effectively in local areas, it is reasonable to assume that Pioneer areas will attract additional attention and leverage from these sources over the three year life of the Pioneer.
- 4.2 The EU Life Integrated Project (IP), known as Natural Course, provides funding for the new GM Natural Capital Coordinator post, which was filled in July. The post is employed by Oldham MBC, co-located with the GM Environment Team at New Economy, and fully funded by the EU Life IP Project. It is anticipated that this post will provide the vast majority of GMCA input to the Pioneer, as part of their agreed role.
- 4.3 Other GM staff resources will be engaged in the Pioneer as part of their normal duties. Primarily this will be staff who are already involved with the existing GM Natural Capital Group although, given the scope of the Pioneer may include support for improving air quality and waste management, it will may also require limited time from TfGM and GMWDA officers to receive and

understand the enhanced evidence that the Pioneer will provide. In this way, the Pioneer will also offer the opportunity to test the integrated working across GM organisations proposed as part of the GMCA transition process.

- 4.4 There are no GMCA capital resource implications of becoming a Pioneer City Region.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Board:

Note the contents of the report and next steps including production of the finalised Urban Pioneer scoping document and governance arrangements.