

Sustainable Stories

How is the exhibition interactive?

Visitors will be able to leave their own stories about sustainability in Greater Manchester with Community Researchers who have designed and tested their questions in their own neighbourhoods. These stories will then be illustrated directly onto the walls of the exhibition space by specialist artists and visual minute-takers. As more people attend the exhibition, the conversation will 'grow as if alive'. A collective conversation will take root and grow about sustainability in Greater Manchester.

What else is at the exhibition?

- Speakers Corner: invited representatives of local organisations and groups tell their story on sustainability (3-4th November, only, 1300 and 1500)
- Exhibition of community stories, gathered by community members
- Exhibition of artwork and short film produced by the Ecoschools Team at Temple Primary

Evidence base

- Six pilot activities carried out as part of Mistra Urban Futures Greater Manchester Local Interaction Platform in 2012
- Case studies, photographs, workshops, interviews
- Facts and figures drawn from official statistics within Greater Manchester strategy and evidence documents

Sustainable Stories is an interactive exhibition to share and provoke discussions about the future of Greater Manchester.

It aims to engage the public in a shared conversation about challenges, issues and solutions to make Greater Manchester more sustainable.

The exhibition draws on work carried out by the Mistra Urban Futures GM LIP and is part of the Economic and Social Research Council's Festival of Social Science. It is organised around the themes of the Mistra Urban Futures centre:

Fair
Green
Dense

Fair

Fair cities are socially inclusive. Fair cities enable all residents to take full advantage of shared urban functions and structures. Fair cities are characterised by urban equity. At a general level, each of these statements may seem uncontroversial: but they are far from simple when put into practice.

Greater Manchester is an unequal place. Economic growth has continued to benefit some sections of the population; whilst others get left behind.

There is no natural leadership for a fair Greater Manchester. There is no single organisation or strategy which examines the ways in which social inclusivity can be fostered in the city-region.

Innovative responses come from outside formal structures: the GM Poverty Commission and the Reading the Riots process have sought to understand the causes and consequences of social deprivation and economic exclusion in the city-region.

The city-region also has a large and vibrant community and voluntary sector which adds capacity to community action. Community hubs and centres have a particularly critical role to play in building sustainable communities. Examples include the Mosses in Bury, Levenshulme Inspire, the Manchester Environmental Resource Centre Initiative in East Manchester or the many community development trusts, such as the

Broughton Trust in Salford, which seek to integrate employability, social inclusion and quality of life at the local level. The Seedley and Langworthy Trust has lost 40% of its staff since February 2012. Key projects such as Resident Participation and Outreach Engagement have been discontinued.

Addressing poverty and social polarisation, whilst reducing resource consumption, is not an easy task. It requires joined-up thinking and working in-between policy and sectoral silos. Food is a good example. Food is important for the environmental, economic, health and well being of residents. FareShare redistributes in-date surplus food from the food industry to organisations who work with vulnerable people in food poverty. Yet Greater Manchester ranks poorly compared with other English counties for access to locally grown food.

Fair, green and dense are connected. Eating local, organic food or being able to enjoy and cultivate land may be seen as luxuries for the privileged. Making sustainable choices is easier for those not preoccupied with the necessities of making ends meet. Yet urban density can also lead to greater fairness, if smart thinking across well-networked organisations can make the most of scarce resources and join up pockets of excellence across GM.

Green

Green cities are resource efficient. Green cities are low carbon. Green cities are public-transport friendly. These are the challenges that are being addressed by policy-makers across Greater Manchester and within different local authorities. Greater Manchester has a climate change strategy and was designated a national Low Carbon Economic Area in 2009. As part of a recent City Deal, Greater Manchester is setting up a Low Carbon Hub, led by the Environment Commission, to integrate multiple carbon reduction targets.

Education and training is central, particularly in increasing carbon literacy. Organisations such as Manchester Environmental Education Network, schools, further education colleges, business support organisations and universities all have important roles to play in education for carbon literacy and sustainability more broadly.

A multitude of organisations and community groups are also actively engaged in addressing the challenges of climate change and the need for resource efficiency. The problem is that formal policy organisations and community groups are not well connected – and often think in silos or compete for the same funding.

They may not also agree on what a 'green' Greater Manchester is. As our panel debate held in March 2012 highlighted, some people believe that the pursuit of low carbon economic growth may not lead to a more sustainable Greater Manchester in the round.

For many people within communities, a green city is about parks, open space and our relationship to the natural environment. The emphasis is on the quality of urban space, linked to feelings of well-being and health. Bottom-up initiatives tend to take a broader approach to building sustainable communities, such as guerilla gardens, urban farms and alley-gating schemes across the city-region.

The concept of a green city is a broad one: from clear targets to reduce carbon, reuse and recycle and retrofit critical infrastructures – to visions of green urban environments, wildlife in the city, roof-top gardens and community farms.

'Green' is not only a new economic opportunity, but also a way of thinking, living and working more sustainably in our urban space. That way, we can not only create jobs, but use fewer resources and foster better mental health and social well-being.

Dense

Dense cities are well connected with equitable access to urban services. Dense cities are space-efficient and cluster people, businesses, buildings and services to create a 'critical mass' from which all people can benefit. Dense cities also bring knowledge and skills together – through universities and educational institutions, but also through networks and local groups, often using digital and social media to connect.

Greater Manchester has a high urban density – across its population, its businesses, its housing and transport infrastructure. The Greater Manchester Strategy specifically aims at building a bigger 'agglomeration' of skilled jobs, amenities and successful places. Specific plans are being put in place for particular elements – such as housing, transport or spatial planning.

A real challenge in Greater Manchester relates to the age of our cities and their industrial heritage. Housing stock is no longer fit for purpose; critical infrastructures are in need of renewal. This makes the 'retrofitting' of the city-region a vital task – making the old structures and buildings of the past fit for a more sustainable future.

Through a number of projects – including the Retrofit 2050 project (EPSRC-funded) and the Salford Energy House – the University of Salford Manchester is working to bring together inter-disciplinary teams of researchers with business, policymakers and communities to address the retrofit challenge.

New experiments in urban living are needed that seek to build more joined-up approaches to regeneration in cities. Retrofitting dense cities requires experimenting with new ways of organising existing energy, waste and mobility systems in the city.

Noma 53, built around the new headquarters for the Co-operative Bank, may be one example of sustainable urban living in the 21st century. Site-specific interventions can help bring the diverse range of buildings, sectors and communities together to develop common pathways for sustainable urban living.

Density also has some negative connotations: not only economic growth, but also disadvantage and poverty is concentrated in urban cores. The development of out-of-town retail centres has a negative effect on town centres across the city-region. Dense cities make the traditional greening of urban space – such as large parks or commons – less resource- and space-efficient.

The real challenge is developing a joined-up approach to urban density. Whilst densely populated cities may be the answer to a growing world population, overcrowding in poorly-designed buildings, no longer fit for purpose, may be the lived reality for many. Agglomeration needs to bring advantage and minimise disadvantage for as many people as possible to ensure that dense cities can also be fair and green.

Funding

Mistra Urban Futures

Mistra Urban Futures is a global center for sustainable urban development which focuses on creating Fair, Green and Dense cities. Mistra Urban Futures sees co-production of knowledge as a winning concept to meet urban challenges. The headquarters is located in Gothenburg, Sweden and the center operates in five cities around the world including Cape Town, Gothenburg, Greater Manchester, Kisumu and Shanghai. Mistra Urban Futures is funded by Mistra, the Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research, and Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Center. In addition, a consortium consisting of Chalmers University of Technology, University of Gothenburg, County Administrative Board of VästraGötaland, Region VästraGötaland, the Gothenburg Region Association of Local Authorities, the City of Gothenburg and the Swedish Environmental Research Institute IVL contributes to the funding. Mistra Urban Futures is hosted by Chalmers University of Technology.

Festival of Social Science

The Festival of Social Science is run by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) from 3-10 November 2012. The ESRC Festival of Social Science has helped over 500 researchers to engage with a new audience, including individuals from business, charities, policy, teenagers, pensioners, parents and the general public. This year's ESRC Festival of Social Science has over 180 creative and exciting events aimed at encouraging businesses, charities, government agencies, and schools and college students to discuss, discover and debate topical social science issues. The Festival of Social Science celebrates some of the country's leading social science research, giving an exciting opportunity to showcase the valuable work of the UK's social scientists and demonstrate how their work has an impact on all our lives.

University of Salford Manchester

The University of Salford Manchester provides local co-funding to the Greater Manchester Local Interaction Platform, along with partners in-kind contributions. The University is proud to take an active role in leading debate and action on sustainability in Greater Manchester. The work is being led by the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures, part of the University's internationally-renowned School of the Built Environment.

Thanks

Sustainable Stories has been created by the Greater Manchester Local Interaction Platform (GM LIP) of Mistra - Urban Futures, as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science. It draws on the work of the Centre for Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures (SURF) at the University of Salford Manchester in creating a platform to share knowledge and develop pathways to address the challenges of sustainability in the city-region.

The exhibition has been curated by Beth Perry, Director of the GM LIP, at the SURF Centre, University of Salford Manchester, with support from Alex Wharton, Mike Hodson, Tim May and Vicky Simpson.

The exhibition also draws on the work of Community Researchers working with Martin Halton from Independent Research Services. They are: Ann Walters, Emily Mbololo, Sarah Whitehead, Sian Lucas, Steve Cunio, Wilson Nkurunziza.

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We also need to thank our many partners who have contributed to the pilot activities: Mark Atherton, Environment Commission; Steve Connor, Creative Concern; Paul Hildreth, Independent Economic Advisor; Ann Selby, Wildlife Trust; Raichael Locke, Manchester Environmental Education Network; Paul Haywood, University of Salford; Carl Abbott, University of Salford; Tony Baldwinson, University of Salford; Andy Karvonen, University of Manchester; Jake Smith, Creative Concern; Martin Halton, Independent Research Services; Gerry Stone, Seedley and Langworthy Trust; Dave Morgan, Broughton Trust; Roger Milburn, Arup; Walter Menzies, Independent; Lucy Danger, EMERGE; Debbie Ellen, EMERGE; Caroline Downey, Manchester Environmental Resource Centre Initiative; Richard Leese, Manchester City Council; Eamonn Boylan, Stockport City Council; Alison Surtees, Creative Industries in Salford; Alex Whinnom, Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations; Simon Borkin, Independent Researcher; Martin Davies, okf productions; Kerenza McClarnan, Buddleia; Lorna Leaston, Seedley and Langworthy Trust.



What happens next?

The exhibition is an active space, designed to inform debate and generate understanding about how we can create a more sustainable urban future for Greater Manchester. We will incorporate the voices into the research as we move forward into 2013 in our action-research projects.

The Community Researchers will also be writing up a report about the exhibition and the stories they gather. If you would like to receive this report, please leave your details.

Finally, we will explore the possibility of popping this exhibition up in other parts of the city-region – if you have any good ideas, let us know!

Please leave your details in the Visitors' Book or with the Community Researchers.

You can find out more about the Greater Manchester Local Interaction Platform (GM LIP) and Mistra Urban Futures by contacting the SURF team at the University of Salford Manchester.

Call us on 0161 295 4018
or email Beth Perry, Director of the GM LIP on: b.perry@salford.ac.uk

Sustainable Stories
3-6 November 2012
CUBE Gallery 3
Portland Street
Manchester

Mistra Urban Futures

www.mistraurbanfutures.se/english

The ESRC Festival of Social Science

www.esrcfestival.ac.uk
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