



Policies for the City Region

Treading lightly for shared prosperity Managed reduction of GM's material footprint



This is a contribution from *Steady State Manchester* to the debate about policies for the city region.

We're a group working out how best to respond here to

- environmental challenges including climate change, resource depletion and damage to the environment
- deep-seated social problems including poverty, social deprivation and fragmentation
- economic problems including debt, unemployment, austerity and instability

These issues need to be tackled nationally and globally as well here in our region where we can "take back control" and devise our own solutions.

It's a huge task and we don't have all the answers. We've borrowed and built on ideas from Manchester and all over the world. We do know that we can't carry on with business as usual. Economic growth, as conventionally understood, is part of the problem, not part of the solution. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) plans contain some good ideas but will not create the fundamental shifts we need to reduce our massive carbon footprint. Nor will they put local people in control and reduce inequalities.

These practical proposals for Greater Manchester are relevant to the new GM Mayor and the local authorities but perhaps more so to everyone who lives or works in Greater Manchester. They cover money, work, enterprise, housing, caring for each other, democracy, inequalities and the strengths of communities as well as energy and the environment.

The Policies: Treading lightly for shared prosperity

An energy transition: less energy, clean energy.

GMCA to set a total carbon budget for the GMCA economy.

A Regional energy demand reduction plan (energy descent) with targets for domestic, industrial, transport and embedded energy use. This will mean agreeing plans with large organisations and publishing the results on an annualised basis. It might be possible to pilot a resource input cap, or cap and share scheme as part of this.

Fossil fuel replacement

Replace, within 5 years, 50%, and in 10 years, 100% of electricity used in the city region with alternatives that are according to these criteria, a) zero carbon, b) locally produced, c) community owned. Do this through establishment of a local supply company (Nottingham model), collective purchase schemes that incentivise demand reduction, review of existing contracts of public sector with dominant energy companies, help community energy schemes access affordable start-up finance and a market, consider possible role of community smart grids.

GMCA to work with organisations across GM to plan the replacement of fossil fuels in accordance with its climate commitments (e.g. in the Compact of Mayors).

Ambitious programme to refurbish, extend, re-purpose, rebuild social and affordable, low energy housing.

In keeping with the official economic model, promote and support the development of the green economic sector, especially renewables and energy saving products.

Contain and reduce aviation and private motoring.

Freeze the expansion of the airport and flight numbers, set aviation reduction targets by phased reduction of flights and setting a date to close one of the two runways.

Make plans made to reduce the economic dependence of GM local authorities on revenues from the Manchester Airport Group. Initiate an award and incentive scheme for not flying.

Radically reduce the use of private cars in urban areas – car parking levy on employers, taking car parks out of use, congestion charging and using the proceeds to fund public transport and pedestrian/cycle infrastructure, work with employers to establish inverse mileage allowance tariffs (e.g. more money for smaller cars, no payments for short journeys, decreasing rate as mileage increases).

Offer structured help and incentives so people can choose lower carbon options for heating and travelling. For example, via subsidised energy survey and supplier accreditation services or by brokerage of job swaps across the region to specifically reduce commuter time and miles.

A sustainable and affordable food supply and distribution network

Establish Food Boards in each borough and at GM level, drawing on Manchester's model.

Influence supermarkets and market dominant food firms to work responsibly, source locally, reduce waste.

Strengthen the emergent “alternative” food production and distribution network (e.g. community-supported agriculture/horticulture schemes) and the city region's significant food processing industry.

Work over the medium term for the replacement of charitable food banks with user-run food coops.

All organisations in Greater Manchester to divest from fossil fuels.

The Greater Manchester Pension Fund (a significant financial anchor institution) redirecting a sizeable proportion of its £1.3Bn investments from fossil fuels to the local economy, with emphasis on environmentally and socially beneficial areas that yield a return to continue its primary responsibilities of paying pensions.

Other anchor institutions to divest. (Note, Manchester Metropolitan University and University of Manchester have already divested).

Anchor institutions

Maximising procurement and employment benefit.

Anchor institutions promote good diet, housing, exercise, nature, equality and waste reduction through procurement, employment and place-outreach. Examples include preferred procurement from local social enterprises rather than big corporate suppliers, contracts to reduce pay ratios, contracts to prefer low carbon, low waste suppliers.

Organisations, public and private can be encouraged to pay the Living Wage as a minimum, using the both hard power of procurement and the soft power of agenda and consensus-shaping.

Maximum salaries and pay ratios can be defined, implemented (and kept to) and also mandated through the supply chain.

Educational anchor institutions to maximise their usefulness and impact locally.

Universities as citizen resources, open to all, offering free and low cost consultancy to non-profit and small-profit initiatives, courses on environmental, economic and political literacy, and pursuing a research agenda that is at once locally responsive and internationally reputable. Tapping all the resources of Universities, not just education and research but facilities and networks.

Schools and colleges as community hubs with health, housing, leisure, learning. Facilities available to citizens free / at low cost outside teaching hours.

Co-operative enterprise and governance.

Properly fund local not-for profit, co-operative and smaller, quality orientated providers (for example in social care), for example with common services and preferred provider status, constructing an alternative to profiteering corporate firms under the new DevoManc health and social care regime.

Public bodies redesigned on co-operative model. Adopt co-operative council model across the region, including at GMCA level.

Economic localisation

Reduce reliance on long, vulnerable, global supply chains.

GMCA to adopt economic localisation as a policy aim and produce a localisation strategy.

Measure and monitor the scale of imports to the region.

Discourage wasteful trade contraflows (e.g. dairy products exported and imported).

Work near home.

For each anchor institution, devise incentives for employees to live locally

Just Trade

Establish co-operative arrangements with producers of selected products elsewhere (tea, sugar for example), ensuring just terms of trade while reducing transaction costs. This would build on but go beyond Fair Trade so that the key institutions and industries of the region all pursue Just Trade in their procurement and trading relations. A Just Trade mark could be developed to aid in this.

Finance

Regional investment fund or bank.

Establish a council sponsored investment fund or bank supporting mostly SMEs and social enterprises working in broadly foundational areas, emphasising environmentally and socially friendly sectors via a public, municipal or community banking institution. Use proceeds from fossil fuel divestment.

Infrastructure for alternative finance and exchange.

Promote and support credit unions, time-banks and other alternative financial and exchange institutions. This would also help release resources to support the many activities of the informal and core economies.

Local currency

Establish a Greater Manchester Unit of Currency (the GMUC) which would circulate within the conurbation. It would be available to small enterprises in the form of micro-credit and could be used entirely or in part payment in transactions, including council rates, taxes and fees. First carry out options appraisal of alternative models (e.g. fiat versus fixed supply, pegged to pound versus finding own value) and administrative infrastructure requirements.

National redistribution

Campaign, electorally, extra-electorally and via public political education for a fair settlement from Central Government, combatting propaganda on fiscal gap and government deficit.

Jobs and income

Conduct a feasibility study for a jobs guarantee (covering jobs that need doing in the local neighbourhood) or a form of basic income.

12.2 Make sectors more, not less, labour-intensive (which need not mean longer working hours since there is a pool of labour to be absorbed) except where machinery and automation can reduce unpleasant and unnecessary drudgery.

Community

Councils as facilitators and catalysts for community initiative.

Introduce neighbourhood decision-making under the Localism Act with proper resourcing for maximising community participation.

Families and children

Provide affordable child care, for example via cooperative arrangements that meld public funding with hours contributed by parents using the resource. Such schemes would become more financially robust if working hours were to be reduced and if the local State could provide assistance, for example via cheap accommodation. Protect remaining Sure Start provision. Provide or facilitate the provision of community centres and hubs with affordable room hire: this would support a variety of activities from parent and toddler groups to rehearsal space for musicians.

Trust

Ease up on the official culture of surveillance and distrust, for example in relation to benefits. Enact this through training and clear instruction to, and monitoring of, public servants.