Policies for the City Region

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

We are 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. We set out specific policy proposals here, and also refer to other documents we have produced setting out detailed policies, or in some cases those of other organisations. In every case we explain our thinking.

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A Viable Greater Manchester

We base our approach on our framework, The Viable Economy¹, which identifies an alternative set of values and principles for a seamless economic, social, political, cultural and ecological framework.

Key features of the Viable Economy:

**Economically viable**
1. An economy that is resilient in the face of bubbles, crashes, supply chain interruptions and the whim of National governments.
2. More money staying local and more democratic and local control over savings and investment.
3. An economy that delivers (and measures) what we need rather than growth for growth’s sake.
4. A balanced economy without the hyper-development of some sectors (e.g. financial speculation, armaments).
5. An economy that does not have to keep expanding, although where some sectors will grow,(e.g. renewable energy) and some must shrink (e.g. fossil fuels).
6. Where needed investment comes from within rather than from exploitation of other peoples or as profit-seeking from external investors.

**Socially viable**
1. Control over the economy rather than the economy controlling us.
2. An economy that relies on and builds equality, solidarity and cooperation among people, here and elsewhere.
3. An economy that rather than increasing inequality, progressively becomes more equitable.
4. Less exploitation of the majority world while keeping open channels for communication and learning globally.
5. An economy founded on stewardship of human and social capital, that does not waste people's energies and talents, that includes everyone.
6. With an increased space for non-commercial transactions: the collaborative or solidarity economy.

**Ecologically viable**
1. Radically reducing both the exploitation of finite resources and the emission of pollutants, including greenhouse gases: a one-planet economy.
2. Based on production and consumption for need: a frugal abundance.
3. More security for us all because the environment is protected from further destruction.
4. Resilient to climatic and other ecological shocks.
5. An economy that practices stewardship of the natural world that we depend on.

¹ Steady State Manchester (2014) The Viable Economy. 
The Policies: Treading lightly for shared prosperity

This diagram gives a snapshot of
- our key themes (section titles outside the circle in bold) and
- how we want to pursue them (inside the circle).

1. An energy transition: less energy, clean energy.

Climate change is the central issue of our times. It is true there are other extremely serious and urgent challenges, but it is climate change that has the capacity to sweep all before it. With mean global surface temperatures near 1.25 degrees C above the pre-industrial level and with the symbolic threshold of 400 ppm. of Carbon Dioxide in the atmosphere it seems likely that we are at or near the point of no return for runaway global warming with no more than 5
years left of carbon emissions at the present rate if a 50% chance of a 1.5 degree rise is to be averted.

It is not surprising then that there is some mention of environmental sustainability and climate change in many strategy documents and discussions now. However, in most cases the issue is a subsidiary one, subordinate to economic “growth” (itself the chief cause of global warming\(^2\)), and the measures put in place to deal with it are typically characterised by inadequacy and wishful thinking.

Some orthodox economists do argue that climate change needs to be central. Lord Stern argues that this will save money in the long run while boosting economic growth\(^3\). We have exposed the limitations of that view\(^4\) and instead take a different approach: **serious attention to both preventing and responding to climate change must become central to the economic strategy of the city region.** That means a managed reduction in the material size of the economy and a particular focus on energy demand reduction and the replacement of fossil fuels. The logic of this approach extends into all areas of economic and social strategy.

We therefore begin with an emphasis on the conurbation's energy use with a view to reducing our impact on the environment, especially the climate, while creating local prosperity through wise investment and enterprise in the local economy.

### 1.1 A Carbon Budget for the region

**Policy 1.1:** 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 every year. It might be possible to pilot a resource input cap, or cap and share scheme as part of this.

**The thinking behind it:**

The key to our impact on the climate is our energy expenditure. For Greater Manchester it is roughly equally spread between the categories Transport, Homes and Business. It is not enough to just switch to renewables because,

- a) some energy sources (transport especially) are difficult, although not impossible, to replace, and
- b) replacing the current levels of fossil fuel energy will require a very demanding renewables infrastructure with impacts on land use for farming, recreation, and “eco-system services” including carbon sequestration and biodiversity.

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\(^3\) He has reiterated this argument 10 years on from the original report: [https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/oct/27/10-years-on-from-the-stern-report-a-low-carbon-future-is-the-only-one-available](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/oct/27/10-years-on-from-the-stern-report-a-low-carbon-future-is-the-only-one-available)? Where we do agree with him is in the emphasis on the critical role of cities in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

\(^4\) See our work on this issue here: [https://steadystatemanchester.net/?s=decoupling](https://steadystatemanchester.net/?s=decoupling)
It is therefore necessary to both “power down”, reducing energy demand, and “power up” - switch to renewable sources\(^5\). This requires a coherent plan, with clearly quantified targets and actions for all sectors of the economy.

Most current approaches to energy and carbon emissions management involve “after the event” interventions (carbon trading, carbon taxes, etc.) while what is needed are ways of preventing excessive energy and carbon bearing fuels from entering the economy in the first place. The city region could experiment with setting resource input caps, on an indicative basis at first, with a view to seeking powers to make them mandatory. This might be combined with a scheme where citizens get individual carbon-cap-related allowances which they can trade – a redistributive mechanism\(^6\).

Investing in the two elements of “power down” and “power up” could create considerable employment\(^7\), the wages for which would also be spent locally into the regional economy - the “multiplier effect”.

### 1.2 Fossil fuel replacement

**Policy 1.21:** Replace, within 5 years, 50%, and in 10 years, 100% of electricity used in the city region with alternatives that are, a) zero carbon, b) locally produced, c) community owned.

**The thinking behind it:**

Electricity generation accounts for 37% of Greater Manchester's carbon emissions\(^8\), so by “powering up” clean, renewable energy, business, public and third sector organisations can make a huge impact by preferentially sourcing their electricity from these sources.

- There are already options in the existing energy market, but more can be done to stimulate these replacement power sources through establishment of local power generation (wind, solar, geothermal and micro-hydro).
- Already there are community owned initiatives such as Stockport hydro and the installation of solar panels on social housing but the examples of Germany and Denmark show us that there could be far more installation and crucially that this could be owned and managed by communities, returning the profits to the local economy.
- There have also been schemes for the collective tendering of supply contracts for domestic consumers, facilitated by local authorities but these have been limited in ambition, concerned solely with price reduction. There need to be innovative tariffs that disincentivise higher levels of consumption.

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• There is already a proposal to establish a local supply company (along the lines of the Nottinghamshire model\(^9\)). This could go hand in hand with the review of existing contracts of public sector with dominant energy companies, and help for community energy schemes to access affordable start-up finance and a market.

See also section 3 below, **Divest from fossil fuels**.

**Policy 1.22**: GMCA to work with organisations across GM to plan the replacement of fossil fuels in accordance with its climate commitments.

*The thinking behind it:*

Fossil fuel consumption also needs to be phased out in other sectors of the region's activity. Greater Manchester has committed to the Compact of Mayors’ “voluntary action to reduce the carbon footprint and make the most of the area’s energy and resources”. As Salford City Mayor, Paul Dennett, GM Lead Member for Environment put it,

\[ \text{“There is no time to waste, our area and planet must be protected for future generations.”}^\text{10} \]

Yet while cities like Copenhagen plan to be carbon neutral by 2025\(^\text{11}\), Greater Manchester lags behind, not having gone beyond the scientifically inadequate national goal of 80\% by 2050 and the very vague “40\% reduction between 2005 and 2030”. Nevertheless, 7 of Greater Manchester's authorities have committed to eliminating fossil fuels by 2050 as part of a 100\% clean energy pledge\(^\text{12}\). Taking into account the lower starting point, in comparison with Copenhagen (we have little District heating and primitive cycle infrastructure, for example), GMCA could nevertheless reasonably establish an ambitious target to eliminate fossil fuels over the next 15 years. In addition to contributing to the avoidance of yet more severe climate change, this would have a major impact on the region's air quality. An IPPR paper on a Zero Carbon London provides some pointers\(^\text{13}\).

### 1.3 Affordable low energy housing

**Policy 1.3**: An ambitious programme to refurbish, extend, re-purpose, rebuild social and affordable, low energy housing.

*The thinking behind it:*

Elsewhere\(^\text{14}\) we set out the following principles for housing in the viable economy:

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\(^9\) Nottinghamshire Community Energy. [http://nce.coop/about/](http://nce.coop/about/)

\(^10\) GMCA (2016) Greater Manchester has come together with cities around the world to join the fight against climate change. Webbsite news item. [https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/article/101/greater_manchester_fights_climate_change](https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/news/article/101/greater_manchester_fights_climate_change)


Everyone should have secure access to adequate, truly affordable housing throughout their life, providing the basis for living well through promoting stability, physical and mental health, and strong communities. Adequate housing has sufficient space and amenities and is free from damp or structural defects.

In order to stabilise housing markets and promote equitable distribution, new housing should be built only to meet housing needs and not as investment.

New and existing homes should be designed to be carbon neutral during construction and use, and residents should be empowered to use energy as efficiently as possible.

Wherever possible, better use should be made of existing buildings rather than building new homes. Agricultural land, green belts and flood plains should be protected from development.

Everyone should be able to live in neighbourhoods with a healthy environment and good access to public transport, services, work opportunities and green spaces for recreation and production.

With regard to the retrofitting and refurbishment of existing housing, a good place to start is the GM Housing Retrofit Strategy, prepared by Urbed and Carbon Co-op. It proposes a target of 17kg CO$_2$/m$^2$. As Carbon Coop propose in their response to the GM Spatial Framework, this strategy should be formally adopted by GMCA. A key recommendation is that “90% of housing stock to be at Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating B, and 17 kg/CO2 per m2 by 2035. with the remaining 10% of homes achieving a minimum of EPC band C.”

1.4 Strengthen the Region's Green Economy

Policy 1.4: In keeping with the official economic model, promote and support the development of the green economic sector, especially renewables and energy saving products.

The thinking behind it:

We have advocated for a “Replacement Economy” - the new or expanded sectors that would take the place of the most environmentally and socially damaging sectors. However, this idea also aligns with the GMCA’s current Priority 12, “Seizing the growth potential of a low carbon economy”. We turn the idea on its head. Rather than promoting the low carbon economy in order to facilitate economic “growth”, it is vital that this is done for its own merit. In so doing, there is scope for re-establishing the region as a manufacturing centre, which in itself will contribute to climate risk reduction by reducing shipping emissions. We are not against growth in these sectors of the economy, so long as the overall material scale of the economy is scaled down to a sustainable scale. It will also help provide good quality jobs for Greater Manchester’s people.

The recommendations in the foregoing policies will all contribute to this aim, as will some of those below. Greater Manchester’s low carbon and environmental goods and services (LCEGS) sector made sales worth £5.4 billion in 2013. However, to expand on


this requires clarity about the sectors that will provide the best returns, not just in terms of profits (essential as they are for viability) but for incomes and environmental impacts. Some work has been done on the opportunities for what is the UK’s third largest regional LCEGS sector\(^{17}\), but more needs doing, in the context of competitive production in low wage economies, to prioritise this area and support the industry, especially its SME’s\(^{18}\) (which give a greater return to the regional economy than big corporates).

### 1.5 Contain and reduce aviation and private motoring.

**Policy 1.51:** 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.

*The thinking behind it:*

“Unregulated carbon emissions from the aviation sector are the fastest growing source of the greenhouse gas emissions that are contributing to global climate change\(^{19}\). For the UK, emissions from aviation made up some 6% of total emissions in 2014. Since 1990, aviation emissions have doubled. As the Committee on Climate Change notes, “It is important that decisions about UK airport capacity are consistent with the UK’s commitment to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% by 2050, as set out in the Climate Change Act.”\(^{20}\), but expansion of aviation will make it very difficult to meet even the inadequate 2050 emission reduction targets\(^{21}\). As Manchester climate scientists, Larkin et al. have shown\(^{22}\), “Limited opportunities to further improve fuel efficiency, slow uptake of new innovations, coupled with anticipated rises in demand across continents collectively present a huge challenge to aviation in cutting emissions.” They also draw attention to the risk of aviation investments becoming “stranded assets” should serious climate change mitigation action be taken. Our proposal is for minimum actions required if the city region is serious about playing its part in reducing climate change.

**Policy 1.52:** Make plans 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.


\(^{18}\) Steady State Manchester (2016) Are small firms getting a good deal in Greater Manchester? (blog post) [https://steadystatemanchester.net/2016/03/14/are-small-firms-getting-a-good-deal-in-greater-manchester/](https://steadystatemanchester.net/2016/03/14/are-small-firms-getting-a-good-deal-in-greater-manchester/)


The thinking behind it:
The airport makes a contribution to the City Region’s economy. While that contribution is usually overstated\textsuperscript{23}, with, for example, income from the airport contributing maybe 1% to local authority funding, there is a condition of dependency on aviation because of the many jobs provided by the airport and by associated industries, even while the airport acts as a conduit for financial flows out of the region\textsuperscript{24}. A comprehensive framework therefore needs to be drawn up to replace aviation as a key link in the region’s economy, involving re-purposing of land and buildings, and harnessing the developing replacement economy to provide part of the alternative. We can learn from the failure to plan for industrial alternatives in previous phases of sectoral decline and fall (for example the cotton and mining industries) and from proposals to create alternatives to the extractivist sectors in the Global South\textsuperscript{25}. 

**Policy 1.53: Radically reduce the use of private cars in urban areas.**

The thinking behind it:
This could involve a 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).

“...Greater Manchester is a car-dependent city. ..... The current dominance of drive-to-work commuting is obvious, even if we focus on radial commutes into Manchester City from the outer boroughs....But [excluding Salford-Manchester] 60-70% of the commutes in to Manchester City are by car.”\textsuperscript{26}


The result is a city and region choked by cars. Suburban centres and residential areas are choked. Cycling is unpleasant due to having to share with cars and lorries. Air quality is poor and greenhouse gas emissions are high. Public transport is poorly coordinated and suffers poor investment. Investment choices have been questionable: while convenient for those areas that have it, Metrolink was probably not the best choice to bring clean efficient transport quickly to as many people as possible and it has made little or no impact on non-radial travel. Moreover fares are prohibitive for a significant part of the population.

To make a real difference there needs to be a combination of wise investment in cost-effective and low emission public transport and infrastructure to encourage cycling and walking, together with strong incentives to switch from car use and disincentives to use cars. At the same time there needs to be action to reduce demand to travel. Our proposals illustrate some practical steps that can be taken.

1.6 Help people make low carbon choices.

Policy 1.61: Offer structured help and incentives so people can choose lower carbon options for heating and travelling.

This could be via subsidised energy survey and supplier accreditation services or by brokerage of job swaps across the region to specifically reduce commuter time and miles.

It is generally recognised that the transition to a lower energy and zero carbon alternative will require a combination of public policy and action from all sectors (public, private, civil) and from citizens themselves. However, it is a fallacy to think that the transition is in the hands of individuals. People can and will make ethical choices if those options are available and are attractive to them. For some products and services (for example domestic heating and energy-saving) the decisions are not straightforward but require surveys, analysis and appraisal of options. For other decisions, people need help to make relevant contacts and the support of organisations that employ, house, or otherwise serve them (as in the example of swapping similar jobs to reduce travel time, costs, demand on transport and emissions).

2 A sustainable and affordable food supply and distribution network

Manchester City Council already has a formal policy that commits it to,

- working towards Sustainable Food City status
- develop a policy on health and take aways to support improvements in the diets and health of our residents

http://www.cresc.ac.uk/medialibrary/research/ManchesterTransformed.pdf


See e.g. Manchester Climate Change Agency http://manchesterclimate.com/getinvolved

London’s “Green Homes Concierge” scheme is a good example http://www.greenhomesconcierge.co.uk/your%20home

Passed unanimously by full council on 21/9/14 http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/16367/download_the_agenda
• working towards reducing food waste in the city
• working to alleviate the scandal of food poverty in the city
• supporting sustainable food procurement through its own purchases and
  through its influence with other public sector organisations

It also noted the possibilities for job creation from a sustainable food growing
industry.

This very much reflects our own thinking and we would encourage Manchester
to build on this so that such an approach becomes the basis for all food
procurement across the city. And we want to see this adopted across the whole
region. But more still can be done, to address the areas that such a policy
framework does not reach and we develop these ideas below.

**Policy 2.1:** Establish Food Boards in each borough and at GM level, drawing on
Manchester's model.

*The thinking behind it:*

To implement the above policy, Manchester set up a Food Board, bringing
together a variety of stakeholders within an overall public health orientation.
This is a good idea in principle, but the Board lacks “teeth”, being essentially a
forum for sharing best practice.\(^{31}\)

To achieve sufficient scale, the approach needs replicating by each local
authority and there needs to be a strategic board at city regional level. The
Boards should be awarded a status within the political and administrative
hierarchies of local government reflecting the central importance of food in all
our lives.

**Policy 2.2:** Influence supermarkets and market dominant food firms to work
responsibly, source locally, reduce waste.

*The thinking behind it:*

If we are serious about healthy, low carbon, affordable food, then we need to deal with
the systems that distribute the larger part of what Greater Manchester eats. The food
we eat comes overwhelmingly through supermarkets and these companies exert a
powerful, often malign, influence over the entire food supply system. Their supply
networks are vulnerable to shocks and disruptions of all kinds.\(^{32}\) Shoppers have come to
expect ready access to a cornucopian variety of “perfect” fresh products at all times.
This can only be achieved through significant over-production and therefore waste.\(^{33}\)
This also entails domineering relationships with suppliers. Consumption, imports and the
use of energy-demanding refrigeration have all been increasing, in large part due to the
clever marketing strategies of the supermarkets. “Imports grew by 51% between 1990
and 2005 by weight due to a combination of a 15% increase in consumption at the
national level and a decrease in UK agricultural output”\(^{34}\). The establishment of large
supermarkets drives smaller traders out of business and a “Friends of the Earth study of

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\(^{31}\) See Report to: Manchester City Council, Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee – 15 December 2015 (item 5) [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/20082/5_sustainable_food_update](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/20082/5_sustainable_food_update)


\(^{34}\) WWF (2008) ibid.p. 29
local food schemes found that on average just over half of business turnover was returned to the local economy, compared to as little as 5 per cent for supermarkets.”

Scotland and Northern Ireland have effective supermarket levies, returning value to the local economy.

Local government can use its soft, place-making and convening power to bring supermarkets to account for their local impacts on diets, incomes and ecological footprints. Local sourcing of products is one element of what’s needed. One model would be Enfield council’s practice of inviting companies operating in the borough to discussions as to how they can discharge their moral responsibility to local people that comes with the “licence to operate”. Sadly, up to now, local government has seen supermarkets as aiding economic regeneration, a short sighted and naïve view.

Policy 2.3: 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.

The thinking behind it:
Manchester has two rather different sectors concerned with food. There is a small, energetic “alternative” network with community-farmer links, co-operative retailers, fresh produce distribution to retailers and caterers, and educational projects (for example on cooking) and food waste reduction and re-use initiatives. Associated with this activity has been work on policy development. There is a much larger, industrial food processing industry in the city whose aims and ways of working have been very different. This is a significant element of the economy, worth £1.06Bn and employing 19,900 people in Greater Manchester in 2014. Researchers at CRESC, University of Manchester identify this as one of the sectors of the “Foundational Economy”, that “.... sheltered sector of the economy that supplies mundane but essential goods and services such as: infrastructures; utilities; food processing, retailing and distribution; and health, education and welfare. The foundational economy is unglamorous but important because is used by everyone regardless of income or social status, and practically is a major determinant of material welfare.” The food industry, like other foundational parts of the economy is relatively resilient since people have to eat, whatever else happens.

We suggest that there should be scope for achieving a greater scale for the innovative, “alternative”, food sector while improving the quality and sustainability of the

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37 Corporate Watch (n.d.) Supermarket local sourcing initiatives: the benefits of local food. https://corporatewatch.org/content/supermarket-local-sourcing-initiatives-benefits-local-food-0


41 Summary from http://www.manchestercapitalism.co.uk/foundational-economy

42 Our previous working paper includes a discussion of the relevance of the Foundational Economy and the need to go beyond it https://steadystatemanchester.files.wordpress.com/2016/11/so-what-would-you-do-v2-0.pdf
mainstream food processing and manufacturing industry, thereby contributing to food security, reducing environmental impacts, improving population health, while protecting and increasing jobs. This will require a strategic approach bringing together the five elements of government/public sector, private business, universities, active citizens and the organisations of civil society⁴³, something that a GMCA with a clear orientation to the Viable Economy could make happen.

**Policy 2.4:** Work over the medium term for the replacement of charitable food banks with user-run food coops.

**The thinking behind it:**

Recent years, in the context of government folly in pursuit of austerity in public expenditure, have seen increasing numbers cast into precarity and destitution. Civil society has responded with the growth of food banks, making available a basic basket of foodstuffs and other necessities on a charitable basis. This has been an admirable response but it has its limits, casting poor people into an essentially passive role as recipients of charity, with the concomitant feelings of shame, anger and gratitude⁴⁴. Whilst many food aid initiatives are important spaces of caring and solidarity⁴⁵, and some run food purchase coops at the same time⁴⁶ they nevertheless fail to address the underlying causes of household food insecurity. A shift from reliance on charity to deal with food aid is needed in order to uphold the right to affordable access to food and good nutrition. DEMOS has proposed community supermarkets as an alternative to charitable food aid⁴⁷, suggesting that co-operatives might be one way of delivering these, funded by a Government ‘conversion fund’ for those food banks willing to convert to an alternative, longer term form of affordable food initiatives. Indeed the conversion of food banks to food co-operatives has been shown to work elsewhere⁴⁸, enabling people to regain power over their situation and establishing alternative economic relations for the distribution of food⁴⁹.

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3 Divest from fossil fuels.

Policy 3.1: 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.

The thinking behind it:
This policy focusses on the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF), the largest local authority pension fund (also providing pensions for some other employers). It has a portfolio of investments, used to fund its pension commitments, of which approximately 10% are in companies primarily concerned with the extraction, processing and distribution of fossil fuels. There are two principal aims of this proposed switch in investments.

1. Climate change requires assertive action to leave most fossil fuel reserves un-exploited. Yet the fossil fuel companies continue to invest in exploration. “Engagement”, or efforts to directly persuade these companies to stop exploration, have not yielded any significant results. An international campaign\(^50\) is encouraging investors to move their money out of the fossil fuel companies, thereby sending a strong signal to the markets, reducing the money available for further climate damaging fossil fuel extraction and incidentally securing the value of assets against their being stranded as a result of global action on climate.

2. The GMPF holds around £1.3Bn for potential re-investment. It can be directed to socially and environmentally positive, or at least benign, investment especially in Greater Manchester itself. A responsibly managed programme of divestment and reinvestment could have a catalytic impact regionally, especially if it was deployed to projects like pump-priming a regional public bank and to the (LCEGS) sector discussed under policy 1.41 above.\(^51\)

Policy 3.1: Other anchor institutions to divest from fossil fuels.

The thinking behind it:
Manchester Metropolitan University has already divested from fossil fuels but as we will see in the next section, there are other key institutions\(^52\) in the region that can have a significant impact on our society and economy. If fossil fuel divestment is needed then all institutions should be doing it, multiplying the environmental, economic and social benefit.

4. Anchor institutions

For CLES\(^53\) directors Jackson and McInroy

“...an anchor institution is an organisation which has a key stake in a place. It will have significant levels of spend and numbers of jobs, and is extremely unlikely to

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\(^{50}\) See350 degrees website: https://350.org/cop21-divestment/


\(^{52}\) Not least the University of Manchester which despite still hosting the world leading Tyndall Centre on Climate Change, has yet to divest.

\(^{53}\) CLES: Centre for Local Economic Strategies, a Manchester-based NGO.
leave due to market forces. Anchor institutions typically include: local authorities, universities, further education colleges, hospital trusts, and housing organisations.⁵⁴"

A government sponsored study gives some more detail:

“The concept of anchor institutions emerged from the US where it has become an integral part of urban regeneration policy and practice. It is typically related to spatial immobility, large size and strategic contribution to the local economy as purchaser and employer. ....
Anchor institutions must have a social role, a social purpose which enables it to develop mutually beneficial and sustainable relationships within the host community.
Possible anchor institutions include non-profit organisations such as higher education institutions..., for instance, university business schools, academic medical centres, cultural institutions including museums, libraries and performance arts facilities, religious and faith-based establishments and performance arts centres, utility companies, military bases, sports clubs and, under certain circumstances, large private sector organisations⁵⁵.”

Our own thinking emphasises using the wealth generated and located locally to invest in local pro-environmental and pro-social development, rather than following the path of dependence on capital external to the city or region⁵⁶. The work CLES has done with Anchor Institutions in Preston (also Manchester and Belfast) has focussed chiefly on their role in procurement of goods and services⁵⁸. They demonstrate their positive impact on local employment and value retained locally. Another study, by Leeds Beckett and York St John Universities⁵⁹, found similar results in the Leeds city region. Similar thinking underpins our earlier work on pay inequality in local government and its supply chains⁶⁰ and the requirement of the Living Wage Campaign that accredited Living Wage employers also mandate the Living Wage in their supply chains⁶¹.

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But there are other aspects to the role of Anchor Institutions: Jackson and McInroy\textsuperscript{62} suggest that this could focus on two areas: local financial enabling and local ownership enabling. The following proposals build on the CLES work in relation to our concept of the Viable Economy, thereby going beyond the merely economic benefits of these institutions.

4.1 Maximising procurement and employment benefit.

Policy 4.11: Anchors promote good diet, housing, exercise, nature, equality and waste reduction through procurement, employment and place-outreach.

The thinking behind it:

If Anchor Institutions are potentially so influential, then they can exert an effect that is not only economic. They can influence all these additional areas, both through their economic leverage in procurement and contracting, partnership activity with other players, and as employers of large numbers of staff. 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. Some universities, for example, have embraced the issue of environmental sustainability in procurement, but other dimensions of sustainability are less well developed\textsuperscript{63}. Central Manchester Hospitals NHS Trust does specifically address the encouragement of local social enterprises bidding for tenders\textsuperscript{64}.

Policy 4.12: Organisations, public and private can be encouraged to pay the Living Wage as a minimum, using the both the hard power of procurement and the soft power of agenda and consensus-shaping.

The thinking behind it:

Our city region has very high levels of economic and social inequality. As a recent Resolution Foundation report showed, reductions in inequality between 2004 and 2008 were reversed between 2008 and 2012, with disparities between high and low income groups reaching a new high\textsuperscript{65}. Indeed reading this report it is hard to escape the conclusion that economic expansion both the pre and post crash period have resulted in increasing inequalities, both within and between neighbourhoods.

Implementing the Living Wage for an organisation's workforce, and through its supply chain is one way of improving this situation. The Living Wage Campaign has been one of Greater Manchester's relative successes\textsuperscript{66}. It encourages organisations to not just


\textsuperscript{63} University of Manchester What is Responsible? (web page) http://www.procurement.manchester.ac.uk/procurementexcellence/responsible-procurement/

\textsuperscript{64} Manchester Metropolitan University (2016). Sustainable and Ethical Procurement Policy. http://www.mmu.ac.uk/policy/pdf/policy_ref_sustainableprocurement.pdf


\textsuperscript{66} GM Living Wage Campaign (2016). We've reached 100 Living Wage Employers! https://gmlivingwage.org/what-is-the-living-wage/
pay the Living Wage, but also go public with their commitment through independent accreditation. Of the local authorities in the conurbation, only Salford has done this, although some 100 other local employers have done so.

**Policy 4.13:** Maximum salaries, and pay ratios between the highest and lowest paid, can be defined, implemented (and kept to) and also mandated through the supply chain.

*The thinking behind it:*

At the other end of the income distribution, salaries can be obscenely high, a sequestration of money that could be distributed more fairly. Some organisations, especially those in the co-operative sector, specify narrow pay ratios and do not experience difficulties in recruiting committed and skilled senior staff: these ratios can still be in the region of 1:8. Our survey of local government found higher ratios and little in the way of coherent justification for paying such high rates other than a reference to market competition.

Note that these two policies only go so far: other issues are poverty of the self-employed, under-employed or those excluded from employment, and those unable to do employed work for a variety of reasons. They also do not address inequalities in wealth. Nevertheless the two policy proposals for anchor institutions are feasible while potentially transformative.

### 4.2 Educational anchor institutions to maximise their usefulness and impact locally.

**Policy 4.21:** Universities as citizen resources, open to all.

*The thinking behind it:*

Our universities are typically seen as elite institutions, not somewhere where many ordinary citizens of the region would feel welcome. This is despite some traditions of public access and service. Universities, however, are Anchor Institutions, with a “licence to operate” in our community. There needs to be a persistent demand that their primary responsibility is to serve that community whilst recognising that many have already built commitments of this sort into their strategies (see, for example, University of Manchester’s Inspiring Communities and Manchester Metropolitan University’s strategy).

Examples could include 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. This “community in-reach and university outreach” needs to tap all the resources of Universities, not just education and research but facilities and networks too.

**Policy 4.22:** Schools and colleges as community hubs.

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69 Manchester Metropolitan University (n.d.). Our Strategy. [http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/about-us/our-strategy/](http://www2.mmu.ac.uk/about-us/our-strategy/)

The thinking behind it:
Likewise, schools and colleges are not going to go away. As common reference points in our neighbourhoods their role, accessibility and impact could be enhanced by partnering with health, housing, leisure, and adult learning: some of which happens (or has happened in the past) in some places but on a haphazard and unsystematic basis\textsuperscript{71}. Now, with city-regional devolution there is an opportunity to establish a Mancunian model of “full service”, extended, community schools and colleges. To help build and strengthen community, facilities could be available to citizens free or very low cost outside teaching hours.

4.3 Co-operative enterprise and governance.

Policy 4.31: Properly fund local not-for profit, co-operative and smaller, quality orientated providers.

The thinking behind it:
If we want institutions and economic arrangements that serve people then the co-operative model, with its deep roots in the region, should be widely supported. This will make it more likely that business and social priorities will be appropriate, that wealth is retained locally rather than leaching out into profits invested elsewhere. Similarly, many small and medium sized businesses are locally based, staffed and owned, with loyalty to their district: are less likely to ruthlessly seek profit extraction and more likely to return value to the community\textsuperscript{72}. Anchor institutions can both procure from such organisations and also support them logistically. To take the example of social care, such providers can be helped, 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\textsuperscript{73}.

Policy 4.32: Public bodies redesigned on co-operative model. Adopt co-operative council model across the region, including at GMCA level.

The thinking behind it:
A number of UK councils have adopted a co-operative approach to both their relationship with the public and to the way services are delivered. This means being more open and collaborative in the way policy and decision-making are approached, and following co-operative principles in the delivery of services. The council's spending power is deployed so it achieves a greater social return for citizens than it would in a typical purchaser-provider market model. Oldham is a co-operative council\textsuperscript{74} and both Rochdale and Salford are members of the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network\textsuperscript{75}. Signing up to co-operative principles does not necessarily mean real change although councils like Oldham can point to real benefit\textsuperscript{76}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{74} Oldham Council (n.d.). Our co-operative approach (web page) http://www.oldham.gov.uk/info/200572/co-operative_oldham/1189/our_co-operative_approach
\textsuperscript{75} See Co-operative Councils Innovation Network website: http://www.coopinnovation.co.uk/
\end{footnotesize}
Our proposal is for the extension of this model throughout the public sector in the city region, applying it to all councils and the Combined Authority, and (in appropriately adjusted form) to the variety of public bodies such as NHS Trusts, Housing Trusts, and the Police and Fire Services. Such a mainstreaming of the approach could make co-operative working the norm, a viable alternative to the narrow marketised model of public service that has dominated the last thirty years. This would have benefits in terms of citizen engagement and the renewal of democracy as well as in the more equitable creation and distribution of social and economic value.

5. Economic localisation

In the report that launched SSM we argued:

“To meet the twin challenges of planetary limits and accelerating resource scarcity, we need to look at a strategy for re-localisation of the economy. This means arranging production, distribution, ownership of means of production/assets, trade and enterprise so that much more of the economy is localised within the city, and the surrounding bioregion.” p. 24.

Localise West Midlands defines localisation in terms of,

- Local trading, using local businesses, materials and supply chains
- Linking local needs to local resources
- Development of community and local capacity
- Decentralisation of appropriate democratic and economic power
- Provision of services tailored to meet local needs.

Localise WM’s extensive literature review\(^78\) found evidence that more localised economies had superior indices of return on investment, quality of life, jobs per capita, income equality, the local multiplier, job creation and unemployment reduction, and income growth.

Despite the evidence there seems little enthusiasm for a strategic localisation of the economy among orthodox economists and leaders. As we point out elsewhere,

The viable economy uses the concept of strategic localism which means that things that can be sourced locally should be. ........This means not just playing to the strengths of local economies but actively building those strengths. It does not mean turning our back on the world, but playing a responsible part in the world while becoming locally more sufficient. Finally it means living in greater knowledge of our own bio-region, its strengths, its delights and its vulnerabilities. (p. 12)\(^79\)


\(^{77}\) About Localise WM. http://www.localisewestmidlands.org.uk/about/


We therefore argue that a viable alternative economic strategy needs to include an explicit strategy for localisation\(^{80}\) as a way of stabilising and strengthening the local (viable) economy. There are already elements of localisation in existing strategies and the proffered alternatives: the need is to make localisation a cornerstone of the strategy which will also help in addressing the many other issues that challenge us.

5.1 Reduce reliance on long, vulnerable, global supply chains.

**Policy 5.11:** GMCA to adopt economic localisation as a policy aim and produce a localisation strategy.

*The thinking behind it:*

If re-localisation is a valid principle for a more resilient Greater Manchester that shares its wealth with its people and that treads lightly on the planet, then it is worth adopting as a strategic principle and aim together with the detailed strategic and implementation planning that will be necessary across all sectors. We suggest that a start is made on those sectors where imports could most easily be substituted locally and whose ecological footprint is the greatest. This therefore requires a combination of sound business economics together with ecological literacy.

**Policy 5.12:** Measure and monitor the scale of imports to the region.

*The thinking behind it:*

This follows from the previous point: we need to understand where we are now. What do we import, from where, with what consequences and with what risks?

**Policy 5.13:** Discourage wasteful trade contraflows (e.g. dairy products exported and imported).

*The thinking behind it:*

Product contraflows (our term) take at least two forms.

1. Products (e.g. non-speciality cheese) are produced in area A and sold in area B while identical or equivalent products are produced in area B and sold in area A.

2. A product (e.g. milk) is produced in area A, processed in area B and then taken back to area A for sale and consumption\(^{81}\).

Orthodox economic measures such as GDP and GVA are blind to this absurdly wasteful situation. Indeed cash value of (say) potatoes exported plus that for potatoes imported are both added to those measures, incentivising this unsustainability, something akin to pointlessly digging holes and filling them in in the name of economic activity. Policy incentives therefore need to be devised to make this situation less likely.

5.2 Work near home.

Our roads are clogged with traffic. People spend a significant part of their working day travelling. Moving people and vehicles around generates carbon emissions and air pollution. It is a pressure on incomes too.

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Policy 5.2: For each institution, devise incentives for employees to live locally.

The thinking behind it:
This is an example of how a policy initiative can bring together several desirable things, in this case, of anchor and other institutions supporting their local economy (since more of the salaries they pay will go into the local area), the improvement of work-life balance as less time is spent away from home travelling, and carbon reduction. Such incentives have been deployed before. Back in the 1970s, Manchester City Council would make a contribution to the legal costs of buying a house for staff living within a certain radius, and paid for rent if a purchase was made in the first six months of employment. More recently it ring fenced its lower paid jobs for city residents. Each of these has its flaws but indicates that employers can incentivise local residence. It is up to the participating institutions to devise schemes that enhance social and economic equity while reducing resource use.

5.3 Just Trade

Policy 5.3: Establish co-operative arrangements with producers of selected products elsewhere.

The thinking behind it:
Localisation does not mean forgetting our responsibilities to people in other parts of the world. Establishing such co-operative arrangements (for tea, sugar for example) can help ensuring just terms of trade while reducing transaction costs otherwise paid to “middlemen”. 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 – an approach adopted by the Ethical Trade movement. A “Just Trade” mark could be developed to aid in this.

6 Finance

6.1 Regional investment fund or bank.

Policy 6.1: Establish a council sponsored investment fund or bank, emphasising environmentally and socially friendly sectors.

The thinking behind it:
The banking and financial system in the UK is highly concentrated in a few “too big to fail” institutions. One consequence is that because profits are chased to satisfy shareholder (and executive) expectations, investment tends to flow to other financial vehicles, thus magnifying the finance bubble: it does not go to local industry which, especially in the case of smaller firms, finds it difficult to obtain investment. This contrasts with the situation in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands where regionally-based public banks (not state but not privately owned, rather like the UK building societies and former trustee savings banks) account for a significant share of banking.

It is not enough simply to establish local/regional banks and funds though. They would need to focus on the kinds of investments that a resilient, viable city region requires, not on sectors that by expanding will increase carbon emissions, traffic congestion, biosphere erosion and inequality.

We therefore propose the establishment of a council sponsored investment fund, or better, since less constrained in terms of money supply, a bank, supporting mostly SMEs and social enterprises working in broadly foundational areas, emphasising environmentally and socially friendly sectors. The form could be a public, municipal or community banking institution. Proceeds from fossil fuel divestment could be used to help establish the bank, which would also be somewhere for local investment and re-investment.

6.2 Infrastructure for alternative finance and exchange.

*Policy 6.2: Prioritise an infrastructure for alternative kinds of finance and exchange by promoting and supporting credit unions, time-banks and other alternative financial and exchange institutions*

*The thinking behind it:*

In addition to banking services that serve the needs of the viable economy, there is also a need for a richer support system to improve matters for people with limited income and wealth. At the same time, by sharing in the abundance of our over-productive global economy it may be possible to reduce demands on the ecosystem. There is already good practice on diverting overstocked food to citizens and community groups. Similarly more could be done to make surplus service capacity available (e.g. premises that are only used part of the day or week, empty seats on public transport and in private vehicles). Practical experimentation could be employed to identify effective ways of achieving the dual aims of making available under-utilised assets in the mainstream economy to people who are money-poor while recognising voluntary action in the community.

We therefore propose that the Combined Authority and the municipalities do more to 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.

6.3 Local currency

*Policy 6.3: Establish a Greater Manchester Unit of Currency which would circulate within the conurbation.*

*The thinking behind it:*

The parts of the economy we would want to support are beset by two problems. Firstly, under conditions of austerity, there is now a shortage of government money for anything but the most basic of services. Secondly, money leaks out of the local economy, because of the open nature of the economy and the way profits are extracted and invested elsewhere by some of the big corporate firms. To address these two things, one potential tool is the complementary currency.

We can start from the insight that there is not a fixed amount of money available: most money is created through the process of lending by banks, and State budgets do not

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function like household or company budgets, but are elastic in nature. Moreover, it is entirely possible for the local State (e.g. metropolitan councils or the Combined Authority) to establish or sponsor parallel, or complementary monies. There are some choices to be made in doing this of which the most critical are

* Should the complementary currency be linked to sterling?
* Should the quantity of such money be limited or open ended?
* Should the money have a limited shelf-life (demurrage)?
* Could it be used in payment or part payment of local fees and taxes?

It would be feasible to establish a Greater Manchester Unit of Currency 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 as part payment in transactions, including council rates, taxes and fees. This would increase the availability of finance for green and social business, would provide a source of liquidity for people disadvantaged in the dominant money economy and crucially would help prevent the seepage of wealth out of the region.

The GMCA could usefully mount a review of existing schemes (Bristol, Hull, Brixton etc. and international ones such as the Palma and WIR) and evaluate the feasibility of alternative options (e.g. fiat versus fixed supply, pegged to pound versus finding own value) and administrative infrastructure requirements.

7 National redistribution

Policy 7.1: Campaign, electorally, extra-electorally and via public political education for a fair settlement from Central Government, combatting propaganda on fiscal gap and government deficit.

The thinking behind it:

Redistribution is an integral part of the kind of alternative economic approach we are proposing. Mainstream discourse about Greater Manchester devolution makes much of the so called fiscal gap. That is the £6 to 7 Billion gap between government expenditure on the city region and the revenue raised from taxation in the region. This is seen to be a problem but it is far from being such.

Firstly, all national economies have a recycling mechanism whereby richer regions support poorer regions. London has always been a centre of accumulation for the surplus generated elsewhere. In the phase of British industrial capitalism, it was the labour of people in this region (and others) that enriched the capital. At present, as a consequence of the policies of the last thirty and more years, London has a hyper-developed economy largely based on the financial institutions of the City of London (but also aided by the property speculation bubble). In an era where everything is subject to unexpected change this wealth might not even last (at least at the present levels) and it is not something to be hoarded down there, but shared with the citizens of the country.

The idea of the fiscal gap, however, is based on a misunderstanding: the reasonable sounding idea that government expenditure is funded from taxation. The reality is different: government determines expenditure and then it taxes: it can indeed spend

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85 This is not the place to explore these insights and their background theory, or the inevitable controversies. For some key sources, see SSM (2016). So what would we do? Towards an alternative strategy for the city region. [http://wp.me/a2xtmC-npE](http://wp.me/a2xtmC-npE) p. 22, note 46.

whatever it wishes, managing any untoward consequences through the powerful macro-economic lever of taxation\textsuperscript{87}.

So the fiscal gap is a \textit{fiscal trap}: it is a very big mistake indeed for political leaders and actors in Greater Manchester to fall for it. On the contrary, \textit{our locally elected leaders need to lead a broad-based campaign for national sharing of resources}, building a movement against public sector cuts (rather than complaining and then implementing them) and for appropriate government capital and revenue expenditure.

8 Jobs and income

A credible regional strategy also needs \textit{a local strategy for redistribution}, especially, as we and an increasing number of scholars\textsuperscript{88}, argue, growth will have to be curtailed because of its destructive impact on the climate and ecosystems. It is in any case slowing as the capitalist economy hits multiple crises of accumulation\textsuperscript{89}, typically described as secular stagnation. Moreover, this entails a rethinking of the relationships among jobs, incomes, productivity and work. While the policy levers available to a city-region are limited, there are things that can be done. \textit{Proposals here should be read in conjunction with those on the role of anchor institutions in enhancing equity} (section 4).

8.1 Local innovation for welfare reform.

\textit{Policy 8.1: Conduct a feasibility study for a jobs guarantee and/or a form of basic income.}

\textit{The thinking behind it:}

Over the last thirty years, the structure of employment has changed markedly, and it is set to change further. Certain sectors have decreased and jobs have been displaced in areas where cost savings can be made by automation, or by outsourcing the work to cheaper labour markets. Beyond the standard policy mantra of “jobs'n'growth”, there is increasing interest across the political spectrum in the idea of a Universal Basic Income (UBI), also known as Citizens' Income. This is an unconditional income paid to every individual as a right of citizenship\textsuperscript{90}. While this might seem like a policy prescription requiring national level implementation, there have been trials in a number of cities and


Murphy, R. (2015). \textit{The joy of tax: how a fair tax system can create a better society}. London: Transworld Publishers


\textsuperscript{90} Steady State Manchester. (2016). Universal Basic Income (or Citizen's Income) – a digest of issues. https://steadystatemanchester.net/2016/05/09/universal-basic-income-or-citizens-income-a-digest-of-issues/
regions internationally. There are a number of questions that arise about UBI, however, and alternative approaches such as Participation Income\textsuperscript{91} or the Job Guarantee\textsuperscript{92} / Government as Employer of Last Resort, or the Green Job Guarantee\textsuperscript{93}. also need to be considered, instead of, or for implementation in hybrid form with UBI. The participation requirement, common to Job Guarantee and Participation Income\textsuperscript{94} (and implicit in the last Labour government's Future Jobs Fund for younger workers) could be placed under community governance enabling priorities to be set covering jobs that need doing in the local neighbourhood. Elsewhere we have also argued that such schemes could be funded via a cap and share scheme for personal carbon budgets\textsuperscript{95}.

8.2 Productivity?

Policy 8.2: Make sectors more, not less, labour-intensive

The thinking behind it:

Mainstream economic dogma claims that one source of the economic woes of the North West is its lower labour productivity. The typical basis for comparison is the economy of London and the South East but that is inflated by the finance, insurance and real estate sector and by the disproportionate head-quartering of companies there. Productivity is actually not a particularly useful concept in many areas of the economy that we want to build upon: the foundational areas of education, health and personal care, for example, are inevitably and rightly labour intensive. In a post-growth economy productivity is counter-productive since it reduces the availability of employment\textsuperscript{96}. Even within a putatively growing economy, increasing productivity is not likely to benefit the lower wage and lower skill sectors\textsuperscript{97}. The policy aims should therefore be to seek and promote more labour intensive options while both reducing working hours\textsuperscript{98} (feasible since there is a pool of labour to be absorbed) and maintaining pay levels. The exceptions are where machinery and automation can reduce unpleasant and unnecessary drudgery.


\textsuperscript{94} And distinct from “workfare”, forced labour to obtain benefits, since at least the minimum wage would be paid and the work is not for benefit of a profit-making concern.


\textsuperscript{98} NEF advocate a 21 hour week. We made similar proposals in our In Place of Growth. Changes to national policy would greatly facilitate this but local initiatives could help – councils for example becoming “right length working time” employers. http://neweconomics.org/2010/02/21-hours/
8.3 Stimulate local enterprise development through civic participation

Policy 8.3: Establish mechanisms to support and fund the emergence of community enterprises in each locality.

The thinking behind it:
Many people are excluded from the labour market for various reasons, including, for example, lack of skills, lack of availability for full time work, living with long term health conditions, lack of travel to work options. In some areas there are no jobs for people to do that fit with their family commitments. Any of these reasons confine people to a life as recipients of welfare benefits and often with the associated stresses of unemployment and living on low incomes. And yet, levels of community need remain high in nearly every locality. It is possible to stimulate the development of local community enterprises, both including and not including paid work, through citizen engagement and participation. People care about their local areas and make all sorts of positive contributions to them. Building on local interests, creativity and commitments, it is possible to deliver a network of activities, grounded in local interests and local need, as, for example, the experiment carried out in West Norwood. Local community-asset enterprise funds would be needed to catalyse the ventures.

9 Community

A viable society and economy means we live in communities that are convivial, caring and proactive. But for this to happen the State, including its local institutions, has to help. This is not a matter of dumping responsibilities on hard pressed communities (which typically comes to mean women) but instead making sure that community groups and organisations (formal and informal) have the resources and support, material and intellectual, to lead, to invent, to design, plan and implement improvements. This is not particularly easy for State organisations which have tended to either dominate or to withdraw inappropriately. We need a different approach.

Any “economic strategy” should consider those various activities that are in their way economic and also the spinal supports for people's everyday life and for the official economy itself. They are variously,

a) monetised and exchanged, but hidden from official view: the hidden economy in which positively speaking, people make ends meet and aid one another, and negatively speaking may avoid taxation and regulation; or
b) monetised but not exchanged (the remaining “social wage” public services), or
c) not monetised, being part of everyday life, but provide human resources for the economy (bringing up children, cleaning the house, cooking in the evening) or
d) not monetised but potentially could be, though that might not necessarily be desirable (fixing a neighbour's gate, babysitting, growing fruit and vegetables in an allotment or garden).


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These various “undeclared” elements of the economy and of everyday life also provide an additional lifeline for many people who rely on mutual aid, free goods, or the “informal economy”. Moreover, their consideration also brings to the fore the gendered nature of not only these undeclared aspects of the economy but of the economy as a whole: changes in these areas disproportionately affect women, on whose unrecognised labour the economy (and society) as a whole relies upon.

9.1 Collaborative design and accountability.

Policy 9.11: Councils to develop their role as facilitators and catalysts for community initiative.

The thinking behind it:
The “neoliberal period saw a change in the model of public authorities from the paternalistic “we do everything” model to one of commissioner and market enabler. We know that model to be highly flawed, often acting as little more than a way of channelling public wealth into private hands. But a redefinition in terms of community enabler, sometimes leading, more often following community initiatives, would be a welcome change for post austerity Greater Manchester, one that would build on initiatives and new thinking from innovating authorities in the city region.

Councils, as key bodies of the local State, and as the part that is locally, democratically accountable, can change the way they work with communities. Rather than the council deciding what it is going to do and then conducting tokenistic consultations with a limited number of people and a limited range of options (converging on what the intention already is), the norm should be collaborative design of solutions – the more complex and expensive of which certainly need to be worked up by full time staff, with meaningful collaboration at each step. To work in ways that encourage and utilise community knowledge, creativity and enthusiasm will mean proper resourcing, not least for the kind of mass deliberative processes required to approach complex issues and decisions. Models of co-production in neighbourhood participation and decision making exist\(^{100}\), and we encourage further experimentation in different kinds of localities.

Other innovations that would support this change of direction include elected members holding open meetings at which they report back to citizens on their work, inviting challenge and alternative perspectives. They should be supported to do this by council staff. Moreover, the Localism Act (2011) has provision for communities to bring together Neighbourhood Fora and draw up neighbourhood plans\(^{101}\). Support should be given to enable these to happen in every locality.

9.2. Trust

This collaborative approach to the community requires a change in attitude based on trust.

Policy 9.21: 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.

\(^{100}\)Loeffle, E. (nd) Why Co-Production is an important topic for local Government. [http://www.govint.org/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/coproduction_why_it_is_important.pdf](http://www.govint.org/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/coproduction_why_it_is_important.pdf)

**The thinking behind it:**
If we want a society and economy that builds community, strengthening solidarity and mutual aid, without using that as an excuse to cut collective welfare arrangements via the State and its organs, then we need significant cultural change. One aspect is a change in attitude by the State and its agents, not least an easing up on the official culture of surveillance and distrust, for example in relation to benefits. What does it matter, particularly as the world of work itself changes, if people mix and match from a menu of benefits and cash transfers for services rendered? It makes little difference to public expenditure but can be a contribution to community economic resilience and prosperity.

9.3 Families and children

**Policy 9.31: Provide affordable child care.**

**The thinking behind it:**
This policy paper is not centrally concerned with social policy: that is a possible focus of further work\(^{102}\). But our concern with redistributive policies does raise the question of ways of helping those on low incomes. We have already mentioned guaranteed incomes and guaranteed jobs as possible options. Free or heavily subsidised child care is another option, particularly relevant to families with young children. Combining this imperative with the goal of building supportive communities leads to some innovative options, for example via cooperative arrangements that meld public funding with hours contributed by parents using the resource\(^{103}\). 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.

**Policy 9.311: Protect remaining Sure Start provision.**

**The thinking behind it:**
Sure Start, the programme to support young children and their families, aimed at “‘giving children the best possible start in life’ through improvement of childcare, early education, health and family support, with an emphasis on outreach and community development”\(^{104}\). The programme was found to be effective in improving both the developmental status and the home environments of young children\(^{105}\). Despite this, Sure Start provision has been under constant threat of cuts. If we are serious about affordable child care and redistribution going beyond incomes to include the generation of “human capital”, then this is an obvious area for protection and prioritisation, especially in the most deprived areas.

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\(^{104}\) Sure Start (wikipedia entry – accessed 22/02/17) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sure_Start](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sure_Start)

Policy 9.32: Provide or facilitate the provision of community centres and hubs with affordable room hire.

The thinking behind it:
Building resilient and supportive communities is not easy without a basic infrastructure. Many neighbourhoods lack common space for people to meet and to support a variety of activities from parent and toddler groups to rehearsal space for musicians. Key to enabling this to happen is a commitment to increasing common spaces (or ‘the commons’). Public services, including local government and schools can do more to make available such facilities, either by exploring multiple uses or by facilitating initiatives such as identifying under-utilised buildings as community assets, placing them on the council’s Register of Assets of Community Value and then working with community groups on ways of securing funding and designing effective ongoing management arrangements. Public services can crucially offer incubator space to help get social enterprises and community organisations going, testing viability before going it alone.

Conclusion
Our approach to policy formulation for the city region is distinctive in that we proceed from the ecological via the social and then to the economic. This reflects the fundamental nature of the ecosystem as the basis for human life: threats to its integrity are threats to human society, here and worldwide. Our approach then examines the economic as a support system for the kind of just and convivial society we envisage, with the economic systems constrained by the two goals of ecological safety (living within planetary limits and achieving social and economic justice). We do all this with an emphasis on the regional scale – that of the city-region (and its eco- or bio-region). We have drawn upon the contributions of other organisations and individuals, not all of whom start from the same place as us, but whose ideas are consistent with our eco-social-economic approach, sometimes without and sometimes with some adjustment. The policy framework offered here does not pretend to cover everything – areas for elaboration and further work include social welfare, housing and health. And while we have explained the thinking behind the ideas, we have not given an exhaustive account of the theory and evidence underpinning the ideas. Much of this can be found in our other publications, available freely, along with other shorter pieces on our website which also has signposts to the work of others who share our general orientation.

We hope that the proposals here are helpful for a variety of people and organisations who share the aim of making Greater Manchester a better place. Please do use the material here – if you can acknowledge us, then so much the better.


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