

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee –
9 February 2023

Subject: Zero Carbon Focused Communications and Engagement
Update

Report of: Head of Strategic Communications, and
Director, Manchester Climate Change Agency

Summary

This report provides an overview of the investment into zero carbon focused communications, and early assessment of impact.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the communications and engagement update in the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero carbon target for the city

The communications and engagement activity are a key driver to inspiring residents, businesses and organisations in the city to reduce their carbon emissions, helping Manchester to become a zero carbon city by 2038 at the latest.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments
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Communications and engagement activity is delivered at a local level to reach all communities and groups across the city. Neighbourhood engagement activity encourages meaning conversation around climate change with residents, including underrepresented groups.
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Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Raising the profile of green skills, green jobs and green careers.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Raising the profile of green skills, green jobs and green careers.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Working with residents to tackle fuel poverty by helping them to reduce energy bills, reduce waste, and improve health outcomes through the promotion of more sustainable modes of transport and improved air quality.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Raising the profile of Manchester's green spaces, parks and positioning Manchester as a destination of choice and a great place for people to live, work, visit and study.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Promoting green planning and development policies, housing retrofit, active travel infrastructure.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

N/A

Financial Consequences – Capital

N/A

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Background documents (available for public inspection): None

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report contains an update on zero carbon communications, impact and a summary on Neighbourhood engagement.
- 1.2 This report does not cover Neighbourhood engagement activity in detail as a full update report was taken to Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2022. A link to the update paper can be found in Appendix one.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Manchester has a target of becoming a zero-carbon city by 2038. This ambition is reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 2.2 Since the launch of collective climate action with the first climate change strategy, 'Manchester: A Certain Future', back in 2009, the focus for campaigns has become city-wide with the council seeing its responsibility as leading and encouraging residents, businesses and organisations to make changes by working together.
- 2.3 The aim of the communications activity is two-fold:
 - To tell the story of Manchester City Council's work to tackle climate change and report progress on our activity against zero carbon plans and targets.
 - To engage residents, businesses, organisations and members of the public to influence behaviours and speed up the pace of climate action across the city, as we, the Council, can't reduce the City's carbon emissions alone, a concerted effort is required.
- 2.4 Alongside communications activity, local engagement activity, undertaken by the Neighbourhood Team, is central to creating a meaningful dialogue with local residents and key groups in a manner that works best for them, recognising that each community is different.
- 2.5 The communications team continues to create communications toolkits that can be disseminated by local community, voluntary, faith and third sector groups and our Neighbourhood teams and Neighbourhood Climate Officers.
- 2.6 There is a four-pronged approach to zero carbon communications activity:
 - Ongoing communications activity, both internal and external, to continue to raise the profile of the Council's zero carbon journey by highlighting key projects, achievements and milestones as outlined in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.
 - A behavioural change campaign which was delivered throughout August, September and October 2022 targeted in local district centres, parks,

libraries etc and making use of other tactics including the Council's social media channels.

- Communications linked to the Refreshed Climate Change Framework for the city which launched in October 2022.
- An integrated citywide communications campaign to be developed and delivered in partnership with Manchester Climate Change Agency Partnership (spring/summer 2023).

2.7 This activity is supplemented with media activity and local engagement events via the Neighbourhood Teams. A comprehensive internal communications campaign runs alongside external communications.

3.0 Research

3.1 A piece of research was commissioned prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 to understand the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of Manchester residents in relation to climate change communications. The research included on-street interviews with over 1,000 Manchester residents from a variety of demographics and 3 face to face focus groups.

3.2 Findings showed that:

- 36% scored their climate change worries highly – 9% were not worried at all.
- Female respondents were likely to score more highly than male.
- Generally older people were less worried about climate change issues.
- 73% of respondents would use renewable or green energy at home and 72% would retrofit boiler / insulation / windows.
- 73% were avoiding the use of, or using fewer, plastic carrier bags.
- 34% were avoiding or eating less red meat.
- Focus groups demonstrated that behaviour is as much about money and poverty as climate change – there were discrepancies between homeowners and those who rent.

3.3 The research showed that most residents were not prepared to:

- Grow food at home.
- Campaign against climate change.
- Avoid or eat less dairy/animal products.
- Drive an electric car.
- Minimise travel by aeroplane – the annual holiday was prized.
- Avoid fast fashion or opt for more sustainable fashion.

3.4 The reasons given were that people:

- Needed more information.
- Already felt they did enough.

- Felt that changes were expensive, time consuming or inconvenient.
- Believed that changing their behaviour wouldn't make a difference.

3.5 Incentives for change and measures that the Council could take to encourage people to act differently, included:

- Improving public transport:
 - 6% said public transport is poor.
 - 27% said if it was cheaper, they could use it.
 - 47% said supporting better public transport should be a Council priority.
- Improving safety: a focus group linked sustainable transport to the need to feel safe when using public transport, as well walking and cycling (using cycle lanes, for example).
- Clean air initiatives: an increase in the number of green spaces was deemed to be important.
- Increasing awareness and providing information and advice about climate change initiatives.
- Providing financial incentives to make changes - 26% said money off council tax would change behaviour.
- However, people did not want to introduce fines for poor behaviour.
- Others suggested better recycling, encouraging businesses to be carbon neutral and reducing food waste (by working with caterers for example).

3.6 Based on research findings, the Council decided to concentrate its information drive and behaviour change communications efforts on a middle group of residents (the largest group of people) who were neither actively in support of environmental initiatives, nor strongly opposed to them.

4.0 Communications activity

4.1 Ongoing communications activity

4.1.1 We continue to raise the profile of the Council's zero carbon work by highlighting key projects, achievements and milestones via social media, press activity, internal communications and partners as appropriate.

4.1.2 The social media strategy for zero carbon is to put out regular engaging content based on key zero carbon priorities, such as housing and retrofit, green and blue infrastructure and buildings and energy. Video and images featuring Council staff are used to bring projects and stories to life and all activity signposts residents to www.manchester.gov.uk/zerocarbon.

4.1.3 Between 1 August 2022 and 24 January 2023, 88 messages were posted on MCC's corporate social media channels promoting stories including: waste and recycling; zero carbon housing; active travel schemes; new cycleways and parks. The posts saw combined engagement of:

- 370k impressions
- 1.5k reactions

- 470 shares
- 462 comments
- 2.4k link clicks

- 4.1.4 Messages are issued via internal communications channels to reach Council staff. Regular staff stories are communicated, and zero carbon themed broadcasts issued throughout the year with a focus on key issues and priorities, such as: carbon literacy training; active travel; new policies; and actions staff can take to help reduce their own, and the Council's, carbon emissions.
- 4.1.5 Website content continues to be developed on manchester.gov.uk to highlight the Council's zero carbon ambition, governance, key projects and actions. New content includes: online quarterly update reports; key projects; neighbourhood climate action; contact details for the three locality Neighbourhood Team for residents; and information on the Neighbourhood Investment Fund.
- 4.1.6 The Communications and Neighbourhood Teams continue to embed the Council's zero carbon ambitions into other initiatives and events to reach as wide an audience as possible, supporting local and national zero carbon related days/months to communicate information and action in a different way, without directly referencing climate change and linking to key issues, such as cost of living and health inequalities. Local and national days include:
- World Car Free Day 2022
 - Clean Air Day 2022
 - Carbon Literacy Action Day
 - National Recycling Week
 - Cycle to Work Day
 - Green Careers Week
 - Christmas Markets
 - Veganuary 2023
- 4.1.7 Media activity is focused around key milestones in the Council's Climate Change Action Plan and tangible progress on actions it is taking to lead by example by reducing its own direct emissions. In addition, it also addresses the Council's wider leadership role in using the levers available to it to facilitate and encourage low and zero carbon initiatives across Manchester as a whole, to champion the zero carbon cause and to support the city's resilience and adaptation to the impacts of climate change.
- 4.1.8 So far in 2022/23 there have been 18 news releases issued which were either wholly or substantially about the Council's zero carbon work. However, this figure does not include numerous other releases – for example around the Housing Strategy, budget progress and the Council being named LGC's Council of the Year – which also touched on carbon emission reduction in activities, reflecting on how they are becoming ever more embedded across the Council's activities.

4.1.9 News releases issued during 2022/23 have featured subjects such as:

- The refresh of the Climate Change Action Plan.
- The update to the citywide Climate Change Framework and how communities, individuals and businesses can get involved.
- A challenge to the Government issued as the COP27 summit started calling for a step change in its ambition around the climate change agenda including more funding for the retrofitting of domestic properties.
- Progress on various housing initiatives with strong low and zero carbon elements such as This City, Project 500, Victoria North and Silk Street.
- Progress on active travel and pedestrianisation schemes and the delivery of improvement of green infrastructure, such as Mayfield Park which opened in September 2022, and biodiversity.
- Progress on the decarbonisation of the Council's estate.
- Progress on the retrofitting of Council-owned properties.

4.1.10 There has been extensive coverage of the Council's zero carbon work in regional, local and trade media. The items which have attracted the most coverage, for example the opening of Mayfield Park, the zero and low carbon housing schemes and the active travel schemes, tend to be those with the strongest visual 'presence' and which can be readily understood by the public. By contrast, releases which were more strategy and policy-focused – while recognised as important by outlets including the Manchester Evening News, Radio Manchester and Hits Radio – attracted less reach overall. Items about the Council's zero carbon work have also featured regularly in the Council's monthly e-bulletin which goes out to 28k subscribers.

4.2 Behavioural Change Campaign

4.2.1 A behavioural change campaign was launch in August 2022 and ran through to the end October 2022. The aim was to promote understanding in the role of residents to realise our collective ambitions to becoming a zero carbon city, with good behaviours highlighted and behaviour changes and community-led activities encouraged.

4.2.2 Communication and engagement activity overlap and, in many ways, complement each other - effective communications activity is followed up by genuine and meaningful interactions that see stakeholders more involved.

4.2.3 Working in collaboration with engagement teams and partners, opportunities were maximised, and consistent messages were delivered across the city. Communications activity promoted positive lifestyle changes residents could make to reduce their carbon emissions, improve their lifestyle, health and to help save money and served to amplify local, regional and national messages.

4.2.4 With the current national and local context in mind, the aim of the campaign was to:

- make climate actions relatable.
- link actions to cost savings and health benefits.

4.2.5 Channels were chosen to ensure visibility at local level in district wards and key arterial routes into and around the city centre. Outdoor advertising channels included:

- Bus advertising - 10 rear slots on the Green Stagecoach Electric fleet.
- Digital Loop screens & JC Decaux Screens - City Centre
- Lamppost banners in 10 key district centres, chosen with the help of the Neighbourhood zero carbon officers to focus activity in areas where residents may be more likely to be inactive in terms of choosing zero carbon behaviours.
 - Baguley
 - Brooklands
 - Moston
 - Cheetham
 - Harpurhey
 - Longsight
 - Beswick/Ancoats
 - Gorton
 - Clayton/Openshaw
 - Ardwick
 - Wythenshawe civic centre - Woodhouse Park/Sharston

4.2.6 In addition to social media channels, both corporate and neighbourhood, were used to ensure regular messaging, a fold out printed Z-card featuring hints, tips and links was printed and distributed via libraries, Members and Neighbourhood staff and a toolkit was created and shared with Members, key partners, stakeholders and neighbourhood teams.

4.2.7 Behaviour change campaigns require sustained effort and activity over time, which is why, although the outdoor campaign has ended, campaign messages are amplified regularly via our social media channels to keep the messages front and centre in people's minds and the Neighbourhood Team continue to use the Z-card to engage residents.

4.2.8 Due to the very nature of the calls to action, it is difficult to measure the direct impact of behavioural change campaigns on resident behaviour as unlike a campaign to promote a consultation, for example, where you can see exactly how many people have responded and filled in the survey and monitor spikes in responses following campaign activity, measuring changes in behaviour without direct conversation and monitoring is not possible. In addition, there are many different factors outside of our control, such as personal and financial circumstances and national issues, that impact on an individual's intent to take action and their ability to take action.

4.2.9 However, where possible we include questions around climate action and barriers to action in surveys with residents and frequently go back to quarterly insight gathered through research undertaken with a statistically representative sample to help inform campaigns.

4.2.10 Outdoor advertising channels can also provide metrics around the exposure of the adverts i.e., reach and how many times it is likely to have been seen, this is called Opportunities to See (OTS). The table shows the average OTS for the outdoor advertising channels used in the zero carbon behaviour change campaign.

CHANNEL	OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE (OTS)
MCC Ocean & JC Decaux digital screen network	116 screens cover the city centre - including the Mancunium way Combined OTS across this network is 5.2 million per fortnight. With the average OTS per screen at 47k Our Zero Carbon Campaign received 12 weeks of coverage on these sites
OOH Billboards & Digital package	16 x Commercial sites across our wards - with a mixture of traditional print sites and digital screens Situated at major commuter, shopping and high footfall pedestrian locations The OTS for these sites is a combined 2.6 million across the 2 weeks the campaign was live.
Bus Advertising Rears & Sides	A mixture of bus rears and streeliners across the 2 main Manchester depots in Manchester. A typical four-week bus Rear campaign will reach - 91% of people in Manchester (Source: BUSADS).
Backlit Void - Print Sites	Large print backlit sites on major roads into Manchester City Centre with huge traffic/Commuter audiences. The average OTS on these sites is 700k Per fortnight. The ZC campaign was live for 10 Weeks.

4.2.11 Social media advertising engagement and reach can be measured, and social listening can be used to gain insight into the effectiveness of messaging and the reaction to campaign materials. Across the campaign we posted 27 posts across MCC corporate social media channels. These posts accumulated:

- 102k impressions
- 439 reactions
- 114 shares

- 160 comments
- 235 link clicks

4.2.12 The communications campaign worked hand in hand with local neighbourhood engagement and events. However, given that the work of Neighbourhood Teams and Climate Change Neighbourhood Officers relates to education and behaviour change it is difficult to quantify the direct impact of the campaign or the work the team are carrying out in terms of reduced carbon emissions at ward level.

4.2.13 Conversations and information sharing with residents and other stakeholders may not have a direct or immediate impact on carbon emissions and going forward it will be a challenge to link the two directly together. This is likely to improve as we move forward due to further information on ward level emissions in the future as a result of the extension of Manchester Climate Change Agency's 'In Our Nature' project.

4.2.14 The Neighbourhood Teams have also identified draft key Performance Indicators against each theme in ward level Climate Change Action Plans so that they can track progress. Data will be collected and reported on an annual basis alongside qualitative descriptive information from conversations, consultations, focus groups and interviews to assess what has been done, what can be done differently and what can be improved.

4.3 Communications linked to the Refreshed Climate Change Framework

4.3.1 The Communications team supported Manchester Climate Change Agency to produce a short social media campaign, social media toolkits to share with Manchester Climate Change Partnership Members and media releases to promote the Climate Change Framework Refresh conversation and to support the launch of the Refreshed Framework in early October 2022.

The toolkit was also used on Council social channels for wider outreach across the city.

- 3 posts
- 7.4k impressions
- 30 reactions
- 17 shares
- 34 link clicks

4.4 Integrated citywide communications campaign

4.4.1 The Zero Carbon Co-ordination Group (ZCCG) and Manchester Climate Change Agency's Partnership Board (MCCP) have agreed to work together to co-produce a zero carbon campaign that can be shared widely across Manchester utilising Manchester City Council and MCCAP channels and networks.

- 4.4.2 Initial discussions with MCCP have been positive and constructive. The Council's communications team will work with MCCA to map out potential options. Costs to be shared with MCCAP.
- 4.4.3 Once an option is agreed a series of workshops will commence with MCCAP members to develop a creative brief and start the design process. This work will be undertaken by the Council's design studio.
- 4.4.4 It is anticipated that the campaign will go live in Spring 2023.

5.0 Citywide engagement activity

- 5.1 Engagement is key to sustained behaviour change outcomes. Neighbourhood level messaging from trusted sources is vital to the success of the communities aspect of the zero carbon campaign. It is important to recognise that use of behaviour change techniques to work with communities and change their behaviour requires a sustained level of engagement resource and commitment over time in order to achieve the outcomes required.
- 5.2 Engagement is a core component to inform and develop solutions and interventions that are meaningful to communities and importantly have joint ownership of delivery.
- 5.3 Zero carbon engagement is delivered at neighbourhood level across all 32 wards in the city. By working at neighbourhood level, our teams can identify the specific issues faced by residents in different areas of the city, so that we can try to support residents and reduce blockages to climate action.
- 5.4 Ward Climate Change Action Plans (CCAPs) form the foundation for the Neighbourhood Teams to engage and capture bottom-up climate change activity across the city. Work for the last 12 months has focused on ensuring that each ward had a draft Climate Change Action Plan by the end of the calendar year 2021 using a standard template produced to ensure consistency in approach, recording and capturing information about residents and partner groups involved, resources and opportunities available.
- 5.5 The CCAPs begin by setting out a clear list of broad climate priorities for the ward, which might cover things like homes & energy, travel & transport, nature & greening, recycling, food, and more. The plan then deals with each of these priorities individually, breaking them down into a set of specific, measurable actions with clearly defined owners and timescales. A partnership approach is used when it comes to local climate action to identify broad opportunities to join events and activity weaving zero carbon messaging into wider community and resident engagement.
- 5.6 An update on the role of Neighbourhood Teams in developing local climate change activity and partnership working was taken to Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2022. A link to the update paper can be found in Appendix one.

6.0 Manchester Climate Change Agency activity (MCCA, The Agency)

- 6.1 MCCA's primary communications and engagement activity is delivered through the In Our Nature programme. In Our Nature is a Manchester-based, National Lottery funded, climate community engagement programme delivered in partnership with the Council.
- 6.2 Phase 1 of the programme deployed a city-wide series of communications and campaigns, tackling topics such as: fast fashion; sustainable food choices; food waste reduction; repair and reuse workshops; and pop-up shops with games and activities to provide zero carbon messages in creative ways to those that might not engage in climate discussions otherwise.
- 6.3 In September 2022, MCCA received funding to extend the programme for three years. A key objective is to raise awareness of the benefits of climate action and to inspire and enable as many people as possible to act, including through a city-wide communications campaign.
- 6.4 These activities will be delivered via traditional channels and offline communications to ensure our outreach is inclusive (acknowledging digital exclusion). Messages will be tailored to the communities served, using simple wording and leading with the benefits/priorities that climate action brings, connecting these to the issues that are most important to them.
- 6.5 Accessibility will remain an important consideration in all communications and campaigns, and the programme has a budget to cover costs that arise in removing barriers to access, e.g., providing non-digital alternatives, such as translation services and conversion to easy read formats.

7.0 Reporting

- 7.1 Communications activity is reported back regularly via the following networks, updates and boards:
- Monthly highlight reports (see Appendix two)
 - Regular communications updates at ZCCG
 - Quarterly CCAP update reports
 - Quarterly

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 Members are asked to comment on and note the report.

9.0 Appendices

9.1 Appendix One

- 9.1.1 A copy of the November zero carbon communications and engagement highlight report is attached as a separate pdf.

9.1.2 The November zero carbon communications and engagement highlight report can also be viewed at [1 - 30 November ZC comms & engagement highlight report1.pptx](#)

9.1.3 The October zero carbon communications and engagement highlight report can be viewed at [1 - 31 October ZC comms & engagement highlight report.pptx](#)

9.2 Appendix 2

9.2.1 Link to the paper “Update on the role of Neighbourhood Teams in developing local climate change activity and partnership working” that went to Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on 10 November 2022.

9.2.2 The Report provides updated information on how the Neighbourhood Teams have supported communities to implement local climate action at ward and neighbourhood level in the last 12 months. This includes the development of Ward Climate Change Action Plans and examples of developing best practice to support local communities to deliver activities that contribute to the city’s ambition of becoming a net zero carbon city by 2038

9.2.3 [Update on Neighbourhood Teams.pdf \(manchester.gov.uk\)](#)