

Innovation Alliance for the West Midlands
Innovative Low Carbon Working Group
“A West Midlands Green Recovery”

Tuesday 7 July 2020, 13:45 – 16:30

Online, via Zoom

@InnovationWM

Register of attendance

Name	Initial	Organisation (and link to website)
Adam Bennett	ABe	CR Plus
Alan Carr	AC	Innovation Alliance for the West Midlands (IAWM)
Alison Fulford	AF	National Grid
Anna Bright	ABr	Sustainability West Midlands (SWM)
Bret Willers	BW	Coventry City Council
Callum Ringer	CR	West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)
Clare Ollerenshaw	CO	Accelar
David Chapman	DC	University of Warwick
Denise Osborne	DO	Coventry City Council
Ellen Wilson	EW	Microsoft
Eric Roberts	ER	IES
Iain Mansell	IM	IAWM
Iain Wheeler	IW	University of Wolverhampton
Isaac Vivien	IV	City of Wolverhampton Council
Jacqueline Homan	JH	WMCA
Jenni McDonnell	JM	Knowledge Transfer Network (KTN)
John Bryson	JB	University of Birmingham
Katy Boom	KB	University of Worcester
Lee Chapman	LC	University of Birmingham
Luca Mitchell	LM	SWM
Mark Smith	MaS	Aston University
Mark Thompson	MT	AceOn Group
Michael Smith	MiS	Accelar
Michaela Kendall	MK	Adelan
Michelle Hollier	MH	Winning Moves
Mike Leonard	ML	Building Alliance
Mike Woollacott	MW	Greenwatt Technology
Oliver Eley	OE	Cenex
Pam Waddell	PW	IAWM
Ravi Kumar	RK	IAWM
Rhiannon Davies	RD	IAWM
Richard Partington	RP	AceOn Group
Richard Rees	RR	WMCA
Serena Bacuzzi	SB	Midlands Energy Hub
Susannah Goh	SG	Black Country Consortium
Tom Bailey	TB	CarbonTRACK
Tom Hendy	TH	SWM
William Ray	WR	National Grid

Please [see accompanying slides](#) for more information about each of the agenda items:

- Update on WMCA Green Recovery plans (JH)
- Update on public funding opportunities (JM)
- Update on IAWM activities (PW)

Also see the [#WM2041 plan](#) for context on WMCA’s overall approach to meeting its target of net zero carbon by 2041.

Actions and project ideas from breakout sessions

Below provides a summary of the key action points and ideas raised at each breakout session that could help the WMCA to further its green recovery plans. More comprehensive notes on aspects covered during each breakout session are available on request. The first steps to taking forward many of these ideas could be:

- Undertake a review of good practice/case studies from other CAs or local authorities to identify if something similar has happened elsewhere with success.
- Identify key players related to the theme or the idea and broker discussions by running an engagement session with them to discuss feasibility of implementation.
- Identify possible funding streams that align with this idea that could be used to help progress its implementation.

Highlighted text refers to actions from partners.

Breakout theme	Project ideas and actions
Retrofitting homes and tackling fuel poverty Attendees: ER, JM, KB, MH, ML, PW, RK, RP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heat network projects are often an effective way to start tackling the issue of fuel poverty, by using BEIS funding and working with housing associations. New technologies to further each network’s effectiveness can often be trialled. • Working with local universities, effectively as landlords, can help to provide better quality housing for students, which are often poor quality. ER was involved in a project akin to this with University of Nottingham; he will share the report. • Educating tenants on how to save energy in their homes, and the cost and wellbeing benefits of this, is equally as important as implementing retrofit measures to improve the efficiency of a home; therefore, should WMCA and partners provide an education programme for tenants? • Equally, educating landlords (including local authorities) and providing incentives to improve their homes is just as important, and therefore a concurrent education programme could also be developed. • Could WMCA provide a more generous scheme (compared to national government) to factor in that more people are working at home and spending more money on their energy bills? This could perhaps be more generous to those in poorer quality housing. • Working with housing associations on the concept of a ‘virtual powerplant,’ i.e. integrating battery and renewable technologies into a house. The main barrier to doing this at present is the cost of the equipment, so could the WMCA work with housing associations to take greater control of the market and have more leverage around this? RP is to provide more information on this concept. • Evaluations of relevant pilots have been carried out that outline successes and failures of similar schemes; MH is to provide more details on this and ML to share relevant reports from other UK projects.

<p>Circular economy</p> <p>Attendees: ABr, CO, DC, IM, MaS, RR, SG, WR</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The metals and materials industry has a keen interest in circular economy and SG has introduced key players in the industry to further conversations. There are other opportunities too, such as how heat from manufacturing can be used to heat homes in fuel poverty. • There is a link between the circular economy and retrofit and building quality; the two issues should not be taken in isolation given the impact the building materials have on the quality of the building and, therefore, its efficiency. Can the construction sector be influenced to ensure both issues are considered? • Equally, if more vacant town centre buildings materialise because of Covid-19 (and other factors), if they are knocked down how can we ensure that the building materials are recycled/reused? • CO is working with the WMCA to start work on engagement around a circular economy taskforce through an invite-only workshop in September and a wider questionnaire. RR will share a link to the latter to AC and IM for circulation. • A network for SMEs that focuses on the circular economy could be set up by WMCA to make it easier for them to improve the quality of their buildings and embrace circular economy principles; entire business models need to be redefined to allow them to embrace the circular economy. • Similarly, plenty of learning from current/previous relevant ERDF projects will be lost once they have finished unless there is a mechanism to capture the information or scale up this activity; is this something that the WMCA could do? • Alongside this, can the WMCA qualify what is meant by the term 'circular economy' and terms such as 'waste hierarchy,' as many businesses do not understand what these mean. • Could WMCA utilise and rollout the services of Warp-It or similar, an online platform where organisations can list unwanted items that can be donated to other organisations (e.g. third sector)? National Grid has a similar approach called Market. • University of Warwick has been running relevant projects which have results which DC will share. • Exergy is a local business doing a lot of work on the circular economy and could represent a useful partner for WMCA in furthering engagement.
<p>Green space and natural capital</p> <p>Attendees: AF, CR, JB, LC, LM, TH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The WMCA Virtual Forest has been launched acting as a virtual platform to enable quantification of the number of trees planted in the region. This will help to improve access to green space over time. • Could the wider issue of 'urban greening' (i.e. other aspects in addition to tree planting) and capturing this be integrated in the Virtual Forest? • Big opportunities could lie in large manufacturing/warehouse sites; can WMCA support these companies to 'green up' less used parts of their land? • Could WMCA better connect local businesses with their local green space to improve access and use? Along similar lines, could a list of green spaces in the region be produced and shared on digital platforms to encourage more visitors and raise awareness of their multiple benefits, such as better air quality, wellbeing etc? This could be made into a challenge for families, e.g. 'find your local green space' or 'discover an unknown green space.' Engagement like this should be prioritised with audiences who are not already engaged using influencers relevant to their demographic.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some green/blue spaces have a poor perception of safety; can WMCA make improvements on the safety of green spaces? • An education programme for and upskilling of local community groups needs to take place so that they can do their best to improve/maintain their local green space and plant trees in the right places. Is this something the WMCA could implement? • Could WMCA implement a carbon offsetting scheme, e.g. in Guernsey where residents can offset the number of miles they drive? A meeting on this issue at WMCA level is taking place soon.
<p>Sustainable procurement, green financing and leadership in tackling climate change</p> <p>Attendees: ABe, IW, IV, JH, MK, MiS, MT, MW, OE, RD, SB</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can WMCA support SMEs with regards to overcoming the challenges of procurement opportunities, such as locating opportunities and finding the time to respond to them? • Can there also be a commitment in the WMCA to favour contractors who are local and who demonstrate 'green,' low carbon credentials and projects/services that will reduce carbon and contribute to other sustainability objectives, even if they're not a 'sustainability' project? Could such principles be rolled out to ensure LEPs, local authorities and other public sector bodies abide by the same principles consistently? Overall, there needs to be a review of how the public sector is managing the procurement process. • IAWM is currently helping to develop a short scoping piece of work being carried out focusing on procurement of innovation (including in the low carbon sector); this is taking place this month and outputs will be circulated. • Are there examples of organisations that are procuring contractors based on a full economic analysis of their products and services, rather than just appointing a contractor because they are the cheapest and quickest? Undertaking a full life-cycle analysis is important. • Can WMCA provide leadership to our local authorities to demonstrate how green investment can bring them financial benefits as well increase revenue? • In turn, how can WMCA encourage local authorities to educate its residents about the benefits of 'buying green,' e.g. that EVs are cheaper over a long period? Is there a 'one-stop-shop' or 'hub' where such information could be kept and updated to prevent people from having to sift through loads of information? • Working with other CAs in England would enable a quicker scale up to more sustainable procurement; Ashden and M9 are examples of such groups that could help to develop this. SWM has links with the former.

Actions and connections from roundtable

1. ILCWG members to [contact JM](#) for more information on any of the Innovate UK / Knowledge Transfer Network / BEIS funding opportunities presented.
2. [MT from AceOn Group](#) raised that the organisation [has developed](#) the first Battery Storage Training Centre in Telford, in addition to their manufacture and storage divisions.
3. On 29 July there will be a [webinar taking place](#) focusing on the green recovery and how fuel cells can aid this. [Get in touch with MK](#) for more information on the session or fuel cells in general.
4. The Low Carbon Steering Group at GBSLEP are examining the economic and jobs benefits of growing the green economy within WMCA as part of the Local Industrial Strategy; [please contact MK](#) for more details.

5. Question from MW: Are there any areas of the West Midlands that cannot benefit from WMCA action and funds? JH suggested that its focus is the three-LEP geography (Black Country, GBS and Coventry & Warwickshire) but the boundaries are fuzzy and the WMCA will continue to work with the other local authorities/LEPs in the West Midlands.
- To view the outputs and slides from this ILCWG meeting, [visit the SWM website](#).
 - To keep up to date with current funding opportunities, collaboration opportunities, events, good practice case studies and resources related to low carbon innovation, join [the ILCWG mailing list](#); [contact AC](#) to sign up.
 - To ensure you are invited to the IAWM's general events including Innovation Policy and Practice events, join our general mailing list; [contact AC](#) to sign up.
 - Future meeting dates (next one likely to be in late September 2020)