

## Summary recommendations for West of England Metro Mayor 2017 (updated April 2017)

### **Fossil Free**

1. Declare West of England a **fracking-free zone**, and work with partners to **divest local pension funds** from fossil fuels.

### **Better homes**

2. Support **zero carbon standards from all new homes** and buildings (including affordable homes) in the West of England Metro region.
3. Working with government and local authorities, roll out local energy efficiency programmes to **reduce fuel poverty** and emissions and keep money in the Metro region. Increase standards so that all landlords must meet **EPC band C** on rental properties.

### **Innovative finance**

4. Explore and develop innovative revenue raising policies for the area to fund low carbon transition – such as a **city tax on hotel rooms**.

### **Cleaner air**

5. Work with government to **ensure that starting in 2018** all major towns and cities in region have a mandatory, well-funded **clean-air zone**. Work with government to boost the uptake of **electric vehicles (EVs), cycling and public transport** and to minimise traffic through an integrated transport and planning strategy.
6. Support the **phase out of diesel vehicles** in the Mayoral region by 2025.
7. Call on national government to introduce a **21<sup>st</sup> Century Clean Air Act** to provide new powers and legal protections to ensure that the existing legal limits for air pollutants are retained and enhanced following Brexit.

### **Clean tech and innovation**

8. Prioritise and **encourage renewable energy** and clean energy storage in its Combined Authority Regions through the planning system, including a presumption of approval for small scale schemes (<1.5MW).
9. Help 'future proof' West of England's energy system. **Work with government** to support the uptake of **innovative energy storage** and **demand side technologies** to drive down costs for business and consumers, integrate renewables and generate employment.
10. Develop **skills and research**. Work with local businesses, universities and colleges to identify and tackle barriers in educational resources in the low carbon technology economy.

### **Boosting biodiversity**

11. Support wildlife habitats and particularly **bees and local pollinators** in the area through the Greater Bristol Pollinator Strategy, B-Lines and similar schemes.

## Briefing on West of England Metro-Mayor elections – updated March 2017

Covering Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and NE Somerset, the West of England region has a reputation as a thriving hub for green technology, business and environmental activism, and is frequently ranked highly for quality of life in the UK. As such the region is well placed to become a world leader in the move to a more sustainable economy and to capitalise on the opportunities such action presents.

Crucially, doing its fair share to prevent runaway **climate change** is a reality which the West of England needs to embrace. The Climate Change Act requires the UK to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050, while the recently signed Paris Agreement will likely require the country to go even further to do its bit to keep global impacts to less than 1.5C. This means that more than 75% of known fossil fuel reserves need to stay in the ground.<sup>1</sup> The West of England should declare itself a **fracking-free zone** and focus on building an economy fit for the future.

Fortunately the tools we need to tackle climate change – **clean renewable energy, energy efficiency, better public transport, improved urban design, more environmentally friendly land-use and smart technology** – will improve our lives, our health and create new economic opportunities.

**Insulating homes will reduce fuel poverty and emissions**, while reducing traffic and increasing **cycling** and **walking** will make cities more desirable to live and work in, and reduce the costs of congestion and **air pollution**.

**Renewable energy** is increasingly **affordable** and investment is pouring into the sector. The global solar industry could be worth **trillions of dollars** in the next twenty years,<sup>2</sup> while electric vehicles are growing rapidly.

This briefing looks at **activities which can be taken by the new Metro-Mayor** in several key areas:

- Preventing fracking and fossil fuel extraction in the region, divesting from fossil fuels.
- Reducing household emissions and fuel poverty through standards and energy efficiency.
- Explore novel mechanisms to raise funds for low carbon transition (City Tax).
- Reducing air pollution and tackling congestion and traffic.
- Prioritising environment and low carbon energy in the planning process.
- Promoting the uptake of renewable energy sources and innovative smart technology.
- Boosting the skills the region needs for the transition to a green economy.
- Improving and safeguarding habitats, biodiversity and local pollinators.

### Metro-Mayor Election

This May the West of England Metropolitan Region will elect its first Metro-Mayor.

The Metro-Mayors will not replace existing city Mayors (such as that in Bristol), or heads of local councils, but act as chair of a combined authority made up of the heads of the three authorities in the region.

While the powers that are currently on offer are restricted, there are several areas, notably planning, transport and skills where some devolution is happening. The Government has also set aside a £900 million investment fund for the next 30 years.

Furthermore there is scope for the election of the West of England Metro Mayors to boost the political profile of the regions, to provide political impetus for Councils to use the powers they already have, and to identify and call for new powers.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2016-12-09/56871>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.solar-trade.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/STA-Solar-Facts-and-Statistics-August-2015.pdf>

### **Leaving fossil fuels in the ground**

The West of England should declare itself a **frack-free zone**, as councils in the Forest of Dean and Watchet have already done.<sup>3</sup> Fracking for oil or gas can have significant local environmental impacts and prolongs dependence on climate-changing fossil fuels.<sup>4</sup> We don't need it, and it is a risk we should not take.

The region has a strong commitment to tackling climate change. This should extend to the region's pension fund investments – which should not be in companies which are making climate change worse, following the Environment Agency Pension Fund's strong example.<sup>5</sup> The mayor should work with local authorities in the region to ensure that their **pension funds divests** from fossil-fuel companies, and reinvest in local low-carbon infrastructure that benefits the region's economy.

### **Better homes, healthier people – energy efficiency, and zero carbon home new-build**

Fuel for heating and cooking in homes accounts for around 12% of UK greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>6</sup> Improving the housing stock will have benefits not only in terms of reducing emissions, but also increased comfort and **reduced health costs**. In Bath and NE Somerset for example it is estimated that 17% of households are in fuel poverty, well above the national average, while excessive cold costs the NHS there at least £3.8 million a year in acute admissions.<sup>7</sup> In some UK cities it is thought that more than 25% of winter admissions to the health system are related to cold and damp homes. Recent 'boiler on prescription' trials in Sunderland have shown that installing heating and energy efficiency improvements **reduced visits to the GP by 28% and hospital outpatient appointments by 32%**.<sup>8</sup>

For existing houses, the West of England Metro-Mayor should lead the way in working with government to develop major programmes of **energy efficiency infrastructure** – rolling out home insulation and improvements to tackle fuel poverty, saving money that would otherwise be spent on healthcare and reduce the need for energy. Schemes like Warm-Up Bristol should be expanded. **Rental standards should be improved** to ensure that landlords must meet a minimum of EPC band C in order to rent their properties.

**New houses** also need to tackle carbon emissions and fuel poverty. Metro-Mayors should promote planning policies to ensure that all new developments conform to **zero-carbon standards**, integrate access to active and public transport and maximise benefits for biodiversity. Across the West of England region, housing and particularly affordable housing is a priority issue. It is estimated that around 86,000 new homes will be needed in the region by 2036.<sup>9</sup> With such a large expansion underway there's an urgent need to future-proof housing stock that could stand for hundreds or years.

### **Explore innovative revenue raising mechanisms – 'City Tax'**

City taxes are extremely common in most of the world, and indeed have already been discussed at

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<sup>3</sup> <https://drillordrop.com/2016/12/19/four-west-country-councils-vote-against-fracking/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.foe.co.uk/blog/let-s-talk-about-fracking-facts>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.eapf.org.uk/~media/document-libraries/eapf2/climate-change/policy-to-address-the-impacts-of-climate-change.pdf?la=en>.

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/496942/2014\\_Final\\_Emissions\\_Statistics\\_Release.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/496942/2014_Final_Emissions_Statistics_Release.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/esp\\_-\\_strategy\\_2012-2015\\_0.pdf](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/esp_-_strategy_2012-2015_0.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gentoogroup.com/media/1061811/boiler-on-prescription-closing-report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.southwestbusiness.co.uk/regions/bristol/06112015162817-85-000-new-homes-needed-for-bristol-and-surrounding-areas-in-the-next-20-years/>

the local level in Bath and Edinburgh. Councils in the West of England should work together with the Metro Mayor to explore using innovative (for the UK) mechanisms like this to raise money for low carbon transition. One version could be a small tax on hotel stays in the region. Estimates a tax of £2 per night, per person, could raise millions of pounds a year.<sup>10</sup> The Metro Mayor should work with local authorities and central government to explore and develop these options.

The transition to a low carbon, environmentally friendly economy is both the greatest challenge and greatest opportunity of the coming decades. It is also essential. There is therefore every justification to use money raised from a city tax to aid the transition to a productive, low carbon economy – focusing on renewables, energy efficiency in low-income homes, high technology and transport. For example by investing money in local renewable generation assets, Councils could generate long term income streams for re-investment.

### **Better Transport, Cleaner Air – tackling air pollution**

Local air pollution costs cities dear, with Bath and Bristol having been found breaching legal limits.<sup>11,12</sup> In Bristol it is estimated to cost more than £83 million,<sup>13</sup> and across the West of England it contributes to the deaths of 383 people per year.<sup>14</sup> Cleaning up transport is hugely beneficial – reducing air pollution, improving quality of life and boosting the economy – and is one of the key areas where Metro Mayors will have immediate influence. Working **with central government**, the cities and districts in the region failing on air-pollution should establish mandatory, well-funded **clean-air zones by 2018**, capable of restricting the access of all types of vehicles, including cars, but particularly diesel vehicles. By 2025 the region should seek to phase out diesel vehicles, as is happening in other cities like Madrid and Mexico City.

A new **Clean Air Act** is essential to bring together and strengthen legal requirements after Brexit. The Mayor of London and other city leaders are already [calling for this](#): *“I am also calling on the Government to work with me and to take more action to tackle air pollution. We can’t do this alone in London. The Government should seize the spirit of the 60th anniversary of the Clean Air Act and pass new legislation fit for the 21st century. This needs to provide new powers and legal protections to ensure that the existing legal limits for air pollutants are retained following Brexit.”* For more information see Friends of the Earth’s Clean Air briefing.

As a counterpoint, improving **public transport**, investing in supporting **cycling** and other forms of active transport, and a move to **ultra-low emission vehicles** like **electric cars** is essential.

As part of the metro-mayor agreements, the region is seeing the emergence of consolidated transport budgets, as well as additional money through development funds. At the same time the government has set aside **£390 million for the promotion of electric transport**, placed Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles are the heart of its industrial strategy, and introduced a number of incentives for private developers to install electric vehicle charging points. City regions are in a good position to capitalise on these resources and political will and should lead the way in promoting low-carbon transport, by identifying gaps in charging and grid management and seeking to fill them.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/news/bath-considering-tourist-tax/>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486122/aa-plan-2015-bristol-urban-area-uk0009.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486122/aa-plan-2015-bristol-urban-area-uk0009.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/486197/aa-plan-2015-south-west-uk0030.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486197/aa-plan-2015-south-west-uk0030.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/cost-air-pollution-public-health/story-27862144-detail/story.html>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/332854/PHE\\_CRCE\\_010.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/332854/PHE_CRCE_010.pdf)

### **Promote clean tech, renewable electricity and innovative smart technologies**

Decarbonising the energy system is absolutely key to tackling climate change. Electricity will need to be one of the first sectors decarbonised, with Friends of the Earth estimating that the UK will need to source around 75% of its electricity from renewable by 2030, up from 25% in 2015. The future of the UK is as a high-tech low carbon economy, and the West of England must ensure it is able to compete with other global low-carbon hubs. Encouraging **renewable energy and smart grid technology** will have significant benefits in terms of the regional economy and jobs. In 2014 around 10,000 people were employed in renewable energy in the South West, with the potential for up to 30,000.<sup>15</sup>

Bristol spends around £430 million a year on gas and electricity<sup>16</sup>, money which mostly leaves the city region (around 3.5% of the local economy). Similarly South Gloucestershire spends around £650 million<sup>17</sup>, and Bath and NE Somerset around £157 million a year.<sup>18</sup> Keeping a portion of this money within the region could be a **significant economic boost**.

Developing a modern flexible energy system will also bring big benefits to the WoE. Many larger scale renewable energy sources (onshore wind and solar) are competitive with fossil fuels, but are locked out by restrictive planning rules and the design of the energy market. A smarter, cleaner energy system will drive down costs<sup>19</sup> and help protect the environment.

- Metro Mayors should work with their combined authorities to **ensure that local and spatial plans contain provision for encouraging and expanding renewable energy generation** in their regions (as required by the Climate Change Act) and that a positive planning environment is encouraged, particularly for smaller scale projects (<1.5MW). West of England should also work to encourage **communities looking to install their own renewable energy** by making council land available for installations.
- With renewables are on track to become the dominant energy sources there is a need for cities to get 'renewable ready'. This includes the integration of energy storage and smart technologies. The West of England region should **work with Ofgem, the Government and the National Infrastructure Commission** to ensure that it becomes a world leader in the use and development of **energy storage and smart, flexible energy**.

### **Jobs and skills – thriving in the innovation economy**

Low-carbon technologies are likely to be the largest and most important industries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However to compete and thrive the West of England region will need to maintain and enhance its ideas. Participating in the global renewable energy revolution, and getting the most out of it will require a skilled and educated workforce that can take advantages of the opportunities on offer. Metro Mayors should work with local universities, colleges and industry to identify gaps and opportunities and ensure that there are local centres of excellence in science, engineering and related skills necessary for industries the future economy.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.regensw.co.uk/the-south-west-renewable-energy-manifesto>

<sup>16</sup> [https://bristol-smart-energy.cse.org.uk/wiki/Key\\_Stats\\_Bristol](https://bristol-smart-energy.cse.org.uk/wiki/Key_Stats_Bristol)

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/environment/climate-change/climate-change-strategy/>

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Environment/Sustainability/community\\_energy\\_strategy\\_2015\\_to\\_2018.pdf](http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/sitedocuments/Environment/Sustainability/community_energy_strategy_2015_to_2018.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> An analysis of electricity system flexibility for Great Britain

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/568982/An\\_analysis\\_of\\_electricity\\_flexibility\\_for\\_Great\\_Britain.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/568982/An_analysis_of_electricity_flexibility_for_Great_Britain.pdf)

### **Boosting biodiversity, protecting habitats**

As urban populations continue to grow in the region it is vital that every effort is made to encourage and support biodiversity and wildlife in the region, from planning measures to architectural standards designed to encourage more wildlife friendly buildings. The Metro Mayor should support the work of the **Greater Bristol Pollinator Strategy**,<sup>20</sup> **B-lines**<sup>21</sup> and other similar projects to ensure that, through their strategic planning functions, the West of England combined authorities protect, enhance and create joined-up networks of pollinator-friendly habitats throughout their area.

### **Contacts**

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.avonwildlifetrust.org.uk/my-wild-city/get-bristol-buzzing/greater-bristol-pollinator-strategy>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.buglife.org.uk/b-lines-hub/west-of-england-b-lines>