

# Speech: Local knowledge. National action. International leadership.

## **Local knowledge. National action. International leadership**

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency Manchester Green Summit, 25 March 2019

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They say all news is local.

Environmental impacts are local too.

Just over a week ago the Manchester Evening News reported the fire service was called out to 48 floods in Greater Manchester when nearly a month's worth of rain fell in 24 hours.

Last year, the military was called in to help the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service manage the vast moorland fires during the heatwave.

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The causes of environmental problems are local too – but also national, and international.

Last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said the world has 12 years to reduce carbon emissions and limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

And, they said – even if we do – we still face a future of hotter days, fiercer fires, and bigger storms.

These will create specific impacts to cities everywhere.

This morning, I was pleased to see the interview on The Huffington Post with 15 year old Emma Greenwood – demonstrating support in Manchester for climate action inspired by Greta Thunberg and the schools strike.

In the interview Emma said: “I think many adults think: ‘it’s not affecting me currently’ or know that it won’t affect them in their lifetime so think it doesn’t matter. But they need to consider the bigger picture and the long term consequences.”

I agree.

But, I hope the Manchester Green Summit shows that there are many adults working to address these problems.

I’m grateful to Andy Burnham and the GMCA for giving that work a much needed platform today.

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When I spoke at the Green Summit last year, I said cities are at the forefront of the world's environmental problems.

However, Manchester's historic capacity for reinvention gives the city region an advantage in meeting the challenges of the future.

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The solutions to environmental problems are also local, national, and international.

The Environment Agency – led locally in Greater Manchester by our area director Lee Rawlinson – works to create a better place for people and wildlife, and to support sustainable development in England.

The combination of local knowledge and national resource is a great strength.

We also need to share expertise and learn with other countries in order to protect local communities and challenge damaging behaviour that can cross international borders – like waste crime or excessive carbon emissions.

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This spring, the government has committed to publish the UK's first ever Green Finance Strategy, setting out the steps they are taking to attract investment into a clean, and resilient, economy, and cementing the UK's position as a global leader in green finance.

But, global leadership can only happen if we're actually walking the walk at home.

Which is why we're supporting the GMCA and 11 other partners to develop the IGNITION project in Manchester.

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The government has been looking at the barriers to the goals of the 25 Year Environment Plan, and highlighted market failures in investments and funding as a key challenge.

IGNITION would be a 3 year first-of-its-kind project that would see the GMCA – supported by 11 partners including the Environment Agency – create, and finance, projects that are:

- attractive to private investors

And,

- create confidence for investments in blue and green infrastructure.

It would set a target of a 10% increase in green infrastructure in Greater Manchester by 2038 – and could provide a model for investors that would help

“green finance” for urban infrastructure go mainstream around the world.

I’m not surprised to see Manchester leading again.

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As the Government’s Urban Pioneer, exploring new ways to improve the natural environment, and as one of the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities, Greater Manchester can be a lodestar for cities everywhere.

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The Environment Agency is right there with you.

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We are helping Manchester City Council and U&I at Mayfield – the £1 billion redevelopment of the old Royal Mail Depot near Piccadilly.

We have supported investments that are de-culverting and re-naturalising the river, reducing flood risk and creating a new 6 acre city park – the largest of its kind since the Victorian era.

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Reducing flood risk is always a priority for the EA and we have worked with Rochdale Council, Transport for Greater Manchester, and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, to find funding for the flood scheme in Rochdale and Littleborough.

This could be the largest ever built in Greater Manchester.

It would reduce risk to around 1000 homes, 200 businesses, a transport interchange, the metrolink, business parks, and a primary school.

We hope the project will start on site in 2020 and be complete by 2024.

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In the last 18 months, we have completed flood schemes in Westleigh and Salford and have schemes in development in Alder Forest and Prestolee.

As well as reducing the risk of flooding, these will create habitat for wildlife.

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We are helping Salford and Manchester with the environmental aspects of the bid for the Northern Gateway so that the £1 billion investment will create a river park leading into the city along the River Irk.

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And, we are working with Natural England to develop a Greater Manchester City

Region policy for net gain with planning and development.

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Alongside our work here I am also pleased to see people from the Environment Agency being recognised in Manchester.

Last week, Sarah Davies, and Claire Eadington were celebrated at the Northern Power Women Awards, which champions excellence in diversity action in, from, and for the North.

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Earlier, I was delighted to see the video from Chris Packham saying “the Environment Agency are one of the great unsung forces in the UK.”

He went on to say: “What we don’t hear enough about – I’m afraid – is the enormously good work that they’ve done over the years.”

And then he said: “anyway I have digressed...”

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Well, as Chair of the Environment Agency, I can’t agree with that at all.

It’s not a digression... it’s an absolutely crucial point.

It is fantastic to see so many inspiring projects on display today, and to hear more stories of resilience and reinvention.

I am pleased to say that since the moorland fires last year, fire breaks have been reinstated and funding made available for us to work with the Woodland Trust to help restore the internationally significant peatland.

Extensive re-seeding and planting will help to prevent soil erosion, reduce flood risk, improve habitats, and safeguard water for the future.

Thank you for inviting me back to the Green Summit.

It’s so inspiring to be in a city that is not only determined to rise to the challenges of the future...

...but show the rest of the world how to get on and deal with them now.

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