

Manchester Carbon Literacy Project

Manchester City Council

Thursday 10 December 2020

Summary

We need everyone to understand how our everyday actions have an impact on climate change, resulting in carbon dioxide and other polluting gases getting into the atmosphere. In short, that means being carbon literate. Manchester is the birthplace of the [Carbon Literacy Project \(CLP\)](#), a training programme designed to help people to reduce their carbon emissions through individual actions and group projects. The Project was founded as a direct response to Manchester's first climate change strategy in 2009. The City Council has adopted the CLP as a high priority for its own staff, having last year declared a climate emergency.

Our problem

Our initial CLP training programme was run under different departments within the City Council - the policy group, HR and the training team. That led to inconsistencies in the training with no overall ownership. To combat this, we appointed a dedicated carbon literacy trainer and put a plan in place to target particular departments within the Council and to help us aim for Silver status with the Carbon Literacy Project (CLP).

The coronavirus crisis has delayed the process somewhat, with face-to-face training stopping at the end of March 2020. In a bid to adapt to the 'new normal', we recreated the training as an online programme, which was officially approved by the Carbon Literacy Project in September. Over 150 people within the Council have been trained in this new format which involves a mixture of home learning and trainer-led online sessions. We've already had our first certified learners approved by the CLP.

Overview

Manchester was the world's first industrial city; it seems only fitting that it now plays a pivotal role in reversing the reliance we have on carbon-emitting fuels. Back in 2013, Manchester City Council pledged to give everyone living, working or studying in Manchester one days' worth of carbon literacy training. Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) designed a training course that could be rolled out to all staff working for the Council. Running on a 'train the trainer' model, staff then became involved in leading the training for other sectors. As climate change has moved further up the agenda, this training has become an increasing priority for staff.

The Carbon Literacy Project was founded in Manchester as a direct response to a report called *Manchester: A Certain Future*. This set out two aims: cut CO2 emissions by 41% by 2020 and create a 'low carbon culture' in the city.

The Project works on the principle that residents, workers and learners who are carbon literate have a deeper understanding of the carbon impacts of their activities and therefore, are better able to make informed choices

about the most energy and resource-efficient, lowest-carbon options available to them. It's about empowering them to make positive, low-carbon changes in their homes, workplaces, schools, universities, communities and any other setting.

Timeline / project progress

This is an evaluated project whose impact has been verified. The Carbon Literacy Project has approved the course and upon completion, participants receive a certificate certifying them as 'carbon literate'.

By the end of 2015, the Carbon Literacy Project was selected from a global field to be part of the Transformative Actions Program (TAP) as part of the UN Climate Change summit (COP21) in Paris - showcasing this Manchester innovation to the rest of the world. It has now grown beyond Greater Manchester to spread to other parts of the UK and mainland Europe.

Stakeholders

Manchester Metropolitan University initially helped to create the programme and train our first staff. It has been delivering carbon literacy to students since 2012 and has been accredited as a 'Carbon Literate Organisation' (bronze). Within the Council, senior managers and councillors have attended the training and supported rolling it out to all staff. It is an important action in the Manchester Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP). Managers support staff after their training in helping them to implement the green pledges they've made during the course of the programme.

Whole systems approach

Within the council, all staff have access to training via individual sign up on our Intranet or through targeted training within their departments.

More broadly, Manchester City Council is part of the Manchester Climate Change Partnership which was established in 2018, alongside Manchester City Football Club, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Manchester, Manchester Climate Change Youth Board and other partners. We are working to meet the terms of our [climate change strategy plan](#).

Impact

The impact of attending the training isn't to be underestimated. Everyone who goes through the course saves an estimated [15% in personal carbon emissions](#), and this training has supported business plans being created that involve looking at carbon emissions in Council buildings and with external contractors. An 'environmental weighting' of 10% is being trialled for procurement across several services. We also now have climate change being raised in ward meetings as a result of officers attending the training and the [MCCAP](#) actions being incorporated into Ward Action Plans.

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A number of facts have become apparent as the Project has proceeded. The ownership of the project by one person leads to consistency and the following through of future goals. Adaptable training is essential if we're to incorporate new updates as the environmental world continues to change. A section of the training looks at current news stories and encourages ways the participants can influence their stakeholders.

As one of the official organisations involved with the Carbon Literacy Project, our training has been recommended to other local authorities both in this country and abroad. The city's European funded, C-Change Project has enabled the arts and culture sector to engage with the CLP. In 2016, members of the Manchester Arts Sustainability Team, (a network of over 40 cultural organisations from museums and galleries to opera houses and arts centre) developed a version of the training specifically for the arts and culture sector. Some MAST members have gone on to deliver organisation or department-wide training. For example, [HOME](#) – a multi-arts venue – now has two accredited trainers who deliver training for the HOME team, as well as to corporate and private sector organisations.