Route to Zero Carbon: Transport Sandpit

Aims

The aims of the sandpit were to:

a. bring together local stakeholders,

b. understand how the stakeholders and their organisations can help Birmingham City Council (BCC) and the Route to Zero (R20) Taskforce reduce the city's emissions from transport and achieve carbon neutrality by 2030, and

c. develop a network of stakeholders to maximise and champion the city's transport decarbonisation efforts through collaboration.

Background, sandpit format

The transport sandpit took place on 13 May 2020. Originally planned for 25 March 2020, it was delayed due to the COVID-19 breakout and the lockdown. The sandpit took place via Zoom, once we were confident that most participants would be comfortable to participate digitally as the lockdown and remote working practices had settled in. Approximately 30 people attended, representing the R20 Taskforce, Council officers, transport consultants, local universities, TfWM, local and international businesses, transport operators, and local community and activist organisations. Some of the participants left the sandpit for short periods of time to attend other meetings and then returned, taking advantage of the flexibility of a digital meeting.

Clear information on how to join was sent in advance of the sandpit, while the BCC team had a test session in advance of the sandpit and a dedicated technical assistance person during the sandpit to ensure that any issues would be addressed without interrupting the main session. Except for some small technical problems, the sandpit lasted for 3 hours and ran smoothly without interruption. The use of shared documents where participants could write their thoughts (instead of using post-its on a wall) and communicate with each other, and the use of 'breakout sessions' on Zoom, where discussions took place in smaller groups, received very positive feedback from participants.

Participant contributions

Following a short presentation on the role of transport in the climate emergency, participants were asked to contribute in a shared document their thoughts on how their organisations can help BCC and the R20 Taskforce achieve net zero by 2030.

The wide range of participants meant that there were multiple contributions suggested, that would could help BCC and the Taskforce with the development and implementation of climate action focusing on transport. The proposed contributions are categorised briefly below:

- Engaging with business to disseminate information about sustainable and active travel opportunities.
- Universities can offer broad interdisciplinary collaboration to make links across different systems in relation to decarbonisation issues.
- Universities can support more sustainable travel among staff and students.
- Developing innovative infrastructure and technology solutions to deliver renewable heat and power, energy storage solutions, clean transport fuels, and advanced waste processing to the city of Birmingham.

- Specialist transport consultancy guidance and lessons from across the world on issues such as parking policies and first/ last mile trips.
- Lobbying across government organisations.
- Community engagement on climate action through various groups, including faith and neighbourhood groups.
- Best practice examples from other places across the world.

Breakout sessions

The first breakout sessions focused on **going from contribution to commitment** and identifying **opportunities for collaboration**. Participants were asked what their wider contribution is and how this could be translated into a short, medium or long-term commitment to working with BCC and the Taskforce. In addition, participants were asked to identify opportunities for collaboration among them and with the council.

The second breakout session focused on how the sandpit could evolve into a **network of local stakeholders**, and how this network will **continue to evolve in the future**. In addition, the participants discussed how their **commitments can be 'formalised'** as part of this network and how **the network can be expanded**.

The breakout sessions allowed participants to expand on their initial contribution statements and discuss the opportunities and challenges of creating a network of key stakeholders that support transport decarbonisation in the city. Some participants also identified different opportunities for collaboration among themselves. Overall, the participants were open to the idea of creating a network and formalising their commitment following the sandpit. Multiple options about the network's contribution were discussed as well as different options for formalising each organisation's commitment.

More specifically, because of the multiple areas of expertise and types of contributions, it was suggested that specialist subgroups of the network could offer their expertise as technical advisory groups or 'task and finish' groups that will help ease the burden of this task for the Council. Specific pieces of work could either focus on climate action, research or engagement of specific communities in the city. Alternatively, it was also suggested that different 'workstreams' are created within the network so that the existing expertise can be directed to specific tasks.

In terms of how this network can be formalised, most participants were open to the idea of signing a Memorandum of Understanding/ collective pledge that outlines the collaborative relationship between BCC, the Taskforce and the network and the shared goal of decarbonising transport and achieving net zero by 2030. However, it was also stressed that different organisations may prefer different levels of commitment, which the network should allow.

Conclusions

This sandpit was an excellent opportunity to bring diverse stakeholders in the same space and discuss the shared commitment to transport decarbonisation. It is considered a helpful and positive start of a network of experts and stakeholders that will help the Council and the Taskforce accelerate transport decarbonisation action.

We believe that establishing and continuously engaging with a network of local stakeholders will be of great benefit for the local transport decarbonisation and for lobbying the central government for more resources and powers. At the same time, it is a unique opportunity to communicate to these

stakeholders and by extension to communities, the scale of the challenge at a system level and the scale of change required to achieve net zero.

It is noted that during the sandpit there were multiple references to the present pandemic that are not included in this note. During the sandpit it was made clear that the decarbonisation agenda spans beyond the current conditions and, however challenging and unique the present situation may be, achieving net zero requires systemic changes that are aligned with but not substituted by our emergency responses.

Next steps

As the Emergency Birmingham Transport Plan and the Emergency Active Travel Fund schemes have now been shared with the public, we will follow up with the participants linking the sandpit with the COVID-19 emergency actions and BCC's unchanged commitment to achieving net zero by 2030. We aim to:

- Map the fields of expertise of each participant.
- Get a better understanding of the level of commitment from different organisations.
- Get the stakeholders' detailed views on the network can be formalised.
- Understand how this network relates to existing networks in the city to ensure that action s mutually reinforcing rather than overlapping.

Feedback from the Taskforce will be greatly appreciated.

Additional materials

Sandpit materials and participant contributions: https://bit.ly/3fHFMHh

List of attendees:

Emily Prestwood, University of Birmingham

Kath Turner, Birmingham City University

Bob Whitehead, CANWM

David Horsfall, Tyseley Energy Park

John Nightingale, Footsteps

Michael Addison, ecobirmingham

Adrian Taylor, Atkins

Johnny Ojeil, Arup

Cllr Julien Pritchard, Birmingham City Council

Andrew Page, TfWM

Deborah Phelpstead, Birmingham City University

Louise Reardon, University of Birmingham

Chris Coyle, ebikebrum

Ewan Hamnett, Retired GP

Shivaji Shiva, VWV

Anna Wilson, WSP

Lydia Barnstable, AECOM

Maria Dunn, Birmingham City Council

David Harris, TfWM

Mike Stringer, Renault Trucks

Andrew Goodwin, Certas Energy

Karen Seehra, University of Birmingham

William Bloss, University of Birmingham

David Cox, The Birmingham Cycling Campaign

Jacqui Roberts, ebikebrum

Tim Egan, Sustrans

Byeronie Epstein, WBCSD

Chris Martin, Footsteps

Alex Greatholder, TfWM

Ali Bell, National Express

Naomi Todd, Birmingham City Council

Ioanna Moscholidou, Birmingham City Council

John Myatt, Birmingham City Council