Manchester Urban Institute Local Advisory Board
4 June 2025

In attendance

Local Advisory Board (LAB):	Mark Atherton (GMCA Environment Programme)
	Nick Brelsford (SUSTRANS)
	Mike Franks (Community Owned Renewable Energy (CORE)
	Revd. Kate Gray (Dandelion Trust)
	Rod Kippen (42nd Street)
	Kathy Oldham (GMCA)
	Anne Parks (Arup)
	Mei Ren (Buro Happold)
	Adrian Slatcher (Manchester City Council)
	Gavin Taylor (Far East Consortium)
	Nicola Wood (NHS Greater Manchester)
	Kristen Zhao (Manchester School of Architecture)
For Manchester Urban Institute (MUI):	Karen Lucas (Director)
	Joanna Barrow (Researcher)
	Jack Benton (Early Career Researchers' Network)
	Emma Tsoneva (Research Manager)
	Alexandra Barrueta Sacksteder (PGR & CORE)

Apologies: John Blundell (Rochdale MBS); Stephen Cochrane (Oxford Road Corridor); Rebecca Heron (Manchester CC); Anupam Nanda (Deputy Director, MUI); Samantha Nicholson (Manchester Climate Change Agency); Joe Ravetz (MUI); David Schiele (Energy Innovation Agency).

Overview of meeting

After introductions, Karen Lucas delivered a brief presentation outlining recent changes to the MUI management team and research environment over the past year. She also highlighted potential opportunities aligned with The University of Manchester's 2035 Strategy. LAB members Rod Kippen and Joanna Barrow spoke about research collaboration with MUI on a transport poverty project with TfGM, and Mike Franks and Alexandra Barrueta Sacksteder about their Community Energy projects in Wythenshaw.

LAB members were invited to form small groups to explore:

- Opportunities for engaging with research
- Barriers to research engagement and wider inclusion
- Recommendations to enhance research engagement.

A summary of the group discussions is below.

Summary of discussion

1. <u>Key themes and recommendations</u>

Translating research into real-world impact	- For best use by public, private and voluntary sectors, there is a need to translate academic research into accessible language. - Present research findings through cross-sector forums in ways that demonstrate their relevance to real world projects. - Through research, create transferable tools and iterative feedback loops to improve learning.
Cross-sector collaboration	- Establish mechanisms for organisations to share priorities and identify areas for potential collaboration. - LAB members can act as conduits but there is a need to establish forums for broader consultation. - Schedule regular events and participation in other external activities to create relationships and minimise institutional barriers to collaboration.

2. <u>Barriers to wider inclusion</u>

Communication and engagement	- Build trusting relationships with communities. - Recognise the barriers practitioners face in engaging with institutions to prioritise accessibility. - Simple presentations of research often have more impact than academic journal articles.
Institutional / structural barriers	- Existing norms discourage risk-taking and innovation due to lack of incentivisation. - Academics often lack the resources to disseminate and embed learning before moving on to new projects.

	- Academic outputs may not always align to the practical impact of research, delaying the translation of research into practice. - Create opportunities to work across sectors to increase capacity to write and submit funding bids.

3. <u>Suggested actions</u>

- **Develop forums for joint planning**
  Build platforms for shared planning across university, public and community partners.
- **Create a research pipeline**
  Establish continuous, iterative research that feeds directly into policy and practice.
- **Focus resources**
  Start with a small number of targeted collaborations that can be scaled up based on their success.
- **Support external research**
  Work with councils and community organisations to help them articulate their research needs.

Next steps

- A summary of LAB discussions was shared at the recent MUI internal away day.
- MUI researchers will meet with LAB members to discuss the development of specific projects.
- This autumn, MUI will host an event bringing together LAB members, policymakers (building on the recent Civic Participation workshop), and University researchers to identify common interests and develop collaborative research ideas.

Conclusion

The LAB provided insights into how MUI can build on and strengthen engagement with external partners. Discussions highlighted the importance of translating academic research into accessible, actionable outcomes and identified steps to generate collaboration and address structural barriers to engagement. Future joint initiatives and a workshop planned for Autumn 2025 will build on this momentum creating opportunities to co-produce inclusive research.