



► Collaborative initiatives in Milton Keynes

Background

Milton Keynes (MK) is one of the few cities that was planned as a whole and built with future growth in mind. Today, it is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK. The challenge of supporting sustainable growth without exceeding the capacity of the infrastructure, and whilst meeting key carbon reduction targets, is a major one. Therefore, several collaborative initiatives were born, such as the Low Carbon Living Programme, MK:Smart and IMAGINE MK 2050.

Process

The Low Carbon Living Programme is developed to re-establish the city as a place where new ideas can be tested and innovation incorporated into daily living. A range of projects are proposed to support and encourage residents to embrace the low carbon agenda and offer a business environment which welcomes companies working in the “green” economy.

The Milton Keynes Low Carbon Programme prospectus¹ sets out the city’s sustainable development under four main themes:

- Your part in the future: Engaging the community and local initiatives
- A low carbon city: Reducing the environmental impact of buildings and transport

- Technology: Improving the present and protecting the future
- Direction: Clear and informed strategies, policies and masterplanning

MK:Smart is a large collaborative initiative, partly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and led by The Open University to develop innovative solutions to support economic growth in Milton Keynes.

In addition to these technical solutions, MK:Smart also comprises ambitious education, business and community engagement activities, including:

- An integrated programme of business engagement, aimed at supporting businesses that wish to take advantage of the innovation capabilities developed in MK:Smart. A key component of this activity is the Innovation and Incubation Centre (IIC) at University Campus Milton Keynes (UCMK), providing training in data-driven business innovation and the digital economy, as well as hands-on support for business development, demonstration facilities, and an incubation space.

1-Available at www.zerocarbonhub.org





- ▶ A smart city education programme engaging a wide range of audiences, from local schools to higher education students and businesses. This programme is to provide advanced training covering digital technologies, business innovation and urban services to empower students and practitioners with the skills and competences needed to participate in the creation of a smart city.
- ▶ Engagement activity to involve citizens in the innovation process, not just through an outreach programme, but also by engaging the community in innovation-centric decision-making processes through the establishment of a Citizen Lab.

The MK:Smart partnership brings together The Open University, University of Bedfordshire, Cambridge University, British Telecom, Dell, E.ON, Anglian Water, HR Wallingford Ltd., the Satellite Applications Catapult, Milton Keynes Council and Community Action MK, together with a number of small and medium sized businesses.

Preparing the IMAGINE MK 2050 Roadmap was the occasion to take a fresh look at the Low Carbon strategy for Milton Keynes (see *Part B page 18*).

Next steps

A key outcome is the dialogue between the project team and other sectors of the local authority, where previously this had been limited. The project has also received support from elected members, who recognise the importance of public consultation on these issues. The impact of the work to date is to focus attention on the importance of early action for long environmental and economic benefits.

The process of engagement with local stakeholders has been good for publicising the need for action now to reduce dependency on external resources.

The message is that this will have long term impact on jobs and the local economy, reducing the flow of finances out of the area, to be used for local environmentally sound and sustainable solutions to global issues.

