

Our economy isn't working - Can Greater Manchester pioneer a new way of doing things?

By Graham Whitham

The UK is failing to ensure economic and jobs growth leads to higher living standards for all. GDP growth has been positive in every quarter since the end of 2012. The employment rate is at a record high and the unemployment rate at its lowest level since 1975. Yet, living standards aren't going up and the IFS says incomes for the average family will not grow over the next couple of years.

In contrast, the richest 1% have recouped losses in income from the financial crash. That's because the economy is configured so that wealth is increasingly captured by capital rather than workers. The richest 1% have received a quarter of the £4 trillion national increase in wealth since 2000.

Policy encourages a business culture that promotes short-term, shareholder driven approaches, at the expense of workers, who have found their position undermined. The UK has adopted this business culture and approach to its economy despite high levels of economic inequality hindering economic success, and evidence that putting money in the pockets of those on low incomes reaps greater economic rewards than concentrating wealth in the hands of the very rich. A new approach is needed.

As the birthplace of the cooperative movement, and a place with a proud tradition of doing things differently, Greater Manchester should be at the forefront of a new economy that fosters alternative business models that rebalance wealth distribution and shift power relationships. The phrase, 'What Manchester does today, the rest of the world does tomorrow' may stem from a very different economic school of thought, but this city region should be at the vanguard of a new, more human centred economy that lights the way for the rest of the country.

Alternative structures of business are emerging that are better geared to sharing wealth more evenly. These are either mission driven or ensure that the stakeholders most impacted by the business also own the business. Such business structures are geared to not only reinvest more into their business but also work more constructively for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Employee-owned businesses, such as John Lewis, have grown significantly in multiple economies, outperforming other businesses on sales and employment growth. Studies on employee ownership show that those types of businesses generate more employment growth and lead to significantly higher pay for their employees.

Multi-stakeholder cooperative models also aim to balance the interests of various stakeholders, such as consumers and workers. These typically structure company governance to ensure that the interests of workers and consumers, or producers and buyers are balanced in key decisions, including on how profits are used. The Go-op train cooperative is one example of this model.

Fostering an alternative approach to business and the economy in our city region will require an acknowledgement across GM that 'trickle down' doesn't work. Whilst the Manchester economy has remained relatively robust, the city region is home to lower than average wages, some of the highest levels of child poverty in the country and growing inequality between the south and north of the conurbation. A plan for addressing these challenges and implementing an alternative GM economy should include:



Graham Whitham

- Adoption of human centred indicators as a means of measuring economic success.
- Promotion of companies that adopt alternative business models through
 - active public procurement that favours such models
 - access to finance for such businesses through a regional/local investment bank
 - tailored start-up and business development support
 - trialling business rate deductions and working with central government to identify other incentives for such businesses.

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The Real Living Wage is good for business!

Cardiff University's "[The Living Wage Employer Experience](#)" interviewed real Living Wage employers about the impact of accreditation:

- 93% of employers reported they had **benefitted as a business**
- 58% of employers saw an improvement in the **motivation of staff**
- 50% reported that it had improved both **recruitment and retention**
- 45% reported that it had improved the **quality of applications** for Living Wage jobs
- 86% reported that it had enhanced their **organisation's general reputation** as an employer
- 64% found that it **differentiated them from others** in their industry
- 44% reported **improved relations with public bodies or politicians**

Please [visit our partners the Living Wage Foundation](#) to find out more about becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer.

It is 31 days to Living Wage Week – [the annual celebration of the Living Wage movement in the UK](#) – which commences on Sunday November 5th.

Please watch this space for details of our events, and to get involved come along to the Campaign meeting on October 10th, 2 - 4pm, at 3rd Floor, Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester, M3 2GH.

For further information about this event or the campaign more generally please email Lynn.Sbaih@gmlivingwage.org or call 07948 549 485.

Our economy isn't working continued

- Promotion of decent work, including the voluntary Living Wage, through
 - Development of a Decent Work Standard and appointment of a Decent Work Commissioner
 - Adoption of the Decent Work Standard across all public sector bodies.
 - Introduction of a GM wide Employment Charter (based on the Standard) with real teeth
 - Active public procurement that favours businesses that provide decent work
 - Working with businesses to identify means of effectively measuring the business benefits (e.g. employee morale, productivity and retention) of adopting decent work employment practices.
- Promoting positive corporate behaviour through greater transparency around business behaviour and practices.

The UK faces major challenges of in-work poverty, stagnating living standards, low productivity and the prevalence of poor quality work. There is widespread acknowledgement that the economy doesn't work for all, but lack of a concerted effort to adopt a new, alternative approach at central government level. Greater Manchester should be a beacon for a new way of doing things, becoming a home for companies that do things differently.

Is Britain learning the wrong lesson from the US about how to deal with food poverty?

Are food banks a dignified answer to hunger? Join us as leading American and British authors discuss these questions as well as the future of food charity in the US and the UK. There will be light refreshments and time for a Q+A discussion. Their books will be available for purchase after the event.

At [Bridge 5 Mill](#) (formerly Merci), [22A Beswick St, Manchester M4 7HR](#) (wheelchair accessible) on Thursday November 9th, 6 - 8pm. Please let us know you're coming by [registering](#) for a (free) ticket on Eventbrite.

Speakers:

Andy Fisher, author of '[Big Hunger: The Unholy Alliance Between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups](#)' will talk about the growth of food banks across America since the 1980s in response to deepening economic insecurity. He argues that instead of challenging the government and corporations to provide living wages and good jobs, to support unions and oppose globalization, the anti-hunger movement has instead built alliances with Walmart, Monsanto and other socially irresponsible companies. Big Hunger reveals the damage caused by this hunger-industrial complex, and offers a new vision for the anti-hunger movement to eliminate hunger through a focus on health, economic justice and local economies.

Hannah Lambie-Mumford, Research Fellow at [SPERI](#), University of Sheffield, will discuss her recently-published book '[Hungry Britain: the rise of food charity](#)'. Drawing on empirical research with the UK's two largest charitable food organisations, Hannah's book explores the prolific rise of food charity over the last 15 years and its implications for overcoming food insecurity: where does responsibility lie for ensuring everyone can realise their human right to food as the welfare state withdraws?



We would like to invite anyone involved or interested in food industry, food charity, hunger and welfare to come and discuss these important issues: what is the role of policy-makers? Of volunteers? Of industry? How can we turn theory into practice?

'Let's Have a Good Week': Connecting with communities to tackle the epidemic of social isolation.



The epidemic of social isolation has been making a lot of headlines recently. Research by The Jo Cox Commission put a number to a crisis that we at Breakthrough UK had long been aware of: more than half of disabled people say they experience loneliness, a quarter say they feel lonely most days. Our new 'Let's Have a Good Week' project will help to remove the barriers that prevent many disabled people from enjoying an active and fulfilling life. This can be the beginning of a pathway to independence. Around two thirds of disabled people who live alone are in poverty and under half of disabled people are in employment. We hope that for many of our clients, the skills and confidence they take away from this short intervention is their first step towards finding employment, and we have other services ready and waiting to support them should they decide this is what they need.



Bilal

'Let's have a Good Week' is a Community Connecting project, which supports disabled people, who are currently experiencing social isolation, to get out about in their local area. We don't want our clients to feel limited to only doing activities specifically for disabled people – with just a little thought and effort on behalf of others, a world of clubs, hobbies and activities can be opened up to disabled people. We've also learnt that people find it difficult to find out what is on offer and going on in their communities. So, our new project will help people to access a greater choice of clubs and activities to join. Our clients are currently accessing activities such as cookery classes, community allotments, Tai Chi and maths classes. A graduate of our pilot project, Bilal, said that before he engaged with our Community Connectors he was 'bored, just sitting down [but] I want to keep busy.' He credits the scheme with giving him increased confidence.

The project is running Manchester-wide as well as in Middleton and the Holyrood area of Bury. It is open to anybody who identifies as a disabled person and feels they need an extra bit of support accessing activities. If you are aware of any disabled person in the area who is experiencing social exclusion or isolation, they may be eligible for our support so please encourage them to contact us today.

We are currently recruiting volunteers to join our team of Activity Mentors to help make the project a success. Trying new activities can be daunting for many disabled people because organisers are not always aware of the need to make adjustments that would enable them to attend, so an Activity Mentor will bolster their confidence and offer them whatever emotional and practical support they need to get the most out of their hobbies or social life. Activity Mentors will help them to use public transport, to access their chosen activities and make sure they feel settled and fully able to participate. This opportunity is ideal for people looking for professional development opportunities, with full training and supervision, or just anybody who wants to do something valuable with their spare time.



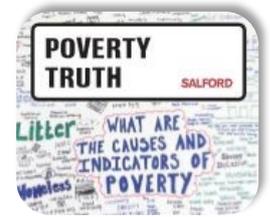
If you interested in learning more about this project, know somebody who could benefit from it or would like to learn more about joining our team of Activity Mentors, please get in touch by [email](#) or call 0161 234 3950 and ask for a member of the Community Connecting Team.

About Breakthrough: Their work is based around person-centred support services for disabled people in Greater Manchester to live and work independently. The lived experience of their clients and staff directly informs all their work with disabled people, employers and other organisations, to remove the barriers that prevent disabled people from getting and staying in work. They also work in other areas to support disabled people and remove societal barriers to equality and independence.

If you think you might benefit from their support, you can contact them by [email](#) or phone 0161 234 2950.

I am... a poverty truth commissioner

Patrick Philpott is a commissioner on Salford Poverty Truth Commission.



I left prison with £4.20 and did not receive my first benefits for 16 weeks. I went to a food bank and a breakfast drop in centre, and there I came across a project involving Church Action on Poverty, and that's when I heard about Salford Poverty Truth Commission.

At the moment there are nine poverty truth commissions running or being set up in the UK, and I am a commissioner on the Salford one. Poverty truth commissions, to me, are the missing link. They are about real people, who can make a difference, and who have the right values and they look at the source of poverty not just the outcome.

The first meeting I went to was at Salford University and as an ex-offender I just didn't feel worthy of even being there. But I saw an opportunity to make lifestyle changes and by being engaged with a diverse group of good-living people, I knew there was an opportunity to maintain a bit of consistency.

The commission had 15 people who have been in poverty and 15 people who are in what we call public life. To me, it was an absolute privilege to be in a room full of such normal people and good-living people. I was made very welcome and I think I was an addition to the diversity of the group. In a way, it was easy for me because I had nothing else to be doing. The meetings were a highlight for me, a day out.

The thing that impressed me was the whole thing had the support of the Bishop and the Mayor of Salford. That's my two biggest interests, faith and politics, I am committed to both. From the outset, for everything we achieved, we were blending a bit of faith and a bit of politics.

We have assembly meetings once a month and between that there are little activities. My first one was when I was invited to speak at St Clement's Church in Salford. I went to speak at the church with a GP on the group and frankly I felt out of place, but there was nothing but encouragement and support and they valued my experience of having lived in abject poverty for quite a long time.

It certainly brought down stigma and barriers for me. The doctor drove me back to my bail hostel and I felt ashamed of my past, but there was no judgment. I was made to feel part of something, and it was the first time in my life I felt part of something worthwhile and meaningful. It's the most talented group of people I have ever met in my life. It's not party political or religious, it's just about people understanding that people care and need help.

I had been out of mainstream society for a long time, and I was watching the approach the group took. I saw a group that had potential to have an influence in different areas of society, and they started knocking on doors gently. Personally, at times, I would have been inclined to kick the door down, but this helped me make the adjustments I needed to make for myself, and the simple approach worked.

You can feel the love growing in the group, and see people's commitment. It's very simple and it's what's lacking, not just in relation to poverty but in British society – simple love and understanding.

I have been in Salford on and off since 1974, and the day we met Salford council was unbelievable. Now there has been a change in ethics. They have changed the way they do debt collection and we can meet people face to face again. They have waived charges when people who are homeless need a copy of their birth certificate, and we have produced a guide for people who are sleeping on the streets. There's some tremendous help out there but some charities have almost become industries. Our approach is about individuals. We care for people's lives, and where people have been broken or are in despair, we care as individuals and as a group.

I honestly believe social care is just about Christian values – not theology or doctrine, but just unconditional love, kindness, compassion and humility. We can't all have ten jobs and four careers. The truth is, people in poverty must be understood and respected and we have a moral obligation as human beings, if we see someone less fortunate, to say 'I can lend a hand'.

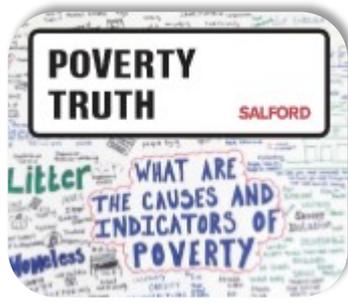
I am not naïvely thinking we can change the world overnight, but if anybody anywhere else needs motivation, just look at what we have achieved in Salford.

My association in Salford covers five decades, and some of the changes I have seen have been a gradual race to the bottom. But this is something that works and it can bring tremendous hope. And people, not just in Salford, should watch this space.



Patrick Philpott,
Salford Poverty Truth Commissioner

Forthcoming Events



Salford Poverty Truth Commission: Our Story so far

On Friday October 6th, 2017 from 10am - 1pm (Tea and coffee will be available from 9.30am for a prompt 10am start) at The Sanctuary, Studio 4, Dallas Court, Houston Park, Salford Quays, Salford M5 2GF

Meet the Commissioners and learn how we worked together on issues in Salford. Closing words from Salford City Mayor Paul Dennett and Bishop of Salford John Arnold

[Please register to book a place](#)

Official launch of the Greater Manchester Sustainable Food Vision

Thursday October 19th, 2017 from 7pm at Bridge 5 Mill, Ancoats, Manchester



A celebration for all your hard work in contributing to the sustainable food vision. They will have copies of the final sustainable food vision hot off the press. There will also be a lovely photo exhibition about local sustainable production in England and Wales that they are hosting at Bridge 5 Mill. More information [link](#). If you would like to come along please RSVP to emily@kindling.org.uk

Forthcoming Events:

End Hunger UK Conference 2017

Tuesday October 17th, 2017 from 10am - 3.30pm at Central Hall, Westminster, London.

Come together with other campaigners for a UK where no one has to go to bed hungry. [More information](#)

Modern Slavery: Protecting Vulnerable People

Monday October 30th, 2017 from 2 - 4.30pm at Manchester Cathedral, Victoria Street, Manchester M3 1SX

Hosted by The Very Revd Rogers Govender, Dean of Manchester, this is a multi-faith, multi-agency public event to raise awareness of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in GM & what's being done to tackle it. Guest speakers include Baroness Beverley Hughes (Deputy GM Mayor: Policing & Crime), Paul Broadbent (Co-op Director of Ethics & Policy), & Phill Clayton (Regional Manager, City Hearts). There will be face-to-face café conversations with workers and agencies on the front line combating people trafficking and freeing victims, informative displays, refreshments and entertainment. [Booking](#)

How can we work together to tackle disadvantage in Greater Manchester?

On Friday November 3rd 2017 from 1 - 4pm at the Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS

If we want to bring about lasting change in the lives of the people most currently disadvantaged in GM, power must be shared more equally. Over the last year a group of individuals with all forms of power and experience from across GM have been meeting to test how decision makers and those with lived experience can work together to create a more inclusive city region. Join us so we can share the stories of the work, the work of others and hear about your own experiences. How do we take this forward to build a Greater Manchester where everyone is included? Lunch is provided. [Registration](#)

Any events you'd like GMPA to publicise? [Email us with the details](#)

For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page.

We want to celebrate our successes, find new ways of working together and provide a voice for the people living in poverty in our region. But we can only do this with your help and support.

For more information or to share your news please contact [Chris](#)

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#)

If you would like to contact us or submit an article for inclusion in a newsletter please get in touch in one of the following ways:

Post: c/o 5th Floor Church House, 90 Deansgate, Manchester M3 2GH

Or contact Chris [Email](#) or 07419 774537 and we will reply as soon as possible.

NB GMPA does not have full-time dedicated administrative support so please do not expect an immediate response.

