



## AGM 02\_Managing Directors report

April 2022

### 1. State of the organisation:

*How has Fare City performed in the last year? (Apr 2021 – Apr 2022)*

This report aims to provide a high-level overview of Fare City's activities in the last year (Apr '21 – Apr '22). Five highlights have been selected to showcase what the organisation has achieved in this time, whereas areas for improvement have also been identified. MD's comments along with a state of the sector overview are designed to help the team to determine how the organisation can progress in the year ahead.

#### 1.1) Highlights:

##### **Personnel:**

Fare City now has a functional and experienced advisory board to complement the organisation's three directors. Periodic board meetings have enabled the directors to test and develop ideas which have then been shared with Fare City's stakeholders. Recent project work has demonstrated that the three directors are able to work to tough deadlines to deliver high-quality and impactful pieces of work.

##### **Policy reports:**

The organisation has published two policy reports in the last year, with a third due within the next six months. Both reports have tackled emerging areas of research and are of value to the organisation's stakeholders. The reports have required the team to upskill and develop new competencies while ensuring that work is delivered to a high standard and to programme.

##### **Grant funded projects:**

Fare City's first policy report *Sharing the Load* has contributed to the development of our third report later this year. The team is working towards implementing one of our own policy recommendations as part of our first grant funded project – the Cleaner Air Market. This community project is innovative and has the potential to lead to tangible long-term change for its stakeholders. Fare City are managing a project team of six organisations, a sizeable project budget and have the remit to test multiple ideas at relatively low risk.

##### **Young Professionals Programme:**

A key aim of Fare City's is to help support young and early career professionals – as detailed in the company's CIC statement. To date the Fare City team has worked closely with two Manchester-based journalists to help them develop, publish, and promote two feature-length articles, including an exclusive with Chris Boardman. Both the pieces were paid – in a departure from similar mentorship-style schemes – while the directors are keen to expand the programme in the coming year.

**Working practices:**

In the last year, the team has worked hard to embed more robust working practices into the day-to-day running of the organisation. This has helped the team to increase productivity and improve the quality and consistency of work. This includes the efficient management of a shared drive, the use of project databases and trackers and the streamlining of internal communications. This has enabled the team to deliver to challenging deadlines and, in some cases, exceed the expectations of clients.

## 1.2 Areas for improvement

**Sustainable business operations and planning:**

The team's workload in the last quarter has challenged both the ability and the resilience of the organisation's directors. This has (at times) necessitated some unsustainable working practices which are at odds with one of the organisation's key aims – namely to run Fare City in a sustainable manner. Mitigating against this for future projects is something that the team will need to consider.

**External communications:**

Owing to a lack of resource and unresolved strategic direction, the organisation's social media engagement has been inconsistent. Engaging a digital media postgraduate to help the organisation shape and implement a strategy will take time yet will provide the organisation with direction and the ability to leverage existing capacity as efficiently as possible in the short to medium term.

**Industry engagement:**

Largely owing to a lack of resource, the organisation has been unable to engage with industry specific events, especially in-person events, which have resumed since the lifting of all COVID guidance. While this may not only impact the organisations' ability to identify and win new work, it has also restricted Fare City's ability to provide effective thought leadership. This is an area that the team have previously agreed is important given our status as a think tank and CIC.

## 1.3) MD's Comments

- Since the start of the current calendar year, the organisation has secured three paid pieces of work and, to date, has successfully delivered one (two pending). Two pieces were obtained from reputable grant funding bodies, while a third, much smaller, consultancy piece has been commissioned from a repeat third sector client. The respective project brief and fee for two larger consultancy pieces of work is currently being formalised with a view to agreeing terms in the next month.
- While taking on new jobs is important in enabling the organisation to grow and will help to facilitate this transition to paid, full-time work; managing this transition will be important and is something the directors would like guidance on from the advisory board.
- Producing regular published work (e.g. articles, podcasts, videos) as a means of providing thought leadership and stakeholder engagement is important, though has inevitably been put on hold in the last quarter owing to the need to service paid work. However, though paid work is typically high impact, better external communication is required to enable its value to be fully realised.
- A key priority in realising the value of this high impact paid work is to roll out the Fare City Patrons and Partner Programmes. Using the team's recent cycle hangar report to demonstrate the type of work that potential patrons/partners would be helping to

support, will be critical in persuading both individuals and businesses to sign up. Help from the advisory board to approach companies is something directors would like to discuss.

- Overall, the last year has been a productive one for the organisation as Fare City is well positioned to capitalise on the projects and programmes which the team have worked diligently to develop and deliver. Having expended considerable time and energy identifying and cultivating opportunities for paid pieces of work, there now appears to be a pipeline of projects extending to at least the autumn that will not only enable us to begin the transition to remunerating directors but continue to deliver impactful pieces of work.

## **2. State of the sector:**

*What external developments could impact the organisation?*

### Summary:

- Several UK-level initiatives have been launched since the beginning of 2022, including the updated Highway Code, Active Travel England (ATE) and the governments 'Levelling Up' white paper.
- The Highway Code is acknowledged to provide greater legal protection for vulnerable road users and like some European countries is based on a model of strict liability. However, the success of its implementation remains to be seen owing to poor awareness/advertising campaign and vocal resistance among many elements of the mainstream media.
- Chris Boardman has departed as Manchester's Transport Commissioner to head up ATE. ATE will manage the national active travel budget, awarding funding for projects which meet the new national standards set out in 2020 and require funds to be returned for projects which have not been completed as contracted. The aim is for ATE to have statutory powers which many consider will ensure that local authorities implement schemes as agreed.
- The Levelling Up white paper sets out a manifesto for how government funding and resource will be distributed across the UK. The white paper pledges 12 medium-term missions which outlines government policy and associated outcomes to be achieved by 2030. The paper makes clear the role of transport and infrastructure for acting as a catalyst for change stating that by 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be 'significantly closer to the standards of London'. However, though acknowledged in the sector as a welcome development it does not propose any additional funding other than what has previously been agreed.
- The May '22 local elections are now a few weeks away. Many consider that success will serve as affirmation or rejection of a candidate's transport policies, especially with regard to cycle provision, and LTN's.
- Clean air is firmly on the agenda, with Manchester's Clean Air Zone (CAZ) becoming heavily politicised – likely to the detriment of the initiative. Following the roll out of the ULEZ expansion in London last year, CAZ's have been proposed across the UK but have been difficult to implement leading to phased adoption making their intended benefits difficult to quantify. In London, a Clean Air Summit which included the mayor and the UK's Chief Medical Officer, followed the publication of a city hall commissioned report 'Pathways to Net Zero Carbon by 2030'. The report reiterated the need for road user charging and recommended a £2 daily levy to serve as an introduction to a larger programme at a later date.
- TfL have yet to reach a long-term funding agreement with the government, which has (partially) resulted in the steepest fares increase for a decade. Bus service fares will rise disproportionately and arguably hit the most deprived Londoners.

- Cargo bike sharing schemes are gaining popularity in Manchester and another scheme has been launched in London.

#### Opportunities for Fare City:

- The three UK-wide initiatives should make it easier for FC to make the case for promoting sustainable transport across the UK, though at present this will comprise drip-down as opposed to direct benefits.
- FC have been a direct beneficiary of May's local elections, having recently delivered a piece around secure cycle parking with the aim of enabling our client to raise the issue with London councils. The project has gained a lot of stakeholder and media attention, having been featured on both local and national news sites.
- The growing interest in clean air initiatives fits well with the CAM (which will be held the week of UK clean air day) and should enable us to leverage more mainstream support for the initiative. Securing cross-party support from London-based politicians – e.g. city hall, assembly members and councillors – should be prioritised in the run up to the event.
- Cargo bike sharing schemes are slowly emerging in the biggest UK cities, including in London where FC are well positioned to partner with a supplier if funding can be found. We are also in touch with a London Assembly Member who has posed questions on shared schemes directly to the mayor via mayors questions and who could be a useful contact in securing cross-party support for such schemes.

#### Challenges for Fare City:

- Cargo bike work remains a priority area, owing to our expertise and industry relations, however, we must remain open to exploring new avenues for research which we will set out in our research programme in the next quarter.
- At one year incorporated, we must ensure that we continue to operate in the interests of our stakeholders and adhere to our responsibilities as a CIC, this includes being transparent, impartial, and mitigating any conflicts of interest.