



Press release

EMBARGOED: 1am, 4th February 2010

Wednesday 3rd February 2010

1,500 NW Teens challenge Politicians at Manchester Event

Government to launch Agenda for Youth Engagement

Today, over 1,500 young people (14-19 years old) from across the North West will meet at Manchester Opera House to challenge high profile politicians and opinion-formers on Politics, Economics and Citizenship. The interactive event, the first of its kind outside London, is hosted by Jane Hill (BBC Newsreader) and at the event, Dawn Butler MP (Minister for Young Citizens and Youth Engagement), will launch the Government *Agenda for Youth Engagement*.

Run by the Institute for Citizenship and partner organisations, the *Young Citizens' Action Event* gives young people the opportunity to question high-profile guests on issues from politicians' expenses to the credit crunch and how the views of youth can influence policy. Other confirmed guests include Baroness Warsi (Shadow Minister for Community Cohesion and Social Action), Alvin Hall (TV Financial Guru), Jim Hancock (Former BBC NW Political Editor), Neville Richardson (CEO, Co-operative Financial Services), Geoff Thompson MBE (Executive Chairman, Youth Charter) and Diane Modahl (former Olympic Athlete).

Minister, Dawn Butler MP, will debate issues with the audience and launch an agenda that outlines Government initiatives to help young people engage in communities and society in response to the recent recommendations of the Youth Citizenship Commission. She said, *'The event provides a tremendous opportunity to hear young people's voices questioning decision-makers on issues that affect teenagers' daily lives. The Government wants to help young people access the growing opportunities that exist for them to get involved in shaping the future and as part of that a new youth citizenship information hub, 'Join', is being launched on the DirectGov digital portal at <http://www.direct.gov.uk/joinin>. We are also bringing relevant organisations together and supporting innovative events and projects to engage and empower young people to take an active role in the democratic process.'*

The exciting Manchester event also aims to engage the 'X Factor' generation in voting in different ways and features narration from the 'X Factor' voice (Peter Dickson). Young people from Burnage, Manchester will be filming the event with the Media Trust and footage will be broadcast on the Community Channel in the next few weeks. Jane Hill, host for the event and BBC Newsreader, said, *'I am delighted to be hosting this event in Manchester. It's the first of its kind outside London, and I'm looking forward to hearing the opinions of young people in the North West. Many young people already vote and engage in different democratic processes like reality television polls and this event provides a great opportunity to empower young people to take part and hold decision-makers to account.'*

Although many young people volunteer, recent elections have seen an ongoing decline in the formal youth vote. Following the last election, research identified a cohort or generation of young people who do not see voting as a 'civic duty' and who, if they don't use their first vote get out of the habit of voting. Research also shows that, contrary to popular myth, these young people are deeply interested in the political, economic, social and environmental issues that will shape their future lives but they risk becoming disillusioned in the belief their views do not count in the real world of politics.

The Institute for Citizenship, with partner organisations, is running the event as part of the *Young Citizens' Action Agenda NW project* that aims to give young people (14 – 19 years old) across the North West of England a range of new and real opportunities to have their voices heard through activities including:

- The high-profile interactive event for 1,500 young people taking place at the Opera House, Manchester on Thursday 4th February, hosted by Jane Hill (BBC One O'clock News) to debate political, economic and citizenship challenges.
- 75 interactive workshop 'briefing' events held in schools across the North West of England in autumn 2009 which reached over 8,000 young people.
- The findings from a *Young Citizens' Say* survey of 5,500 young people on a range of issues key to young people's lives will help shape the 20-year strategy for the North West, which is being produced by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and 4NW on behalf of the region.
- This survey will also inform the work of sub-regional *Young Citizens' Panels* who will produce an *Action Agenda for the North West* to be presented to the Regional Minister and newly elected Prime Minister in mid-2010.

**** Ends****

Note to Editors:

- The event runs from 1.30pm – 4.30pm at the Opera House, Quay Street, Manchester.
- The event is split into three main sections: Politics (1.35pm – 2.15pm) Economics (2.15pm – 2.55pm) Citizenship (3.10pm – 3.50pm)
- Minister, Dawn Butler MP, will be launching the Government's response at 4.05pm.

For further information, photography, quotes, and interviews.

To cover the interactive event at the Manchester Opera House and interview special guests and young people about Politics, Economics and Citizenship, please contact Adam Calderhead, Institute for Citizenship, on: (direct) 0161 602 3643 (Mobile) 07896 649 639. E-mail: adam@citizen.org.uk.

The Young Citizens' Action Agenda NW is a partnership led by:



The **Institute for Citizenship** is an independent charitable trust. The IfC aims to promote informed, active citizenship and greater participation in democracy and society through a combination of events, projects, research, education and discussion and debate. The IfC President is David Dimbleby and key projects include *Schools Question Time* with the BBC and Parliament's Education Service.



The **Co-operative Group** is the world's largest consumer co-operative with more than 4.5 million members, over £14 billion turnover, and core business interests in food, travel, pharmacy, funeral care and financial services. Led by The Co-operative's values and principles, the strength and commitment of the membership is vital in helping to achieve its goals from helping the community to tackling global climate change.



The **Northwest Regional Development Agency's** (NWDA) core purpose is to maximise the region's competitiveness to build a stronger economy. Their investment is carefully targeted at initiatives that unlock the widest possible economic benefit. The Agency's work is set out in the Regional Economic Strategy. The NWDA is currently developing a new single Regional Strategy called RS2010.



Government Office for the North West is part of a network of nine Government Offices each of which represents Whitehall in its region and supports the work of a Regional Minister. The role of Government Offices is to strengthen national policies, integrate regional strategies and drive local delivery.



By investing in education and skills, **BT's Better World Campaign** helps young people overcome disadvantage, achieve more in their own lives and improve the world around them. With an emphasis on developing these skills in young people to the Campaign aims to meet three key objectives;

- 1) To ensure young people most in need are heard and helped
- 2) To develop young people's communication skills by sharing information
- 3) To help young people campaign to create real social change.



Parliament's Education Service works with schools and Members of both Houses of Parliament to support young people in developing their understanding of Parliament and democracy. The Service aims to inform, engage and empower young people to understand the work, history and relevance of Parliament.



The **Youth Charter** has a proven track record in the creation and delivery of social and human development programmes and web based tools, research and services with the overall aim of providing young people with an opportunity through sport, arts and cultural activity to develop in life.



The **Greater Manchester Challenge** is a three year programme (2008-2011) to improve educational outcomes for young people in Greater Manchester delivered in partnership between Government, schools, local authorities and all those working to raise education standards.



AGMA (the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities) was formed after the abolition of the Greater Manchester County Council in 1986. The Association is a partnership between the ten local authorities within the Greater Manchester area.



The **Media Trust** is the UK's leading communications charity. It believes everyone should have a voice and be given the opportunity to be heard. It works with media organisations and charities to enhance their communications and enable communities to find their voice.

Media Trust owns and runs Community Channel, the UK's only national TV channel dedicated to communities, their stories and the organisations that support them.