

# **GREATER MANCHESTER LOW CARBON HUB BOARD**

**Date:** 29 July 2019

**Subject:** Making Trees Count: an update on All Our Trees, GM's Tree and Woodland Strategy

**Report of:** Bryan Cosgrove, City of Trees

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## **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

The paper provides an update on the draft GM Tree and Woodland Strategy (All Our Trees), that has been developed by City of Trees on behalf of the GM Forests Partnership.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Board is requested to:

- Note the progress is developing the Strategy since the presentation to the previous meeting.
- Provide comment to City of Trees on the intended route to sign-off for the draft GM Tree and Woodland Strategy

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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## 1. BACKGROUND

City of Trees has been developing a Tree and Woodland strategy for Greater Manchester on behalf of the GM Forests Partnership of local authorities, Woodland Trust, and Forestry Commission.

Greater Manchester's trees are essential for its future health, prosperity and resilience. A GM wide strategy, that sits alongside the suite of GM Strategies for managing our economy and infrastructure, is needed set out how we maximise the public benefits that they provide, helping to ensure existing trees are protected from disease and development, and that effort to expand our urban forest is targeted to where benefits from trees are most needed, and most likely to be realised.

The starting point for the strategy was to quantify GM's tree resource and the benefits that this provided, City of Trees adopted the i-Tree Eco method of tree ecosystem service valuation, using data from sample plots to generate a model of the composition, structure and condition of the entire forest canopy. This model quantifies the scale and cash value of Carbon Storage, Pollution Removal, Carbon Sequestration, and Avoided Runoff benefits. Importantly, the model also allows these benefits to be forecasted into the future.

It is intended that the Tree and Woodland Strategy be adopted by the GMCA as a component of its strategic framework, and furthermore, that the strategy be adopted by as supplementary planning guidance.

## 2. STRUCTURE OF THE STRATEGY

The strategy is presented in four distinct sections:

- **The vision and strategy** - Sets out Greater Manchester's priorities for trees underpinned by common principles and the actions required to achieve the aims of the plan at each scale.
- **The Evidence Base** - Provides detailed analysis of the distribution, structure, function and value of Greater Manchester's trees, highlighting the importance of retaining the trees we already have.
- **Where do We Need more Trees** – A series of maps (to be made available digitally) that identify right down to the level of an individual garden, pavement, or car park where more trees are most needed. Need is assessed according to each in-scope ecosystem benefit, so that future planting schemes are targeted where they will provide the greatest benefit.
- **Guidance and Standards** – Extensive guidance / best practise/ policy for managing existing trees and woodlands including how best to deal with the threats from tree diseases. Also, guidance on what and how to plant and care for trees, both in hard landscapes and natural environments, to ensure they are fit for our future climate, and can reach their maximum potential.

### **3. KEY MESSAGES FROM THE STRATEGY**

Older, larger trees deliver exponentially more benefits than smaller, immature trees so we need to ensure we have a coherent plan for ensuring tree cover and tree benefits are expanded not lost.

When considering new development, GM's planners need to adopt a natural capital approach when considering impact of tree loss, and move away from a simple numeric replacement to ensure GM doesn't suffer a net loss of service provision.

GM will lose some of its tree cover over the lifetime of this strategy, whether as a result of development, disease, or simply old age. In order to continue to benefit from our trees, we urgently need to plan for their replacement, plant many more than we will lose, and plant them where their benefit is most needed.

The vast majority of plantable land in GM, and land with existing tree cover, is outwith Local Authority control, private landowners are key to managing our tree cover, and releasing land for planting.

### **4. PROGRESS**

Having completed data gathering and preparation of the evidence base at the start of 2019, the draft strategy has now been through a first round of consultation with officers of the GM Forests Partnership, and other key stakeholders. Comments are now being sought from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible before an advanced draft is presented back to the partnership in September. It is planned that a final draft would be available for consideration for approval by the GMCA by October 2019.

Following approval, City of Trees proposes to work with the GMCA and the 10 districts to embed the principles and targets of the Strategy in Local Plans and other key strategies and policies.

A series of consultations has been taking place with those colleagues involved in planning and preparation of the GM Spatial Framework (GMSF), to progress the adoption of Strategy as a Supplementary Planning Document. It is understood that this process will likely take somewhat longer to allow for statutory public consultation and finalisation of the GMSF.

### **5. NEXT STEPS**

- Redrafting, following first round consultation
- Consultation (2nd Round) GM Forests Partnership – September 2019
- Present to Planning & Housing Commission – September 2019
- Present to GMCA for approval – October

- Autumn onwards – embedding strategy in Local Plans, integration with other key GM documents, and developing joint working approaches to deliver the strategy

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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