



## Greater Manchester Green City Region Partnership

Date: **29<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

Subject: **Local Nature Recovery Strategy Pilot**

Report of: **Sam Evans, Head of Natural Environment, GMCA**

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### PURPOSE OF REPORT:

The purpose of this paper is to outline the work carried out in undertaking a pilot Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Greater Manchester and to seek approval for publication of the pilot report.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

**Members are requested to:**

1. Note the work carried out in delivering a pilot LNRS in Greater Manchester.
2. Note the intention to publish the report from the pilot (draft at Annex A).
3. Note the likely longer-term requirements regarding the adoption of an LNRS once the Environment Bill and underpinning legislation comes into force.

### CONTACT OFFICERS:

Mark Atherton [mark.atherton@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:mark.atherton@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

Sam Evans [samuel.evans@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:samuel.evans@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk)

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**OLDHAM**

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**ROCHDALE**

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## **1. BACKGROUND:**

In autumn 2020, Greater Manchester was selected by government as one of five areas to pilot the creation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). These strategies will become a requirement for Combined/Local Authorities to create and implement from next year, once the Environment Bill, currently before parliament, is enacted.

LNRS will introduce a new system of spatial strategies for nature and are designed to support the implementation of a Nature Recovery Network across England. The intention is that LNRS will then drive action locally to support nature's recovery and deliver wider environmental and social benefits. This includes their use in prioritising future funding streams, including from Biodiversity Net Gain (see paper on Biodiversity Net Gain) and the future Environmental Land Management scheme (ELMs) which will succeed and replace current payments to farmers/landowners as support transitions post-Brexit.

The pilot LNRS was required to include the following components:

- A map of the current core wildlife sites and habitats – those sites that are already good for nature (e.g. Sites of Biological Importance).
- A set of outcomes – what a place wants to see delivered for nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits (e.g. functioning and species diverse lowland raised bog habitats storing carbon, reducing flood risk and improving water quality)
- A set of measures – what would deliver those outcomes (e.g. rewetting currently degraded lowland peat).
- An opportunity map – showing where these measures could be implemented (e.g. Chat Moss).

## **2. GREATER MANCHESTER'S PILOT:**

The pilot started in autumn 2020 and concluded at the end of May 2021. Government's aim in piloting the development of the strategies was to inform how LNRS should be rolled out nationally from next year. For Greater Manchester, the pilot has provided us with the resources to build on previous work in this area and bring this together into a single document.

The process of delivering the pilot has been collaborative and locally led involving the following key steps and engagement:

- 9 publicly facing engagement sessions to discuss the most important issues for nature in Greater Manchester
- Focused workshops with strategic partners - NGOs, charities and private sector organisations – to co-design the content and material details of the strategy
- A Greater Manchester wide online consultation to determine the most important and pressing issues facing nature
- Update and feedback sessions delivered to all Local Authority policy and planning colleagues

This has all amounted to over 180 hours of engagement and design with a wide variety of stakeholders.

As a result of this engagement, GMCA produced a pilot report containing a prototype strategy, which was submitted to Defra as the output of the pilot at the end of May.

### **3. SUMMARY OF THE PROTOTYPE STRATEGY:**

The prototype strategy within the pilot report contains the following sections:

1. Introduction: this section links the Strategy to other GM plans, discusses the status of an LNRS (once enacted) and outlines how it was developed and who can use it.
2. Why we need a Local Nature Recovery Strategy: summary of the biodiversity emergency and the wider environmental benefits that can be gained through nature recovery and through implementation of this strategy – these details are expanded on in the latter section ‘Achieving nature recovery’.
3. The basis for nature’s recovery: this section covers the principles of nature recovery, outlining GM’s existing sites that are good for biodiversity and the need for these sites to form the foundation of the Strategy.
4. Space for nature’s recovery: using the National Character Areas (NCAs) and GM’s key strategic habitats, this section describes the geography and biology of GM as a basis of what might be achieved and where (which is covered in the subsequent section).
5. Achieving nature recovery: this section details the key outcomes (what needs to be achieved for nature) and the measures (how to achieve the outcome). Represented in a table, it links what the engagement process told us is needed for nature to the steps required to achieve each one of these. The Outcomes also describe the wider environmental benefits that can also be achieved if successfully implemented, such as, carbon capture and storage, flood resilience and other climate change mitigations, enhancing soil health and providing better access and links into nature for communities. This section ends with a series of maps that outline the best areas for delivering the outcomes. The maps tell us that, theoretically, if we could deliver these outcomes, doing it in these strategic locations would offer the best chance for nature’s recovery as well as the wider environmental benefits.
6. Implementation: this final section draws on the distinction between a strategy and an implementation plan. It outlines what different users will need to consider when looking to implement elements of the strategy.

### **4. PUBLICATION OF THE DRAFT LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY:**

Given the Mayor’s manifesto commitment to “work together with councils and deliver on our Nature Recovery Plan” and the significant work carried out during the pilot, it is recommended that the pilot report be published. In advance of LNRS becoming a statutory requirement, publication will help realise the following benefits:

- Align nature recovery efforts across all partners and landowners in Greater Manchester, thereby increasing the potential of obtaining future funding streams aligned with the Greater Manchester Environment Fund.
- Focus resources onto the most pressing issues facing nature and biodiversity in Greater Manchester.

- Help achieve wider environmental benefits such as flood risk mitigation, water quality improvement, air quality improvement, carbon capture and storage and mitigate other climate change risk factors.
- Connect residents with a greater amount of natural space.
- Allow for a 12+ month learning period that will enable an improved version of the prototype strategy to be produced in 2022.

When Local Nature Recovery Strategies become mandatory to develop from next year, the GMCA will likely be required to complete the following steps:

1. Review the work carried out during the pilot.
2. Ensure the strategy meets the guidance and secondary legislation to be provided by Defra.
3. Run a public consultation on the strategy.
4. Obtain sign off from the Secretary of State.

Given the above and the lack of clarity from government as to how LNRS will fit within the planning system (and any proposed reforms), publishing the work of the pilot within a report is recommended, rather than formally adopting a strategy at this point. A brief on this and how the pilot report fits within the current and future planning system, and with local plans and the Places for Everyone joint plan, is attached at Annex B.

## **5. IMPLEMENTATION:**

Defra funding only covered the development of the LNRS as a strategic document and has not provided funding for an implementation plan or the practical delivery of measures on the ground (beyond funding already announced for tree planting and peatland restoration). There remains a significant gap in terms of funding the ambition and measures set out in the LNRS which we will continue to make the case to government to address.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

### **Members are requested to:**

1. Note the work carried out in delivering a pilot LNRS in Greater Manchester.
2. Note the intention to publish the report from the pilot (draft at Annex A).
3. Note the likely longer-term requirements regarding the adoption of an LNRS once the Environment Bill and underpinning legislation comes into force.