

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot

Briefing for Local Authorities

Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilot

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority has published a report from its recent Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) pilot. The pilot report sets out the priorities and opportunities within Greater Manchester to tackle the biodiversity emergency and enhance the natural environment, both for nature and for wider benefits to our environment, economy and society. It also sets out the practical actions to needed to deliver on this.

The report will help partners across Greater Manchester to focus efforts, funding and partnership work where it is needed most and will drive nature-based solutions for the benefit of biodiversity which, at the same time, deliver other environmental, economic and social benefits to our city region. It should be the starting point for anything and everything nature-based in Greater Manchester. It sets out what nature needs to be able to recover, identifying the most important drivers of biodiversity, as well what action would have the greatest impact and where.

The report was produced as part of a pilot – Greater Manchester was one of five pilot areas across England tasked with working with government to develop test the development of these strategies. The report was submitted to Defra in draft in May. Defra will use the learning from the pilots in deciding how to roll out LNRS across the country from next year once the Environment Bill gains Royal Assent and it becomes a requirement for all areas across England to produce a LNRS. The report was developed collaboratively and the views of local experts, groups and residents were integral to the pilot.

Q&A:

What is the LNRS pilot report?

The report from the Greater Manchester pilot sets out the opportunities for recovering nature in the city-region and the wider environmental, social and economic benefits of doing so. It describes how and where those could be delivered to have the maximum benefit. It should be the starting point for everyone with an interest in nature and the natural environment. It builds upon all the work carried out in the city-region to date to support nature recovery.

How has it been created?

The pilot was led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) in partnership with Natural England and the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit. To support this, GMCA consulted widely with local experts. A series of nine virtual and interactive workshops open to residents and local experts were held in which 148 people contributed to developing it. A further 26 sector/geography-based workshops and two workshops with young people were held. Additionally, a Greater Manchester wide natural environment consultation was held that received over 1000 responses. All this was integral to the pilot.

What approach do we need to take to recovering nature?

To recover nature, we need to focus on current wildlife sites, usually the existing nature conservation sites, as the start of efforts to reverse the decline in wildlife. From there, the pilot report sets out how we can:

1. Improve the quality of current wildlife sites by better habitat management
2. Increase the size of current wildlife sites
3. Enhance connections between wildlife sites
4. Create new wildlife sites
5. Reduce the pressures on wildlife by improving the wider natural environment

To be more resilient, Greater Manchester's ecological network needs to be more, bigger, better and joined up.

What status does the report have?

The pilot report does not yet have a formal status like documents such as the 5 Year Environment Plan. This is because LNRS won't have a formal status nationally until the Environment Bill becomes law. Once this happens and government decides at which level of local government (e.g. Combined Authority or individual local authority) LNRS should be developed in Greater Manchester, the pilot report will be reviewed and used to inform that work. It is likely that will also entail a formal public consultation and approval by the Defra Secretary of State. We're publishing this report now to inspire and help people across Greater Manchester to take action to support nature's recovery. We would welcome views on the report draft over the next year before that review.

What status will LNRS have in the planning process?

At present, LNRS do not have a formal status and as such, do not have a status within the planning system. Last year, the government published its consultation ([Planning for the future](#)) on proposed reforms of the planning system. The government has not yet made clear how LNRS (once they become required under the Environment Bill) will fit within these proposed reforms. Before any planning reforms come into place, the report can help local planning authorities deliver on existing commitments in the National Planning Policy Framework relating to habitat conservation and restoration. The report is another piece of evidence that can help local planning authorities to continue in their role in reconciling and balancing competing pressures for land in their areas.

How does the report relate to the Places for Everyone joint plan and the One Stockport Local Plan?

Nature recovery has been central to the development of the joint plan from its outset as the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF). Previous versions of the GMSF identified priority areas for nature recovery in Greater Manchester. Stockport Council withdrew from the GMSF last year. The nine councils will continue to work closely with Stockport Council, which will now prepare its own local plan, to deliver on shared objectives. The pilot report builds on this previous work and sets out in greater detail the opportunities for recovering nature across Greater Manchester and for maximising the potential for new development, (including allocations in both plans), to play their part in contributing to nature recovery. In

particular, the plans include a requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain from new developments and the pilot report supports this policy by identifying opportunities and mechanisms for delivery.

What does the pilot report mean for measures and locations identified as opportunities?

The pilot report identifies opportunities for nature recovery, rather than imposing constraints on other activities. To do this, the pilot report identifies the priority actions and opportunities for recovering nature in Greater Manchester and the locations most suited to those. This does not mean that those actions have to be delivered in those locations or that nothing else can take place there, be that development or other types of nature recovery activities. As far as development is concerned, local planning authorities will continue their role in reconciling and balancing competing pressures for land in their areas.

How will the nature recovery be implemented?

Recovering nature and tackling the biodiversity emergency is a huge task that requires all of us to act. In Greater Manchester, we are doing what we can with our powers and resources available to us to do this, including:

- Setting up the Greater Manchester Environment Fund to channel more **funding** and investment into the natural environment. This is already investing £1.8m into projects across GM that will improve nature, restoring over 500ha of habitats across GM. Other projects, such as City of Trees extensive tree planting programme, are also delivering nature recovery on the ground.
- Developing ways to attract further **investment** into Greater Manchester's natural environment, particularly for organisations wanting to address their negative environmental impacts, such as their carbon emissions.
- Putting in place **policies** in the Places for Everyone joint plan and the One Stockport Local Plan to support the role that development can play in recovering nature, particularly through introducing the requirement for a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain from new development once the plan is adopted. The report can support BNG and help deliver gains for biodiversity within a local context.

Despite all these efforts, we need further, large-scale resources and investment from government if we are to realise the ambitions set out in the pilot report.

Who should be interested in the report?

The pilot report is there to help us recover nature recovery and that means we all need to play our part. It will be particularly important for:

- Developers and Local Planning Authorities, in informing the development of local plans and delivery of off-site Biodiversity Net Gain once it becomes mandatory.
- Those who own or manage land and are looking for information on the opportunities and priorities for nature recovery.
- Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in shaping their efforts to recover nature and contributing to a national Nature Recovery Network.

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- Investors and private funders (e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility funds and water companies) looking to achieve the maximum benefit for their investment by aligning it with others.
- Central government, Arm's Length Bodies and agencies looking to align their activities and funding streams with existing and planned activities.