



## Greater Manchester Green City Region Partnership

Date: 15 October 2021

Subject: Outline Proposal for the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund

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 initial proposals for the development of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund, a commitment in the Mayor's manifesto.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Partnership is requested to:

1. Note the proposals being developed.
2. Provide any feedback on the proposals.
3. Note the timetable and next steps.

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## 1. BACKGROUND:

The Mayor's manifesto set out the ambition to establish a Green Spaces Fund *"to give small grants to communities to clean up and improve pocket parks and local green spaces or create new ones where they are needed."*

To help develop and agree the principles, purpose and priorities for the Green Spaces Fund, this proposal sets out the following:

- The ambition for the Green Spaces Fund and how it will support delivery of Greater Manchester's wider plans for the environment.
- The aims of the Green Spaces Fund.
- The types of projects the Green Spaces Fund will support
- How projects will be prioritised for funding.
- What type of organisations will be supported.
- An indicative budget and funding.
- An indicative timeline

## 2. GREATER MANCHESTER'S ENVIRONMENTAL AMBITIONS

[Greater Manchester's 5 Year Environment Plan](#) sets out the ambition for a clean, carbon neutral, climate resilient city-region with a thriving natural environment and circular, zero-waste economy.

For our natural environment, the plan describes the need to prioritise action that protects, maintains and enhances our key natural assets (Greater Manchester's air, land, water and biodiversity) and the multiple benefits they provide. It also sets out the importance of both engaging and connecting people with their natural environment and the need to bring in other sources of funding to deliver these actions. The importance of access to quality green space across Greater Manchester is a key part of this plan.

Subsequently, the report of the [Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission](#) has highlighted the importance of green space to communities across Greater Manchester and how much they matter to people. It also sets out the need for us to pivot the towards a new way of doing things that puts tackling inequality at its heart.

The [Greater Manchester Resilience Strategy](#) also emphasises that a damaged environment can reduce our resilience by exposing us to increased risk resulting from climate change and environmental degradation

It is against these ambitions and this backdrop that we have developed proposals for the Green Spaces Fund.

## 3. THE NEED AND PROPOSED AMBITION FOR THE GREEN SPACES FUND

Greater Manchester's green spaces are vital to those living and working in the city-region. Their importance has become only more apparent over the past 18 months as people have discovered and appreciated parks and green spaces during the Covid-19 pandemic

They are particularly important to our mental and physical health, providing us with places to walk, exercise, meet friends, relax or simply connect with nature. Greater Manchester's green spaces provide us with nearly £700m per year in recreation, physical and mental health benefits.

The natural environment also helps reduce the risks of the impacts of climate change – reducing flood risk and keeping urban areas cooler – as well as locking up carbon, improving air quality and providing space for wildlife. This amounts to over another £300m of benefits every year, meaning Greater Manchester's natural environment provides its residents and businesses with £1bn of benefits annually.

However, access to these benefits is not equal. Not everyone in Greater Manchester has equal access to quality green space, either at their home or in their local area. For example:

- 64% of Greater Manchester's minority ethnic population live in areas with a below average share of green space provision per person, compared to 49% for the white population.
- 39% of Greater Manchester's minority ethnic population live in areas with the worst 20% of green space provision per person, compared to 23% for the white population.
- Access to private green space at people's homes varies from 79% in Manchester to 94% in Wigan.

Sufficient funding is not readily available to tackle these issues. Local authority budgets for park and green space creation and management have been impacted by over a decade of budget cuts.

#### **4. PROPOSED AIMS OF THE GREEN SPACES FUND**

Tackling these issues and bringing more and better quality green spaces to those who need it most will be at the heart of the Green Spaces Fund.

The proposed aim of the Green Spaces Fund is to create new and improve existing green spaces in Greater Manchester to benefit people and nature and to tackle the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

In realising this aim, the Green Spaces Fund's objectives will be to:

- Tackle inequalities and target the creation and improvement of green spaces in communities where they are most needed – where people suffer from poorer access to quality green space or where they are particularly exposed to other environmental risks.
- To support and empower these communities and organisations with the capacity to take action in their local areas, bringing communities together to improve their local natural environment and create new green spaces.

#### **5. PROPOSED TYPES OF PROJECTS THE GREEN SPACES FUND WILL SUPPORT**

The Green Spaces Fund will support projects that take place within Greater Manchester and make the city-region greener, whilst tackling inequalities in access to green spaces.

Projects should improve accessible spaces by making physical improvements to make them better places for nature and people. As examples:

- New green spaces could be created on brownfield land, undeveloped/unused land or paved public realm/streets.
- Existing green spaces that could be improved include parks, community gardens and verges.
- Projects could take place in areas such as parks, community gardens, streets, schools or housing estates.
- Examples of the type of projects it could support include but are not limited to:
- Improving existing or creating new accessible green space for people and/or wildlife.
- Permanently greening streets
- Creating new permanent parklets or pocket parks
- Community gardening/food growing
- Turning paved over areas to green areas
- Cleaning up and restoring streams, rivers, canals and ponds

The Green Spaces Fund would not fund:

- Projects that should be met through statutory responsibilities – e.g. developers' responsibilities under section 106.
- Existing business as usual activity – e.g. existing green space maintenance carried out by local authorities.
- Other improvement projects proposed near or at green spaces – e.g. improvements to other facilities at a public park, such as provision of toilets.

## **6. PROPOSED PRIORITISATION OF PROJECTS**

The Green Spaces Fund will prioritise projects:

- In areas with poor access to green space and areas of deprivation.
- Led by the community, in particular by minority ethnic groups.
- That provide opportunities for people through skills and training (e.g. through volunteering).

These would be included within the assessment criteria as part of looking at how the project meets the ambition of the fund, how it will be successfully delivered and how it will deliver against its proposed budget.

## **7. ORGANISATIONS TO BE SUPPORTED**

The following organisations would be supported through the Green Spaces Fund. They would need to be formally constituted organisations that have a bank account to which funding can be paid:

- Registered charities.
- Community groups.
- Social enterprises and community interest companies.
- Register housing providers, tenant associations and tenant management organisations.
- Schools and academy trusts.

- Local authorities that have partnered with any of the above to act as a constituted organisation on their behalf.

## 8. BUDGET AND PROJECT FUNDING

The Mayor has set out his ambition for a £5m fund over the longer term. The GMCA is working to secure an initial tranche of funding for the GSF.

This budget will need to support grant funding to projects as well as covering fund management, project management, community engagement activities and promotion.

Over the medium and long term, the ambition will be to match this funding with wider contributions to grow the size of the pot. This could include contributions from government, National Lottery Heritage Fund, local authority contributions or corporate/private donations.

In the first year, relatively small awards for projects, of £10,000 or less are proposed, with the ambition to fund larger projects from the following year.

## 9. TIMELINE

A proposed/indicative timeline for the first tranche of funding and projects is set out below.

Activity	Timeframe
Confirm first tranche of funding in place to deliver projects	October
Agree mechanism/body for delivering the fund (assumed GMEF)	October
Agree criteria for projects	November
Fund documentation in place	November
Launch first call for projects potentially around Green Summit/COP26	December
First projects awarded funding	Spring 2022
Delivery of first projects	Spring 2022

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

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2. Provide any feedback on the proposals.
3. Note the timetable and next steps.