

## **GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY**

Date: 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Subject: Preparation of a Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Report of: Councillor Martyn Cox, Portfolio Lead for Green City Region and Harry Catherall, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for Green City Region.

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### **Purpose of Report**

This report seeks the support of the GMCA for the proposed appointment of the Mayor as the responsible authority for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester.

### **Recommendations:**

The GMCA is requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report.
2. Support the proposed appointment (by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) of the Mayor as the responsible authority for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester.
3. Recommend that the Mayor accepts the above appointment.

### **Contact Officers:**

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# Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Impacts Questionnaire			
Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation	
Equality and Inclusion			
Health	G	GM's natural environment provides £56m in physical health benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment GM's natural environment provides £364m in mental health benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment GM's natural environment provides £372m in mental health benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment	
Resilience and Adaptation	G	GM's natural environment provides £11m in flood risk reduction and urban cooling benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment GM's natural environment provides £11m in flood risk reduction and urban cooling benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment Taking action under the recommendations in this report would increase the quality of green and blue infrastructure in Greater Manchester.	
Housing		All development requiring planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 will be required to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.	
Economy	G	Greater Manchester's natural assets provide over £1bn of benefits each year to Greater Manchester, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment Further enhancement in the natural environment is likely to result job opportunities within the sector in the longer term Further enhancement in the natural environment is likely to result job opportunities within an increasingly important sector in the longer term Greater knowledge and integration into decision making of the economic benefits of GM's natural assets will result in more sustainable use of these assets in the future There are likely to be resulting opportunities in delivering on these commitments and implementing the actions under the underpinning Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan.	
Mobility and Connectivity			
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	GM's natural environment provides £38m in air quality benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment	
Consumption and Production			
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		The delivery of nature based solutions play a key role in achieving the Greater Manchester Carbon Neutral 2038 target including planning more trees and restoring our lowland and upland peatland stores. GM's trees store 1.5m tonnes of carbon. Chat Moss, one of GM's most important peatland resources, stores over 5m tonnes of carbon. Opportunities for stacking biodiversity net gain offsetting and carbon credits are being explored including through the Defra Natural Environment Readiness Fund pilot at Chat Moss in Salford.	
Further Assessment(s):	Carbon Assessment		
 Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	 Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	 Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.	 Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment		
Overall Score		
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation
New Build residential	TBC	
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A	
New Build Commercial/Industrial	N/A	
Transport		
Active travel and public transport	N/A	
Roads, Parking and Vehicle Access	N/A	
Access to amenities	N/A	
Vehicle procurement	N/A	
Land Use		
Land use		
No associated carbon impacts expected.	 High standard in terms of practice and awareness on carbon.	 Mostly best practice with a good level of awareness on carbon.
	 Partially meets best practice/ awareness, significant room to improve.	 Not best practice and/ or insufficient awareness of carbon impacts.

## Risk Management

These proposals have been informed by both national and local actors and or policies. Detailed proposals for producing the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be developed when Regulations and Guidance are published by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

## Legal Considerations

This report seeks the GMCA's support for the proposed appointment by the Secretary of State of the Mayor as the responsible authority under section 105 of the Environment Act 2021 for the preparation and publication of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the Greater Manchester area.

Public bodies, which includes the GMCA, councils of the districts and local planning authorities, will have to have regard to any relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy when performing their duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 20016 when considering what action they can take to “further the general biodiversity objective” of conserving and enhancing biodiversity when delivering their functions.

## Financial Consequences – Revenue

There are financial consequences for GMCA revenue budgets, but these will be cost neutral, in that additional burdens funding will be made available to the GMCA to deliver a

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The strategy will be produced within the budget provided.

### **Financial Consequences – Capital**

There are no financial consequences for GMCA capital budgets.

### **Number of attachments to the report: 0**

### **Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

### **Background Papers**

N/A

### **Tracking/ Process [All sections to be completed]**

Does this report relate to a major strategic decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution

Yes

### **Exemption from call in**

Are there any aspects in this report which means it should be considered to be exempt from call in by the relevant Scrutiny Committee on the grounds of urgency?

No

### **GM Transport Committee**

N/A

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

TBC

# 1. Background

## Nature Recovery

1.1 Nature and biodiversity are in decline across England. In recognition of this, the GMCA declared a biodiversity emergency in March 2022.

1.2 In Greater Manchester (GM), initiatives across the public, private and third sectors under the GM 5 Year Environment Plan are seeking to reverse the decline in biodiversity and deliver the wider socio-economic benefits that improving our natural environment can bring.

1.3 The government's 25 Year Environment Plan and the Environment Act 2021 seek to provide a national framework and new powers to support these efforts. This includes the requirement for local areas in England to develop [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#). This will form a new, England-wide system of spatial strategies that will establish priorities and map proposals for specific actions to drive nature's recovery and provide wider environmental benefits.

1.4 In March 2022 the GMCA was provisionally identified by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs as the authority to be responsible for the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the Greater Manchester area.

1.5 The government is also introducing wider measures aimed at supporting the implementation and delivery of these strategies. This includes:

- Three new Environment Land Management Schemes, replacing previous schemes and payments to landowners for environmental outcomes.
- Stimulating private investment and market-based mechanisms that improve and safeguard the natural environment.
- Introducing the requirement in the Environment Act 2021 for Biodiversity Net Gain.

## 2. Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

2.1 As mandated by the Environment Act 2021, the Secretary of State is required to both determine the areas to which individual Local Nature Recovery Strategies are to relate

and to appoint responsible authorities to produce an individual Local Nature Recovery Strategy for each such area. Together, these will cover the whole of England.

2.2 Section 106 of the Act sets out that these strategies are to include the following, which together cover the whole strategy area:

- (a) a statement of biodiversity priorities for the strategy area, and
- (b) a local habitat map for the whole strategy area or two or more local habitat maps which together cover the whole strategy area.

2.3 In producing Local Nature Recovery Strategies, responsible authorities must identify local habitats, together with areas that are or could be of biodiversity importance, or where recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could be beneficial.

2.4 Defra has written to the GMCA requesting confirmation that it accepts the Mayor's appointment as the responsible authority for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester, under section 105 of the Act. A formal request from the Secretary of State to accept this appointment as the responsible authority for a Local Nature Recovery Strategy is imminent.

2.5 If accepted, the Mayor will become responsible for producing and publishing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester, which will set out our priorities for nature recovery, and delivering wider environmental benefits, in Greater Manchester and will also be responsible for the strategy's periodical review.

2.6 The Environment Act 2021 also amended the duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 20016. Under the amended clause, public authorities (which includes public bodies such as district councils and local planning authorities) will have to consider what action they can take to "further the general biodiversity objective" of conserving and enhancing biodiversity when delivering their functions. The first consideration must be completed by 1 January 2024, and every five years after that. Public authorities will have to have regard to any relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy when performing its duty under section 40.

2.7 Funding is being made available by government for development of the strategy, through additional burdens funding. This will be used by the GMCA, on behalf of the Mayor, to prepare the final strategy and, as such, the process will be cost neutral. On-

going review costs may be at our own expense and can be picked up as business as usual.

2.8 In 2020/21, Greater Manchester was one of five Local Nature Recovery Strategy pilots, working with government to understand the process and inform the eventual roll-out of the policy across England. Following 9 months of work, involving local authorities, key stakeholders and the public, a report of the pilot was published in October 2021. This will form the starting point of the production of the final strategy.

### **3. Next steps**

3.1 The government is expected to imminently publish secondary legislation and guidance, setting out in further detail how responsible authorities should produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

3.2 Once these have been published, GMCA officers, working with the 10 local authorities and wider stakeholders, will produce a plan for producing a Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy on behalf of the Mayor. This will take account of the work already carried out during the pilot in 2020/21, which will act as a foundation for the statutory strategy.

3.3 It is anticipated that a final strategy will be put to the Mayor for approval, endorsement by GMCA and publication in late 2024. The strategy will be developed in line with and be reflected within the next 5 Year Environment Plan.