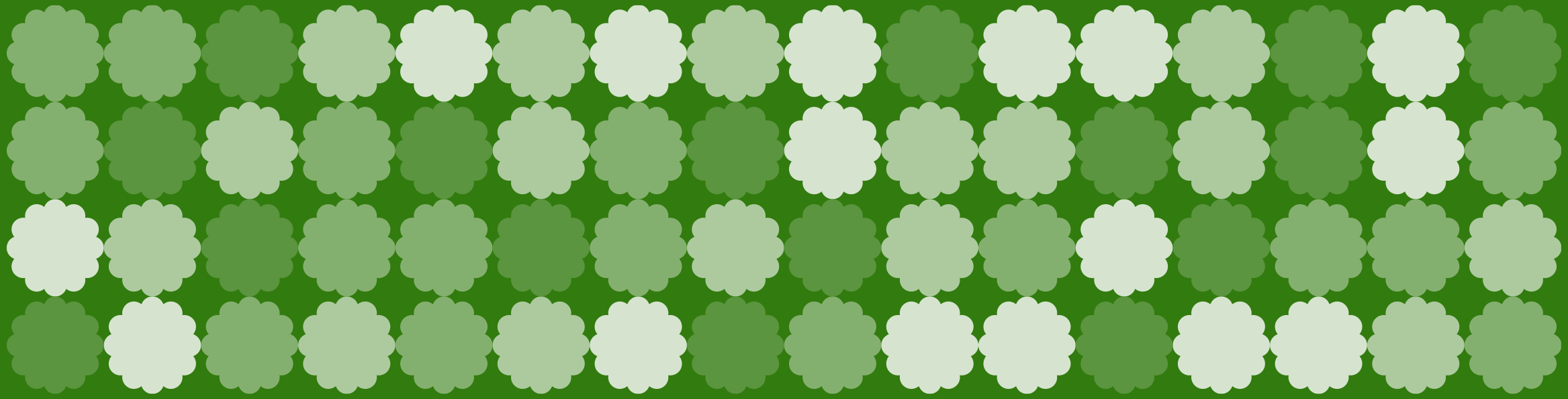
GREATER MANCHESTER

DOING THINGS DIFFERENTLY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

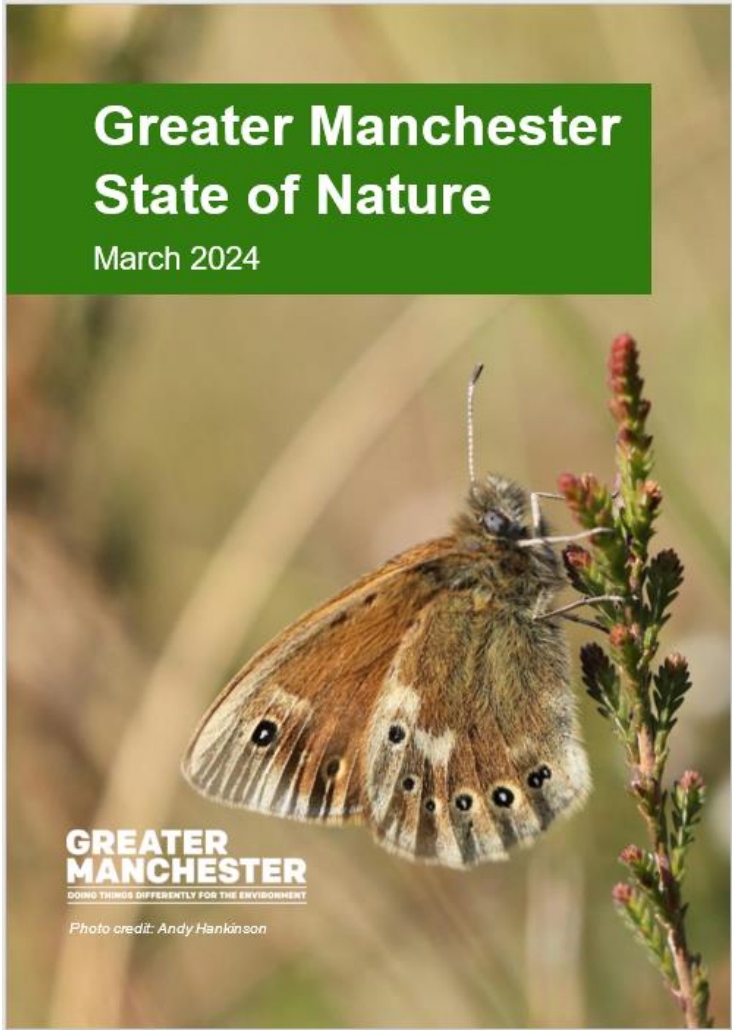
Item 8b

State of Nature in Greater Manchester



State of Nature Report

- Highlights urgent challenges faced by nature across Greater Manchester
- Report covers trends in wildlife and our most important spaces for nature and the pressures it faces, uses of land, wider benefits from nature and peoples access to nature
- The report will be used to help develop Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy



Headline Findings

Our wildlife populations are declining

Individual bird species population has declined up to 40% over the last 40 years and populations of common mammals have dropped by between 20-40% since 1995.

Our protected sites are valuable refuges for wildlife

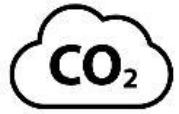
...but cover only 11% of GM, are highly fragmented, and are not in as good a condition as they could and should be.

Our natural environment provides us with around

£1bn

of benefits each year

...but these are under threat with the continuing decline in nature.



Our peatlands have been degraded by human activity over two centuries and now emit carbon rather than locking more of it away.

80% of our waterbodies have been heavily modified by human activity

...and none of our rivers are assessed as being in good ecological condition.

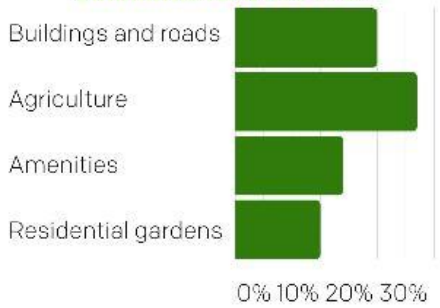
Our tree canopy covers

16%

of Greater Manchester

with the management of existing woodlands and trees under-resourced when compared to the creation of new woodlands and planting of new trees.

Estimated land use in GM

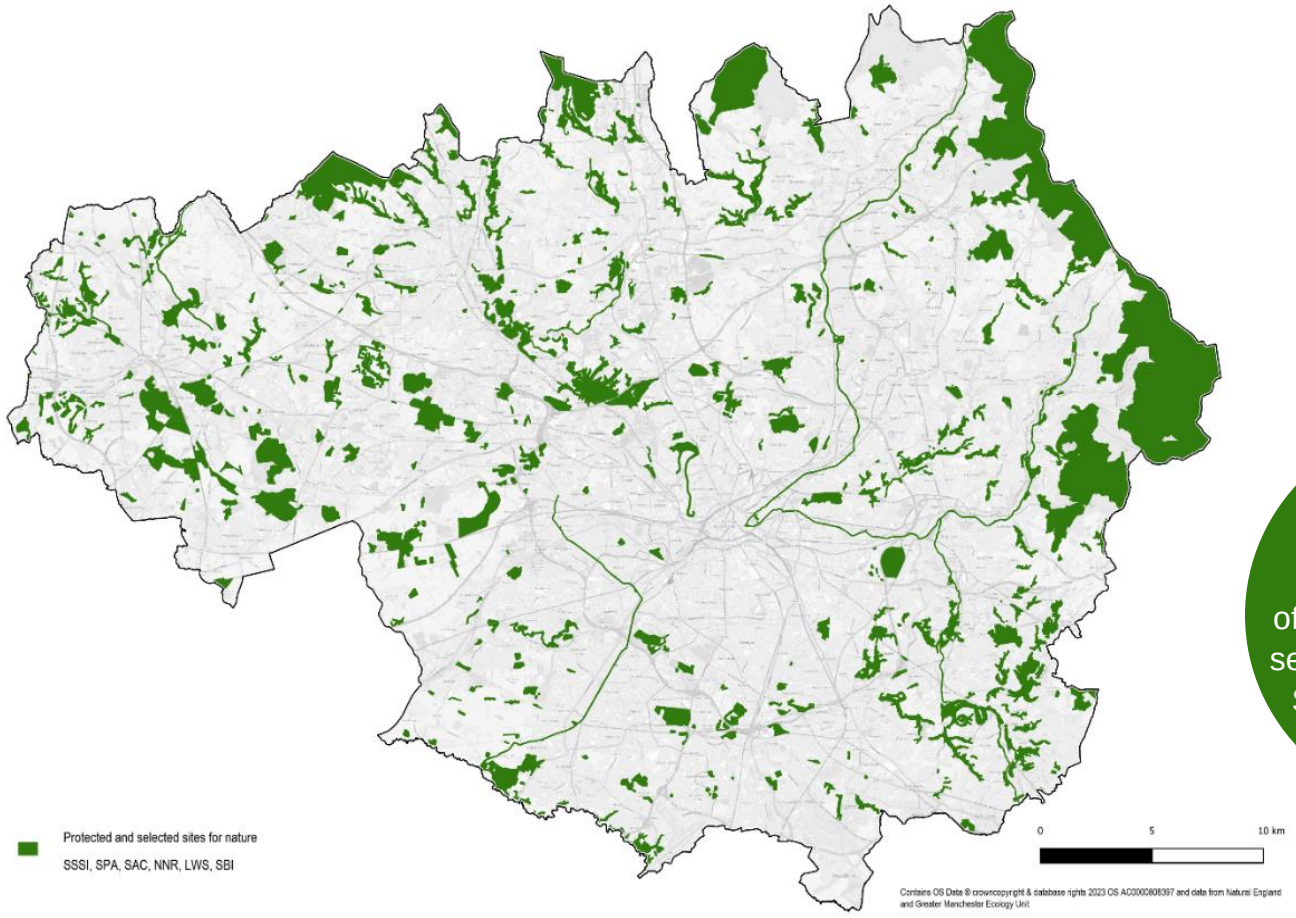


...leaving less than 10% dedicated to nature.

93%

of residents surveyed consider it important or very important to live close to greenspace. But an estimated third of GM's population do not live within 15 minutes of a greenspace.

Our best sites for nature

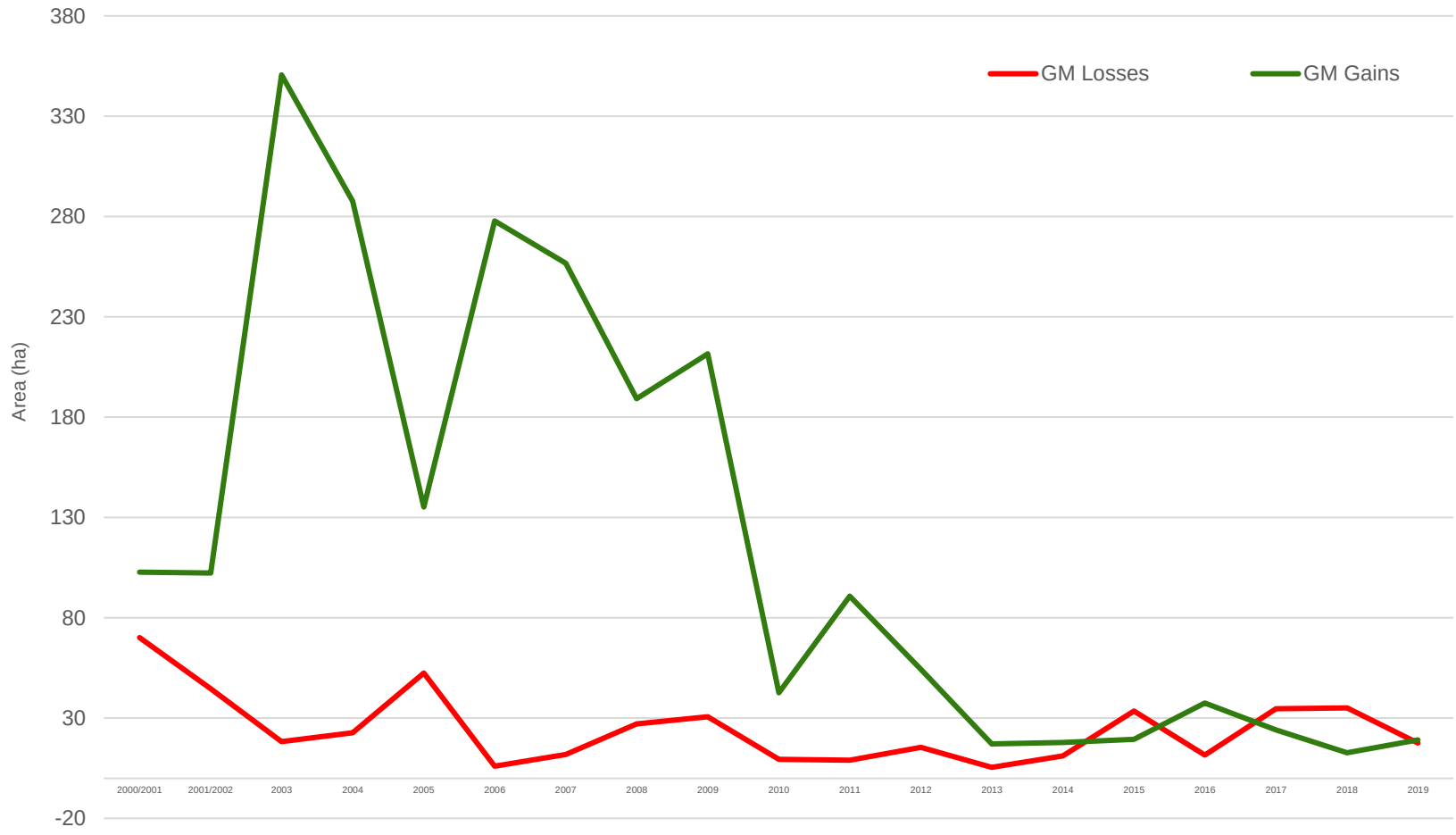


11%
of Greater Manchester's land is currently protected for nature.

5%
of Greater Manchester is selected as Local Wildlife Sites and receives the least protection

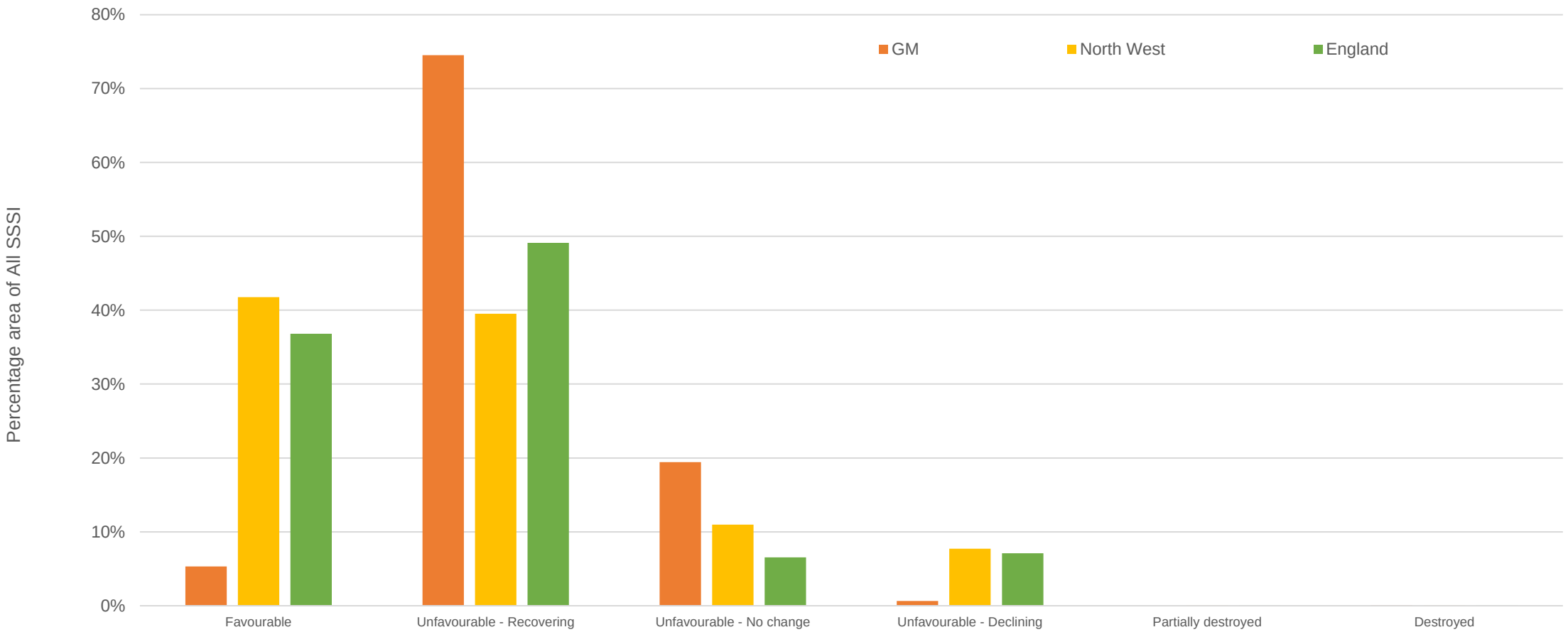
Greater Manchester sites selected or designated for nature conservation

Losses and Gains of Local Wildlife Sites



Annual losses and gains in the area of Local Wildlife Sites in Greater Manchester (ha)[11]

SSSI's Site Condition



Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in Greater Manchester, North West and England[13]

BIRD DECLINE

Between 1980-2011, Greater Manchester has seen the following declines in bird populations:

Farmland birds

-32%
Tree Sparrow

-33%
Skylarks

Woodland birds

-24%
Spotted Flycatcher

-11%
Tree Pipit

Moorland birds

-40%
Lesser Redpoll

-9%
Twite

Wetland birds

-26%
Snipe

MAMMAL DECLINE

Between 1995-2021, the North West has seen the following declines in mammal populations:

-44%

Red Fox

-64%

Rabbits

-8%

Brown Hare

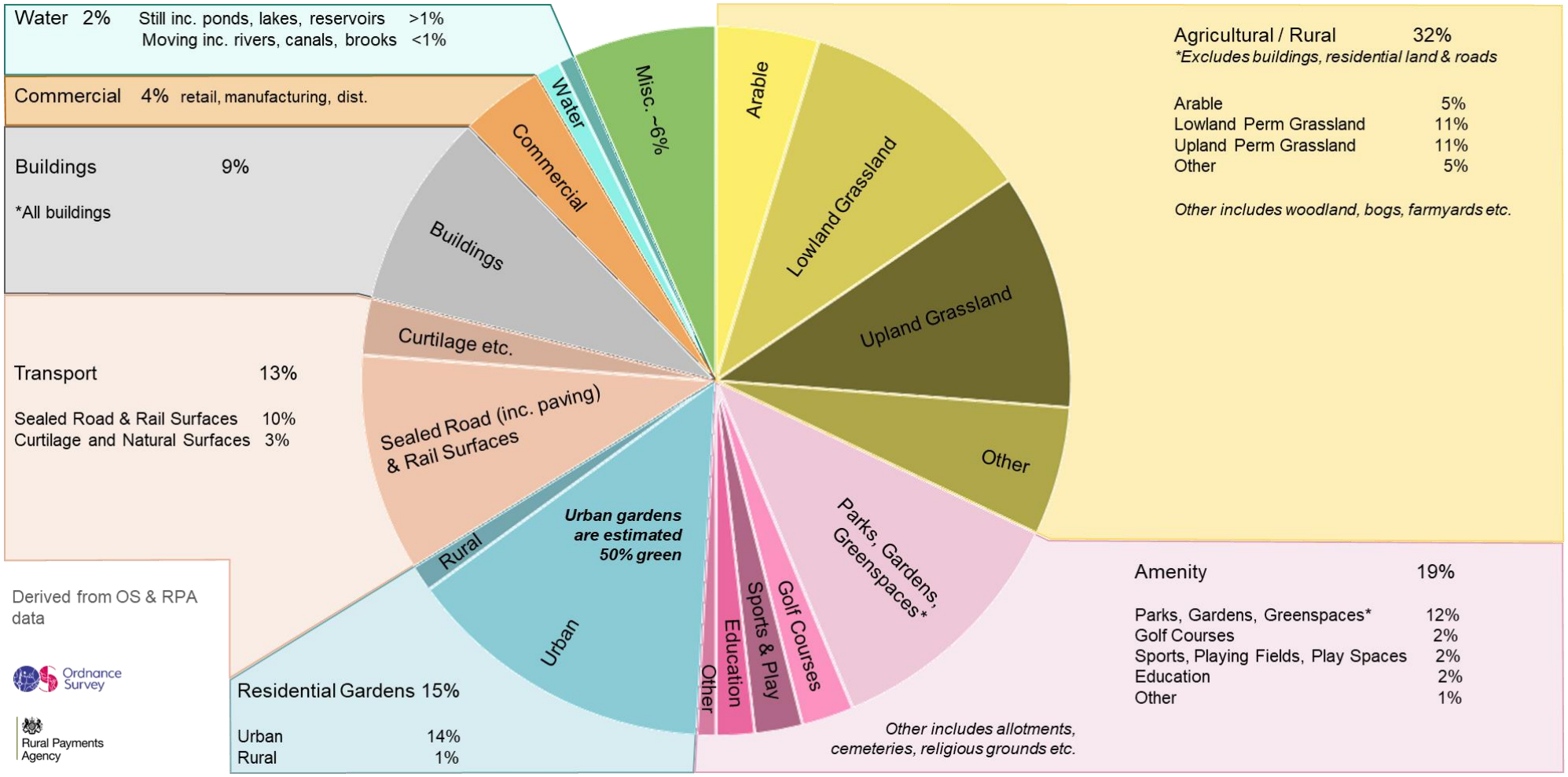
-24%

Hedgehogs

Species Return

- **Otter sightings have increased** across Greater Manchester, showing that they are now resident and increasing their distribution
- **Fish and Mayflies have returned** to the River Mersey
- The **Manchester Argus Butterfly has returned** through successful reintroduction by the Great Manchester Wetlands Species Reintroduction project on Astley Moss
- **Nightjars and other bird species have returned** to Chat Moss
- **Reintroduction of several specialised bog plants** across Greater Manchester's lowland peatlands

Main land uses



Water

- Water in Greater Manchester is under pressure from a range of sources

Heavy modification of waterbodies due to human activities.

Greater Manchester has 793 combined sewer overflows, that spilt an estimated

21,391

times in 2022 for an average of over 4 and a half hours per spill.

The use of fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture.

Japanese Knotweed found on

11%

of riverbanks

...with Giant Hogweed across 4% and Himalayan Balsam across 100%.

Diffuse pollution from urban areas including runoff from roads, and from emerging forms of contaminations such as micro plastics.

20%

reduction in water consumption per person needed by 2038 to achieve sustainable water abstraction levels.

Trees

- Rise in tree planting
- Management of our trees is under resourced
- Woodlands could be better utilised to support biodiversity

There are an estimated 11.3 million trees in Greater Manchester

...made up of 192 different species – the three most common are Hawthorn, Sycamore and English Oak.

Over
857,000
trees

planted in the last decade

with City of Trees on target to plant 1m trees by the end of 2024.

16.5% of Greater Manchester is covered by tree canopy

...above the national and European averages, but below other urban areas such as London (21%) - and tree canopy cover varies widely across the city-region.

Management of our existing woodlands and trees is under-resourced

...particularly when compared to creating new woodlands and planting new trees.

Summary

- We are facing a biodiversity emergency.
- Despite improvements in the environment in the last 50 years, species are still in decline. Despite some success stories.
- The total area of GM protected for nature has stagnated and sites aren’t in the best condition.
- Our key networks – waterways and trees/woodlands – are under threat, including from invasive species and climate change.
- We need collective action to turn this around – including looking at agricultural land, amenity land, residential gardens, transport infrastructure and buildings.