



Greater Manchester Green City Region Partnership

Date: 17 October 2024
Subject: Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Draft for Consultation
Report of: Rachel Morrison, Natural Environment, GMCA

Purpose of Report:

This report presents Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (draft for consultation). The strategy has been developed over the last 18 months with our Local Authorities and wider stakeholders. The strategy is now ready to progress to public consultation

Recommendations:

The Partnership is asked to:

- Endorse the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (draft-for-consultation) to proceed to public consultation
- Note its contents, including the vision, aims, targets, priorities and actions to help respond locally to the biodiversity emergency
- Note that the Mayor (as the Responsible Authority) has delegated Councillor Tom Ross, Portfolio Lead for Green City Region, to approve any minor changes to be made to the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (draft-for-consultation) prior to the public consultation

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Environment Act (2021) introduced a range of measures to seek to halt and reverse biodiversity decline. This included the requirement for Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) to cover the whole of England, to set out where and how efforts should be focussed locally to contribute to halting and reversing the decline in biodiversity.

The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (draft-for-consultation) sets out how and where we should focus action to try to reverse biodiversity decline locally and work towards better access to nature for all. The strategy is aimed at encouraging all organisations, communities and residents to take action to support nature's recovery. It will be of particular importance for landowners and, once adopted, will incentivise investment, particularly through Biodiversity Net Gain and environmental land management schemes.

In preparing the strategy to meet local needs as well as the requirements of the Environment Act (2021), underpinning regulations and statutory guidance, GMCA (on behalf of the Mayor) has been working in consultation with the ten local authorities and stakeholders across the city-region over the past 18 months to develop a draft strategy for public consultation.

To inform the strategy, GMCA also ran a public survey in early 2024, which received over 800 responses, and has held a range of workshops, events and other engagement sessions with public, private and VCSFE organisations over the past year.

2. GREATER MANCHESTER LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY – DRAFT-FOR-CONSULTATION

In alignment with the requirements under the Environment Act 2024, regulations thereunder and the statutory guidance issued to responsible authorities, the strategy covers the following:

Vision: The strategy sets out a shared vision for nature recovery - *“to work together to deliver a resilient network for nature across the city-region, connecting and enhancing wild spaces so that people and nature can thrive”*.

Aims: The strategy sets out a series of high-level aims to help deliver on this vision, including:

- Safeguarding, enhancing and restoring our nature rich sites;
- Creating more wildlife-rich resilient spaces, where they will expand and connect spaces for wildlife and people;
- Managing and reducing pressure on our environment and waterways, maximising nature’s role in adapting the city-region climate change;
- Working together to take action for nature and embed space for nature and people to thrive across all our communities;
- Improving local access to nature and ensure there are more opportunities to enjoy nature, in those areas which need it the most; and
- Improving engagement with nature and better understanding of its value in our lives.

Targets: New quantitative targets to help track progress towards nature recovery are set. These include:

- Increase the number of GM residents living within 15mins of a decent green space.

- Increase the amount of Greater Manchester protected for nature from 11% to 15% of the city-region.
- Work towards the restoration and creation of 1,800ha of wildlife-rich land and to expand tree canopy cover from 16.5% to 18.5%.
- Bring 50% of our Local Wildlife Sites into active management for nature conservation.

A mapped **Nature Network** across GM to help drive forward nature recovery, including:

- Core local nature sites - existing valuable areas for nature
- Nature recovery opportunity areas – areas where action and investment should be focused across the city-region to build better connect greenspaces for nature and people, alongside other land uses.

Priorities and actions: the strategy sets out specific priorities and actions for a series of different broad habitats found across GM, including urban greenspaces and buildings, and for particularly vulnerable local species.

The draft-for-consultation (Annex A) and Executive Summary (Annex B) of the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy accompany this report.

3. CONSIDERATIONS

The next steps for the strategy is to progress to public consultation, after which changes will be made to the strategy in response to the consultation feedback. When revised post-public consultation the strategy would then be brought again to the Natural Capital Group, Green City Region Partnership, Green City Region Board and GMCA for endorsement.

When formally adopted in 2025, after the public consultation has been completed, public bodies, which includes the GMCA and local authorities, will have to have regard to the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) in performing their duties under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2016 when considering what action they can take to “further the general biodiversity objective” of conserving and enhancing biodiversity when delivering their functions.

The Environment Act (2021) sets out that local authorities will need to “have regard” to the LNRSs in local planning policy and decisions. The Levelling up and Regeneration Act (2023) included a clause which creates a new requirement on all relevant plan-makers and requires all tiers of planning to take account of the relevant LNRS. Taken together, these legislative provisions are designed to support development plans and provide closer alignment with the planning system and environmental outcomes.

4. NEXT STEPS

Now that the LNRS (draft-for-consultation) has been prepared, the next step of the process is to undertake a public consultation on the strategy. The consultation will run from mid-November until late January.

Responses to the consultation will be considered ahead of approval of a final strategy in the first half of 2025.