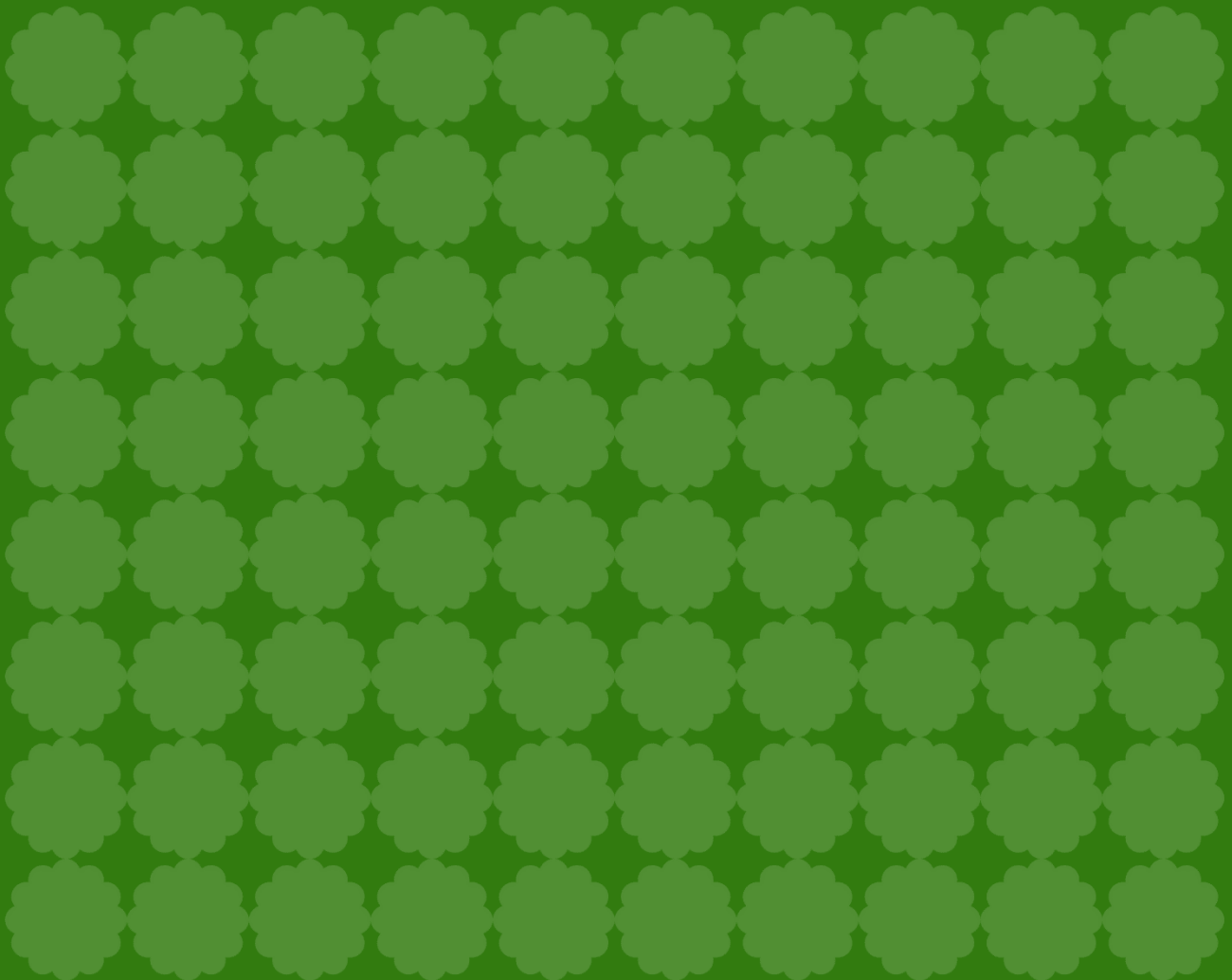


# Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Consultation Draft - Executive Summary

30<sup>th</sup> August 2024



## What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

England is currently one of the most nature-depleted countries globally – and the situation in Greater Manchester is no different. To address this decline, Local Nature Recovery Strategies were made mandatory in 2021 under the Environment Act.

Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy will act as a roadmap for how we tackle the biodiversity emergency across the city-region over the next decade. It is a statutory, locally-led and evidence-based strategy that sets out how and where we should focus action to achieve this.

The strategy outlines a long-term vision, aims and targets that will help make Greater Manchester a place where people and nature to thrive. It sets out what we need to do - priorities and practical actions. It tells us where we need to focus action - how we can create a nature network across Greater Manchester, supporting biodiversity and delivering better local access to green spaces.

It covers the ten local authorities within Greater Manchester – Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan – and will be in place from 2025-2035.

The strategy has been developed collaboratively, led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), and involved representatives from all ten local authorities, local environmental charities, infrastructure providers and other partner organisations. Public engagement has ensured that our strategy is locally driven.

## Why do we need a Local Nature Recovery Strategy in Greater Manchester?

Greater Manchester continues to grow and evolve rapidly around us, meaning the respite provided by our green spaces is ever more important. Access to nature is vital for Greater Manchester's residents, with 93% of them stating that having open green space close to their home is important and over half saying that they access the outdoors for leisure at least once a week.

Nature is good for us. It is key to us leading healthy lives and underpins the resilience of our city-region. Every year, the city-region benefits from around £1bn in essential benefits and services from our natural environment – including mental and

physical health benefits, opportunities for recreation, reduced flood risk and air pollution, supporting local food production and water supplies.

But our nature is struggling. We are in the throes of a biodiversity emergency that puts these vital benefits – and the resilience of our city-region – under threat. There will be knock-on effects if nature continues to decline, including greater pressure on public services like the National Health Service.

Access to nature already looks very different across our 2.8 million residents. Many people are not able to enjoy access to nature at home or near where they live or work, meaning the benefits of being in and close to nature are not shared equally. A third of residents do not live within 15 minutes of a decent sized green space and communities experiencing inequalities tend to live in areas with less green space.

But nature can recover and thrive alongside a growing city-region, particularly where communities and partnerships come together to help reconnect spaces for nature and people. This strategy sets out a pathway for nature to recover, to reverse biodiversity decline and benefit our residents and our economy.

## **The State of Nature in Greater Manchester**

Greater Manchester is home to an array of wildlife, some of which can be found in even the most urban parts of the city-region. The [Greater Manchester State of Nature report](#) sets out the urgency of the biodiversity emergency locally, but also the opportunities to support nature's recovery.

Echoing national trends, the State of Nature Report tells us that key species of birds and mammals in Greater Manchester and the North West of England are declining. Individual bird species population show declines of up to 40% over the last 40 years and the abundance of once common mammals (such as foxes, hedgehogs and rabbits) has dropped by between 20-40% since 1995.

Our protected sites provide valuable refuges for nature, but they cover just 11% of Greater Manchester and are highly fragmented, rather than forming a connected network for nature. Although recovering at present, they are not in as good condition as they could be. These sites have become increasingly fragmented and isolated from one another – they are too disjointed for wildlife to thrive and move between

them, meaning they do not provide a good enough foundation from which nature can recover.

We have also witnessed examples of the remarkable potential of nature to return. Nature has flourished on former industrial sites such as the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh, now a national nature reserve. Species such as otters and the Manchester Argus butterfly have returned. Woodlands have been planted on former landfill sites.

However, nature – and the successes we have seen over recent years – are under threat from a variety of sources. This includes pollution and litter, urbanisation, agriculture and climate change. These pressures make action to tackle the biodiversity emergency even more important.

## Where do we need to get to?

### Vision and Aims

Given the continued pressures facing nature, we need to plan proactively to ensure that the city-region has resilient spaces for wildlife and people to thrive. This will help nature to bounce back and at the same time provide spaces that improve our health and wellbeing, reduce flood risk, improve water quality and better adapt the city-region to climate change.

The fragmented and isolated nature of our best remaining sites, coupled with them not being in as good a condition as they could be, means that they do not currently provide the foundation from which nature can recover. To allow nature to recover our remaining spaces for nature need to not only be bigger and better, but crucially more joined up, allowing wildlife to move between them.

#### Vision:

To halt – and in time reverse – local biodiversity loss and to help nature recover, we need everyone to work together and play their part.

**Our vision for nature recovery in Greater Manchester is for everyone 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:

This vision can only be achieved by working together across our city-region, with communities, developers, local authorities, businesses, charities and institutions all playing a part.

To deliver on this vision we need Greater Manchester to be a place where we are all:

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

## Targets

To track action on progress towards this vision and aims we need to set clear focused targets and monitor everyone's progress against these.

Working with partners we have selected some headline targets for our key aims. Action beyond these targets is crucial, but they will be used focus action and report on progress.

Our ambitions, by 2035, are to:

<b>Protect</b>	Increase the amount of Greater Manchester protected for nature from 11% to 15% of the city-region.
<b>Enhance</b>	Bring 50% of our Local Wildlife Sites into active management for nature conservation.
<b>Create</b>	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%.
<b>Connect</b>	Target the delivery of new wildlife-rich land and tree planting within the GM Nature Network.
<b>Improve access</b>	Increase the number of GM residents living within 15mins of a decent green space.

These are the headline targets for the strategy – a list of all the targets and monitoring framework will be published in 2025.

## Nature Network

### A spatial strategy for nature's recovery

To drive nature recovery, we need to set out a long-term spatial vision for nature recovery and focus delivery efforts on the places that will make the biggest difference for nature and the wider environment. This is to enable the targeting of effort and resources, encouraging collaboration and coordination where it will have the most impact.

This is our Nature Network for Greater Manchester, based on the established principles of “bigger, better and more joined up” set out in the Lawton review (2010).

Action outside of this Nature Network is still vitally important to reduce pressures on nature by creating a more wildlife-friendly city region.

### **The Greater Manchester Nature Network**

The Greater Manchester Nature Network is made up of the following:

- **Core local nature sites** – sites that are already protected to some degree but are fragmented, isolated and poorly connected. We need to prioritise improvements in the condition and management of these sites.
- **Nature recovery opportunity areas** – areas where there are opportunities to expand and better connect our core local nature sites. We need to prioritise efforts in these locations for the creation and restoration of habitat, alongside other land uses.

### **Taking action in the nature network**

To help guide action on nature recovery, our opportunity areas identify and map where action to enhance, restore or create different types of habitats might be possible and most beneficial. For example, areas are mapped where woodland enhancement should be encouraged or where woodland creation would be beneficial. These actions are not binding for landowners and managers but identify the areas, and types of action, that could be particularly beneficial in creating a Nature Network.

Areas mapped within our Nature Network are particularly suitable for the delivery of offsite biodiversity net gain and are classed as strategically significant in terms of the Defra Biodiversity Metric. The Nature Network does not introduce any new designations or protections, nor does it create any barriers to development. Development within these opportunity areas (or where it could have an impact on these areas) should seek to support and deliver on the priorities set out for these areas and help to work towards the wider ambitions of the Nature Network.

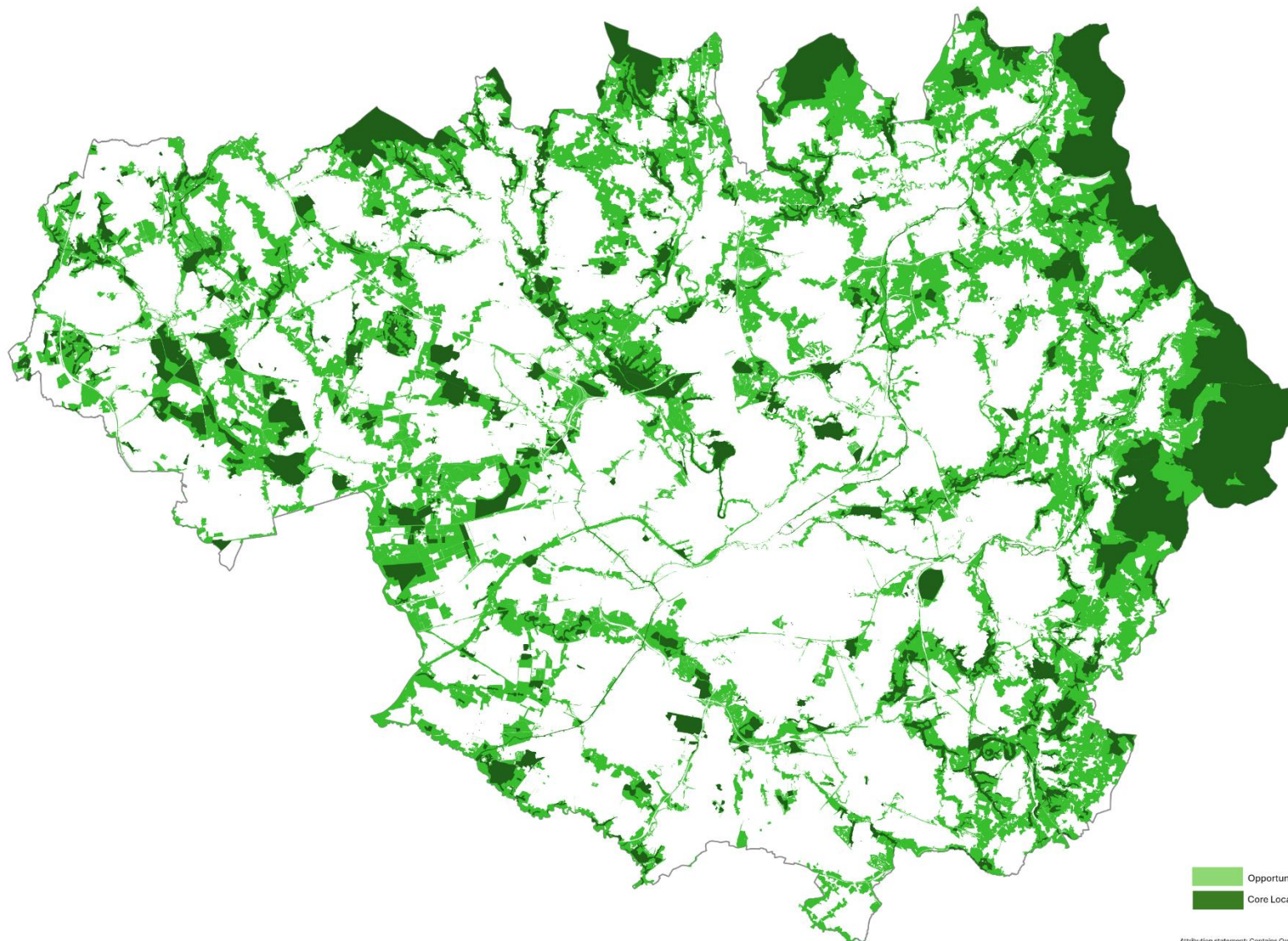
### **Taking action outside the Greater Manchester Nature Network**

Identifying a Nature Network does not mean that taking action should not be pursued in other locations across the city-region. Action can take place anywhere across the

city-region to help realise the priorities in this strategy. There are many opportunities to do this in every community. Everyone can play a part, whether it is via the creation of pocket parks, wildlife-friendly gardens or new community growing spaces.



# Greater Manchester Nature Network



- Opportunity areas for nature recovery
- Core Local Nature Recovery Sites

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## Priorities and actions

### **Our approach to priorities and actions:**

To deliver our vision, aims and targets, and focus action in the Nature Network, the strategy sets out priorities – the end results that we all need to work towards. Each priority is accompanied by several practical actions, or measures – the activities that would make a positive contribution towards delivering on each priority. Each priority may have several practical actions linked to it – working towards one or a number of these actions can help achieve a priority.

### **Habitat priorities:**

To help cover the different types of places and spaces across Greater Manchester, we have developed priorities covering each of the major habitat types found in the city-region:

- Grasslands, farmland and lowland heath
- Lowland mosslands and wetlands
- Rivers, canals and waterbodies
- Upland moorlands
- Urban green spaces and buildings
- Woodlands, trees, scrub and hedgerows

### **Species priorities**

Our habitat priorities will be of huge benefit to many species. Some species, and groups of species, are particularly at risk locally and need bespoke action beyond these wider habitat priorities. It is these particularly vulnerable local species that require focused attention.

Working with local experts, 16 priority species and groups of species have been identified as priorities for this strategy. This list includes species like the willow tit,

water vole and bilberry bumblebee, swift and mountain hare, hedgehog and black poplar.

## Delivery

Mapping out a network for nature and identify priorities and actions is just the first step — the real prize is bringing the maps to life by delivering on nature recovery alongside how we grow nature across the city-region.

We want this strategy to inspire everyone across Greater Manchester to take action to help nature's recovery. The smallest actions – at home and in our local communities – can add up to make a big difference and make space for nature in every community. Larger initiatives can also have a transformational impact, providing space at a landscape-scale for nature to recover.

We all have different ways we can support the implementation of the strategy and in what capacity we can do so. The strategy is particularly important for:

- Those who own or manage land
- Those who are involved in developing land for new homes or commercial spaces
- Those who run or manage businesses or other organisations
- Those who are involved in community-led groups or environmental charities
- Those who live, study or work in Greater Manchester

Across these groups, there are several key factors that will enable successful implementation of the strategy. This includes:

- Funding – maximising its impact and accessing public and private finance.
- Skills and capacity – across a range of sectors.
- Collaboration – to bring people together to deliver projects and partnerships

### **How will we know if we're successful?**

Over the next ten years monitoring the delivery of the targets and actions in this strategy will be crucial in understanding our progress in tackling the biodiversity emergency. To track progress towards some of the most important elements of this strategy a monitoring framework, for the headline targets for this strategy, will be published in 2025. GMCA will report on progress of the strategy and its main targets annually.