

Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Date: 25 October 2024

Subject: Endorsement of the Draft-for-Consultation of a Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Report of: Councillor Tom Ross, Portfolio Lead for Green City Region and Sue Johnson, Portfolio Lead Chief Executive for the Greater Manchester Green City Region

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 Mayor is requested to:

1. Approve the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (draft for consultation) to proceed to public consultation and delegate authority (as the responsible authority) to 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.

GMCA is requested to:

2. Endorse the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (draft-for-consultation) to proceed to public consultation
3. Note its contents, including the vision, aims, targets, priorities and actions to help respond locally to the biodiversity emergency
4. Note that the sustainability assessment of these proposals is positive.

Contact Officers

Name of key contact Officer and email address to be included

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Report authors must identify which paragraph relating to the following issues:

Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers

The GMCA is recommended to note that the co-benefits decision tool is positive for the draft strategy. There are particular positives for health, resilience and adaptation, carbon, nature and the environment.

Impacts Questionnaire

Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation
Equality and Inclusion	G	<p>Everyone benefits from nature – and when all this is added together, Greater Manchester gets £1bn of essential benefits from the natural environment each year</p> <p>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 £372m in mental health benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment.</p> <p>Public greenspaces are one of our most frequently used public services. 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 £372m in mental health benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment.</p> <p>This draft-strategy sets out targets, priorities and actions to help nature recovery that communities can take and support in shaping decisions that affect them.</p> <p>Public access to greenspace often helps to support community cohesion. The priorities and actions set out in the draft strategy are likely to encourage greater community cohesion.</p>
Health	G	<p>GM's natural environment provides £56m in physical health benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment.</p> <p>GM's natural environment provides £372m in mental health benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment.</p> <p>GM's natural environment provides £56m in physical health benefits each year, further enhancement to the natural environment could encourage greater levels of physical activity.</p> <p>The draft strategy promotes the right-to-grow and encourage community food growing which could encourage and enhance the accessibility and provision of locally grown produce in GM.</p>
Resilience and Adaptation	G	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The draft strategy encourages the enhancement of the quality and provision of green and blue infrastructure across Greater Manchester</p>
Housing		
Economy	G	<p>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</p> <p>Further enhancement in the natural environment is likely to result job opportunities within the sector in the longer term</p> <p>Further enhancement in the natural environment is likely to result in job opportunities within the sector in the longer term, by providing an attractive and high-quality city-region where businesses want to invest and attractive place to live and work for employees.</p> <p>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</p> <p>Enhancing our natural environment will provide an attractive and high-quality city-region where businesses want to invest and attractive place to live and work for employees.</p>

Mobility and Connectivity		
Carbon, Nature and Environment	G	<p>GM's natural environment provides £38m in air quality benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment</p> <p>GM's natural environment provides £19m in water quality benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment</p> <p>GM's natural environment reduces noise pollution, benefiting communities.</p> <p>GM's natural environment provides £3m in carbon storage each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment</p> <p>GM's natural environment provides £174m in amenity benefits each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment</p> <p>This draft strategy sets out targets, priorities and actions to help everyone in the city-region to respond to the biodiversity emergency.</p> <p>This draft strategy sets out targets, priorities and actions which would help increase local community's access to greenspace.</p> <p>GM's natural environment provides £3m in carbon storage each year, which would increase with further enhancement to the natural environment</p>
Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving the GM Carbon Neutral 2038 target		This proposal will have a positive contribution to achieving the Greater Manchester carbon Neutral 2038 target by encouraging actions that would help sequester carbon, including peatland restoration and tree planting.
Further Assessment(s):		Carbon Assessment
G Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.	A Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.	R Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
		RR Negative impacts overall.

Carbon Assessment

Overall Score	G	
Buildings	Result	Justification/Mitigation
New Build residential	N/A	
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenance	N/A	
New build non-residential (including public) buildings	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	G	<p>This strategy aims to enhance biodiversity and respond locally to the biodiversity emergency.</p> <p>The creation of new habitat and enhancement of existing habitats are encouraged through the strategy.</p> <p>The strategy encourages the conservation of particularly vulnerable local species.</p>
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. National statutory regulations and guidance have been followed in preparing the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Legal Considerations

Sections 104 – 108 of the Environment Act 2021 (the 2021 Act) introduce requirements to create local nature recovery strategies ('LNRSs').

In that regard, a LNRS for an area is to be prepared and published by the 'responsible authority'. The 'responsible authority' is appointed by the Secretary of State and for a combined authority established under section 103 of the Local Democracy Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, the 'responsible authority' is the Mayor.

The Secretary of State has made regulations on the preparation, review and publication of LNRSs (the *Environment (Local Nature Recovery Strategies) (Procedure) Regulations 2023* ('the 2023 Regulations')).

Each local authority in Greater Manchester (amongst other bodies) is a "supporting authority" in respect of the LNRS under Article 3 of the 2023 Regulations.

Regulation 12 of the 2023 Regulations requires a responsible body to consult on its LNRS (which must include the matters set out in section 106 of the 2021 Act). However, it cannot do so unless it has complied with regulations 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the 2023 Regulations. This includes:

- a) providing all supporting authorities with the consultation draft of its LNRS and requesting their comments (regulation 7)
- b) Within a reasonable time of providing the consultation draft of its local nature recovery strategy to all supporting authorities, a responsible authority must provide a copy of the consultation draft to all neighbouring responsible authorities for the local nature recovery strategy (regulation 8).

Under Article 9 of the 2023 regulations, a supporting authority can raise objections at the pre-consultation stage on the draft LNRS itself or the responsible authority's preparation of the strategy (including the extent to which the responsible authority has involved the supporting authority in that preparation).

In addition, a responsible body may not consult unless—

(a) 28 days have expired, beginning with the date on which all supporting authorities for the local nature recovery strategy had been provided with the consultation draft under regulation 7: or

(b) all of the supporting authorities for the local nature recovery strategy confirm in writing that they are content for the consultation to proceed.

A responsible authority must publish all responses to the consultation within a reasonable time of the consultation concluding.

The 2023 regulations also require responsible authorities to provide all supporting authorities with the final LNRS (and the intended date for publication) before it can be published. There is also a requirement to provide a copy of the LNRS to neighbouring authorities.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

There are no financial consequences for GMCA revenue budgets. Preparation of the strategy has been cost neutral, as additional burdens funding has been made available to the GMCA to prepare the strategy. The strategy has been produced within the budget provided.

Financial Consequences – Capital

There are no financial consequences for GMCA capital budgets.

Number of attachments to the report: 2

- A: Draft-for-Consultation GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Full Strategy
- B: Draft-for-Consultation GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy – Executive Summary

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Background Papers

- [Greater Manchester State of Nature Report 2024](#)

Previous CA papers

- [GMCA Paper March 2022 – Biodiversity Emergency](#)
- [GMCA Paper March 2023 – Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)
- [GMCA Paper March 2024 - Progress in tackling the Biodiversity Emergency in Greater Manchester](#)

Tracking/ Process

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

No

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

Bee Network Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Background

- 1.1 Greater Manchester Combined Authority declared a biodiversity emergency in March 2022. This reflected the need for more urgent and ambitious action to tackle the decline in the diversity and abundance of key species and habitats across the city-region.
- 1.2 The extent of this decline is set out in our first “State of Nature in Greater Manchester” report, published in March 2024. Bringing together available local evidence, it set out the declining trends in local wildlife populations, the challenges in growing and managing our most important spaces for nature, the use of land and pressures this puts on nature and the varying degrees of access to which people across the city-region have to nature. This all puts the benefits we receive from the natural environment under increasing pressure, particularly for health and wellbeing, flood risk reduction and carbon sequestration and storage.
- 1.3 There have been efforts across Greater Manchester, across the private, public and third sectors, to try to halt this decline. Despite these, the decline continues, reflecting the broader picture across England.
- 1.4 Over the past 18 months, GMCA has developed a draft Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) to respond to the biodiversity emergency and set out how and where everyone can work together to help nature recover across the city-region. A total of 48 individual LNRS strategies will cover all of England, collectively forming a National Nature Recovery Network.

2 Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

What are Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy sets out how and where we should focus action to try to reverse biodiversity decline and work towards better access to nature for all.

- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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 .
- 2.5 GMCA also ran a public survey in early 2024, which received over 800 responses, and has held a wide range of workshops, events and other engagement sessions with public, private and VCSFE organisations over the past year.

3. What does the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy contain?

- 3.1 In alignment with the requirements under the Environment Act 2021, regulations thereunder and the statutory guidance issued to responsible authorities, the strategy covers the following:
- 3.1.1 **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”;
- 3.1.2 **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.

3.1.3 **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.

3.1.4 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.

3.1.5 **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.

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

4. Next steps

4.1 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 for around 8 weeks.

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

5. Recommendations

The Mayor is requested to:

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