

GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY

Date: 25th March 2022

Subject: The Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund

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

Purpose of Report

This report sets out proposals for the delivery of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund, a key commitment to improving green spaces, and access to them, across the city-region. The report sets out the need for investment in the city-region's green spaces, the proposed aims of the fund, the types of projects to be supported, how community participation and action will be enabled and arrangements for the fund's delivery.

Recommendations:

The GMCA is requested to note the report and the proposals for the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund.

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Equalities Impact, Carbon and Sustainability Assessment:

The aims of the fund, reflected in the criteria for project selection, will weight projects in deprived areas greater than elsewhere. Proposals as to how to support these communities in developing applications for the fund are also set out within the report.

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 The proposals are aimed at bringing communities together around projects that will improve their local 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 Projects delivered under the GM Green Spaces Fund would increase the quality of green and blue infrastructure in Greater Manchester.
Housing		
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 planting 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.
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	N/A	
Residential building(s) renovation/maintenanc	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 stakeholders and similar funds delivered elsewhere. These proposals may be adapted further depending on experience of delivering the fund.

Legal Considerations

A grant agreement between the GMCA and Greater Manchester Environment Fund has been drafted and will be agreed before transfer of any funding (see section 8). This will set out the terms for delivery of the Fund in line with the proposals set out in this paper. Separate agreements will be signed between projects and the Greater Manchester Environment Fund.

Financial Consequences – Revenue

There are no financial consequences for GMCA revenue budgets.

Financial Consequences – Capital

Funding for delivery of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund is allocated from the Mayoral Precept and held within the GMCA Budgets (agreed in January 2022)

Number of attachments to the report: 0

Comments/recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

N/A

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

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

GM Transport Committee

N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

N/A

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The Mayor’s manifesto set out the commitment to establish a Green Spaces Fund “to give small grants to communities to clean up and improve pocket parks and local green spaces or create new ones where they are needed.”
- 1.2 Greater Manchester’s 5 Year Environment Plan sets out the ambition for a clean, carbon neutral, climate resilient city-region with a thriving natural environment and circular, zero-waste economy.
- 1.3 For our natural environment, the plan describes the need to prioritise action that protects, maintains and enhances our key natural assets (Greater Manchester’s air, land, water and biodiversity) and the multiple benefits they provide. It also sets out the importance of both engaging and connecting people with their natural environment and the need to bring in other sources of funding to deliver these actions. The importance of access to quality green space across Greater Manchester is a key part of this plan.
- 1.4 Subsequently, the report of the Greater Manchester Independent Inequalities Commission has highlighted the importance of green space to communities across Greater Manchester and how much they matter to people.

2. The need for investment in green spaces

- 2.1 Greater Manchester’s green spaces are vital to those living and working in the city-region. Their importance has become only more apparent over the past 2 years as people discovered and appreciated parks and green spaces during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2.2 They are particularly important to our mental and physical health, providing us with places to walk, exercise, meet friends, relax or simply connect with nature. Greater Manchester’s green spaces provide us with nearly £700m per year in recreation, physical and mental health benefits.
- 2.3 The natural environment also helps reduce the risks of the impacts of climate change – reducing flood risk and keeping urban areas cooler – as well as locking up carbon,

improving air quality and providing space for wildlife. This amounts to over another £300m of benefits every year, meaning Greater Manchester's natural environment provides residents and businesses with £1bn of benefits annually.

2.4 However, access to these benefits is not equal. Not everyone in Greater Manchester has equal access to quality green space, either at their home or in their local area. Natural England has recently published a Green Infrastructure Mapping tool¹ that allows interrogation of data relating to this at a local level, including for Greater Manchester.

2.5 It is within this context that proposals for the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund have been developed.

3. Aims of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund

3.1 Tackling these issues and bringing more and better-quality green spaces to those who need it most will be at the heart of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund.

3.2 The proposed aims of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund are as follows:

- To improve Greater Manchester's green and blue spaces to benefit people and nature and to tackle the climate and biodiversity emergencies.
- To tackle inequalities and target these improvements in communities where they are most needed – where people suffer from poorer access to quality green space.
- To support and empower these communities and organisations with the capacity to take action, bringing communities together to improve their local natural environment.

3.3 These aims will be reflected in the criteria for applications to the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund, alongside an assessment of how the projects will be successfully delivered and how they will leave a legacy beyond the project itself.

¹ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/MappingAnalysis.aspx>

4. Types of projects the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund will support

4.1 The Fund will support projects that take place within Greater Manchester and make the city-region greener, whilst tackling inequalities in access to green spaces.

4.2 Projects should improve accessible spaces through physical improvements to make them better places for nature and people. These projects could take place in parks, community gardens, streets, schools, housing estates, canals/streams/rivers and existing nature reserves.

4.3 Examples of the type of projects it could support include but are not limited to:

- Improving existing or creating new accessible green space for people and/or wildlife.
- Permanently greening streets
- Creating new permanent parklets or pocket parks
- Community gardening/food growing
- Turning paved over areas to green areas
- Cleaning up and restoring streams, rivers, canals and ponds

4.4 The following organisations would be supported through the Fund. They will need to be formally constituted organisations that have a bank account to which funding can be paid:

- Registered charities.
- Community groups.
- Social enterprises and community interest companies.
- Register housing providers, tenant associations and tenant management organisations.
- Schools and academy trusts.
- Local authorities on behalf of or that have partnered with any of the above.

4.5 To cater to the needs of different communities and groups, it is proposed that two tranches of projects be funded:

- Projects of £10,000k.
- Projects between £10,000 and £40,000.

4.6 Applications would be accepted on a rolling basis, rather than in distinct rounds, to provide flexibility to groups applying, with all projects to conclude by March 2024.

5. Empowering and enabling communities

5.1 Those communities with the greatest need to create new or enhance existing green space may be less able to develop proposals and projects. With that in mind, a key aspect of the Fund is to work with these communities and empower them to take action and maximise the opportunities for the fund.

5.2 Their activities would include:

- Supporting the development of projects that are realistic, achievable and deliverable and result in strong applications.
- Ensuring projects are developed that are reflective of the needs of the community and inclusive to different groups.
- Supporting groups to develop their skills and confidence in delivering projects.
- Measuring the impact of their projects consistently.
- Identify common training and development needs and develop ongoing skills.
- Facilitate the network of groups through sharing best practice and mentoring.

5.3 They would also work to raise double the amount of funding from the Green Spaces Fund from other sources to secure a legacy for their projects.

6. Budget and project funding

6.1 Funding of £2.6m from the GMCA's budget has been allocated across 2022/23 and 2023/24 for delivery of the Fund. This will support the delivery of projects on the ground, as well as the "community enablers" and administration of the fund (see below).

6.2 As set out above, a key priority for the “community enablers” will be to support projects and groups to bring in further funding to provide a legacy to the projects and increase the amount of funding brought into green space projects.

7. Timeline

7.1 A proposed/indicative timeline for the first tranche of funding and projects is set out below.

Activity	Timeframe
Communications to encourage potential applicants to develop proposals	March
Fund documentation in place	April
Launch first call for projects	May
First projects awarded funding	July
Delivery of first projects	From July onwards
Future application assessments	Autumn 2022; Spring 2023
Completion of projects	March 2024

8. Delivering and administering the fund

8.1 The challenge of securing varied and sustained investment into the natural environment is common to all cities across the UK and is recognised in the government’s Green Finance Strategy (2019). Given pressures on public spending, broadening the range of investment into projects that enhance the natural environment – encompassing increasing amounts of philanthropic, impact first, responsible and mainstream investments – is crucial to overcoming this challenge. These opportunities

and challenges are set out in greater detail in the Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan².

8.2 As such, a key action in the 5 Year Environment Plan was to support the development of a Greater Manchester Environment Fund (GMEF). The aim of doing this was to establish the right structures and enabling environment to mobilise existing and new sources of funding at scale into projects on the ground. In turn, this would allow the blending of public and private sector funding to close the gap between corporate organisations and institutions, that either wish or are required to address their negative environmental impact, and smaller, grassroots organisations, that aim to deliver environmental projects on the ground.

8.3 Since making this commitment in the 5 Year Environment Plan, significant progress has been made. Through a competitive tendering process, The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Greater Manchester and North Merseyside (Lancashire Wildlife Trust) were appointed in May 2020 to set up and run the fund on Greater Manchester's behalf. They have since established the GMEF as an independent charitable company limited by guarantee.

8.4 The GMEF has been successful in securing £2.1m of funding to start delivering projects on the ground to benefit Greater Manchester's environment. This comprises funding secured, ringfenced and allocated to projects, as below:

- £1.8m of funding from the government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund which will restore over 500ha of habitats across the city-region (including woodland, peatland and public parks/green spaces) and create new jobs and traineeships.
- £220,000 of funding from SUEZ for the Recycle 4 Greater Manchester Community Fund, which will support community-led projects that will prevent, reuse, or recycle household waste, and also reduce contamination, promote sustainable use of waste and resources, and generate wider social benefits.
- £100,000 of capacity funding from the Environment Agency to support development of investment models for carbon and habitat enhancements.

² [Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan - GM Green City](#)

8.5 This funding has provided the foundation to establish the GMEF and the capacity to develop and fund more projects. It has also set up the legal and governance structures necessary to receive and disburse funding.

8.6 Given that, it is proposed that the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund be administered and delivered as a distinct and separate fund under the umbrella of the GMEF. A cap of 12% in terms of a management fee for the fund is proposed.

9. Opportunities/Risks

9.1 The key opportunities include:

- The creation and improvement of green spaces in areas of the city-region where they can have the most impact for people, nature and the environment.
- Engaging people in the natural environment, improving health and wellbeing.

9.2 The key risks include:

- The capacity and capability of communities, especially those most in need of increased/improved accessible green space, to develop and deliver projects.
- The demand for funding outstripping the amount available.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 As set out above, funding of £2.6m from the GMCA's budgets has been allocated across 2022/23 and 2023/24 for delivery of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund.

11. Recommendations:

11.1 The GMCA is requested to note the report and the proposals for the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund.