



## **Greater Manchester Green City Region Partnership**

**Date:** 21 July 2023

**Subject:** Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

**Report of:** Sam Evans, Head of Natural Environment, GMCA

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### **PURPOSE OF REPORT:**

To provide members of the Green City Region Partnership with a briefing on the forthcoming GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy (GM LNRS).

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Green City Region Partnership is asked to:

- a. Note the requirement for GM to produce an LNRS and what it needs to contain (sections 2 and 3).
- b. Note the governance arrangements being put in place to develop the GM LNRS in a collaborative way (section 4).
- c. Note the proposed timeline for developing the GM LNRS (section 5).
- d. Note the proposed approach and process for signing off the GM LNRS at the consultation and final strategy stages (section 6).

### **CONTACT OFFICER:**

Sam Evans – Head of Natural Environment

# 1. BACKGROUND: LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Nature and biodiversity are in decline across England. Locally, and in recognition of this, the GMCA declared a biodiversity emergency in March 2022.
- 1.2 Nationally, the government introduced legislation under the Environment Act 2021 to put in place measures to support the reversal of this decline. This includes a new mandatory requirement for local areas in England to develop a spatial strategy for nature recovery, referred to as [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#). These strategies will show where and how we should be taking action for nature and provide wider benefits.
- 1.3 Defra decides the area that each strategy covers and appoints a 'responsible authority' to lead its preparation. There will be 48 in total across England - collectively forming a National Nature Recovery Network.
- 1.4 In March 2023, the Mayor of GM was provisionally identified by the Secretary of State for Defra (Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) as the authority to be responsible for the preparation of a LNRS for GM. The Mayor accepted this provisional appointment at the GMCA meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> March.
- 1.5 Statutory regulations and guidance for the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies by Responsible Authorities have since been published by Defra, under the Environment Act.
- 1.6 The Environment Act sets out that Local Planning Authorities will need to have regard to the LNRS in local planning policy and decisions. The statutory guidance sets out that the government intends for LNRS to inform the local planning process. Local planning authorities must have regard to them in complying with the [strengthened biodiversity duty](#) introduced in the Environment Act. The government will provide separate guidance to explain what this means in practice and has previously stated that LNRS will not be a barrier to development nor will it introduce new/different designations.
- 1.7 The statutory regulations set out the steps responsible authorities must take in the preparation of the GM LNRS. The regulations state that the responsible authority must

take reasonable steps to involve all supporting authorities (for GM, this is the 10 GMCA metropolitan district councils, Natural England and Peak District National Park Authority) and consenting authorities (Forestry Commission and the Environment Agency), and such persons and organisations as appear to the responsible authority to be appropriate in the preparation of its local nature recovery strategy.

1.8 The regulations also set out that the responsible authority must undertake a public consultation on its LNRS and publish all responses to the consultation.

1.9 We will need to report on progress on the GM LNRS every 3-10 years and as part of an enhanced biodiversity duty introduced by the Environment Act.

## **2. CONTENT REQUIRED OF THE STRATEGY**

2.1 As mandated by the Environment Act, GMCA officers, working with the 10 local authorities and wider stakeholders, will produce a plan for producing a Greater Manchester LNRS on behalf of the Mayor.

2.2 The preparation of the GM LNRS is an opportunity to set out a long-term vision not just for nature recovery but for access to green space alongside the growth of the city-region. GMCA are commissioning technical expert support to advise on how we can best align local nature recovery and growth, using the Timperley Wedge allocation as a case study and working with Trafford Council.

2.3 In producing a LNRS, responsible authorities must identify areas that are or could be of biodiversity importance, or where recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could be beneficial.

2.4 In preparing the strategy, to meet the requirements of the Environment Act and the statutory regs and guidance the current minimum outline for the strategy is as follows:

- Set out a vision, targets and principles for nature recovery in GM
- Set out the state of nature in GM and describe the strategy area
- Set out our priorities and measures for nature recovery (statement of biodiversity priorities)

- Map our 'core network' areas of particular importance for biodiversity (as set out in the statutory guidance)
- Identify and map priority 'opportunity areas' for nature recovery (e.g. proposed areas to expand, connect and restore habitats)
- Map where action has been taken for nature recover
- Set out how the strategy will be monitored

### **3. PREPARATION OF THE STRATEGY**

3.1 To work with partners and Local Authorities in the preparation of the strategy, as required by the statutory regulations and guidance, the GMCA are proposing the following governance arrangements.

3.2 The development of the strategy (as set out in 3.3) will be informed by two groups working under the direction of the Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group (GM's Local Nature Partnership):

- A dedicated steering group for the strategy to engage key partners (listed in annex 1).
- A GM Local Authority Officers group, consisting of representative from the GM LA Nature Recovery Officers Group (planning policy officers from across the 10 districts) and the GM Parks Network (Parks/green estate officers from across the 10 districts). Council officers attending this groups are expected to engage/provide a direct link into with their Heads of Planning/Heads of Services and others within their LA on the GM LNRS.

3.3 Once the strategy and accompanying maps have been drafted these would then be circulated to the groups listed below for approval prior to public consultation (as shown in Annex 2):

- GM Directors of Place
- Planning and Housing Commission
- Green City Region Partnership

- Green City Region Board
- the Mayor
- the GMCA

3.4 Revisions and publication of responses to the public consultation would then be made prior to recirculation of a final version of the strategy to the groups listed in 4.3 for sign-off

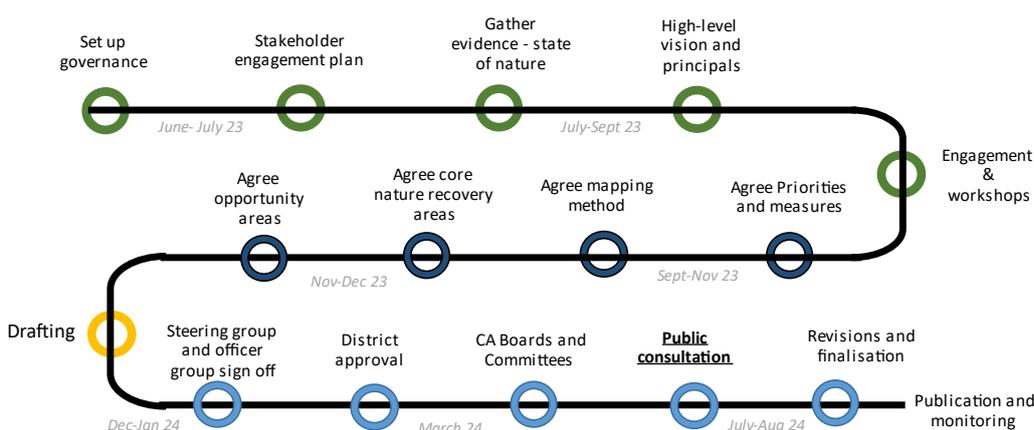
3.5 A Taskforce for Nature will be set up to promote the strategy with senior leaders and extend awareness and reach of the strategy, but would not be part of the formal governance or sign-off of the strategy.

3.6 It is anticipated that a final strategy will then be put to the Mayor for approval, endorsement by GMCA and publication in late 2024. The strategy will be developed in line with and be reflected within the next 5 Year Environment Plan.

## 4. PREPARATION OF THE GM LNRS

4.1 The following outline timeline is currently being followed for the preparation of the strategy.

### Draft timeline



4.2 The regulations implementing the LNRS prescribe the following from local authorities:

- Agreeing to the consultation draft, within 28 days of being provided with it.
- Agreeing to the final strategy, within 28 days of being provided with it.

4.3 Neither the regulations nor guidance prescribe at what level this agreement should be sought or provided by a local authority – it is left to their discretion.

4.4 Given the collaborative approach proposed to developing the strategy, the governance arrangements being put in place, the close working relationships between the GMCA and districts in this area and the process for approving similar GM strategies, it is proposed that:

- Drafts of both the consultation and final strategy are developed iteratively within the governance arrangements set out above.
- The consultation draft and final strategy are formally sent to the local authorities 28 days before a nominated GMCA meeting.
- Local authorities can respond in writing with any formal objections within 28 days.
- These are both approved by the GM local authorities at that nominated GMCA meeting. Proposed dates for sign off will be provided by Autumn 2023.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 Recommendations are set out on page 1.

## **Annex 1 Members of the GM LNRS steering group**

- The Environment Agency
- Transport for Greater Manchester
- United Utilities
- The Forestry Commission
- NHS Manchester Foundation Trust
- National Farming Union
- Southway Housing Trust
- GM Local Authority Officer Representative – Wigan Council
- The National Trust
- Groundwork
- City of Trees
- Royal Horticultural Society
- Canal and Rivers Trust
- The Lancashire Wildlife Trust
- Mersey Rivers Trust
- Irwell Catchment Partnership
- Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
- Natural England
- Taylor Wimpey (Developer Representative)
- The Peak District National Park
- Environment (Environmental Professional Bodies Representative)

## Annex 2 Overarching governance of the GM LNRS

