

GM PLANNING AND HOUSING COMMISSION

Date: 23 February 2024

Subject: Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Report of: Rachel Morrison, GMCA

Purpose of Report

This paper provides an update to the commission on the preparation of a Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to:

1. Note the contents of the report and the requirements for GM to produce a Local Nature Recovery Strategy under the Environment Act 2021.
2. Note the proposed timelines, approach being taken, the publication of the GM State of Nature Report (March 2024) and current public survey.

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1. Introduction

- 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 establish Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs). These are spatial strategies aimed at bringing public, private and voluntary sectors to work more effectively together for nature's recovery and enable collective effort to be focused where it will have the most benefit.
- 1.3 The Mayor of GM has been appointed as "responsible authority" for the preparation of an LNRS for GM and its 10 local authorities. Developing the strategy will involve a wide range of partners and stakeholders in helping to agree priorities for nature's recovery, investment and action over the next 10 years.
- 1.4 As mandated by the Environment Act, GMCA officers, working with the 10 local authorities and wider stakeholders, are preparing a Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Environment Act requires responsible authorities to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies. These should identify opportunities and priorities for nature recovery and map areas where funding and efforts to work together to help nature recover should be focused.
- 2.2 For more details on Local Nature Recovery Strategies what they should contain please click these links to the [statutory guidance](#) and the [GMCA webpage on the LNRS](#).
- 2.3 At the same time, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB) is making changes to the planning system which will lead to government updating the National Planning Policy Framework. These updates will include how LNRSs should be given weight in the plan-making process.
- 2.4 In 2023, government added a clause to the LURB which will create a new requirement on all relevant plan-makers and requires all tiers of planning to “take account of” LNRS, including specific elements of those strategies, such as those areas identified as having potential to become of particular importance for biodiversity and other environmental benefits. The government has stated it will provide separate guidance to explain what this means in practice, however it has not yet done so and the timeline and level of detail that guidance will contain is not clear.

3. Preparing the strategy

- 3.1 The GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy will cover the whole of Greater Manchester, supported by Natural England, the Peak District National Park, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit and our Local Nature Partnership (the Natural Capital Group).
- 3.2 GMCA officers are following the statutory regulations and guidance for the preparation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies by Responsible Authorities published by Defra. However, having also been one of 5 pilots to test the development of a strategy in 2020/21 and given the breadth and depth of previous work in this area, GMCA has the ambition to produce a robust, evidence-based strategy that is informed by a high level of engagement.

3.3 In preparing the strategy, 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 any other organisations we deem appropriate in the preparation of the GM LNRS.

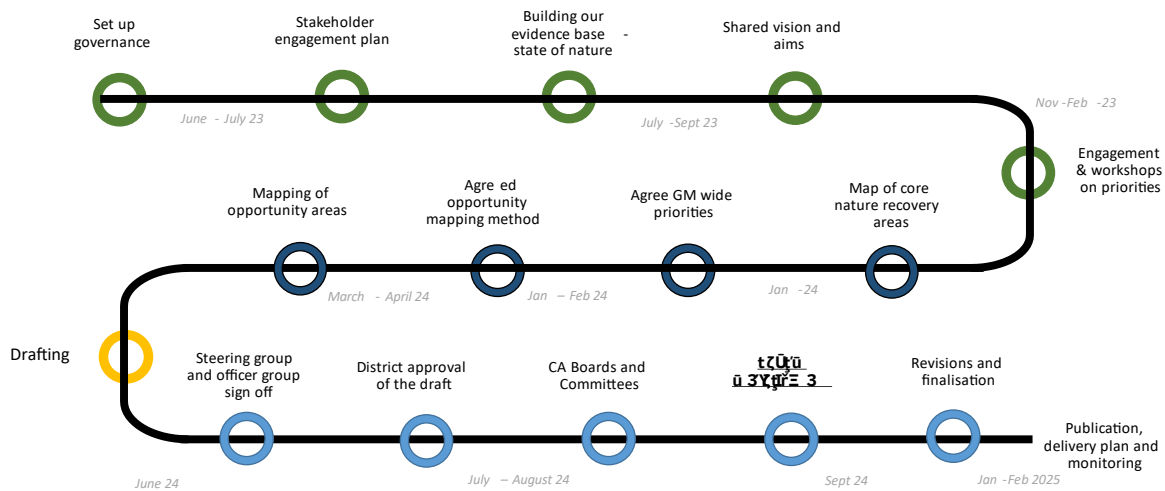
3.4 To meet these requirements the development of the strategy is taking place under the direction of the GM Natural Capital Group (our Local Nature Partnership), chaired by Anne Selby, reporting to the Green City Region Partnership, the GMCA and the Mayor. A Steering Group has been set up, under the direction of the Natural Capital Group, to engage local partners in the co-production of the strategy, supported by the Local Nature Partnership and a Local Authority Nature Recovery Officers group with representatives from all 10 councils.

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

- Set out a **high-level vision, targets and aims** for nature recovery in GM.
- Set out the **state of nature in GM** and describe the strategy area and its opportunities for recovery
- Set out our **priorities and measures for nature recovery** (statement of biodiversity priorities)
- Map where actions for nature recovery should be taken
 - **Map our ‘core network’ areas** of particular importance for biodiversity (as defined by Defra)
 - 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 recovery**
- Set out how the strategy will be monitored

4. Preparation of the GM LNRS – Timeline

- 4.1 GMCA officers are working to develop the strategy collaboratively with many interested organisations, landowners and communities, already working on (or who could be involved in) nature conservation, to formulate and agree priorities, targets and actions for habitats and species relevant across the city-region.
- 4.2 The following outline roadmap is currently being followed for the preparation and adoption of the strategy by January 2025.



- 4.3 Key current steps and milestones for spring 2024 include:

- The publication of GM’s first State of Nature report (March 2024).
- Completion of maps of our ‘core network’ areas of particular importance for biodiversity (as defined by Defra).
- The [launch of a public survey to engage residents, community groups, landowners and businesses](#) (February 2024).

5. Next steps

5.1 You are asked to:

- Note the contents of this report
- Note the proposed timelines, approach being taken and forthcoming publication of the GM State of Nature Report and current public survey.

5.2 To better inform members regarding the remit and preparation process for the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy, GMCA are running a councillor webinar on March 4th at 12-1.30pm. If you would like to attend [please register here for the webinar](#).