

LOW CARBON HUB BOARD

Date: 07th July 2017

Subject: URBAN PIONEER AND NATURAL CAPITAL UPDATE

Report of: Anne Selby, Chair of Natural Capital Group

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this paper is to update the Board on recent Natural Capital Group activities and on the progress of the Urban Pioneer Project, addressing how these are supporting delivery of the Mayors' ambition for a Green City Region.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board is requested to:

- Note the contents of the report;
- Agree the 2017/18 Natural Capital Group Work Programme (Annex 1); and
- Endorse the Urban Pioneer Project Plan for approval by GMCA (Annex 2).

CONTACT OFFICER:

Email: mark.atherton@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Tel: 07834 174132

krista.patrick@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk

Tel: 07973 874778

TRACKING/PROCESS		
Does this report relate to a Key Decision, as set out in the GMCA Constitution or in the process agreed by the AGMA Executive Board		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 AGMA Scrutiny Pool on the grounds of urgency?		NA
AGMA Commission	TfGMC	Scrutiny Pool
07 th July 2017	NA	NA

1.0 NATURAL CAPITAL GROUP

- 1.1 The Natural Capital Group (NCG), GM's Local Nature Partnership, and its partners continue to play a key role in acting as an ambassador for Greater Manchester's natural environment, supporting delivery through existing partnerships and structures and showcasing headline initiatives.
- 1.2 A report was presented to the Low Carbon Hub Board at its meeting in January 2017; since then the following progress has been made including the production of the 2017/18 Work Programme (Annex 1) which identifies a number of key priorities for the next 6-12 months. These are described in more detail below:

Identify and quantify the value of GMs key natural environment assets

- 1.3 The Natural Capital Group has played a significant role in the development of Greater Manchester's Natural Environment Evidence Base which has been used to inform natural environment policy for the draft GMSF. The evidence base, which is mapped spatially on the MappingGM website, has recently been updated to include water management and catchment information and further additions are envisaged including the latest Ordnance Survey aerial photography and green space data.
- 1.4 The Natural Capital Group continues to support delivery of the Urban Pioneer project and the production of a high level set of natural capital accounts, including the provision of a detailed evidence base review and engaging with key stakeholders to complete data requests for financial information on environmental projects. This work will form a baseline for the development of the Urban Pioneer.

Influencing and embedding a natural capital approach in policy and decision making

- 1.5 The Natural Capital Group continues to provide a joined up point of contact for consultation, providing decision makers with the evidence required to make informed decisions about the natural environment. Following on from the Natural Capital Group's draft GMSF consultation event, on 30th November 2016, feedback received was used to inform the preparation of a detailed response on behalf of Greater Manchester's natural capital interests. One of the key issues raised was that the draft GMSF did not include natural environment targets. As a result, a set of natural environment targets for the GMSF are now being developed with a sub group set up to support this.

Identifying and developing innovative investment frameworks

- 1.6 A key priority for the delivery of future projects is the need to increase our knowledge and understanding of the financial value (and any markets for payment) of Greater Manchester's natural environment assets. This includes the development of an urban demonstrator project on innovative finance which

is being explored as part of the Urban Pioneer project.

- 1.7 Manchester City Council have recently launched their EC Horizon 2020 funded Grow Green project (Green Cities for Climate and Water Resilience, Sustainable Economic Growth, Healthy Citizens and Environments) demonstrating the delivery of innovative `nature based' solutions in cities. GMCA will be advising on market development and the contribution that nature based solutions can make to the local economy.

Supporting the delivery of projects

- 1.8 GM plays host to many forward looking environmental organisations and groups. Examples of key natural environment initiatives being delivered include:
- Natural Course EU Life IP project supporting the Water Framework Directive Catchment Partnerships
 - City of Trees ambition to plant over 3 million trees (by 2035)
 - GM Wetlands NIA and the Low Carbon Landscape Project
 - RESIN and Grow Green projects promoting the use of natural interventions for climate change and resilience
 - University of Manchester MEMO Project (Manchester Environment Mapping Online)
- 1.9 The Natural Capital Group will continue to support the delivery of these projects exploring opportunities to build cross-sector partnerships and secure direct benefits for the environment, local people and the economy.

Act as an ambassador for the natural environment in GM, providing leadership and co-ordination for activity

- 1.10 A successful annual conference was held at The Lowry, Salford, on 1st February 2017. 120 delegates attended, including representatives from the health sector and developers. The conference significantly raised the profile of the natural capital agenda at a time when policies and strategies are being formed at a Greater Manchester level.
- 1.11 A key priority for the next 6-12 months is the development and delivery of a targeted communications campaign `connecting people with nature' which brings together the key natural environment stakeholders and their initiatives being delivered across Greater Manchester. The proposal looks to overcome barriers to effective delivery by connecting with a wider regional audience to understand what's taking place in their areas, the reasons why they are taking place and the wider benefits.

2.0 URBAN PIONEER

- 2.1 The Urban Pioneer is one of 4 national three year pilots instigated by DEFRA in order to determine future policies, strategies and ways of working that could deliver the step change necessary to achieve the Government's commitment

to reverse declines, and leave the environment in a better state than it currently is within a generation. The Urban pioneer focusses on governance, decision making and the urban environment.

OUTCOMES

What is it going to deliver?

- 2.2 A report was presented to the Low Carbon Hub Board, at its meeting on 7th October 2016, which provided an outline of the scope of the Urban Pioneer. Visits by DEFRA ministers and Environment Agency Chief Executives have helped to shape the work. A delivery group is in place and a small team is being recruited within the Environment Agency to strengthen the partnerships necessary to deliver this collaborative project. Since then, the following progress has been made and 5 key objectives have been identified:

Creating a natural liveable city region

- 2.3 Achieving a clean, safe environment is essential to the delivery of inclusive growth, creating places that people want to live and work. The Urban Pioneer will support Greater Manchester in creating a natural liveable city region, aiming to reverse the decline in the quantity and quality of our natural assets and the services they provide. Beyond supporting the provision of clean air and water, the full extent to which nature contributes to health and wellbeing is currently only partly understood, but includes positive contributions such as access to green space and flood risk reduction. Developments and investments are pivotal in urban regeneration, creating attractive, healthy places people want to live, work and bring up a family.
- 2.4 The Urban Pioneer will seek to provide local and national government, NGO's, private sector and communities, the tools and evidence required to appropriately identify and account for the truer value of Greater Manchester's natural capital. This will provide decision makers at all levels with the tools and evidence to make more informed, joined-up decisions. It will create an increase in both the quantity and quality of the city regions stock of natural capital assets, whilst engaging with GM's residents so that they can understand and access the natural environment and the benefits it provides.
- 2.5 There are 4 primary objectives for the Urban Pioneer and a supporting cross cutting 5th.

Develop and test a communications and engagement model that brings together sectors, organisations and the public to deliver more for the environment.

- 2.6 Online digital tools will be created to engage with residents so that they can understand and access the natural environment in their local communities. New ways of efficient, integrated working will be identified and shared so that others can replicate and benefit from the Urban Pioneers findings, both locally and nationally. Relevant evidence and links between natural capital and its

beneficiaries will see organisations and/or sectors, previously having little or no engagement in environmental protection/management, demonstrating increased direct or indirect environmental delivery, improving the capacity for the provision of benefits to local residents.

- 2.7 The Urban Pioneer has been engaging with a number of sectors and organisations to establish what is required to achieve these outputs. Support for Manchester Metropolitan University's 'My Back Yard' and Lancashire Wildlife Trust's 'My wild city' initiatives have been identified as opportunities for community engagement. Work is also underway establishing the benefits of Environment Agency staff being embedded within the Combined Authority and the impact this has had of environmental outcomes.

Develop a demonstrator project that shows the benefit of a Natural Capital Approach on project funding.

- 2.8 As part of a previously unfunded existing project, new project or way of working, the Urban Pioneer will test a natural capital approach to the investment to test whether it will increase environmental delivery capacity. One possible project is the City of Trees ambition to initiate the greening of the City Centre over 10 years including 1000 street trees (Sustainable Urban Drainage System enabled where possible).

Creating a Natural Capital Investment Plan for Greater Manchester

- 2.9 Future investment and resource will be targeted towards those natural assets identified as providing strategic benefit to local communities across Greater Manchester, either through the services provided or environmental issues mitigated. This will aim to address the issues of quality, resilience and the provision of services to people whilst ensuring the natural capital asset's protection and improvement. It will provide the steer for all environmental players to work collaboratively in tackling the challenges of a reducing stock of natural capital assets and the services and benefits they provide.

Demonstrate a place based approach to delivery that improves policy and decision making.

- 2.10 Decision making will be expedited and better informed and policy's updated to account for the value of the natural environment and the benefits to local people's health, wellbeing, prosperity and growth. This may lead to increased protection, maintenance and/or investment in existing and/or the creation of new natural capital assets for the benefit of the residents of Greater Manchester.
- 2.11 The Urban Pioneer will assess how to embed a Biodiversity net gain approach to the planning system across Greater Manchester and demonstrate how this could deliver wider natural capital net gains and the benefits to residents. Currently, technical knowledge and resources required to support this outcome are being sourced. Exploratory sessions with technical leads and Warwickshire county council (who have successfully deployed a biodiversity

net gain approach) have been held. Resource has been allocated to explore a pre-application processes to improve coherence of local and national processes.

Cross cutting supporting actions

- 2.12 Providing the evidence, knowledge and ways of working to support the Urban Pioneer's objectives and outcomes, ensuring that the Urban Pioneer's work is evidence based, collaborative in nature and joined-up, working efficiently and effectively.
- 2.13 Natural capital accounts aim to map and identify the fiscal value and societal contributions of natural assets. Eftec have recently concluded their baseline assessment and created a scoping paper on natural capital accounts for Greater Manchester. Eftec has also completed a first attempt at collating existing spend and allocation from across the city region. Development of evaluation frameworks for both the pioneer and for identifying and analysing learning and best practice for existing projects has been started. Engagement and feedback on the Environment Agency's natural capital scorecard has been provided for further development.

Future actions (next 6-12 months) include:

- Finalisation of the workplan, including actions and leads, to be signed off.
- Initiate actions detailed within the workplan.
- Finalisation of the strategic plan for the Urban Pioneer and for this to become public, to be signed off.
- Complete recruitment of 2xFTE funded by the Environment Agency to provide dedicated project support to the Urban Pioneer.
- Adopt NCG supported recommendations from Eftec's report.

Further information is provided on the Urban Pioneer project in Annex 2 which is a draft document and an updated summary will be available on the day.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board is requested to:

- Note the contents of the report;
- Agree the 2017/18 Natural Capital Group Work Programme (Annex 1); and
- Comment on the Urban Pioneer Project Plan (Annex 2).

ANNEX 1

GM Low Carbon Hub Business Plan 2017-18 – Natural Capital Group

Sub-group vision: By 2020, our natural environment, and the ecosystem services it provides, still need to be both protected and (where possible) enhanced in light of increasing pressures from people, the economy and a changing climate. Our natural capital must also be embedded into the decision-making for sustainable economic growth investments, enhancing their success and resilience.

By 2020 we will seek to achieve:

- No net loss in habitat quality or extent from a 2014 baseline
- A year on year increase in the external funding secured for delivery of physical natural environment enhancement projects
- Over 3 million trees planted (by 2035) and natural capital embedded into our investments
- The transparent and informed consideration of natural capital impact in investment decision making

KPIs: (To be advised by the GM Outcomes Framework)

Promoting healthy waterways: Water Framework Directive Ecological Status;

Enhance biodiversity: Monitor and maintain the % of sites of biological importance in positive management.

Sub-group priorities: There are 5 priorities:

1. Identify and quantify the value of GMs key natural environment assets
2. Influencing and embedding a natural capital approach in policy and decision making
3. Identifying and developing innovative investment frameworks
4. Supporting the delivery of projects
5. Act as an ambassador for the natural environment in GM, providing leadership and co-ordination for activity

Priority 1 Identify and quantify the value of GMs key natural environment assets						
Outcome	Actions	Lead	Priority	Timescale	Progress	CCLES
Collate, increase and expand our environmental evidence base to enable informed decisions to be made relating to the natural environment, supporting a natural capital approach.	Update and maintain the GM Natural Environment Evidence base to identify the quality, quantity and distribution of natural capital assets across GM.	GMEU (DR)	M	Ongoing	Green	A11
	Compile a list of key natural environment	NCG (KP)	M	2017-2018	Amber	

	<p>research and projects to identify future needs and priorities e.g. including carbon sequestration and air quality improvement.</p> <p>Support the production of a high level set of natural capital accounts for GM to provide a baseline for monitoring change in our natural environment.</p> <p>Update and maintain MappingGM including a comprehensive list of natural environment projects across GM showing their distribution and benefits.</p>	<p>Urban Pioneer (AB)</p> <p>NCG (KP)</p>	<p>H</p> <p>M</p>		<p>Amber</p> <p>Green</p>	
Priority 2 Influencing and embedding a natural capital approach in policy and decision making						
<p>Provide a joined up point for consultation, providing decision makers with the evidence required to make informed decisions about the natural environment when developing key GM policies.</p>	<p>Input into each phase of the GMS and GMSF to ensure the natural environment is given sufficient weighting as a key critical issue when planning for future growth in GM.</p> <p>Further scope and develop a set of natural environment targets and list of opportunity areas for the creation and enhancement of certain habitat types including trees and woodland to support the production of the GMSF.</p>	<p>NCG Sub Group (KP)</p> <p>NCG Sub Group (GMEU)</p>	<p>H</p> <p>H</p>		<p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p>	<p>A11</p>
<p>Engage with the GMCA and LEP on the development of economic strategies and decision making to ensure they incorporate relevant NCG objectives.</p>	<p>Work with the GMCA and LEP to embed policies into the GMSF and GMS which actively promote an enhanced environment, transport, air quality and health.</p>	<p>NCG Sub Group (KP)</p>	<p>H</p>		<p>Amber</p>	

	<p>Work with partner organisations to ensure that economic growth is embedded into natural environment plans and strategies.</p> <p>Disseminate details of LEP funding as and when available and support relevant projects within the project pipeline.</p>	<p>Urban Pioneer (AB)</p> <p>NCG (KP)</p>	<p>M</p> <p>M</p>		Amber	
Influence decision makers and inform strategic health strategies about the value of nature for health & wellbeing, and the potential cost saving results.	<p>Identify and bring together key stakeholders in public health to raise the profile, consensus and priorities for nature-based interventions.</p> <p>Investigate the potential for holding a joint workshop for public health professionals about the value of 'nature based interventions'.</p> <p>Support delivery of appropriate elements of the GM Health and Wellbeing Strategy.</p> <p>Work with Directors of Public Health to support GM Local Planning Authorities on planning decision making and appeal processes to ensure that health and wellbeing of GM communities is integral to planning decisions that are made.</p>	<p>NCG (SW)</p> <p>NCG (SW)</p> <p>NCG (SW)</p> <p>NCG (SW)</p>	<p>H</p> <p>M</p> <p>M</p> <p>M</p>		<p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p>	A3
Priority 3 Identifying and developing innovative investment frameworks						
Increase knowledge and understanding of the financial value (and any markets for payment) of GM's natural environment assets.	<p>Support the production of a natural capital investment plan for GM.</p> <p>Support the development of an urban demonstrator project on innovative</p>	<p>Urban Pioneer (AB)</p> <p>Urban Pioneer</p>	<p>H</p> <p>H</p>		<p>Amber</p> <p>Amber</p>	

	finance. Work with partners and external advisors to advise on a range of delivery mechanisms including setting up of an offsetting scheme.	(AB) GMEU/NE (DR & GH)	H			
Priority 4 Supporting the delivery of projects						
Build cross-sector partnerships across GM to secure direct benefits for the environment, local people and the economy.	Support the catchment partnerships to develop and deliver their catchment management plans through the Natural Course Project.	Natural Course (MT)	M		Amber	A1 A2
	Deliver City of Trees and Pennine Edge Forest plans/activity including production of business plans, supporting officer groups and linking up projects and evidence.	CoT/PEF (TH & FC)	M		Amber	M25 M26
	Support the delivery of the GM Wetlands NIA by promoting partnership bids, developing priority projects, partnership engagement and identifying funding streams.	LWT (AS)	M		Amber	
	Support delivery of the RESIN and Grow Green projects to explore opportunities to promote the use of natural interventions for climate change and resilience.	LCH (ME)	M		Amber	
	Support delivery of University research projects including Manchester Environment Mapping Online (MEMO) and Green Infrastructure and Health and Wellbeing Influences on an Aging	NCG (KP)	M		Amber	

	Population (GHIA) projects.					
Priority 5 Providing a collective voice and supporting collaborative working through existing partnerships and showcasing headline initiatives.						
Improve and build cross-sector partnerships, by bringing together key stakeholders to result in positive outcomes for the natural environment.	Hold quarterly NCG board meetings.	NCG (KP)	M		Green	
	Set up and hold NCG sub groups as and when required including an NCG officers group.	NCG (KP)	M		Amber	
	Attend partner meetings to engage with wider stakeholders to inform wider NCG agenda and understand progress on work plan.	NCG (KP)	M		Green	
	Plan and hold a themed annual stakeholder event to promote the work of the NCG.	NCG (KP)	M		Amber	
Implement a communications strategy to inform and educate new and existing stakeholders about the work of the NCG, providing transparency through a variety of communication methods.	Develop and deliver a targeted communications campaign including website/communications materials/targeted engagement/social media activity.	NCG/LCH (KP/TB)	H		Amber	C5 C15
	Develop and deliver an NCG website providing 'one stop shop' for the natural environment with case studies and signposting.	NCG/LCH (KP/TB)	H		Amber	
	Link with wider LCH communications activity, including increasing links and benefits from LCH communications support and use of 'ontheplatform'.	NCG/LCH (KP/TB)	H		Amber	

	Support conversations leading up to delivery of the Mayors Green Summit.	NCG/LCH KP/TB)	H		Amber	
--	--	-------------------	---	--	-------	--