

# Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Frequently Asked Questions

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# Understanding the LNRS

## 1. What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)?

England is currently one of the most nature-depleted countries globally. To drive action locally, Local Nature Recovery Strategies were first proposed in 2019, and made a statutory requirement under the 2021 Environment Act.

Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is designed to set out how we can all tackle the biodiversity emergency and improve access to nature across the city-region over the next decade. It sets out a long-term vision for us to all 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.

In short, it's our roadmap for nature recovery – how we can all work together towards a greener city region where nature is thriving and where we need to focus our efforts to have the biggest impact. It covers the ten local authorities within Greater Manchester (GM) – Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan.

## 2. Who can use the LNRS?

Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is for everyone, whether you are a local business owner or landowner, environmental charity, developer, local resident, park manager or a community group.

Everyone can use the strategy as inspiration to play their part for nature. You can read more about the different ways the strategy can be used in section 7 of the strategy.

## 3. Who has led the development of the GM LNRS and who was involved?

The strategy has been developed collaboratively, led by Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and involved representatives from all 10 local authorities, and host of local environmental charities, infrastructure providers, and other partner organisations. Public input and engagement from various sectors have ensured that our strategy is locally driven.

## 4. How is Greater Manchester's LNRS different from broader environmental strategies and broader environmental conservation efforts?

Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is uniquely tailored to the conservation needs and priorities of our city-region. It is based on a assessment of local biodiversity and ongoing engagement with key community stakeholders. Unlike broader conservation efforts that often address larger geographic areas or focus on general policy frameworks, the LNRS is specifically designed to address the unique challenges and opportunities within our city-region.

## 5. What the LNRS will not do?

The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy is a strategic document designed to set out priorities for different habitats and species and identify locations where it could be beneficial to create or improve habitats to benefit nature and the wider environment. It aims to foster more collaborative and coordinated action across Greater Manchester, so we are all pushing in the same direction. While the strategy provides direction, **it is not a binding delivery plan, it does not introduce new protections or designations, it does not act as a barrier to development nor does it authorise habitat creation without proper consultation and processes.**

## 6. What is the Greater Manchester Nature Network?

To help address the biodiversity emergency the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy sets out a new spatial vision for nature's recovery – a Nature Network across Greater Manchester. The Nature Network sets out opportunity areas which could help to identify

The Nature Networks sets out the best potential opportunity areas to boost ecological connectivity across the city-region – where action for nature could have the biggest impact on driving species recovery by better connecting our remaining wildlife-rich areas. By targeting action using the Nature Network we hope to focus efforts where they could have the greatest impact.

The Nature Network has two main components

- **Core Local Nature Sites** these are areas that we know are already important for nature, as they are designated or protected in some way (such as Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and irreplaceable habitats).
- **Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas** these are areas where there are opportunities for action for nature recovery, that could help better connect, expand or enhance core local nature sites. Action for nature in these opportunity areas can take place alongside other land uses, such as farming, recreation, development or business – everyone can make space for nature.

The goal of the nature network is to contribute to a broader effort to establish a network across regions in England, facilitating species movement and supporting nature recovery.

It is important to note that the Nature Network is not able to provide any additional designations or protection to land, beyond those protections already given to sites that fall within the Core Local Nature Sites. The Nature Network aims to have a positive influence on the growth and development of the city-region, targeting efforts by charities and helping planners and developers to understand and contribute towards nature recovery, alongside the delivery of new neighbourhoods, offices and commercial spaces.

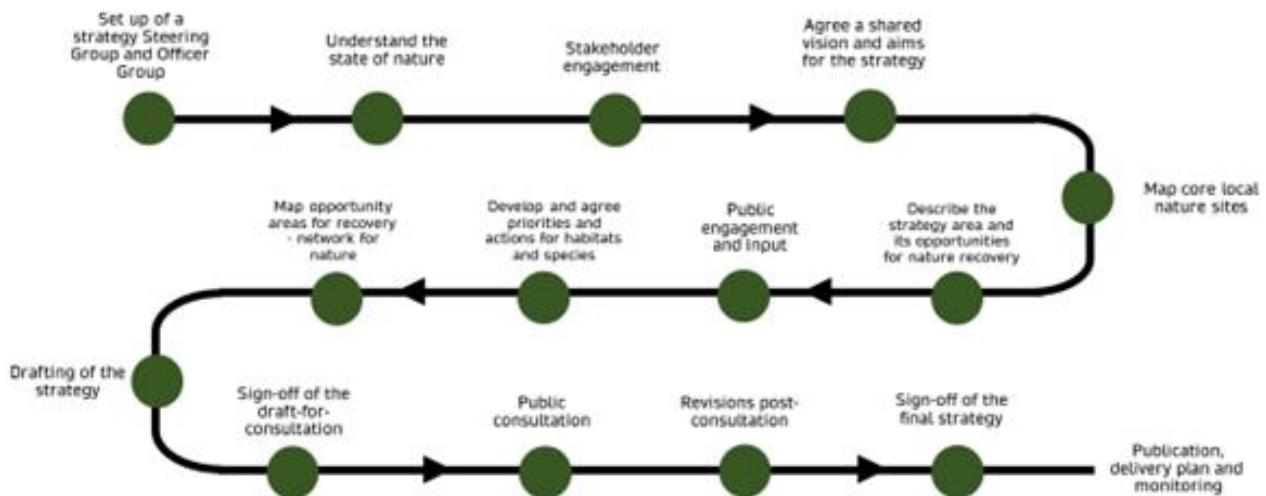
## Implementation of the LNRS

### 7. How will the GM LNRS deliver nature recovery?

Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) will serve as a guide to inspire nature recovery efforts across the region by identifying priorities and actions we can all work towards, and opportunity areas that could help boost nature recovery. The aim is to support wildlife recovery, enhance climate change adaptation, and direct funding and investment, including through the new Biodiversity Net Gain requirement. Additionally, as mandated by the Environment Act 2021, planning authorities must have regard to the LNRS when making policy and development decisions, ensuring that nature recovery is a priority throughout Greater Manchester.

### 8. What are the timescales for its development and implementation?

The image below shows the broad progress GMCA have followed to develop the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. We are currently in the public consultation phase, after which we will make revisions based on the feedback received, with the goal of publishing the strategy in 2025.



**9. How will the Local Nature Recovery Strategy influence funding for nature recovery activities?**

The government currently offers funding to support a wide range of nature recovery activities, encouraging landowners and managers to adopt practices that enhance environmental benefits. As Local Nature Recovery Strategies are implemented across England, the government is exploring ways to better align these funding initiatives with the priorities and actions set out in these strategies. The Greater Manchester LNRS will serve as a valuable resource, guiding landowners toward funding opportunities where they are most likely to succeed and offering advice on advancing nature recovery on their land.

**10. How will we monitor the LNRS and update the strategy once its published?**

Over the next ten years, monitoring progress against the targets and ambitions outlined in our strategy will be vital for assessing all our efforts to address the biodiversity emergency. To ensure we track key elements effectively, a monitoring framework for the strategy's headline targets will be implemented. Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) will establish a monitoring group within the Natural Capital Group (Local Nature Partnership), collaborating with the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit and partner organisations to oversee progress. This group will regularly monitor the strategy's key targets, with annual or biannual updates provided to report on progress and delivery.

**11. How will the LNRS integrate with areas neighbouring Greater Manchester?**

Greater Manchester Combined Authority is actively working with partners in neighbouring areas to ensure the effective integration of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy across county borders. This collaboration aims to align strategies, particularly in mapping and planning, to create a seamless interface in bordering areas like Cheshire and Lancashire. Additionally, all ten local authorities within Greater Manchester continue to work closely together to ensure a cohesive and unified approach to nature recovery across our city-region.

## Public Involvement and Consultation

Residents across Greater Manchester play a crucial role in driving nature recovery throughout the city region and often have the best understanding of what works for nature in their local communities. Collecting residents' feedback is essential for developing a strategy that is better tailored to the needs and priorities of the people it serves.

### 12. What is the purpose of the current public consultation?

The purpose of the public consultation is to give everyone across Greater Manchester the opportunity to shape the strategy and provide feedback on our draft plan. Public consultations on LNRSs are required under guidelines set by DEFRA.

### 13. What will happen afterwards?

After the public consultation closes, feedback gathered during the public consultation will be used to help shape the final version of the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Once revised the strategy will be returned to the Combined Authority for endorsement to become the formal plan for nature recovery for the city-region. To stay informed, visit our [dedicated webpage](#) and subscribe to the [GM Green City Newsletter](#) for regular updates on the strategy's progress.

### 14. How can I contribute, and find out more about the strategy?

Residents, landowners, organisations, and the broader community are crucial in shaping our strategy. We need your views to get the strategy right for Greater Manchester. You can read more about the Local Nature Recovery Strategy on our [LNRS webpage](#), including project blogs and previews of the priorities that will be covered in the draft plan.

Over the last 12 months GMCA have been actively engaging with people across Greater Manchester through initiatives like our public 'Plan for Nature' survey, which received over 800 responses. Additionally, we promoted the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (GM LNRS) at key events over the past year, including the first RHS Urban Show at Mayfield Depot and the Manchester Festival of Nature at Heaton Park.

## Habitats and Areas included in the LNRS

The questions in this section aim to answer those relating to the habitats and areas included in the draft Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

### 15. What type of habitats and species are included in the LNRS?

Greater Manchester's draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy outlines a range of outcomes for various habitats across the city region, including woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, uplands, lowlands, rivers, and our extensive urban green spaces and buildings, which constitute nearly 50% of the region.

Our draft strategy also features a shortlist of priority species and species groups, including those in need of targeted conservation efforts, threatened or endangered species. The LNRS will enable us to set out ambitions to accelerate progress in increasing wildlife abundance, expanding tree canopy cover, and creating more connected and diverse habitats across Greater Manchester.

## 16. Why are only certain areas mapped for nature recovery?

The mapped areas within Greater Manchester’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy pinpoint:

- **Our Core Local Nature Sites** - These are our best remaining wildlife sites across the city-region (our “areas of particular importance for biodiversity”). What we can include is set out by Defra in statutory guidance. They are sites that are already designated to some degree for their value for nature. For Greater Manchester they include nationally designated sites for their value to nature, including: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); Special Protected Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), National Nature Reserves (NNRS), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), locally designated Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) and irreplaceable habitats.
- **Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas** - These are areas where action to enhance, restore or create different types of habitats (i.e. woodlands, grasslands, moorlands, waterbodies and wetlands) would expand or better connect our Core Local Nature Sites. These are areas where more ambitious action for nature should be prioritised and are where we can have the greatest impact by planning, coordinating and focusing efforts and resources. The opportunity areas set out specific mapped locations that are potentially suitable for carrying out different habitat actions, alongside other land uses, to help achieve the priorities set out in this strategy.

The long-term goal of these mapped areas is to establish a ‘Nature Network. While all areas across Greater Manchester are important for nature, the strategy highlights core and opportunity areas to guide individuals and organisations on where they can contribute to nature recovery most effectively, maximising outcomes.

## 17. How were those areas decided?

To identify a nature network for Greater Manchester, GMCA has worked with a range of partner organisations, including Lancashire and Cheshire Wildlife Trusts, the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit and Natural England. The approach taken follows national guidance to first map core local nature sites, which are already of particular importance to nature, such as local wildlife sites and National Nature Reserves, and then identify opportunity areas. The areas included in this category are set out by DEFRA and cannot be altered by GMCA. After mapping the core local nature sites we were then able to map opportunity areas for nature recovery that could have significant impact on driving action in Greater Manchester.

To identify opportunity areas GMCA focused on mapping the best places to connect, expand and join up our core local nature sites. This approach is based on established evidence and thinking on nature recovery in the UK, in particular the Lawton principles of “bigger, better, more and joined”. This involves recognising our best remaining wildlife sites as the building blocks for our Nature Network and mapping areas where there is potential to:

1. Improve their quality by better habitat management.
2. Increase their size.
3. Enhance the connections between them – through corridors or stepping stones.
4. Create new sites altogether.
5. Reduce pressures on nature by improving the wider environment

Mapping these areas follows statutory guidance set out by DEFRA and was carried out through regular consultation with range of local key partners. This careful process ensures that the final LNRS accurately identifies and prioritises areas for nature recovery.

### **18. What are core local nature sites and nature recovery opportunity areas and what do they mean?**

Core areas in Greater Manchester are essential green spaces that represent the city-region's most valuable remaining wildlife sites as defined by Defra. These are sites already protected for their biodiversity. These include nationally designated areas such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). However, many of these core areas are fragmented and not in optimal condition, requiring better management and improved connectivity.

Opportunity areas, on the other hand, are locations with the potential to expand and link these core sites. Although not currently protected or designated, these areas can play a crucial role in the Nature Network and have potential to benefit nature through habitat creation and restoration, complementing existing land uses like agriculture and recreation. By focusing on both core and opportunity areas, the Nature Network aims to guide where efforts and funding should be directed to enhance ecological connectivity and resilience, ultimately maximising the impact of nature recovery initiatives.

## **Landowner and Development Considerations**

The questions below aim to address the concerns of landowners or developers who the LNRS will have a potential impact on.

### **19. I own and/or manage land in one of the areas included in the map – what does this mean for me?**

The core and opportunity areas identified within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) are intended as a guide to highlight where nature recovery efforts could have the most significant impact and help direct funding to these areas. However, this does not mean that landowners in these areas will be required to undertake nature recovery actions or be restricted from using their land for other purposes, such as food production. The strategy instead can be helpful in identifying where land sits in relation to the Nature Network and as a starting point if landowners are considering making more space for nature.

If your land is included as an opportunity area, it signifies specific opportunities to enhance biodiversity on your land and the potential, in the future, to access targeted funding. Greater Manchester's LNRS is designed to be practical and adaptable, understanding that each landowner will know their land best. The LNRS should therefore be used as a starting point to help understand your land's place in the wider Nature Network and what might be the biggest opportunities for making more space for nature on your land. We are keen to collaborate with you to explore these opportunities and identify the best approaches to achieve meaningful outcomes together.

The LNRS is likely to be used to determine future funding allocations, and we are here, with partners across Greater Manchester, to support you in navigating and updating you on funding options as the strategy evolves. Additionally, the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric will carry more weight in these



identified areas due to its strategic significance multiplier, making your participation even more impactful.

Everyone in Greater Manchester has a role to play in nature recovery, and there are many ways to get involved with the GM LNRS. Please contact us at [naturerecovery@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk](mailto:naturerecovery@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk) with any specific questions.

## **20. Does the Nature Network mean that no development can take place on land included within it?**

Core local wildlife sites identified in the strategy are those that are already designated and/or protected (to varying degrees, depending on the type of designation). However, the opportunity areas are not designated or protected, and the LNRS does not introduce any new designations or protections for these areas. The opportunity areas identified within Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy serve only as a guide for directing nature recovery efforts throughout the city region. Local authorities will continue to set out the vision and framework for future development through local plans and determine decisions on planning applications.

## **21. How will Biodiversity Net Gain be integrated and influenced by the Local Nature Recovery Strategy?**

Local Nature Recovery Strategies are designed to complement other environmental initiatives, such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy identifies key habitats and areas with high potential for nature enhancement, using evidence-based methods to pinpoint sites that can expand and connect existing habitats. The Nature Network set out in the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy shows priority areas for the delivery of off-site BNG to achieve cohesive, locally-driven outcomes for conservation and restoration across the city-region.

The areas mapped within the 'Nature Network' are particularly suitable for delivering offsite BNG and are strategically significant under the Defra Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations and Guidance.

## **22. What is the status of the areas included in the Nature Network?**

The areas included in the Nature Network are identified as key sites for nature recovery and enhancement. They are mapped based on their potential to expand and connect existing habitats, providing significant environmental benefits. However, their inclusion does not introduce any new protections or designations above what is already in place. Instead, they serve as a strategic guide for directing conservation efforts and funding, aiming to support broader environmental goals and complement other initiatives such as Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

## **23. How does the Nature Network relate to the green belt and the grey belt?**

Over the summer, the government set out and consulted on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system. This included the proposal to insert a new definition of grey belt into the NPPF, defining it as "land in the Green Belt comprising Previously Developed Land and any other parcels and/or areas of Green Belt land that make a limited contribution to the Green Belt purposes". The Green Belt plays an important role preventing urban sprawl.

Given these current and prospective definitions are tools used in planning, they have not been used as evidence in the development of the LNRS or to inform the development of the Nature Network.



However, the LNRS will be able to be used as evidence to overlay with the Green Belt (and prospective Grey Belt, subject to the outcome of the government’s consultation) by local planners and others.

## Definitions

**Nature Network:** The Nature Network encompasses core local wildlife sites and opportunity areas, designed to connect regions across England and facilitate the movement of species.

**Core Sites:** These are our most valuable wildlife areas, already protected for their biodiversity. They include nationally designated sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs).

**Opportunity Areas:** These are locations with the potential to link or expand existing core sites, supporting habitat creation and restoration.

**Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):** BNG is a new requirement for development and land management that aims to enhance the natural environment, ensuring it is left in a measurably better state than before.

**Green Belt:** These are areas of open land where development is restricted to control urban growth and preserve the countryside.

**Grey Belt:** The Grey Belt refers to areas within the green belt that have become neglected or rundown, often featuring disused car parks, abandoned buildings, and concrete wastelands.