together we are **GREATER MANCHESTER**

NATURE FOR ALL

A Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester

Executive Summary

Purpose

This Executive Summary provides an overview of 'Nature for All: A Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester', the statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the city-region. The strategy outlines action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss ensuring that nature and people can thrive together.

> **The full strategy is the statutory Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester – this Executive Summary does not replace that, nor should it be used as such. It is designed to be a high-level summary of that document and to signpost to the further detail found in the full document and appendices.**

Introduction: Why a Nature Recovery Strategy?

Greater Manchester is a city-region with a global reach. At our heart is a vibrant central city, surrounded by unique places which together are home to three million people. An important part of this is its diverse natural environment and green spaces. These are vital for many reasons – providing homes for wildlife and spaces that are good for our health and wellbeing, contributing to reducing flood risk, storing carbon and underpinning the supply of food and water. However, nature is in decline globally, nationally and locally, due to the impacts of habitat loss, fragmentation, land use intensification, development, invasive species and pollution. This means nature is less resilient and less able to provide the benefits on which we rely and which underpin our health, wellbeing and economy.

In response to the biodiversity emergency declared in Greater Manchester in 2022, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) sets a long-term vision for a resilient nature network. It outlines headline targets, priorities for habitats and species and guides action for the decade (2025-2035). Its delivery requires collective effort from all sectors.

The Environment Act 2021 requires LNRSs to drive collaborative, evidence-based action. The LNRS outlines how and where to achieve nature recovery through agreed targets, priorities, actions and mapped areas. Its status means that it is not intended to act as a barrier to development – it does not place new restrictions on development or on land use change. Rather it provides a guide, evidence base and tool for all stakeholders to guide funding, inform planning and target action for nature.

Why nature matters for Greater Manchester

Nature has an intrinsic value and underpins life in and the economy of Greater Manchester. Annually, the natural environment in Greater Manchester provides an estimated £1 billion in benefits, including significant avoided healthcare costs and property value uplifts. These benefits are particularly vital for vulnerable groups and in reducing health inequalities.

Protecting and enhancing nature provides wide-ranging benefits:

For people:	Healthier environment, more recreation, improved air quality, better physical and mental health, increased climate resilience, reduced water pollution, greater connection to nature, stronger communities, food and green job opportunities.
For businesses:	Attractive places to work/visit, increased resilience to hazards, healthier workforce, higher property values, green jobs, sustainable tourism and productive land for growing food and providing other resources.
For wildlife:	Protection of threatened species/habitats, repaired natural cycles, greater biodiversity, carbon capture and resilience to climate change/diseases.

Despite the importance of green spaces to residents (93% deem open green space near home important), access is unequal: only 40% live within 200m of a small green space. This compounds health inequalities, with communities experiencing racial and other inequalities disproportionately affected by this lack of access. This picture, alongside a range of data and evidence, and the response to a public consultation, has informed how this strategy has been developed.

Nature in Greater Manchester: Where are we now?

Greater Manchester is largely urban and suburban with significant industrial heritage. It is also home to a diverse range of habitats and species and has larger expanses for nature around its fringes. Across the city-region, biodiversity continues to decline both in terms of species numbers and diversity, and the sites and habitats that support them.

Our key sites:

Sites that are designated for their value to wildlife are the key building blocks of how we help nature to recovery.

11% of Greater Manchester is safeguarded for nature through various national and local designations and irreplaceable habitats (e.g. ancient woodlands, blanket bog). However, the growth seen in the area covered by these sites has plateaued in the last decade.

These sites are fragmented and there is need to improve how they are managed and linked together, as well as improving our understanding of their state.

Our species:

Despite its significant urban area, Greater Manchester is home to a diverse range of wildlife. However, population trends here have mirrored national declines, particularly in species of birds and mammals. These declines have been caused by a range of factors, including habitat loss, fragmentation, pollution, invasive species, urbanisation and climate change.

You can find a full assessment of this in the Greater Manchester State of Nature report.

Our habitats:

Greater Manchester is home to six broad types of habitats:

- Urban green spaces and buildings.
- Rivers, canals and waterbodies.
- Woodlands, trees and hedgerows.
- Lowland wetlands and mosslands.
- Upland moorlands.
- Grasslands and farmland.

Each habitat type has an important role to play in nature recovery but faces challenges in doing so. These, along with the priorities, wider benefits and species that will benefit, are set out further from page 8.

Pressures on nature

Major pressures on Greater Manchester's natural environment include:

- Urbanisation and development.
- Pollution and litter.
- Agricultural intensification.
- Climate change.
- Diseases and high-impact invasive species.

Vision and targets: Where do we need to get to?

Existing spaces for nature in Greater Manchester are fragmented, limiting species movement and hindering nature recovery. Proactive action is needed to create resilient, connected spaces for wildlife and people, improving health, flood risk management, water quality and climate adaptation. The 'Lawton Review' (2010) set out principles of how space can be made for nature through 'bigger, better and more joined up' ecological networks.

Vision:

Our collective vision for nature recovery in Greater Manchester is to 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.
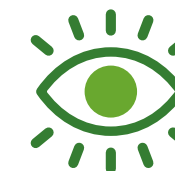
Aims:

To achieve this vision, stakeholders will work together to:

- **Enhance and protect:** Safeguard and restore wildlife-rich spaces.
- **Create and connect:** Expand and link wildlife-rich resilient spaces.
- **Build resilience:** Manage environmental pressures and maximise nature's role in climate adaptation.

These aims are supported by principles to:

- Act together.
- Accelerate action.
- Improve access.
- Engage and value.

Targets:

Six headline targets will track annual progress, reported via an accessible dashboard to key governance bodies:

Aim 1: Enhance and project

- **Target 1:** Increase land designated for nature by 5,000ha (from 11% to 15%) by 2035.
- **Target 2:** Bring 50% of designated sites into active nature conservation management by 2035.

Aim 2: Create and connect

- **Target 3:** Restore or create 1,800ha of new wildlife-rich land by 2035, targeted within the Nature Network.
- **Target 4:** Provide at least 3ha of accessible green space per 1,000 residents by 2035.

Aim 3: Build resilience

- **Target 5:** Reduce combined sewer overflow spills by disconnecting 150ha of land from the drainage network by 2030.
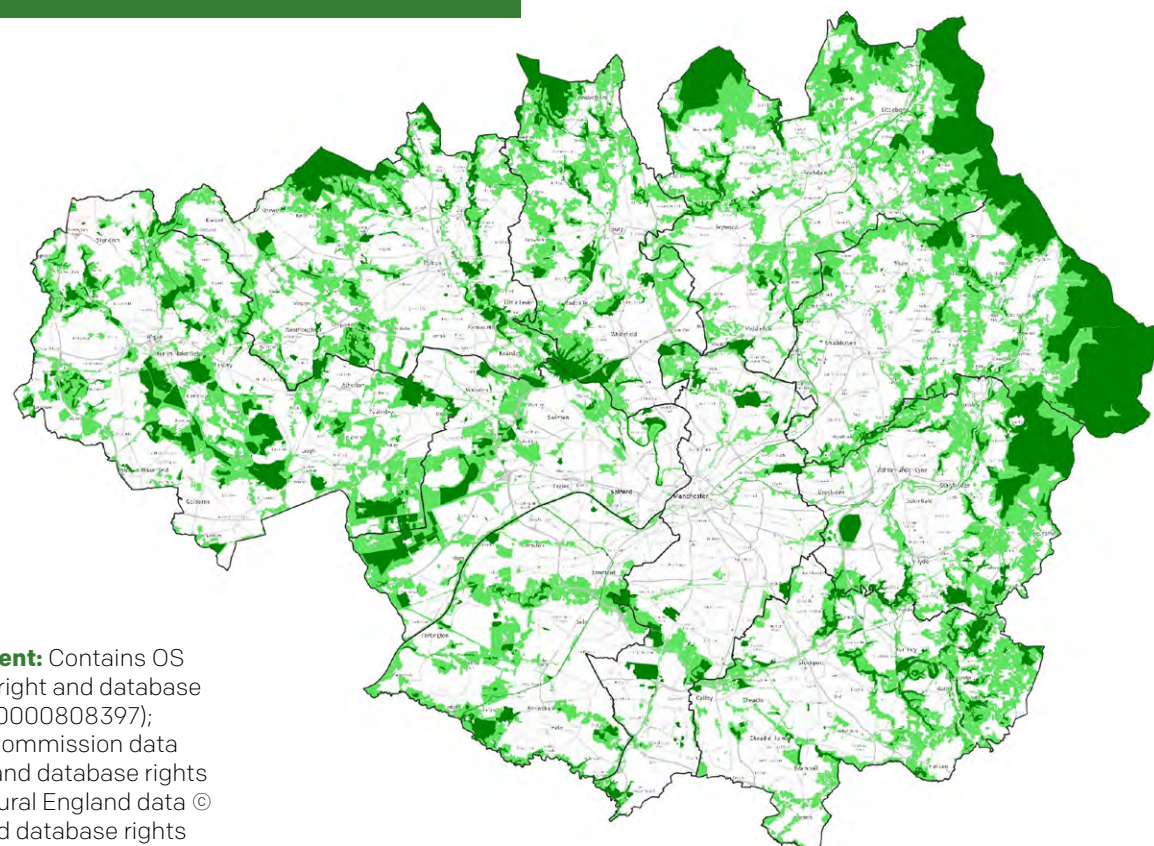- **Target 6:** Expand tree canopy cover from 15% to 17% by 2035 to adapt to climate change.

Nature Network:
Where is best for nature?

The Nature Network identifies optimal locations for habitat creation and improvement to maximise benefits for nature and communities, driving coordinated efforts. It forms a long-term spatial vision for nature recovery in Greater Manchester, contributing to the National Nature Recovery Network.

The Nature Network consists of:

- **Core Local Nature Sites:** Existing, designated and important wildlife sites. These are, however, fragmented and need better management to improve their condition, alongside better connections between them.
- **Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas:** Areas where strategic habitat action (woodlands, grasslands, wetlands) would significantly expand and connect these core local nature sites. These are multi-functional areas where nature recovery should be prioritised alongside other land uses. They are not legal designations but guide where resources can have the greatest impact.

NATURE RECOVERY OPPORTUNITY AREAS

■ Core Local Nature Recovery Sites
■ Opportunity Areas for Nature Recovery

Interactive maps and resources referenced in this section can be found here.

Maximising socio-economic benefits

Delivering the Nature Network will have wider benefits for people, the economy and the environment – ecosystem services. There is significant overlap between the Nature Network and areas with the greatest capacity to deliver ecosystem services – such as those that can help with noise regulation, climate regulation (heat), carbon sequestration, flood mitigation and air purification. The image below is a heatmap of the areas with the greatest potential to deliver ecosystem services within the Nature Network, showing those areas that would be particularly beneficial for providing these wider benefits.
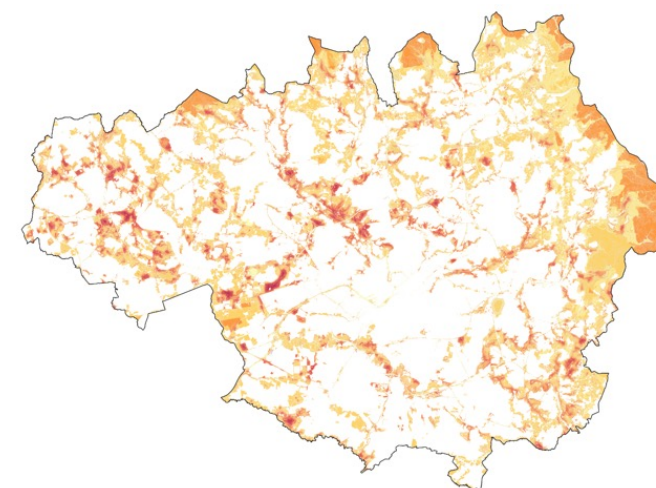

Red and orange areas indicate higher capacity to deliver ecosystem services, yellow areas have lower capacity, derived from the EcoservR spatial tool.

Taking action within the Nature Network

Opportunity maps indicate suitable and priority locations for habitat actions. However, it is essential to follow a set of overarching principles set out in the strategy when using these maps to inform work on the ground (e.g. carrying out site-specific assessments, getting required permissions and licences).

Taking action outside the Nature Network

Action beyond the Nature Network is also crucial, especially in urban areas, to create wildlife-friendly landscapes and improve green space access. There are some areas where we know delivery of the urban priorities would be particularly beneficial due to factors such as low existing levels of green space, low access to green space and high levels of deprivation. The map below sets out areas (in yellow), where action would be particularly beneficial.
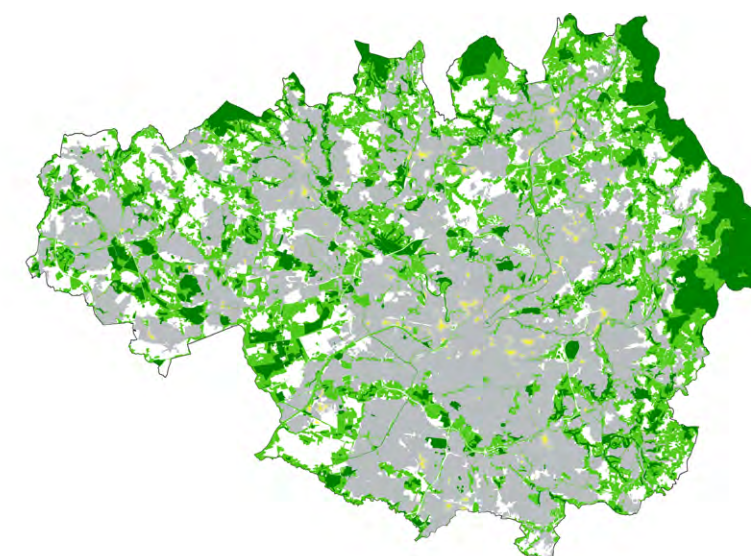
Based on local access to green space, amounts of green space and levels of deprivation, we know that certain areas of the city-region would particularly benefit from the urban actions set out in the strategy.

Priorities and actions:
What do we need to do?

This section outlines long-term priorities and practical actions for nature recovery, categorised by the six habitat types and target species, with overarching principles.

Urban green spaces and buildings:

Priorities:

- Nature-rich green spaces in public/commercial buildings.
- Enhanced parks, greener streets/cycle routes.
- Nature-rich regeneration/development.
- Nature-friendly gardens/balconies.
- Community-led green spaces/food growing.

Wider benefits: Health, social interaction, reduced inequalities, economic growth, extreme weather management, property values, air pollution reduction.

Species supported: Fox, hedgehog, common pipistrelle bat, house sparrow, peregrine falcon, robin, starling.

Woodlands, trees, scrub and hedgerows:

Priorities:

- Safeguard/restore resilient woodlands/hedgerows.
- Create bigger, better-connected woodlands.
- Introduce new urban street trees/orchards/woodlands for access/climate adaptation.
- Create/maintain native hedgerows linking spaces.
- Incorporate varied trees/parkland into farmlands.

Wider benefits: Carbon storage, rainwater management, temperature regulation, pollution reduction, health, local food/timber, improved livestock welfare.

Species supported: Badger, tawny owl, woodpecker, bluebell, birch, hawthorn, oak.

Lowland mosslands and wetlands:

Priorities:

- Restore/manage bogs/fens/wetlands to store water/reduce carbon.
- Create bigger mosslands/wetlands with more habitat corridors.
- Rewet historic wetlands/restorable peat.
- Reconnect communities to mosslands/wetlands.
- Create better quality/connected ponds.

Wider benefits: Rainwater storage, flood resilience, reduced carbon emissions, recreation, improved water/soil/air quality.

Species supported: Water vole, great crested newt, bittern, curlew, lapwing, nightjar, willow tit.

Grassland, farmland and lowland heath:

Priorities:

- Safeguard/manage/restore species-rich grasslands/lowland heath.
- Create more species-rich grasslands/lowland heath for connectivity.
- Establish more urban meadows.
- Integrate dedicated wildlife spaces into farmland/buildings.
- Foster more biodiverse farmland with healthier soils.

Wider benefits: Recreation, reduced carbon emissions, community interaction, rainwater storage/flood risk management, wildlife-friendly food production, healthier soils.

Species supported: Barn owl, kestrel, lapwing, bumblebees, grasshopper, orchid.

Rivers, canals and waterbodies:

Priorities:

- More accessible/visible waterways.
- Cleaner, more resilient waterways.
- More natural/biodiverse waterways.
- Increased habitat connectivity along corridors.
- More space for water/natural flood management.
- Restored/well-managed canals.

Wider benefits: Rainwater management, flood risk reduction, recreation, health, temperature regulation, water supply.

Species supported: Daubenton's bat, otter, common frog, great crested grebe, kingfisher, Atlantic salmon.

Upland moorlands:

Priorities:

- Restore/rewet upland peat to active blanket bog/wet heath for carbon/water retention.
- Foster varied/well-functioning upland habitats (bog, heath, trees, springs) to reduce flood/wildfire risk.
- Ensure thriving upland flushes.
- Promote natural regeneration of trees/woods/scrub to slow water.
- Reward upland communities/land managers for nature recovery.

Wider benefits: Carbon storage, recreation, water storage, water quality, flood risk management, reduced wildfire risk.

**Species supported:** Brown and mountain hare, golden plover, kestrel, meadow pipit, red grouse.

Species priorities and actions:

While habitat actions benefit many, some species require bespoke attention. 16 target species/ groups were selected for focused action, based on urgency, deliverability, national significance, wider benefits, and climate change vulnerability.

Individual species:

Mountain hare, water vole, willow tit, black-necked grebe, hedgehog, European hornet, Manchester black poplar, slow worm.
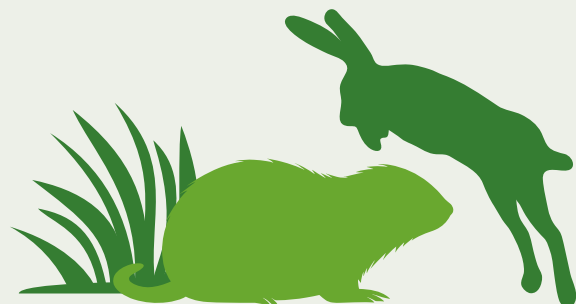
Species groups:

Upland bees, butterflies and moths, urban birds (swift, house martin, black redstart), farmland birds, migratory fish (Atlantic salmon, European eel), grassland fungi, grassland ground-nesting birds, brownfield insects, mossland insects.

Actions:

These include specific measures like predator protection (water vole), nest site creation (willow tit), habitat corridors (hedgehog) and managing foraging areas (upland bees, butterflies, and moths). General habitat actions also support these species.
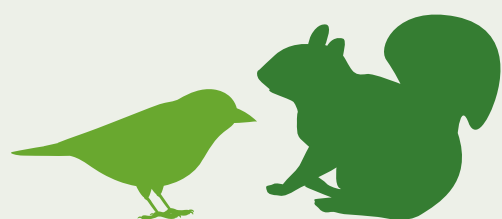
Reintroductions:

Public interest exists for lost species (e.g. beaver, red squirrel, pine marten, birds of prey). Any reintroductions will require careful planning and alignment with habitat principles to avoid unintended consequences.

Principles for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation:

Key principles include: selecting the right habitat in the right place, following best practice and standards, planning for the long term, aiming for high quality delivery, tackling invasives, building resilience (climate change, pests), maximising multiple benefits, involving residents and communities, improving responsible access, monitoring success and supporting landowners and managers.

Delivery: How you can deliver on the strategy

The strategy encourages all stakeholders to contribute to nature recovery. A detailed delivery options document will be produced in 2026.

Who can do what?

The strategy is particularly important for:

- Landowners, farmers and land managers.
- Developers and planners.
- Businesses.
- Community groups and volunteers.
- Environmental charities and partnerships.
- Schools, health facilities and other local institutions.
- Residents.

Enabling factors: What more do we need to be successful?

Several factors are crucial for successful strategy delivery:

- Increasing and diversifying funding sources.
- Deepening collaboration and partnerships.
- Mobilising volunteers and enabling community leadership.
- Building skills and capacity.
- Increasing recording and monitoring.
- Supporting behavioural change.
- Integrating across sectors.
- Connecting people with nature.

Monitoring: How will we know if we're successful?

A monitoring framework will track progress against targets over the next decade. GMCA, with the Natural Capital Group and partners, will produce annual updates on strategy delivery.