

Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – Farmers and Landowners

Guide to the FAQs for Farmers and Landowners

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Implications for Land Owners/ Managers and Farmers

1. What are the implications for farmers for land identified in the LNRS?

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (hereafter LNRS) do not impose strict restrictions on identified lands or limit the choices available to farmers, land managers or owners. Instead, it highlights areas within Greater Manchester where there could be opportunities for creating or enhancing habitats to maximise benefits for nature and the broader environment. While the strategy sets out a spatial vision (Nature Network), **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.**

2. What will the GM LNRS mean for land I own/manage and or farm?

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. If you are concerned about your land featuring in the Nature Network and want to understand more please contact us at naturerecovery@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk with any specific questions.

3. How does the GM LNRS relate to Tenant farmers?

Tenant farmers, like landowners, play a significant role in supporting nature in Greater Manchester. They possess valuable insights into opportunities for enhancing, maintaining, or creating habitats and supporting key species on their land. Because of this, we are keen to engage with tenant farmers as well as landowners throughout the public consultation on the Greater Manchester's LNRS.

Greater Manchester’s LNRS aims to be a strategy for all and would like to enable all farmers (including tenanted farmers) to better understand and determine if there are actions for nature recovery that they could undertake that would have particular benefit in their areas.

4. 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 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.

Mapping and Exclusions

5. What are Core Local Nature Sites and Nature Recovery Opportunity Areas and what do they mean?

Core Local Nature Sites areas in Greater Manchester are essential green spaces that represent the city-region’s most valuable wildlife sites, already protected for their biodiversity. 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.

Opportunity areas, on the other hand, are locations with the potential to expand and link these Core Local Nature Sites. Although not currently protected or designated, these areas can play a crucial role in the Nature Network and have potential for 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.

6. Why aren’t gardens included?

Gardens, while crucial to local biodiversity, are not typically included in the mapped areas for nature recovery because nature recovery and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements often involve long-term agreements, such as 30-year commitments, which are difficult to implement in private gardens. However, the LNRS does acknowledge the importance of gardens and includes priorities and measures to support their role in nature recovery.

The LNRS instead focuses on areas where long-term action for nature recovery can be secured over the long term, aiming to enhance and connect existing natural habitats while supporting broader environmental goals.

7. If my land is on the core or opportunity maps, what does it actually mean to me?

Core Local Nature Sites are already designated and have other legislation driving activity and the LNRS does not change those requirements. Opportunity areas identified within the LNRS are non-binding and provide an evidence base for where nature recovery will have the biggest impact, guiding investment and funding to these areas. Inclusion in the LNRS opportunity mapping does not prevent land use change or development on that land.

If your land is included in the core or opportunity maps, it indicates specific opportunities to enhance biodiversity and potentially access targeted funding. The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy is designed to be practical and flexible, recognising that each landowner has unique opportunities for achieving biodiversity goals. We are eager to collaborate with you to explore these opportunities and identify effective ways to achieve meaningful results.

The LNRS will guide future efforts and funding, and we are here to help you navigate and update funding options as the strategy develops. Additionally, the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) metric will hold more value in these identified areas due to its strategic significance, making your participation more impactful.

Everyone in Greater Manchester has a role in nature recovery, and there are many ways to engage with the GM LNRS. To discuss your land and potential opportunities, please contact us at naturerecovery@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk.

8. I don't think my land should be included – what should I do?

We would like to hear from as many landowners and land managers as possible in the consultation on the draft Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy. If you have views on the potential measure identified on your land, we would like to hear your views as part of your response. We will look to accommodate the views of landowners and land managers where possible and where any changes would not undermine the coherence of the strategy as a whole. Please contact us at naturerecovery@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk.

It's important to remember that the LNRS is an evidence base and should be used as a starting point for decisions on making more space for nature on land you own or manage. It is non-binding and does not require you to carry out particular interventions on your land.

Involvement and Advice

9. Where can I go for advice on how to progress nature recovery on my land?

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), Local Councils, and the LNRS offer strategic guidance for nature recovery throughout the city region. For more detailed advice, please email naturerecovery@greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk and our team will respond promptly.

Additionally, environmental organisations across Greater Manchester provide specialised support for nature recovery efforts.

We also host various events before and after the strategy's launch, which will be listed on our dedicated LNRS webpage. These events provide information on how to effectively advance nature recovery on your land in Greater Manchester.

10. Why should Farmers and Landowners be involved?

Farmers and landowners should be involved because their participation is crucial for the success of Greater Manchester's Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Our LNRS will guide future nature recovery activities, offering additional benefits beyond environmental improvements including reducing risks to production and food security. By contributing to the LNRS, landowners can benefit from increased funding opportunities and potentially see a rise in biodiversity net gain units by up to 15%.

Moreover, involvement in LNRS helps in business diversification and enhances climate change resilience, offering additional benefits beyond environmental improvements. The strategy encourages environmentally responsible practices and aims to create more extensive and effective nature recovery efforts across Greater Manchester. This collaborative approach ensures that efforts are better connected and more impactful, benefiting both the environment and the local communities.

Impact on planning

11. How will the GM LNRS impact on local planning?

The Environment Act mandates that public bodies, including local planning authorities, must "take account of" Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRSs) in their decision-making processes. This requirement means that planners need to consider specific elements of the LNRS, such as priorities and actions and proposed locations for habitat restoration or enhancement, when making planning decisions. LNRSs support the planning system by providing crucial evidence for biodiversity and guiding investment in nature-based solutions, thereby promoting better environmental outcomes and long-term development planning.

12. 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

13. 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 GM LNRS does not have the power to introduce any new designations or protections for these opportunity 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.

14. 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.

15. 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).

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.