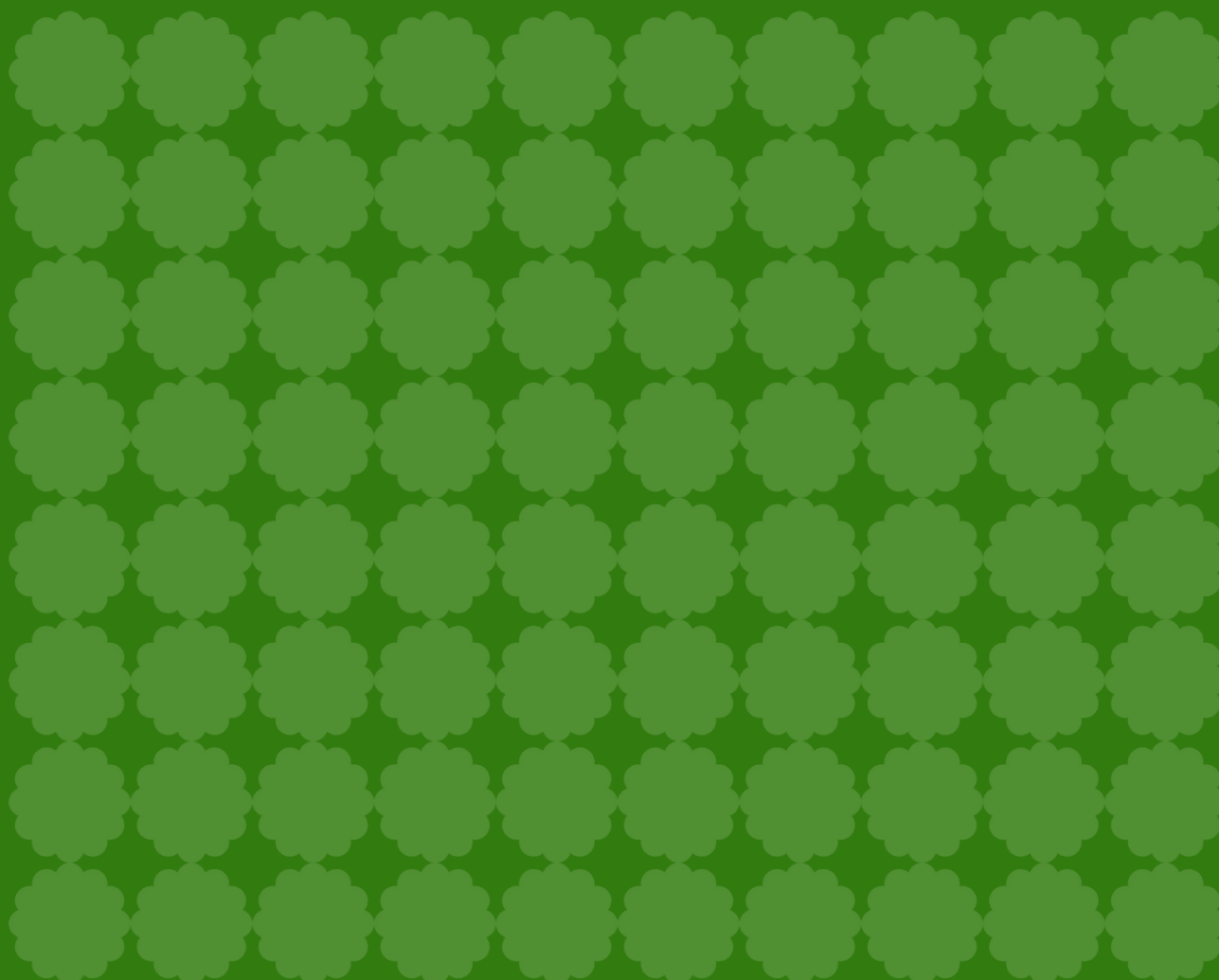


Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Appendix 7 – Overview of the headline targets developed



Introduction

The Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) sets out an overarching vision and aims for nature recovery across the city-region, as well as factors that will be critical to supporting and enabling the vision and aims to be achieved.

To drive forward action, headline targets are set out for each aim to support wider understanding of whether progress is being made to deliver against them. These are voluntary components of the strategy and are not a requirement under the national LNRS regulations or guidance. These targets have been put in place where there is readily available and reliable data to support monitoring of progress. Action beyond these is crucial but these targets will be used to focus action and report regularly on progress against key aims. Wider indicators for the strategy will form part of a broader monitoring framework.

This document explains how the headline targets have been developed and how they link to the wider strategy and national targets under the national Environmental Improvement Plan¹.

Overall approach

The overall approach for setting out the headline targets is as follows:

- **Evidence based** – the targets draw on the key areas identified in the Greater Manchester State of Nature Report.
- **Fair share** – where relevant, an approach of Greater Manchester contributing its fair share towards a national target has been adopted.
- **Ambitious** – the targets are set to be stretching and ambitious, reflecting the scale of the biodiversity emergency.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan>

- **Quantifiable and measurable** – targets should be quantitative with progress against them able to be monitored by GMCA using existing data that is updated at least annually.
- **Time period** – targets have been set over a 10-year period (the maximum duration of the strategy) to 2035 or a 5-year period to 2030.

Progress against the targets set out in this document will be reported and monitored annually through our Natural Capital Group, GM Green City Region Board and GM Green City Region Partnership. A publicly accessible dashboard will be created to enable everyone to track progress.

Vision and aims

The targets set out relate to the vision and aims for the LNRS.

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 deliver on this vision we need Greater Manchester to be a place where we all:

1. **Enhance and protect:** Safeguard, enhance and restore wildlife-rich spaces
2. **Create and connect:** Create more wildlife-rich resilient spaces, where they will expand and connect spaces for wildlife and people
3. **Build resilience:** Manage and reduce pressures on our environment and waterways, and maximise nature’s role in adapting the city-region to climate change

To achieve these aims we also need to:

- **Act together:** Work together to take action for nature and embed space for nature and people to thrive across all our communities

- **Accelerate action:** Boost the pace and scale of action for nature in response to the biodiversity emergency
- **Improve access:** Improve local access to nature and ensure there are more opportunities to enjoy nature responsibly, in those areas in which people need it the most
- **Engage and value:** Better engagement with nature and recognition of its value in our lives and economy

Headline Targets

The headline targets included in the strategy relate to the key aims – as set out below.

Aim 1 - ENHANCE AND PROTECT: Safeguard, enhance and restore wildlife-rich spaces	LNRS Target 1: To increase the amount of land designated for nature by 5000ha by 2035, growing this from 11% to 15% of the city-region. LNRS Target 2: To bring 50% of sites designated for nature into active management for nature conservation by 2035.
Aim 2 - CREATE AND CONNECT: Create more wildlife-rich resilient spaces, where they will expand and connect spaces for wildlife and people	LNRS Target 3: To restore or create 1,800ha of new wildlife-rich land by 2035, and target delivery within the nature network. LNRS Target 4: To provide at least 3 ha of accessible green space per 1,000 residents by 2035.
Aim 3 - BUILD RESILIENCE: Manage and reduce pressures on	LNRS Target 5: To reduce spills from combined sewer overflows into our

our environment and waterways, and maximise nature's role in adapting the city-region to climate change	waterbodies by disconnecting 150ha of land from our drainage network by 2030. LNRS Target 6: To better adapt the city-region to the impacts of climate change by expanding our tree canopy cover from 15% to 17% of the city region by 2035.
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The following sections provide more information on how each target was developed.

Headline LNRS Target 1

Aim 1 - ENHANCE AND PROTECT: Safeguard, enhance and restore wildlife-rich spaces

LNRS Target 1: To increase the amount of land designated for nature by 5,000ha by 2035, growing this from 11% to 15% of the city-region.

*The term designated sites is used in this definition to refer to the following: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas for Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Sites of Biological Interest (SBI) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

Background

The basis of the Nature Network is its designated and scheduled sites (mapped and described as “core local nature sites” in the strategy) – those areas that already have a degree of protection for nature and represent areas where nature is prioritised. The Greater Manchester State of Nature Report sets out that these currently cover 11% of the land area of the city-region. To help nature recover, we need to increase the area of land designated or scheduled for nature and thereby increase the core local nature sites in the Nature Network.

Relevant national targets

The UK has committed to “protect 30% of land for nature by 2030” to support the global “30by30” target² agreed at the UN Biodiversity Summit (COP15) in 2022. However, the land included in the definition for this target is different to that used for the core local nature sites for the purposes of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (not just in Greater Manchester, but England-wide). For example, it does not include the Local Wildlife Sites (also referred to as Sites of Biological Interest) that make up nearly half of Greater Manchester’s core local nature sites³.

Currently, 7% of land in England and less than 4% of land in Greater Manchester meets the criteria set out by DEFRA. Much of the work nationally to meet this target will be focussed on much more rural areas – particularly Protected Landscapes (national parks and national landscapes).

Rationale

This target has been chosen based on the following:

- The peak year for designations over the past 25 years (350ha designated in 2003) being surpassed each year between now and 2035.
- Ambitions for designations by the local authorities where this is known (e.g. Manchester) and Natural England (e.g. Risley, Holcroft and Chat Moss National Nature Reserve).
- Reflecting the intention of the national-level target, whilst also taking account of the more limited opportunities in urban areas – almost 50% of land in the city-region is already urban or built up – and the important role Local Wildlife Sites (locally called Site of Biological Importance - SBIs) play for nature and people’s access to it in Greater Manchester, making this a more meaningful target.

² <https://www.cbd.int/gbf>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/criteria-for-30by30-on-land-in-england/30by30-on-land-in-england-confirmed-criteria-and-next-steps#our-vision-for-30by30-on-land-in-england>

How will this target be achieved?

Several initiatives are already underway to try and work towards this target over 2025 and 2026, including the designation of a new National Nature Reserve in the Chat Moss area by Natural England and partners, as well as the identification and designation of more ancient woodlands (potential SBIs) across Greater Manchester by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU).

Monitoring

How these sites are designated and defined is well-established and the process for categorising them agreed as part of the LNRS process. Natural England play a key role in the declaration process for SSSI and NNRs and can report any new declarations locally and nationally. Local Nature Reserve designations come through local authorities and GMEU manages the SBI/LWS designation process. Data to monitor progress will be updated annually, reflecting the frequency of monitoring and the long-term nature of this target.

Baseline

Designation type	2024	2025
Total area covered by all designations (hectares/ha) *This is the net area as different designations overlap. Includes SSSI, SAC, SPA, NNR, LNR, LWS and SBI.	14,402	14,786
Percentage of Greater Manchester's total land cover	11.3%	11.6%

Headline LNRS Target 2

Aim 1 - ENHANCE AND PROTECT: Safeguard, enhance and restore wildlife-rich spaces

LNRS Target 2: To bring 50% of our designated sites into active management for nature conservation by 2035.

Background

The basis of the Greater Manchester Nature Network is its core local nature sites. Ensuring these sites are in active management for nature conservation is crucial to support nature recovery. The State of Nature Report sets out what is known about the condition of these sites – how well managed they are (or are not) for nature. This varies by designation type:

- SSSIs (which also cover all SACs and SPAs) – have regular condition assessments that ascribe the site with a condition (ranging from “favourable” to “destroyed”).
- NNRs – are required to be in active management to maintain their designation.
- LNRs and LWSs/SBIs – do not have regular condition assessments and we generally lack knowledge about whether they are in active management for nature conservation or not. Some are in local authority ownership, but many are in private ownership.

To help nature recover, we need to make sure more of these sites are in active management for nature conservation, particularly the many LNRs and LWS (see table below).

Designation type	Number of sites in Greater Manchester (2024)	Number of sites in Greater Manchester (2025)
SSSI (covering SAC and SPAs)	22	22
NNRs	1	2
LNRs	78	79
LWS/SBIs	531	533

Relevant national targets

The government has recognised the importance of designated and scheduled sites – not just in terms of being safeguarded, but in terms of their condition (e.g. only SSSIs in a favourable or unfavourable recovering condition are included in the land counted towards the national 30-by-30 target). To reflect this, the government has committed to the following:

- All SSSIs will have an up-to-date condition assessment by 31 January 2028.
- 50% of SSSIs to have actions on track to achieve favourable condition by 31 January 2028.
- 75% of SSSIs will be in favourable condition by 2042.

However, there are no such national targets set for other types of designations (including NNRs, LNRs and LWSs/SBIs).

Rationale

A target to bring 50% of all our designated and scheduled sites into active management or nature has been chosen based on the following:

- There is no standardised ambition for the condition or management of LNRs or LWSs/SBIs. Committing to a standardised and targeted approach will help bring more of these sites into active management and will help ensure these sites are consistently getting better for nature.

- In recognition of the quantity of these sites across GM (over 600) we are aiming for 50% in active management by 2035, this means working to bring 316 into active management by 2035. Some of these sites are in local authority ownership but many are in private ownership.
- Expanding beyond the national target is important in Greater Manchester, as SSSI designations account for less than half the land designated for nature.

How will this target be achieved? How will we make progress against this target?

Achieving this target will require significant active work by GMCA, the local authorities and partners, including private landowners who own designated sites. Developing habitat management plans for each site is a key initial action, then ensuring the right management is happening and monitoring progress against actions.

Monitoring

These sites will be monitored through a mixture of Natural England and GMCA/local authority reporting. Initial work will be required to understand how many can currently be classed as in active management for nature conservation, as this is largely unknown at present and needs to be assessed and established.

Baseline

Designation	Number in 2025	Number in active management	% in active management
SSSI (SAC and SPAs)	22	6	27%
NNRs	2	2	100%
LNRs	79	Unknown ⁴	Unknown
LWS/SBIs	533	Unknown	Unknown

⁴ Where current status is unknown, we are working towards assessing sites against an agreed and consistent definition. Once this process is completed we will update our baseline accordingly.

Where the status of the site is currently unknown, GMCA and GMEU will be working with the local authorities to confirm the exact number in active management over 2025 to establish the baseline.

Headline LNRS Target 3

Aim 2 - Create more wildlife-rich resilient spaces, where they will expand and connect spaces for wildlife and people

LNRS Target 3: To restore or create 1,800ha of new wildlife-rich land by 2035 and target delivery within the Nature Network.

Background

The strategy sets out the importance of delivering a network for nature across Greater Manchester. This means not only creating more wildlife rich spaces but also crucially targeting this habitat creation within the nature network, so it can deliver the greatest gains for nature. The nature network sets out the priority areas to do this, based on ecological connectivity modelling work and stakeholder input.

Relevant national targets

The government has recognised the importance of action beyond designated and scheduled sites in achieving nature's recovery. To reflect this, the government has committed to restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitat by 2042.

Rationale

A target to work towards the restoration and creation of 1,800ha of new wildlife-rich land by 2035 and target delivery within the nature network has been chosen based on the following:

- The restoration and creation of wildlife-rich land will be crucial for achieving the vision of the LNRS.

- Natural England have estimated proportions of the national target for each LNRS area and provided them to LNRS Responsible Authorities. A figure of 3,000ha by 2042 was derived by Natural England for Greater Manchester, as a guide to what could be achieved. This figure was based on the national target along with considering the likely capacity for wildlife-rich habitat restoration or creation within each strategy area and taking account where possible of local circumstances (such as the degree of urbanisation).
- The target of 3,000ha by 2042 has then been adapted to 1,800ha to set a 10-year target for 2025-2035 and align with the timescale for this strategy.
- Understanding how much of this creation and restoration takes place in areas identified within the Nature Network will be crucial to ensuring efforts are being targeted in the areas where they can have the biggest impact for nature recovery.

How will this be achieved?

Achieving this target will require the combined efforts of a wide range of organisations from across Greater Manchester, particularly landowners (including farmers), land managers, environmental NGOs, public bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, businesses, utilities and infrastructure providers (such as United Utilities), local authorities, community groups and volunteers, as well as developers meeting Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements. No single organisation alone will be able to achieve this target.

Monitoring

Monitoring this target will be undertaken through first establishing an agreed definition of wildlife-rich land. Organisations will then be asked to self-report against this agreed definition on an annual basis, providing a location of where new wildlife-rich land has been created, how much, and which actions set out in the LNRS have been delivered upon. Organisational data will then be combined with records of any offsite BNG sites which have been implemented annually (which will be monitored by GMEU and Natural England). Once combined, this data will give us an annual picture of additional wildlife rich land that has been restored or created each year and the location of this land, allowing us to track not only quantity but also what has

been delivered within the nature network and which actions progress is being made against.

Baseline

The initial baseline is set at 0 for this target for 2024.

Headline Target 4

Aim: Create more wildlife-rich resilient spaces, where they will expand and connect spaces for wildlife and people

LNRS Target 4: To provide at least 3 ha of accessible green space per 1,000 residents by 2035.

Background

The strategy sets out the importance of delivering more wildlife rich spaces for nature and also the need for more access to nature for people. This means ensuring good access to green spaces to help people connect to nature. Publicly accessible green spaces are spaces that are available for the general public to use free of charge and without time restrictions.

Setting and monitoring targets for publicly accessible green space is guided by Natural England who set out a capacity target of “at least 3 ha publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 people and ensuring that there is no net loss or reduction in capacity of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population at an area-wide scale”.

Relevant national targets

The government has recognised the importance of ensuring good access to green space across the UK and sets out a national target to work to ensure that everyone in England lives within 15 minutes' walk of a green or blue space. Natural England's National Green Infrastructure Standards set out a capacity of *‘at least 3 ha accessible greenspace per 1,000, measured at district /borough/ unitary authority-*

wide scale and ensuring that there is no net loss or reduction in capacity of accessible greenspace per 1,000 population at an area-wide scale'. This target is set to ensure that sufficient greenspace is provided across a local authority area.

Rationale

A target to provide at least 3 ha of accessible green space per 1,000 residents in Greater Manchester by 2035 has been chosen based on the following:

- Meeting national commitments and using national standards set out by Natural England.
- A number of different local targets are set out by local authorities in a range of strategies and plans. They measure different things – e.g. amount of space per resident and vary considerably between our local authorities.
- Recognising the scale of the challenge, as it is currently estimated that provision of accessible green space is around 2.7ha per 1000 resident in GM. To reach 3 ha per 1000 we need to increase publicly accessible green spaces to approximately 8,900ha by 2035. This is an increase of 768ha, which is roughly equivalent to 537 football fields. However, this figure is estimated based on current population levels (as of 2024); the amount of greenspace that we need to deliver will actually increase as the population of the city-region increases over the next decade. Therefore, 768ha is the minimum amount of new accessible greenspace that needs to be delivered.

Monitoring

Natural England provide a nationally consistent definition of green spaces that can be counted as publicly accessible. The definition of 'accessible' and 'green space' used has a large impact on measuring this target. GMCA have used this definition as a starting point and then assessed what makes sense locally.

Natural England's National Green Infrastructure Standards define accessible greenspace as:

- Accessible green spaces are available for the general public to use free of charge and without time restrictions (although some sites may be closed to the public

overnight and there may be fees for parking a vehicle). Accessible greenspaces are available to all, meaning that every reasonable effort is made to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2020. Accessible green spaces are areas of vegetation set within a landscape or townscape, often including blue space (i.e. lakes, rivers and wetlands).

- A range of types of green spaces is included within the definition of publicly accessible greenspace. They include: public parks, country parks, millennium or doorstep green, Local Nature Reserves, National Nature Reserves, playing fields, other sports facilities, access land (section 15 and section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 – “CRoW land”), woodland, watercourses and surface water features, allotments and community growing spaces, activities spaces provision (including bowling greens and tennis courts), cemeteries and religious grounds, golf courses and play spaces.

GMCA have largely followed this definition but have excluded access land (as defined under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and generally includes the open country and registered common land). Although this land is accessible to the public, the vast majority of this land is found in the upland areas of Greater Manchester (see Figure 1 below) and is not likely to be accessible for residents on a regular basis. Including CRoW land in our estimates inflates the amount of publicly accessible land in Greater Manchester from 2.7ha to 5.9ha per 1000 residents. Instead, we have focused our definition of publicly accessible land on those land types that would be regularly accessed by residents.

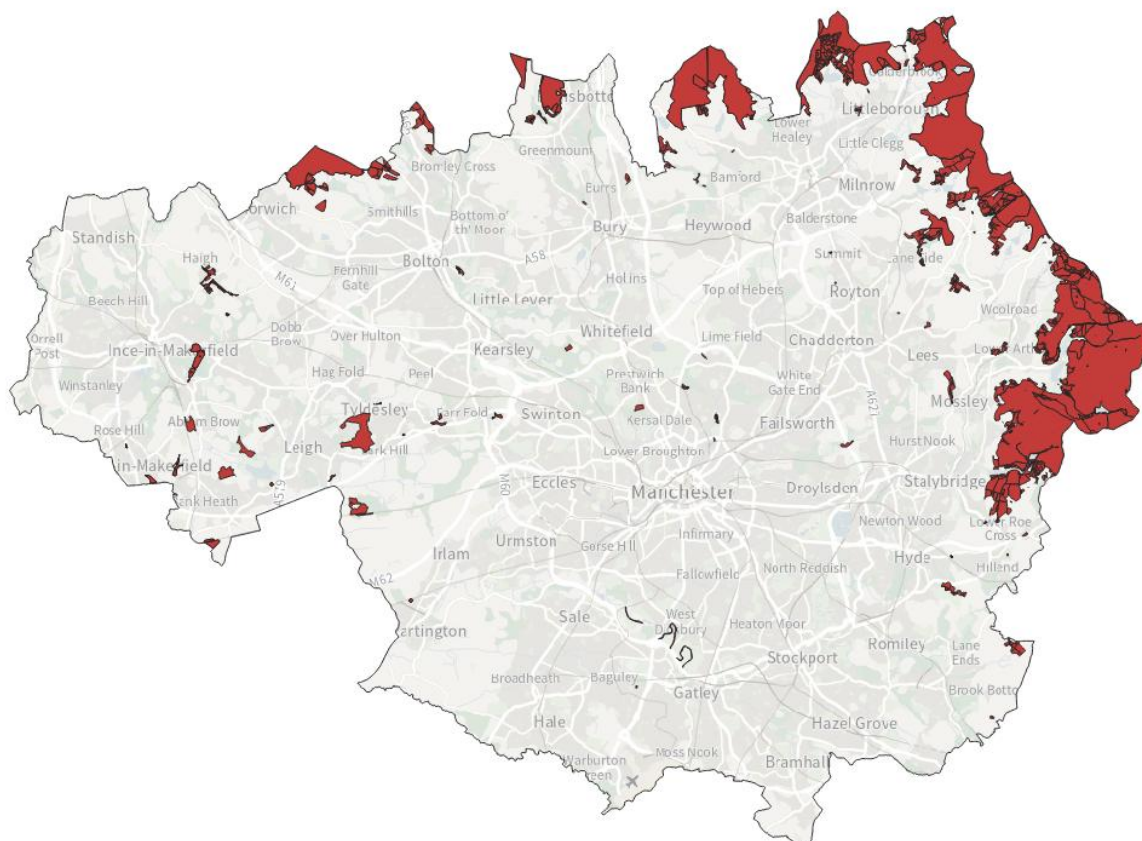


Figure 1. Map of access (CRoW) land in Greater Manchester

How will this target be achieved?

Creating new accessible green space will require the combined efforts of a wide range of organisations from across Greater Manchester, particularly local authorities, developers, environmental NGOs, public bodies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, utilities and infrastructure providers (such as United Utilities), local authorities, community groups and volunteers. No single organisation alone will be able to achieve this target. The continuation of the Greater Manchester Green Spaces Fund will be one way that GMCA can play a role in working towards this target.

Other funds such as Nature Towns & Cities and United Utilities' Sustainable Water Fund, as well as investment in greening the public estate (NHS, Education, Sporting etc.) will all help to achieve this target with even more needed to achieve our ambition. Other approaches are key contributors such as the "Green in 15" scheme

or using and establishing planning mechanisms that support inclusion of green space in master-planning and through Local Plan policy to address the growing population's need for green space.

Baseline

	2024	2025
Hectares of publicly accessible land per 1000 residents	2.7 ha per 1000 residents	Not yet released by Natural England

Headline Target 5

Aim 3 - BUILD RESILIENCE: Manage and reduce pressures on our environment and waterways, and maximise nature's role in adapting the city-region to climate change

LNRS Target 5: To reduce spills from combined sewer overflows into our waterbodies by disconnecting 150ha of land from our drainage network by 2030.

Background

There are a wide variety of pressures on nature across Greater Manchester, from invasive species to climate change and urbanisation. There are also very limited national or open datasets available to help monitor these pressures in a consistent way over the long term. Setting out just a few headline targets for this aim is therefore extremely challenging.

Across the strategy, the importance of rivers, waterbodies and canals as key corridors for nature recovery is clear, and the many issues related to the condition or quality of these blue spaces is a key issue highlighted in our State of Nature report. Having a target related to our rivers, canals and waterbodies was, however, a high

priority, as it is clear that to help nature recover, we need our blue spaces to be in better condition.

Many factors influence the quality and condition of our rivers and waterbodies including diffuse pollution from agriculture, roads and urban areas, litter, modification or canalisation of rivers and canals, use of pesticides and herbicides and also point source pollution from combined sewers overflows (CSOs), industry and agriculture.

It is not possible to set targets or approaches to monitoring many of these different factors. However, United Utilities has now committed to new targets intended to reduce pollution from CSOs by 2030 – allowing us to monitor one component affecting our water quality.

Relevant national targets

The government has recognised the importance of action on combined sewer overflows in helping nature recover. To reflect this, the government has committed to requiring water companies to have eliminated all adverse ecological impact from sewage discharges at all sensitive sites by 2035, and at all other overflows by 2050.

Rationale

A target to reduce spills from combined sewer overflows into our waterbodies by disconnecting 150ha of land from our water network by 2030 has been chosen based on the following:

- Driving forward progress on one of the measurable drivers of point source pollution
- Meeting national targets and commitment to reduce pollution from combined sewage overflows
- A measurable target that we are able to monitor annually and make progress against

Monitoring

United Utilities will monitor and provide data on the area of land that has been disconnected from combined sewers every year. The area disconnected will be based on their capital investment programme and work with landowners and local authorities to implement disconnection projects on ground. This will be reported annually to the GMCA.

How will this target be achieved?

United Utilities has identified key catchments where the disconnection of land from the combined sewer network would reduce spills from CSOs. United Utilities has designated funding for the next 5 years through its rainwater management programme to invest in disconnection projects, in partnership with local authorities and other organisations.

Headline Target 6

Aim 3 - BUILD RESILIENCE: Manage and reduce pressures on our environment and waterways, and maximise nature's role in adapting the city-region to climate change

LNRS Target 6: To better adapt the city-region to the impacts of climate change by expanding our tree canopy cover from 15% to 17% of the city region by 2035.

Background

The impacts of climate change on Greater Manchester are already being felt and will further increase over the coming years. Trees play a crucial role in mitigating this risk, contributing to slowing the flow of water, maintaining soil integrity and preventing soil erosion. They also provide shading, particularly in urban areas where the urban heat island effect can raise temperatures significantly during spells of warm weather, compared to surrounding areas.

Increasing tree canopy cover will provide a wide range of benefits, beyond adapting the city-region to the impacts of climate change. This includes locking up carbon, improving air and water quality and providing spaces for wildlife to thrive and people to enjoy.

Relevant national targets

The government has set a target to increase tree canopy and woodland cover from 14.5% to 16.5% of total land area in England by 2050. This target is based on data that includes not only woodlands but also trees outside of those areas. These trees, including street trees, are particularly important in urban areas such as Greater Manchester.

Rationale

A target of increasing tree canopy cover from 15% to 17% of the city region by 2035 has been chosen based on the following:

- This target would see Greater Manchester contributing its fair share to the national target (2% reflecting the national ambition).
- However, this would see Greater Manchester delivering on this target in a much shorter timeframe. This builds on the momentum built by stakeholders, particularly City of Trees, over the past 5 years in accelerating planting across the city-region.
- Previously, progress in tree planting has been monitored and reported on in terms of number of trees planted. While a useful indicator, this only provides a partial picture given that it does not account for all trees planted in the city-region (only those self-reported by City of Trees). It also does not account for any growth in the canopy cover provided by existing trees or the loss of trees (for example, from felling due to Ash dieback).

Monitoring

The current baseline of 15% and changes against this will be monitored annually using national available data. This is based on mapping through satellite and laser technology. This will allow alignment of the target for Greater Manchester with the national target for England.

How will this target be achieved?

Significant tree planting has taken place across the city-region, particularly over the past 5 years. Tree planting involves and is carried out by a range of organisations, but the most significant activity has been carried out by City of Trees, who have secured and deployed government funding to accelerate activity. This momentum will be built upon, subject to further government funding, over the coming years.

The nature of this target will place an increased focus on the importance of the management of existing woodlands so that the canopy cover they provide is maintained and enhanced. It also demonstrates the importance of replacing and restocking trees that are lost – through either natural loss or disease.