

**Manchester City Council  
Report for Information**

**Report to:** Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee  
– 13 January 2021

**Subject:** Manchester Green and Blue Strategy and Implementation Plan,  
including: Annual update and a report on the Tree Action Plan

**Report of:** Strategic Director, Development

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**Summary**

This report provides the annual update on the delivery of the Green and Blue Implementation Plan together with information on the delivery of the Tree Action Plan. The work on the green and blue agenda is an essential component of creating a climate resilient city and delivering Manchester’s Climate Change Action Plan and these links are also covered in this report. The report addresses the current context within which this agenda is being delivered: the impact of Covid and the need to deliver an economic recovery that is both inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

**Recommendations**

That Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee:

1. Consider and comment on the progress that has been made by both the Council and external stakeholders in achieving the actions in the G&BI Implementation Plan and the Tree Action plan.
2. Consider and comment on the priorities for the G&BI and Tree Action Plan set out for the coming year

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**Wards Affected:** All

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| <b>Environmental Impact Assessment</b> - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city |
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| Manchester’s tree stock helps to capture and store carbon. Attractive green routes encourages walking and cycling, reducing reliance on cars with a consequent reduction in carbon emissions. Local green space, both public and private can be used to increase the amount of sustainable, locally grown food. |
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| <b>Manchester Strategy outcomes</b>   | <b>Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS</b>  |
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| A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities | A high quality environment, including trees and open spaces, increases the attractiveness of Manchester as a place in which to work and invest. Jobs are created in the environmental sector through the need to plant and manage the local green and blue infrastructure resource.            |
| A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success                   | Manchester competes on a world stage to attract skilled people. A high quality natural environment makes an important contribution to this.  |
| A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities    | An attractive tree filled natural environment should be accessible to all communities within Manchester, offering the potential to gain health benefits through improved air quality and opportunities for relaxation and exercise and learning new skills through volunteering opportunities. |
| A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work                                      | The city's tree stock plays a valuable role in storing carbon and creating a liveable city. High quality multi-functional open spaces also improve the quality of life.  |
| A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth                                     | Appropriate tree planting along transport routes can help mitigate poor air quality. Appropriately located and designed green infrastructure can also increase the permeability of the city reducing surface water flooding along transport routes.  |

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**Background documents (available for public inspection):**

The following documents disclose main facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: report to Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee and Executive, July 2015, Manchester City Council
- Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: July 2015
- Manchester Green and Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan : July 2015
- Our Manchester 2015-25
- Manchester G&BI Strategy 3 year review 2015-18
- Manchester G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan and Tree Action Plan – Report on Progress: to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee January 2020
- Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 – Report to NESC and Executive March 2020

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1. This report provides the annual review on Manchester's Great Outdoors – A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester. The strategy, together with the accompanying and annually updated Implementation Plan, play a key role in delivering the Our Manchester vision for a world class city where residents from all backgrounds can live well. Attractive and multi-functional green and blue infrastructure has a vital role to play in creating a high quality, healthy and biodiverse environment with accessible opportunities for recreation and exercise, supporting inclusive and sustainable growth.
- 1.2. Work to improve our green and blue assets aligns with Manchester's Climate Change Action Plan and contributes towards the Council's zero carbon target by capturing carbon within our trees, helping to create attractive walking and cycling routes to reduce reliance on cars and encouraging sustainable food production. Planting in appropriate locations contributes towards improving air quality and plays an essential part in helping our city to become flood and climate resilient.
- 1.3. As part of our response to the challenge of Covid, the increased focus on zero carbon together with the importance of our public realm are highlighted as opportunities within Manchester's Economic Recovery and Investment Plan. As we seek to meet the challenge of Coronavirus and recover from both its economic and social impacts the need to ensure the ongoing improvement in the quality and function of our existing parks and gardens, our river valleys, canals, and public realm has become even more significant.
- 1.4. The background for these improvements will be the need to deliver growth which has climate resilience embedded. Manchester has the foundations and building blocks to re-establish its previous momentum as the UK's premier growth city, but it will do so in a way that is even more inclusive and environmentally sustainable. The work on our green and blue spaces outlined in this report is a key component of this.

## **2.0 Background**

### **The G&BI Strategy and Implementation Plan in brief**

- 2.1. Manchester's Great Outdoors: The G&BI Strategy and Implementation Plan was prepared and is jointly owned by the Council and Manchester G&BI stakeholder group on behalf of the wider city. The vision of Manchester's Great Outdoors is:

*By 2025 high quality, well maintained green and blue spaces will be an integral part of all neighbourhoods. The city's communities will be living healthy, fulfilled lives, enjoying access to parks and greenspaces and safe green routes for walking, cycling and exercise throughout the city. Green and blue infrastructure will be supporting Manchester's growth. Businesses will be investing in areas with a high environmental quality and attractive*

*surroundings, enjoying access to a healthy, talented workforce. New funding models will be in place, ensuring progress achieved by 2025 can be sustained and provide the platform for ongoing investment in the years to follow.*

- 2.2. The G&BI Strategy and Stakeholder Implementation Plan are based around the following four objectives.
- Improving the quality and function of Green and Blue Infrastructure to maximise the benefits it delivers,
  - Using appropriate Green and Blue Infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city's growth,
  - Improving connectivity and accessibility to Green and Blue Infrastructure within the city and beyond,
  - Improving and promoting a wider understanding and awareness of the benefits that Green and Blue Infrastructure provides to residents, the economy and the local environment.
- 2.3. Under each objective is a series of Headline Actions with associated projects and activities which are being delivered or investigated by the council and external stakeholders as part of the Implementation Plan. The Implementation Plan is appended to the report.

### **Manchester's Tree Action Plan**

- 2.4. Trees are a major element of Manchester's green infrastructure and they are given a specific focus in Manchester's Tree Action Plan which sits under the G&BI Strategy and is also appended to this report. The Tree Action Plan is structured around four objectives:
- Managing trees sustainably
  - Planting trees appropriately
  - Protecting trees strongly and
  - Involving creatively
- 2.5. The G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan and Tree Action Plan are live documents which drive progress towards the objectives of the G&BI Strategy and the actions listed are not exhaustive. This approach provides the flexibility to respond to opportunities as they arise, maximising resources available to allow focus to be given to projects that will have the greatest impact.

### **Governance - the G&BI Board**

- 2.6. The Action Plan is delivered by the Council and by external stakeholders. Progress against the Council actions is steered within the council by the G&BI Board which is now chaired by the Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing and attended by relevant Heads of Service. This provides an opportunity to focus on the strategy objectives and add value to the way G&BI is delivered across the city. Ward Members and council officers are involved with many of the actions needed to deliver the G&BI Strategy and outlined in

the Action Plan. Ward members are often best placed to know their local community groups and understand their communities' needs and opportunities.

### **Working in Partnership - the G&BI stakeholder Group**

- 2.7. The stakeholder group which partnered with the Council to produce the G&BI Strategy and Implementation Plan is known as the Manchester G&BI Group. In normal times it meets on a regular basis and is made up of a range of experienced practitioners and stakeholder organisations, including officers from the Council, Corridor Manchester, Manchester Climate Change Agency, Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Registered Housing Providers, statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England, environmental charities like Groundwork, City of Trees, the National Trust, Wildlife Trust and RSPB, and academics from Manchester's Universities. It provides both a forum for sharing best practice and a catalyst for encouraging new partnerships for delivering action in line with the objectives of the G&BI Strategy.
- 2.8. During Covid the stakeholder group have not been able to meet physically, but the collective continues to function as an important virtual network. Key stakeholders are actively involved in dialogue around Northern Gateway (National Trust, City of Trees, Eden Project) and supporting local plan workshops (Deloitte) while many are working collaboratively in delivering all aspects of the projects listed in the report, including for Our Rivers Our City, Managing Manchester's Trees. The Network has also facilitated extended focus via groups such as the successful Manchester Nature Consortium. The network also helped facilitate links enabling the successful £1million Wildlife Trust GM wide bid to the green recovery fund.

### **The role of G&BI in delivering our Climate Change Action Plan**

- 2.9. In March 2020 the Council adopted the Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25, setting out the actions that need to be delivered to ensure that the Council plays its full part in delivering the city's zero carbon ambition. Manchester's green and blue infrastructure has an important role to play in the action that we can take both to reduce carbon emissions and create a city that is more resilient and adaptable to climate change. G&BI is multi-functional and brings a variety of benefits. Many of these benefits, particularly those known as "regulating services" link directly with actions to assist with combatting the climate emergency, such as storing carbon, helping to reduce flooding, and improving air and water quality. Other relevant benefits include the local production of food and fuel, which can reduce transport related carbon costs and the creation of natural habitats which encourage greater pollination and biodiversity, both of which are being damaged by climate change.
- 2.10. Four of the actions within the G&BI Implementation Plan have been identified as of enhanced relevance for climate change and these are also reported

back to the Zero Carbon Coordination Group on a quarterly basis, via the chair of the G&BI Board. These actions are the:

- Manchester Tree Action Plan,
- Horizon 2020 GrowGreen project which includes the delivery of the West Gorton Community Park,
- Tree opportunity Mapping Commission and the
- £1million tree planting programme.

The full report on progress made against all the climate change workstreams will be presented to NESC in February. Detail on the four actions which link both agendas is provided below.

- 2.11. The work on G&BI also plays an important role in linking into ward based climate action plans. Further work on this aspect will be developed in 2021 to help maximise the benefits of G&BI in delivering climate change adaptation and mitigation identified in the ward plans.

### **3.0. The Impact of Covid**

- 3.1. At the beginning of 2020 no one could have foreseen the impact that Covid 19 would have on all cities and communities across the globe. In terms of projects delivering the objectives of Manchester's Great Outdoors across the City, Covid has led to some delays in planned activity, due to furloughed staff in partnerships and the inability to undertake community events such as planting in parks and face to face consultation events. This, however, has been met with an outstanding commitment to continue to work with communities and has resulted in innovative ways for engagement, including online workshop sessions, you tube videos and nature based activities distributed to families via local parks.
- 3.2. During this period, we have been able to make increased outside space available to support the hospitality sector in areas such as the Northern Quarter. This has been welcomed by businesses and the public alike. Our aspiration is for more space to be created for pedestrians and cyclists to continue to improve accessibility within the City Centre. Whilst Covid was unforeseen, the impact has been to accelerate the intention that already existed to consider ways to maximise the use of space within the City Centre.
- 3.3. The overall volume of work delivering this agenda has remained undiminished. The Council's firm intention to continue to deliver on its climate change objectives has enabled the £1mill tree planting programme outlined below to commence. Our work with our partners through The Esmee Fairburn Foundation, EU funded GrowGreen project and across GM has continued. Work to create high quality public realm within our regeneration schemes and increase their green and blue value has also been ongoing with the aim of creating an international, climate resilient city in line with Manchester's Economic Recovery and Investment Plan.

#### **4.0. Key delivery highlights from the G&BI Strategy on progress in 2020**

- 4.1. The G&BI Implementation Plan brings together the substantial number of actions through which the four strategic objectives of the G&BI Strategy are being delivered across the Council, including those undertaken jointly and separately through external partnerships.
- 4.2. It is important to note that many of the projects span several objectives, for example, improving the quality and function of our green infrastructure whilst contributing and informing our understanding of best practice and widening engagement with residents and other stakeholders. For simplicity, this report outlines key highlights against each objective with progress against each Headline Action provided in the appendices.

**Objective 1:** The first of the four objectives of the Strategy is **to improve the quality and functionality of G&BI across the city.**

#### **Key Highlights**

- Commenced the delivery of the Our Rivers, Our City project (18 month project from April 2020 – September 2021) – key project to provide up to date knowledge of the three river valleys (Irk, Medlock and Mersey) that cross the City.
  - Five new annual work plans completed for Sites of Biological Importance with a further six underway to assess work required.
  - Commenced tree planting programme funded via Climate Change Action Plan - first planting of 33 cherry trees, creating a feature avenue in Old Moat, took place early in December.
  - Commissioned new project, Managing Manchester's Trees, to evaluate changes to tree cover across the city and identify opportunities for new tree planting.
  - Successful bid to Green Recovery Challenge Fund by Lancashire Wildlife Trust - includes £110K to be spent on improvements to the canals in the city centre and out to the north and east and access to improved areas for wildlife, greater flood resilience and carbon storage.
- 4.3. **Our Rivers Our City** – This EU funded project, a spin-off from the Grow Green project, began in April this year. It aims to increase our understanding of the role of Manchester's rivers - the Irk, Medlock and Mersey and their tributaries, in terms of flood resilience, recreation, biodiversity and accessibility. The project is led by the Council, TEP and Groundwork, working with a wide range of stakeholders, including United Utilities, the Environment Agency, Natural England and development partners from the Northern Gateway. The project seeks to achieve agreement around collaborative key actions that will improve the multi functionality of the river valleys. The project will be completed in September 2021 with the production of three action plans, recognising the individual character of each of the rivers.
- 4.4. **My Wild City** - The Esmee Fairburn funded collaboration between MCC and the Wildlife Trust is now in its second year. This partnership is beginning to

reap the benefits of activity on focused on increasing involvement in improving biodiversity. Some of Manchester's Sites of Biological Importance need work to prevent deterioration. Five new annual work plans were completed by Lancashire Wildlife Trust for Manchester's Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) situated within parks, and 6 more are being produced in 2020. They are detailed but accessible for site managers without specialist knowledge to manage these valuable and under managed habitats. We are also working with the My Wild City team and the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit to develop focussed priority action plans for over 50 species across five habitat types in the City. This work will inform both local plan development and the GM wide Nature Recovery Network project as well as assisting into the delivery of a new biodiversity action plan for Manchester. The work will:

- Prepare an up-to-date, comprehensive species list for the city (historic and recent).
- Highlight and analyse spatial and historic information to demonstrate where some species are doing well and where others need help.
- Target recommended actions for species.

**4.5. Tree Action MCR** – A £1 million pound tree planting budget to deliver a two-year planting programme was agreed by the Council earlier this year. The aim is to plant trees in the right location and of the right species to achieve maximum benefits for climate adaptation, carbon storage, sequestration. The key consideration is to find sites capable of accommodating larger trees that will create long lasting impact, provide local benefits and will be capable of surviving into old age. By the end of the full programme all wards will have received additional tree planting where appropriate. Within the first phase, wards have been identified that typically have fewer trees, including a lower percentage of street trees. Many of these wards are in the Central part of Manchester, so the list has been amended to include some wards in the North and South to allow a wider geographical spread. Wards not included in Phase 1 will have the opportunity for tree planting in Phase 2.

4.6. The first planting of 33 cherry trees, creating a feature avenue in Old Moat, took place early in December, with previous consultation and the support of local residents, a nearby primary school and ward councillors. As the programme is rolled out over 1,000 new trees will be planted including a mix of street trees; beacon trees and other tree planting in cemeteries; and beacon trees, avenues, hedgerow planting and community orchards within parks.

**4.7. Managing Manchester's Trees (MMT)** - The I-trees assessment of our tree stock, which was reported to Scrutiny last year, demonstrated the value of our existing 1.2 million trees to carbon storage, sequestration, climate resilience air quality and many other benefits. As a result, the G&BI Implementation Plan, Tree Action plan and Climate Change Action Plan all included the intention to commission work to allow a strategic approach to managing our existing tree stock and any new planting to maximise the benefits to the city. In August of 2020 and despite the difficulties with Covid, the Council

commissioned City of Trees and TEP to deliver this strategically important work with the following four aims:

- A retrospective look back at the composition, change and evolution of the City's treescape over the last 100 years
- A sustainable and innovative plan for managing the City's existing tree resource
- Ward specific opportunity maps indicating priorities for new tree planting, including species suitability options.
- The means to identify ward specific location for new Beacon Trees (mature) tree planting.

4.8. This work will provide the context within which opportunities for tree planting can be assessed going forward. Trees are not the only habitat of importance within the city and this work will allow reasoned decisions to be made regarding appropriate places to plant individual trees and woodland. This work is on track to be completed by the end of March 2020. It will be used to inform the ongoing Tree Active tree planting programme.

4.9. **A successful and collaborative bid of £1.8 million to the Government's Green Recovery Challenge Fund has been developed by the Wildlife Trust.** This grant is being used to boost the newly established Greater Manchester Environment Fund (GMEF), the UK's first regional environmental impact fund, targeting social, environmental and financial outcomes and seeking to recycle capital back into delivering GM's vision for the natural and built environment over the long-term. It includes a programme of priority projects that will establish a network for nature across the county, with 37 jobs created and safeguarded including 12 traineeships. Benefits to Manchester will include £110K spent on improvements to the canals in the city centre and out to the north and east and access to improved areas for wildlife, greater flood resilience and carbon storage across GM through natural flood management projects and peatland restoration.

**Objective 2:** The Strategy and Implementation Plan's second objective is to ensure that green and blue infrastructure is well integrated within new development. This needs to happen at both the detailed, masterplan and strategic framework level.

### Key Highlights

- Delivery of West Gorton Community "Sponge" Park
- Bringing forward proposals for riverside enhancements to the River Irk amounting to around 40 hectares of greenspace – successful Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid of £51.6 million will include an element of funding for green space improvements.
- Planning permission in Feb 2020 for Mayfield first phase including creation of the 6.5-acre park, office buildings, a car park and significant public realm.

- 4.10. This is a key component in the planning process and those wishing to invest and develop in the city are required to address how they can contribute to the Council's ambitions regarding green and blue infrastructure. On major projects there is an expectation that there is a contribution which helps deliver wide ranging benefits to our communities through each stage of the development process. This will often start with work to decontaminate sites, embed sustainable construction methods, improve tree coverage wherever possible, create new improved public realm, enhance biodiversity and more.
- 4.11. West Gorton Community "Sponge" Park** - This exciting project, funded by the European Commission was initiated to research how Nature Based Solutions (NBS) can be deployed to create climate and water resilient, healthy and liveable cities. It was launched in June 2017 and with Manchester as the lead partner and has involved the collaboration of 23 partners including six European cities and the city of Wuhan in China on major new environmental research.
- 4.12. One of the key outputs for Manchester has been the creation West Gorton Community park which opened in July 2020. This is a new accessible, multi-functional neighbourhood green space designed to help the climate resilience of the local area. It follows "sponge principles", incorporating sustainable urban drainage (SuDS) to allow rainwater run-off from nearby roads to be channelled and filtered through natural drainage systems, slowing and reducing the flow into the normal drainage system. The development of the community park included working and consulting with the local community in West Gorton to ensure local ideas could be incorporated into the final design.
- 4.13. Northern Gateway** - Proposals for the Northern Gateway include an exciting opportunity to enhance a significant area of open space directly to the north of Manchester City Centre. The vision held for the 155-hectare development site incorporates a strategic enhancement of greenspace located alongside the River Irk, as part of a network of new and improved parks and open spaces running through the heart of the development area.
- 4.14. This enhanced green and blue infrastructure network has the potential to provide new and improved habitats for wildlife, increased flood storage and a space for people to use and enjoy. Specifically, these proposals will include riverside enhancements to the River Irk, up to 40 hectares of green spaces including habitat for biodiversity gain, a resilient landscape that can adapt to climate change, and a functional space for people to use and enjoy. These spaces will link together development platforms across the Northern Gateway area, supporting the principles of placemaking that are fundamental to development proposals for the 7 new neighbourhoods which will accommodate the planned 15,000 new homes and associated social and community infrastructure over the next 15-20 years.
- 4.15. In March 2020, the Council received notification that it had been successful in a Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) bid for £51.6m. A proportion of this funding will be used to enhance the green and blue infrastructure in the lower Irk Valley part of the site. In addition, residents have recently been consulted

on plans for the first phase of new development in Collyhurst which also includes the creation of a brand-new park to be delivered alongside the new homes. This newly designed landscape and community infrastructure will require additional resources to cover management and maintenance, and to ensure that the enhanced landscape meets its full potential for people and wildlife over the development phase and beyond. The Council is currently working with partners to explore potential funding sources and revenue generating opportunities for green space within the Northern Gateway, along with options for long-term governance and delivery structures.

- 4.16. Mayfield** - Mayfield is a 24-acre brownfield site with the River Medlock and green infrastructure improvements central to its delivery. The site has an industrial history of innovation spanning back to the 1700's with previous lives as a parcel depot, relief railway station and textile mill. The site has lain mostly derelict for over 30 years before the next phase of its revival began.
- 4.17. The Mayfield Partnership, a public private joint venture partnership between LCR, Manchester City Council, Transport for Greater Manchester and regeneration specialist U+I, will oversee the regeneration. Overall, the brownfield site will provide over 2.3m sq. ft of office space facilitating 13,000 new jobs, 1,500 homes, 56,000 sq ft of retail and leisure, a new 300-bed hotel and 13-acres of public realm, including Mayfield Park – the city's first new park in over 100 years.
- 4.18. Consent for phase one of the scheme was granted in February 2020, for the creation of the 6.5-acre park, office buildings, a car park and significant public realm. In August 2020 Mayfield secured £23 million in grant funding from the Government's £900 million Getting Building Fund which will allow construction to commence soon.

**Objective 3:** The third overall objective of the G&BI Strategy is **to improve accessibility to green space within and beyond Manchester.**

Improvements to the transport network are helping towards achieving better accessibility across the city and out from the city centre, creating better links with the city's existing parks and open spaces.

### **Key Highlights**

- Six schemes approved via Mayor's Challenge Fund – details for latest state of play for each scheme listed in Appendix 1.
- Further development of the Rochdale Canal towpath scheme – outline design completed and consultation undertaken
- First phase of the Chorlton Cycleway completed including the installation of the cyclops junction.

- 4.19. Bee network investment** - There is immense potential to increase walking and cycling in Manchester as the main ways of taking shorter journeys around the city and accessing our public spaces. Following the publication of the Made to Move document to promote a genuine culture of walking and cycling in the city the Bee Network of 1,800 miles of walking and cycling routes was developed. Initial funding of £160million was made available through the Mayor's Challenge Fund (MCF) to implement and develop the Bee Network. Manchester has secured programme entry for ten projects amounting to more than £79million in the MCF programme to provide improvements to make it easier and more attractive for people to take shorter journeys on foot or by bike. A couple of the schemes are described below with further details available in the appended spreadsheet.
- 4.20. The report to NESC last January informed members about the success of the proposals to enhance the **Rochdale Canal towpath** in securing programme entry to the Mayor's Challenge Fund (MCF) in 2019. Since then, an outline design has been completed by the Canal and Rivers Trust/ (CRT) /Arcadis and a public consultation exercise has been carried out. The scheme includes improved lighting, resurfacing of the whole route up to 3 metres wide, where possible, and improvements to access points, paving and access controls. It was originally estimated that the works would cost in the region of £1.3M however not all measure will be able to be delivered within the existing budget so some prioritisations will be required. Works are due to commence once priority areas have been agreed.
- 4.21. The investment in the Rochdale Canal will see the route improved for both walking and cycling enhancing access to Manchester's waterways. When complete the Rochdale Canal will provide a traffic free environment for local residents to walk and cycle along. The aim is that routes like this will help build interest in cycling, leading to the growth in utility cycling that will deliver the Made to Move Strategy with walking and cycling the preferred choice for short journeys.
- 4.22. Chorlton Cycleway** is a £13.4M new 5km cycle route from the city to centre to Chorlton partly funded by the MCF and the Cycle City Ambition Grant. This project will create a route that includes large sections of segregation between people travelling on foot or by bike and other traffic providing a high-quality segregated link between Chorlton and Manchester city centre, making it safer, more attractive, and easier to get around.
- 4.23. Work on the first phase of this scheme was completed in the summer of 2020, with further phases due to start later in 2020/1. Phase 1 includes the first cyclops junction of its kind in the UK at the junction of Royce Road and Chorlton Road in Hulme. These are orbital cycle routes which separate cyclists from traffic around busy junctions and give pedestrians more space. The scheme will also include enhanced public realm creating routes that are both safe and attractive for all users.

**Objective 4:** The fourth objective is **to promote a wider understanding of the benefits that G&BI bring to residents, the economy, and the local environment.**

### **Key Highlights**

- Our Rivers, Our City project incorporating learning from sponge city work (e.g. West Gorton Community Park).
- Continued work through My Wild City to understand the connection of people to local nature – survey during lockdown undertaken.
- Digital version of Manchester Festival of Nature held this year.
- Further work via the IGNITION project to demonstrate G&BI benefits.

**4.24. Embed GI into key plans and policies** - The wealth of learning from our sponge park is being shared across the council to enable nature based solutions (NBS) to be used effectively in creating a flood resilient city. The Council and Wuhan are liaising to further develop and embed the Sponge City principles within Manchester. The Our Rivers Our City Project funded via GrowGreen is enabling lessons learned about flood resilience to be applied to across the city. This increased understanding on how nature based solutions can be used to combat climate change will inform the **refresh of our G&BI Implementation plan** in 2021. It will also provide useful evidence to shape climate change policy within the **Local Plan** currently in development.

**4.25. Raising the awareness of the benefits of G&BI** - Under the banner of My Wild City partnership the Wildlife Trust is working with the Council to refresh the Biodiversity Action Plan and develop an understanding around what a Nature Recovery Network could look like for Manchester again which will inform the Local Plan. Underpinning this and building support for delivering the action plan is the continued work of the Wildlife Trust in engaging with Manchester's residents and community groups. A survey during lockdown "Our Nearby Nature" had 1,204 respondents, with 99% telling us that contact with nature during the lockdown was "Very important" or "Important" to them. Social media has been used reaching 759,023 people between Aug 2019 and Aug 2020). There have been news features in the MEN, and on BBC North West Tonight and engagement has taken place with school children and business interests including Lloyds Banking Group and Siemens.

**4.26.** In celebration of Manchester's green and blue assets and determined not to let Covid halt this growing annual event, **Manchester's Festival of Nature** (MFoN) went digital this year. MFoN is a partnership between the Wildlife Trust, Manchester City Council, the RSPB, City of Trees and many others. Originally begun in 2018 its aim is to create a united approach to the conservation of nature in Manchester and to engage people young and old in saving our wildlife. 3,450 "engagements" with this successful day long virtual event were recorded.

**4.27. Developing research into the benefits of G&BI and monitoring existing G&BI across the City** - The IGNITION project is a ground-breaking project

that aims to develop innovative financing solutions for investment in Greater Manchester's natural environment. This project, backed by €4.5 million from the EU's Urban Innovation Actions (UIA) initiative, and led by GM with the specific involvement of both Manchester and Salford City Councils, brings together 12 partners from local government, universities, NGOs and business. The aim is to develop the first model of its kind that enables major investment in large-scale environmental projects which can increase climate resilience. Key outputs will include:

- Development of an IGNITION evidence base - a central evidence repository of existing and emerging evidence focussing on key benefits provided by five nature based solutions – green walls, green roofs, street trees, greenspace, and SuDS.
- A planning support toolkit to inform decision making around extent and value of urban green infrastructure
- Delivery of a Living Lab in Salford – A “seeing is believing” approach to NBS (Nature Based Solutions), providing real life sustainable examples of NBS interventions.
- Development of a pipeline of investable GI opportunities.

## 5.0. Tree Action Plan summary

- 5.1. The Manchester Tree and Woodland Action Plan continues to capture activity and support improvement across the City's growing treescape. The Action Plan delivers an element of the overarching Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy as well as helping to deliver the Council's Climate Change aspirations. Over the last thirteen years over 100,000 new trees have been planted, including over 10Km of new hedgerow, with 50 new community orchards planted. The Action Plan was developed over the time period 2015-20 and appendix 2 of this report sets out the key activities and achievements of the plan. The actions and work within the plan are now being taken forward via key projects including the Tree Action MCR programme and the Managing Manchester's Trees project.
- 5.2. In 2019/20 over 10,000 new trees were planted including over 7000 hedge trees. The importance now though, is to take a needs-based approach to understand better environmental inequalities and deficiencies to maximise the usefulness and functionality of the city's trees and woodlands. This more strategic approach will inform priorities within the new Local Plan, help us respond positively to the effects of climate change and play a part in Covid recovery.
- 5.3. The key delivery highlights from the Tree Action Plan - **Tree Action MCR**, the million pound planting programme and “**Managing Manchester's Trees**” have already been covered above. Other projects relevant to the Tree Action plan include Ignition and Grow Green where Manchester is playing a lead role in helping to analyse the usefulness of trees as nature based solutions. The Ignition Project has developed an evidence base assessing over 1000 sources of information including 193 pieces of focussed research around the benefits of street trees. Both Ignition and the Grow Green projects have real

life living lab assessments underway, looking at the effectiveness of street trees in the urban environment. The results will provide robust and valuable evidence for many years to come.

- 5.4. Working collaboratively is a key strength of the tree and woodland action plan. Manchester and the other Districts in GM have been working with City of Trees in their successful bid for £2mill DEFRA funds for focussed new woodland planting across GM. The DEFRA funds are for woodland planting and will be complemented by the Council's commitment to Tree Action MCR, our new £1million planting programme aimed at improving Manchester's climate resilience and addressing environmental inequalities through appropriate tree planting in more urban locations, over the coming years.

## **6.0. Future Priorities**

- 6.1. Work will continue in delivering the four objectives of Manchester's Great Outdoors: our Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, including the focused actions on trees. Projects will involve work undertaken by the council, by the council in collaboration with its many stakeholders and projects that are delivered directly and independently by those stakeholders. It is proposed that in addition to continuing and completing current actions, the key priorities for 2021 will be on the following.

- In direct response to the Climate emergency and Climate Change Action Plan
  - Continued roll out of Tree Action MCR, with Phase 2 intricately linked to the results of Managing Manchester's Trees to achieve greatest benefits through future planting and ensure our existing tree stock is well maintained.
  - Continuing work on embedding nature-based approach to combatting climate change and increasing the climate resilience of the city. (GrowGreen legacy)
- Our Rivers Our City completed with the production of action plans for the Mersey, Medlock and Irk
- Ongoing work on Mayfield park and Northern Gateway
- Draft Biodiversity Action Plan produced
- Manchester to consider becoming a signatory of the new Global Biodiversity Framework.
- The first draft of the Local Plan (Preferred Options) will be prepared during 2021. This will be underpinned by the evidence base that has been created by the key studies outlined in this report utilising the new evidence to inform local plan priorities
- The G&BI Action Plan will also be further refined, integrating the findings from key studies including Our Rivers Our City, Managing Manchester's Trees, the Nature of Manchester and the Adaptation Pathway and Green City Framework approach developed through Grow Green. We will also integrate and reference the new GI Standards and Principles work being undertaken by Natural England in the development of the new Action Plan.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

7.1. Recommendations appear at the front of the report.