

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee
– 10 March 2022

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

Report of: Director of Planning, Building Control and Licensing

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. It looks back at the progress made during 2021 and sets out how the Green and Blue Implementation Plan has been refreshed to ensure it remains relevant and in the context of the current challenges faced by the city. The work on improving our green and blue spaces is an essential component of delivering the vision for Our Manchester. It also contributes to delivering Manchester's Climate Change Action Plan by helping to create a more climate resilient city.

Recommendations

That Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee:

1. Consider and comment on the progress that has been made during 2021 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 refresh of the Green and Blue Strategy Implementation Plan.
 3. 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

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

Manchester's tree stock helps to capture and store carbon. Attractive green routes encourage 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.

| Manchester Strategy outcomes | Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS |
|---|--|
| 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's Great Outdoors: A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester: July 2015
- Manchester's Great Outdoors: A Green and Blue Infrastructure Stakeholder Implementation Plan: July 2015
- Green and Getting Greener. A three-year review of progress through Manchester's Great Outdoors: A Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester 2015-18
- Our Manchester Strategy - Forward to 2025
- Manchester G&BI Stakeholder Implementation Plan and Tree Action Plan – Report on Progress: to Neighbourhoods and Environment Scrutiny Committee January 2021
- Manchester City Council Climate Change Action Plan 2020-25 – Report to NESC and February 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides the annual review on Manchester’s Great Outdoors – A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester. As shown in Figure 1 below, the strategy forms part of a framework of strategies, policy and action plans for Manchester which support the city’s strategic objectives related to environment, climate change, sustainable development and access to green space. As shown below, the Strategy is delivered through its accompanying Implementation Plan and supporting Tree Action Plan, both of which play a key role in delivering the Our Manchester vision for a world class city with a high quality environment. Delivery of the Strategy will also be supported through actions and investment under the Park Strategy and Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy also contributes to the delivery of Manchester’s Climate Change Action Plan, specifically in relation to climate resilience and adaptation, as well as informing the evidence and strategic context for the city’s local development framework, including the refresh of the Local Plan.

Fig1: This shows the relationship of the Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy to other Council strategies and action plans as described in paragraph 1.1



- 1.2 The delivery of Manchester’s Great Outdoors is achieved through the council working in partnership with its many stakeholders. The main highlights from these actions are set out in this report. A more detailed list of actions taken during 2021 is provided in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.3 During 2021 the Green and Blue Strategy Implementation Plan has been refreshed and streamlined to ensure it remains relevant within the context of the current challenges and opportunities faced by the city. This report identifies those key drivers for change and the ways in which the Implementation Plan has been updated. This refreshed version is provided in Appendix 2 of the report. It will form the template for reporting on the delivery of actions going forward.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Manchester's Great Outdoors – A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester, together with its Implementation Plan were prepared and jointly owned by the Council and Manchester G&BI stakeholder group on behalf of the wider city in 2015. Together, they have been recognised as a benchmark of excellence, winning the 2018 CIEEM Award for best practice in Knowledge Sharing.
- 2.2 The Strategy is based on a long-term vision. This has been updated as part of the refresh outlined later in the report. The updated vision is that:
By 2025 climate resilient, 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.
- 2.3 The delivery of the vision is centred on four objectives:
1. Improving the quality and function of Green and Blue Infrastructure to maximise the benefits it delivers,
 2. Using appropriate Green and Blue Infrastructure as a key component of new developments to help create successful neighbourhoods and support the city's growth,
 3. Improving connectivity and accessibility to Green and Blue Infrastructure within the city and beyond,
 4. 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.
- 2.4 A three-year progress report, entitled Green and Getting Greener, was published in 2019. In summary, this identified that since the introduction of the Strategy over £80million had been invested in GI related projects in the city, more than 50 jobs had been created and over a million people had attended events and activities.
- 2.5 During 2021 the Implementation Plan has been further refreshed to take into account the new challenges and opportunities for delivering an improved environment within a growing, successful city. Further detail on how the plan has been updated is provided in section 4 of this report.

Governance - the G&BI Board

- 2.6 The Implementation Plan continues to be delivered by the Council and its partners. The Executive member for Environment who covers all green issues, including climate change, leads on this agenda. Progress against the Council actions is steered within the council by the G&BI Board, 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. It

enables issues that arise to be discussed across services rather than in isolation. Ward members are often best placed to know their local community groups and understand their communities' needs and opportunities and together with council officers they are involved with many of the actions needed to deliver the G&BI Strategy.

Working in Partnership - the G&BI stakeholder Group

- 2.7 Many of the actions within the G&BI Strategy and Implementation Plan are achieved through collaboration with Manchester's partners. A stakeholder group known as the Manchester G&BI Group meets at regular intervals. This group 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.

3.0 Key drivers for change

- 3.1 Whether the actions are delivered by the council alone and/or its partners, it is important that the Strategy and its Implementation Plan continue to be relevant to the current challenges and opportunities faced by our city. This section outlines the factors that have driven the refresh of the Implementation Plan.

Climate Emergency

- 3.2 In 2019, Manchester declared a Climate Emergency, putting an even greater spotlight on the need for the city to be climate resilient. Manchester's future climate is expected to reflect the broader and longer-term projections for climate change and climate variability across the United Kingdom. The manifestation of this is likely to be summers being warmer, with the potential for some exceptionally hot days; the likelihood of increases in short-lived heavy rainfall events and winters are likely to be wetter. The city could also face medium-term variations in climate patterns.
- 3.3 The city's Climate Change Action Plan emphasises the importance of green infrastructure and nature based solutions as key tools in helping us adapt to the challenges of the effects of climate change. We also need to take account of the impact a changing climate will have on the functionality of our existing green infrastructure, and to adapt our plans for future environmental improvements accordingly.
- 3.4 The refreshed G&BI Implementation Plan incorporates a clearer vision which places emphasis on a climate-resilient Manchester that enables our buildings,

infrastructure, green and blue spaces, businesses, and people to mitigate and adapt to future climate shocks and stresses.

- 3.5 Increased consideration is being given to nature-based solutions and Sustainable Drainage Solutions (SuDS) on new large developments. The Council has started to work with developers to explore feasible ways of adopting more SuDS, which could be incorporated into the highway drainage network. We have also been successful in competing for external funding, which will be directed to combat flooding on both a local and wider catchment scale across the city. The focus for this will be on clearing out and upgrading the Manchester culverted watercourse network and reducing the size of areas that are currently at risk of flooding, by creating areas where controlled flooding can occur safely, away from residential areas.
- 3.6 At planning application stage, both types of SuDS (infiltration or attenuation) are requested as part of the validation process and if this is not possible or feasible, reasons for not utilising them must be provided where alternative solutions are proposed as part of a sustainable drainage strategy. The requirement is further that surface water drainage works are designed in accordance with Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems to ensure proper drainage and to manage the risk of flooding and pollution.

Social inclusion and equality

- 3.7 In line with the Our Manchester vision as a city we are striving to be more inclusive and equitable. We know that the health, wealth, and well-being of everyone in society are fundamental indicators of the success of a city. Recent research by the Environment Agency, the UK's leading environmental public body, suggests that people who are living in areas with higher levels of deprivation may be more vulnerable to the cumulative effects of environmental inequalities than others. Manchester is a complex and diverse city composed of many intersecting communities with contrasting characteristics. Communities and individuals will be affected by climate change in different ways, and some people will have greater capacity to respond than others.
- 3.8 The refresh of the Implementation Plan has made use of evidence gathered through The Nature of Manchester work. This will assist our thinking where, down to ward level, the key environmental risks and challenges are in the city. At a detailed level, Tree Action MCR, the citywide £1million tree-planting programme is prioritising the areas in most need of localised tree planting based on levels of existing street tree cover. This will increase the council's managed street tree numbers by 10% in around two years, one of the biggest, most focused local authority-driven street tree-planting schemes undertaken in recent years. More detailed information is provided in paragraph 5.8 and Section 6 of the report.

Green Spaces and Covid

- 3.9 In late 2019, a community consultation was undertaken by the Wildlife Trust, which demonstrated the importance of nature in people's lives. The 'My Wild City' consultation received over 2,000 responses and provided a significant statement highlighting the role nature plays for people in Manchester. Following March 2020, the importance of parks and green spaces grew even more.
- 3.10 During the first lockdown, between April and May 2020, the Wildlife Trust undertook a further survey, Valuing Nature Nearby, in which over 1,000 people took part. The findings reinforced the original study, reporting the increasing value people placed on parks and green spaces. It also illustrated how parks, green spaces, gardens and river valleys were vital to people's health and wellbeing in a time of uncertainty and national crisis.
- 3.11 Parks in Manchester recorded a 30% increase in usage during 2020 and into 2021. Green space which has always played a key role in the city was now even more important. As a city we have announced a major park development programme, which will help improve these key green assets even further. This is also reflected in the refreshed Implementation Plan.

Policy

- 3.12 Changing policy both at national and local level is also changing the context for our Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. The new Environment Act 2021 (England and Wales) is set to create a new governance framework for the environment and will act as an enabler for priorities within a national 25 Year Environment Plan. The Act will make 10% biodiversity net gain for most new development a statutory requirement with further detail subject to regulations still to be confirmed. How this will be addressed and options for securing a net gain within the city are currently being explored and will be embedded in the refresh of the local plan. This requirement will sit along-side and complement other policy outcomes based around key sustainability principles.
- 3.13 Places for Everyone is a long-term joint development plan of nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan) for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth. Published by the GMCA, it includes policies on green infrastructure and biodiversity net gain. The plan was submitted for examination on 14 February 2022 with an expected adoption of the plan in 2023.
- 3.14 Our existing local plan (the Core Strategy 2012–27) sets out Manchester's approach to development and is used to guide decisions on planning applications across the city. Work has now also begun to look at what our new local plan should cover to meet our needs and ambitions for the next 15 years. There has always been a focus of delivering key outcomes for the city, new jobs and new homes, we also need to ensure future growth supports our ambition to be a zero-carbon city by 2038 or before, and to be a green,

climate-resilient city. In the context of a successful city providing homes and jobs, the new Local Plan will also provide an opportunity to update our policy approach around Green Infrastructure (GI).

4.0 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan refresh

- 4.1 The intention of updating and refining the Implementation Plan is not just to build on the success to date, but to recognise changes that will add value and build even more momentum around the GI agenda for many years to come.
- 4.2 The overarching vision remains the same but has been condensed to be more impactful. The four key Objectives remain the same, except for Objective three now reported as “Improving access and connectivity for people and wildlife,” reinforcing the biodiversity value of improved connectivity. The original twenty-six headline actions have been streamlined to eighteen and integrated to avoid duplication and improve impact. This makes it easier for organisations, stakeholders and our partners to see where their commitments can fit in and add value. Many of the headline actions and associated projects are cross-cutting across several objectives, but all will add to the city’s overarching climate resilience.

New Themes, New Evidence

- 4.3 It has always been recognised that since being published in 2015, the strategy will need to adapt to new priorities and emerging themes within the city’s green and blue landscape, particularly where a more detailed focus has been necessary. Bespoke, independent commissions have looked in much more detail at the city’s key green and blue assets. These include:

- Nature and Networks
- Biodiversity
- River Valleys
- Trees and Woodlands
- Gardens
- Health and Ageing

More details on all the above can be found in the Implementation Plan Refresh attached.

- 4.4 The robust evidence gathered through these projects allows for more informed decision-making, it has allowed for learning from best-practice approaches and developing new partnerships. We know that our green and blue spaces are important in improving the city’s resilience to climate change. We also need to evaluate how these spaces may themselves be subject to climate change and how people may increasingly use these areas to cope with challenging weather conditions. Convincing evidence has made the case for deploying nature-based solutions in appropriate locations but we also need to understand how and where they can best be deployed. New evidence supporting the new Implementation Plan, which is doing this, includes the following two projects.

Greater Manchester (GM) IGNITION Project

4.5 This project, backed by €4.5million from the EU's Urban Innovation Actions (UIA) initiative, brings together twelve partners from local government, universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and business. The aim is to develop the first model of its kind that enables major investment in large-scale environmental projects that can increase climate-resilience. The project has already delivered cutting-edge research that will shape Manchester's own green and blue landscape. IGNITION has so far provided:

- A **baseline assessment of green infrastructure** for the city
- A **Living Lab** of real-life nature-based solutions (NBS), such as green walls, green roofs, rain garden and trees with sustainable drainage systems, to demonstrate their function, value and cost effectiveness.
- The development of a new **Planning Support Tool** to aid decision making and the creation of an extensive research online library.

GrowGreen Project

4.6 GrowGreen has been a five-year €15million European Commission-funded project that aims to create climate and water-resilient, healthy, and liveable cities by investing in nature-based solutions (NBS). GrowGreen has provided the city with vital support, guidance, and promotion, helping us to commission bespoke, necessary evidence such as the Our River Our City work referred to later in paragraph 5.2.

4.7 The Green Cities Framework was created through the GrowGreen Project to provide a roadmap to a Green Infrastructure strategy. It was developed through a shared understanding of best practice and expert knowledge brought by different partners. It has allowed us to sense check and refresh our new action plan.

4.8 The GrowGreen Project enabled the creation of the **West Gorton Community Park**, which opened in June 2020, in the middle of the global pandemic - a testament to the city's commitment and determination around the climate change agenda and the culmination of a ten-year regeneration programme for this area. The park won a Landscape Institute Award and Golden Pineapple Design Award in 2021. It stores water from extreme weather events and uses surface water run-off for irrigation. The impact of this is continuing to be monitored by the university partners and will help our understanding of how to replicate this approach elsewhere.

5.0 G&BI Implementation Plan – 2021 Delivery highlights by Objective

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

Delivery Highlights:

- Successfully launched the Our Rivers, Our City project.

- Successfully launched the £12.5 million Park Development Programme
- Delivered first phase of Tree Action MCR
- Continued delivery of Managing Manchester's Trees Project
- Continued development of a new Biodiversity Strategy for Manchester through My Wild City project (See paragraph 5.20)

Our Rivers Our City

- 5.2 This initiative was funded through the EU GrowGreen project. It began in April 2020 and the strategy was successfully launched on 7th December 2021. It is already yielding results, providing the strategic support for Groundwork's successful £1million Resilient River Valleys bid. It aims to increase our understanding of the role of Manchester's rivers, with a particular focus on the Irk, Medlock and Mersey and their tributaries, in terms of flood resilience, recreation, biodiversity and accessibility. The project has been led by the Council and a wide range of stakeholders. It aims to re-energise some of the city's most important natural spaces, making them 21st-century assets, drivers for growth, and places where people and nature can thrive. As well as an overarching strategy for the city, individual long-term action plans have been co-developed for the Irk, Medlock and Mersey Valleys. To find out more, all documents can be found via the link here: <https://growgreenproject.eu/rivers-city-strategy-revitalising-manchesters-river-valleys-urban-waters/>

Park Development Programme (PDP)

- 5.3 This £12.5 million five-year programme of tailored investment opportunities will be delivered by a newly established **Park Development Programme (PDP)** Team, established to work within the Park's service in collaboration with community groups and a range of partner organisations. The aim is to develop and deliver (through feasibility and business cases) investment to meet the aims of the Park Strategy and to close the gap in income and expenditure across the programme. The PDP programme is set out over a four-year period up to 2024/25 and is split into four workstreams, as indicated below.
- 5.4 Workstream 1 - Parks in Partnership is about raising standards and improving the customer/family experience across our Parks. This workstream provides up to £30k per ward for works in a local park, river valley open space or allotment, with a total of £960k available citywide. Launched in April 2021, applications for rounds one and two are now being processed in partnership with stakeholder groups, neighbourhood officers and local members. There have been nearly ninety applications with a wide variety of requests from park infrastructure (benches, bins, paths, signs) to new play and sports equipment, and environmental improvements. The programme will be completed during Spring 2022.
- 5.5 Workstream 2 includes ten mid-scale projects up to £250k, totalling £2.5M and seeking a proposed return on investment of between 2% to 6%. There are currently two live projects:

- Wythenshawe Hall Operational Office - £211k, commenced on site in November 2021 and is due to be complete this month.
 - Gatley Brook Embankment - £116k, a design and cost plan to develop a design solution (approved by the Environment Agency) to repair damage to the brooks embankment to prevent flooding adjacent areas. This will have a positive impact on preventing flooding within Sharston.
- 5.6 Workstream 3 includes four largescale projects up to £1M, totalling £4M, with a proposed return on investment of 7% to 9%. There are currently two live projects:
- Wythenshawe Park Track Cabins - £530k, anticipated to be completed in spring 2022.
 - Wythenshawe Park Cycling Hub - £1.55M (inclusive of £500k match funding from British Cycling), currently projected for completion in June 2022
- 5.7 Workstream 4 includes two flagship projects up to £2.5M, totalling £5M, with a proposed return on investment of 10%, Currently there are two workstream 4 proposals in the early stages of development at Heaton Park with ongoing feasibilities and a soft market test completed to better inform a future business case for consideration through due process. These include the proposed introduction of a new family attraction based at the lakeside centre hub and overflow car park enhancements to allow for multi seasonal use, this is restricted currently when the weather is poor.

Tree Action MCR

- 5.8 This £1million capital programme is delivering the most focused programme of street tree-planting undertaken in recent years. All wards have been or are in the process of being surveyed for new street tree planting. 8 parks are receiving Beacon trees (large trees of note), including an avenue of 18 Oak trees which were successfully planted in Heaton Park on Monday 13th December as part of the Queens Green Canopy Initiative more details here: <https://queensgreencanopy.org/>) This was attended by Cllr Tracey Rawlins and the Deputy Lieutenants of Greater Manchester. New Covid Beacon Trees have also been planted in Manchester parks and cemeteries, as a legacy of the pandemic. The community Orchard Project is ongoing; it delivered four new Community orchards in 2021 and will focus on North Manchester in 2022.

Managing Manchester's Trees

- 5.9 Manchester is leading the way with the level of detail provided in this authoritative look at the way the city's treescape has evolved, how it functions and how it can be improved. An assessment of the treescape with this level of detail has never been undertaken before in the UK. Work began in 2020 and will be completed by Spring 2022. Delivered by environmental consultants The Environment Partnership (TEP) and City of Trees, in partnership with the Council, there are three elements to the work:

- **Evolution** – an informative 100-year look back at how the city’s treescape and its neighbourhoods have evolved over time, referencing population decline and growth, and reflecting the changes across the city’s landscape.
- **Function** – consideration of how we look after the thousands of trees we already have, and cater for constant challenges such as pests, disease and climate-resilience, e.g. Ash Dieback, including options for better and sustainable treescape management.
- **Opportunity and Capacity** – using the most detailed data sets on tree cover ever provided, information has been mapped down to ward-level, providing an insight into tree capacity and identifying where and how tree canopy could be increased effectively, sustainably and appropriately. A separate tree mapping tool will allow us to work with communities on improving tree cover across Neighbourhoods.

5.10 **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

- Embedding GI into policies and plans – Local Plan, Places for Everyone, Manchester Climate Change Framework (see paragraphs 3.12-3.14 for more background)
- Manchester Glade of Light
- Flagship development initiatives such as Victoria North and Mayfield continue at pace.

Glade of Light

5.11 The Glade of Light is a £562,855.20 memorial commemorating the victims of the 22 May 2017 terrorist attack at Manchester Arena and has been accessible to the public since 5th January 2022, with an official opening ceremony scheduled for Spring. The Glade of Light was designed to be a living memorial, a tranquil garden space for remembrance and reflection. Its peaceful surroundings are intended as the setting for commemorative events in the city relating to the attack. It features a central white marble ‘halo’, and plants which grow naturally in the UK countryside have been selected to provide year-round colour and echo the changing seasons. 43 new trees were planted as part of this scheme. Around the anniversary, every year, the white flowers of a hawthorn tree planted at its centre will bloom. Located within the Medieval Quarter it has been designed to complement the wider areas regeneration.

Victoria North

5.12 This is the North of England’s biggest urban regeneration project, and the biggest renewal project Manchester has ever seen. With landscape at the

heart of the vision, jointly developed and funded by the Far East Consortium (FEC) and the City Council, the ambition is to create 15,000 new homes across 155 hectares and seven neighbourhoods over the next twenty years. At the heart of Victoria North will be the City River Park, which will cover 46 hectares of new and improved parkland. The park will vary in character, providing a diverse and active new recreational corridor for the community, including parks and smaller amenity spaces. Planning, design and consultation work continued in 2021, with physical works having already commenced.

Mayfield

- 5.13 The Council is working with partners to deliver a major new six acre city centre park as part of the Mayfield regeneration proposals. The Mayfield SRF area is adjacent to the Ardwick area and will be easily accessible by those who live and work in the area. In 2021, work began on site, which included the historic “daylighting” of a 400m stretch of the River Medlock, making this part of the river visible again for the first time in nearly 100 years. The park is scheduled to open in September 2022.
- 5.14 **Objective 3:** The third overall objective of the G&BI Strategy is **to improve accessibility to green space within and beyond Manchester.**

Key Highlights

- Work continues on delivering the Bee Network travel Routes
- £1million secured to deliver the Resilient River Valley Programme

Bee Network travel Routes

- 5.15 Almost £30million is committed to Bee Network travel route improvements in Manchester. This network improves accessibility, via active modes of travel to facilities across Manchester including our open spaces. Projects include:
- Chorlton Cycleway - 5km route south from the city centre to Chorlton. This scheme is split into four areas. Area 1 (Stretford Road/Brooks Bar) is now complete. Works are underway on Area 2 (Upper Chorlton Road) and in Area 4 (Barlow Moor Road) where they are nearing completion. In Area 3 (Manchester Road) works commencing in December 2021 in 3a but designs are still to be finalised in 3b.
 - Deansgate - Involving part pedestrianisation of Deansgate. Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) are currently being advertised for the northern end of Deansgate, Parsonage and King Street. Further TROs for a variety of elements are to be advertised in the coming months.
 - Triangle - A connected route around the city centre. Changes to the design are being worked on along with modelling work with consultation expected in February 2022 if sign off is agreed
 - Wythenshawe Cycleway – A route connecting through Wythenshawe. A road safety audit is currently underway on the current design to inform how the scheme should progress.

- GM Cycle Hire – A new cycle hire scheme, with the first phase including roll out on Oxford Road in Manchester. Initiation of the project is being undertaken with rollout expected through 2022.

Resilient River Valleys Programme

5.16 This ambitious two-year, near £1million programme will focus on delivering nature-based solutions to enhance the climate resilience of our river valleys. It will help improve access to, along and across our river valleys for people and nature. This will be achieved using sustainable management and new employment and training opportunities identified in the Our Rivers Our City strategy. Orchestrated by Groundwork Greater Manchester, the successful partnership bid will use funds from Defra and Heritage Lottery's Green Recovery Challenge Fund. In addition to delivering a programme of physical work across a network of sites, it will:

- Create new jobs within delivery teams and for young people recruited through DWP Kickstart and NCS Youth Corps initiatives (nine new roles, six urban forestry assistants at City of Trees, and 32 roles for young people)
- Deliver a programme of community engagement work to connect people with nature-based activity within the river valleys, and increase involvement in volunteering and maintenance of urban green space
- Develop and deliver new training modules relating to NBS for staff, people on employment programmes, and community members, as well as specific training courses and activities relating to managing green infrastructure for community and Friends of Groups.

5.17 **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

- The refresh of the G&BI Strategy Implementation Plan
- Ward Climate Change Plans
- Work continues on the development of a new Biodiversity Strategy for the City
- Manchester became the first major City in England to sign the Edinburgh Declaration
- New Nature Recovery Network community engagement and wildlife recording project in North Manchester
- My Wild City was a commended finalist in the Knowledge Exchange Category of the 2021 Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environment Management (CIEEM) Awards.
- West Gorton Community Park won a Landscape Institute Award and Golden Pineapple Design Award in 2021 (see paragraph 4.8)

G&BI Implementation Plan Refresh

- 5.18 A key output in 2021 has been the refresh of the new Green and Blue Infrastructure Implementation Plan, with over £150m worth of expected environmental improvements that will support the Our Manchester Vision over the coming five years. This raft of new GI information, evidence, strategies and plans will also shape climate resilience and environment policy within the Local Plan currently in development.

Ward Climate Change Plans

- 5.19 Working with communities, newly appointed Climate Change Officers have begun delivering ward-based Climate Change Action Plans with GI featuring prominently. Working with Manchester Climate Change Agency, creative engagement specialists Hubbub delivered an exciting year long programme of immersive environmental activity, including the “In Our Nature” Pop up Shop in the heart of the City Centre.

Biodiversity Strategy

- 5.20 Work continues on the development of a new Biodiversity Strategy for Manchester, which is being led on by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust under the My Wild City Programme. A new Biodiversity Action Group, consisting of key stakeholders, statutory bodies and academic institutions has been established and is helping to oversee strategy development. The new Strategy project will bring a citywide focus to the idea of a people’s nature recovery network and includes developing around 75 new species action plans across five broad habitat areas in the city. The document will be produced and tabled at a future Scrutiny Committee.

Edinburgh Declaration

- 5.21 Manchester has become the first major City in England to register its concern about Biodiversity loss by signing the Edinburgh Declaration, which encourages Cities globally to support the delivery of a new Global Biodiversity Framework.

North Manchester Nature Recovery Network

- 5.22 Raising the awareness of the benefits of G&BI, in 2021, despite the challenges we have all faced over the last two years, innovative and creative work was undertaken by partners in delivering engagement activity across the city. The Wildlife Trusts delivered a programme of events and activity in North Manchester as part of the North Manchester Nature Recovery Network, working with communities to improve habitats and record species.

6.0 Tree Action Plan – Highlights and Update

- 6.1 Manchester’s trees continue to be managed in line with Manchester’s Tree Management Principles which can be found at

https://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/7022/tree_management_principles This provides a useful starting point for all responses to queries concerning how Manchester looks after its trees.

- 6.2 In 2021 significant work was undertaken on developing a new fundamental appraisal of the City's tree resource. This work (outlined above as Managing Manchester's Trees) will shape the development of a new Tree and Woodland Action Plan in 2022.
- 6.3 In total 4286 trees were planted in 20/21, including five orchards and 2036 hedge trees. The Tree Action MCR planting programme planted 1008 trees over the same period. Over 1200 are expected to be planted in 2021/22. As part of this, working with City of Trees, the City Council secured a further £150,000 for additional tree planting through Government and Heritage Lottery Fund's Urban Tree Challenge fund.
- 6.4 The City's Arboricultural team have been instrumental in delivering a dynamic assessment of all the City's Neighbourhoods in terms of potential for new tree planting on Manchester verges and along some streets and highways. This has been systematically undertaken by the team, looking at wards with the least street tree cover first, using a suite of tree species specially chosen for their climate resilience and biodiversity value.
- 6.5 Over the course of the year, the council's tree officers continuously liaised with Neighbourhood teams, Climate Change officers, Ward councillors and community representatives to understand local needs and priorities.
- 6.6 This collaborative approach has moulded the Tree Action MCR planting programme. It will lead to a 10% increase in the numbers of MCC managed street and highway trees in less than two years.
- 6.7 As part of Tree Action MCR, four new community orchards were planted with community support and training delivered by the Orchard Project in:
- Delamere Park, Openshaw
 - Platt Fields Park, Fallowfield
 - Mersey Banks Fields, Chorlton Park
 - Kenworthy Wood, Northenden
- 6.8 Five new tree preservation orders (TPOs) were also declared in 2021, taking the overall number to 404.

7.0 Future Priorities

- 7.1 Work will continue in delivering the four objectives of Manchester's Great Outdoors: Our Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Future reporting will align with the headline actions contained within the refreshed Implementation Plan. Projects will continue to include work undertaken by the council, in collaboration with its many stakeholders and projects that are delivered directly and independently by those stakeholders.

7.2 The priorities for 2022 will focus on the following:

- The refresh of the Tree and Woodland Action Plan using the evidence that has been gained through the work on the Managing Manchester's Trees Commission.
- The continued roll out of phase 2 of Tree Action MCR, including work to ensure that all the young trees are thriving and consideration of the potential to continue the programme through external funding sources.
- The continued delivery of the flagship projects at Victoria North and Mayfield, leading to a total of 52 hectares of new and improved open space and parkland.
- The continued link with the Manchester Climate Change Action Plan to help embed the learning from projects such as the GrowGreen enabled West Gorton Community Park and IGNITION. Using the evidence from these demonstration projects, the ability to consider appropriate nature based solutions early in the design stage of projects will help create a more climate resilient city.
- The presentation of the new Biodiversity Strategy to Scrutiny and its subsequent adoption. This will use information gathered through My Wild City. It will link with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy work being implemented at Greater Manchester level, with a more local, Manchester specific focus.
- The preparation of a draft Local Plan with strengthened environmental policies that draw on the increased up-to-date evidence created by the studies, such as the Our Rivers Our City project, that have been undertaken as part of the Green and Blue Implementation Plan.

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 Recommendations appear at the front of the report.