



Lancashire,
Manchester &
N Merseyside



Valuing Nearby Nature

How local nature helped the people of Manchester and beyond get through the Coronavirus Lockdown



Cyclists enjoy a walk through the park by Nick Rodd

Nearby Nature: everyday urban nature close to home, such as flowers, trees, birds and other creatures in yards and gardens, parks and streets.

Introduction

During the full Coronavirus Lockdown, we saw many comments on social media and in the press about people taking notice of nearby nature: bird songs were louder, leaves greener and spring more noticeable.

Did residents in and around the city of Manchester feel this too? How was nature benefitting their locked down lives?

More than 1,200 people responded and told us just how important contact with nature was for them.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to everyone who took part and helped us to share this survey. Thank you to Manchester City Council and Konstantinos Tzoulas, Senior Lecturer in Environmental Management at Manchester Metropolitan University.



Connecting with nature

“In a time of huge uncertainty and stress for everyone, people wanted access to nature.”

99%

said being able to **connect** with nature during the restrictions was Very Important or Important.

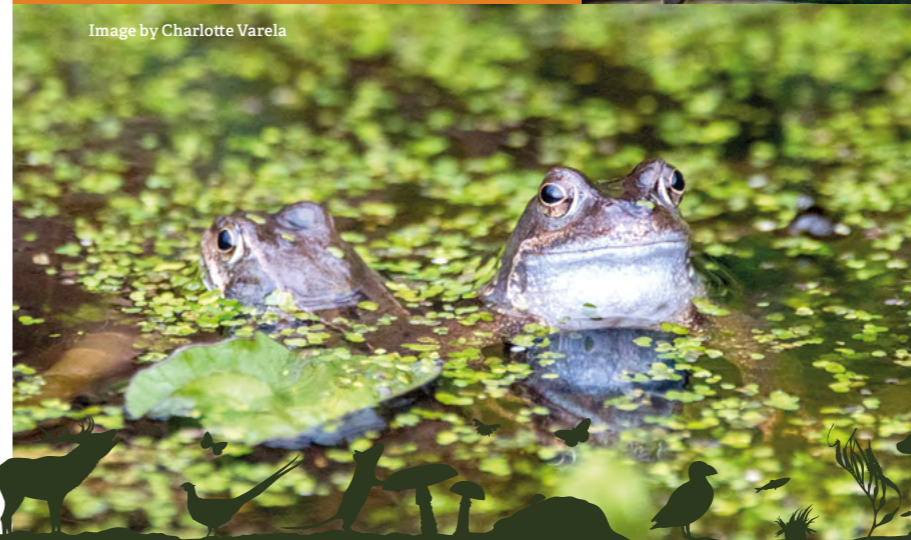
67%

valued nearby nature Much More or More now, compared with before restrictions. People really needed nature.

67%

had **visited** nearby nature Much More or More often over the last week, compared with a usual week before restrictions.

Image by Charlotte Varela



I realised I needed to get out more. Even before lockdown I stayed in a bit too much. Now I've changed that.



Nature, health and wellbeing

People spoke candidly about the effect of nature on their mental health and wellbeing with comments ranging from **“it lifts the spirits”** to **“it helps to ease my wife’s dementia symptoms”**.

Nearby nature helped people connect during an isolated time, providing a positive topic of conversation. Parks and greenspaces could be safe places to socially distance with others, and to see people enjoying themselves.

“It is saving my life.”



Image by Charlotte Varela

The Wildlife Trust knows how valuable nature is, not just in its own right, but also as a lifeline to all of us during moments of need. We are committed to supporting health and wellbeing, through connection to nature and the outdoors. The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside is working with local NHS Foundation Trusts to offer free ecotherapy support to individuals. Visit lancswt.org.uk/myplace



Sahar enjoying nature at Fletcher Moss by Nick Rodd

Enjoying nearby nature

Respondents mentioned buds on the tree outside their house, while others spoke of “freedom”, “beauty” and “fresh air”. They mentioned how much louder and clearer bird song seemed, and thought there were more plants, birds, and animals around than usual.

“I am not allowed out so looking out of my window and watching the birds, bees, butterflies and watching the trees blow in the wind is fantastic.”

“The sense that no matter how awful the situation is, nature continues to be beautiful.”

“The highlight of the day is getting out of the house into nature, keeping us sane.”

“I don’t feel as lonely when I’m out in the park.”



Wildflower sabbath colour to the park by Nick Rodd



Image by Shirley Freeman





Long lawns are great for wildlife by Cath in Manchester

55%

of people were regularly visiting their local green spaces, and nature reserves.

How can you help?

The responses to this survey prove how vital nature and greenspace has been to support people and communities through a national crisis, but the 2019 State of Nature report says wildlife is still in rapid decline. Here are details of what you can do to help.

Take action for nature in your garden

Sign up to our My Wild Garden campaign and take steps to improve the value of your garden for wildlife. If you are already involved, champion wildlife gardening amongst your friends, family and colleagues. Visit lancswt.org.uk/mywildcity.

Anyone aged 16 - 24 in your household?

As a Trust we have an active Youth Council whom help shape the services which the Wildlife Trust delivers now and in the future as well as being involved in campaigning with the public and MPs. Find out more by emailing ebartlet@lancswt.org.uk

Support us to realise nature-friendly building

We are committed to work proactively with planners and developers to realise nature-friendly development and want to recruit and train a series of volunteers to support us with this work. If you are interested in this voluntary role, please sign-up to become a volunteer at lancswt.org.uk/support-us/volunteer

Become a member

We are a membership charity, we can't protect wildlife without you - our members share our love of nature and care about protecting wildlife. Support us by visiting lancswt.org.uk/support-us

How will we follow up this response as an organisation?

At a regional level...

Work with key partners to support the development of a Local Nature Recovery Network for Greater Manchester and beyond. This is our vision for a joined-up natural world; giving nature room to thrive and enabling more people to experience the wonders of our natural world. Discover our Wilder Future campaign at lancswt.org.uk/wilder-future-campaign.

We will work with planners and developers for a more proactive approach to nature-friendly development, sensitive to location and context, that cares about long-term maintenance and management.

At a neighbourhood level...

We will work with partners and the public, guided by the new Local Nature Recovery Network, within an urban neighbourhood in Manchester. This will include safe Nearby Nature events for the family, and work to improve and connect parks, yards, gardens and green spaces so nature can thrive.

Encouraging action amongst the public

Support members of the public to collect species records for Greater Manchester, particularly through City Nature Challenge. To find out more about the City Nature Challenge, visit citynaturechallenge.org/

“Public Parks have come into their own and saved the Nation.”

Image by Nick Rodd



67%

said they spent time in their own garden. Most with a garden or yard were able to enjoy it and told us how vital it was for physical and mental wellbeing.



Image by Tom Marshall

39%

visited a local park and felt living near a park improved their quality of life.

Image by Tom Marshall



“I was quite afraid of walking alone in my local nature park but having been forced to do so by circumstance, I now feel safer doing it.”

Image by Austin William Humphries-Walker



“Noticing what an amazing array of nature is on my doorstep (and I don't even have a garden!).”



The Wildlife Trust is keen to discuss and support local authorities, businesses, housing associations and others to take positive action to maintain and enhance the quality of their land for nature and people.

Get in touch...



Lancashire,
Manchester &
N Merseyside

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