

HOUSING PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 13th September 2018

Subject: Natural Capital and Urban Pioneer Update

Report of: Mark Atherton, Asst. Director, GM Environment Team

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on the work of the GM Natural Capital Group, the Defra Urban Pioneer and (EU Life IP funded) Natural Course Project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To note and comment upon the contents of the report.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Whilst an increase in urbanisation may be required to meet our growth aspirations, we need to ensure that our 'natural capital' i.e. the quality of the environment (and the ecosystem services it provides) is sufficient to support greater concentrations of people and business and enhance the quality of life for residents. To support this, there are a number of exciting initiatives across Greater Manchester which are applying a natural capital approach.

2 Natural Capital Group

- 2.1 The Natural Capital Group (NCG), GM's Local Nature Partnership, and its partners continue to play a key role in acting as an ambassador for Greater Manchester's natural environment, supporting delivery through existing partnerships and structures and showcasing headline initiatives.
- 2.2 The last meeting of the Natural Capital Group (mat 2018) included a discussion about how best to progress the outcomes from the Mayor's Green Summit. It was agreed that the workplan would focus on relevant workstreams which include:
- Production of a high level set of natural capital accounts for GM.
 - Understand the contribution from peatland restoration towards GMs carbon neutrality target.
 - Develop a GM planning policy for biodiversity and environment net gain.
 - Support the production of a natural capital investment plan for GM.
 - Advise on a range of delivery mechanisms including setting up of a potential GM Environment Fund.
 - Support the delivery of the GM Wetlands Nature Improvement Area.
 - Deliver City of Trees and Pennine Edge Forest plans/activity.
 - Support communities to better connect with their natural environment.
- 2.3 A number of these workstreams are being delivered through the Defra Urban Pioneer and EU Life Integrated Natural Course Projects, described in more detail below.
- 2.4 Over the past 12 months, there has been a targeted communications campaign 'connecting people with nature' and a new website has been launched which brings together the key natural environment stakeholders and their initiatives being delivered across Greater Manchester: <https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/>.
- 2.5 Lancashire Wildlife Trust have also launched their new campaign 'My Wild City' in March aimed at increasing green spaces and enhancing wildlife across Manchester. A dedicated website has been launched at <http://www.lancswt.org.uk/MyWildCity> which includes further information and signposting to resources.

3 Defra Urban Pioneer

- 3.1 Greater Manchester is the UK's Urban Pioneer, one of four pioneer areas in the country, testing new tools and methods for investing in and managing the environment for the UK's 25 Year Environment Plan. The Urban Pioneer will support Greater Manchester in creating a natural liveable city region, reversing the decline in the quantity and quality of its natural assets and the services they provide.
- 3.2 Beyond supporting the provision of clean air and water, the full extent to which nature contributes to health and wellbeing is currently only partly understood, however strong links between mental health, respiratory health and access to green space and flood mitigation are known, as well as their role in creating attractive, healthy places people want to live, work and bring up a family.
- 3.3 It will also seek to secure an increase in both the quantity and quality of natural capital assets whilst engaging with Greater Manchester's residents so that they can understand and access the natural environment and the benefits it provides. To support this, the 5 key objectives are:
1. Develop the evidence base
 2. Demonstrate a place based approach
 3. Create a Natural Capital Investment Plan
 4. Identify a demonstrator project
 5. Develop and test a communications and engagement model
- 3.4 To date, the focus has been on delivering against Objectives 1 – 3 which are set out in more detail below.
- 3.5 **Objective 1 - A Natural Capital Account for Greater Manchester** - A natural capital account has been developed for Greater Manchester and its 10 districts. This is about capturing the current baseline of what GM's existing natural environments are doing in terms of the ecosystem services they are providing.
- 3.6 By understanding the types of land that make up Greater Manchester and capturing the current baseline of what Greater Manchester's existing natural environment is doing in terms of the benefits it is providing us, we will have a better understanding of its value to us and how we can maintain and enhance it over time, to maximise these benefits. The data still has gaps, but despite this, it provides very positive results which are set out in Appendix A. The full accounts and the 4 page summary report can be found at: www.naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/projects/urban-pionner

- 3.7 **Objective 2 - Net Gain** - Natural England has been leading on developing an approach for embedding a biodiversity, and ultimately natural capital, net gain approach into the planning system. This will provide significant benefits for the people of Greater Manchester, ensuring new developments are having a positive environmental impact and not resulting in net loss of biodiversity (and the ecosystem services they that provides).
- 3.8 This has involved working closely with the GMCA Planning team to ensure GMSF has a strong Net Gain commitment that can be delivered on the ground. The Net Gain Task Group (led by Natural England and chaired by Mark Atherton) includes representatives from GMCA, Districts, government agencies and developers.
- 3.9 A Net Gain guidance document will be produced by the end of the year to support planners, councillors and other relevant stakeholders in embedding net gain into developments. The guidance will sit alongside GMSF and could form a Supplementary Planning Document. This work will complement the Greater Manchester Natural Capital Investment Plan by helping to identify and target investment into the areas that provide the biggest benefits for people and wildlife.
- 3.10 **Objective 3 - The Natural Capital Investment Plan** - Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Natural Course have commissioned eftec (and partners Environmental Finance and Countryside) to develop the first Natural Capital Investment Plan for the city region. The team are working alongside stakeholders to identify priority areas and a pipeline of investment opportunities that will enhance the value of natural capital assets with a focus on local and national socio-economic priorities. Mechanisms for delivery of one or more pilot innovative financial model(s) will be detailed to ensure the achievement of financial and social objectives.
<https://naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/project/greater-manchester-natural-capital-investment-plan>

4 **Natural Course EU LIFE Integrated Project**

- 4.1 Natural Course aims to deliver integrated water management through:
- Accelerated delivery towards the objectives of the EU Water Framework Directive i.e. improved water quality.
 - Improved flood risk management
 - Increased biodiversity and habitat value of our watercourses.
- 4.2 The primary objective is to identify and understand innovative and cost effective solutions to a range of water management issues and where possible use a Natural Capital approach to help deliver multiple objectives. The project is delivered by a

partnership of Environment Agency, United Utilities, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Salford CC as the lead authority), The Rivers Trust & Natural England.

- 4.3 A set of Natural Capital Accounts have been produced and Ecosystems Services Opportunity Maps for the Irwell Management Catchment uploaded to MappingGM and shared with stakeholders. Additional consultancy support has been procured to help use the outputs to develop a Natural Capital approach for 4 pilot projects including Bradshaw Brook, Bolton, Northern Gateway, Manchester, Moors for the Future and the Croal/Irwell Partnership. <http://naturalcourse.co.uk/publications/>
https://mappinggm.org.uk/gmodin/?lyrs=tep_ecosystem_services#os_maps_light/10/53.5069/-2.3201
- 4.4 Urban Diffuse Pollution - A survey of outfalls along the River Irk has been completed and results have been added to an Environment Agency data base and will be used as part of the development of a River Irk vision, also led by the EA. A University of Manchester study, released in March 2018, identified the River Tame in GM as a significant hotspot for micro plastic pollution. Currently working with United Utilities, Environment Agency and the University of Manchester to commission further research as part of Natural Course Phase III.
- 4.5 Catchment Ecology Project - On-going work led by the GM Ecology Unit to record the riparian environment to monitor change and inform decision making. The project uses professional and voluntary recorders to undertake wildlife surveys and monitoring. Working with the Environment Agency to identify further survey opportunities on the River Irk including potential electrode fishing survey and a survey of the restoration potential of Wince Brook in partnership with the River Restoration Centre.
- 4.6 Catchment management plans - The Irwell catchment partnership is developing an evidence review “story map” which will enable partners to develop projects and interventions which will contribute to the delivery of EU Water Framework Directive, flood risk management objectives and wider biodiversity goals.
- 4.7 Review of water governance across GM - Researchers at the University of Manchester have produced a draft final report following a review of water governance across GM. The report covers water quality, flood risk and biodiversity functions and will feed into a wider review of GM infrastructure and NW Flood & Coastal Risk Management. The report will be considered by the GM Flood & Water Management Board in October 2018.

- 4.8 Tackling physical modifications - Funding has been secured to tackle barriers to fish movement on the Bradshaw and Eagley Brooks in Bolton. The project will be delivered by Groundwork MSSTT in-line with a scope developed by the Environment Agency.

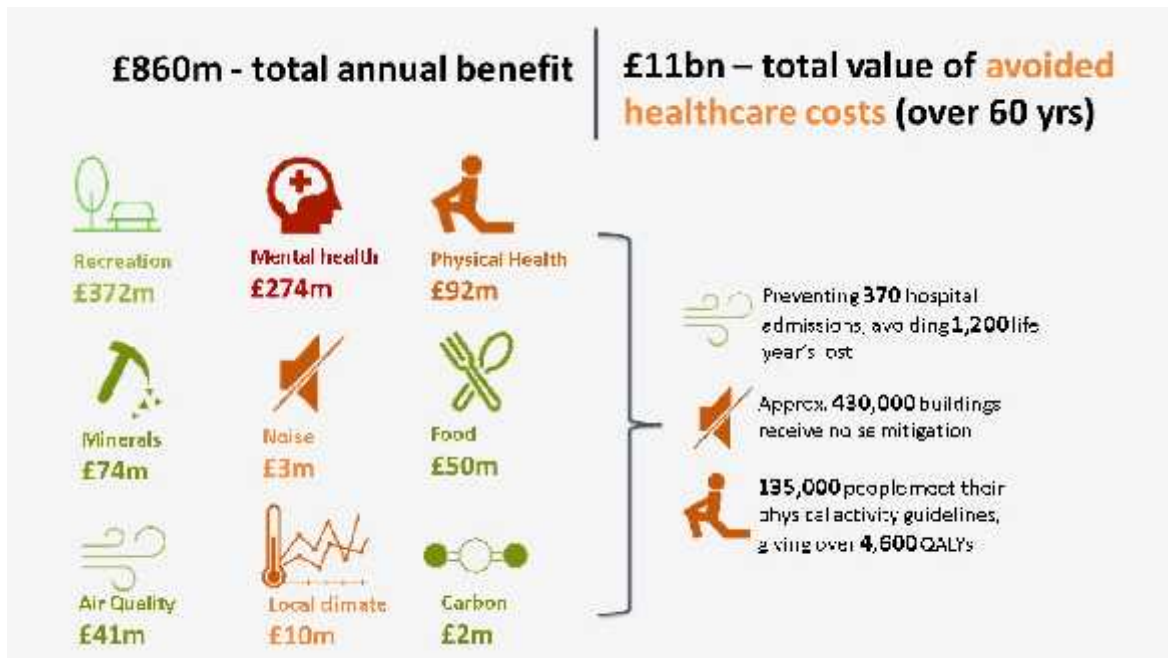
- 4.9 Green Infrastructure schemes - Agreed locations for City of Trees Natural Course Phase II activity at Crompton Moor in the Beal valley, Oldham, and in association with the re-development of Stockport Transport Interchange.

Appendix A

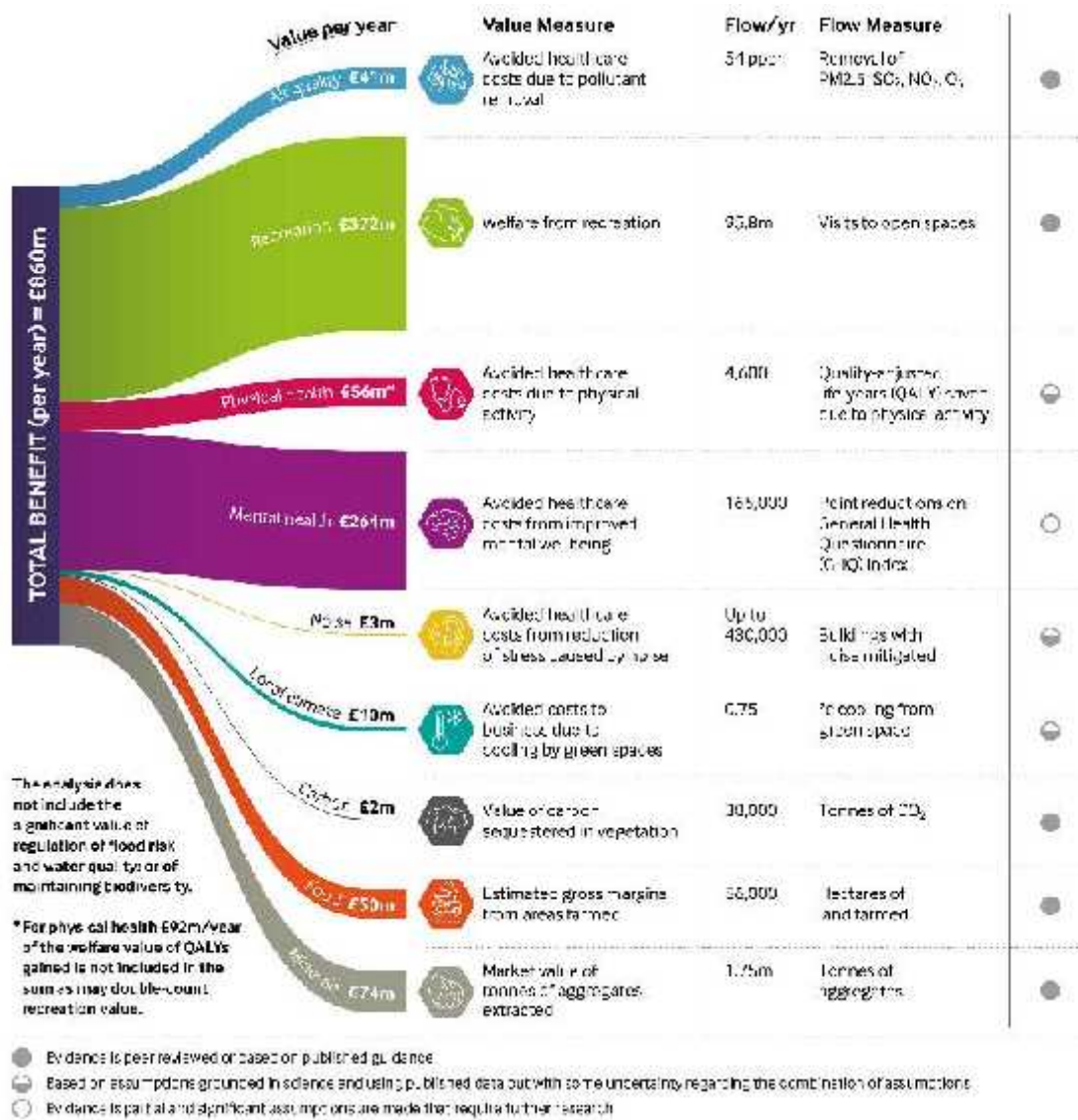
Natural Capital Account Results

The full accounts and the 4 page summary report can be found at:
www.naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/projects/urban-pionner

The results have a focus on demonstrating the health benefits of Greater Manchester's natural capital:



* Green, amber, red colours denotes the confidence level in the values detailed.



This information is now being converted into a marketing brochure, to be used to communicate with key stakeholders. See attached.

Analysis

These results are conservative estimates for the most part and with more data, time and resources, improvements in the robustness of the data and methods could be applied yielding potentially higher monetary values.

The analysis does not include the significant value of regulation of flood risk, water quality or of maintaining biodiversity. Furthermore, it does not highlight the far wider benefits beyond health and wellbeing, such as local economic and house value uplift, improved social cohesion, reduced anti-social behaviour, educational opportunities and climate change mitigation. We hope to provide values for these in time.

Despite this, these initial results are very positive and are a good indication for what Greater Manchester's environment is providing.

