

Manchester Biodiversity Duty Report 2026 (Reporting time period – 1 January 2023 – 1 January 2026)

Section 1: Your policies, objectives and actions

Policies and objectives

- The draft Manchester Local Plan contains a suite of environmental policies. This includes draft Policy EN4 Biodiversity and Geodiversity and draft policy EN5 Biodiversity Net Gain.
 - Draft policy EN4 identifies and distinguishes between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites. It ensures that development takes place on land with the least environmental or amenity value and takes a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure that have been identified as important within Manchester. The policy references the GMLNRS and requires development to support and deliver its priorities and actions across Manchester and within the Core Local Nature Sites and opportunity Areas.
 - Draft Policy EN5 seeks 10% net gain in biodiversity. It sets out the expectation that developers will enhance and restore biodiversity with reference to the GMLNRS, Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and the Habitats Regulations Assessment for Manchester. On site BNG provision is prioritised but the policy sets out the criteria for assessing off site provision.
- Enhancements to biodiversity are further supported by requirements in Policy EN1 Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure, Policy EN2 River Valleys and Waterways and Policy EN3 Trees and Woodlands. Policy EN6 Urban Green Factor seeks to enhance the levels of climate resilience and biodiversity on sites that would not automatically benefit from the mandatory BNG requirements. Policy EN8 Water Quality requires the use of Sustainable drainage systems, with above ground nature-based solutions preferred to increase the biodiversity value of such interventions. Policy EN9 Flood Risk supports the opening up of culverts where appropriate and feasible to enhance biodiversity.
- Policy DM1 Development Management requires all development proposals to have regard to effects on biodiversity.
- The draft Manchester Local Plan went out to Regulation 18 consultation in September – November 2025. Responses received relating to issues around biodiversity are currently being considered and will be used to inform the next stage of plan preparation.

Actions that benefit biodiversity

- The Council has worked on a suite of strategies listed below that set out specific actions that benefit biodiversity. Further information on the actions for each strategy can be accessed by the following weblinks.
 - In 2021 MCC delivered a 10 year River Valley Strategy - Our Rivers Our City. ([About the Our Rivers, Our City Strategy | Our Rivers, Our City Strategy | Manchester City Council](#))
 - In 2022 MCC refreshed its GBI Implementation Plan ([Green and blue infrastructure | Green and blue infrastructure | Manchester City Council](#))
 - In 2022 MCC approved and endorsed a new 10 year Biodiversity Strategy ([Biodiversity and wildlife | Biodiversity and wildlife | Manchester City Council](#))
 - In 2023 MCC published a new 10 year Tree and Woodland Action Plan, supported by a new Growing Manchester's Trees Study. ([Tree action plan | Trees and woodland strategy | Manchester City Council](#)).
 - In 2024 MCC delivered a new Open Spaces Study. ([Open Space Assessment | Manchester City Council](#))
 - In 2025 GMCA published a new Local Nature Recovery Strategy. ([Our plan for nature recovery - Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#))
 - In 2025 MCC began the process of developing a new GBI strategy

Demonstrate Progress/adoption of Biodiversity/Nature recovery/Environment or related strategies (e.g. on Climate Change, Flood Risk, Estate Management).

- In 2022 MCC approved and endorsed a new 10 year Biodiversity Strategy. (see weblink above).
- In 2022 Manchester refreshed its Green and Blue Infrastructure Implementation Plan (see weblink above).
- In 2023 The Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) design guide was produced by MCC Highways Services and has been published online.

Action to adopt biodiversity/nature recovery as a corporate policy/objective

- In October 2021 Manchester was the first major City in England to sign the Edinburgh Declaration, a global pledge registering our concern about Biodiversity loss and signalling our commitment to tackling the twin challenges of biodiversity and climate crises.

Describe your Council's individual LNRS adoption process and provide details of the Council's commitment to implementation

- The Chief Executive, under delegated approval process, approved the LNRS

Council's contribution to encouraging take-up of environmental land management / nature recovery schemes

- As well as signing the Edinburgh Declaration on Biodiversity (see above) Manchester declared a climate emergency in 2019, aiming to become a zero carbon City by 2038.

Actions completed

- Specific biodiversity/nature recovery projects the Council has been involved in or supported:
 - 2021-2024: £1.4 Million Resilient River Valleys programme
 - 2019-2024: £1.5 Million Tree Action MCR Planting Programme
 - 2023 – 2025: £1.2 Million Species Survival Fund Medlock Project
 - 2025 - onwards £1.5 Million Championing Nature Project

Practical actions in operational plans Information on biodiversity from Local Plan monitoring reports

- Detailed HMMPs have been provided for 13 South Manchester sites, and two commissioned in 2025 for Clayton Vale LNR, and Chorlton Ees and Ivy Green LNR.
- In 2021-23, MCC Parks team commissioned 11 annual work plans for Sites of Biological Importance.
- 2020-24: Biodiversity Assessments were provided for all five MCC managed cemeteries.
- 2025: Significant drainage improvement work on Sunbank Wood SBI

Actions for biodiversity on Council-managed land e.g. SBIs, Local Nature Reserves (and any other designated sites), allotments, community gardens, cemeteries, parks and sports fields, amenity spaces, roadside verges, farmland etc. and any designated sites in Council ownership.

- 2022-24: New LNR's declared – Kenworthy Woods, Broadhurst Clough, Southern Cemetery.
- 2023 – onwards: A new small Biodiversity team within the grounds maintenance and arboriculture section has been established and provides greater flexibility over the way Manchester's hedges, meadow sites and green spaces are managed.
- 2025: Significant drainage improvement work on Sunbank Wood SBI.

Establishment of and progress made by any biodiversity-related Committees/ Member Working Groups etc.

- In 2025 the City Council and University of Manchester established a new focused group, made up of practitioners, statutory bodies and academics. The primary goal of the Manchester Biodiversity Action Group (MBAG) is to create a network of professionals and partners dedicated to addressing biodiversity challenges within Manchester and its urban environment through the delivery of the Biodiversity Strategy and LNRS.

Partnership working on biodiversity e.g. with Environment Agency, Natural England, United Utilities and other utility providers, Forestry Commission, City of Trees, Wildlife Trusts, local environmental/community organisations, Schools, local residents, local businesses, landowners

- MCC plays an active role in both the Upper Mersey Catchment Partnership alongside the South Manchester Urban Brooks Group, and the Irwell Catchment Partnership alongside the BriL group (Bringing the River Irk to Life).
- MCC is also a founding partner of Natural England's Bollin – Mersey Nature Recovery Partnership Project in South Manchester
- MCC played a key role in Environment Agency's £20 Million Natural Course Programme 2017 – 2024.
- A stakeholder group known as the Manchester G&BI Group meets at regular intervals throughout the year, with MCC as Chair. 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 and Biodiversity Strategy.
- 2023-25: Pond restoration has also taken place at Highfield Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Painswick Park meadows Site of Biological Importance (SBI) Chorlton Ees LNR and Clayton Vale LNR.
- 2023-25: Grassland and Reed Bed Management has also taken place at Clayton Vale LNR and Chorlton Ees LNR.
- 2025: MCC are continuing to look at opportunities to change land use in parks to wildflower areas. The grounds technical lead is working with the Parks teams on their Climate Change Action Plan in an advisory capacity to explore how we can increase differential mowing in a number of parks across the city.
- Through the Championing Nature Project, significant habitat management work has been undertaken and is planned across a number of Sites of Biological Importance in South Manchester – including Nan Nook Wood, Blackcarr Wood, Painswick Park Meadow, Gib Lane Wood and Kenworthy Wood Local Nature Reserve.
- Championing Nature has also delivered volunteering days and engagement activities through several "heartbeat moments" at Wythenshawe Park and Kenworthy Wood including bat and nature walks.
- An innovative programme of non-native invasive species treatment is being piloted at Kenworthy, which involves using biological control in the form of rust fungus, which can lead to a weakening of the plant over time.

Training/volunteering opportunities in biodiversity/nature recovery provided by or supported by the Council

- MCC has supported numerous Biodiversity Projects that have encouraged volunteering, including:
 - 2021-24 In Our Nature programme
 - Ongoing City of Trees – Citizen Forester Scheme
 - 2021-24 Resilient River Valleys
 - 2021-25 Sow the City – GM Greenspace Initiatives
 - 2024/25 Medlock Species Survival fund project
 - 2025 Park Tastic! events
- Further details for some of the events noted above include:
 - Resilient River Valleys
 - 6461 engaged community members
 - 154 community members regularly volunteering
 - 1237 school children connected with Nature
 - Park Tastic!
 - 54 parks used
 - 300 sessions delivered
 - 18,500 children engaged
 - Medlock Species Survival Fund project
 - 179 Events
 - 2171 event attendees
 - 1691 Volunteers
 - 7454 Volunteer Hours committed

Details of any biodiversity-related funding bid for or received e.g. Green Spaces Fund (and related actions/outcomes)

- 2021 -24: £1.4 Million Resilient River Valleys programme
- 2023 – 2025: £1.2 Million Species Survival Fund Medlock Project
- 2019-2024: £1.5 Million Tree Action MCR Planting Programme
- 2025-26: £300,000 Mersey Valley Way habitat management funding

Progress on producing Management Plans for designated sites (and increase in numbers of sites in active management)

- Detailed HMMPs have been provided for 13 South Manchester sites, and two commissioned in 2025 for Clayton Vale LNR, and Chorlton Ees and Ivy Green LNR.
- In 2021-23 MCC Parks team commissioned 11 annual work plans for Sites of Biological Importance.
- 2020-24 Biodiversity Assessments were provided for all five MCC managed cemeteries.

Positive biodiversity outcomes achieved through planning decisions (in addition to BNG)

- **2022 - Mayfield**

Mayfield is a 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.
- **2022 - Castlefield Viaduct**

A twelve month pilot was opened officially in early 2022, by the National Trust (NT), to explore opportunities to use the grade II listed Castlefield viaduct to create a new multi-functional elevated open space in the City Centre. The aim of the National Trust is to bring the viaduct back into use and transform it into a freely accessible green space. Visitor sessions booked up instantly online and as of end of December NT has engaged 15,915 people since May.
- **2022 - The Glade of Light**

The Glade of Light is a memorial commemorating the victims of the 22 May 2017 terrorist attack at Manchester Arena. A living memorial, the Glade of Light is a tranquil garden space for remembrance and reflection. It features a central white marble ‘halo’, and plants which grow naturally in the UK countryside. 43 new trees have been planted and around the anniversary, every year, the white flowers of a hawthorn tree planted at its centre will bloom. The memorial was officially opened on 10th May 2022.
- **2023 - Poland Street, Ancoats**

The Mobility Hub is an innovative project helping to deliver the public realm strategy within Ancoats. The hub will provide space for resident and visitor parking in a manner that allows more space for public realm and planting, within the Poland Street area. As part of the project trees will be planted from six different species and positioned to define different spaces so pedestrians and cyclists can use the area safely whilst creating places for sitting and relaxing. The southern elevation of the Mobility Hub will consist of pre-grown ‘green’ panels of climbing plants providing a mix of species to increase biodiversity. Construction is due to commence in summer 2023.
- **2023 - Land to the Rear of 354 Wilbraham Road**

The scheme proposes the development of 65 new dwellings. The site would be accessed via an improved access from Wilbraham Road. The scheme also proposes that additional land included in the site edged red be enhanced to deliver grassland habitat. The applicant has revised the landscaping scheme to achieve an 11.86% Biodiversity Net Gain on the site. The increase in BNG has been achieved by uplifting the targeted condition of tree planting on the site from ‘Moderate’ to ‘Good’ through the planting of 87 trees. This exceeds the BNG targets which at the time of granting planning permission were not statutory.
- **2024 - The Coop Live Arena, Etihad Campus**

Located adjacent to the Etihad Stadium, this new events arena will open in June 2024. Green infrastructure enhancements include a green, living wall, improvements to the public realm around the building with trees, planting and

wildflowers to the canal side to improve biodiversity, by creating new habitats and attracting wildlife.

- **2024 - Victoria House and Castings, Portugal Street East SRF**

These two mixed use, residential/commercial sites form part of the Portugal Street East SRF and have both recently had conditions discharged relating to landscaping and biodiversity. These sites play an integral role in helping to green the urban area. The G&BI gains such as the inclusion of a roof garden, the planting of a number of trees (hornbeam and crab apple), shrubs, and bulbs such as allium, are good pollinators and good for biodiversity. Bird and bat boxes have also been included within the proposals, together with public realm improvements and a rain garden. The schemes are a good example of how cumulative small scale improvements can have a significant impact on greening dense urban areas.

Successful securing and implementation of nature-based solutions

- 2018-2023 - MCC managed GrowGreen, a five-year €15million European Commission-funded programme to create climate and water-resilient, healthy and liveable cities by investing in nature-based solutions. One of the key outputs is the City's first bespoke climate resilient park, worth £1.4 Million opened in 2020. The award-winning West Gorton Community park is designed to "drink water" with extensive ongoing monitoring of SUDs enabled features to demonstrate impact.

How has the management of land in Council ownership taken account of the LNRS (in relation to development of its own land, or land which is managed for nature)? (could also refer to progress on producing management plans, increasing number of designated sites in active management)

- The Manchester Biodiversity Strategy was approved in 2022 in advance of the LNRS but was used in a complementary way to inform LNRS development, for example aligning species priorities and over-arching objectives about better management for Nature and increased collaboration.
- A new 10 year Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is in development and will align with the key suite of related natural environment strategies and studies.

Section 2: Our future actions

Local Plan

- Work continues in the development of nature related policies for the new Manchester Local Plan, including specific draft policies for River Valleys, Trees and Woodlands and Biodiversity. A draft local Plan was subject to public consultation in November 2025. Work continues on collating responses in order to shape any possible changes to the Plan.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy

- The New Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy was approved in September 2025, the first to be published in the North of England. The strategy sets out our vision for a greener Greater Manchester, where space for nature to

flourish is grown and enhanced, more people can access and enjoy the natural environment, and the many benefits nature brings are increased for everyone – from supporting mental and physical wellbeing to creating leisure space and supporting biodiversity. The strategy aligns with our own Manchester Biodiversity Strategy

Monitoring - Manchester Biodiversity Strategy Outputs

- We will continue to deliver progress against Biodiversity Strategy objectives and report annually through our established cycle of scrutiny committees with associated publicly accessible reports and information.
- 2025 - MCC co-chair a new Manchester Biodiversity Action Group. The primary goal of the Manchester Biodiversity Action Group (MBAG) is to create a network of professionals and partners dedicated to addressing biodiversity within Manchester and its urban environment.
- MCC recognises the importance of forming Greater Manchester-wide action groups and facilitating discussions to implement effective biodiversity initiatives. However, MBAG will specifically concentrate on projects and evidence relating to biodiversity in Manchester to refine strategies in the area and enhance communication and information sharing.
- The Manchester Biodiversity Action Group will:
 - Oversee the implementation of the Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan.
 - Champion and promote Manchester specific biodiversity and its distinctiveness in an urban setting.
 - Seek opportunities for joint projects and partnership working to deliver actions
 - Facilitate sharing of best-practice and skills
 - Support and provide inspiration for local conservation projects, events and activities
 - Monitor biodiversity and biodiversity action in Manchester and document action delivery.
 - Report back annually on its achievements - MBAG Annual report to be confirmed
 - Integrate with the new LNRS

Section 3: Biodiversity net gain information (for local planning authorities only)

- Over the period from February 2024 to 31 December 2025, six Biodiversity Gain Plans have been approved, where all final required information has been provided (i.e. final metric, biodiversity gain plan and HMMP, where necessary). This is due to provide a total net gain of approximately 10.5 area habitat units and 0.02 hedgerow units.

- Four sites are providing the BNG fully on-site and two involve a mixture of on-site and off-site BNG (allocated to habitat banks at Cledford Lagoons, Cheshire and Redcar, Cleveland). Four approved sites include the provision of “significant” onsite BNG, which will require monitoring over a 30-year period.
- The Council has undertaken significant research to understand the potential for the delivery of BNG both on-site and off-site and to support the development of the emerging Local Plan ([Manchester Biodiversity Net Gain Needs Study | Manchester City Council](#)).
- The Council is an active partner with the other Greater Manchester Local Authorities; Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit and Natural England in collaborating on the future delivery of BNG across the conurbation. This has included strategic work, undertaken by GMEU to evaluate BNG opportunities in each GM Local Authority. Manchester has followed that work on with its own commissioned research as noted above. Work is underway to explore options around the newly established Responsible Body status that GMCA has achieved and how BNG sites may be delivered via that option.
- The Council is evaluating the potential sites identified through the BNG Needs Study to determine the best route and priority for sites to be brought forward for off-site delivery of BNG on Council owned land.
- The Council is nearing the completion of moving to a new cloud-based Regulatory Management and Licensing System (Arcus). The development of the system will look at the opportunity to build in functions that assist in the monitoring and delivery of BNG that is complementary to the system held by GMEU (Exacom).
- The draft Local Plan includes a specific policy – EN5 Biodiversity Net Gain – which seeks to secure the 10% net gain as required by national policy and identifies the need to secure habitat gain within the context of the:
 - Priorities and actions set out in the LNRS
 - Priority habitats identified in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy
- The draft policy also sets out the expectation that off-site BNG should be delivered in the following priority order:
 1. Off site, but as near to the development site as possible, within the boundary of Manchester District and within the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy Network area.
 2. Off site, within the National Character Area 55: Manchester Conurbation, and within the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Network area.
 3. Off site and within the Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Network area.
 4. Off site and within Manchester.
 5. Off site and within Greater Manchester.
 6. Off site, beyond Greater Manchester or via the purchase of Statutory Credits as a last resort.

Section 6: How your policies and actions have helped the Environment

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