

# Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group Annual Conference 2020: Delivering a Greener Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)

## Partners

Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group  
Environment Agency

## Date carried out

11<sup>th</sup> February 2020

## Location

Manchester

## Background

The Greater Manchester Natural Capital Group is one of 48 Local Nature Partnerships around England, and an ambassador for the natural environment.

It is made up of representatives from the public, private and third sectors who work together to protect nature and advise the GMCA on natural environment issues

The group produces evidence that helps shape environmental policy at district and city region levels.

The Natural Capital Group annual conference brings together leading practitioners from across the public, private and third sectors to celebrate successes, find out about new projects being delivered and key activities planned for the next 12 months.

## Themes



Evidence & tools



Healthy rivers



Community engagement



Green infrastructure



Urban



Rural



Water quality



Water quantity

## Project

The purpose of this year's conference was to:

- Showcase recent work of the Natural Capital Group and its partners
- Share lessons learnt from delivering Greater Manchester's Five-Year Environment Plan
- Understand activities required to deliver natural environment priorities
- Learn about research activities and inspirational new projects

## Outcomes

This year's conference had a fantastic turnout. More than 170 delegates from Greater Manchester's environment, health, planning, utilities and transport sectors met to discuss and plan nature-based projects which form part of Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan.

In addition, it featured a number of environmental trailblazers including keynote speakers Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, Professor Dieter Helm, Chair of the Natural Capital Committee and Andy Holden, Natural Environment Strategy Team at Defra.

The conference also saw a series of major announcements from partners, including an investment of more than £1.5m in new tree planting across Greater Manchester as part of Defra's Urban Tree Challenge Fund, and the opening date of the Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) first new garden in nearly two decades, RHS Garden Bridgewater, located in Salford. GMCA also announced a partnership campaign with local environmental organisations including Lancashire Wildlife Trust, City of Trees and Natural England, United Utilities, Royal Horticultural Society, and the Environment Agency. The campaign aims to inspire residents, businesses and policy makers across the region to work together to improve Greater Manchester's environment.

### Learning

Speakers highlighted the UK-wide 25-Year Environment Plan and the lessons learnt so far, as well as the implementation of the Greater Manchester Five-Year Environment Plan launched by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, at the Green Summit in 2019.

Social prescribing – the idea of prescribing nature for physical and mental health benefits – was a particular area of interest at the conference.

Workshops covered five key areas:

1. Managing land for carbon (*City of Trees and Natural England*)
2. Collaborating on the delivery of integrated catchment solutions (*United Utilities and Environment Agency*)
3. Developing a Greater Manchester Nature Recovery Network (*Natural England*)
4. Increasing investment in our natural environment (*GMCA and Environmental Finance*)
5. Embedding green and blue opportunities into social prescribing (*Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership*)

Evaluation of the event showed that over 80% of the delegates found the conference useful, and had increased their knowledge and understanding.



Speakers at the conference included: Krista Patrick (GMCA), Tony Juniper (Natural England), Anne Selby (Lancashire Wildlife Trust) and Chris Matthews (United Utilities)

### Next Steps

Feedback received from seminars and question and answer sessions will inform a future programme of activity, and will highlight any gaps or areas of activity which need to be prioritised.

Initial thoughts are to hold a joint GM Natural Capital Conference bringing together Natural Course and the IGNITION project.

Tony Juniper, Chair of Natural England, said:

*"This was a really positive conference, underlining the power of collaboration between different organisations and sectors. If we are to have any chance at all of halting and reversing the ecological decline that is now so evident, it will be via partnerships."*

*The Natural Capital Group in Greater Manchester is a great example of what we can achieve when we all work together to do our bit for the environment."*

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