



Great Manchester Wetlands NIA Partnership

BRIEFING NOTE

What is Great Manchester Wetlands?



The **Great Manchester Wetlands** is a 48,000 hectare (480 km²) community and natural heritage programme, the aim of which is to deliver an ecological network between the two heavily urbanised areas of Greater Manchester and Merseyside. Stretching from Warrington to Wigan, the wetland landscape it covers includes the mosslands of the South and the post-industrial coalfields to

the North and West, a unique combination of peatscapes and brownfield sites.

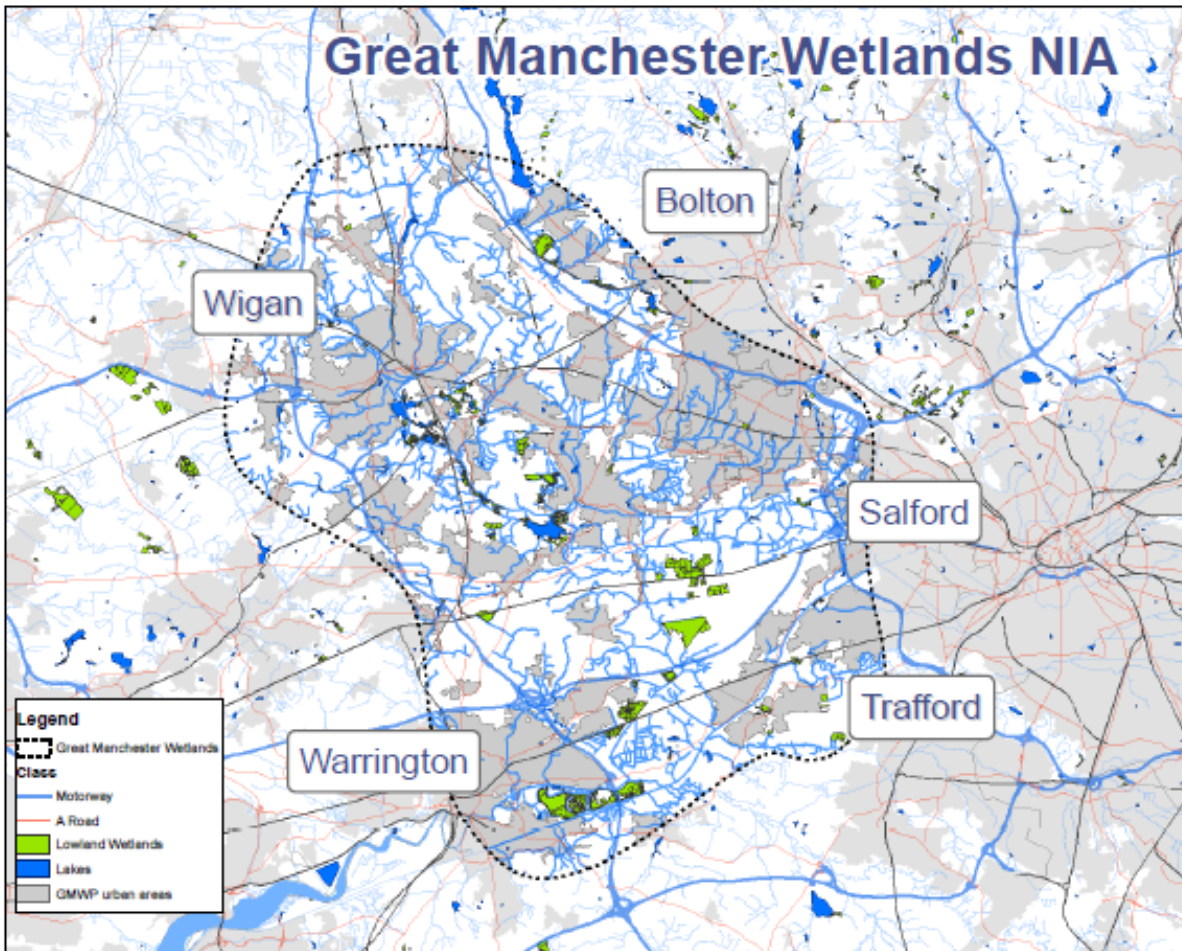
The programme has been developed by a Partnership, formed in 2011, of over 20 local authorities, statutory organisations, businesses, academic institutions, environmental charities and community groups, who are working to deliver improvements to nature and wildlife for the benefit of local communities.

The Partnership works across the Great Manchester Wetlands (GM Wetlands) Nature Improvement Area (NIA) (locally determined in 2013 by the Greater Manchester and Cheshire LNPs). A full list of organisations involved can be found at the end of this briefing note

The Partnership currently focuses on the wetlands within and around Wigan (the Flashes), the mosslands in and around Salford and Warrington (the Mosslands) and the Mersey corridor stretching from Rixton to Warrington, including the Woolston Eyes SSSI (the Mersey Wetlands Corridor). The full area can be seen on the map below.

Whilst the area includes many valuable wildlife sites, the surrounding communities are often in areas of high social deprivation. Enhancing the value of the GM Wetlands for people as well as wildlife is just as important for us. We believe that supporting access and recreation will bring about wellbeing benefits as well as an increasing sense of ownership of the local area.

Additionally, a better functioning natural environment will provide vital services to society such as reducing flood impacts and reducing carbon emissions.



What are we trying to achieve?

The aim of the GM Wetlands Partnership is to deliver a **living landscape** between the two heavily urbanised areas of Greater Manchester and Merseyside.

Our vision is that:

By 2025 Great Manchester Wetlands will be a thriving, resilient and inspirational landscape that delivers real benefits to local communities and the local economy

Our detailed objectives are:

1: To mitigate the impact of environmental pressures by improving species mobility between Lancashire, Cheshire and Greater Manchester.

2: To make a lasting improvement to four of Britain's rarest habitats by restoring key designated sites (SAC, SSSI, LNR) and priority BAP habitats.

3: To improve regional and local connectivity for critical species by creating stepping stones and corridors between habitats and populations.

4: To optimise the ecosystem services provided by all habitats particularly the carbon storage function of lowland raised bog.

5: To develop and implement a shared vision for the project area with key partners, organisations, and local people.

How are we doing this?

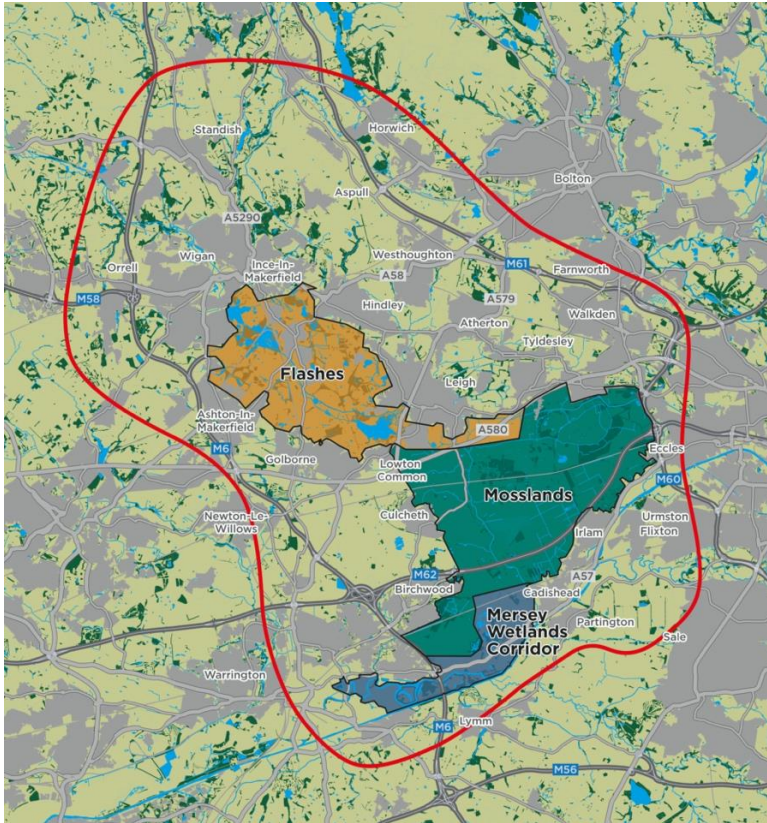
We are identifying wildlife corridors and creating or restoring appropriate and complementary wetland habitat. This is delivering widescale and coherent ecological networks of wetland habitats that will help to buffer ecologically important sites and link up biodiversity hotspots to allow free movement of key species into, out of and between local wildlife sites.

Our vision is for the project to become an exemplar of biodiversity restoration, enhancement and the delivery of landscape-scale ecological networks. Working with landowners and land managers, the landscape will be managed as a whole unit, with sensitive and complementary land management being undertaken.

The ambition of what the Partnership wants to achieve in GM Wetlands is possible because of years of previous investment and effort by individual partners across the NIA, such as Wigan Council's Greenheart, Warrington Borough Council's work at Risley Moss, Lancashire Wildlife Trust's restoration of the mosslands and many others, as well as vital support from local authorities, the Environment Agency and Natural England. The Partnership allows us to work more closely together, more strategically and achieve more.

What has been happening so far?

In the first five years following the Partnership's creation in 2011 partners delivered some £5m of improvements at a range of sites across the NIA and this level of investment has continued. In 2017 we were successful in attracting more extensive funding through a Landscape Partnership Bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund entitled "The Carbon Landscape". This five-year £2.9m programme of improvement includes creation of wetland habitat such as reedbed and wet woodland, restoration of peatlands and improvement and linking of other sites. In addition, it is delivering a major programme of community engagement aimed at reconnecting the community with its valuable wetland heritage which is often little known and with poor access facilities, resulting in benefits in terms of health and skills and a sense of ownership of the landscape. The boundary of the Carbon Landscape project within the GM Wetlands area is shown on the attached map. It covers some 100 square kilometres.



What next?

The partnership has drawn up a strategic plan looking ahead to around 2025. During this period, we will seek to develop a new landscape scale project to build on the work of the Carbon Landscape project, which finishes in 2022. We will embed the outputs, improvements and continuing processes from the Carbon Landscape project into partner organisations.

We will continue to engage and support Greater Manchester's Natural Capital programme and will take up opportunities to adopt self-sustaining investment models to protect and grow the region's natural capital.

We will work with wider partners on areas of mutual interest such as peatland restoration for long term and wide-spread benefit.

We will continue to develop and deliver our partnership-wide project on Species Reintroductions, building on progress made by partners in restoring sites and creating suitable habitat which can once again support plants and animals historically lost from the area, such as the Large Heath (Manchester Argus) butterfly.

We will inform our work through our Technical Group (which includes 5 NW universities) and partners, such as using the outputs from ecological network models.

Organisations involved in GM Wetlands:

NGOs/Charities/Community Groups

- Canal and River Trust
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- City of Trees
- Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles
- Lancashire Wildlife Trust (**Chair and Coordinator**)
- Mersey Rivers Trust
- RSPB
- Woolston Eyes Conservation Group

Local Authorities

- Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
- Salford City Council
- Trafford Council
- Warrington Borough Council
- Wigan Council

Statutory Organisations

- Environment Agency
- Forestry Commission
- Natural England

Businesses

- Peel Land and Property Group
- United Utilities

Academic Institutions

- Edge Hill University
- University of Liverpool
- University of Manchester
- Manchester Metropolitan University
- University of Salford