

The Mosslands Project - The Vision

Final Draft Vision



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Funded by:



Warrington Borough Council



Salford City Council

The Mosslands

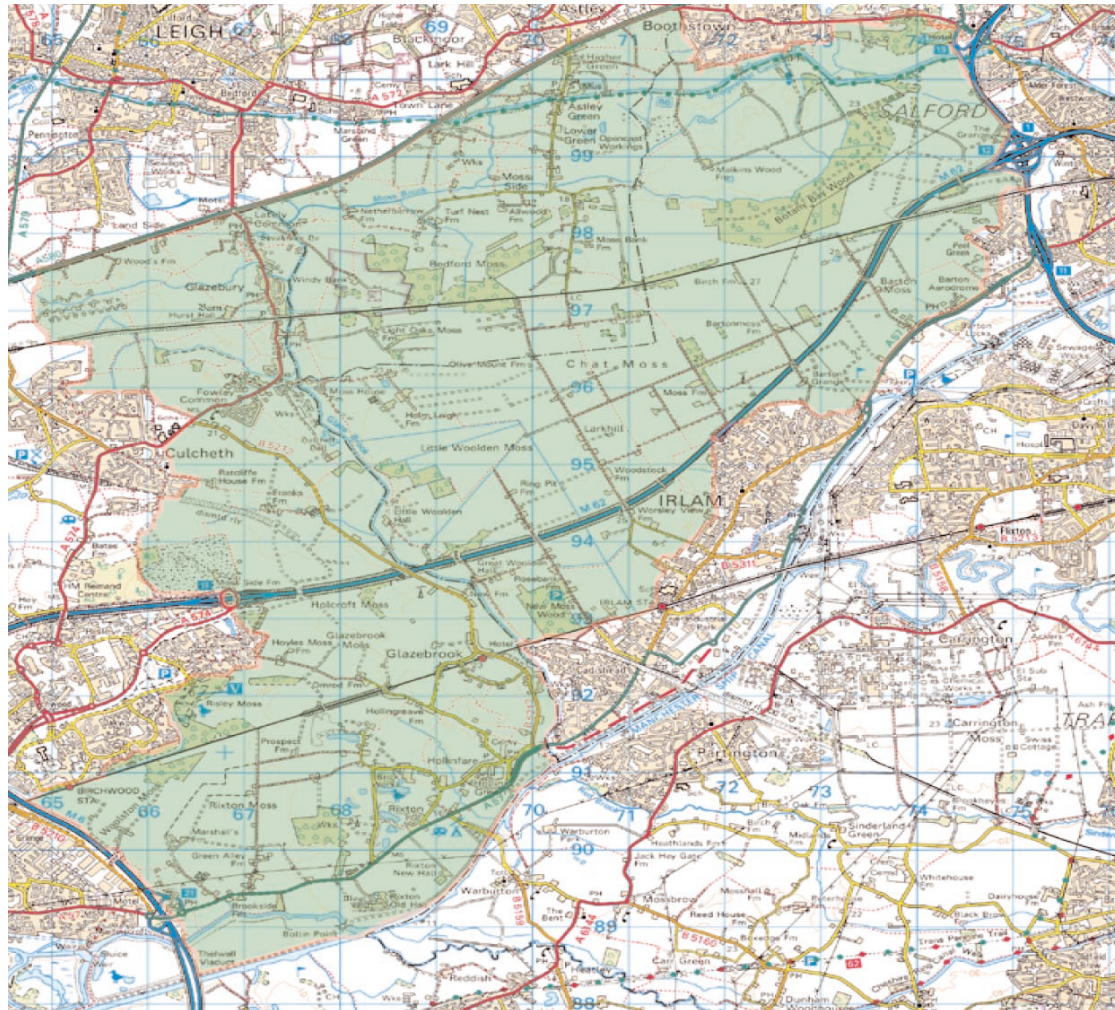
A group of interested parties has come together with the common aim of developing a clear and sustainable way forward for the Mosslands area. This group is called the Mosslands Action Group, and its partners are listed at the back of this document.

The Action Group appointed a team of consultants to produce a Draft Vision for the Mosslands which would aim to find solutions to current conflicts and develop a sustainable land use pattern for the area.

This document presents the consultants' vision for the Mosslands.

Key

 Project Area



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The Mosslands



Coordinated action is needed to halt the decline of the Mosslands landscape and to realise its potential .

Stretching across the administrative boundaries of Salford, Wigan and Warrington, the Mosslands Project area is an urban fringe landscape suffering from economic decline and a general lack of coherence. Public access is currently limited leaving the area isolated from the surrounding communities.

Historically the majority of the Mosslands landscape was covered by lowland raised bog. Following the construction of the railways, the land was drained and improved for agricultural production resulting in the loss of much of this habitat. Today, only remnants of this formerly extensive wetland remain and a number of the remaining sites are designated to protect their nature conservation value.

The Mosslands landscape has a sense of tranquil remoteness which is in sharp contrast to the surrounding urban sprawl. Much of the open and expansive character of

the Mosslands has been protected by its designation as green belt land and it provides a highly valued break in the urban conurbation.

However, the qualities and character of this landscape are under threat. The changing pattern of land ownership and the decline in the viability of agriculture are resulting in an uncoordinated fragmentation of land use. The extent of funding available is influencing the extent to which diversification is taking place and also the uptake of environmental stewardship initiatives. The rise of hobby farming is resulting in an increase in the number of small holdings and the conversion of farm buildings into private dwellings will also have long term implications on the infrastructure of the area. There are increasing development pressures which currently include recreation and minerals extraction and climate change poses an increased flood risk for the area.

Over recent years a number of uncoordinated initiatives have sought to address some of the key issues affecting

the Mosslands but to date this has taken place in an ad hoc manner with no long term vision for the area. If no coordinated action is taken, the fragmentation and decline of this valuable landscape will continue, reducing its potential to deliver a wide range of land uses and provide health, social and educational benefits for local communities.



The Landscape Resource

The Mosslands landscape encompasses a large variety of different land uses and landscape resources including a number of designated sites, cultural heritage sites, distinctive waterway networks and unique opportunities for recreation and leisure activities.



The landscape resource consists of the building blocks or core elements of a landscape which influence its character and qualities. The landscape resource affects the pattern of land use which develops.

The Mosslands project area was originally part of an extensive area of lowland raised bog. Intensive drainage of the area commenced in the latter half of the 19th century to 'reclaim' the land for arable and horticultural production. Field boundaries across much of the landscape are formed by the extensive network of drainage ditches which has created a very distinct open and expansive landscape character. There is a history of mineral extraction mostly peat, clay and sand with some restoration having taken place. More recently trends have seen the fragmentation of agricultural land with commercial turf production equine and leisure interests expanding.

The project area is sparsely

populated and consists of large-scale, open, flat farmland on the rich dark peaty soils of the former mosses. It is generally low-lying with low relief and is mostly below 20m above sea level. A few small remnants of semi-natural mosslands remain which are protected for their biodiversity value but on the whole this is a highly cultivated landscape dissected by a complex drainage network and suffering from severe degradation on the urban fringe.

Historically the Mersey Valley was a natural frontier of impenetrable marshes, which at one time formed the boundary between English Mercia and Danish Northumbria. Urban development has had a significant impact upon the character of the area and its surrounds with the vernacular building material being red brick.

At the current time of 80% of the project area is agricultural land, 5% is used for public enjoyment and recreation, 8% is covered by woodland and 5% is covered by

nature conservation designations. The above percentages combined are in excess of 100% as some areas of land fit within a number of these categories.

Geology, Hydrogeology and Soils

The key issues relating to the geology, hydrogeology and soils of the area are:

Management of surface and ground water interactions: the conservation sites within the project area require high levels of water and low nutrient inputs whilst the adjacent intensive agriculture relies on high inputs of fertiliser nutrients.

Potential contamination of water resources: there are a number of both active and historical landfill sites adjacent to the study area. The older landfill sites developed with a dilute and disperse approach may leak contamination.

Peaty Soils: peaty soils which cover

The Landscape Resource



There has been a dramatic decline in lowland raised bog in Europe since the beginning of the 19th Century giving importance to all remaining active and degraded bogs. Nationally, raised bogs have been classified as a priority habitat under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Since 1800 the surface of undisturbed raised bogs in the UK has declined by approximately 94%, from 95000ha to only 6,000ha.



much of the area are particularly suitable for intensive agriculture. However, high inputs are required for high yields including drainage, fertilisers and pesticides. The application of fertiliser results in heavy weed growth making these soils unsuitable for organic farming.

Peat Extraction and Soil Erosion: peaty soils which have not been fertilised are particularly suited to peat extraction but are susceptible to shrinkage and wastage, during which the peat dries out, oxidises and becomes susceptible to wind erosion and lower managed water levels.

Hydrology and Drainage

The key issues relating to the hydrology and drainage of the area are:

The extensive drainage network: includes over 100km of artificially cut ditches connected to an arterial network of streams, including Moss

Brook and Glaze Brook, which have been enlarged and re-aligned over time and are at risk of flooding due to their relatively narrow floodplains.

Infield underdrainage systems connected to the arterial ditches: covering most of the agricultural land their effectiveness is dependant on maintenance which is the responsibility of individual landowners and therefore varies considerably.

Water level management: controlling water levels is fundamental to most of the land uses within the study area.

Ecology and Biodiversity

The key issues relating to the ecology and biodiversity of the area are:

Unique ecology: the study area has one of the largest concentrations of lowland raised bog habitat in the

northwest of England. There is also the potential to link some of these fragmented sites through the creation of corridors and restoration of current peat extraction sites.

Designated sites: the study area includes the Manchester Mosses Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which comprises of Risley Moss, Astley and Bedford Mosses and Holcroft Moss. These sites are internationally important for their habitats and wildlife. Existing legislation requires the protection and enhancement of their biodiversity value and limits any development which may have an adverse impact on them.

Agricultural land use: A number of the existing farming practices including changes in sowing patterns, the application of high levels of chemicals and the expansion of turf growing could all have adverse impacts on wildlife. However, some existing farming practices help to maintain important farmland bird species.

The Landscape Resource



It is estimated that approximately 90% of the agricultural land within the survey area is Grades 1 and 2, with a significant area being Grade 1.

The mosslands are the most important areas within Greater Manchester for farmland birds.

Recreation pressures: if not sustainably managed, recreational use of nature conservation sites can have an adverse impact on the habitats and wildlife present.

Agriculture

The key issues, trends and options for agriculture within the area are:

Protected agricultural land: approximately 90% of the study area is Grade 1 and 2 quality agricultural land (DEFRA National Land Classification Plans). The planning framework affords protection to the best and most versatile agricultural land.

Historical land use: extensive horticultural production with crops sold into the Manchester wholesale market and further afield. The loss of the wholesale markets in the

1950s and the rise of the supermarkets resulted in a decline in the number of horticultural growers in the area. By 1970 horticultural production on the Mosslands had largely ceased and it is now limited to a small number of growers.

Current land use: mainly arable cropping, turf production and potatoes with some limited horticulture in the west of the Mosslands. Field sizes are generally greater than 10 hectares

Land ownership: although ownership is currently concentrated in a small number of holdings. Small areas of land are increasing being let or sold for hobby farming, equestrian use or turf growing leading to a fragmentation of land use.

Indirect impacts on agriculture: there is increased pressure for development on the urban fringe and also for further minerals extraction. There is also a perception that the land management and in particular the water and nutrient levels required to maintain nature

conservation sites are not compatible with agricultural production.

Agricultural options: need to be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable, respect the physical characteristics of the area and maintain the drainage network.

Current Situation: without intervention farm sizes will continue to increase and "extensive" arable cropping will be the main agricultural land use. The continuing demand for horse grazing and for farm buildings suitable for conversion to dwellings will continue to have a major impact on agriculture. The risk of drainage systems falling into disrepair will continue and it is predicted that the recent changes to Farm Subsidy Payments will have a beneficial impact on the wildlife and biodiversity of the study area.

There is a strong horticultural heritage in the area. Increasing public concerns regarding health and



The Landscape Resource

New crops for the emerging market of Biodiesel production could be alternatives to existing crops such as wheat, straw and oilseed rape.



the source and quality of produce has been reflected by the rise in Farmers Markets and farm shops selling locally grown produce. Local farmers are open to diversification provided that it is sustainable and there is the potential to link the production of quality fresh vegetables and salad crops with local authorities promoting the educational role with schoolchildren. However, significant investment in machinery, fixed equipment and labour would be required in addition to potential investment in accommodation for a large migrant labour force. Organic produce attracts a significant premium but is not economically viable as it would be too labour intensive.

The production of biomass for electricity generation or biodiesel is a recent and significant development in the agricultural sector. Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) could be grown as an alternative to crops such as wheat, barley and oilseed rape forming a separate crop enterprise on individual farms along with reduced

areas devoted to arable crops. SRC and Miscanthus are eligible for Entry Level Stewardship grants and growing them on a small scale would not necessarily have an adverse impact on the nature conservation interests of the area. If sufficient grant aid could be obtained and specialist contractors engaged to harvest the crop and market/sell to power generators, the economies of scale could make small scale production on individual farms viable. Growing SRC on a large scale would make maintenance of the drainage ditches more difficult and it would be difficult to prevent the spread of these species into adjacent nature conservation areas.

Public Enjoyment and Access

The key issues relating to public enjoyment and recreation within the area are:

Public access: existing rights of way are limited within Salford; the East

Lancashire Road, the railways and motorways form barriers to access as crossing points across are limited. Most of the access flows along farm tracks from Irlam and Cadishead and there is little existing parking provision. The existing footpath network is far more extensive within the Warrington and Wigan parts of the study area with health walks and public footpaths enabling access to local nature reserves, country parks and woodland areas. The public access network currently includes; Public Rights of Way - footpaths and bridleways, the Timberland Trail, Green Access Routes /Networks and Health Walks.

Existing amenities: within the project area there are a range of existing facilities which deliver a number of functions including 'nature reserve', and 'health centre'. Existing facilities include: Risley Moss Local Nature Reserve which has around 40 to 50 thousand visitors a year including school groups and runs a series of events through the year.

The Landscape Resource



Wigan's Greenheart Regional Park will lie closely to the north of the study area. Other facilities include museums at the former Astley Green Colliery and Barton Aerodrome. The tourism potential of existing facilities could be increased through a coordinated approach to their planning, management and promotion.

Proposed developments: current proposals include a small scale recreation and education based development at a local garden centre which will be linked to existing facilities.

Local and Cultural Heritage

The key issues relating to the local and cultural heritage of the area are:

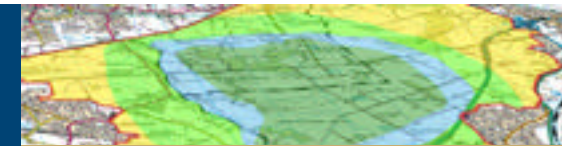
Natural Heritage: the area has a rich natural heritage- public access and knowledge of which is limited. There is excellent potential to link the remnant sites of lowland raised bog with the active peat extraction

sites to educate visitors on the environmental impact of this process and the potential benefits which can be achieved through actively planned and managed restoration of these sites to nature conservation after use.

Industrial Heritage: within the three local authority areas there are a number of local attractions which relate to the industrial heritage of the area. Attractions include the Bridgewater Canal and Astley Green Colliery Museum. The Bridgewater Canal was Britain's first commercial waterway and is a scheduled Ancient Monument. The need for diversification of the areas economy provides opportunities for the development of tourism and recreation based activities which exploit the potential of the area's heritage.

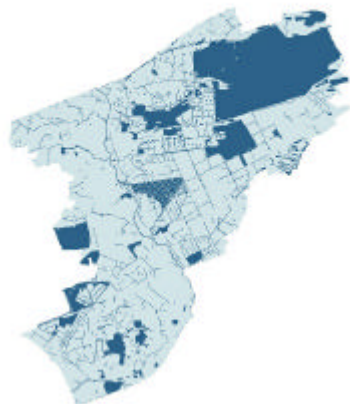


Functional Landscapes



'The Green Infrastructure Unit analysed what the Mosslands landscape is used or managed for - its functionality - and mapped those functions based on categories within the Countryside Agency's 'Countryside in and Around Towns'.

Mosslands Project
A Health Centre: Potential Functionality Map



The maps produced by the functionality assessment help illustrate where current landscape functions exist and where potential opportunities for developing each function, in line with local policy requirements, are strongest. The following summarises the findings for a number of the categories.

A Bridge to the Country

Key Words: public access, networks, routes, areas

- Railway line and motorway limits movement between north and south
- The potential restoration of two active landfill sites offers larger areas for future public access

A Gateway to the Town

Key Words: first impression, sense of place, transport infrastructure

- Views into the mosslands from the main roads and motorways are limited with visual gateways being primarily motorway bridges, giving the area a "hidden" nature

A Health Centre

Key Words: accessible sites, mental and physical health, active and passive recreation

- Most publicly accessible sites are to the periphery of area - closer to the urban population
- Noticeable 'gaps' in the public rights of way network around Botany Bay Wood

A Recycling and Renewable Energy Centre

Key Words: resource management, pollution control, land recycling, reducing waste

- This function illustrated the high density of drains and watercourses in the area. Water resource management is important for agriculture and nature conservation management.

A Productive Landscape

Key Words: farming, diversification, rural business

- Virtually all land is Class 1 or 2 agricultural land
- The Agricultural Classification of land as 1 or 2 masks differences across the area with some land suffering from under-use and other areas being used for turf and peat extraction rather than food crops
- Countryside Stewardship Schemes are focussed mainly in Wigan district -none in Warrington borough
- Very few other agri-environmental schemes present

Heritage and Cultural Legacy

Key Words: sense of place, landscape elements, link to the past, built and natural heritage

- Larger areas identified are attributable to 'natural heritage' - mature woods and lowland raised bog

A Nature Reserve

Key Words: encounter nature, protection and enhancement, designated and non-designated sites

- Mix of local, national and international biodiversity designations present
- The potential restoration of two peat extraction sites to a conservation afteruse offers an opportunity to build on the existing areas lowland raised bog

Multifunctional Landscapes

By combining complementary functions, multifunctional maps or themes were developed that pull together the key priorities within the strategies and policies that apply to the area. These multifunctional themes have been integrated into the zoning carried out in the visioning process and are taken forward in the next sections.

The Visioning Process

Bringing together all strands of the work, four land use zones were identified to guide future planning, land use and management across the Mosslands.

The visioning process identified a number of potential conflicts between different interests in the area. In response to a questionnaire over half the responding organisations identified major potential for conflict between nature conservation and minerals extraction interests. Leisure/access interests were identified as having potential for major conflict with nature conservation interests and minor conflict with agricultural and economic interests in the area. Other interests which were viewed as conflicting were new development opportunities and nature conservation, economic and environmental interests.

Although potential conflicts have been identified, these interests are not necessarily mutually exclusive if land use is planned and managed in a sustainable and coordinated manner. Within the mosslands habitats include reedbeds and wet woodland. On drier sites a mix of woodland and heathland habitat may develop. Woodland is capable of absorbing large numbers of

people and is excellent for all types of recreational pursuits. By managing the different habitats and recreational uses within them potential conflicts can be minimised.

In order to minimise potential conflicts between the different functions of the landscape, the consultants have utilised spatial planning to develop two alternative visions for the mosslands.

The key stages of the visioning process can be summarised as:

- (1) Collect data on the relevant strategies, local planning policies etc. to determine the priorities and goals in the mosslands area
- (2) Map where the various functions of the landscape, that relate to these goals are currently working - functionality mapping.
- (3) From this mapping, define a set of “zones” with varying functions
- (4) Map these zones across the

project area according to the following policy emphasis:

(a) **zero intervention**: leave to market forces. This illustrates the potential conflicts which will occur if no action is taken.

(b) the **maximum wetland vision**: act to prioritise important biodiversity sites. in policy terms it is imperative that EU designated sites of high biodiversity are protected and enhanced.

(c) the **integrated vision**: act according to wider sustainable development principles- a more balanced approach which recognises the biodiversity value of the area but looks to balance the existing potential social, economic and environmental interests

The zones would have a primary function guiding their planning and management. A range of compatible land uses and functions would be present in each zone.

The Visioning Process



In order to create a spatial vision for the Mosslands, broad land use 'zones' have been created which reflect the current and potential uses of the land as well as responding to the needs of local communities and land managers.

Four land use zones have been defined.

By identifying different land use/ land management zones the consultants have sought to enable the sustainable management of the area in the long term. This approach would encourage the development of a matrix of differing but compatible land uses and functions within each zone. No land uses would be viewed as mutually exclusive and all could coexist within an integrated landscape framework which focused management of the differing functions and land uses on the broad principals of each zone.

The zones which have been identified have then been used to develop alternative visions for the mosslands.

The following pages detail the principals that are to be adopted within each of the four land use zones. A brief description of the zones follows:



Biodiversity Zone:

The primary purpose of this zone is to enable the long-term protection and enhancement of the remnant mosslands which are designated for their international, national and local biodiversity value.

Hydrological Management Zone:

The primary purpose of this zone is to protect and enhance the biodiversity zone. Within this zone, land management agreements could be sought to ensure that drainage and land are managed in ways which will not harm the biodiversity value of the remnant mosslands and which will facilitate their management. The exact width of the zone will vary around the perimeter of the biodiversity zone according to local conditions e.g. peat characteristics, drainage network and topography, and typically this is likely to be in the order of 200m-400m. The outer boundary of the zone would always tend to follow an element of the arterial drainage network as this is where water levels can be most easily controlled e.g. through ditch/drain blocking.

Agricultural Zone:

Our vision for agriculture is for a productive landscape with areas of intensive management within the Agricultural Zone and more environmentally sensitive agriculture within the Hydrological Management Zone. Diversification of the agricultural economy should also be encouraged across these zones.

Public Enjoyment and Access Zone:

The primary purpose of this zone is to meet the needs of the surrounding urban communities. A wide range of both active and passive leisure/access facilities could be established and linked to existing sites. By concentrating zones of public enjoyment along existing access routes and adjacent to population centres, the more sensitive landscapes of the biodiversity zone can be protected. existing facilities could be enhanced and linked to the new sites.

Biodiversity Zone



Primary Focus

- Protect and enhance the remnant mosslands (Manchester Mosses SAC) designated for their international, national and local biodiversity value
- Assist the delivery of UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets for the restoration of lowland raised bogs
- Increase knowledge and understanding of the mosslands landscape
- Secure the future of key farmland birds

Land Cover and Land use

- A mosaic of wildlife habitats (transitional habitats from raised bog to lagg fen/wet woodland)
- Primarily a combination of education, passive recreation and nature conservation
- No land uses will be excluded but all must be planned and managed to protect and enhance the biodiversity value of the land within this zone

Functions of the Landscape

The extent of the biodiversity zone is loosely based on the areas of land where existing and potential nature reserve, heritage and cultural legacy functions are concentrated and it would deliver these functions in addition to providing opportunities for public enjoyment and recreation.

Requirements

The establishment of a biodiversity zone could be delivered through an integrated area wide Environmental Stewardship Scheme covering the whole of the Mosslands project area. This scheme could link farms/land across the project area enabling the more intensive farming of the proposed agricultural zones to be offset by the creation of new areas for nature conservation, education and passive recreation linking the remaining designated sites within the biodiversity zone. Such a scheme may require the input of additional resources e.g. funding, manpower and local support.

Issues

Extent of funding available for environmental stewardship and diversification
Some of the peat extraction sites not conditioned for restoration to nature conservation
Need for renegotiation of the restoration conditions to achieve a nature conservation afteruse.



Hydrological Management Zone



Primary Focus

- Protect and facilitate the management of the lowland raised bog at the heart of the biodiversity zone
- Enable the control of water levels and water quality entering the biodiversity zone
- Control land use

Land Cover and Land use

- Primarily a mosaic of environmentally sensitive agriculture, nature conservation and passive recreation
- Habitats could include extensive grassland, rush-pasture and mire habitats. Some of the grassland habitats would benefit from specific grazing and/or cutting regimes, for hay or stock rearing. Ideally a vegetated cover should be maintained at all times.
- No land uses will be excluded but all must be planned and managed to facilitate the hydrological management of this and the adjacent biodiversity zone

Functions of the Landscape

The Hydrological Management Zone includes a range of existing functions including the productive landscape. In addition to delivering this existing function, this zone would also deliver health centre and nature reserve functions and could promote the diversification of the agricultural economy.

Requirements

A Hydrological Management Zone could be established by controlling land use through land management agreements with landowners. These agreements could form part of a Mosslands Integrated Environmental Stewardship Scheme but may require additional resources.

Issues

- Need to determine most appropriate way of managing water levels to achieve the project's agriculture, biodiversity and recreation objectives
- Need to reach agreement with all concerned parties
- Need to determine how desired water level management is to be achieved
- Potential pollution of ground water resource from older landfill sites
- Establishing the final extent of zone would require detailed assessment and planning



Agriculture Zone



Primary Function

- Re-establish a viable and sustainable rural economy
- Link to social, health and environmental benefits
- Maintain biodiversity protection through agricultural practices

Land use

- Small scale biomass production and microgeneration for electricity generation and biodiesel
- Extensive arable cropping
- Re-establish salad/vegetable growing
- Diversification of the agricultural economy could see the establishment of educational and tourism land uses within this zone.
- No land uses will be excluded but all must be planned and managed to create a viable and sustainable rural economy and provide social, health and environmental benefits

Functions of the Landscape

The agricultural zone covers much of the existing agricultural land away from the urban fringe. The land in this zone will be revitalised to once again deliver the function of a productive landscape. Although it is limited in extent in reality environmentally sensitive agriculture would also occur within the Hydrological Management zone.

Requirements

In order to develop biomass production an assessment of the impact of establishing monocultures on drainage and biodiversity may be required. To re-establish salad/vegetable production new local and sustainable markets would be required and investment in infrastructure (pack houses/cooling systems, machinery, marketing). By establishing large scale growers cooperatives it may be possible to provide a range of crops and continuity of production throughout the year. Some form of catalyst may also be needed to provide the initial impetus for growers to join the cooperatives.

Issues

- Extent of funding available for diversification
- Need to establish sustainable markets for agricultural produce
- Development pressures, leading to land being transferred into residential and "horsiculture" use, rather than continuing as primarily productive land.



Public Enjoyment and Access Zone



Primary Function

- Reduce pressure of urban fringe on the biodiversity core and agricultural zones by diverting recreational use into areas of lesser sensitivity
- Provide health and social benefits

Land Cover and Land use

- A series of interconnecting green spaces providing a wide range of opportunities for active and passive recreation within an integrated access network that includes strategic access route and trails
- A linear access/leisure zone along Glaze brook.
- Remodel Glaze brook to create a more natural and responsive environment with seasonal water meadows, reedbeds and willow planting to increase its biodiversity and amenity value

Functions of the Landscape

The extent of the Public Enjoyment and Access Zone is loosely based on the areas of land with existing and potential health centre, bridge to the country, heritage and cultural legacy and nature reserve functions and it could deliver all of these functions in addition to providing opportunities for diversification and thus delivering the engine for regeneration function.

Requirements

If the proposed Salford Forest Park scheme was ever to be approved, it could provide a catalyst for further recreation/leisure investment and significant access improvements in the area. Irrespective of this, the area retains significant potential for greater access and public enjoyment. The remodelling of Glaze brook would need the engagement of the Environment Agency and could be included within a Mosslands Integrated Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

Issues

Extent of funding available for diversification into tourism and recreation

Existing access issues need to be resolved e.g. lack of public roads

The establishment of the nearby Wigan Greenheart Regional Park could bring an opportunity to link the Mosslands area with a recognisable brand identity to encourage visitor interest.



Zero Intervention- “do nothing” approach

The landscape is a vital part of our natural and man-made environment. During the latter part of the last century we have witnessed its vulnerability in the face of economic growth and social change. Often, we have failed adequately to predict, recognise or deal with the impact of new development. (Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, LVIA)



If no co-ordinated land-use planning occurs and the current trends continue, the fragmentation and decline of this landscape will proceed unchecked. This process will reduce the landscapes value and neglect its potential to deliver a whole range of land uses and opportunities for local communities. Pressure for further development and minerals extraction will continue to degrade the landscape and urban fringe issues, including fly tipping, will become an increasing problem without active and co-ordinated management.

This will lead to further sales of land exacerbating the decline of farming businesses and threatening the long term viability of agricultural activity in the area.

The decreasing viability of agriculture is likely to lead to further farm diversification into leisure and access based activities. If these new land uses are not actively managed and planned, land use

conflicts could occur between these different interests.

If the current trend for large scale intensive arable and turf growing continues in close proximity to the remnant lowland raised bog sites, the differing management requirements of these two land uses mean conflicts of interest are likely to occur. Without a coordinated and sustainable approach to their planning and management, the potential benefits and additional functions which could be provided through careful spatial planning and integrated management will be lost.

The lack of access provision will continue to limit access uses to the periphery of the study area where access to existing facilities including Risley Moss is established and along the internal access routes where equestrian activities are likely to continue to increase. This will create a very fragmented pattern of land use.





The zero intervention approach does not coordinate the functional landscape units identified by the GIU unit. Conflicts between the different interests in the area would continue, development and change would continue in a piecemeal style and fragmentation of land use and the loss of landscape character would be the inevitable result.

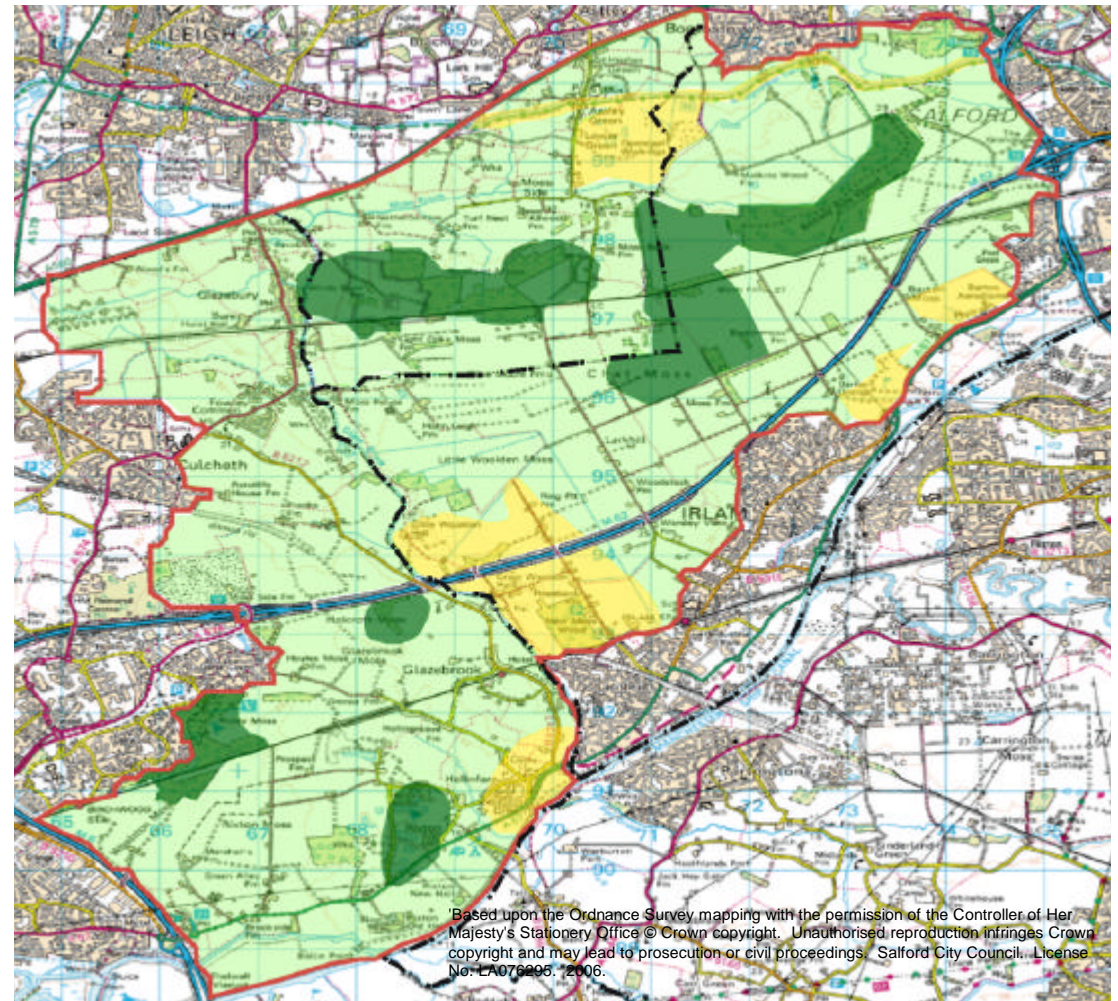
Zero Intervention- Land Use Plan

Zero Intervention Land Use Plan

The following predictions of land use development within the Mosslands project area are based on the assumption that no co-ordinated land use planning occurs and the current trends in agriculture, land ownership, peat extraction, funding and tourism continue.

Key

-  Biodiversity Zone
-  Hydrological Management Zone
-  Agriculture Zone
-  Public Enjoyment and Access Zone



Maximum Wetland Vision

Maximum Wetland Vision

A radiating pattern from the maximum area of protection will ensure that there is increased protection for the Mossland Heartland areas in the future.



The aim of this vision scenario is to provide a maximum level of protection to the sites of nature conservation and biodiversity value in particular the SAC sites and to maximise the area restored to this land use.

In order to achieve this the Biodiversity Zone has been extended to create one central zone which links all of the existing SAC sites, remnant lowland raised bogs and existing peat extraction sites. This vision is not an integrated approach and suggests the establishment of four distinct zones. An extensive Hydrological Management Zone would be created surrounding the Biodiversity Zone to ensure that the high water levels and low nutrient levels required to conserve and enhance the sites within this zone could be maintained. By extending these zones, the distance between the central sites of existing and potential biodiversity value, intensive agriculture and recreation would increase.

This approach would create a simplified radial pattern with an agricultural zone outside the Hydrological Management Zone and then adjacent to the surrounding urban areas a Public Enjoyment and Access Zone. The focus of this vision is the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and whilst the simplified radial zones would afford a high level of protection they do not fully reflect the character of the landscape or the existing land uses. It is unlikely that agriculture could remain viable if constrained within the proposed pattern and as the extended biodiversity zone covers a much larger area the resources required to maintain this land use pattern would be considerable.

The positioning of the Public Enjoyment and Access Zone on the periphery of the project area could facilitate access from the surrounding conurbations providing the dual functions of 'bridge to the country' and 'gateway to the town'. This would enable the provision of





new access and leisure facilities in close proximity to local communities fulfilling the and 'health centre' functions and creating opportunities for the diversification of urban fringe farmland. This vision provides for an extensive public enjoyment and access zone. If some form of major access and leisure development were ever to receive planning permission on land near Botany Bay Wood, this could act as a catalyst for further diversification of the agricultural economy into recreation, leisure or tourism. If the current trend for equine activities continues to expand a blurring of the boundary between the Public Enjoyment and Access Zone and the Agriculture Zone could occur, as 'horsiculture' expands across both zones interspersed with agriculture and other tourism, leisure and access uses.

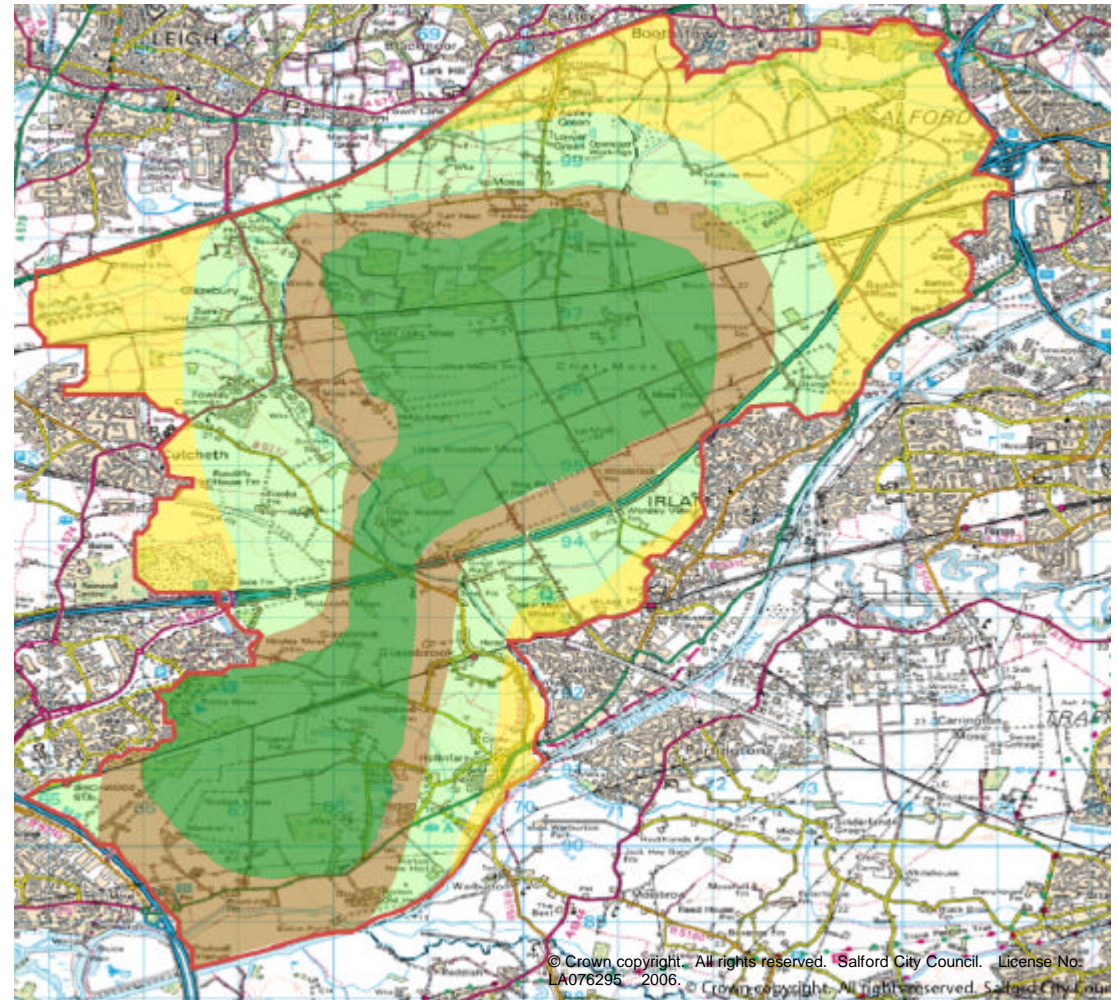
Maximum Wetland Vision- Land Use Plan

Maximum Wetland Land Use Plan

To ensure the maximum protection of the remnant lowland raised bog sites a Hydrological Management or "buffer" zone must be defined around them .

Key

-  Biodiversity Zone
-  Hydrological Management Zone
-  Agriculture Zone
-  Public Enjoyment and Access Zone



The Integrated Vision

The Integrated Vision

It is time to reclaim the mosslands landscape for the benefit of all.



Reclaiming the Landscape

The integrated vision for the mosslands seeks to 'reclaim the landscape'. In the past this land was reclaimed from the mosses for agricultural use and now it is time to reclaim it for the benefit of all. It is time to develop a sustainable land use pattern for the future. In order to establish such a pattern there is a need to:

- Enable the diversification of the agricultural economy by engendering local support, and facilitating funding for the significant investment required.

- Assess the impact of establishing monocultures on drainage and biodiversity prior to developing biomass production as an alternative crop.

- Secure the long term viability of agriculture by establishing new and sustainable markets for locally branded, high value products, reducing food miles and re-establishing local pride in the farming industry. To re-establish salad/vegetable production, investment in infrastructure and the establishment

of large scale growers cooperatives would also be required.

- Realise the potential of this landscape to act as a "green lung" for the urban conurbation by providing innovative interpretation facilities and integrated access improvements. This could increase usage and understanding of the landscape and promote the engagement of local communities in its ongoing management.

- Engage the Environment Agency in remodelling Glaze Brook to create a more natural, responsive environment and a linear access/ leisure zone. The zone could include seasonal water meadows, reedbeds and willow planting to increase biodiversity and amenity value as part of a Mosslands Integrated Environmental Stewardship Scheme.

- Prevent the loss of further remnant lowland raised bog sites and enable their enhancement by establishing Biodiversity Zones and Hydrological Management Zones. These zones could be established by controlling land use through land management

agreements with landowners as part of a Mosslands Integrated Environmental Stewardship Scheme. Additional resources e.g. funding for manpower or infrastructure may be required.

- Secure the future of farmland birds on the Mosslands through appropriate management of the farmed landscape.

The primary function of each zone is clear but within this integrated vision the multifunctional aspects of the landscape will be maximised with a range of land uses occurring within each zone. The boundaries of the proposed zones should be seen as merging with each other and not as clearly defined lines on a map.

The mosslands landscape has the potential to demonstrate sustainability in action through the establishment of multifunctional land uses that deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. It is time to 'reclaim the landscape'.





The Integrated Vision - Land Use Plan

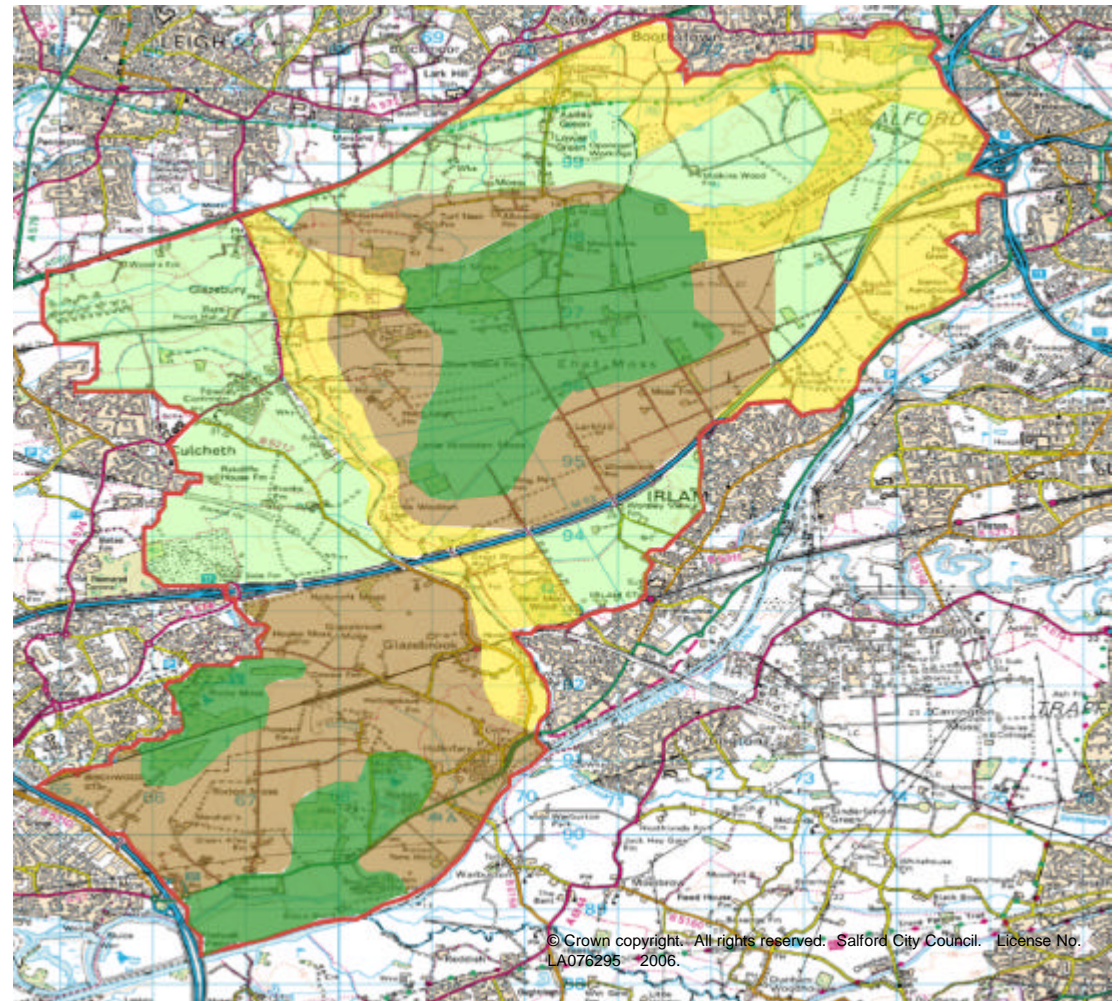
An Integrated Land use Plan

The vision for the Mosslands Project area is of an integrated land use plan which establishes a number of land use zones for which the primary land use and functions are clearly defined. The location of these zones has been designed to reduce potential conflicts between the differing land uses. The proposed zones are:

- Mosslands Heartland or Biodiversity Core
- Leisure/Access
- Agriculture
- Hydrological Management Zone.

Key

	Biodiversity Zone
	Hydrological Management Zone
	Agriculture Zone
	Public Enjoyment and Access Zone



Project Partners

Project Partners:-

Red Rose Forest-Community Forest Centre, Dock Office, Trafford Road, Salford Quays, Salford, M50 3XB

Salford City Council-Civic Centre, Chorley Road, Swinton, M27 5BY

Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council-Civic Buildings, New Market Street, Wigan, WN1 1RP

Warrington Borough Council-Town Hall, Warrington, WA1 1UH

Government Office North West -City Tower, Piccadilly Plaza, Manchester, M1 4BE

Natural England North West Region-3rd Floor Bridgewater House, Whitworth Street, Manchester, M1 6LT

North West Development Agency-Cheshire Office, Brew House, Wilderspool, Greenalls Avenue, Warrington, WA4 6HL

The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside-499-511 Bury Road, Bolton BL2 6DH

The Mersey Forest-Risley Moss, Ordnance Avenue, Birchwood, Warrington, WA3 6QX

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit-Ryecroft Hall, Manchester Road, Audenshaw, Tameside, M34 2GF

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