
Report to: Green Economy Panel

Date: 17 April 2018

Subject: **Green and Blue Infrastructure**

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1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to update the Panel on progress to develop a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan for the Leeds City Region.

2. Information

Background

- 2.1. The Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board provided a mandate in January 2016 to refresh the City Region approach to the delivery of green and blue infrastructure. The previous approach was adopted in 2010.
- 2.2. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan (GBI Strategy and Delivery Plan) was requested in light of the 2015 Boxing Day floods that struck the City Region. The LEP Board, in providing the mandate for the refresh, acknowledged that while the primary focus was the mitigation and adaptation of future flood events, implementation of green and blue infrastructure measures can deliver multiple benefits across a wide range of areas.
- 2.3. The significance of the GBI Strategy and Delivery Plan to the City Region is reflected in it being a named delivery plan of the Leeds City Region Strategic Economic Plan (SEP). In addition to alignment with the existing SEP the GBI Strategy and Delivery Plan must contribute towards addressing the key challenges¹ identified for delivery by the emerging Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy and policy framework.

¹ The key challenges were identified as holding back the economy and constraining growth by the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board. The key challenges are: the productivity gap is

- 2.4. The environment and energy are identified in the emerging Leeds City Region Strategic Framework as a key policy area that will contribute to delivering against the key challenges identified. The table below sets out how the GBI Strategy and Delivery Plan will contribute to achieving the key challenges.

Key challenges for the City Region	How can the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Plan help to tackle these?
Productivity gap is increasing	<p>By supporting the key drivers of productivity including skills, innovation, investment and enterprise by creating new business and upskilling opportunities.</p> <p>By enhancing the City Region's attractiveness and profile by raising the quality of developments and town / city centres, and improving an accessible green and blue infrastructure network.</p> <p>By providing the environment that enables businesses to attract talent and investment.</p>
Innovation and research and development are very low	By connecting green and blue infrastructure expertise in universities and other institutions to business growth and the development of key projects e.g. energy, planning, engineering, construction.
Living standards have stalled	<p>By boosting quality of place, leisure and amenity aspects of quality of life and living standards.</p> <p>By encouraging high quality development, reducing flood risk on businesses, and supporting business and jobs growth.</p>
Stubborn deprivation exists	<p>By prioritising access to, and improvement of, green and blue infrastructure in areas of deprivation and poor health.</p> <p>By creating opportunities for work experience, employment and apprenticeships.</p> <p>By improving air quality, mental health and physical activity.</p>

increasing; innovation and research and development are very low; living standards have stalled; stubborn deprivation persists.

- 2.5. Green and blue infrastructure continues to be of importance to the City Region and this is reflected in the emerging thinking around the Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy being developed by the Combined Authority.
- 2.6. The Strategy was approved by this Panel in February 2017 and the LEP Board in March 2017. The Delivery Plan is scheduled to be approved (subject to a recommendation for approval by this Panel) during 2018 at meetings of the LEP and Combined Authority Boards.

Strategy

- 2.7. The Strategy established a vision, five interconnected aims and seven priorities. These can be seen in Figure 1.

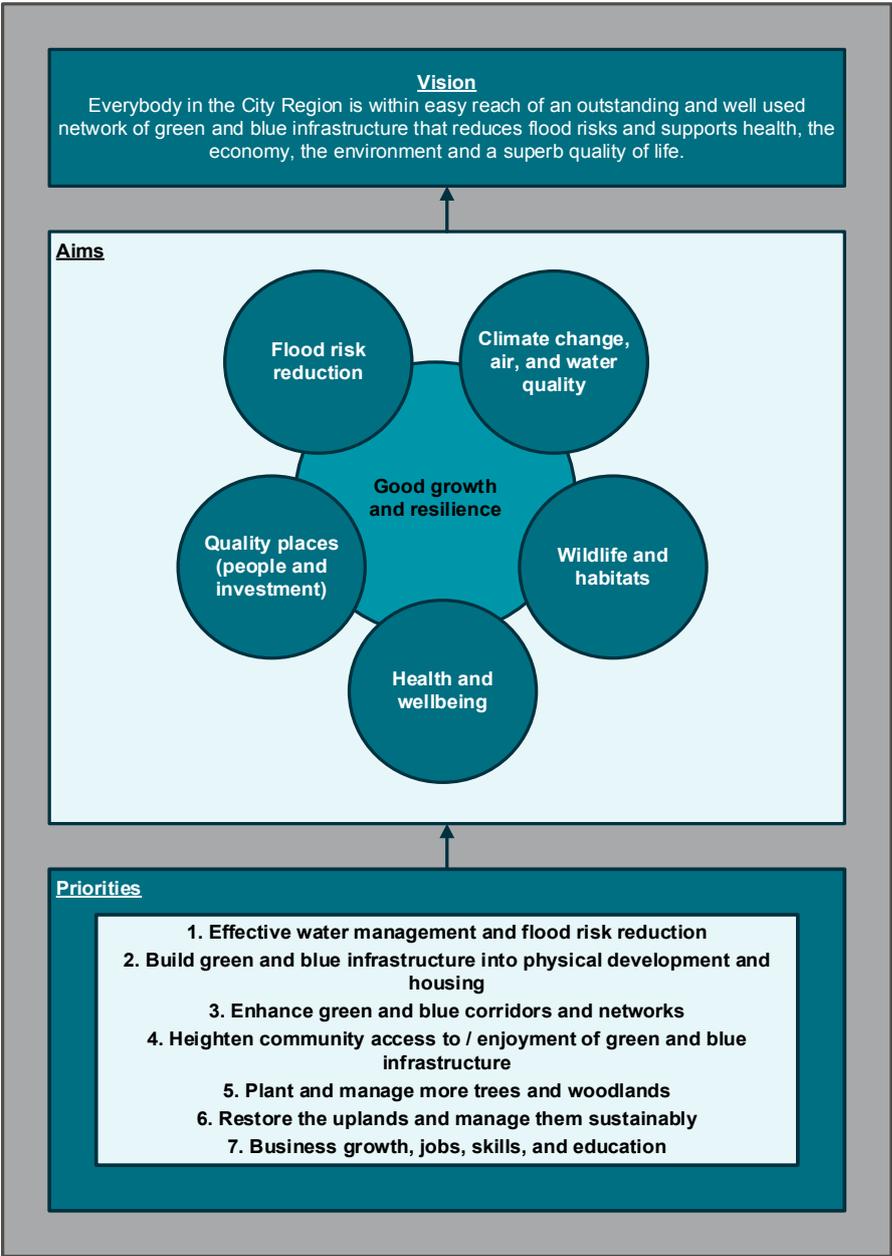


Figure 1. GBI Strategy vision, aims and priorities

- 2.8. The vision, interconnected aims, and priorities were developed in consultation with over 50 organisations from across the City Region with an interest or influence over the delivery of green and blue infrastructure measures.
- 2.9. From the priorities more detail is provided through 27 different action areas. These reflect specific areas where action will be focused and where specific actions will be developed within the Delivery Plan.
- 2.10. It is unrealistic to think that the Combined Authority will be able to deliver the entirety of the GBI Strategy and Delivery Plan. As such the successful delivery of the vision, aims and priorities will only be achieved with the buy-in and engagement from stakeholders from within and without the sector. This factor was acknowledged in the Strategy and as such the development of the Delivery Plan has been led by a convening partner for each priority.

Delivery Plan

- 2.11. The role of the convening partner for each of the Strategy's seven priorities was, to bring together the relevant partners, collate current and planned actions, and identify future interventions. This approach was designed to build and widen ownership and to break the task into manageable (but still connected) components. It has been successful in doing this for the majority of priorities and a wide range of stakeholders have been involved in the process. In areas where this approach has been less successful or slower than anticipated, we have used other approaches such as direct information requests to partners to gain information. More detail will continue to be added to the Delivery Plan over time in keeping with its role as a 'living document' that evolves as circumstances change and new interventions emerge.
- 2.12. The Delivery Plan is interconnected with the GBI Strategy and hence does not seek to repeat the information within the latter. It summarises overall headline actions and challenges (see 2.14 and 2.15 below) and will set out specific actions that will take forward the Strategy's seven priorities.
- 2.13. The interventions in the Delivery Plan will be split between those which are tangible projects, and those which are policies or processes that will deliver change. The Delivery Plan seeks to secure all the required information for all interventions, and to write this up succinctly. Where information gaps remain these will be closed as the Delivery Plan is updated and new information emerges. A summary of key interlinkages with other priorities and actions will be included at the end of each Priority.
- 2.14. While the content of the Delivery Plan is likely to be extensive some of the emerging interventions that have been identified and are committed for delivery include:
 - **Natural flood management:** Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2 will invest £10 million in natural flood management (NFM). A further 12 multi-benefit NFM schemes will invest over £9 million across the City Region.

- **Flagship development schemes:** Where green and blue infrastructure is a key feature. South Bank, Leeds which includes a new City Park, and the A62 smart corridor in Kirklees are two notable examples.
- **CityConnect:** £60 million towpath upgrade works to create multi-functional green corridors and cycle routes, including on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, Huddersfield Narrow Canal, Rochdale Canal and Calder and Hebble Canal. Connected to the development of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans.
- **Green and blue infrastructure to promote health:** A spread of actions including park trim trials, a new canal canoe trail, innovative 'story walks' and a phone app to promote park use in Wakefield, and over 20 volunteer led Park Runs which get over 5,000 people in the City Region running every week.
- **New woodland areas:** As part of the Northern Forest, such as in Wessenden Valley, Gorphey, Hardcastle Craggs, Bradford, Dewsbury and the Yorkshire Dales. These will reduce flood risk, create attractive environments for people and habitats for wildlife.
- **Flood risk reduction:** £4 million naturalised flood storage reservoir at Killingbeck Meadows which will provide habitat creation and new planting to improve biodiversity and amenity value of the area within a strategic green corridor for Leeds. Scheme is supplemented by other catchment wide measures to reduce flood risk.
- **Upland peat restoration:** Over £20 million investment that will benefit water quality, flood risk, carbon reduction and biodiversity.
- **Large-scale sustainable drainage systems:** Including at flagship developments such as Olympia Park, Selby and City Fields, Wakefield.

2.15. Through consultation with stakeholders as part of the development of the Delivery Plan a number of areas where new or further interventions could be investigated has been identified to deliver the ambitions set out in the GBI Strategy. These are:

- **Investigate mapping and communicating the City Region green and blue infrastructure network:** This could look to build on local networks and key assets and proposals identified through the Delivery Plan.
- **Post-Brexit agricultural and environmental policy / support:** Investigating processes to influence proposals being developed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and how this could potentially link to devolution proposals.
- **Consider stakeholder appetite to review planning policies on green and blue infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems:**

This could seek to raise their ambition and consistency through partnership approaches.

- **Identify further flagship new development schemes:** This could include investigating how high-quality and prominent green and blue infrastructure could be integrated into town and city centres, other Spatial Priority Areas and Inclusive Growth Corridors.
- **Consider the appetite to establishing a green and blue infrastructure and health programme:** Investigate with partners how further local action could be delivered that links green and blue infrastructure with health.
- **Investigate how green and blue infrastructure can be taken forward in transport schemes:** This could include how 'Green Streets' type design principles could be incorporated into future highway schemes and looking to engage with rail partners to identify green and blue infrastructure opportunities.
- **Explore a plan for future peatland restoration after 2020:** Including the potential for securing resources for this once major EU funding ceases.
- **Explore how the full economic benefits from green and blue infrastructure can be realised:** This could include alignment with the Local Inclusive Industrial Strategy, and exploiting opportunities for business growth, employment, skills and inclusion benefits across the Delivery Plan.

2.16. The GBI Strategy sets out a range of long-term targets, aspirations and indicators – quantitatively where possible (although this is not always possible). These were approved by the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership Board in March 2017. Long-term (2036) targets against which performance will be tracked include:

- Everybody in easy reach (one kilometre) of an outstanding and diverse green and blue infrastructure network.
- 1,000 miles of green and blue infrastructure rich corridors, including canals, rail, road, and cycle routes.
- Become a UK trailblazer in catchment planning and natural flood management (evidenced by increasing investment as a proportion of flood management expenditure, measuring and demonstrating impacts on flow rates, and increasing integration with other flood prevention measures).
- Create a 'White Rose Forest' and increase tree cover by more than a third (anticipated to equate to 3 million trees planted and tree canopy cover increasing to over 10 percent).

- Make quality green and blue infrastructure a defining feature of the way we do development (with exemplar green and blue infrastructure schemes in place in the largest town and city centres in each local authority area).
- Increase the proportion of Yorkshire blanket bog peatlands in good (favourable and recovering) condition to 50 percent or more.
- Growth in green and blue infrastructure based businesses, jobs and apprenticeships that outstrips the average City Region growth rates for other sectors.

2.17. A method is to be investigated as to how progress will be judged and monitored.

2.18. The green and blue infrastructure agenda is supported by many organisations in principle, but in practice, delivery of it can often fall between organisations or the teams and departments within them. Hence it will be vital to have the right leadership and co-ordinating resources to drive forward the Strategy and Delivery Plan long-term, including to ensure it is implemented, updated, monitored, and to identify and exploit opportunities for funding, collaboration and influence. In this respect, the following interventions could be developed:

- A leader or chief executive within the City Region is invited to champion the GBI Strategy and Delivery Plan and agenda.
- Individual local authorities are invited to specify named individuals as internal and local coordinating points for the green and blue infrastructure agenda.
- A designated resource specifically allocated to coordinate and drive forward this agenda across the City Region, including monitoring and updating the GBI Strategy and Delivery Plan.

2.19. In reviewing this report the Panel are asked to comment on the contents of 2.15 and 2.18.

Next steps

2.20. Noel Collings from the Economic Policy and Strategy Team will present the emerging findings of the Delivery Plan will take questions from the Panel.

2.21. A draft version of the Delivery Plan will undergo consultation both internally and externally, including Chief Executives, Leaders and Directors of Development. It is anticipated that the Strategy and Delivery Plan will be adopted by the Combined Authority later in 2018.

3. Financial Implications

3.1. There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

4. Legal Implications

4.1. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

5. Staffing Implications

5.1. There are no staffing implications directly arising from this report.

6. External Consultees

6.1. Over 50 organisations have been consulted and engaged in the development of the Strategy and Delivery Plan. These include large utilities e.g. Yorkshire Water, local authorities, NGOs, community groups and government agencies.

7. Recommendations

7.1. The Panel are recommended to note the contents of the report and provide comments on the emerging findings, especially in relation to the information outlined in 2.15 and 2.18.

8. Background Documents

8.1. None.

9. Appendices

9.1. None.