



# The Natural Capital Approach in Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester (GM) is the home of the Urban Pioneer programme testing new tools and methods for investing in and managing the environment, supporting the implementation of Governments 25 Year Environment Plan.

This is about how we can have a better natural environment for people and wildlife, ensuring it is accessible for everyone to connect with and benefit from.

Natural capital is a way of describing the natural world as 'assets' that provide us with benefits, such as clean air, good health, food and water – all of which underpin our way of life.

A natural capital approach is about everyone understanding the benefits – ensuring the protection and enhancement of natural assets are fully considered in decision making, ultimately leading to positive change for people and wildlife.

## Valuing Greater Manchester's Natural Capital

A natural capital account has been developed for GM and its 10 districts. It aims to measure the benefits provided by the city-region's natural assets to its businesses, public services and to those that call GM home.

We have done this so we know what we currently have and can monitor those natural assets over time, seeking improvement.



### Air Quality Regulation

Preventing **370** hospital admissions, avoiding **1,200** life year's lost and around **60** deaths per year



### Physical Activity

**135,000** people use green spaces to meet their physical activity guidelines giving over **4,600** Quality-adjusted life- years (QALY)



### Noise Regulation

**44,000** buildings benefit from reducing traffic noise and stress caused by noise



### Carbon Sequestration

**50,000** tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub> sequestered each year through GM's trees, woodlands and peat alone



### Mental Health

**1 million** people receive mental health benefits from access to green space, giving over a **120,000** point reduction on the General Health Questionnaire index (GHQ)

# TOTAL BENEFITS

**£1bn** the 'conservative' estimate of the value that Greater Manchester receives from its natural capital each year from the services valued

**£28bn** the total asset value of natural capital to Greater Manchester over the next 60 years

## HEALTH

### BENEFITS OF

#### NATURAL CAPITAL

**£9bn**

The total value of avoided healthcare costs over the next 60 years from the **positive difference** to physical and mental health, **reducing financial pressures and demand** on the NHS and Local Authority health providers.

## GM's Household Gardens

The role and value to GM's natural capital from private gardens should not be overlooked. They play a critical role in health & wellbeing and if managed well they can provide a wealth of other benefits to people and local wildlife.

The University of Salford\* has shown that:

- 1.1 million adults are gardening in GM receiving **£1.69bn worth of health and wellbeing benefits**.
- 14.3% of GM's land cover is private gardens and this provides **£375m annually to the local economy**.

For more information visit:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/gardening-in-a-changing-world>

\*undertaken by Katherine Scaletta and Philip James.

## GM's Urban Forests

Our Urban forests offer a significant range of benefits and a recent study by City of Trees have found that across GM:

- 11 million trees are providing **£33m in benefit annually** through **cleaning our air, storing water and absorbing carbon**.

- Absorbing **57k tonnes of carbon** each year.

This data is greater than that in the natural capital accounts, due to different research approaches. City of Trees undertook in-depth research using i-Tree, providing ground truth data. This is more detailed but has a much greater cost than using open remote data used in the natural capital accounts.

For more information visit: [www.cityoftrees.org.uk](http://www.cityoftrees.org.uk)

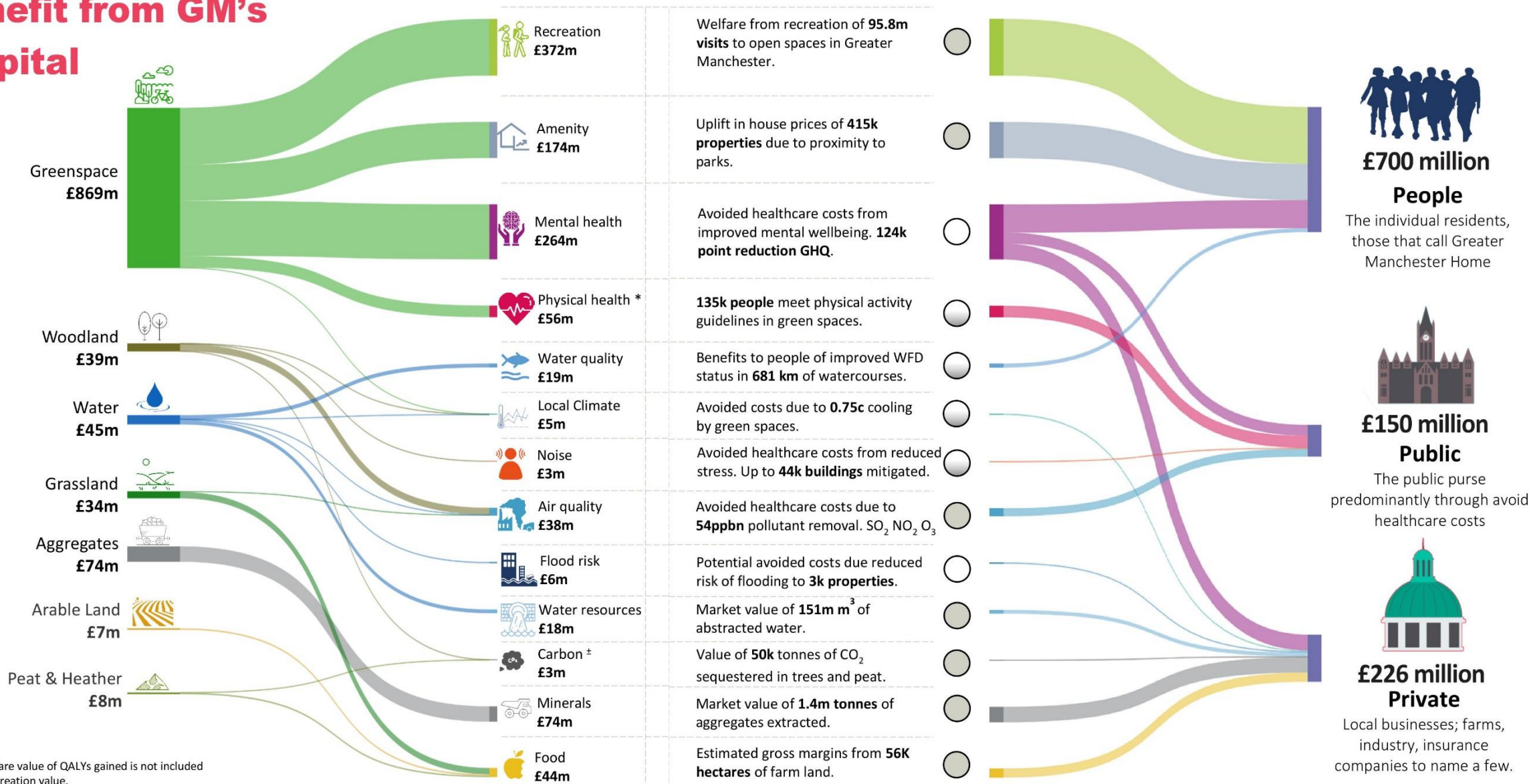
## Annual benefit from GM's Natural Capital

These are the natural capital assets that have been valued as part of our work. It should be noted that the financial values are derived from the total value of all benefits provided by any given asset.

The analysis is not exhaustive and does not include all benefits and services. Additionally it does not capture all assets such as soil, but represents those considered the most critical in an urban context.

For transparency, we have given an indication of the level of confidence we have in these valuations using the following

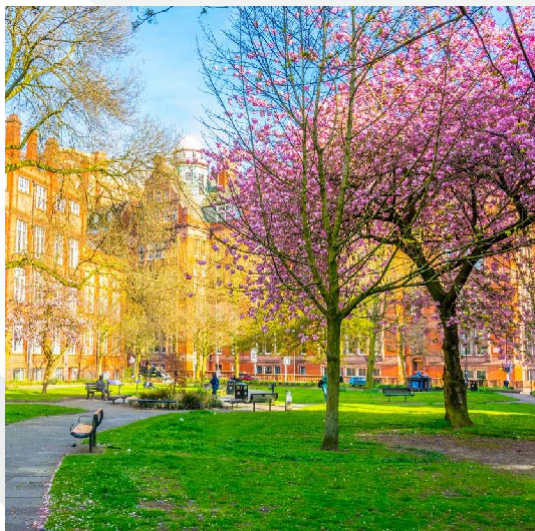
- HIGH
- MEDIUM
- LOW



\* For physical health £92m/year of welfare value of QALYs gained is not included in the sum as this may double-count recreation value.

\*The total CO<sub>2</sub>e stored in GM's peat is estimated to be 100,460 tonnes valued at £7m, this has not been included in the above as this is not an annual flow.





## What's needed?

Managed in the right way, natural capital can provide sustained benefits to society. Natural capital values have implications for transport, public health, the work force, manufacturing and many more sectors.

The natural capital account estimates the value of benefits natural capital assets can deliver for future generations. Some benefits, like cooling during heatwaves and reducing flood risk, may become more important in future due to climate change.

The Greater Manchester natural capital investment plan will inform the scale of interventions required in GM and the opportunities for viable financial investments to maintain, enhance and create natural assets.

Mayfield Development near Piccadilly Station, © U&I Development Artist impression



## What can you do?

- 1 Consider how you can incorporate a natural capital approach in to your strategy and plan development
- 2 Build natural capital in to your projects to maximise the value that the environment brings
- 3 Use our evidence to support your funding bids and applications

## Talk to us!

- 1 Share your feedback, comments and views with us
- 2 Tell us about any projects where you're taking a natural capital approach and embedding nature into your decision making
- 3 Let us know if and where you have shared or used this information to support your work

Contact us at :

[urbanpioneer@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:urbanpioneer@environment-agency.gov.uk)

Find out more :

[www.naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/projects/urban-pioneer](http://www.naturegreatermanchester.co.uk/projects/urban-pioneer)

“

Together there's lots of things we can do across the city-region... to make sure people here have clean air to breathe, and quality green spaces to enjoy...

”

- Andy Burnham,  
Mayor of Greater Manchester