

leeds city region

intelligence driving growth



Green Infrastructure Strategy

FINAL
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Prepared by LDA Design on behalf of the Leeds City Region Partnership

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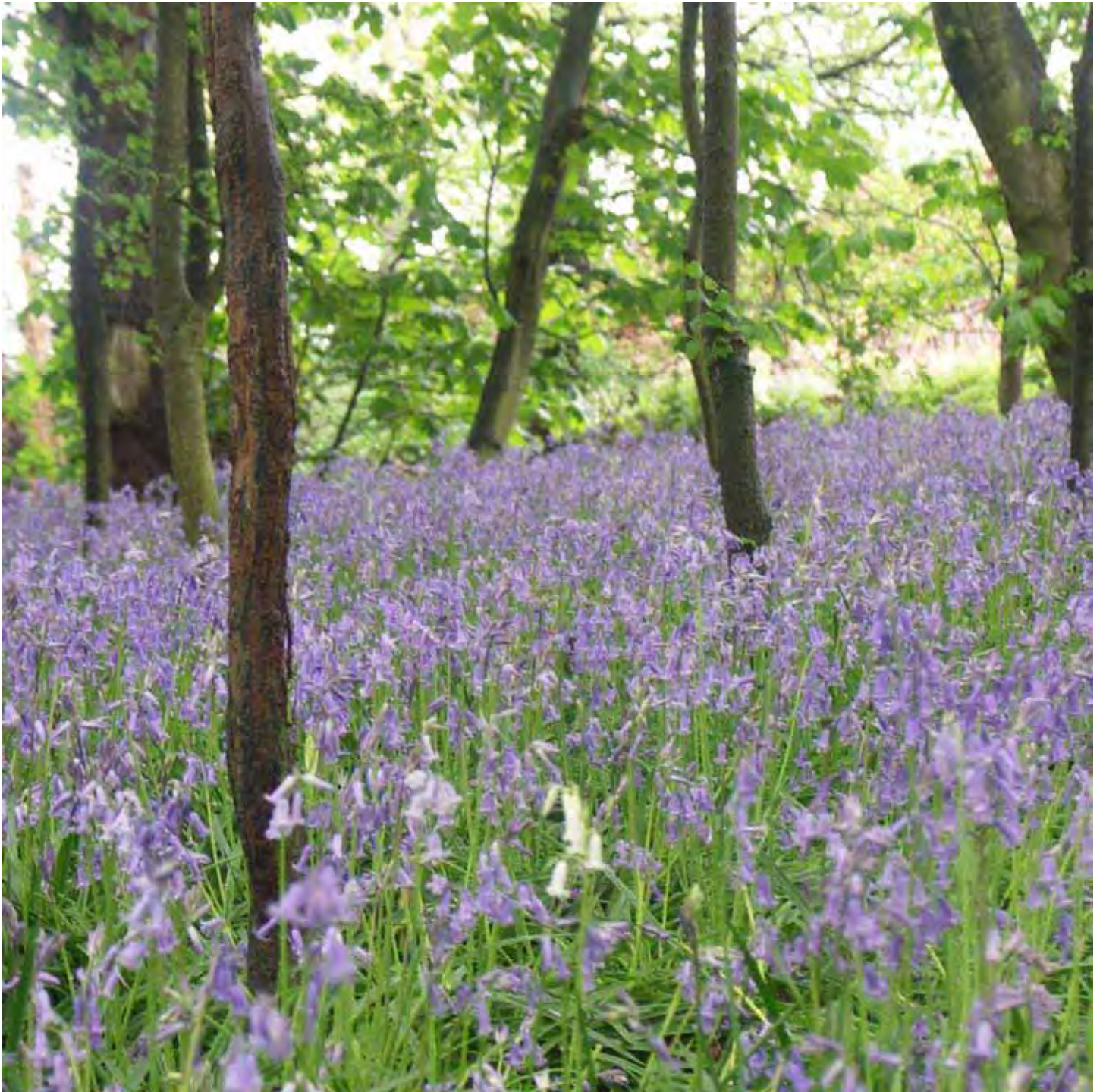
FOREWORD

“The future ain’t what it used to be” concludes the Environmental Defence Fund’s recent report Green, Clean and Dollar Smart. Both in the States and the UK there is a growing body of evidence demonstrating the multiple benefits that can flow from restored, enhanced and integrated natural systems. But to secure these benefits, you have to make ambitious choices on how best to prioritise investment to shape the health, wealth and identity of our future communities.

This Green Infrastructure Strategy for the Leeds City Region offers clear blueprint to guide environmental investment to underpin economic vitality and environmental health. The region is blessed with a magnificent asset base including the majestic river corridors of the Aire and Calder and the natural splendour of Malham Cove. The historic canal networks, including those that link Bradford to Shipley, are an integral part of the region’s heritage and identity. Built to fuel industrial expansion they now provide an attractive low-carbon transport network for tourism and commerce.

Today we face challenging choices on how best to invest for current and future generations. We have better techniques to quantify the short and long term return with financial efficiency and environmental health as two sides of the same coin. Green infrastructure is increasingly seen as a smarter alternative to simply upgrading aging grey infrastructure. But it requires a deliberate re-planning of our urban landscape.

Take water for example. With more erratic patterns of rainfall and greater urbanisation, surface run-off is set to increase exponentially. Our aging sewer networks will simply be unable to cope in a generation or two. Many cities in the States are starting to implement coordinated urban greening programmes to gradually replace grey with green. Such measures include re-establishing tree cover, increasing the permeability of surfaces, restoring riparian corridors and reinstating natural flood plains to dramatically alter storm water flows. If Philadelphia, Washington and Chicago can do it, why not Leeds, Bradford and Halifax?

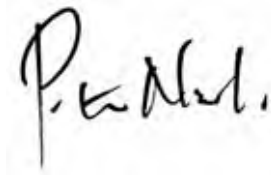


ASKHAM LANE WOOD, IMAGE COURTESY OF YORK CITY COUNCIL

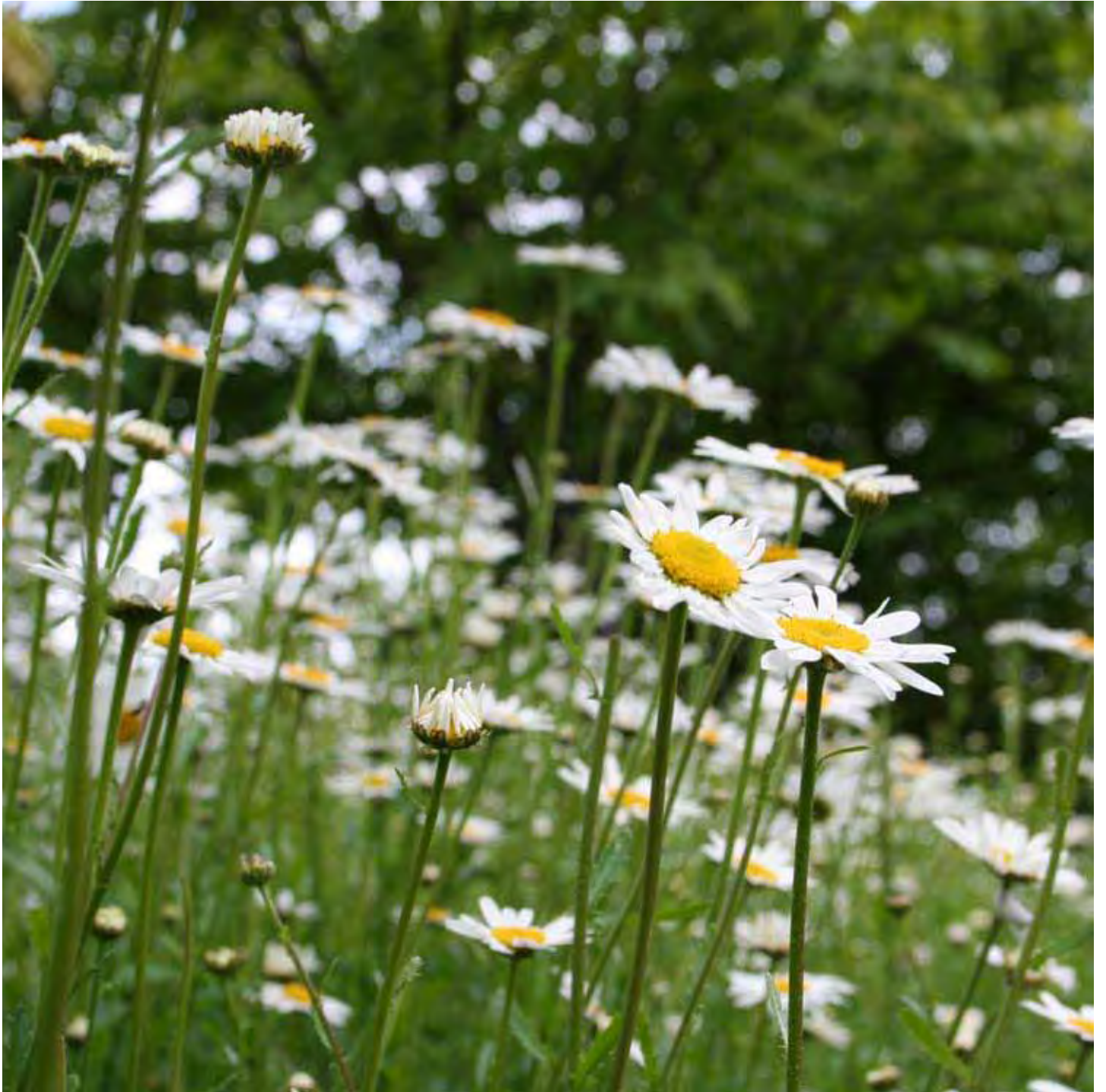
Add to this the biodiversity dividends that can flow, more localised sources of renewable energy, greater scope for local food production and more attractive greenways for zero-carbon transport and you start to build a compelling argument for such investment.

But this is not just about improving the environmental performance. It is also about changing the perception and identity of a place to increase competitiveness. Those who study the dynamics of the knowledge base industries, including financial services and information technology, understand that quality places count. They provide both a setting for investment and are central to attracting and retaining a skilled workforce.

Whilst such greening programmes can be delivered incrementally in line with the resources at hand, you do need a plan to join up projects and fulfil the vision. That is why this strategy is so important. For it is only at the scale of the city region you can start to coordinate political ambition, pool necessary capital and connect fragmented landscapes to realise the multiple benefits that can flow from an attractive and fully functioning green infrastructure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Neal', with a stylized, cursive script.

Peter Neal
Head of public space, strategy and design
CABE



OX EYE DAISY, IMAGE COURTESY OF GORDON SCAIFE



A MESSAGE FROM THE ECONOMIC DRIVERS AND INNOVATION PANEL AND NATURAL ENGLAND

This Strategy, developed in partnership between Leeds City Region and Natural England, represents a step-change in the way we think about the success and resilience of our economy and places. It recognises that the economy not only benefits from a high quality natural environment – it is dependent upon it.

As we move towards a future where considering the environmental limits and opportunities of the natural environment is ever more critical, green infrastructure has demonstrated it can provide a wide range of benefits. With advance planning, these benefits can be enhanced so that our environment is working to its full potential.

It is therefore crucial that we establish ambitious and innovative green infrastructure planning at the core of decision making to deliver multiple benefits for local communities across the city region. The aspirations and objectives put forward in this document represent a long term commitment to the ongoing improvement of green infrastructure assets across the Leeds City Region.

In an era of tightening public finances it is imperative that we now focus on how we deliver these bold ambitions. Building on the strong relationships that have been formed through the development of the strategy itself, we look forward to continuing to work with partners to realise our vision of a green city region.

Peter Knottage
Regional Director
Natural England, Yorkshire & Humber

Cllr Mike Gardner
Chair of the EDI Panel



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