

SECTION 4.0
DELIVERING THE STRATEGY



4.1 LEADERSHIP

Much of the strategy will be delivered through the local authority development process, local green infrastructure strategies and through the existing local partnership processes that are at work across the city region. The strategy will therefore be followed by a Delivery Plan that will support strong cross boundary political leadership, sustained investment, robust partnership working and the local planning system.

The success of the strategy depends on local partnerships to deliver green infrastructure action on the ground. Given the opportunities to achieve multi-functional green infrastructure benefits, it is likely most local actions will need to bring together a range of local agencies into partnerships to plan and design schemes; to win resources; to deliver the project; and then to secure its ongoing management.

There are many other partnerships planning and delivering green infrastructure at the regional, sub-regional and local levels in the city region with either a wide scope, such as the White Rose Forest partnership, or narrow focus such as Incredible Edible, a local community food project in Calderdale.

The White Rose Forest partnership is a sub-regional model of successful green infrastructure partnership working. It has established a strong track record in the West Yorkshire local authorities' area by working closely with regional and local agencies with a focus on delivering quality green infrastructure. It is currently working with other local authorities in the city region with a view to extending its geographical scope to cover the whole city region.

Working through existing partnerships, agencies and structures, the Leeds City Region Leaders Board will oversee and guide the successful implementation of the Strategy and the forthcoming Delivery Plan. At the city region level, we will add value to ongoing work by:

- leading communications, lobbying and advocacy of the importance of green infrastructure, and the delivery of the green infrastructure Strategy, across the city region
- commissioning city region wide prospectuses for Strategic Initiatives, where efficiency gains can be realised;

- coordinating collaborative working and pooling of resources through establishing a Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Design Network consisting of specialist officers from local authorities and agencies to support development management teams across the Leeds City Region on masterplans and planning applications where green infrastructure will play a significant role;
- coordinating high level partnership working between the local authorities, agencies and other sectors, who are current parties to the Green Infrastructure Strategy;
- establishing high-level agreements with major land owners and employers;
- integrating the strategic initiatives into existing city region programmes and examine the scope to deliver more and higher quality green infrastructure in current and emerging local regeneration, conservation and economic development programmes and housing investment plans and programmes;
- encouraging partners to make the most of opportunities to encourage delivery of green infrastructure in local planning, forward planning and development management work;
- leading the research and development of the proposed green infrastructure investment funds;
- developing a ‘Total Capital’ approach to green infrastructure investment;
- supporting the preparation of joint city region-scale bids for funding on strategic projects;
- promoting investment in green infrastructure nationally; and
- monitoring performance of the strategy and implementing future reviews.

4.2 INVESTMENT

Investing in green infrastructure in the city region has traditionally been seen as a public sector activity. The local authorities have built and managed parks and open spaces for more than a century. The Environment Agency and British Waterways own and manage significant lengths of waterways and adjoining land. The Forestry Commission owns and manages thousands of hectares of woodland. And Natural England invests in supporting nature conservation.

Public funding has been supplemented in more recent years by funding secured through the development of land using planning obligations (i.e. Section 106 Agreements). This has commonly secured on-site provision of public open space and payments to local planning authorities for the creation and management of green infrastructure off site. Where development has been at a relatively high level in the city region, this source of funding has made a significant contribution to the overall investment in green infrastructure.

Whilst the planning system will continue to support investment in green infrastructure over the coming years, our level of ambition for green infrastructure across the city region,

and the tightening of public funding, requires additional funding approaches be developed. We will therefore diversify our investment funds used for green infrastructure capital and revenue expenditure, in order to ensure that sufficient investment is available without an over-reliance on any one funding source.

Where such action will add value, the strategy will be financed by the preparation of city region-wide funding bids for green infrastructure investment. The White Rose Forest partnership, for example, has been very successful in bringing local partners together to promote investment opportunities, most recently resulting in the £2m green infrastructure fund sourced from Yorkshire Forward.

The city region green infrastructure investment model therefore has three key features:

- consolidating and aligning existing public funding;
- securing private sector funding through the planning system; and
- generating new public and private sector funding.

Four new investment initiatives have been identified in the process of developing the strategy. Each has the potential to become an important future source of investment but all four will require further feasibility work to determine their precise structure:

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE TOTAL CAPITAL

Public sector funds will likely continue to be the largest source of funding for investment in the Leeds City Region. The strategy will depend on the public sector maximising the value of its green infrastructure spending. The current public sector spending – local authorities and the statutory agencies, as well as others like the NHS – will total many millions of pounds. Much of this spend will be regarded as discretionary and therefore more vulnerable to tighter public sector budgets.

The city region is in a strong position to investigate how funding in green infrastructure can be used to best effect when planning other capital projects. Working through the Total Capital programme we will identify:

- What green infrastructure asset management services are operated now and how well do they work?
- How effective are those services on maximising the multi-functional value of green infrastructure assets?
- What opportunities exist to share green infrastructure assessment management responsibilities with other public bodies in the locality?
- What are the barriers and issues that prevent this happening now?
- How can those barriers and issues be addressed?
- How can the most be made of the total public sector spend in these areas?

ADVANCE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

This new Fund will be set up in the city region with the objective of investing in green infrastructure actions in the Green Infrastructure Growth Areas identified in the strategy and to leverage public and other funds into these projects from national, regional and local sources.

The fund will invest in major green infrastructure actions in advance of development in the Growth Areas where there is a reasonable prospect of that investment being recouped from subsequent development schemes via S106 agreements. Capital receipts from successful investments will be re-invested in other qualifying development schemes.

It will seek to attract national and city region loan funds and may secure private debt finance in the longer term once the programme is established with a track record of delivering future capital receipts from successful schemes.

There are emerging proposals of a similar intent in the city region, such as proposals for Accelerated Development Zone (ADZ) funding. The ADZ is seeking to use a 'tax increment financing' model to secure future revenues for a specified area. At present, the ADZ proposal is intended to cover the Aire Valley in Leeds⁶⁶.

CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

Consultation with businesses on the Leeds City Region Innovation Prospectus and Investment Plan has identified the passion and commitment of the private sector on supporting a high quality environment and moving to a low carbon future.

In order to capture this commitment alongside public sector spend, it is proposed that a city region-wide fund be established to attract payments from corporate organisations in the private, sector and third sectors to invest in the Investment Programmes. In the long term, this fund may become a city region carbon offsetting scheme that meets national standards for such schemes. In the meantime, payments will be sought on a voluntary basis to invest in accredited green infrastructure projects within the Investment Programmes.

It is anticipated that corporate organisations will be able to choose either an Investment Programme or a specific green infrastructure project for their investment. The fund will have a joint city region and local brand identity to enable corporates to be seen to invest in their local district if desired.



The fund is, in effect, an extension to a proposal currently being developed in the region (e.g. the CREDIT carbon reduction and investment technique project⁶⁷) to enable corporates to fund carbon storage projects on a voluntary basis. The White Rose Forest partnership is developing an online donation and sponsorship facility, run by its accountable body, Kirklees Council, to attract funds from corporate organisations and households across the area for new woodland creation schemes that deliver woodfuel, carbon storage and biodiversity benefits in key, strategically significant, locations.

HABITAT BANK

It is proposed that a Habitat Bank is established to invest in green infrastructure in the city region. Focusing on mitigating for the unavoidable physical loss of biodiversity assets as a result of development the Habitat Bank creates incentives for mitigation schemes in the locality of the loss to replace the equivalent quantum and type of lost habitat.

In many cases abroad, a credit system is used to enable the cost of delivering the mitigation scheme to be met from credits paid for by those requiring the mitigation as a condition of planning consent⁶⁸. The types of mitigation funded through such credit mechanisms match many of those types of green infrastructure investment anticipated in this strategy.

Although some of the features of the international exemplars, notably in the USA and Australia, cannot yet be replicated in the UK, some of the key features of the concept may be possible to adapt into a UK context. The concept is gaining ground in the UK (also known as ‘biodiversity offsetting’ and ‘conservation credits’) and it is likely that it will become a viable mechanism to fund green infrastructure within the next decade.

Assuming the key feature of the concept can be replicated within UK legal and financial regulations, the city region may be of sufficient geographical scale to sustain such a funding mechanism. The city region local authorities will therefore seek to collaborate with other local partners and central government to develop the Habitat Bank.



4.3 PLANNING

The promotion and management of development through the local planning system – the respective Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) – will play an important role in delivering our green infrastructure proposals on the ground. Local planning policy needs to support the case for green infrastructure and local development management teams will ensure that this policy will be implemented effectively.

POLICY

As place shapers, Leeds City Region Local Authorities are already working towards robust and aspirational green infrastructure policies within their Local Development Frameworks (LDF). The Frameworks are taking ownership of the Regional Spatial Strategy (and policy YH8 in particular) with their Core Strategies and other Development Plan Documents (DPD), Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and other planning policy statements and include policies covering the protection, improvement, creation, connection, management and funding of green infrastructure assets.

The Leeds City Region Green Infrastructure Strategy will complement local policy and strategy development by demonstrating the context of green infrastructure interventions to the wider city region economy. In addition, it provides the basis for enhanced cross boundary working that is required to maximise the benefits of green infrastructure investments.

Naturally, although each Local Authority shares priorities at the City Region level, local policies will also respond directly to the needs of their local communities and the prevailing economic, social and environmental factors of place. As an example, the existence of local habitat sites in specific areas will be need to be considered at an area and site level.

Through the LDF process and complementary strategies, the Local Planning Authorities in the Leeds City Region will seek to ensure that green infrastructure policy is prominent and consistent with other local policy, e.g. Green Belt, open spaces, leisure/recreation, climate change, economic development, housing supply.



DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

The Draft Planning Policy Statement on Development Management⁶⁹ identifies a number of elements as central to successful delivery of policy at the local level. Getting these elements right will have a major impact on the success of green infrastructure policy in the planning system. The following actions will help deliver success:

- Adopting a positive approach to place shaping by understanding the breadth of what green infrastructure can achieve on the ground as an integral infrastructure as important as utilities.
- Putting planning policy into action by using the local policy framework to get the right blend of protection, enhancement and creation of green infrastructure assets from development proposals.
- Front loading by shaping development briefs and using pre-application discussions to express a clear intent for green infrastructure action.
- Taking a proportionate approach by obtaining enough information about the proposal to understand the relative importance of green infrastructure alongside other infrastructures and finding ways to make green infrastructure work.

- Employing effective engagement by considering the comments of green infrastructure specialist agencies on planning applications positively and engaging members at the right stage of the process.
- Securing pro-active delivery by understanding how green infrastructure can help resolve complex development issues through creative design solutions.
- Monitoring & reviewing to ensure green infrastructure commitments in planning conditions and obligations are adhered to.

To put these elements into practice, the local planning authorities will seek to improve joint-working on proposals that cross boundaries and will develop ways for sharing staff resources offering specialist green infrastructure design advice.

