



Lancashire,
Manchester &
N Merseyside

RECONNECTING MANCHESTER WITH URBAN WILDLIFE: NEXT STEPS



Image by Jon Hawkins

www.lancswt.org.uk/mywildcity



my wild city

RECONNECTING PEOPLE WITH URBAN WILDLIFE

My Wild City is a four-year collaboration between The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside and Manchester City Council which was launched at the beginning of 2019.

Funded by the Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation, My Wild City aims to reconnect people with the urban wildlife living right on their doorstep. We will inspire and motivate Manchester's residents to help transform Manchester into a wildlife-rich city which can be enjoyed by people and wildlife for generations to come.

My Wild City has provided the catalyst for a renewed focus on biodiversity within Manchester City Council, with the project aiming to produce a new Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to sit alongside 'Manchester's great outdoors - a green and blue infrastructure and action plan for Manchester 2015 - 2025'.

This document has been written by the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside, with special thanks to our partner, Manchester City Council and our funder, Esmeé Fairbairn Foundation.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to everyone who has helped us to distribute this survey, including Manchester Museum, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester, City of Trees, The Conservation Volunteers, RSPB, Whitworth Art Gallery and Action for Conservation.



a bigger, better, MORE JOINED UP APPROACH TO NATURE



"At the Wildlife Trusts we know wildlife is not just something that is pleasant to be around, it is absolutely fundamental to every aspect of our lives, from our health and wellbeing to ecosystem services - like food, drink and the air we breathe.

Nature can provide us with therapies, relieving pressure on our National Health Service, provide carbon storage solutions and boost our economy. It is essential to our future and we must work together in our communities, our businesses and our leadership to help put nature into recovery.

Receiving such a positive response to this consultation highlights that even in our most urbanised spaces, people still look to the natural world for inspiration and relaxation and demonstrates a huge mandate for more projects like My Wild City.

Certainly for us at The Wildlife Trust, it is a huge encouragement to keep fighting to bring nature to the forefront of everything we do and to keep it on every agenda. To hold onto those vital green spaces and to not only improve, but create a bigger, better, more joined up approach to nature conservation. Creating a Wilder Future and Nature Recovery Network which can be enjoyed by all."

The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside Chief Executive, Anne Selby



"More than 2,000 people responded to the recent My Wild City survey and many of you told us your favourite space for wildlife in Manchester was your own garden, which shows just how precious and beneficial for both people and wildlife these vital green spaces can be.

A greener city which supports a more diverse abundance of wildlife is one of the important benefits we will gain by working towards our ambition to make Manchester a zero-carbon city by 2038 at the latest."

Manchester City Council's Executive Member for the Environment, Councillor Angeliki Stogia



More than
2000
people responded
to the recent
My Wild City
survey

Image by Bertie Gregory/2020VISION

the consultation

The first year of funding was allocated to building partnerships, piloting activity with communities and strategically setting out the ambitions, target areas and key aspects of work for My Wild City over the subsequent three years of the project. The details of which are outlined further in this report and a full summary of these can be found at the back.



Films available to watch at www.lancswt.org.uk/mywildcity

Image by Alice Singleton



how we did it



The consultation was developed alongside Manchester City Council's Research and Intelligence team to provide My Wild City with a combination of definitive answers and statistics, whilst also providing space for participants to express their own views and opinions.

After an initial pilot at the 2019 Manchester Green Summit, the consultation was launched in April using online survey development software, SurveyMonkey, with hard copies being distributed at public events and venues across Manchester to reach offline audiences. Following the Our Manchester approach, the consultation set out to enable people from diverse communities, areas and age groups to participate.

As well as sharing the consultation online using The Wildlife Trust and City Council's platforms, we also reached out to a large number of other organisations, including City of Trees, Whitworth Art Gallery and RSPB to share amongst their wider networks. The consultation was also promoted and distributed through a series of professional short films, articles in the Manchester Evening News, features in The Wildlife Trust's membership magazine, and emails (both to internal and external contacts).

THE CONSULTATION WAS ACTIVE FOR A PERIOD OF SIX-MONTHS BETWEEN APRIL AND OCTOBER 2019, WITH A TOTAL OF 2,195 INDIVIDUALS TAKING PART

97% of respondents said that Manchester's wildlife was **important** to them

81% of respondents consider Manchester's wildlife **extremely important** to them



How **important** is Manchester's wildlife to you?

This hugely positive response gives a resounding mandate from the public for urban wildlife projects like My Wild City. It is also of importance to politicians and other decision makers.

The question asked specifically about Manchester's wildlife, so the results show that people are thinking about their local city wildlife, as well as the more traditional wildlife-rich but not so local National Parks or National Nature Reserves.

"Most people's experiences with nature are close to home, with people making more use of nature on their doorstep. The number of visits to urban greenspaces almost doubled in the last 10 years."

People's engagement with nature, Natural England.



Image by Tom Marshall



my wildlife



SAHAR

Teaching Assistant in a primary school in Manchester

Sahar is a teaching assistant in a primary school in Manchester. Not only does she use nature in her teaching to inspire children, she also enjoys Manchester's parks and greenspaces in her personal time to unwind and re-connect to the world around her.

"The park is just the perfect place for you to unwind and really think about things and I realise I've always got something to be happy about."

"I love having time to myself as well so I will bring a book and a packed lunch and just find a secret spot where I can sit for a few hours, read a book and just enjoy that time with myself."



"Forest School, taking children out to local spaces, natural spaces, bonding with nature, playing with nature, appreciating nature, the animals, the leaves, the trees, everything around them. I think that when children are in nature they are the happiest, so I've got to encourage them to do that and I feel really proud when they are doing that."

"I think it's great that people across different backgrounds access public spaces in Manchester. It would really make me happy if I saw more ethnic minorities going into the parks with their families, their loved ones and enjoying the spaces they have."



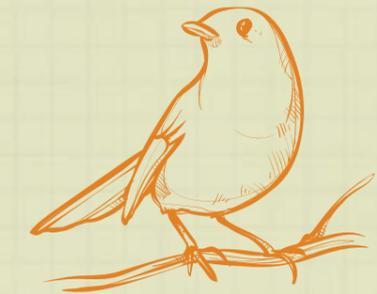
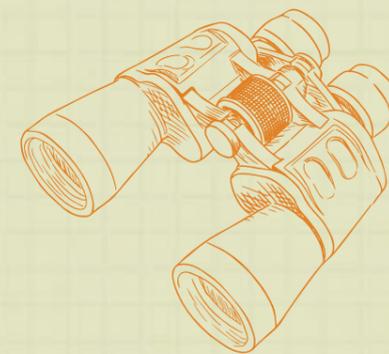
JOEL

Student living in manchester

Joel is a student and keen bird-watcher based in Manchester. For him, wildlife is not only a way to de-stress between exams but also a career ambition as he aspires to work in wildlife film-making.

"I feel relaxed when I'm out, I feel kind of excited, there's always that feeling that you might see something a bit unusual. I don't think I could be fully fulfilled without bird and wildlife photography."

"I'm coming up to my exams and its quite intense how much I'm having to study. I know that if I don't get good grades I probably won't be able to do bird-watching for a job but any little spot I can, I'll use that to get out and do some bird-watching."



"There's a lot of wildlife currently living in the city-centre, especially in the little green pockets. Most importantly are the birds which migrate through which actually use these little green pockets as stop offs. Waxwings will come and use the city centre over the countryside and they're quite nice to see. I've seen them in Hulme a couple of times, they like to feed on the berries there and the apples."

"I think attitudes are definitely changing towards bird watching, it seems like since these amazing documentaries have come out, it's become more trendy and taken over mainstream. I just say get out and about, go to your local green spot, maybe get a bird book or even just use the internet, see what you see with your naked eye or if you can find a cheap pair of binoculars use them. You'll be surprised what you can see in whatever area is green near you."



Are you **concerned** about the loss of wildlife in Manchester?

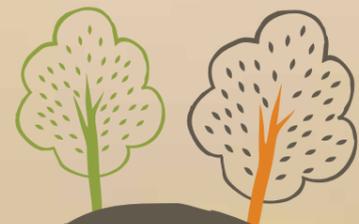
An overwhelming majority, 98%, of respondents said that they were concerned about the loss of wildlife in Manchester. This response undoubtedly reflects international and national as well as local issues.

The response could be seen as a sign of the times, with mass movements like Friday's for Future and demonstrations by Extinction Rebellion in 2019 bringing climate change and the ecological crises to the forefront of people's minds.

Individuals already interested in nature, which many of the respondents were, would almost certainly have been aware of the increasing urgency in biodiversity and climate messages. The response could also be a reflection of very local issues, with plans to build on both Green Belt and brownfield land in Greater Manchester specified in the draft Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, and also reduced Local Authority budgets.

An ambitious and practical long-term Biodiversity Strategy produced collaboratively between The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester and North Merseyside and Manchester City Council and other key stakeholders, will address some of the issues outlined above. Key biodiversity targets will be identified and outlined, ensuring that wildlife in Manchester is not only protected but restored and enhanced.

We know that Manchester's Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) need good habitat management in order to preserve and enhance their ecological value. Where these SBIs are within Manchester's parks, My Wild City, Friends groups and Manchester City Council Officers will work together to ensure they are well managed, and that local people are aware of them. Where gaps remain the Wildlife Trust will work with Manchester City Council and other stakeholders to seek additional resources to secure the long-term future of Manchester's SBIs.



98% of respondents said that they were **concerned** about the loss of wildlife in Manchester



Image by Fergus Gill/2020VISION

What are your **main concerns** or priorities?

"Future generations won't experience any wildlife"

Wildlife Trust initiatives in Manchester, like Forest School, Nature Tots and My Wild City events will create more opportunities for children and their families to experience wildlife every day. My Wild Libraries – our initiative to get a copy of The Lost Words book into every library in Manchester and our Lost Words competitions in schools will also help children in Manchester form a deeper connection with nature.



"Neighbourhoods with wildlife are better for everyone to live in"

People have started talking about how to improve their own streets and local neighbourhoods for wildlife. My Wild City aims to support, encourage and enable these groups to take positive action, not just in their own backyards and gardens but in their neighbours' gardens and local areas – grass verges, schools and church grounds, local business properties and Housing Association sites can all provide excellent homes for urban wildlife. My Wild City can help link groups across Manchester with each other and help with training. By documenting the development of an existing group, My Wild City aims to build up a detailed case study to inspire people in neighbourhoods across Manchester, Greater Manchester and beyond.

"Being near nature makes me feel happier"

The Wildlife Trust has successfully been delivering Myplace, an ecotherapy project in partnership with Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust since 2016. The results of this report support The Trust's plans to expand Myplace into our urban communities to benefit even more people.

"According to the Wildlife Trust's 'Every Child Wild' report, fewer than 10% of children play in natural areas"

Image by Alan Wright



What **actions** do you take to look after nature in Manchester?

82%
said that they have a
“nature-friendly garden”

82% of respondents said they have a “nature-friendly garden”, taking actions such as feeding the birds to help look after nature in Manchester.

In 2016, Manchester Metropolitan University led a two-year research project entitled ‘My Back Yard’ and found that one third of the green space in Manchester was people’s gardens, making them key spaces for wildlife living in the city, particularly as stepping stones in a Nature Recovery Network to allow wildlife to extend through Manchester and beyond. The research also demonstrated that gardens are not completely green infrastructure as originally assumed. This affects the total estimate (previously 58%) of green and blue space cover across Manchester, which is now estimated at 49%.

My Wild Garden; a key strand of the My Wild City project, will build upon existing action amongst Mancunians to reach more residents and champion greater positive action people can take to improve their gardens, back yards, allotments or balconies for wildlife. Free garden packs, e-newsletters, blogs, articles and a creative online gardens campaign are all ways in which My Wild City hopes to encourage over 5,000 people to make the most of their gardens for nature.

29% of respondents said they took part in wildlife recording. This is of particular significance as wildlife is under-recorded in the city and currently there are no adequate measures of species numbers across Manchester. My Wild City will be encouraging more people to get involved with citizen science over the next three years through events, blogs and social media, helping to build a better picture of the wildlife living in Manchester.

The creation of wildlife recording apps, like iNaturalist, and growing interest in wildlife recording create a platform for My Wild City to ignite a discussion around wildlife recording in the city. My Wild City has already encouraged people to do this through City Nature Challenge – an annual, international, biological recording competition which in 2019 saw 138 people collecting 5,098 observations of 792 different species for Greater Manchester in just four days. We are hoping to further improve on these figures over the next three years.

My Wild City will also re-establish Manchester’s Biodiversity Hotspot Award and create a ‘My Wild Champions’ initiative which will celebrate small local actions for wildlife already taking place and provide a ‘Thank You’ to the people involved.



Image by Tom Marshall

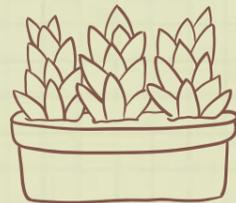


What is your **favourite place** for wildlife in Manchester?

People gave a huge variety of answers in response to this question, from their own gardens to local parks and nature reserves. Below are just some of the things people said about their favourite place for wildlife in Manchester, highlighting the importance and value of such spaces for peoples' day to day lives.

"Boggart Hole Clough is a place to visit nearby. Myself and family actually need the open fresh air and green space to enjoy, we teach our grandchildren about nature, it's so enjoyable for them and so important. They absolutely love being out in parks, learning something new."

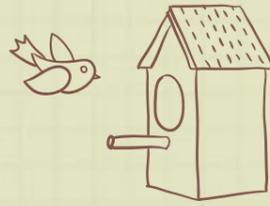
"I can relax in my garden and know we are likely to get bird and insect visitors and though only a small garden it is surrounded by others and fairly peaceful."



"Chorlton Ees is a large, open wild space within the city - home to a huge range of wildlife and open to all."

"Although Platt Fields Park is in a very urban environment, I love the avenue of trees, the lake that is teeming with life and spotting herons on the little island in the middle. I also love that it has the veg growing area and more natural areas."

"Nutsford Vale is a wonderful wild urban woodland where there are many species of insect, wild flowers and birds. There are squirrels and urban foxes."



What would **encourage** you to do more to help nature in Manchester?

61% of respondents stated that having 'accessible nearby wildlife places to visit' would encourage them to do more to help nature in Manchester. To quote Sir David Attenborough "No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced". A lack of regular wildlife experiences means people will feel less connected with nature and their surroundings and subsequently will be less inclined to take action to protect it.

So many people named their local park as the place where they experience Manchester's wildlife. My Wild City needs to work closely with the **Manchester Parks team** and associated Friends of Parks community groups both at a strategic and operational level. Manchester Parks Strategy 2016 has a vision of Manchester's Parks being "the soul, lungs and heart of Manchester by providing the conditions for our people, our environment and our city to flourish" with supporting "a diverse range of wildlife" a key element of that strategy.

61% of respondents also stated that 'being part of a big movement to help Manchester's wildlife' would encourage them to do more to help nature in Manchester

My Wild City will support the introduction of a series of nature-based family events in parks across Manchester, run by Friends groups and Parks staff. Staff and volunteers will receive informal training, support with resources, and help with promotion and publicity. Parks staff and My Wild City will collaborate to host activities at Manchester Festival of Nature, and My Wild City will be the theme for I Love Parks Week in 2020. Biodiversity will be incorporated into the new Park Plans and My Wild City will work with Parks staff to enhance their parks for wildlife. We will aim to create good examples of wildlife-friendly areas of Parks, and produce case studies of actions which can then be replicated across the city.

61% of respondents also stated that 'being part of a big movement to help Manchester's wildlife' would encourage them to do more. Feeling part of a big movement is a motivating factor for people as it will help them feel valued and validated for their contributions.

Encouraging and enabling people to volunteer for nature flexibly, contributing when and how they want to, helps to make their actions sustainable, and enables activity for nature to grow massively as everyone can play a part.

Through an effective communications campaign including press releases, blogs, videos, case studies, photos, radio and television appearances, e-newsletters and social media, My Wild City will help to highlight Manchester's wildlife and wild places, encouraging local residents to explore the wildlife on their doorsteps.



Image by Charlotte Varela

Why do you think nature in Manchester is **not important** to you?

What do you think would make you **more interested** in Manchester's wildlife?

People were only directed to these questions if they responded 'No' to the question 'Are you concerned about the loss of wildlife in Manchester?'

The responses to this question highlight not so much a specific disinterest in wildlife, but more so a lack of information about urban wildlife and opportunities to get involved.

In the follow-up question respondents largely expressed that they did not feel they had enough information about opportunities to interact with urban wildlife. This could be specific wildlife groups, educational events or volunteering opportunities, or more general information about urban wildlife and places to enjoy nature in the city.

Working collaboratively with other conservation organisations and groups over the next three-years will help to create bigger and better opportunities for Manchester's residents, such as the Manchester Festival of Nature.

The My Wild City team play a key role in the Manchester Biodiversity Action Group, Manchester Nature Consortium and City Nature Challenge, bringing key players together and creating a culture of shared learning.

A more general My Wild City campaign and resources, such as the garden pack, bi-monthly e-newsletter, digital map and regular events will also provide valuable information and celebration of urban wildlife and opportunities to reconnect with wildlife and wild places in the city.



Image by Jon Hawkins



Action Plan 2020-2022



| Key Outcome | Progress Indicators |
|--|---|
| 1. Greater awareness, engagement and active involvement of people with nature and greenspaces in Manchester | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media campaign to raise the profile of nature in Manchester and encourage residents to become and feel part of a big movement • Collaborative events programme with Manchester Parks Team and others to inspire and engage families about urban wildlife • An annual Festival of Nature which engages the public • Active involvement of people in practical conservation on priority sites for nature (100 practical days) • Active involvement of local people and improved wildlife value of gardens (5,000 individuals involved) • Local people actively involved in species recording (200 new recorders) • 1,500 school children engaged in activities in their grounds • Collaboration with an artist(s) to explore and showcase the importance of nature in Manchester in a radical and creative approach alongside residents |
| 2. Greater partnership working to connect more people with nature and deliver more co-ordinated work to improve spaces for nature | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline and identify key biodiversity targets for the city through a new Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan • Collaboration with artists and the culture team at Manchester City Council to increase activity focused on urban nature in Manchester • Facilitate collaborative work amongst partners to grow species records and recording amongst the public, particularly through City Nature Challenge • Training, support and partnership work with Manchester Parks and 'Friends of' Groups to protect and enhance key priority sites in Manchester • Collaborative Festival of Nature to raise awareness and celebrate partner activity • Learning from a collaborative neighbourhood wildlife project captured and showcased with communities throughout Manchester to inspire and support action • Conference to recognise and celebrate achievements of volunteers, residents and community groups involved in improving nature • Collaboration with health partners to recognise and promote the importance of nature for residents as establishing new ecotherapy projects |
| 3. Improved quality of spaces and corridors for nature in Manchester | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of key nature recovery network(s) within Manchester and action plans to help protect and enhance their value for nature • Increased records for wildlife species across the city (over 200 new recorders) • 100 practical volunteer sessions, focused on priority sites for nature (SBIs) • 5,000 gardens improved for wildlife by local people • 25 schools engaged / supported to improve their grounds for wildlife • Support, encourage and enable residents to work together to deliver positive action for wildlife within their neighbourhood • Biodiversity hot-spot awards re-established to encourage, showcase and celebrate community action |



Image by Andy Jones



my wild city

CONSULTATION DATA

98%
are concerned
about the loss
of wildlife
in Manchester

- Q1 How important is Manchester's wildlife to you?**
- Extremely important – 81%
 - Important – 16%
 - No opinion – 1%
 - Slightly important – 1%
 - Not important at all – 0%
 - Don't know – 0%

- Q2 Are you concerned about the loss of wildlife in Manchester?**
- Yes – 98%
 - No – 2%

- Q3 What are your main concerns/priorities?**
*Ranked from highest (top) to lowest (bottom)
- Future generations won't experience any wildlife
 - Neighbourhoods with wildlife are better for everyone to live in
 - Being near nature makes me feel happier
 - Being near nature makes me feel healthier
 - There are fewer wildlife places to visit
 - Experiencing nature is important for creativity and the arts

- Q4 Do you do any of the following to look after nature in Manchester?**
- I have a wildlife-friendly garden – 83%
 - I let other people know about nature in Manchester – 47%
 - I am a member of a community group which supports greenspace/nature – 37%
 - I record my wildlife sightings – 29%
 - I volunteer to help look after a greenspace in Manchester – 21%
 - Other – 14%

- Q5 What is your favourite place for nature/wildlife in Manchester?**
*Open question.
Top 5 most popular responses
- Water park
 - My local park
 - Fletcher Moss
 - My garden
 - Chorlton Water Park

83%
have a
wildlife-friendly
garden

- Q6 Why is it your favourite place?**
*Open question.
Top 5 most popular responses
- Wildlife
 - Birds
 - See
 - Space
 - Lots

- Q7 What would encourage you to do more to help nature in Manchester?**
- Accessible, nearby wildlife places to visit – 61%
 - Knowing I'm part of a big movement to help Manchester's wildlife – 61%
 - Being able to join in a range of activities for people on their own as well as other families – 46%
 - Having more information about the value of nature and how to support it – 38%
 - Having a local community group to join in with – 38%
 - Other – 13%

- Q8 Why do you think wildlife in Manchester is not important to you?**
*Open question.
- "I don't understand why wildlife is important in cities"
- "I don't have enough information about the value of nature and how to support it"
- "I would be more concerned about a loss in the countryside"

- Q9 What would encourage you to become more interested in Manchester's wildlife?**
*Open question.
- "More extensive promotion of all the projects that are being carried out and updates on the current situation"
- "I'd like to have more information about what is Manchester's wildlife, what their relationship is with the city, and what that means for those of us living in the city centre."

81%
think
Manchester's
wildlife is
extremely
important



my wild city

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

76%
of the
respondents
live in
Manchester

Which best describes you?

- I live in Manchester – 76%
- I work in Manchester – 49%
- I study in Manchester – 11%
- I visit Manchester – 19%
- I volunteer in Manchester – 19%
- Other – 5%

What is your gender?

- Male – 33%
- Female – 65%
- Prefer not to say – 2%

What is your age?

- Under 16 – 5%
- 16 – 25 years – 8%
- 26 – 39 – 26%
- 40 – 49 – 17%
- 50 – 64 – 28%
- 65 – 74 – 12%
- 75+ – 2%

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

- Yes – 9%
- No – 87%
- Prefer not to say – 4%

I describe my ethnic origin as

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| White British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh – 81% | Kashmiri – 0% |
| White Irish – 3% | Other Asian – 1% |
| White Gypsy or Irish Traveller – 0% | Caribbean – 0% |
| Other White – 5% | African – 1% |
| White and Black Caribbean – 1% | Somali – 0% |
| White and Black African – 0% | Other Black – 0% |
| White and Asian – 0% | Prefer not to say – 2% |
| Other Mixed – 1% | Other – 1% |
| Indian – 1% | |
| Pakistani – 1% | |
| Bangladeshi – 0% | |
| Chinese – 1% | |



summary and further reading

Years 2020-2022 of My Wild City will be crucial in helping to transform Manchester into a green city which can be enjoyed by both people and wildlife for many years to come. It will also be key in helping Manchester to reach its ambition of being zero-carbon by 2038 at the latest.

Nature plays such an important role in our lives and everyone who lives, works, studies or volunteers in Manchester has the power to protect it. Whilst the My Wild City project is limited to four-years of funding, sustainability and replicability will be paramount throughout – delivering training to parks staff, producing clear and detailed case studies and action plans and creating a systematic change in the way we view and appreciate urban wildlife. This will have impacts far beyond the project and will help to re-imagine the way Manchester views urban wildlife and green spaces for years to come.

- The State of Nature 2019 available to download at www.wildlifetrusts.org/about-us/publications
- The Wildlife Trusts 'Every Child Wild' 2015 report available to download at www.wildlifetrusts.org/about-us/publications
- Manchester Metropolitan University's 'My Back Yard' report, overview and key findings available to download at www.mmu.ac.uk
- People's engagement with nature, Natural England. Available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results
- Manchester's great outdoors - a green and blue infrastructure and action plan for Manchester 2015 - 2025 available to download at www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/6314/manchester_green_and_blue_strategy
- 'The Lost Words' by Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris

My Wild City videos available to watch at www.lancswt.org.uk/mywildcity

Our Manchester

Manchester City Council has adopted a set of principles called the 'Our Manchester Principles', which is a long-term and ambitious attempt to change the way the council and its partners carry out their work:

Principle 1

Better Lives (it's about people)

Principle 2

Listening (we listen, learn and respond)

Principle 3

Recognising Strengths of Individuals and Communities (we start from strengths)

Principle 4

Working Together (we build relationships and create conversations)





Lancashire,
Manchester &
N Merseyside

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