



## Sustainability & Transport O&S Committee



Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2023

# Introduction

Simon Needle – Urban Forestry and Nature Lead Officer

*An overview of the progress of the original Future Parks Project and City of Nature Plan (Our Future Nature City Plan) the challenges and the steps being undertaken to address them.*

## **The City of Nature Plan:**

On 8th February 2022 Cabinet approved the 25-year City of Nature Plan which brings together all the work of the Naturally Birmingham FPA Project including the learning gained from partner organisations and communities and builds on the fantastic work happening in the city. Now we have a plan that we can work together to deliver. We know that allowing nature to recover in the city will benefit us all.

## **The City of Nature Programme:**

This is how we will deliver the City of Nature plan, although much has already been achieved through the work of the Future Parks Accelerator Project, there is a lot of work to do to ensure the structures, both operational and governance, are in place to ensure 25 years of delivery.

## **The Urban Nature Development Project and the Urban Forest Accelerator (Birmingham Pilot) Project:**

The first two projects in this programme are The Urban Nature Development Project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Urban Forest Accelerator (Birmingham Pilot) Project funded by the Governments Trees Call for Action Fund and both projects are supported by the National Trust.

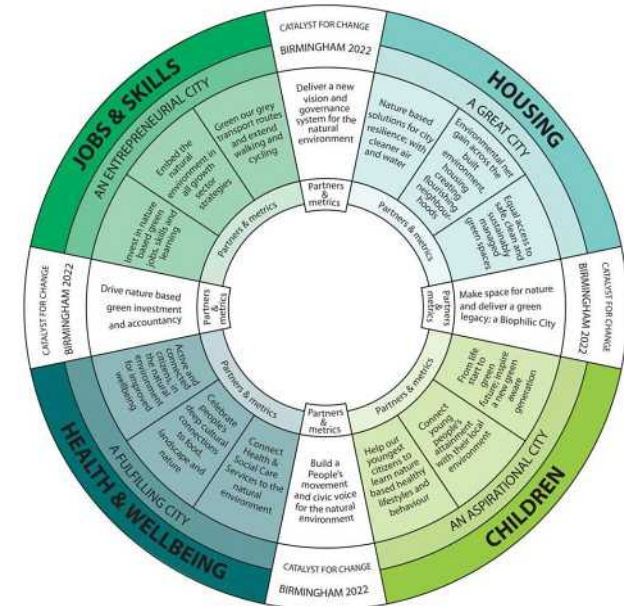
## **City of Nature Alliance and Delivery Partners:**

The City of Nature Alliance of organisations will continue to play a major role in the delivery of these projects, with the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country and Birmingham Tree People delivering significant sections of the work. Birmingham Open Spaces Forum will continue delivering a Community Facilitation function and BCC's Landscape Practice Group will host a new Landscape Architect Post for the project.



# Developing a City of Nature The Challenges

- STRATEGIC OUTCOMES
- CLIMATE CRISIS
- HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY
- ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE
- ECOLOGICAL CRISIS
- SKILLS GAP
- FUNDING GAP



# What did we need to work through?

## What we did.

- Decisions about development, especially housing
- Decisions about finance – is the system going to support nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure to help us continue adaptation to climate change?
- Are we doing enough to allow ALL our residents to engage with the green space and climate change agenda – whatever their resources and/ or the scale they want to work at?
- Are we going to hold other parts of the Council to account to ensure they fulfil their role in supporting green spaces and green infrastructure?
- Planning Policy review
- Biodiversity Net Gain
- Future Parks Standard - Bordesley and Highgate Pilot
- Governance Model

# A 25 year Plan for a City of Nature

Thirty years ago, at the Rio Summit in 1992, the world formally recognised how important the environment, biodiversity and sustainability were as a new framework for 21st century living.

Over the same intervening 30 years Birmingham has undergone a significant transformation rebuilding its city centre and a vibrant economy.

Over the next 30 years Birmingham sees its future as a Bolder Greener City responding directly to the climate change challenge. This green vision also embraces the inequalities in this city exposed through the Covid-19 pandemic and the children and young people struggling to have a fair start in life.

Our Future City Plan (OFCP) 2040 'Shaping this City Together' has introduced a new approach to strategy and plan making in the city based on a shared and inclusive vision.

OFCP also introduced a vision for Birmingham becoming a city of nature; the **City of Nature Plan** shows how this can be done.

The Plan looks at the next 25 years to ensure that this current young generation inherit a much improved, fairer, and greener city.

**A city that puts nature, people, and the planet at the heart of its decision-making and inclusive growth agenda.**





# Bordesley and Highgate Pilot

## Developing the Future Park Standard and the City of Nature Alliance

To develop a green infrastructure management system and capacity building programme for people in most need to benefit from the enjoyment of the natural world by becoming involved with their green spaces.

Funded through the Commonwealth Game Legacy fund and in collaboration we:

- Established the City of Nature Alliance partnership to enhance working with communities
- Activated 5 parks in the ward using the Birmingham “Fair” Park Standard (**Now Future Park Standard**) method
- Installed 34 new bins across the 5 parks.
- Trialled Green Champions training sessions. Example of Tree Warden Training: <https://youtu.be/xAIW2yQbbHI>
- Developed a programme of outdoor / nature-based health interventions: Walks and Sports sessions delivered in all parks over 6 months.
- Young Green Champions education programme delivered.
- Trialled a Community Impact Assessment app to capture community consultation feedback and Earth Stories.
- Identified key sources of park related income for future projects.



# What Next?

## Helping to deliver City Council Plan

### WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Outcome	Why is this important?
Birmingham is an entrepreneurial city to learn, work and invest in	We want a city that invests in its people, so that everyone can have opportunities to realise their potential through lifelong learning, skills and good jobs. We want to invest in the buildings and transport connections of our city to provide better places to live and work, and to enable businesses to prosper. HS2 will be a key milestone in the city's development and we must make the most of this opportunity to boost our economy and key growth sectors, and enable our citizens to access employment.
Birmingham is an aspirational city to grow up in	We want to respond to our unique profile as one of the youngest cities in Europe to give all children from every background and community the best start in life, with clear pathways to achieve success and realise their full potential.
Birmingham is a fulfilling city to age well in	We want citizens to live more active, longer, healthier and independent lives. We want to reduce social isolation so that people can make positive choices and take control of their wellbeing.
Birmingham is a great, clean and green city to live in	We want Birmingham to be a sustainable city of vibrant culture and flourishing neighbourhoods, with good quality housing. A city with clean air, safe and clean streets, and green spaces. We want to be a city where our citizens have pride in where they live, have a strong sense of belonging, and a voice in how Birmingham is run.
Birmingham residents gain the maximum benefit from hosting the 2022 Commonwealth Games	Hosting the Commonwealth Games gives us a global stage to use the transformational power of sport and culture to project a positive image of our city, promote growth, and provide a long-lasting legacy to the citizens of our city.
Birmingham is a city that takes a leading role in tackling climate change	Climate change is an urgent issue with a global reach that directly impacts upon Birmingham residents. We will work with our partners to tackle this issue to make Birmingham a city in which all of our residents, including those from our most deprived communities, can lead healthy, safe, fulfilling lives.

### What will be delivered through the City of Nature Programme 2023 /2024

- Deliver Green Champions Programme, showcase green jobs and skills and involve people in nature recovery and green space management by working with partners to provide better places to live and work.
- Work with partners in education at all ages to provide opportunities for children and young people to connect with nature.
- In partnership with the City of Nature Alliance deliver a programme of nature based health activities for all ages
- Deliver the Future Park Standard at site level in five more “red” wards and Green Infrastructure Master planning in East Birmingham.
- Continue to deliver the legacy created through the City of Nature pilot project across five more wards in 2022/2024
- Work closely with the Route to Zero Team and report to the newly established Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero Board



# Urban Nature Development and Urban Forest Accelerator Projects

This City of Nature Programme is how we will deliver the City of Nature plan, although much has already been achieved through the work of the Future Parks Accelerator Project, there is a lot of work to do to ensure the structures, both operational and governance, are in place to ensure 25 years of delivery.

## **The first two projects in this programme are:**

- The Urban Nature Development Project funded by the Heritage Fund and
- The Urban Forest Accelerator (Birmingham Pilot) Project funded by Heritage Fund using the Governments “Trees Call for Action Fund”

Both projects are supported by the National Trust.





# Master Planning a Nature Recovery

**Produce a high level biophilic green infrastructure (GI) masterplan with a pipeline of projects for the East Birmingham Inclusive Growth geography.**

## **We will:**

- Develop a GI master plan that will identify improvement options for all existing green space.
- Through the GI master plan identify all future opportunity sites & linkages across East Birmingham.
- Develop costed investment proposals for nominated sites, across a typology, that follow the 4 tiers within the Green Prospectus, with recommended financial resources.
- Inform the City's local development plan, wider GI master planning and sustainable investment strategies and the delivery of the City of Nature framework



# Biodiversity Net Gain

**Create a Birmingham City Council Schedule of Sites that could successfully benefit from future Biodiversity Net Gain credits and embedded maintenance payments,**

**We will:**

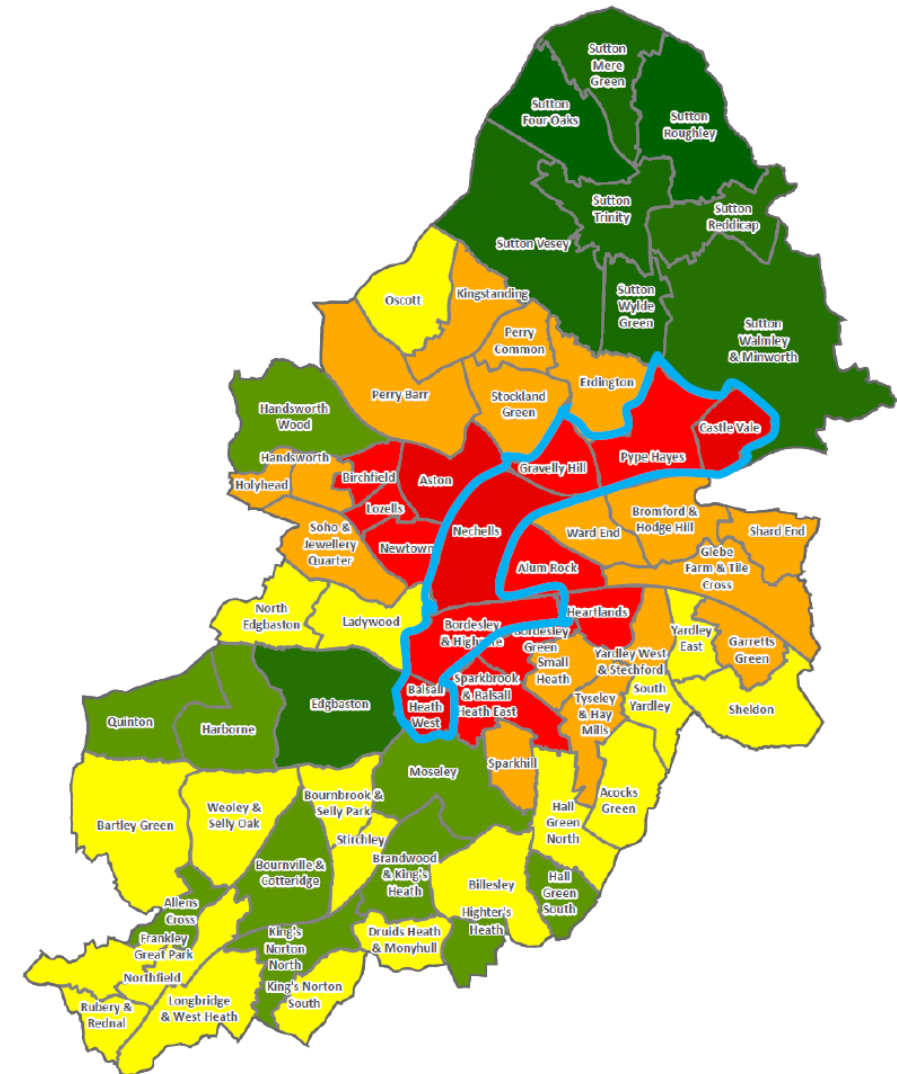
- Identify BCC owned sites against the 25-year Nature Recovery Vision Map
- Assess the habitat across prioritised city owned green space identifying:
- habitat types and quality
- key protection and buffer sites
- areas for enhancement or creation potential
- critical gaps in the Nature Recovery Network, regardless of ownership



# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAP OF BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham's priority wards:

- Bordesley and Highgate (in progress)
- Castle Vale
- Nechells
- Balsall Heath West
- Pype Hays
- Gravelly Hill



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Ordnance Survey Open Greenspace layer derived information.  
Ordnance Survey 100021325.  
2014 daily mean urban heat island intensity (oC) at 1 km resolution  
derived from the relationship between the BUCI urban  
observation network and GH5-built data, R Bassett et al 2020  
Environ. Res. Lett. 15 114014 <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/abb51>.  
You are not permitted to copy, sub-licence, distribute or sell any of this data  
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Produced by the Birmingham City Council Geospatial Team.

# Future Parks Standard

## Focusing on Nature on Your Doorstep / Nature Connection for Health

**Establish a capacity building mechanism for people in most need to benefit from the enjoyment of the natural world by becoming involved with their green spaces and nature on their doorstep:**

### **We will:**

- cultivate the City of Nature Operations Group and the City of Nature Alliance partnership to enhance working with communities
- activating three 'red' wards from the Environmental Justice mapping using the "Birmingham Fair Park Standard" method
- develop a Green Champions model
- identify and test a programme of nature-based health interventions and grow a range of online information and opportunities to involve new audiences
- trial a Community Impact Assessment app to monitor and report on this work.
- identify key sources of park related income





# Birmingham's Urban Forest

The UFA project contributes to the vision of the England Trees Action Plan (ETAP) and will deliver against multiple objectives from the ETAP.

## Objectives of the ETAP are:

- Connecting people with trees and woodlands
- Trees and woodlands as part of the green economy
- Protecting and improving our trees and woodlands
- Expanding and connecting our trees and woodlands

As a local authority we have stated a clear commitment to Net Zero and as part of that commitment future tree planting. But, we have yet to identify where and how this will happen. We will work with our partners to recruit staff to work with The BCoN Alliance and other environmental charities, community groups and landowners.



# Birmingham's Urban Forest

## We will:

- identify and survey appropriate sites
- co-create future planting programmes
- build local capacity to fundraise, create and manage future trees and woodlands
- Explore entry level skills training for new workers in the sector (particularly people aged 16–24)
- explore on-the-job or in-house training opportunities.
- Deliver volunteer Tree Warden training linking with the Green Champions.
- Improve access to and engagement with trees and woodlands for under-served groups. For example, ethnically diverse communities, people from economically disadvantaged areas, disabled people, children and young people and older people.
- bolster physical and mental health and wellbeing through engagement with woodland
- connect people from urban areas with trees and woodland
- create and improve nature-rich and active travel corridors, trails, signage, and accessible paths in woodland locations
- employ wardens, educators, and other similar positions (Through Birmingham Tree People)
- increase volunteering in trees and woodland (including increasing volunteer recruitment from under-served groups)
- Deliver community engagement and citizen science for environmental conservation and future woodland improvement or maintenance.



# City of Nature Pilot Delivery Operating Model

This diagram shows the City of Nature Alliance members actively engaged in delivery in Bordesley and Highgate ward Future Park Standard Pilot.

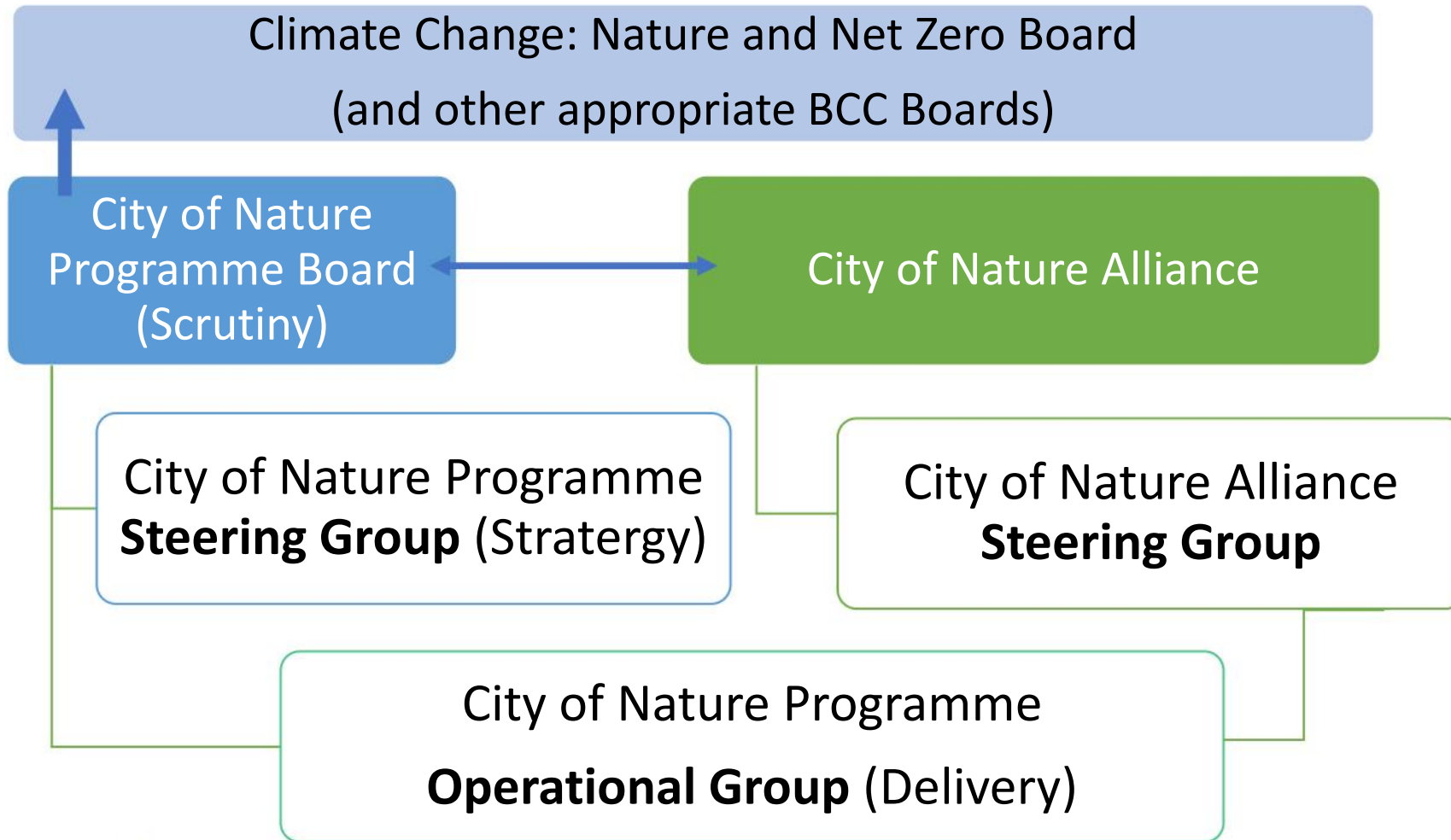
These “operational” members may change from ward to ward.

City Council departments may be more or less involved depending on the needs of the ward.

The wider City of Nature Alliance that helps to shape and steer the delivery of the City Nature Plan is growing all the time.



# Governance for a City of Nature





# What do we still need to work through?

- Building a workforce and volunteer model that can deliver green infrastructure management that includes Climate Change Adaptation and Nature Recovery across the city.
- Recruiting a project based Change Manager to help achieve this.
- Ensuring other parts of the council can fulfil their role in supporting opportunities delivered through green spaces and green infrastructure management through good communication and coordination.
- Ensuring the City of Nature Alliance has a sustainable operating model for the life of the City of Nature Plan.
- Building stronger connections between planning and operations to ensure the City of Nature Plan is delivered at all levels.