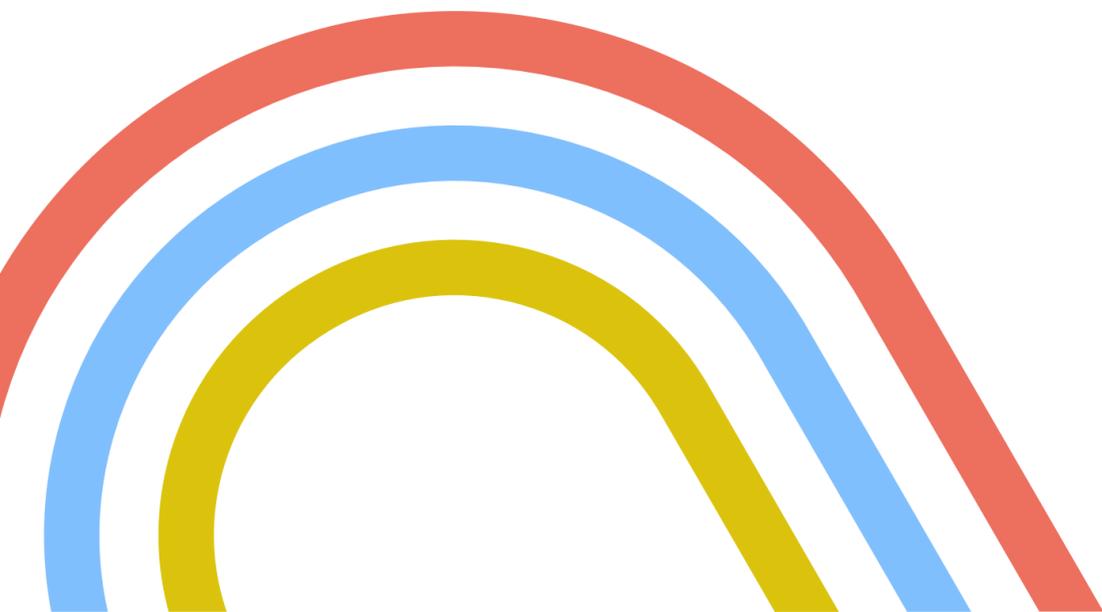


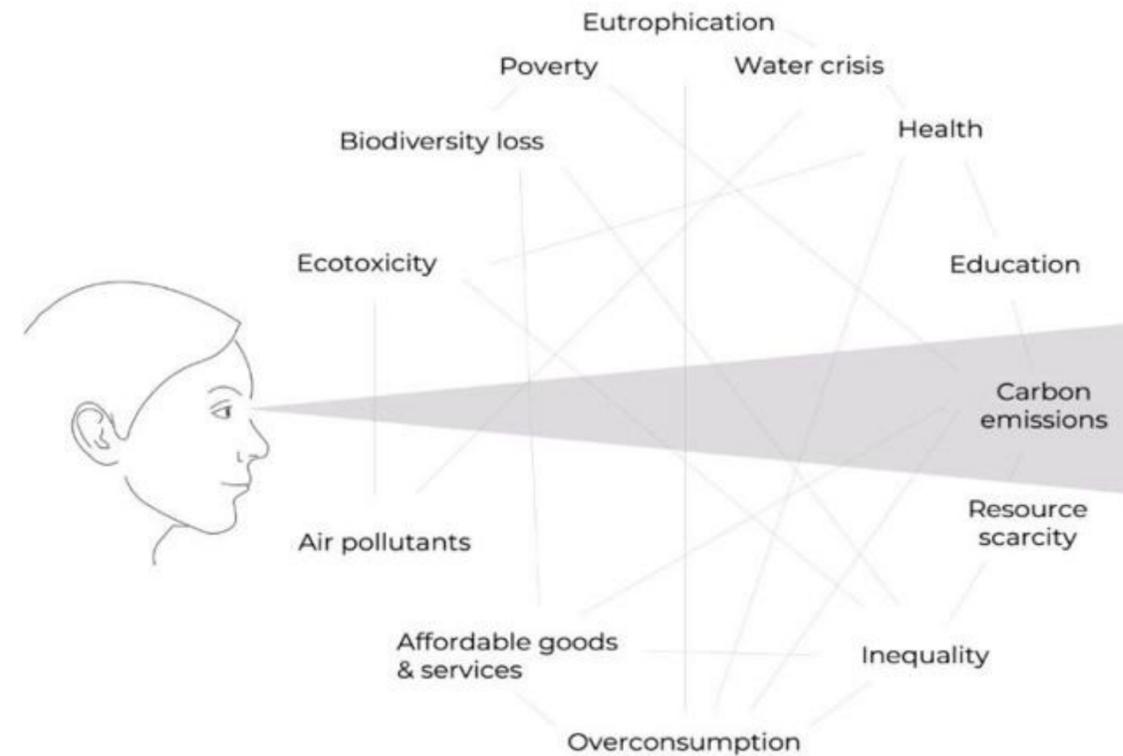


Green Open Spaces Strategy



What do we mean when we talk about sustainability?

Carbon Tunnel Vision



Sustainability transition

Graphic by Jan Konietzko



Why ecosystem services matter

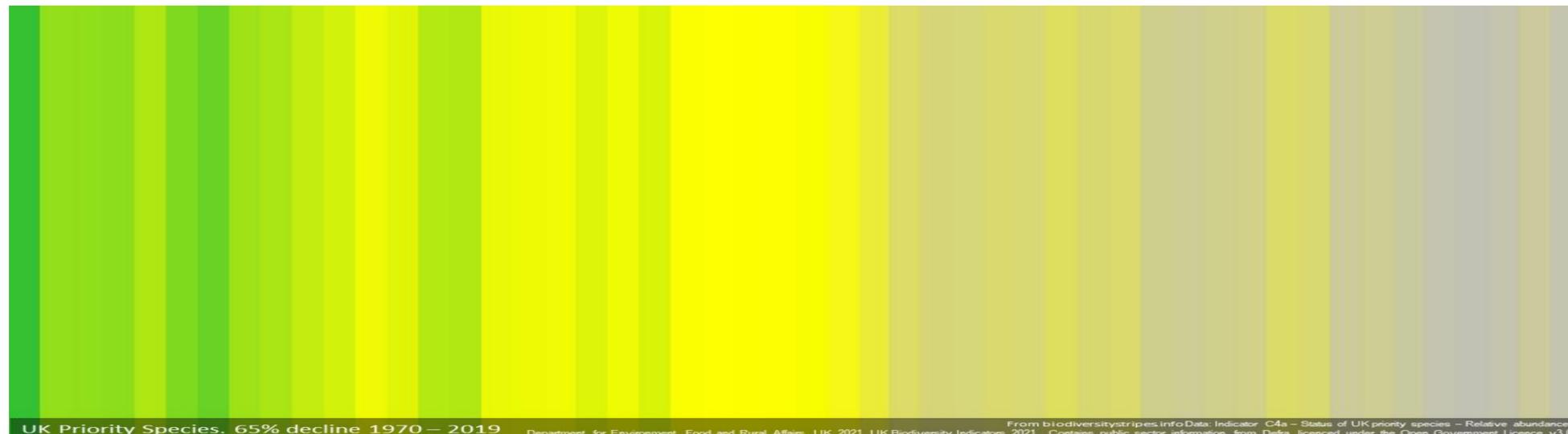
The United Nations considers biodiversity to be our strongest natural defence against climate change.

This is because our landscapes, lakes and water courses serve as natural carbon sinks, absorbing large amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.

Therefore, conserving and restoring natural spaces, and the biodiversity they contain, is essential for limiting emissions and adapting to climate impacts.

UK Priority Species stripes – 65% decline 1970 - 2019

Acknowledgement of biodiversitystripes.info and LPI 2024, Living Planet Index database. (www.livingplanetindex.org) UK stripes use public sector information from Defra, UK, Biodiversity Indicators 2021, licenced under the Open Government Licence v3.0



Be prepared

The reality

- By 2050 1.6 billion people living in cities will regularly be exposed to extreme temperatures.
- By 2039 one million plants and animals, or 75 per cent of all species, will be extinct in the planet's "sixth mass extinction".

The solution

- Make Climate Change and loss of Biodiversity a strategic risk
- Create a Carbon Literate organisation
- Identify the opportunities



External Drivers



The UK government has set a legally binding target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 and committed to increasing the abundance of wildlife by 10% by 2042 compared with 2030 levels.

Social Housing White Paper - Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood

A green open spaces strategy will support overall satisfaction for customers by improving neighbourhoods.

- We know lower scores are given based on the look and feel of estates/roads leading up to properties etc.
- We also know there is an increased need for communal space to escape to and in particular for high rise/flats.
- Families are expanding but can't afford to move so need outdoor areas to be in.
- Green spaces for children are critical for their health.



Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG is an approach to development land and marine management that leaves biodiversity in a measurably better state than before the development took place.

Mandatory requirements for new developments relating to Biodiversity Net Gain and sustainable drainage from 2024.

Environment Act 2021 - minimum target of 10%

National Planning Policy Framework

'Planning policy should identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable gains for biodiversity'

Written into local plans

30-year stewardship



Internal drivers at whg



Sustainability Strategy has two core objectives for Biodiversity:

- Develop an Open Spaces strategy addressing both development and existing stock, covering biodiversity enhancement, open spaces access and engagement of local residents with nature
- Ensure new developments come with a biodiversity net gain and investigate opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the existing stock

- **Ritterwald ESG Certified Sustainable Housing Label**
- **Sector Sustainability Reporting Standard**
- **Decarbonisation – net zero roadmap**
- **Climate Transition Planning**
- **Customer and Communities Strategy**
- **Social Justice Strategy**
- **Grounds Maintenance Contract**

Sustainable Futures 2030 Plan



Transformational programmes



Data-driven
decisions



Forward-thinking
services



Social justice –
transforming lives



Sustainable
futures



Making
places



Work and workplace
of the future

Some examples of projects



Walsall Development Sites
Design Intent Brochure
Rev. 3



What others are doing



Orbit

Committed that 30% of outdoor green spaces will be enabling nature's recovery by 2030

Clarion

Partnered Backyard Nature & Iceland helping children protect nature (just won unlock net zero biodiversity category award)

Futures Housing Group

Changed approach to landscape maintenance to more planet friendly – mowing to wildflower planting across whole estate

Vivid

Developing a green infrastructure plan



Why we need a strategy



The NHS estimates it could save up to £2billion in treatment costs if everyone in England had access to good quality greenspace.

Climate Change

- Increased habitat resilience
- Carbon capture
- Helping reduce the impacts of climate change (air pollution, urban heat island, flood risk)

Health and Wellbeing

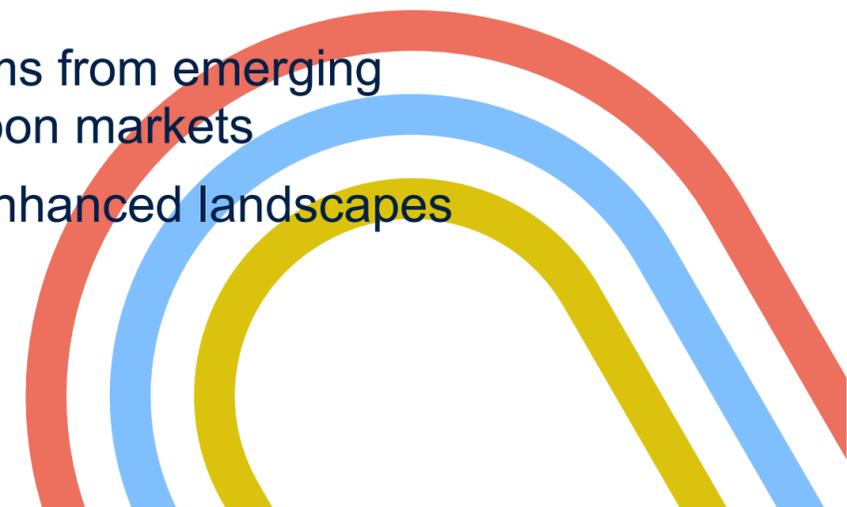
- Opportunities for rest, relaxation, and connection with nature
- Increased physical activity for leisure or transport
- Better mental health

Cultural

- Enhanced community engagement and social cohesion
- Developing younger generation's knowledge and ownership
- Gateway to encourage community to engage on matters of climate change

Economic

- Helping to decrease operational cost
- Creating nature-based income streams from a sense of place (tourism)
- Creating nature-based income streams from emerging habitat banking, biodiversity and carbon markets
- Increasing property values through enhanced landscapes



Longer term – Funding and Resource



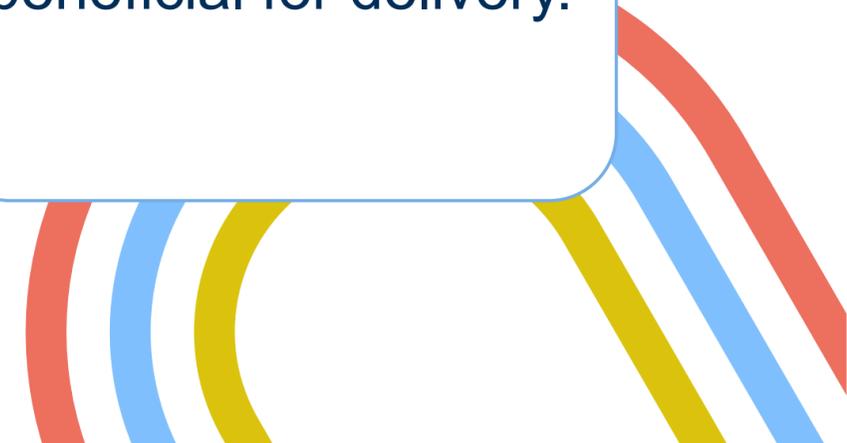
Funds tend to have a very limited application timeframe and are in high demand. It pays to be shovel ready – know what you want, outputs and costed up programme ready.



Planning and engagement are the key to success.



Dedicated resource available to tap into these funding streams is highly beneficial for delivery.



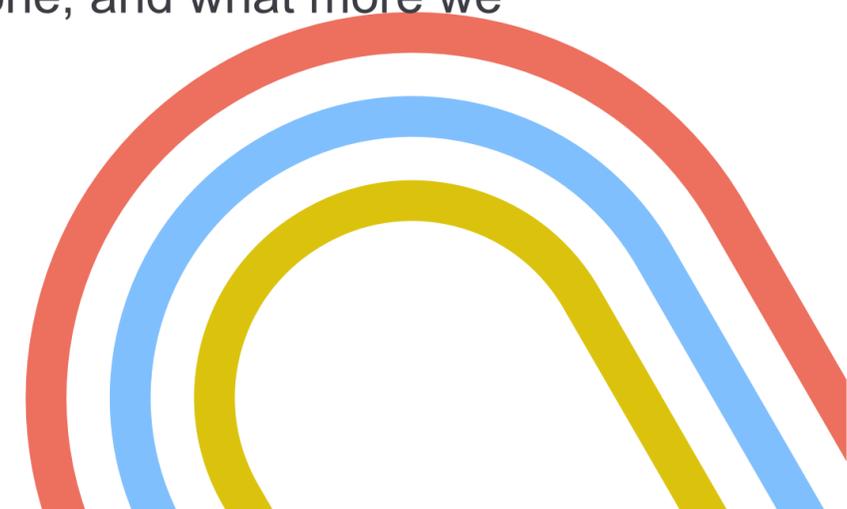
Development of the plan

Key Objectives

- Measure our habitat baseline/green audit/baseline
- Measure the carbon offsetting potential of our Green infrastructure (GI) assets
 - Specific sites identified for improvement each year
 - Measures that could be replicated and implemented at a large scale
- Tells us what good looks like in terms of:
 - Methodologies/specification we must achieve
 - Maintenance schedules
 - Measures that could be replicated and implemented at a large scale
 - Monitoring

Key Principles

- Connect the estate with wider green infrastructure
- Embed biodiversity and Green Infrastructure thinking with wider estate planning
- Integrate with existing workstreams
- Take internal stakeholders with us
- Understand what we can do alone, and what more we could do in partnership.



Outputs

- Baseline measurement of GI, Biodiversity and current Carbon Sequestration of all whg owned land assets
- Metrics, target setting and audit
- Landscape Improvement Plans for 10 Priority Areas
- Prioritised quick win projects for biodiversity enhancement
- Manuals for delivery and maintenance of replicable elements
- Biodiversity Net Gain model for new development
- Grounds maintenance tender/contract support



Use nature-based solutions to shape place

- Orchards
- Community gardens/growing spaces
- Rewilding
- Planting trees
- Water saving & water slowing solutions
- **Retain** and enhance the natural asset



Always protect and plant trees!

They can lower surface temperatures by 11- 25 degrees Celsius





Thank you

