

**MEETING: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY SCRUTINY****DATE: 23 MAY 2018****REPORT TITLE: WEST OF ENGLAND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE  
PLAN UPDATE****AUTHOR: LAURA AMBLER, WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED  
AUTHORITY****Purpose of Report**

1. To provide Members with an overview of the scope and purpose for the West of England Green Infrastructure Plan. This report provides an early opportunity for Members to engage and comment on the Green Infrastructure Plan. A presentation (attached will be given at the meeting). Future updates and opportunities to engage will be provided as the project advances.

**Background**

- 2.0 The West of England Joint Spatial Plan (JSP) commits the four Unitary Authorities of Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council and South Gloucestershire Council to produce a joint West of England Green Infrastructure (GI) Plan.
- 2.1 The GI Plan will identify the strategic measures and mechanisms to support, guide and implement the delivery of environmental commitments set within the JSP. This policy commitment will ensure that through the delivery of GI the JSP; meets the requirements of the Habitat Regulation Assessment agreed through Natural England, addresses and outlines a strategic GI network and delivers GI within new development to conform with the place shaping principles set within policy 5 of the JSP.
- 2.2 Whilst the GI Plan will be read as a whole, it may take the form of a suite of interrelated documents.
- 2.3 Work has already been undertaken to assess GI assets and opportunities for each of the JSP Strategic Development Locations appraised against 8 GI multifunctional objectives derived from the adopted West of England GI Framework (2011). The GI Plan will advance these outputs integrating GI across a range of development types and geographies.

**Definition of Green Infrastructure**

- 2.4 The West of England Green Infrastructure Framework (2011) states; *Green Infrastructure is a planned network of green (and blue) spaces and corridors within, around and between towns and cities, which can be designed, maintained, and improved to meet the needs of local communities, wildlife and the environment.*

2.5 *Green Infrastructure assets may be publicly or privately owned, may be with or without public access, and may be in urban and rural locations.*

*A network of green infrastructure offers multiple benefits, which are essential to the sustainable growth of communities and the economy. These include:*

- *Promoting economic growth, employment and skills improvement*
- *Supporting resilient ecosystems and biodiversity*
- *Mitigating and adapting the natural and built environment to climate change*
- *Recognising and enhancing a legible network of physical green spaces and corridors*
- *Reducing and managing flood risks*
- *Improving mental and physical health, and the cohesion of local communities*
- *Increasing sustainable food production*
- *Maintaining and enhancing cultural heritage, landscapes and natural resources*

2.6 This definition is supported by National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) paragraph 27 which recommends embedding GI into the development process at an early stage linking it explicitly to ecosystem services to provides multiple benefits at a range of scales, for the individual, for society, the economy and the environment.

2.7 Natural England further outlines that GI should be a strategically planned and delivered network comprising a broad range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. GI should be designed and managed including established green spaces and new sites and should be delivered across all spatial scales integrating through the built environment and connecting urban area to rural.

### **Project Scope**

2.8 The GI Plan will provide the evidence and guidance needed to support the JSP examination and preparation of Local Plans. The GI Plan will:

- Define what GI is for the West of England.
- Identify a clear vision.
- Appraise GI function against 8 objectives (derived from the 2011 West of England GI Framework).
- Ensure there is a robust and up-to-date evidence base.
- Identify measurable targets and indicators.
- Demonstrate the importance of GI in the delivery of sustainable development and place-making.
- Identify GI-related issues to be addressed in local plans and other policy documents, including opportunities to enhance or extend the GI network.

### **Governance**

2.9 The Green Infrastructure Plan is being developed to support the JSP and will be supported and approved by the JSP Project Board. The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) will be supported by a Project Manager and technical team comprising officers from the 4 Unitary Authorities, and key prescribed bodies. The SRO will seek the views of WECA Scrutiny and ensure members are regularly informed of the plans development via the delivery of formal reports and presentations.

**Next steps**

- 2.10 The GI Plan along with other key workstreams will continue through the JSP examination process and provide outputs to inform the examination and Local Plan preparation as required. The proposed timetable for key deliverables are set below

1. *Baseline stock take of current position-Ongoing to Sept 2018*
2. *Core document – Nov 18- March 19*
3. *HRA mitigations to support JSP examination and local plan development – Ongoing to Sept 2018*
4. *Planning policy development and support – Summer 2018*
5. *Delivery and implementation – Late 2018*

**Consultation:**

- 3 The Joint Spatial Plan: Publication Consultation (November 2017 to January 2018), where the Publication document included in policy the commitment to produce a West of England Green Infrastructure Plan.

**Other Options Considered:**

- 4 The Green Infrastructure Plan is a requirement set within the West of England Joint Spatial Plan policy 6.

**Risk Management/Assessment:**

- 5 There are no direct implications arising from this report. Any risks will be reviewed through the Joint Spatial Plan Project Board.

**Public Sector Equality Duties:**

- 6 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the Joint Spatial Plan. The outputs of the Green Infrastructure Plan will need to be consistent with the Joint Spatial Plan Equalities Impact Assessment.

**Economic Impact Assessment:**

- 7 The Green Infrastructure Plan will evaluate options for funding, investment and economic implications of Green Infrastructure.

**Finance Implications:**

- 8 The Green Infrastructure Plan will be resourced by the four Unitary Authorities, via the JSP Budget for which B&NES is the lead authority

Advice given by: Tim Richens, Director of Investment & Corporate Services, West of England Combined Authority.

**Legal Implications:**

- 9 The delivery of Green Infrastructure is in accordance with the requirements of the Joint Spatial Plan Habitat Regulation Assessment.

Advice given by: John McCormack, Monitoring Officer & Head of Legal, Governance and Democratic Services, South Gloucestershire Council

**Land/Property Implications:**

- 10 These implications will be reviewed through the development of the Green Infrastructure Plan.

**Human Resources Implications:**

- 11 The Green Infrastructure Plan will be resourced by Unitary Authority officers. As this project evolves, the resource requirements will be reviewed to ensure effective delivery of the project.

Advice given by: Alex Holly, Head of Human Resources, West of England Combined Authority.

**Recommendation:**

- 12 Members are asked to give their views and note the report.

**Joint Scrutiny**  
**23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018**

**West of England**  
**Green Infrastructure Plan**

# What is Green Infrastructure

## **WoE Green Infrastructure Framework (2011):**

GI is a planned network of green (and blue) spaces and corridors within, around and between towns and cities, which can be designed, maintained, and improved to meet the needs of local communities, wildlife and the environment.

A network of green infrastructure offers multiple benefits, which are essential to the sustainable growth of communities and the economy. These include:

- *Supporting resilient ecosystems and biodiversity*
- *Mitigating and adapting the natural and built environment to climate change*
- *Recognising and enhancing a legible network of physical green spaces and corridors*
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# JSP and Green Infrastructure

Initial GI assessment work based on WoE Framework themes used to:

- Assess GI for each Strategic Development Location

- List key WoE habitats and species

- Identify initial key strategic GI corridors

- Identify next steps – ambition for the GI Plan

# The Ambition for the GI Plan

- Opportunity for new green leadership. *'Greening the city regions opportunities for Metro Mayors (May 2017)\** report, supported need for WoE GI Plan.
- Bristol European Green Capital 2015
- Government ambition; A green future; Our 25yr plan to improve the environment

\* NT, WTs, CPRE, Campaign for better transport, Green Alliance

# JSP and Green Infrastructure

The JSP policy outlines the production of a GI Plan:

- To meet the requirements of the Habitat Regulation Assessment\* as agreed with NE
- To identify strategic GI measures and requirements (policy 6)
- To support delivery of place shaping principles (policy 5)

\*The Habitat Regulation Assessment outlines the GI Plan as a mechanism to delivery strategic mitigation for ecological sites

# West of England GI Plan – Project Initiation Document

**Priority** to provide evidence and guidance to support the JSP examination and preparation of local plans.

**Essential it is practical**, example driven document(s)

**GI Plan** may take form of a suite of interrelated documents

# The Project Deliverables

## Proposed Timetable

Ongoing to Sept 2018

March 2018– March  
2019

Ongoing to Sept 2018

Summer 2018

Late 2018

## A West of England Green Infrastructure Plan to include:

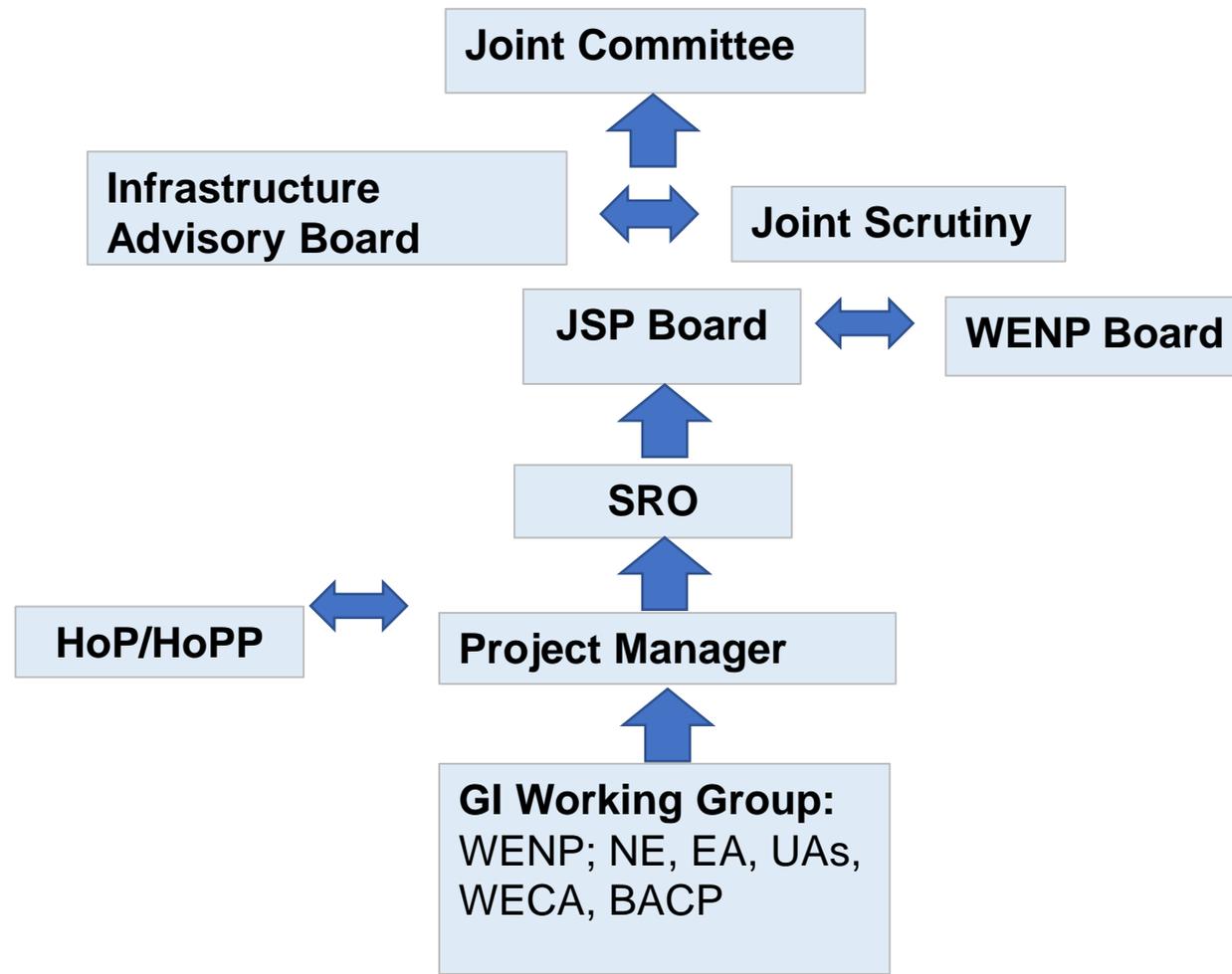
- 1. Baseline stock take of current position**– to identify existing evidence base and determine.
- 2. Core Document** - GI Vision and objectives; WoE targets and indicators, relationship to national policy and strategy.
- 3. HRA mitigation** – to advance the work undertaken for the HRA by reviewing impacts and further appraising mitigation required to deliver the strategic development locations in relation to sites of international and national importance.
- 4. Planning policy development and support** – to provide planning policy-related guidance at both the strategic and detailed level to be included within, or to support, local plans.
- 5. Delivery and implementation** – to investigate and identify the various delivery options and opportunities.

# Project Governance

As the Green Infrastructure Plan is a requirement of the JSP and is required to support its delivery, the plan and its component parts will be formally approved by the JSP Board.

**Senior Responsible Officer**– Laura Ambler (WECA)

**Project Manager** - Sarah Jackson (B&NES).



# Green Infrastructure Plan Objectives

## For discussion

1. To maintain and enhance a functional and connected strategic green infrastructure network maximising opportunities for enhancing networks of green corridors and open space.
2. To establish and maintain coherent and resilient ecological networks, by reducing fragmentation, and delivering habitat restoration, re-creation and biodiversity enhancement.
3. To provide natural solutions to help tackle the impacts of climate change, such as increased use of trees and green spaces to reduce urban heating, land uses that absorb carbon dioxide, and active travel solutions to reduce motorised transport.
4. To optimise the use of green infrastructure and natural ecosystem services to deliver sustainable water management, flood mitigation measures and reduce flood risk.
5. To improve the network of active travel routes and accessibility to green spaces to support healthy lifestyles and provide more opportunities for people to connect with nature.
6. To design and deliver high quality green infrastructure improving local sense of place to protect and enhance landscape character, and the natural, cultural and heritage services that they provide.
7. To recognise opportunities for local food production in urban and rural areas and increase food security by protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land.
8. To create attractive areas for inward investment by enhancing green infrastructure within and around housing and employment sites that demonstrate strong links to the wider green infrastructure network.