

Photo by: Paul Thomas



# Achievements and Legacy of the Carbon Landscape Partnership



# Contents

Foreword	3
Carbon Landscape Partnership Statistics	4
About the Partnership	5
Scheme Vision and Aims	6
30 Ways to Deliver Nature Recovery	7
Legacy	8
Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve	10
Wigan Greenheart Landscape Recovery Scheme	11
Funders and Supporters	12





Since the declaration of the Nature Improvement Area it has been an enormous privilege to work with such amazing partners developing this programme and making the differences across Wigan, Salford and Warrington, for wildlife and connecting people with nature. It's been inspiring bringing the local community on this journey and learning from their experiences, engaging them in the restoration of this truly carbon landscape and its future sustainability and resilience.

**Dr Amanda Wright**

Natural England

Chair of the Carbon Landscape Partnership

---

Working at a landscape scale has been a fantastic opportunity! We have managed to raise the profile of how important our wildlife truly is and find new innovative ways to connect people with nature.

**Daveen Wallis**

Programme Manager and

Director of Lancashire Wildlife Trust

It's been a pleasure to have been involved with the Carbon Landscape Partnership. As with any complex and challenging project there have been ups and downs, challenges and disappointments. But the end results justify all the hard work by the Carbon Landscape team and the partner organisations.

I have seen a step change both in people's engagement with this landscape and in the condition of many of its wetland sites. The Landscape Partnership has now completed its work, but I think the impact it has had will become increasingly evident over the coming years.

**David Mount**

Carbon Landscape mentor and monitor,  
working on behalf of the National Lottery  
Heritage Fund



# Carbon Landscape Partnership



**24 projects**

delivering a **£3.2 million** programme within Wigan, Leigh, Salford and Warrington



**776 hectares**

of biodiversity and landscape enhancements



**58**

management interventions for nature



**13 ponds**

for great created newts



**10 trainees**

gained experience and moved on to full time employment



**12,285 days**

or 56 full working years from

**1,500+ volunteers**



**14,162**

participants engaged through

**898 activities**

talks, walks and events



**2,792 trained**

from

**214**

skills workshops



**807**

school children involved in education and learning activity



**145**

interpretation features including digital



**112**

local community groups

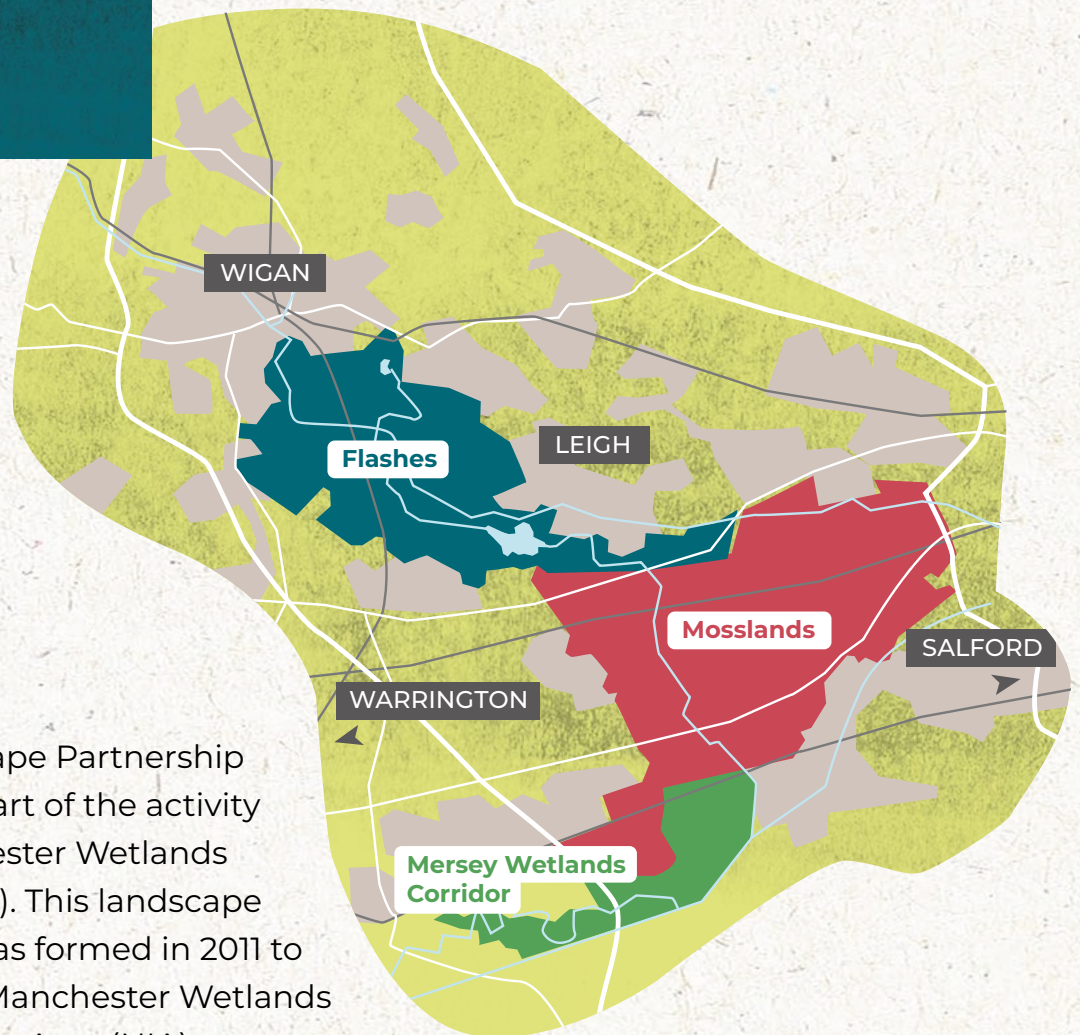


**94½ km**

of trails including wheelchair friendly and cycle routes



## About the Partnership



The Carbon Landscape Partnership was developed as part of the activity of the Great Manchester Wetlands Partnership (GMWP). This landscape scale partnership was formed in 2011 to manage the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area (NIA).

This NIA was locally designated in 2013 by the Greater Manchester (now Natural Capital Group) and Cheshire Local Nature Partnerships.

The NIA comprises a landscape-scale community and natural heritage area totalling 480 km<sup>2</sup>. The Carbon Landscape Partnership focuses on a part of that: the Flashes of Wigan, the Mosslands of Chat Moss and Risley Moss to the west and southwest of Manchester and Salford, and the Mersey Wetlands corridor stretching from Rixton to Warrington. The area extends southwards as far as the Manchester Ship Canal.

Carbon Landscape is a Landscape Partnership Scheme funded by the National Lottery's Heritage Fund (NLHF) delivered in just over 5 years between April 2017 and September 2022.

The Carbon Landscape Partnership is at the heart of the wider Great Manchester Wetlands Partnership who bring together a wide range of organisations who share a vision of:

“By 2030, Great Manchester Wetlands will be a thriving, resilient and inspirational landscape that delivers real benefits to local communities and the local economy.”



# Scheme vision and aims

To help to work towards the GMWP vision, the Carbon Landscape Partnership reconnects residents with their unique local landscape and their natural and cultural heritage. The project area is a cross-section of wetlands and famous for its carbon-based resources, coal and peat. The exploitation of these during the industrial revolution had a major, destructive effect on the landscape. Since then, a remarkable transformation has taken place to benefit both wildlife and connecting people with nature.

The area sits between two city regions, it lies west of Manchester and east of Liverpool, and is the only significant gap in the Merseyside to Manchester urban belt, making it a vital corridor for the gradual south to north migration of species as the climate changes.

Over an 18-month development period, a steering group of 12 local partners (later with the addition of the Woodland Trust and Cheshire Wildlife Trust) identified 22 different, yet interrelated projects around three strategic aims that reflected the nine Heritage Fund programme outcomes.

## The biggest achievements to note and celebrate are:

**For landscape restoration – the landscape impact over 776ha, exceeding original intentions by 16%** with extensive conservation and restoration activity to help improve the threatened and declining landscape made up of water, fen, wet grassland, wet woodland and lowland raised bog.

The delivery of an **awareness and engagement programme** at a community level has been one of the most effective parts of the Carbon Landscape Partnership as demonstrated by the **14,162 people participating in the 898 different events.**

Learning activities throughout the scheme, were delivered through **214 training and skills workshops benefitting 2,792 participants,** along with the engagement and retention of the volunteers to contribute **12,285 days or 56 full time working years.**

**100%** of the trainees went on to **relevant employment** and the Programme Team are now employed to take forward legacy and benefit other landscape scale schemes.

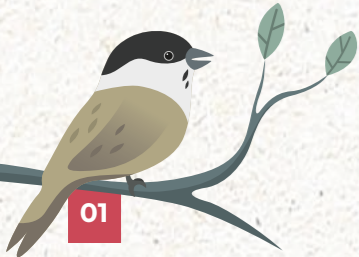
## Some key ingredients for future activity

**Many of the lessons learned reflect the different complex elements of successful project management and delivery.**

1. Managing risk and uncertainty with a flexible approach to project management
2. Being realistic with resources and timetable
3. Having a clear project scope and relevant permissions
4. Tendering, procurement and managing contractors
5. Recruiting and managing volunteers
6. Communication – keeping everyone up-to-date including recruitment campaigns
7. Building relationships by working in partnership and supporting local communities



# Great Manchester Wetlands



01

Rewet woodland to improve the habitat for willow tits



05

Declare the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh a National Nature Reserve



06

2 x lagoons which are the largest new wetland in the north of England encouraging Black-necked Grebes at Woolston Eyes



02

Ditches for watervoles



03

Pondscape for great crested newts



07

Reintroduce the Large Heath Butterfly after local extinction 150 years ago at Astley Moss.



04

Fenscape corridor of fen habitats close to urban areas



08

633 Practical Volunteers and 393 Citizen Science Volunteers



09

Swift a data collection system



10

Sustainable Urban Drainage with reedbed filtration before the Hey Brook



11

Be like a beaver and create leaky wooden dams at Low Hall



12

Remove hay to encourage orchids at Wigan Flashes



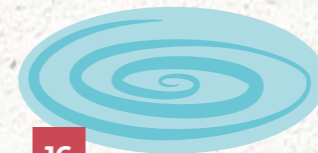
13

Reedbed water channels to stop dogs disturbing water rail at Amberswood



14

Reedbed lowering for breeding bitterns at Bryn Marsh



16

Slow the flow swirl pools at Three Sisters



18

Rewet a mossland and watch the dragonflies return at Pestfurlong Moss



19

Donate bog bush crickets from Pestfurlong Moss and work with Chester Zoo



20

Wheel chair friendly boardwalk at Risley Moss



21

Sphagnum squeezing with school children and the rangers at Risley Moss



22

Newtopia improve great crested newt habitats at Rixton Claypits



23

Reduce shading to ponds at Rixton Claypits



24

Wildflower sowing at Paddington Meadows



27

Convert a hockey pitch into a wetland with Golborne High School



28

Cotton grass spectacular at Little Woollen Moss



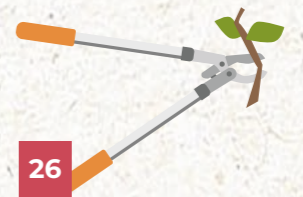
25

Practical skills training with the New Cut Group



29

Lay a hedge for hedgehogs at Mossbrook Growers



26

Keep wet grassland scrub free at Whitehead Hall Meadows



30

Create a new mini moss at New Moss Wood

**30** to deliver **Nature WAYS Recovery**  
with Great Manchester Wetlands Partnership

- Restore core sites
- Access and Trails
- Friends Groups
- Corridors and stepping-stones
- National Nature Reserve
- Citizen Science
- Volunteer
- Remove invasives





Twenty four detailed project reports are available at [carbonlandscape.org.uk/project-inspire-and-enable](https://carbonlandscape.org.uk/project-inspire-and-enable) with thanks and logo display of all 33 match funders. In addition, there is the 69 paged independent evaluation by Simon Lees of Countryside Training.

Great Manchester Wetlands Partnership have committed to the legacy of the Landscape Partnership Scheme through a refresh of the strategy and development of a project pipeline. With so many exciting projects to take forward the partners have devised a scoring matrix to help prioritise future work.

The accompanying case studies brochure highlights the legacy of each individual project.

### **Some examples of note include:**

Collectively, the Partnership has built on the programme of restoration works and among the wider partners a further £10.8million has been secured that will benefit the wider landscape.

It cannot be underestimated how much Fenscape has trailblazed the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh to become a new generation of National Nature Reserves. It was declared an NNR in May 2022 but not purely based on its rare wildlife. It is based on the potential for wildlife and connecting people with nature.

This included a pioneering programme of community engagement that culminated in a series of short films promoting voices of young people and local residents expressing why the area is so important to them.

Woolston Eyes has become one of the leading regional wetlands in terms of scale and innovative approaches for conservation management. This has been led by the extremely dedicated Woolston Eyes Conservation Group who, with the support from the partnership, have grown in confidence to take on a further multi-million pound capital infrastructure project.

Warrington Council's programmes of works including the boardwalk at Risley Moss and the access improvements at Rixton and Paddington meadows have transformed these areas for local residents.

The development of Swift, Greater Manchester Local Record Centre's new online recording system has become the preferred option for most of GMLRC's recorders to submit their records. It has also been adopted by the Cheshire Local Record Centre and the GM Bird Recording Group.





The Partnership attracted two new formal partners Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Woodland Trust, due to the impressive work the partnership have delivered with them. Other beneficial partnerships have formed out of the Carbon Landscape including a Creative People and Places Consortium who have been promoting greenspace for creative cultural experiences and learning. The new “Chat Moss Heritage Partnership”, spearheaded by the Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, is raising the profile of Chat Moss as a local resource as well as a tourism destination.

Access across our landscape has significantly improved with a “Carbon Trail” weaving the entire length of the landscape, connecting people with nature reserves. Circular routes of various lengths and abilities, some of which are suitable for cycling, have been created and improved, and a number are also accompanied by digital resources which help enhance the learning and enjoyment of these spaces. The cycling hub has really gone from strength to strength. Leigh Spinners Mill has put a funding application into Transport for Greater Manchester to put cycle parking on site and with access to showers.

With climate change now a major concern for local residents, the Carbon Landscape has focussed on simple ways in which people can engage within their landscape to help combat and mitigate the effects of climate change. UNESCO UK is exploring funding options to trial the RoundView and Ketso as engagement tools for using geo-parks to inspire long-term thinking about resilience and sustainability.

Wanderland has laid the foundation for the successful “Down to Earth” £1m Arts Council bid which from 2023, will further benefit Wigan by demonstrating high-impact, high-quality art commissioning with a focus on carbon heritage and a net zero carbon future.

The Partnership has disseminated learning and best practice from the Carbon Landscape through published papers about peatland restoration, and the use of creative engagement tools has helped other heritage organisations think about resilience and sustainability.



### Perhaps the greatest aspects of the Carbon Landscape legacy are:

- 1 The declaration of a new Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve covering the wetland flashes between Wigan town centre and Leigh town centre
- 2 The proposed Mosslands National Nature Reserve
- 3 The Wigan Greenheart Landscape Recovery Scheme



# Flashes of Wigan and Leigh National Nature Reserve



During the winter of 2020/21, the programme team and partners worked on a pilot project to collate and build the evidence base to support a potential declaration for a new 'urban' National Nature Reserve (NNR) that involved:

- restoration work at Pearson's Flash
- a deep dive into the biological evidence base for a NNR
- community engagement activity looking towards new voices for nature recovery

This activity led to the Flashes of Wigan and Leigh being declared as a National Nature Reserve in May 2022, delivering a significant legacy for the Carbon Landscape Partnership and will ensure that the benefits delivered through the Fenscape programme will be sustained through a long-term management plan developed through close consultation and collaboration with local stakeholders. The experience and learning from this activity has helped influence a new generation of NNRs which are not solely about rare wildlife but also about the potential for Connecting People with Nature.



## New Voices in Nature Recovery

The film was produced through the engagement of a broad spectrum of young people including a wheelchair campaigner James who said that being an advocate for improving access *"had given him a voice."*



# Wigan Greenheart Landscape Recovery Scheme

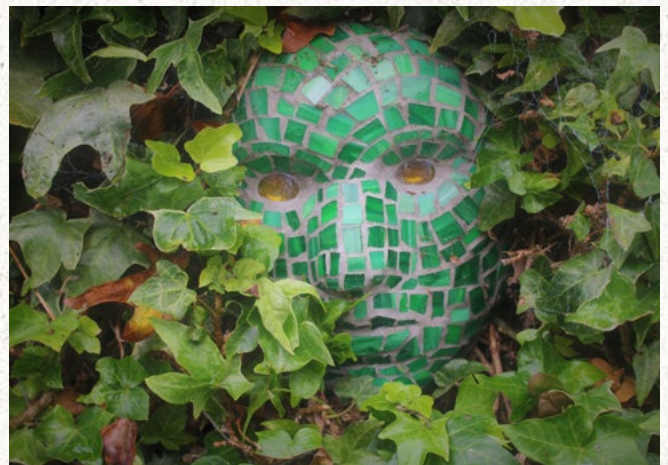
**Wigan Greenheart is one of 22 projects to be awarded funding through the new Landscape Recovery Scheme announced by Defra on 2nd September 2022.**

Lancashire Wildlife Trust and Wigan Council have secured a 2 year development phase to take forward further landscape connectivity designed to boost iconic threatened species. This will provide long-term support and continuity for land managers and deliver multiple social benefits including greater access and stronger climate change resilience, as part of implementing the Government's post-Brexit Agricultural Transition Plans.



The Great Manchester Wetland Partnership is of strategic importance for this area and the Project Pipeline will ensure the continuation of partnership work and thinking in developing future activity for natural heritage restoration.

*Thirty ways to create the Nature Recovery Network with Great Manchester Wetlands* is an inspiration for all landscape scale nature recovery schemes. To find more information visit [carbonlandscape.org.uk/about](https://carbonlandscape.org.uk/about)





# Carbon Landscape

