City of BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

LUC

Bradford Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

Executive summary



Made possible with Heritage Fund

Part of Nature Towns and Cities

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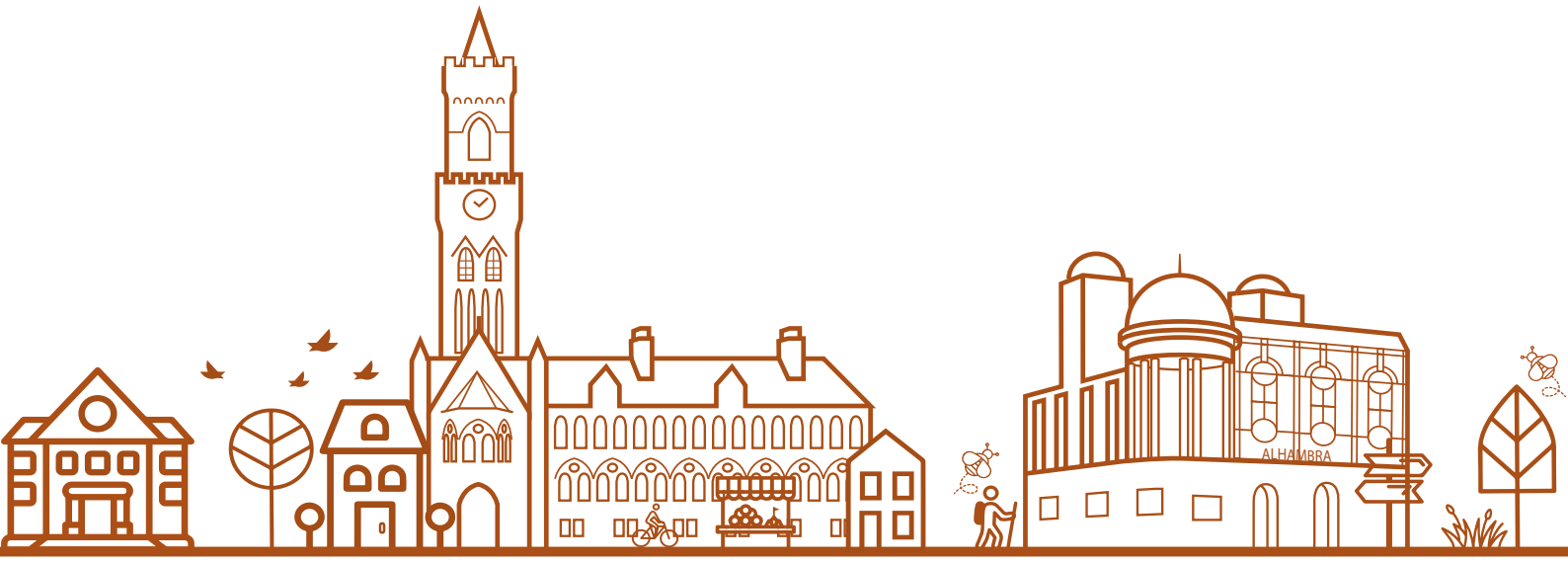
Chapter 1

Purpose of the Strategy

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council commissioned LUC to prepare a comprehensive Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy to support the preparation and implementation of the emerging Local Plan.

The delivery of high-quality green and blue infrastructure will underpin the proposed Local Plan objectives by supporting sustainable development, addressing health and social inequalities, conserving and enhancing built and natural heritage, improving social cohesion, facilitating active travel and building environmental and climate resilience.

The Strategy has assessed the existing green and blue infrastructure network across Bradford District, identifying gaps and opportunities as well as evidence-based recommendations to integrate interventions into future planning policies and development. The recommendations incorporate interventions which can be delivered as part of new development through the planning process, wider partnership working or other delivery mechanisms.



Purpose of the Strategy

Nature Towns and Cities is a programme jointly run by the National Trust, Natural England and National Lottery Heritage Fund. The focus of the programme is to bring nature and greenspace to urban areas for everyone's benefit.

In 2026, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council was one of 19 local authorities awarded revenue funding (approximately £850,000) to develop partnerships, strategies and delivery plans to enhance urban greenspaces and increase the benefits they provide. The production of this Strategy is partly funded via Nature Towns and Cities.



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What is green and blue infrastructure?

Green and blue infrastructure networks can include, but are not limited to:

- Managed and natural greenspaces: public parks and gardens, nature conservation sites, allotments, cemeteries and community gardens.
- Linear linkages and corridors: hedgerows, public rights of way, walking and cycling routes and canal and river corridors.
- Elements of the built environment: roadside verges, street trees, public realm, private gardens, sustainable urban drainage systems and greening features.
- Aspects of the wider landscape and countryside: farmland, wetlands / flood plains, and woodlands.
- Blue infrastructure: water elements of green infrastructure; including rivers, canals, lakes, ponds and wetlands.

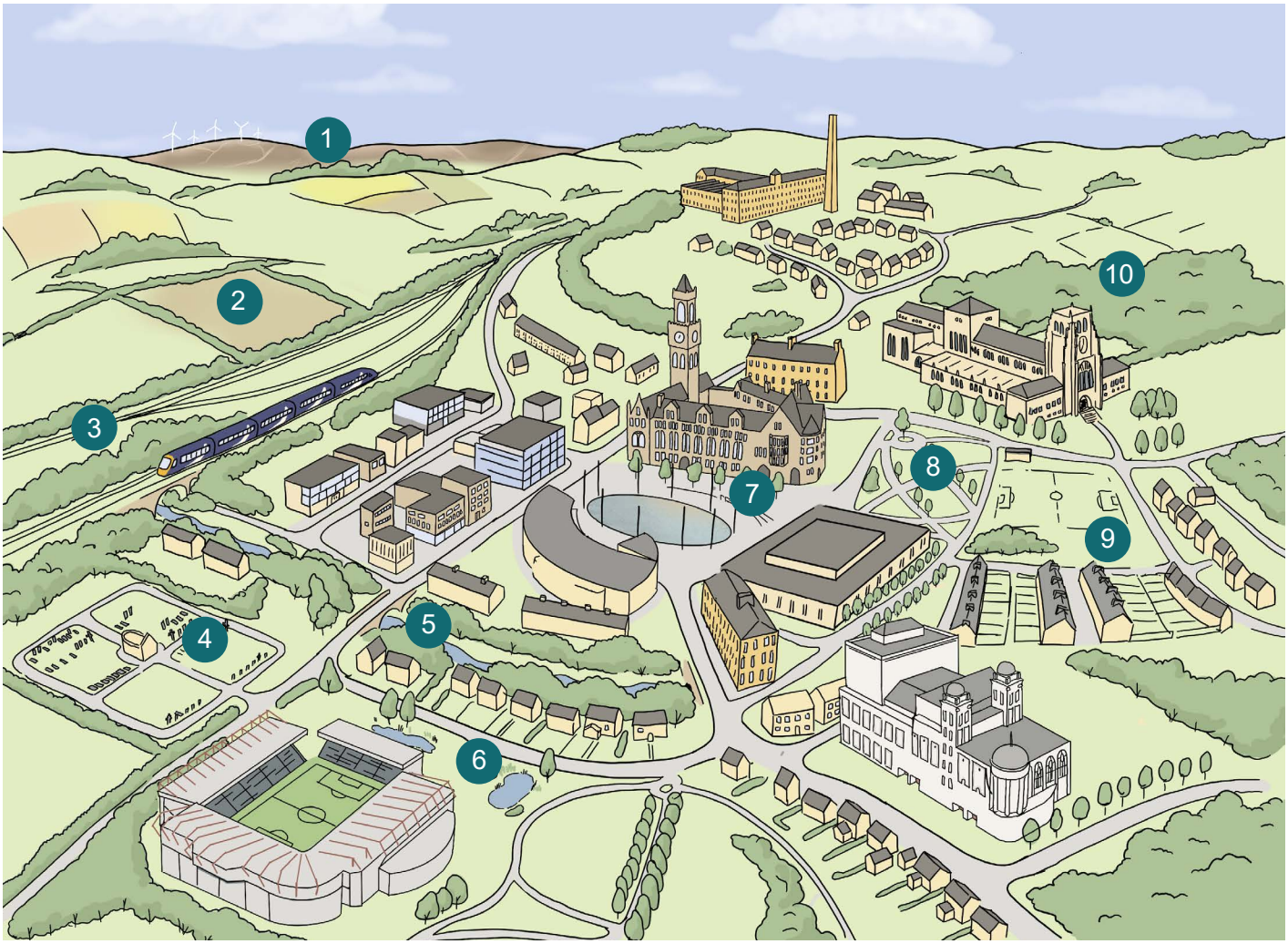
The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework sets out five 'benefit principles' which summarise the role green and blue infrastructure can play in the creation of high quality attractive places. The Strategy uses these five benefit principles to structure the baseline analysis.



Nature rich Bradford | Active & healthy Bradford | Thriving & prosperous Bradford | Water management in Bradford | Climate resilient Bradford

The five 'benefit principles' applied to the Bradford context

What is green and blue infrastructure?



1. Moorland and heathland
2. Agricultural land
3. Disused rail corridors
4. Cemeteries and churchyards
5. Riparian corridors
6. SuDS schemes
7. Street trees
8. Parkland and gardens
9. Amenity greenspace
10. Woodland

Elements of the green and blue infrastructure network in Bradford District

Benefits of green and blue infrastructure

Green and blue infrastructure is defined by its multi-functionality, with a single asset having the ability to provide a number of benefits to people, place and nature. It is this variety of benefits that play an important role in the delivery of sustainable growth.



Benefits of green and blue infrastructure



The vision for green and blue infrastructure in Bradford

In 2050, Bradford District will have a well-integrated, diverse and connected green and blue infrastructure network. Urban areas will be thriving places with equitable access to wildlife rich green and blue spaces which support biodiversity, health and well-being, and provide opportunities for social activities and increased community cohesion.

A re-naturalised water environment will improve access, water quality, reduce flood risk and be rich with aquatic habitats and species. All communities will benefit from an environment which is resilient to the effects of climate change. Existing green and blue infrastructure will be protected, and new development will have further enhanced and expanded the network with associated benefits.



Strategic objectives

The vision is supported by a series of strategic objectives for green and blue infrastructure which will help guide the delivery of the Strategy. Informed by feedback from stakeholders, each strategic objective for green and blue infrastructure is linked to the five 'benefit principles' (as defined within the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework). The strategic objectives will help deliver green and blue infrastructure enhancements across Bradford District and form the basis for monitoring its success.



1. Increase the amount of important habitat protected through local designation, targeting areas where this could also improve access to nature.



2. Improve the condition of existing designated sites through habitat restoration, and the implementation of enhanced management practices.

Strategic objectives



3. Create new areas of wildlife rich habitat within urban areas.



4. Increase tree canopy cover across the district, targeting areas where it will provide environmental justice benefits for underserved communities.



5. Target the provision of new accessible greenspace and play in areas of deficiency and where there are high levels of deprivation.



6. Expand the active travel network, improve access and enhance the attractiveness of routes to encourage active travel and improve health and well-being.

Strategic objectives



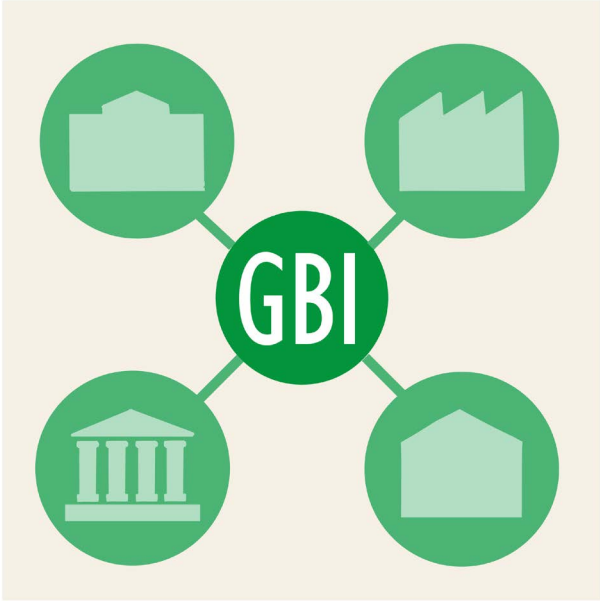
7. Capitalise on the success of city centre regeneration, focus on increasing use of greenspaces and learn from success to roll out to other areas.



8. Support river restoration efforts, including re-naturalisation of heavily modified watercourses and removal of invasive non-native species to enhance water quality and reduce flood risk.



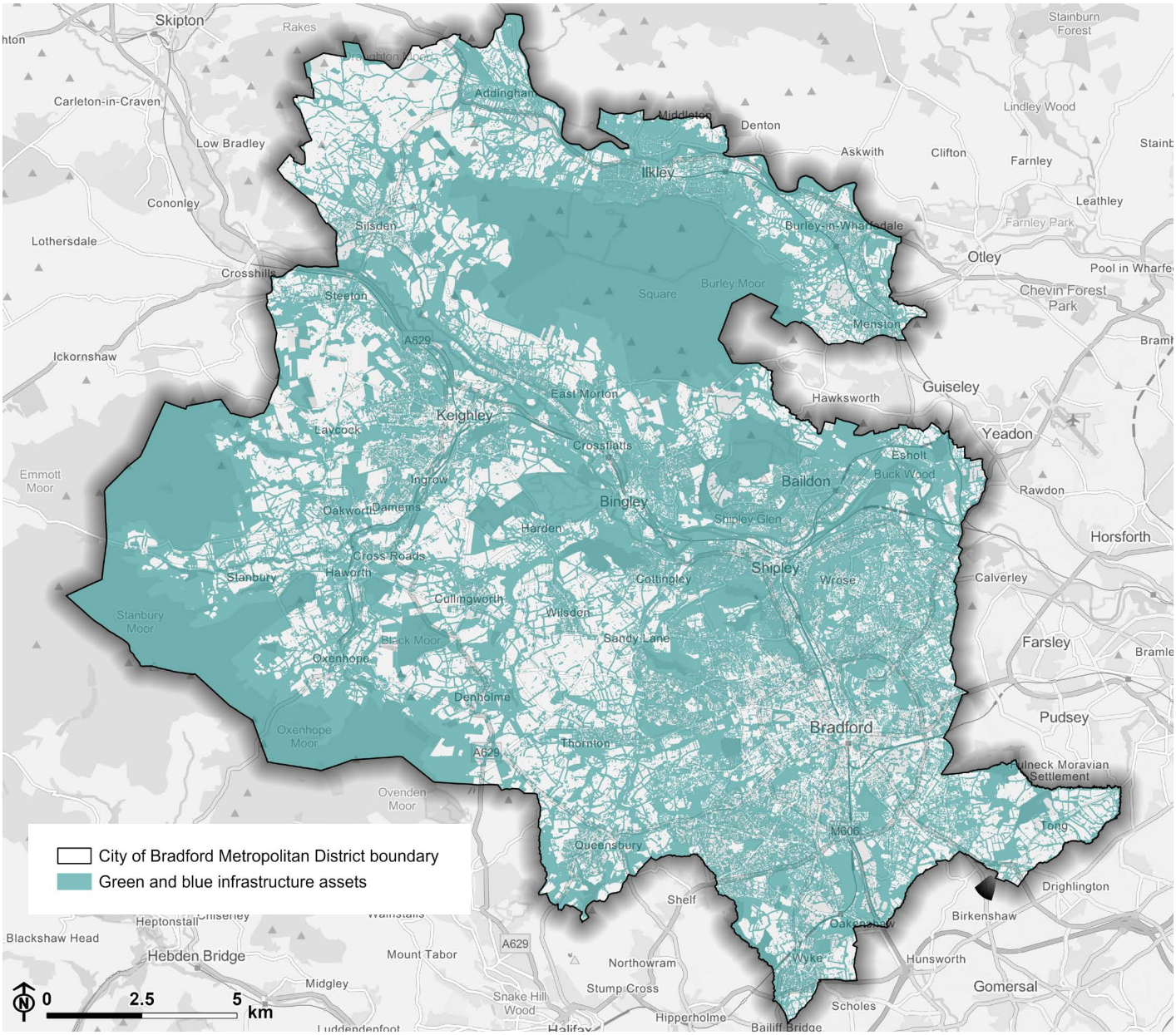
9. Build on and expand the existing partnership working across the district to ensure a coordinated approach to green and blue infrastructure delivery and management.



10. Deliver good quality green and blue infrastructure in all new development which contributes to the multi-functionality of the wider network.

Existing pattern of green and blue infrastructure

Bradford District is characterised by a high coverage of existing green and blue infrastructure assets, albeit these are not equally distributed. Notable gaps are located in the north west, land south of Steeton-with-Eastburn, around Keighley, between Wilsden and Thornton and within Bradford city centre.



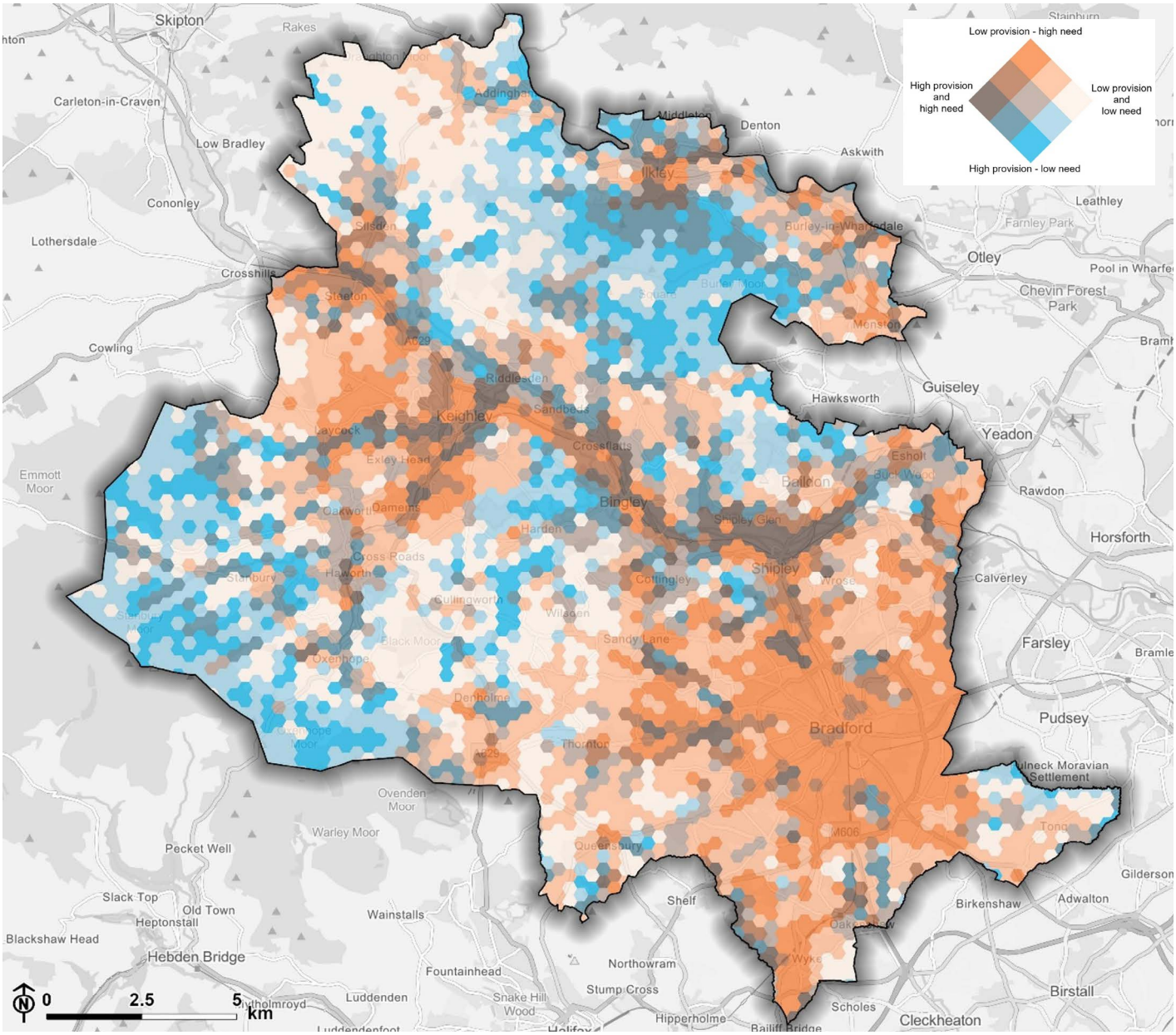
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The need for green and blue infrastructure in Bradford

A bivariate mapping exercise has been undertaken to identify the highest priority locations for green and blue infrastructure investment in Bradford District.



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Please refer to the appendices for a full list of data used in this analysis. Contains OS data © Crown Copyright and database rights 2026. Basemap: © OpenStreetMap contributors, Microsoft, Esri Community Maps contributors, Map layer by Esri.

The need for green and blue infrastructure in Bradford

Need examines the existing environmental and social issues within the district which green and blue infrastructure could help alleviate. Deficiency refers to an absence of green and blue multi-functional assets which make up the existing network. Using a 50m hexagonal grid, overall green and blue infrastructure need and deficiency has been calculated for Bradford District. The findings provide a high-level guide to help prioritise where interventions are most required and indicate spatially any gaps in the existing network.

The mapping outputs indicate different priorities for green and blue infrastructure investment, as outlined below:

High need and low existing provision
These areas should form the priority for green and blue infrastructure investment. Proposals should focus on green and blue infrastructure creation, carefully designed to contribute towards site-specific issues.

High need and high existing provision
Proposals should focus on green and blue infrastructure enhancement or connectivity to deliver multiple functions.

Low need and high existing provision
These areas should form a low priority for green and blue infrastructure investment. Proposals should focus on protection and conservation of existing assets.

Low need and low existing provision
These areas should focus on green and blue infrastructure creation, albeit are lower priority than those areas identified as high need and low provision.

Supporting action plans

A number of emerging opportunities have been identified, structured within green and blue infrastructure focus areas. These emerging opportunities provide a variety of project types, scales and costs, and are intended to be taken forward by various partners as and when funding becomes available. The projects are divided into a series of action plans to promote their future delivery. The structure of the action plan profiles is set out below:

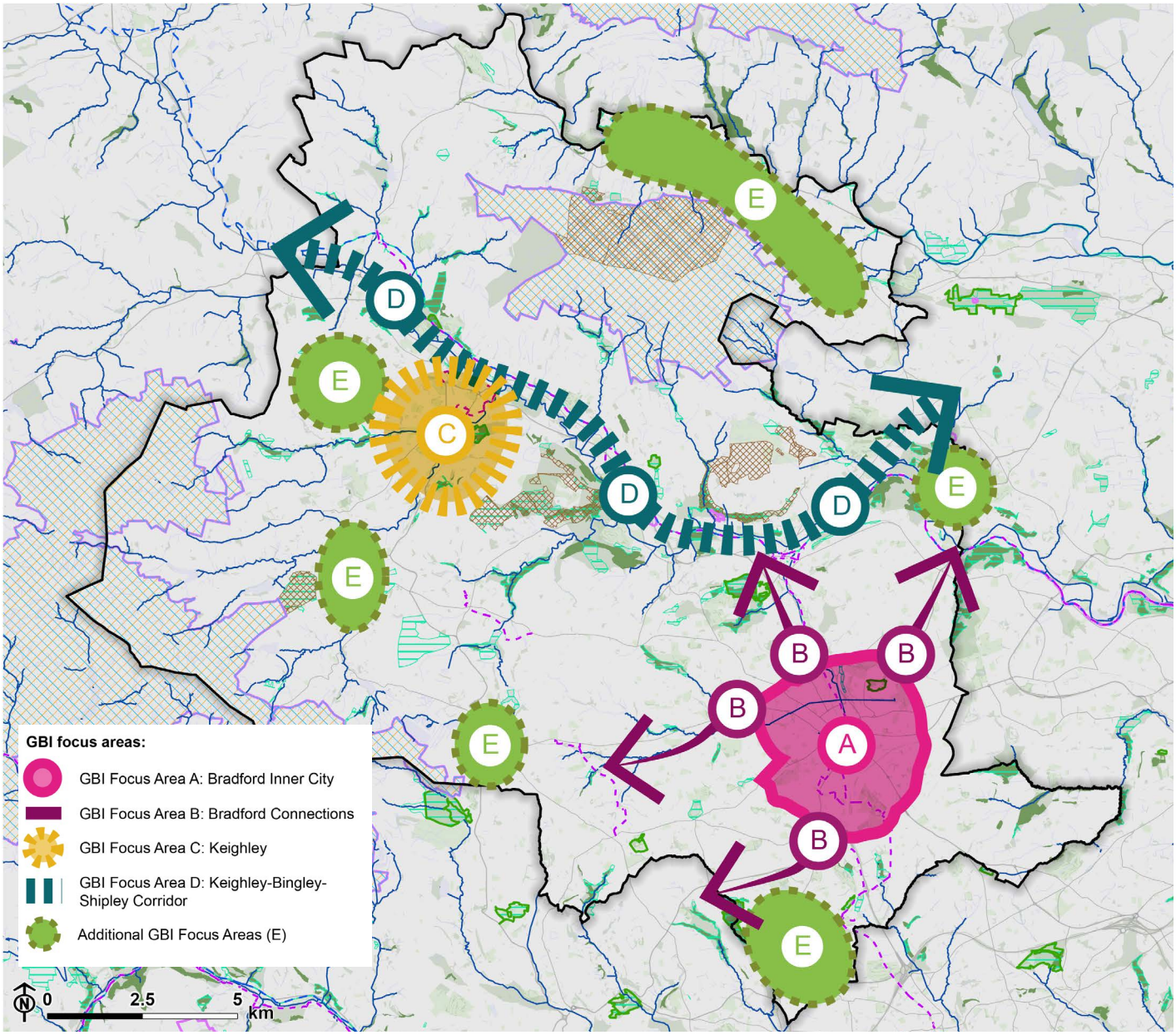
- Name of green and blue infrastructure opportunity;
- Overview and justification for inclusion;
- Benefits;
- Potential delivery partners and governance arrangements;
- Funding mechanism(s);
- Indicative cost;
- Indicative timescale;
- Measurable outcomes; and
- Next steps.

Whilst some projects are spatially specific, the principles of other projects offer the opportunity to be replicated across Bradford District.



Green and blue infrastructure focus areas

The Strategy has identified four priority focus areas for new green and blue infrastructure provision and enhancement within the district. These areas are identified on the map below:



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Green and Blue Infrastructure Focus Area A: Bradford Inner City



Opportunity A1: Integrate street trees and pocket parks along key streets within the A6177 ring road to improve the public realm and enhance the setting of active travel routes



Opportunity A2: Create a joined-up network of active travel routes linking city centre parks and wider suburbs



Opportunity A3: Develop new programmes to activate greenspaces and encourage their use by a wider audience



Opportunity A4: Seek opportunities to de-culvert and re-naturalise sections of Bradford Beck through the city centre



Opportunity A5: Explore opportunities to create more community growing spaces (including community orchards) in parks and public spaces (as well as schools, healthcare settings and places of worship)



Opportunity A6: Create a city centre active travel hub as part of the proposed Southern Gateway Project (linked to the West Yorkshire Mass Transit system (Bradford Line)), as a central meeting point of key active travel routes



Opportunity A7: Ensure green and blue infrastructure is fully integrated within designs for the proposed Bradford City Village development



Opportunity A8: Promote awareness of and access to Bradford Pennine Gateway National Nature Reserve

Green and Blue Infrastructure Focus Area B: Bradford Connections



Opportunity B1: Integrate street trees and pocket parks along key high streets and commuting routes to improve the public realm and enhance the setting of active travel routes.



Opportunity B2: Creation of community growing spaces, including community orchards throughout the city



Opportunity B3: Create and restore accessible blue spaces (e.g. lakes and ponds) particularly in the north east to south west (e.g. Bradford Moor, Holme Wood and Little Horton)



Opportunity B4: Improve connections from outlying suburbs in the west of the district to the city centre, providing more opportunities for access and sustainable travel



Opportunity B5: Create links and awareness to Bradford Pennine Gateway National Nature Reserve



Opportunity B6: Connect heavily fragmented woodland between Northcliffe Park and Peel Park in the north and Bowling Park and Bierley Woods in the south

Green and Blue Infrastructure Focus Area C: Keighley



Opportunity C1: Working with the National Trust (East Riddlesden Hall) and Yorkshire Water, explore opportunities to create Marley Country Park



Opportunity C2: Improve the condition of footpaths within Higher and Lower Holme House Wood, including the installation of a footbridge



Opportunity C3: Restore sections of the River Worth and North Beck



Opportunity C4: Seek opportunities to re-naturalise sections of the River Aire through the north of Keighley



Opportunity C5: Improve the management and access of Park Wood Local Nature Reserve



Opportunity C6: Create a network of community growing spaces, including community orchards throughout the town (including community orchards) in parks and public spaces (as well as schools, healthcare settings and places of worship)



Opportunity C7: Increase and expand nature-friendly management practices and provision of habitats (e.g. ponds, nest boxes, wildflower meadows and bug hotels) across parks, road verges and open spaces in Keighley

Green and Blue Infrastructure Focus Area D: Keighley-Shipley-Bingley Corridor



Opportunity D1: Integrate street trees and pocket parks along key high streets and commuting routes to improve the public realm and enhance the setting of active travel routes



Opportunity D2: Improve connections from the Leeds & Liverpool Canal to adjacent urban areas, providing more opportunities for access and sustainable travel



Opportunity D3: Introduce improvements along National Cycle Route 69 (and 696) with the aim of enhancing condition, functionality and accessibility



Opportunity D4: Expand, buffer and connect fragmented deciduous woodland to the north of Keighley, including Low Wood LNR, to improve habitat connectivity and resilience of irreplaceable ancient woodland habitat



Opportunity D5: Expand and buffer valuable semi-natural habitats; including lowland fen to the north of Bingley and floodplain grazing marsh to the north of Keighley



Opportunity D6: Increase and expand nature-friendly management practices and provision of habitats (e.g. ponds, nest boxes, wildflower meadows and bug hotels) focussing on area within Buglife's B-network corridors which follow the route of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal



Opportunity D7: Support landowners to deliver natural flood management across the green and blue infrastructure focus area as well as efforts to improve water quality

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