

Greater Manchester Minerals Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework

A response on behalf of The Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Manchester & North Merseyside and Cheshire Wildlife Trust

There is no reference in the Greater Manchester Minerals Plan to joint working with authorities outside the Greater Manchester Minerals Plan's geographical remit.¹ This may be a nature conservation issue around all the plan's boundaries, but especially in the South Pennines National Character Area (including the West Pennine Moors), which extends into neighbouring Blackburn with Darwen Borough, Lancashire County, West Yorkshire County and Derbyshire County; and the Manchester Mosslands National Character Area (including the former extent of Chat Moss), which extends into neighbouring Warrington Borough. Extant policy should be amended and/or new policy proposed accordingly.

The proposals map should now identify the Greater Manchester Ecological Framework and its associated Natural 2000 sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Wildlife Sites² – the latter are known within Greater Manchester as “Sites of Biological Importance” or “SBI”. The extant biodiversity policies in the Minerals Plan do not make specific reference to the designated nature conservation areas or the framework.

The ten Greater Manchester councils may also wish to identify Nature Improvement Areas³ within and/or across Greater Manchester's boundaries. A “Great Manchester Wetlands” proposed Nature Improvement Area partnership and business plan is already in existence and a similar proposal for the South Pennines appears likely.

The Greater Manchester Minerals Plan needs to be strengthened to reflect the statements in the published National Planning Policy Framework regarding new and extended peat extraction sites in order to make it explicit that such applications will not be approved.⁴

RELEVANT EXTRACTS FROM NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

117. To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- *plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries¹;*
- *identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation²;*
- *promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;*
- *aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests; and*
- *where Nature Improvement Areas are identified in Local Plans³, consider specifying the types of development that may be appropriate in these Areas.*

143. In preparing Local Plans, local planning authorities should:

- *identify and include policies for extraction of mineral resource of local and national importance in their area, **but should not identify new sites or extensions to existing sites for peat extraction**⁴*