

Newcastle Learning and Action Alliance

Vision and Terms of Reference 2016

The Vision is for Newcastle¹ to become a city that follows the principles of a Blue-Green City by maximising the opportunities to achieve multiple benefits of Blue-Green approaches to surface water management.

In the urban environment, a Blue-Green City creates multifunctional land use through surface water management and greening schemes. Surface water is managed in part by natural processes, including interception, attenuation, evapotranspiration, infiltration and subsurface/groundwater flow, to create some of the following benefits:

- Improved infiltration (green infrastructure) and enhanced water storage (blue infrastructure)
- The integration of water management, urban green space and connected Blue-Green networks to make urban environments better places to live
- Valued natural assets that provide economic, ecological, environmental and socio-cultural benefits
- Assets that enhance the visual quality of the urban environment in the time between floods
- More healthy communities and improved quality of life
- Greater enthusiasm about the urban environment and motivation to enjoy it on foot to appreciate and protect it
- Enhanced social capital through better relationship with water, interaction with the natural environment and improved urban space
- Improved water quality through natural processes and treatments
- Better air quality and reduced urban heat due to greening the urban area, helping with climate change adaptation
- Increased biodiversity and the development of thriving natural habitats within the city
- Schemes designed to be sustainable by making them resilient and adaptive to future changes in climate, landuse and socio-economic activity
- Better value for money from whole-life costs over the lifetime of a scheme

By forming a Learning and Action Alliance (LAA), our overarching goal is to *promote this vision and to realise it by recognising, and utilising, windows of opportunity for potentially influencing the strategies of decision makers*

Strategic objectives

To develop a common narrative around Blue-Green infrastructure and use this to communicate with important influencers, stakeholders and communities about the benefits of the Blue-Green approach

To challenge traditional approaches and policy, drive change and promote Blue-Green infrastructure as a multifunctional strategy that provides a range of benefits to a range of beneficiaries

To investigate how funding for Blue-Green infrastructure could be assessed and where possible, seek funding for projects and create opportunities for uptake

¹ *Newcastle refers to, but is not exclusive to, the local authority boundary. The LAA will focus on drainage catchments within Newcastle.

Explore how non-financial resources could be used to develop the business case for Blue-Green infrastructure

To identify the strategic priorities of other city organisations and assess how multifunctional Blue-Green infrastructure could be used to meet their objectives (promoting collaborative working)

To share opinions, skills and approaches and open a dialogue across disciplines to reduce the 'silo effect' and avoid missing opportunities

To develop location-specific Blue-Green strategies that may inform the plans enacted by the organisations represented by LAA members and beyond

To identify new areas for academic research into Blue-Green infrastructure

Newcastle LAA

The LAA will be formed of a core group of about 30 individuals and a wider virtual group ([Google Groups](#)). Coordination of meetings will be a shared responsibility initially between representatives of the six signatories of the Newcastle Blue and Green declaration (Newcastle City Council, Environment Agency, Northumbrian Water, Newcastle University, Arup and Royal HaskoningDHV). The coordinator responsible for each respective meeting will make arrangements, select the theme for the meeting and write the agenda.

Roles and responsibilities:

Attendance of core group members at regular meetings roughly every four months, with other members to attend meetings as appropriate (e.g. themed meetings in their area of expertise) and when invited

Proactive virtual engagement between meetings and with the wider LAA members through group discussion and information transfer using [Google Groups](#) and a file sharing platform, e.g. Dropbox

Other wider group activities arranged as and when appropriate

Ability to opt in and out of the core group (by agreement with the coordinator) as time commitments and relevance of meetings change

Core group to participate in coordination and hosting of meetings if possible and appropriate

Core group to participate in selecting themes and topics for future meetings

Frank and open discussion at the meetings in an atmosphere of mutual disclosure and trust

Frank and open contributions to the closed virtual platform

Identification and recruitment of other key individuals to the wider group through identification of skills and capacity gaps

Being open to new ideas and adopting a learning approach fit for long term innovation

Stepping outside the institutional straightjacket to create a shared vision irrespective of institutional priorities

Agreeing the underlying challenges to creating a Blue-Green Newcastle, and together, develop potential solutions

Acknowledging and resolving conflict in an open and honest way to seek a compromise and recognizing that the group may need to agree to disagree on some issues

Championing Blue-Green approaches where appropriate within the organisational setting

Identification of new Blue-Green projects and potential for collaboration

Clear communication and sharing of non-confidential information and data

Address the sharing of more confidential, sensitive information and data as and when the need arises

Respecting the value of all contributions and the confidentiality of contributions unless wider sharing is agreed

Taking ownership of the vision of the LAA and fulfilling promised actions made to the group in a timely fashion