



Green Streets

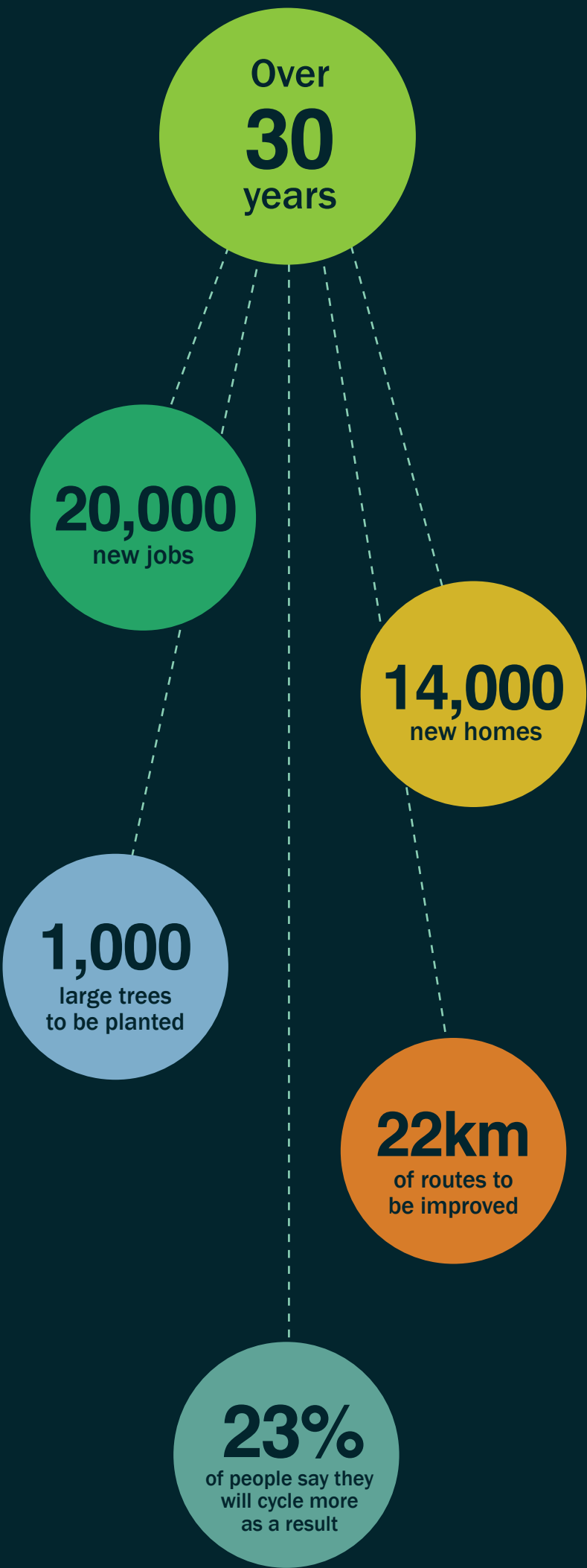


The vision for Wirral Waters, part of Atlantic Gateway, is full of ambition. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bring about the regeneration of Inner Wirral and the Liverpool City Region, creating over 20,000 new jobs and 14,000 new homes over a period of 30 years.

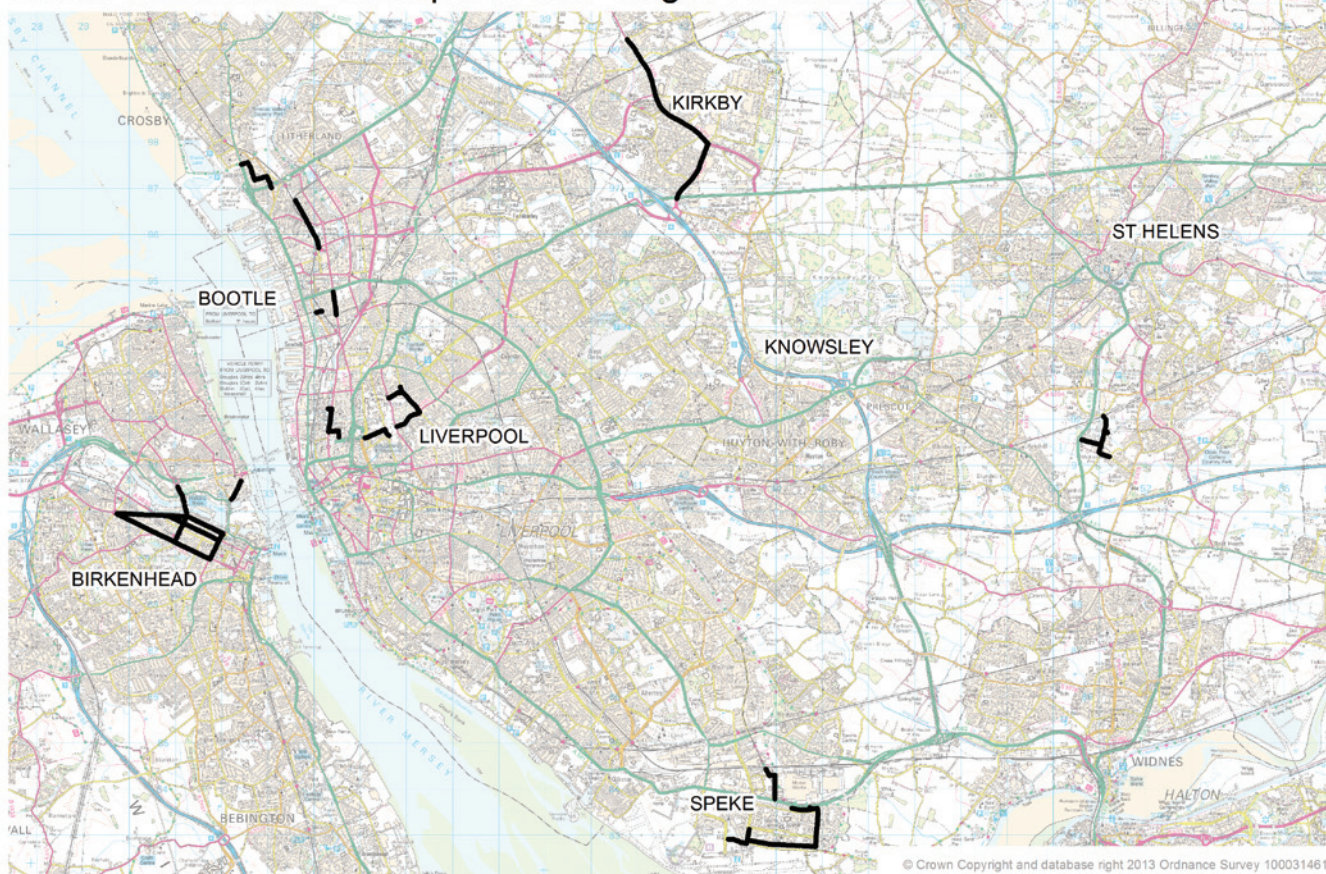
Through this programme, part funded by the Department For Transport, Merseytravel has invested £515k from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF). This is helping to encourage active travel to work along 22km of road and set the scene for new investment and new jobs across Merseyside through The Mersey Forest Green Streets programme.

The Mersey Forest Partnership has been working on the Green Streets programme in the Wirral since 2011. To date, 370 new street trees have been planted across Birkenhead, with more to come this year and 1000 in total for the LSTF programme, in order to green key transport routes in the area. These trees are just some of over nine million planted to date by the Mersey Forest Partnership, many targeted on key transport corridors.

The Mersey Forest's aim through LSTF is to get more from trees. More people walking and cycling and more inward investment to create more jobs.



Local Sustainable Transport Fund Target Routes



Trees leading to jobs

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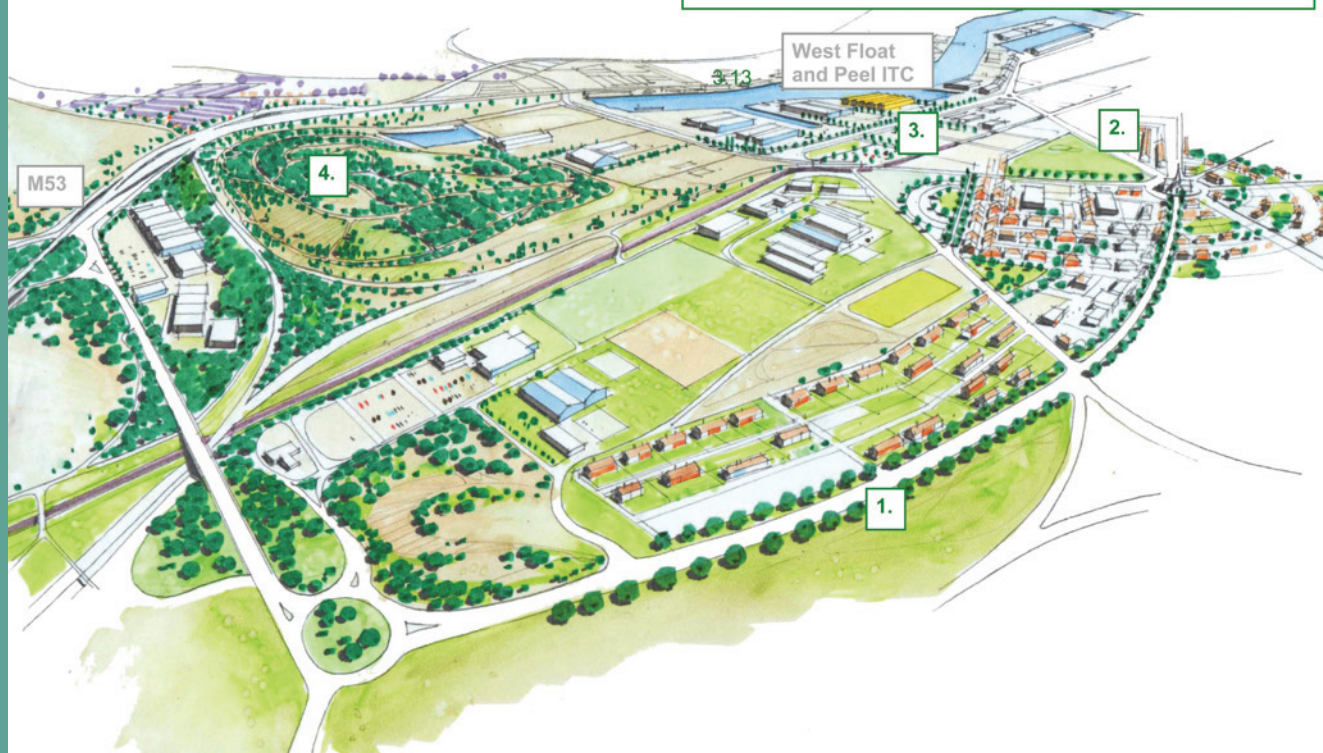
Target routes – those that link areas of job opportunity to areas of higher unemployment – are the focus of intensive community engagement and environmental improvements to create attractive routes that encourage active travel to work.

The LSTF investment is complemented by a range of other funds, including the Setting the Scene for Growth funds from BIS delivered through the Forestry Commission.

Our independent baseline assessments have indicated that there is a real appetite for this work across all of the target areas. In fact, 25% of local residents suggested that Green Streets would encourage them to cycle more regularly to work and 15% said that they would walk more often.

Coordinating this work with investment from other LSTF partners, we can start to make a noticeable and sustainable change in the ways that people travel to work and also help to provide the setting for new economic investment that creates new job opportunities.

Richard Mawdsley, Projects Director at Peel Holdings, who is developing and promoting the multi-billion pound investment at Wirral Waters, one of the LSTF target areas, talks of “trees leading to jobs”. His, and his organisation’s, view is that the investment in green infrastructure through LSTF and complementary funding through Setting the Scene for Growth, connects people, through active travel routes, to places of work and improving the environmental quality of the area accelerates investment, in turn creating new jobs.



Wirral Waters is set to be the largest regeneration scheme in the UK (by floor area). It is the centre of the Green Streets programme on Wirral.

- The Wirral Waters scheme boasts:
- 420,000 sq m of office and R&D space
- 13,500 residential units
- 60,000 sq m ancillary retail space
- 38,000 sq m hotel and conference facilities
- 100,000 sq m of cultural, education, leisure, community and amenity space
- 20,000+ new jobs.

The Mersey Forest's Green Streets are integral to the Wirral Waters scheme. Alongside the infrastructure of roads and utilities that accompanies new development will be a network of green infrastructure, turning the bleak landscape into one that is welcoming and colourful.

A network of tree-lined 'green streets' is just as important as the engineered infrastructure of roads and services, creating the conditions for economic growth. And The Mersey Forest is planting relatively mature trees to ensure immediate impact.

There are also links to existing investment in green spaces, including the recently restored Birkenhead Park, as well as several smaller local parks and open spaces and Forestry Commission owned Bidston Moss, a potential key recreational gateway to the area.

"Occupiers want a compelling place. It's more and more important to get the place right and give it an identity – a campus feel on the doorstep of a vibrant city. The green infrastructure will be at the forefront of the marketing: being in touch with the elements and in touch with nature is very important."

*Richard Mawdsley
Projects Director at Peel Holdings*



The Mersey Forest is a government approved Community Forest Plan. Our focus is on how we use trees and woodlands in and around our towns and cities to make places more attractive and improve the quality of life for people who live, work and visit The Mersey Forest. Our vision is summed up in the phrase: 'More from Trees'

Green Streets

Green Streets is one of our key projects and key to its successful delivery is the engagement and involvement of local communities. Engagement engenders a sense of pride and improves community cohesion. By providing attractive routes to work, and a setting for new investment and jobs, we can deliver much 'more from trees'.

Impact

The initial programme of LSTF work focuses on the area around Wirral Waters. The overall programme, including complementary funding, includes street trees, the design of new green spaces, temporary uses of derelict sites and improved access to Bidston Moss costed at £2m. Using the Green Infrastructure Valuation Toolkit, it is estimated that economic benefits worth £30m NPV, can be achieved through this investment, through a mix of carbon reduction, rising land values, attracting visitors and creating jobs, and improving local health and wellbeing.

A sense of change

Work is already well underway. In 2012/13 we delivered 93% of the projected budget, and hit our targets for LSTF.

Testimonials

"Bidston Rise is a lovely place to live and people appreciate all the improvements and are really looking after the place. You can see the community spirit coming up."

*Jean McIntosh,
Chairperson of Bidston Rise Residents'
Association in Birkenhead*

"You need connection to your natural environment to get a sense of the seasons and the colour that this brings and sense of hope that this fosters is extremely valuable!"

Local resident

"This planting will lead investors into the docks area. In time investment will help pay for the transport and green infrastructure that is essential to a prosperous working environment."

Local resident

What?

As part of the Supporting Sustainable Access for Merseyside project (funded by DfT), The Mersey Forest will be delivering a series of connected projects across Merseyside. These form part of the Sustainable Transport Infrastructure strand of the overall bid.

The schemes focus on improving sustainable transport infrastructure between areas of deprivation and areas of employment, linking closely to major investment and regeneration projects and plans (such as Wirral Waters). This will be achieved by working closely with local communities to carry out strategic green infrastructure interventions, such as street trees and community planting schemes, resulting in a greater degree of connectivity.

We will also work closely with the relevant local authority partners to ensure that these interventions serve to enhance other infrastructure improvements (including improvements to pedestrian and cyclist access to and from rail stations, facilities at key employment/education destinations for active travel users, and improvements to cycle ways and pedestrian routes across Merseyside) and behavioural change options (including The Community Travel Hubs, bike ride and walking promotional activity, workplace travel planning, and Cycle Buddy Schemes) featured in the bid.

How?

A major delivery mechanism for this scheme is our 'Green Streets' programme – community-led urban greening that has been trialled across Merseyside and Cheshire. It has a proven track record of successful delivery and has transformed the physical environment of many inner city residential streets. The Green Streets vision centres on 'residential and business communities working together to improve their quality of life through neighbourhood and city-centre greening'.

The Green Streets core values, which give a strong flavour of the way in which the programme is managed and delivered, are:

- Community-led approach to environmental improvement to facilitate life-long learning, community cohesion and skills development;
- Prioritisation for communities in the greatest need;
- Co-operation and complementarity with existing regeneration initiatives;
- Commitment to innovation and high-quality design solutions;

- Commitment to disseminating best practice through the creation of a replicable model to facilitate the mainstreaming of the Green Streets approach;
- Sustainability to be at the core of design, implementation and long-term management;
- Best value in procuring service delivery;
- Financial accountability and strong emphasis on delivery to timescales;
- Commitment to robust mechanisms for long term management;
- Commitment to long-term monitoring and project evaluation; and
- Raising the profile of the Northwest through the creation of high-quality urban environments.

Why?

Because trees can lead to jobs.

The scheme is underpinned by detailed green infrastructure needs and functionality mapping covering the Liverpool City Region, as well as the Green Infrastructure to Combat Climate Change framework. This ensures that the greatest possible economic, social and environmental benefits are realised through project delivery.

By providing greened transport routes and engaging with the local communities, we aim to facilitate and encourage a greater uptake of active travel for all journeys but especially on those to the place of work. This will bring a host of health benefits to the target population.

The trees planted as part of this scheme will also play a critical role in helping to absorb airborne pollutants (especially ozone, nitrogen dioxide and PM10 particles) along strategic routes as well as carbon dioxide. In addition the greened routes will deliver a suite of economic benefits.

Where?

In total, 22km of green links will be created, improving journey ambience for walkers and cyclists and reducing atmospheric carbon. These links will be created in all five of the overall bid's priority areas:

- North Liverpool/ South Sefton
- East Wirral
- South Liverpool
- Kirkby
- St Helens

Policy support

Despite difficulties in putting a monetary value on green infrastructure interventions featured in the LSTF bid (such as increased use of tree lined cycle routes), **The Treasury Green Book recognises the importance of green infrastructure** and suggests that, "...material costs and benefits that cannot be valued in monetary terms should clearly be taken into account in the presentation of any appraisal or evaluation".

There exists currently a groundswell of government support for better integration of grey and green infrastructure in major projects in our towns and cities. This can be seen at a national level in key policy documents, including:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (Communities and Local Government, draft 2011); and
- The Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP): The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (HM Government, 2011). This identifies the LSTF specifically as a mechanism for reconnecting people with nature.

The Third Local Transport Plan clearly shows the importance of green infrastructure in sustainable transport: "Priorities are clear; we must seek to provide a transport system that supports sustainable economic growth, but only in ways that address worklessness and support health and wellbeing... All our evidence shows that sustainable cities are successful cities, where commitments to public transport, cycle and walking and green infrastructure create the conditions for inward investment and graduate and young people retention."

Direct benefits

Increased levels of walking and cycling:

The presence of street trees is found to be a significant positive factor in the level of physical activities undertaken such as walking and cycling (Forsyth et al., 2008; Larsen et al., 2009; Lee, 2007). For example, in one study bicycle traffic increased by more than 20% due to better street-scale design that included planted trees (Heath et al., 2006, S75).

Safer routes for pedestrians and cyclists:

A recent DfT study found that street trees can be as effective as speed cameras in slowing down traffic (Taking on the Rural Road Safety Challenge, DfT, 2010 – Annex 3).

Direct health benefits:

Greener, pleasant, attractive and safer routes and strong community engagement activity will encourage communities to use proposed routes for active travel. The health benefits of walking and cycling are well documented.

Reducing the health gap:

Across the country there are 'health inequalities' related to income and social deprivation, which generally reflect differences in lifestyle, diet and, to some extent, access to medical care. Research has shown that living near parks, woodland or other green spaces helped reduce these inequalities, regardless of social class (Effect of exposure to natural environment on health inequalities: an observational population, The Lancet, Mitchell, R. and Popham, F., 2008).

Improved mental health and reduced stress:

Contact with nature has been proven to act as an effective component of treatment of a number of mental health issues, including children with poor self-discipline, hyperactivity and ADHD, stress and anxiety across the population, elderly care and treatment of dementia. Interaction with nature generally increases a sense of health and mental well-being (Dr Bird, 2007, Natural Thinking, commissioned by the RSPB: investigating the links between natural environment, biodiversity and mental health).

Increased community cohesion:

Local communities will be involved in the green infrastructure interventions featured in the LSTF bid. Such active engagement has been shown to improve mental well-being as group activities reduce feelings of isolation and provide a social and creative outlet for people. Community engagement will ensure that hard to reach communities are involved in the project and provide an excellent and invaluable link between potential users of the newly improved routes.

Improved wind shelter:

The green infrastructure featured in the LSTF bid will provide shelter from winds at a local level by slowing or diverting currents. This can play a vital role in creating a pleasant and safer route for pedestrians and cyclists to use.

Increased noise absorption:

The green infrastructure will contribute to screening of noise, especially from major transport routes. Noise can lead to additional stress and poor health (Fang & Ling, 2002).

Shading from sun:

Green infrastructure contributes to the shading of people, buildings, and surfaces from solar radiation to reduce temperatures and increase comfort levels – reducing the urban heat island. This will become more critical as we adapt to a changing climate (Huang et al. 2006, Parker, 1981).

Evaporative cooling:

As plants transpire water is evaporated from their surfaces cooling their immediate locality. The future climate is predicted to be warmer and the cooling role of trees is likely to be even more important. This will help to keep the route at a comfortable temperature for walkers and cyclists (Kramer & Kozlowaki, 1960).

Trapping air pollutants:

The trees planted will play a key role in the removal of pollutants, especially ozone, nitrogen dioxide and PM10 particles from the air, through uptake via leaf stomata and deposition on leaf surfaces. A recent study estimated that doubling the number of trees in the West Midlands would reduce excess deaths due to particulate pollution by up to 140 per year (Hill, 1971, Beckett et al., 1998, Smith, 1990, Hewitt et al., 2005).

Aesthetic value:

The proposed green infrastructure interventions will improve the image of an area for people as they arrive and for those who reside there. The improved aesthetic which green infrastructure can provide will be reflected in surrounding property prices (CABE, 2005).

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