



Jacqueline O'Hagan – EastSide Greenways Manager



[/ConnswaterCommunityGreenway](https://www.facebook.com/ConnswaterCommunityGreenway)




[connswater\\_greenway](https://www.instagram.com/connswater_greenway)







- A 9km linear park for walking and cycling
- 16km of foot and cycle paths
- 26 new or improved bridges and crossings
- Serves 23 schools and colleges
- Up to 5km of rivers cleaned
- 1700 homes protected from flooding
- Hubs for education, interpretation points and tourism and heritage trails
- Wildlife corridor from Belfast Lough to the Castlereagh Hills
- C.S. Lewis Square – a space for events and activities



EastSide Greenways (formerly the Connswater Community Greenway Trust), a registered charity, aims to maximise the potential of the Connswater Community Greenway as a catalyst for the ongoing physical, social and economic regeneration of east Belfast.



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LIVING THE GREEN WAY



# Climate and Nature Action: A Vision for the Connswater Community Greenway



thepaulhogarthcompany



# Eliminate Emissions<sup>A</sup>

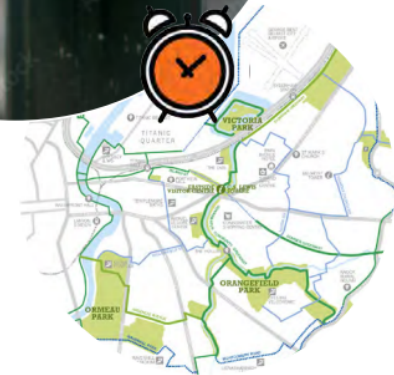
## Direct and Indirect Green House Gases (GHGs)

Every effort is urgently required to reduce the emissions of harmful gases into the atmosphere, caused largely by the burning of fossil fuels. The Greenway plays a key role in this regard, offering people an alternative movement route. However, more work must be done to reduce direct and indirect emissions along the Greenway. If all those living and working along the greenway were to work together, their collective impact could be substantial.



## Modal Shift<sup>1</sup>

Getting more people to use the Greenway will be one of the quickest and most effective forms of climate action possible. This would increase levels of 'modal shift' away from the car, towards walking and cycling, while also benefiting health, air quality and economy. This should include proactive initiatives such as school walking buses and cycle trains.



## Network Expansion<sup>2</sup>

Growing the Greenway by adding new pathways, spaces and neighbourhood connections would increase its reach and levels of usage. Work is already underway to consider a wider greenways network plan for East Belfast and the city. Where possible in doing so, green spaces should be protected, while grey spaces are transformed. The delivery of this vital work should be accelerated as a means of getting more people moving on greenways by foot and bicycle.



## Energy Saving <sup>3</sup>

Another fast way to bring about climate action along the greenway will be energy saving initiatives. This objective was inspired by a member of the public who highlighted that a public building on the Greenway has its lights left on every night. A range of initiatives should be brought forward to reduce energy consumption on and along the Greenway. This would relate to lighting and other draws upon the energy grid, as well as the insulation of buildings to conserve heat.



**Eliminate Emissions**  
Direct and Indirect GHGs

## Energy Generation <sup>4</sup>

Imagine the Greenway was one big green power station. This could be made possible through the deployment of on-site energy generators such as wind turbines, solar panels, hydro-electrics and ground source heat pumps. A specialist study is required to determine the most appropriate options. These should not just benefit the greenway, but also surrounding communities and especially those most affected by fuel poverty. ParkPower, the pioneering work in this area by Greenspace Scotland should be consulted.





# Capture Carbon<sup>B</sup>

## *Prioritising Sequestration*

There are too many green houses gases in our atmosphere, including carbon dioxide. A priority must be to seek opportunities for its sequestration. This is when carbon dioxide is removed from the air and stored in liquid or solid form. Through its trees and other plant life the Greenway already performs this function - it is now time to make sure it is maximising that very important role.



## Wetland Expansion<sup>1</sup>

Wetlands are one of the world's most effective carbon sinks, locking away 'blue carbon' to great effect. The Connswater Community Greenway has some limited areas of wetland, including tidal mudflats at Victoria Park and seasonally flooded meadows at Marsh Wiggleway. Opportunities should now be found to extend and develop wetland areas along the Greenway, helping store more carbon while enhancing wildlife habitats.



## Tree Planting<sup>2</sup>

Many people responding to the survey expressed a wish to see more trees planted along the Greenway. Trees provide many ecosystem services, including the storage of carbon throughout their lifetime. A systematic assessment of the greenway should be undertaken to identify areas suitable for the planting of new, locally grown native trees by the community. Consideration should be given to the potential contribution of certain native trees to a specific area, including blossom for pollinators and fruits for human and non-human consumption.



**Capture Carbon**  
Prioritise Sequestration



## Soil Improvement<sup>3</sup>

Another sometimes forgotten carbon sink is the soil. The earth can store high volumes of carbon, especially when it is rich in organic matter. A process of soil testing would therefore inform efforts to improve soil quality along the Greenway (such as mulching and composting), so helping it absorb more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

# Strengthen Resilience<sup>C</sup>

## *Adapt the Greenway and Surrounds*

As our climate changes, so too will our landscapes, including the Connswater Community Greenway. It will therefore be important to get 'ahead of the curve' in assessing what adaptations can be made to lessen negative impacts, while realising associated benefits.



## Planting Strategy<sup>1</sup>

The Greenway is home to many wonderful plants, from trees and woodlands, to shrubs, grasses and semi aquatic species. In the context of the climate and nature crisis, a regular review of plant species should be undertaken to ensure they will be resilient to extreme weather events and continue contributing to ecological objectives. Over time this will inform appropriate new plantings. For example, many hedgerows on the Greenway consist of a single, non native species and potential exists to augment these with complementary native plants, so increasing their ecological value.





## Flood Management <sup>2</sup>

A key feature of the Connswater Community Greenway is its built-in flood defences. Orangefield Park, for example, has been designed to attenuate flood water, thereby protecting adjacent homes and businesses. The opportunity exists for the greenway to play a further role in local flood defence, by diverting and storing surface and river waters during times of peak rainfall. An added benefit of such interventions is the creation of wetland wildlife habitats.



**Strengthen Resilience**  
Adapt the Greenway and Surrounds

## Greenway Neighbourhoods <sup>3</sup>

Many thousands of people are lucky to live along the Greenway. By thinking of these areas as 'Greenway Neighbourhoods', much potential exists to extend the value of the Greenway into surrounding streets and spaces. A Greenway Neighbourhood should have more street trees and sustainable urban drainage systems. They may also be good candidates for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, where walking, cycling and public transport are given greater priority over the needs of the car. Furthermore the continuance of community development in Greenway Neighbourhoods would also help strengthen their social resilience and shared greenway identities.



# Build Biodiversity<sup>D</sup>

## Manage Ecologically

The Greenway is a refuge for nature in the city, playing host to various ecosystems of plants and animals. Coming into contact with nature is a great source of joy for many people who use the greenway. In the context of the climate and nature crises, the time has come to enhance our understanding of the Greenway's ecology and to use that knowledge to improve management practices. Local people should be involved as much as possible in these processes, further strengthening historic and social ties within the community.



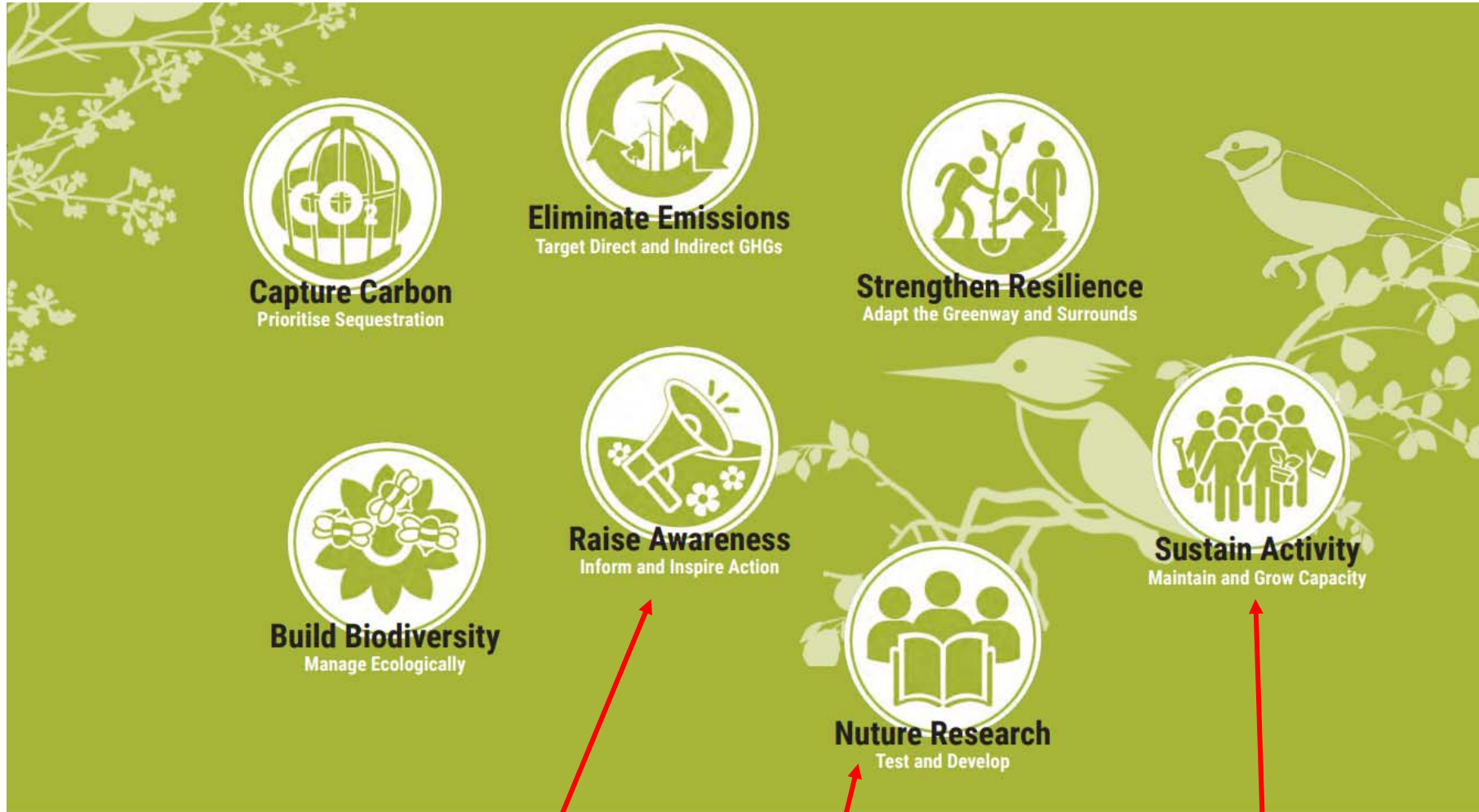
## Habitat Surveys<sup>1</sup>

Knowing what lives on the Greenway is a critical first step to managing it more ecologically. Various habitat surveys were a requirement of planning consent for the greenway and activities such as birdwatching and river kick-sampling are regular activities today. After a comprehensive review of existing data, habitat surveys are required to systematically map the Greenway and build an accurate ecological baseline. Opportunities for public involvement in this process should be actively sought.

Wetland expansion; tree planting; soil improvement

Modal shift; network expansion; energy saving; energy generation

Flood management



Manage ecologically;  
habitat surveys

Events; signage;  
artworks

Test and develop;  
living lab

Maintain/grow capacity;  
local skills