

CASE STUDY

REPORT

How are UIA projects contributing to building resilient cities, adapting to the climate emergency?

PROJECT

IGNITION - Innovative financing and delivery of natural climate solutions in Greater Manchester

📍 Greater Manchester, United Kingdom

TOPIC

Climate adaptation

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IGNITION

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website



Innovative financing and delivery of natural climate solutions in Greater Manchester



The living wall of the IGNITION project in the University of Salford in Greater Manchester increases biodiversity on the campus

Greater Manchester faces frequent extreme weather events like downpours, heatwaves and droughts, which are all projected to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change. A large number of impermeable surfaces in the urban areas of Greater Manchester has exacerbated the problems of urban floods and heat waves. More greenspace and nature-based solutions (NBS) could partly mitigate these impacts. Therefore, Greater Manchester had decided to aim for a substantial uplift in urban greenspace.

A major challenge identified is a lack of municipal funding which the IGNITION project has addressed by developing innovative business models and funding schemes. A pre-condition to make such schemes work has been to gain the confidence of public and private investors on the effectiveness as well as multiple benefits of

nature-based solutions. The most visible tool has been the Living Lab at the University of Salford, which combines different types of nature-based solutions and measures their live performance by a multitude of sensors. The tangible experience inspired investors and other stakeholders supplemented the comprehensive IGNITION Evidence base on the benefits of nature-based solutions (a publicly available database). Small business cases have been tested and various communication and co-creation activities have enabled mutual learning, developed trust and increased interest in the solutions.

Finding effective funding stream models has been a difficult journey. Over time, the project reworked its original approach of a simple model built on saving water charges by investors when de-sealing impermeable areas and establishing nature-based solutions that can drain stormwater. The long-term and uncertain returns have not convinced other investors to follow the example. IGNITION broadened this model and developed others that are location-specific, at places where benefits can be maximised, and in co-investment by different stakeholders. By this approach, the gains increased, and the model becomes viable.

Many supporting tools have been developed for different stakeholders and purposes forming now the foundation for replication and upscaling of the developed solutions. To make these tools work, the right structures need to be put in place to make it easy for widespread installation of nature-based solutions. Grant funding needs to be used more smartly to blend it with other funding contributions. IGNITION has thus also supported the setting up of the Greater Manchester Environment Fund, a new charity with the aim of providing a way of bringing together funding from different sources to deliver projects on the ground.

Partnership:

- Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Manchester City Council - municipality
- Salford City Council - municipality
- Environment Agency - environmental agency
- Business in the Community - business community representative
- United Utilities – regional water company
- UK Green Building Council - business community representative
- City of Trees - NGO
- Groundwork - NGO
- Royal Horticultural Society - NGO
- The University of Manchester - higher education and research institute
- The University of Salford - higher education and research institute

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