

# BLUE-GREEN CITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT: BRADFORD

*By the City of Bradford and Bax & Company*

Across Bradford District, the BEGIN project has brought the value of investing in Blue and Green Infrastructure (BGI) into the spotlight.

**Following major flooding events in 2007, Bradford and the wider West Yorkshire region have reconsidered their strategic plans for the environment.**

Adopted in 2017, the Local Plan - Core Strategy sets out the long-term spatial vision for Bradford District until 2030. Amongst its many aims are establishing habitat networks to support a healthy biodiverse ecosystem and reducing the likelihood and impacts of local flooding.

The Leeds City Region's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy 2017-2036 outlines how the region should incorporate BGI into future developments. This document explains why and how the West Yorkshire Combine Authority (WYCA) would like the region to pursue 'Good Growth' through the implementation of blue and green infrastructure as an integral part of future developments. The core aim of the strategy would mean that:

**“Everybody in the city region is within easy reach of an outstanding and well-used network of green and blue infrastructure that reduces flood risks and supports health, the economy, the environment and superb quality of life.”**

The BEGIN project presented an opportunity to explore the value of BGI in the delivery of regeneration projects needed for Bradford's communities to thrive socially, economically and sustainably.



One of Bradford's regeneration projects was the [Bradford Shipley Road Improvement Scheme \(BSRIS\)](#). The vision of this project was presented in conjunction with the [Shipley Canal Road Corridor Area Action Plan \(SCRCAAP\)](#), adopted in 2017). The SCRCAAP set out a vision for 2030 that includes a series of vibrant new sustainable neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods provide a range of high-quality homes and local employment opportunities for residents connected by the Linear Park, revitalised Bradford Beck, and Canal Road Greenway, which runs from Bradford city centre to Shipley. This multi-functional green corridor has helped enhance biodiversity and ecological networks and provides a high-quality setting for walking, cycling, sport, and recreation along the corridor.

## BRADFORD SHIPLEY ROAD IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The aims of the £47m Bradford Shipley Road Improvement Scheme are to reduce congestion and journey times, improve air quality, and increase road safety. The project seeks to encourage sustainable transport such as cycling and walking, and enhance public transport. The project will also support jobs, businesses and housing development in the immediate areas and wider district.



Now scheduled for construction between 2022 and 2025, the development of the BSRIS has championed the need for BGI investment, and become a vital part of meeting the SCRCAAP's ambitions. Through extensive public consultations, the wider benefits of BGI investment in a highways project have been explored. The Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) [Benefits Estimation Tool \(BEST\)](#) has been used to assess and monetise many of the financial, social and environmental benefits of BGI in the BSRIS, helping make the business case for investment to the West Yorkshire-plus Transport Fund.

## BRADFORD BECK

Bradford Beck runs the length of the Shipley Canal Road Corridor. Once a clear, open river, the Beck was at the centre of Bradford life for centuries, and is where the city derives its name - the 'broad ford' or crossing over the Beck. Utilising the BEGIN project methodology, opportunities to improve the condition of Bradford Beck have been developed.



[Collaborative working](#) between Bradford Council, the Environment Agency, volunteer and action group the [Friends of Bradford's Becks](#), and the Wild Trout Trust, has delivered work to modify weirs and bridges to make it easier for fish to pass upstream, and improve the morphology (shape), creating footpaths and bankside planting to improve habitats, accessibility and visual amenity. A bold project which will completely de-culvert an enclosed section of the Beck and naturalise its path, with biodiversity, flood mitigation and amenity enhancements, has been developed to contribute to the BSRIS. If £1.7m of European Structural and Investment Funding is secured, the Naturalising Bradford Beck project will commence in 2021.

## Bradford's ongoing and future projects

Developing opportunities for BGI and social innovation has seen the learning gained through BEGIN rolled out across Bradford Council's work, and in how they have collaborated with their partners within the local community.

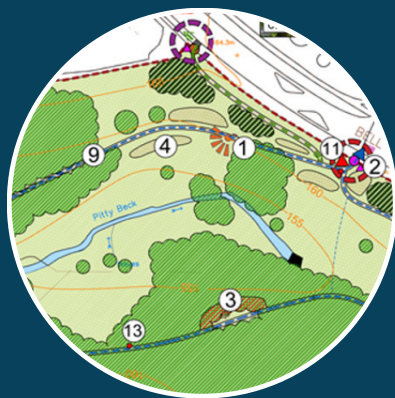
The use of the CIRIA Benefits Estimation Tool (B£ST) is being embedded in major project delivery across the council's infrastructure technical services, to increase the quality and quantity of BGI in their work.

The desire to build more BGI into major project delivery has seen bold bids for essential funding made, to grow the scope of what is achievable. The knowledge base brought to Bradford by the BEGIN project has been invaluable in securing investment.

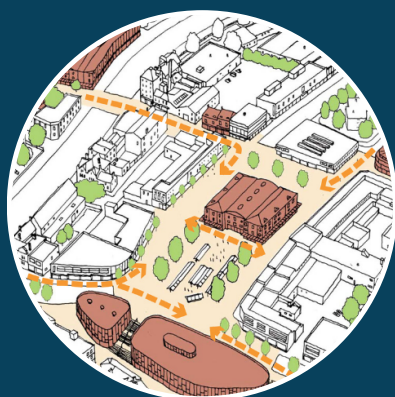
**The council's relationships with its voluntary and community sector partners have also been strengthened by the BEGIN project.**



Bradford Council passed a motion in January 2019 to declare a climate emergency and commit to a green economy. In March 2020, the Council agreed its Sustainable Development Action Plan which includes commitments to deliver *landscaping and dedicated green and blue infrastructure and biodiversity duty/habitat network development and support*.



Enhancing the quality of BGI in highway schemes is now embedded into the Council's culture. Major projects at Harrogate Road and New Line have been designed with enhanced BGI for delivery in 2020. Three new junction improvements in West Bradford will benefit from additional £700k of European Structural and Investment Funding in the Blue Green Gateways project.



Shipley town centre will benefit from a £1m Streets for People Demonstration Project funded by the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Integrated Transport Block Programme. Possible improvements to the town centre focus on creating improved green space and public realm, which should increase footfall for local retail and the market, as well as improving pedestrian links to the wider town, local amenities and railway station.





Bradford has become a partner LIFE Critical, a project in the EU Life Programme supporting environmental, nature conservation, and climate action projects. LIFE Critical takes on an innovative approach to adapt old city neighbourhoods to the effects of climate change. It addresses neighbourhood issues by exploring the proactive involvement of citizens and co-ownership. Based around the historic Horton Park, nestled amongst some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city, the local community will have an active involvement in the redesign of the park and neighbourhood through citizen participative workgroups; BGI implementation and maintenance activities; monitoring climate change and socio-economic indicators; and, in the development and facilitation of citizen initiatives for the use of public spaces.



The Bradford City Centre Townscape Heritage Scheme is a four-year grant programme supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Bradford Council. It provides financial assistance to property owners and tenants, to restore their historic buildings, within part of the Bradford city centre conservation area commonly known as the 'top of town'. With only a modest budget for public realm improvements available through Townscape Heritage, additional European Structural and Investment Funding will grow the extent of BGI to £1.8m and include rain gardens and urban green spaces in a project which will increase biodiversity, remediate land and reduce flood risk, whilst improving the visual amenity of the streetscape. The Top of Town Public Realm Improvements scheme will link to another key regeneration project in the city, where a new market is being built with its own new pocket park, and on into future plans for a City Village - a green, healthy, and sustainable neighbourhood of up to 1,000 new homes.

Bradford Council has explored all possibilities for the design of the urban landscape, to help regulate air temperature and quality, offer noise reduction, provide sustainable drainage systems, and mitigate climate change. The council has embedded the scientific knowledge and best practices it has gained through BEGIN into the delivery of its projects. As a city, **Bradford has embraced the concept that blue and green infrastructure can offer a wide range of ecosystem benefits that support a healthy urban environment.**

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