



savills

WEBINAR

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

“

**Agree priorities
for nature
recovery and
propose actions
to achieve these
priorities**

”

Meet the Speakers

savills



DAVID JACKSON

Head of UK Planning and Savills Earth, with over 25 years experience as a professional town planner.



JOE DANCE

Strategic Ecology Director at Savills, specialising in Biodiversity Net Gain, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and wider biodiversity matters.



CHLOE EDWARDS

LNRS Project Manager at Oxfordshire County Council. Co-ordinating a partnership approach to produce an LNRS for Oxfordshire.



ANDREW WATSON

Planning Director at Savills with a specific focus on natural capital aspects of planning.

Agenda

■ What are Local Nature Recovery Strategies?

Joe Dance

■ The work and progress: Oxfordshire Case Study

Chloe Edwards

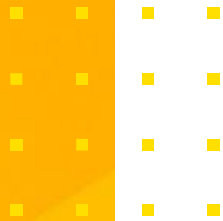
■ How do they interact with the planning system?

Andrew Watson



JOE DANCE

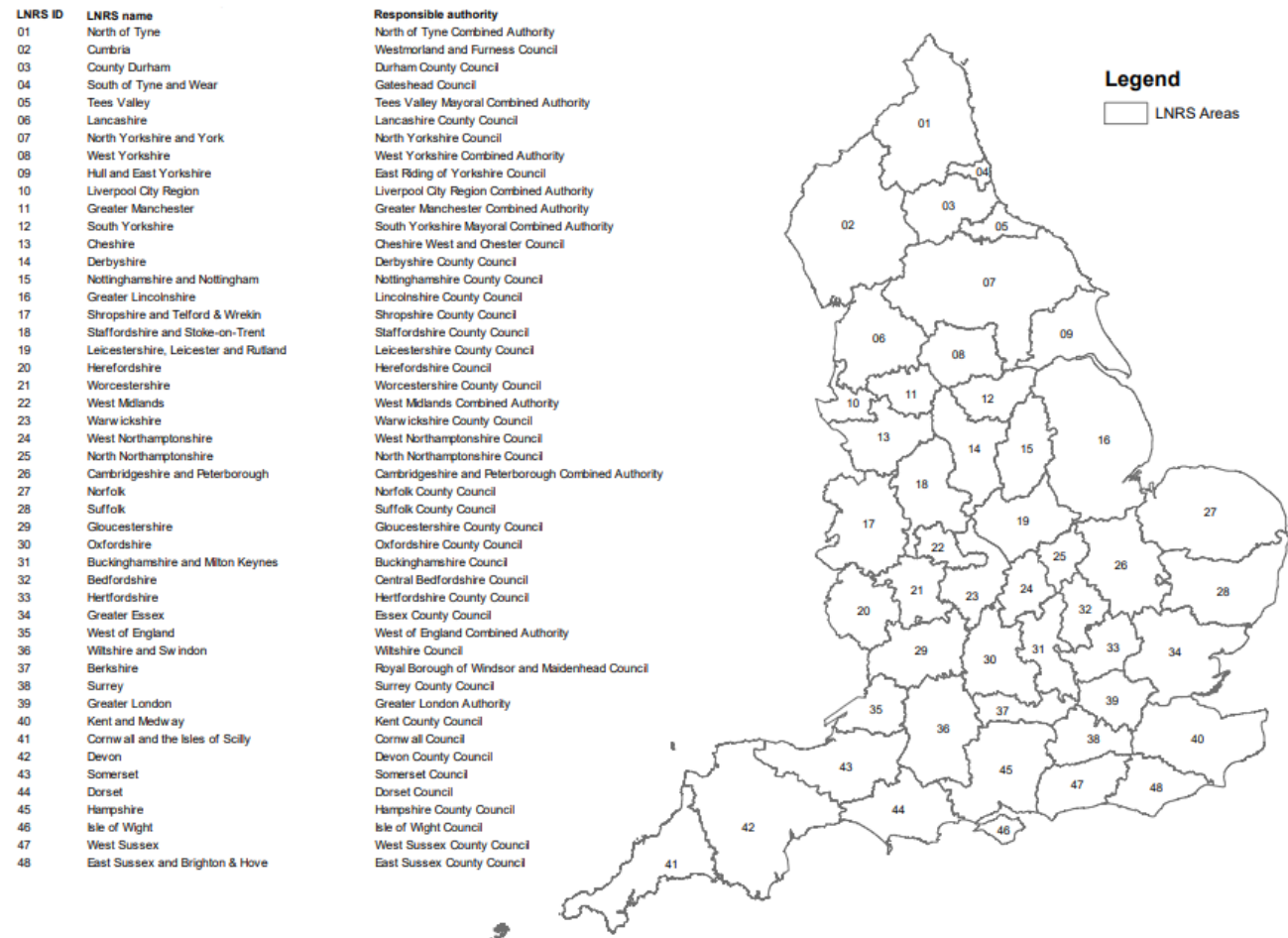
LNRS: What, Who, Why, How?



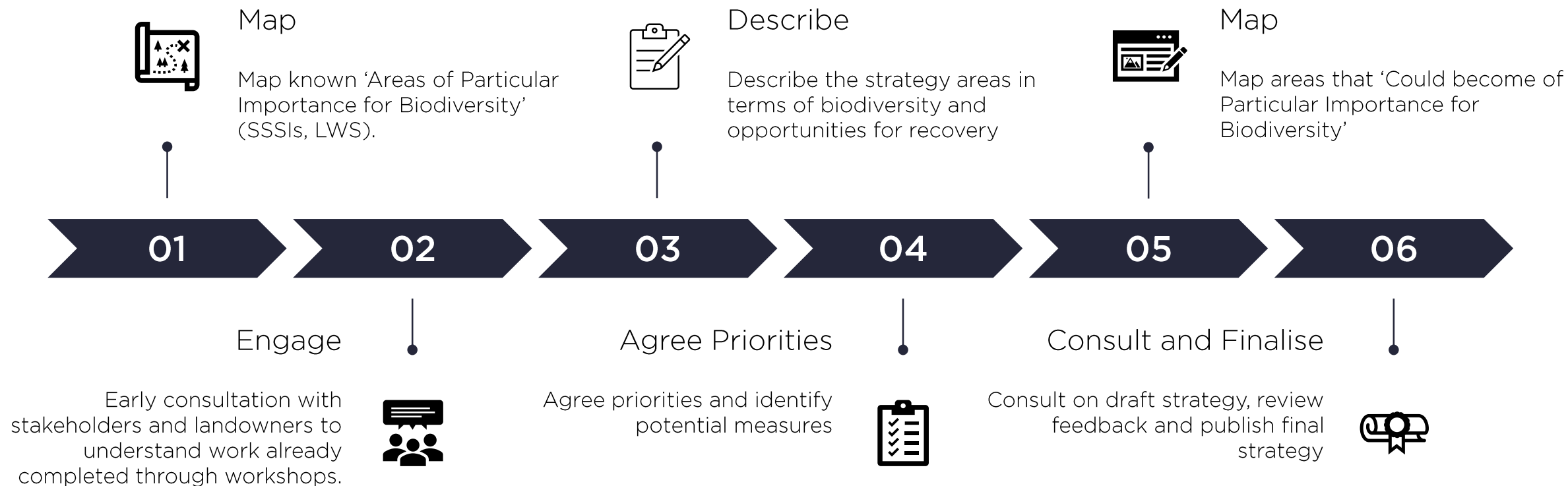
LNRS: What and Why?

- First introduced through The Environment Act 2021 – puts an obligation on ‘Responsible Authorities’ to publish LNRS (due March 2025).
- Part of the government’s efforts to **address biodiversity loss and promote environmental recovery**. These strategies are designed to spatially identify and prioritise actions for nature recovery at a local level, involving collaboration between various stakeholders, including landowners, NGOs and local authorities.
- **Must include a habitat map and written statement of biodiversity priorities** which are locally specific.

Map of local nature recovery strategy (LNRS) areas and responsible authorities



LNRS: The Process



LNRS: Identifying Priorities

Ecological Prioritisation Criteria



Does the opportunity offer a significant contribution to the recovery of NY&Y LNRS Priority Habitats?

Does the opportunity offer a significant contribution to the recovery of one or more threatened species, species for which East Yorkshire is a particular stronghold or iconic/keystone species?

Does the opportunity support positive outcomes for species in categories A-E of the species prioritisation process?

Does the opportunity promote aspects of local distinctiveness as outlined in the LNRS Strategy Area Description?

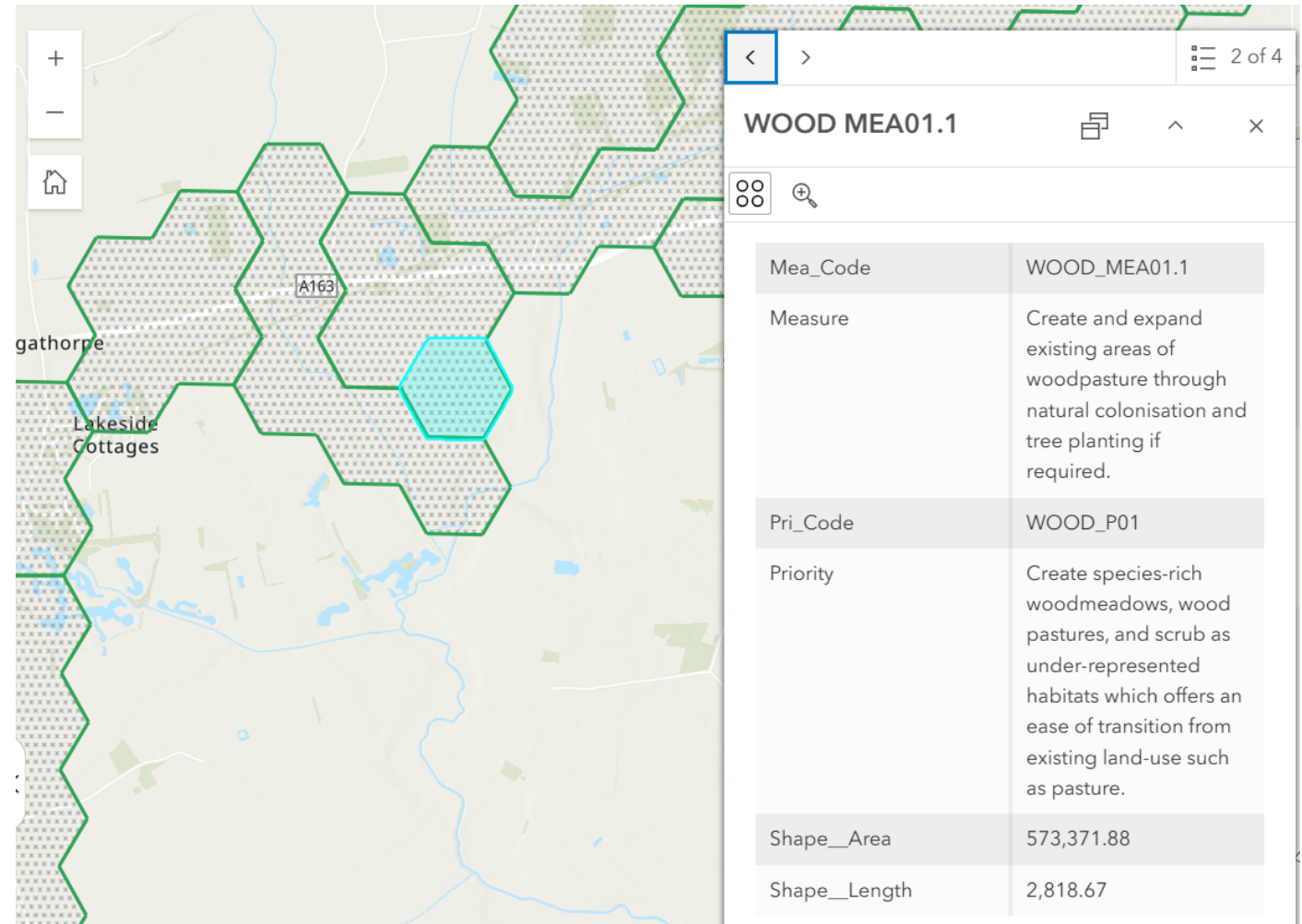
Are there reasons why the opportunity should be progressed within the current iteration of the LNRS?

Is this opportunity based on well-established evidence and is it likely to have a sustainable legacy after the intervention period?

Is this opportunity within the experience and resources of existing LNRS partners if suitable funding can be accessed?

LNRS: Identifying Priorities

Priorities		Measures		
Priority Code	Priority Descriptor	Measure Code	Measure Descriptor	Supporting Activity Descriptor
WOOD_P01	Create species-rich woodmeadows, wood pastures, and scrub as under-represented habitats which offers an ease of transition from existing land-use such as pasture.	WOOD_MEA01.1	Create and expand existing areas of wood pasture through natural colonisation and tree planting if required.	Promote the benefits of trees in landscapes to land managers (including habitats such as wood pasture and scrub), and encourage these habitats where close canopy woodland is not viable. Use agri-environment options for funding (e.g. agroforestry), and encourage species-rich swards as part of the management requirements (e.g. WD6).
		WOOD_MEA01.2	Create wood pasture (a mosaic of woodland, grassland and scrub) at unrecoverable or 'lost' poor-quality calcareous grassland sites to increase habitat diversity for birds and invertebrates.	Identify existing poor quality calcareous grassland where transition to wood pasture or scrub is desirable (e.g. valley bottoms of poor quality, tor-grass dominated grasslands).
		WOOD_MEA01.3	Enhance and maintain species diversity by appropriate grazing regimes, retention of deadwood, and introduction of wildflower species into the sward where required.	Provide advice to land managers on the amount and type of stock, and any associated land management options to maintain species-rich wood pasture.



Mea_Code	WOOD_MEA01.1
Measure	Create and expand existing areas of woodpasture through natural colonisation and tree planting if required.
Pri_Code	WOOD_P01
Priority	Create species-rich woodmeadows, wood pastures, and scrub as under-represented habitats which offers an ease of transition from existing land-use such as pasture.
Shape_Area	573,371.88
Shape_Length	2,818.67

LNRS: **Interaction with BNG**

- Does not 'replace' BNG, but intended to complement roll out of it under Environment Act
- LNRS designation does not implicate baseline habitats (i.e. strategic weighting does not apply) for adopted LNRS...
- Achieving goals of LNRS = 15% higher weighting for habitat creation

Examples:

- Arable → Woodland in an LNRS strategy area which seeks more woodland planting. Existing habitat does not score 15% higher, but any woodland planting delivered through development would score 15% higher;
- Delivering habitat not in line with LNRS still acceptable, but does not get 15% extra weighting



LNRS: Carrot or Stick?

Table 7 Biodiversity metric strategic significance categories and score applied in the metric where an LNRS has been published

Category	Score	Description
High (Formally identified in local strategy)	1.15	This category can be applied when: - the location of the habitat parcel has been mapped in the Local Habitat Map as an area where a potential measure has been proposed to help deliver the priorities of that LNRS; and - the intervention is consistent with the potential measure proposed for that location If your project delivers the mapped potential measure set out in the LNRS you should: - record strategic significance as low in the baseline - record strategic significance as high in post-intervention sheets - record that you have applied the published LNRS in your gain plan
Medium	1.10	This category cannot be applied.
Low (Area / compensation not in local strategy)	1	Where the definitions for high strategic significance are not met. Even if your project is an area mapped with a potential measure, if it does not deliver the specific actions outlined for your location you should record strategic significance as low.

Table 8 Biodiversity metric strategic significance categories and score applied in the metric where an LNRS has not yet been published

Category	Score	Description
High (Formally identified in local strategy)	1.15	The habitat type is mapped and described as locally ecologically important within a specific location, within documents specified by the relevant planning authority. If your project delivers the mapped habitat creation, enhancement or actions set out within specified alternative documents, or enhances an existing habitat identified within specified alternative documents as locally ecologically important, strategic significance can be recorded as high in the post-intervention sheets. If the specified alternative documents identify existing habitat as locally ecologically important within a specified location, strategic significance may be recorded as high in the baseline. You should record the name of the plan the relevant planning authority has specified in the user comments and record that you have used the specified document in your gain plan.
Medium (Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy)	1.10	This category can be applied when the LPA has not identified a suitable document for assessing strategic significance. Users should: - explain how the habitat type is ecologically important within a specific location - demonstrate the importance of that habitat in providing ecological linkage to other strategically significant locations - use professional judgement When the above criteria are met, strategic significance may be recorded as medium in the baseline and post-intervention sheets.
Low (Area / compensation not in local strategy)	1	Where the definitions for high or medium strategic significance are not met.

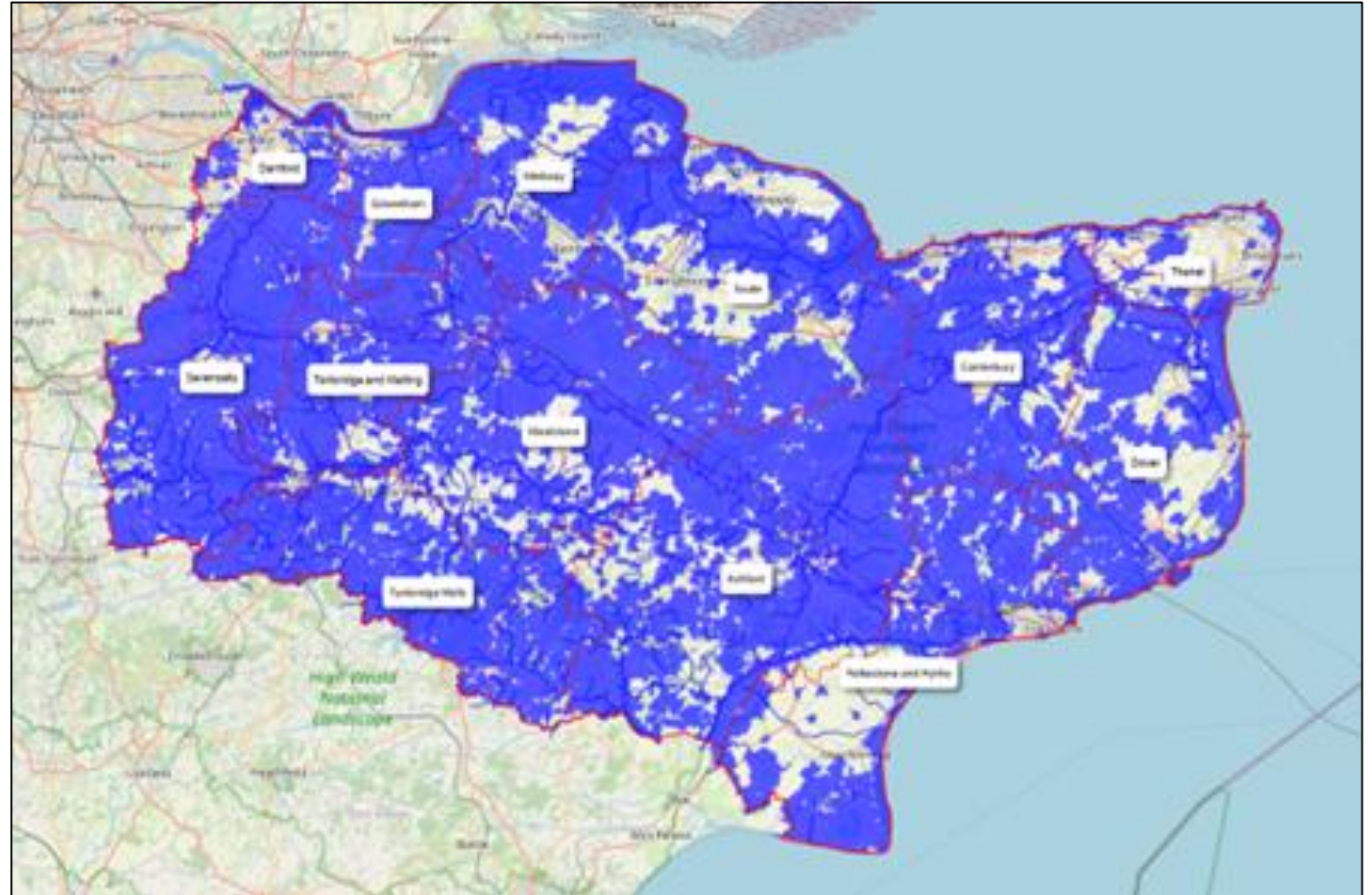
LNRS: Examples

Kent and Medway

Priority: *“The county’s key wildlife sites better connected by addressing the fragmentation and barriers preventing movement of species”*

CON1.2: Identify and safeguard areas that are strategically important in reducing fragmentation and addressing bottlenecks for species movement

“The potential measures that fall within the Local Habitat Map – indicate the areas of strategic significance in the county. If land falls within this area, and the action aligns with the potential measure(s) identified, this may be classed as strategically significant”

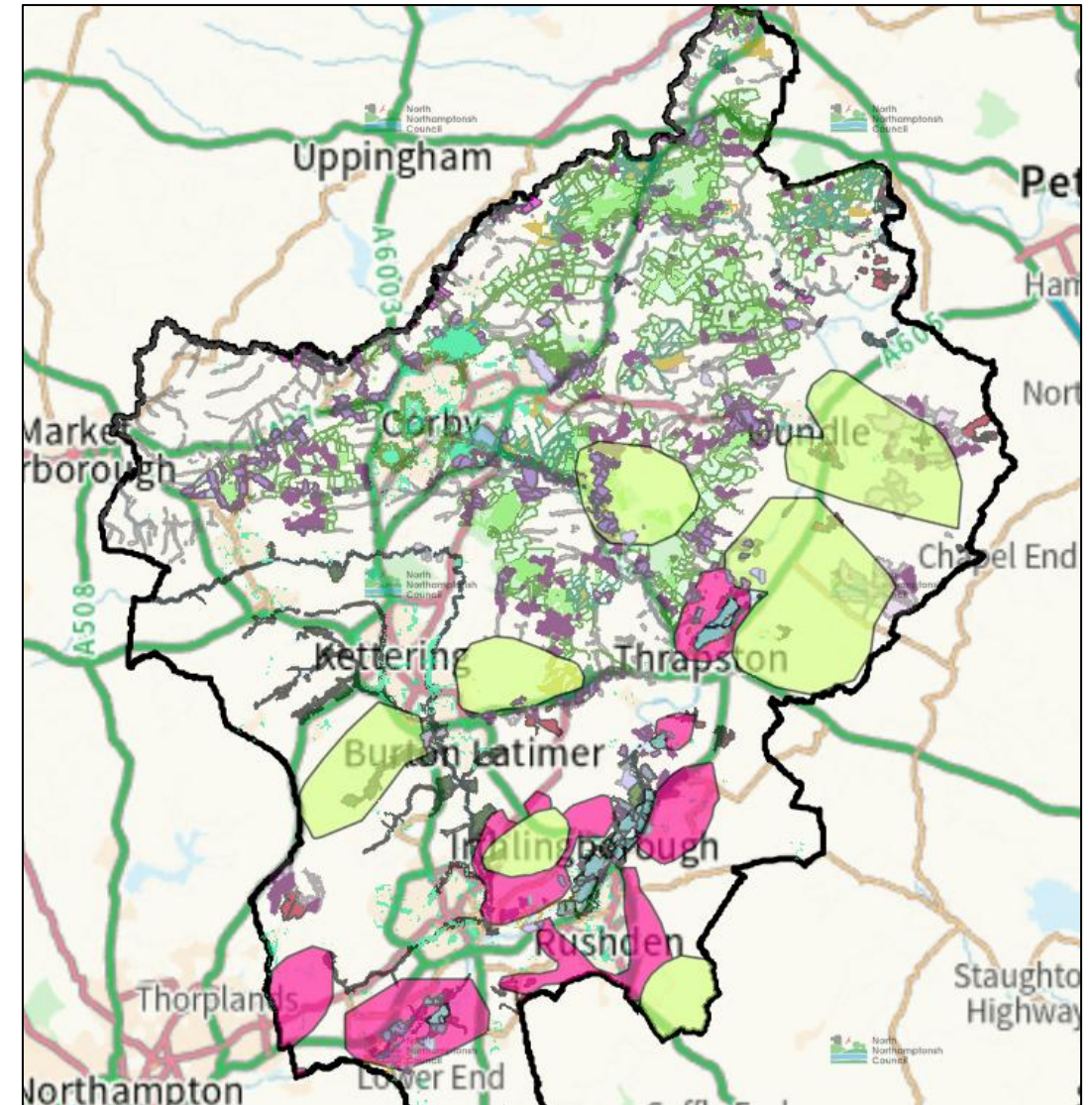


LNRS: Examples

North Northamptonshire

009B: Within those already identified and mapped areas of suitable habitat for Lapwing and Golden Plover, the land will be principally managed to support these qualifying species for the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

Upper Nene Gravel Pits is a Special Protection Area (SPA) and is internationally important for its over-wintering population of golden plover and lapwing.

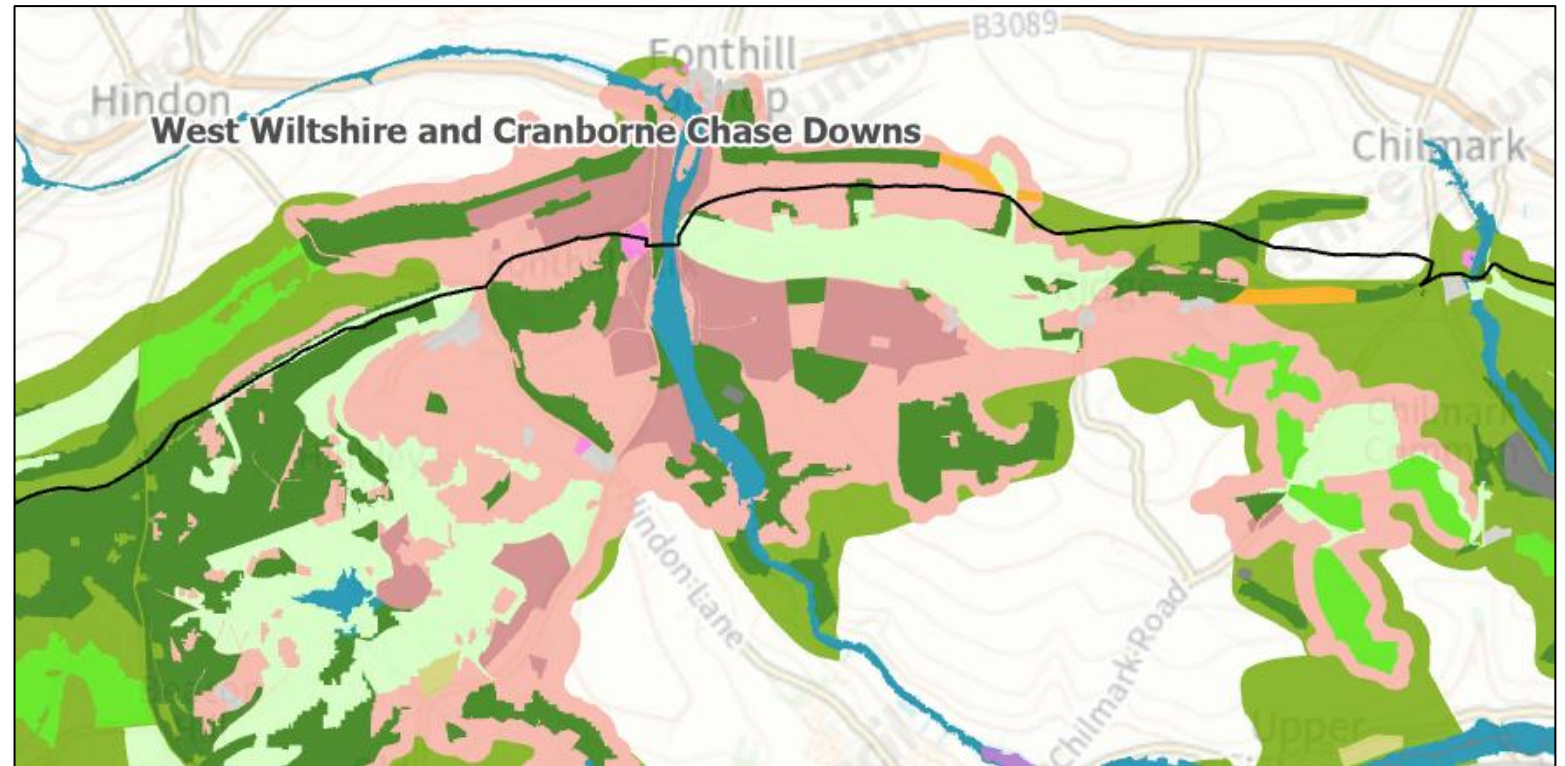


LNRS: Examples

Wiltshire

‘Create More Open Mixed Habitat’:

- Consider habitat creation in context with any identified species and habitat measures
- Establish open mixed habitats
- Subsequently manage as per “Maintain and enhance areas of open mixed habitats”
- Undertake hydrological restoration measures
- Create topographical diversity to increase species diversity
- Create and improve ponds
- Manage, enhance and create hedgerows



LNRS: Numbers



Example per 1ha residential site targeted for other neutral grassland creation within LNRS:

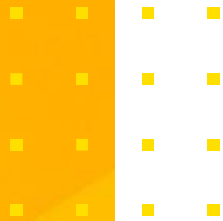
- Baseline Strategic Significance is ‘Low’
- Assumes 70% built form : 30% green infrastructure (10% of which = grassland, 20% vegetated garden)
- In left hand scenario, grassland = amenity grade grassland (non-LNRS)
- In right hand scenario, grassland = other neutral grassland (identified as priority in LNRS)
- 0.23 ‘extra’ units per ha
- Weighed against other planning ‘benefits’ + mitigation hierarchy

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-1.42
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-71.05%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-1.19
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-59.28%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	

CHLOE EDWARDS

Oxfordshire LNRS



Oxfordshire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

The making of a Local Habitat Map

Oxfordshire County Council

Chloe Edwards

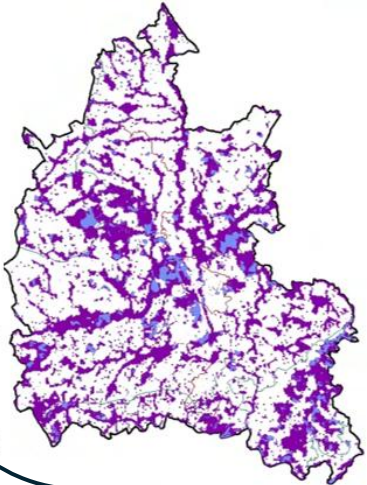


Local Nature Recovery Strategy



Government asked authorities across England to create Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs)

The main purpose is to prioritise and identify where to create or improve habitat to benefit nature and the wider environment. The strategies don't force landowners or managers to make any of the changes identified on the map. Instead, the government is encouraging action through, for example, opportunities for funding and investment.

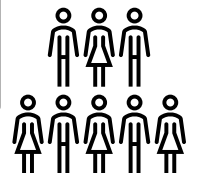


Local habitat map

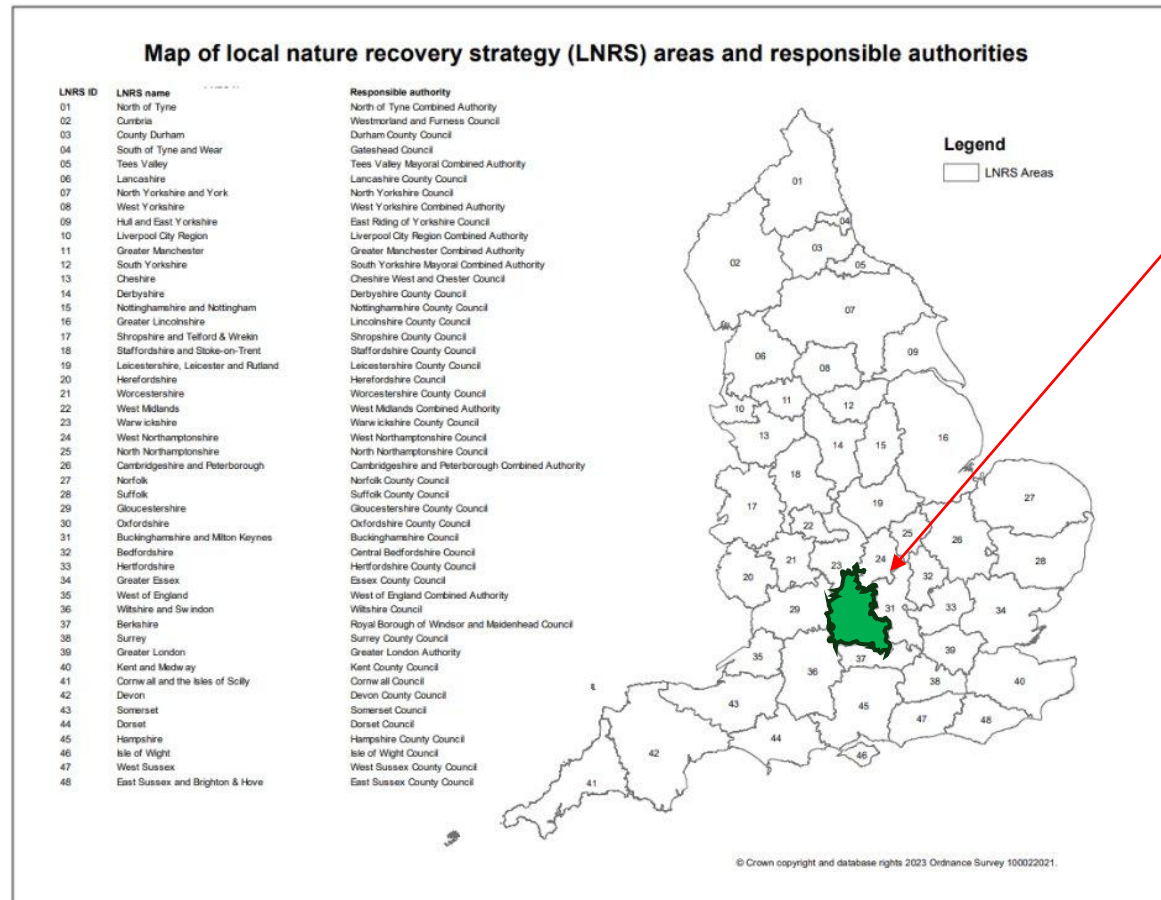
Local nature
recovery strategy

A list of outcomes 'priorities' to achieve in the area. Each priority should have a set of actionable 'potential measures' that could be taken to deliver the priority. The potential measures should include actions to be taken for relevant **habitats** and **species**.

Statement of
biodiversity
priorities



48 Local Nature Recovery Strategies, expected to publish by mid-late 2025



Oxfordshire, number 30.

260,596 hectares of opportunity connecting multiple counties across England

To produce the LNRS map, effectively the question to all of us was:

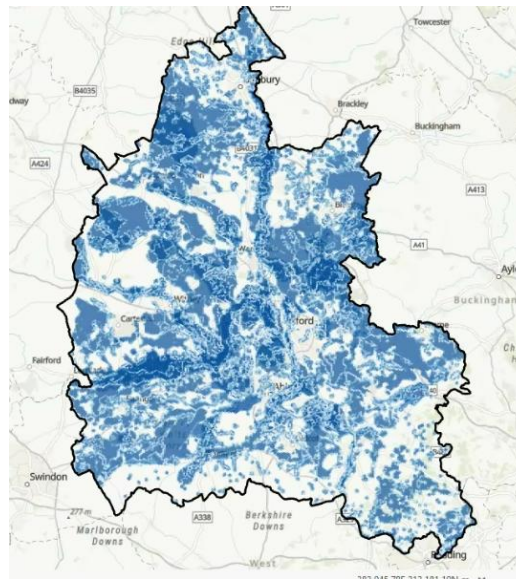
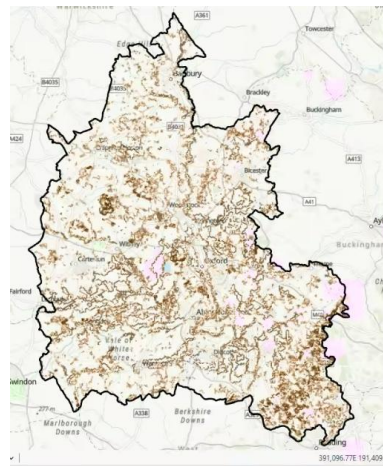
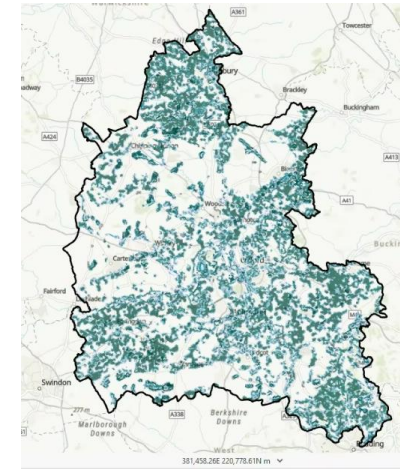
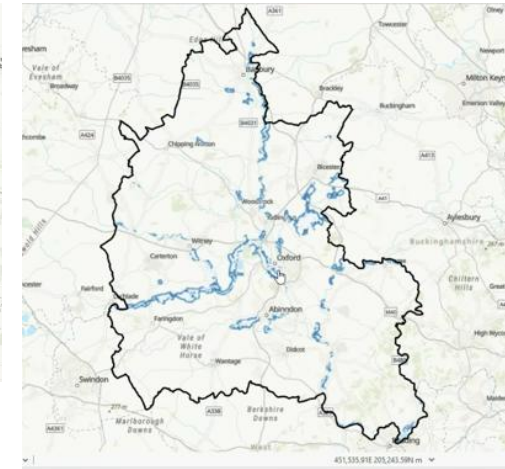
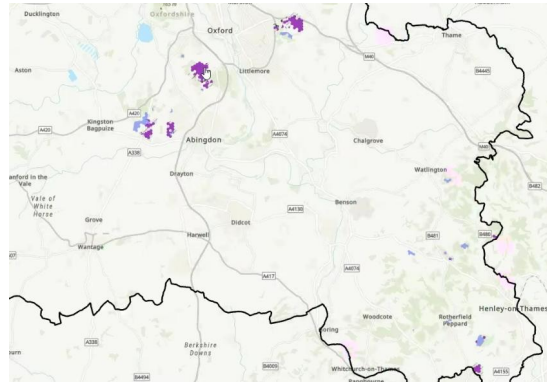
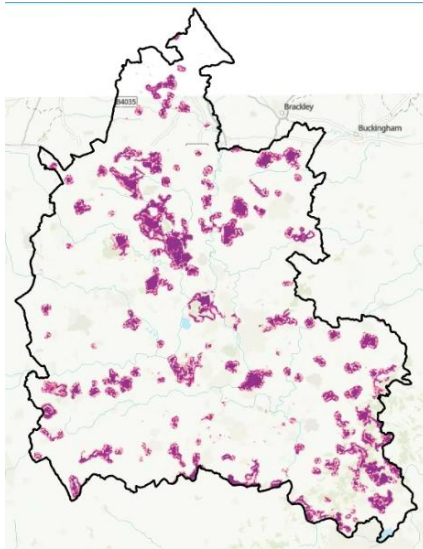
If finances were limited, where would resources need to be targeted to create a bigger, better, more joined up network for nature?

Step 1: Produce spatial information (maps) about where the opportunities are to create or improve habitats. To understand what's possible in each area of our county.

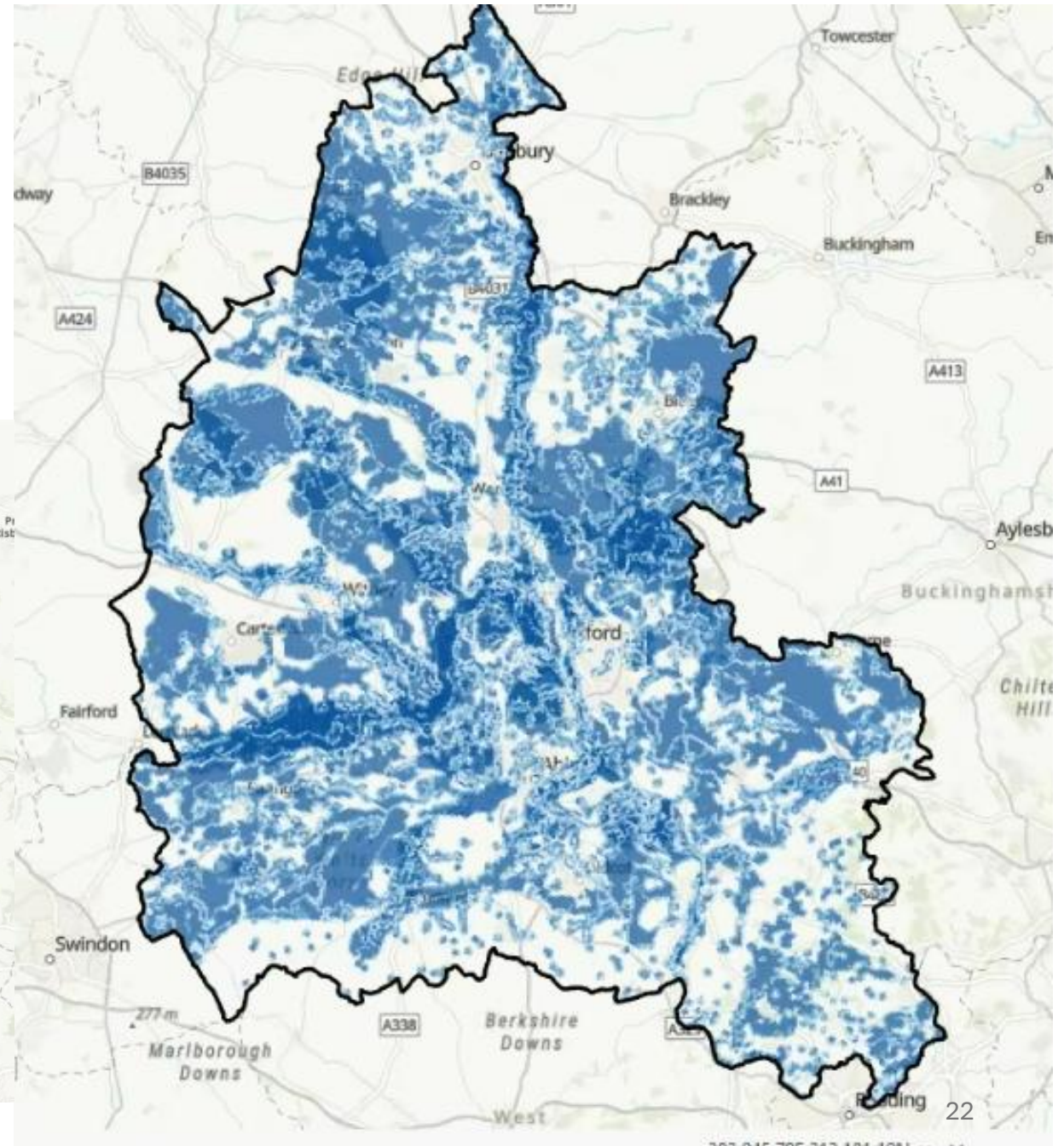
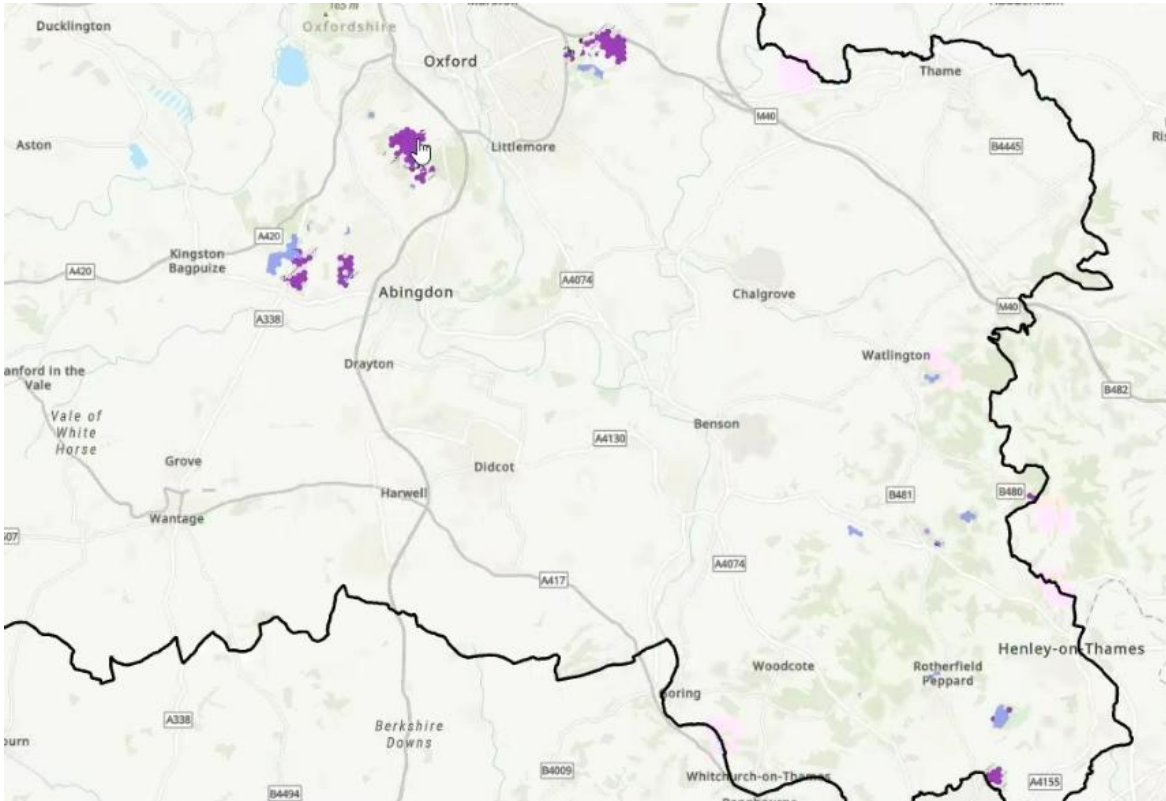
Including;

Based on data held by local environmental records centre and the latest soil data (23/24)

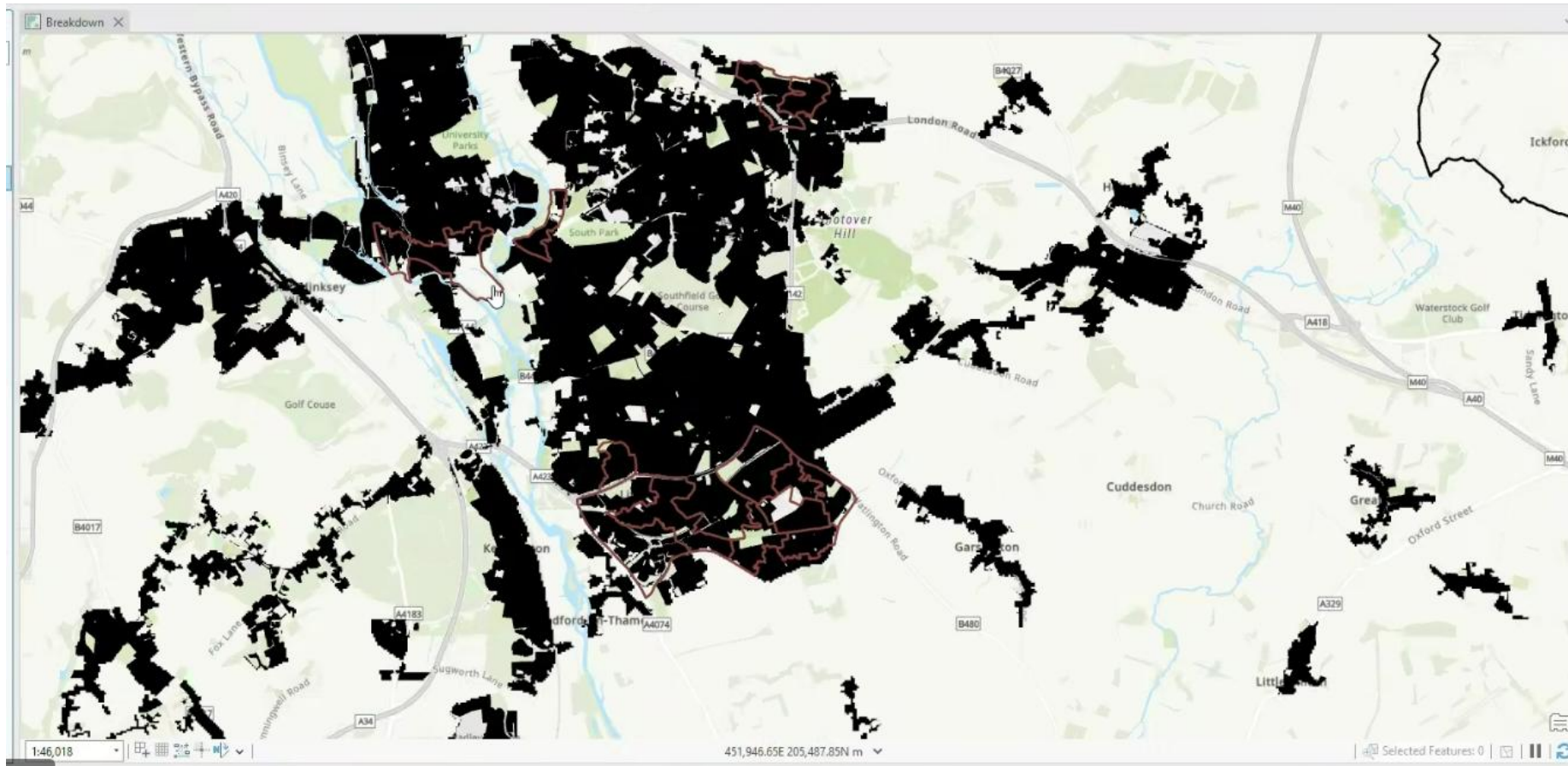
- Grassland types and creation
- Wetland creation
- Pond creation
- Floodplain meadow creation
- Woodland, wood pasture, parkland, and creation
- Chalk streams
- Heathland and acid grassland
- **Many more...**
- **Some are far more limited than others**



Pond creation →
vs
heathland restoration
(below)

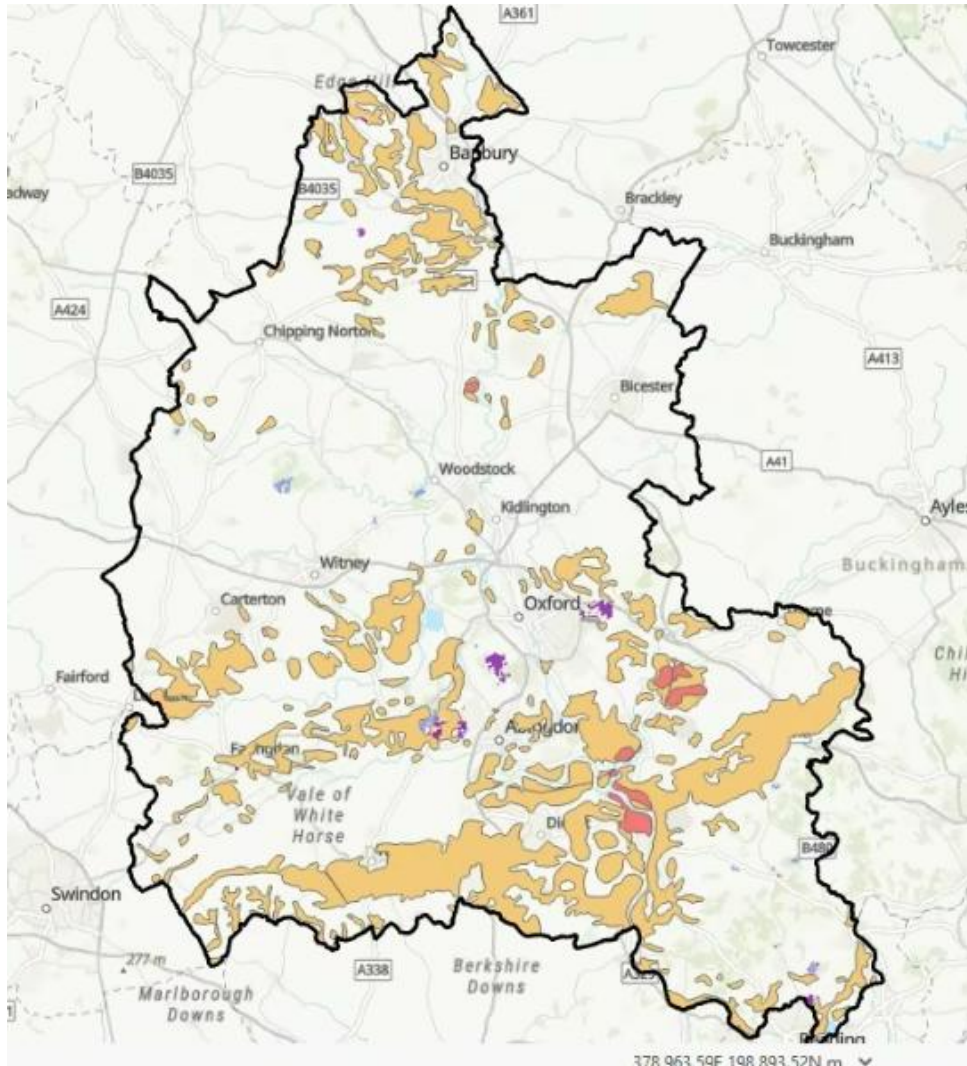


After the opportunities, we considered ‘constraints’ (areas where we can’t create landscape-scale habitat).



Built up areas and impermeable surfaces (car parks) in black above were not selected for habitat creation. Green spaces could still be selected. Please note, people still have other nature recovery actions to take in these places (just not creating woodlands for example)

Whilst there were lots of opportunities we needed to consider which areas we were incentivising or not.

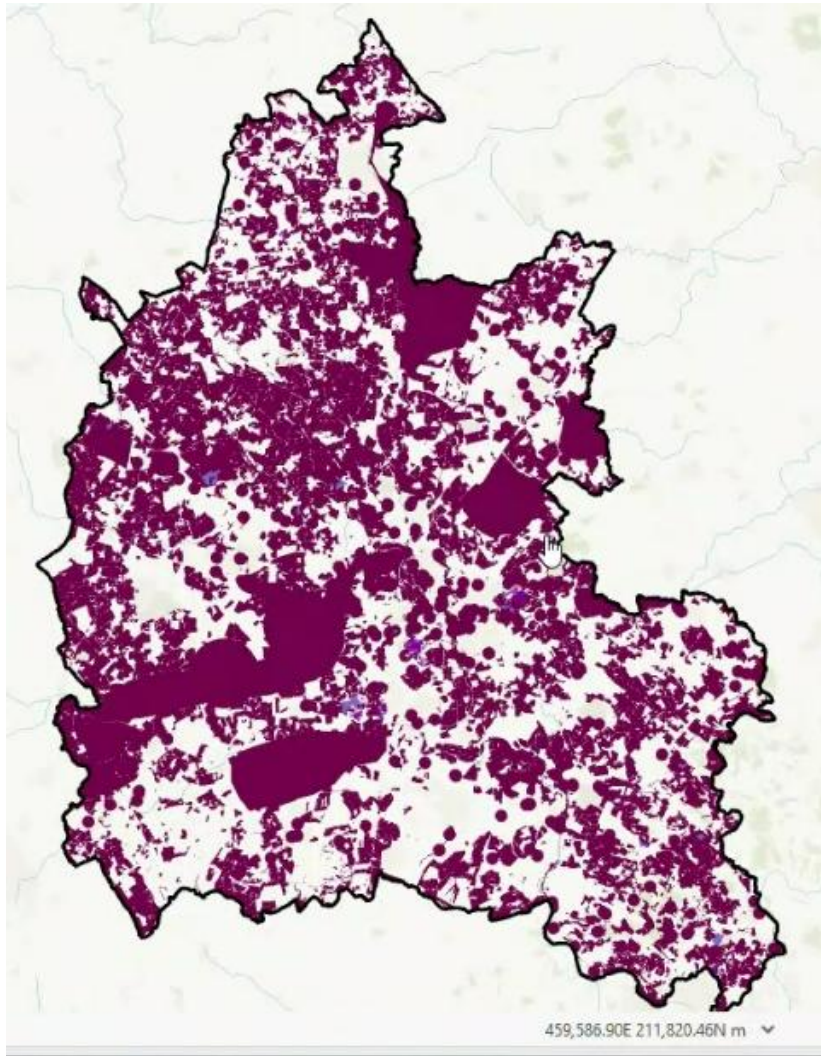


More than 70% of Oxfordshire is used for agricultural purposes and we are lucky to have significant areas of some of the highest quality farmland (ALC grades 1 and 2) – land with the greatest capacity to produce crops.

We therefore added a ‘disincentive’ or penalty to these areas of land, meaning that they were less likely to be chosen in our map (**for habitat creation**) unless they played a key role in connecting large areas of habitat.

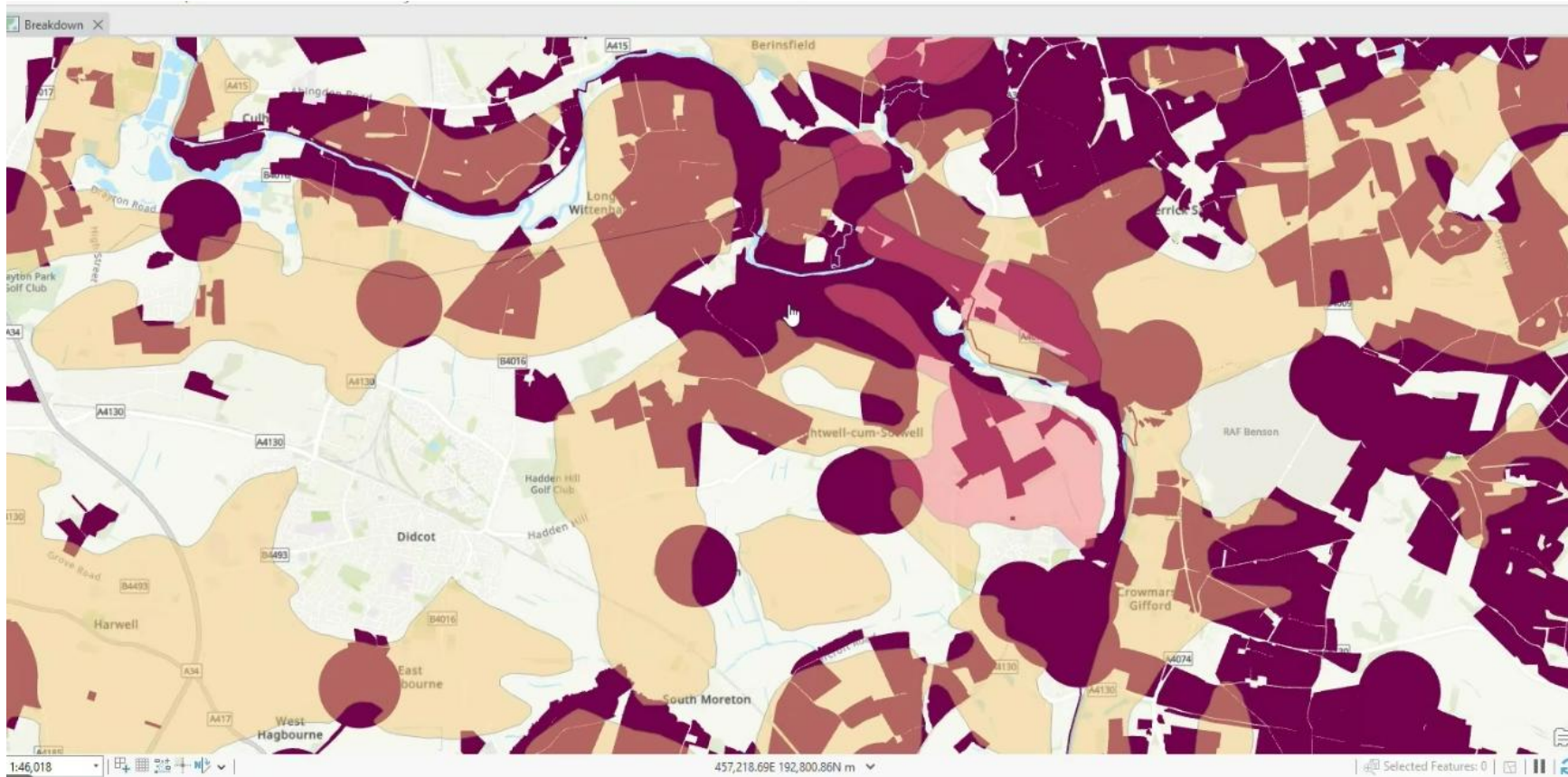
The LNRS still recommends that landowners/managers deliver nature-friendly farming actions on those areas but we were used the penalty above to avoid mapping e.g. woodland creation on high quality arable fields.

We also asked local people if they are already enhancing, or willing to create habitats?



- Earlier in 2024 we asked people to tell us about areas of the county where they are already supporting nature/would like to take actions for biodiversity in the near future.
- This map shows those areas of land where people told us that they are already **willing to support biodiversity through habitat creation/improvement work.**
- For these areas, we set incentives, meaning that these ‘willing locations’ were more likely to be chosen if they are also suitable for habitat actions.

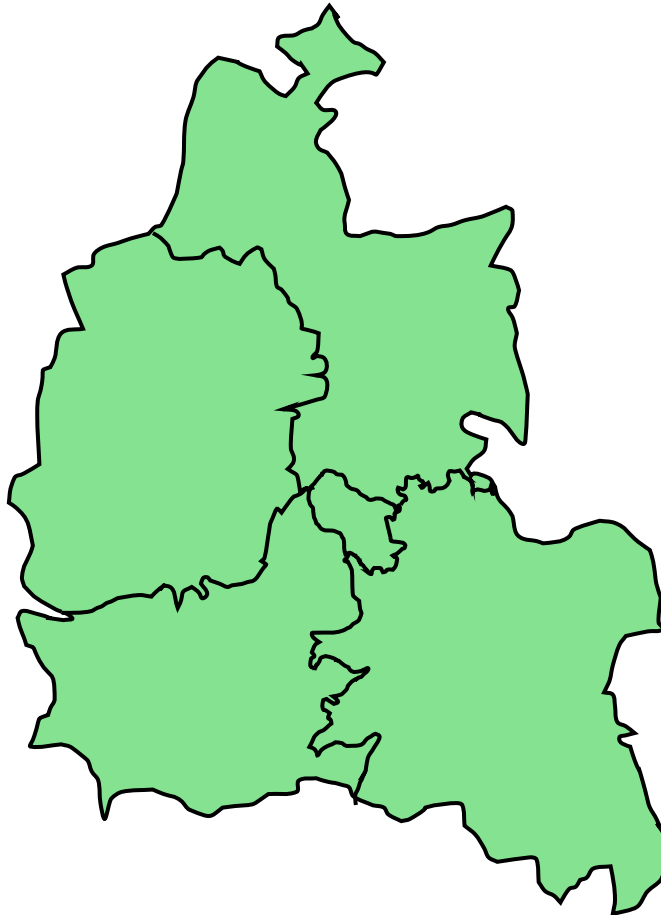
So, these opportunities, constraints, penalties and incentives and help indicate which areas offer the greatest benefits.



It is by navigating the suitable, willing, and possible locations that we are able to prioritise which land areas are most suitable for inclusion on the LNRS map.

But to do this at the county scale, we used a software to navigate the complexity of these options. We set targets so it new how much land it would need to achieve a bigger, better, joined-up network of nature.

‘We’ set targets. Who is ‘we’?



1000 local people and organisations joined workshops in our LNRS to help to set the early priorities and actions and steer the decision making for nature recovery in Oxfordshire.

Our draft had **2,100** more responses to shape the final version.

~ 20 close partner organisations shaping the targets, priorities, and actions throughout the process.

OXFORDSHIRE'S LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

What can we do to REVERSE the decline of BIODIVERSITY?

NATIONAL LANDSCAPES



REGIONAL NATURE PARKS

Helping NATURE to RECOVER, not to just survive



ENABLE PEOPLE to see LOCAL WILDLIFE

DEVELOP PRIDE in BIODIVERSITY

ALL PEOPLE, NOT JUST CERTAIN DEMOGRAPHICS

Support NATURE and WILDLIFE



Actions

Create functioning, larger, connected ECOSYSTEMS

GIVE people AGENCY and FUNDING

Building development must conform to LAWS

WILDLIFE CORRIDORS PRIORITY POLICY

ENGAGE EVERYONE

NATIONAL CURRICULA

ANNUAL DAY to CELEBRATE NATURE

What's the BEST we can do for Nature?

CORRIDORS need to CONNECT KEY AREAS, NETWORKED across the COUNTY



Improve existing HABITATS

Improve RIVERS and FRESHWATERS

Priorities

This is IMPORTANT for us!

ENGAGE with the VOICE of NATURE

CONNECTIVITY of HABITATS via the WATERWAYS

ACKNOWLEDGE the CHANGING CLIMATE SYSTEM we're working in...

TACKLE POLLUTION

STORE more CARBON CO₂

Collaborative VISION

LOCAL INFORMAL GROUPS for RESTORATION

NATURE EDUCATION for PEOPLE of ALL BACKGROUNDS

NATURE THRIVING and FLOURISHING

ACCESSIBLE LARGE NATURAL AREAS near POPULATION

CONNECT diverse range of HABITATS

BEAVERS as ECOSYSTEM MANAGERS



NATURAL REGENERATION

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

GREEN Rooftops

70% INTENSIVE FARMING

42% ARABLE

REALIGN ourselves with NATURE, as part of NATURE

Being able to WALK from one end of the county to the other one without any BARRIERS!



PASS on a functioning and HEALTHY ECOSYSTEM to OXFORDSHIRE'S FUTURE GENERATIONS

Ultimately, the LNRS had to agree on targets based on local information and priorities. Our targets are published and available to view.

The key democratic part of the process. Having this list of targets offers consistency, transparency, and the ability to run this process again in the future and tweak targets based on local input. Oxfordshire set about 60 different targets to map. We could always add to, or remove them in future. We could set targets for anything that we had good, mapped data for.

Including fens, ancient woodland, traditional orchards, etc.
For example:

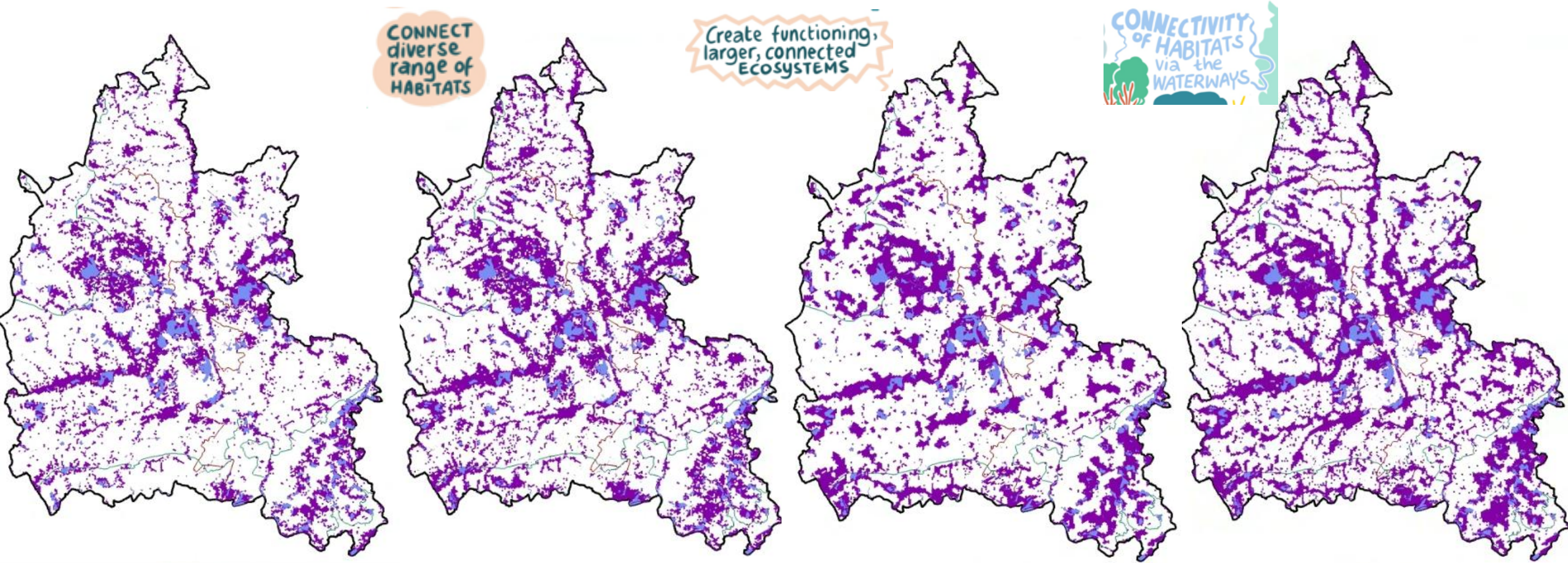
Conservation Feature	Area in county (ha)	Current % in county	Feature target (%)	Area selected in solution (ha)	% of feature in solution (%)
Active Quarries	411	0%	80%	329	80%
CF FPGM	8,949	3%	80%	7,160	80%
CF LCG	8,566	3%	80%	6,854	80%
CF Wet Woodland	33,222	13%	25%	16,991	51%
CF WPP	20,384	8%	30%	10,638	52%
CF & ICR LMW	26,081	10%	40%	14,527	56%
Existing AW	6,373	2%	80%	5,099	80%
Existing Chalk Rivers & Streams (25m buffer)	658	0%	87%	572	87%
Existing FPGM	4,361	2%	80%	4,036	93%
Existing LAG LHL	200	0%	80%	160	80%
Existing LCG	1,248	0%	85%	1,134	91%
Existing LMW	1,344	1%	85%	1,128	84%
Existing Ponds	580	0%	80%	464	80%
Existing Priority Habitat on Arable Neutral Soils (250m buffer)	37,016	14%	45%	16,658	45%
Existing TRO	271	0%	80%	217	80%
Existing Water Features	1,287	0%	80%	1,031	80%
Existing Woodland	16,482	6%	40%	11,158	68%
Existing WPP	9,935	4%	65%	6,463	65%
Good Quality Grassland on Neutral Soils (250m buffer)	38,554	15%	45%	17,358	45%
ICR LAG & LHL	205	0%	80%	166	81%
Important Freshwater Areas	48,941	19%	20%	26,125	53%
Juniper Clusters	502	0%	90%	469	94%
LCG Opportunity	37,272	14%	45%	19,567	52%
LCG Opportunity on Cropland	22,140	8%	25%	8,477	38%
LCG Opportunity on Existing Grassland	12,110	5%	75%	9,083	75%
LCG Opportunity on Steep Slopes (>12% grade)	3,475	1%	80%	2,784	80%

Conservation Feature	Area in county (ha)	Current % in county	Feature target (%)	Area selected in solution (ha)	% of feature in solution (%)
Existing Woodland With 'enhance' actions	16,482	6%	40%	11,158	68%
Existing Chalk Rivers & Streams (25m buffer) With 'enhance' actions	658	0%	87%	572	87%

What we asked for as a minimum

What we got in the map

Targets were adjusted to ensure the map reflected local ambitions



Run 1 – 23%

Run 2 – 30%

Run 3 – 30%. More consolidated areas but we lost the network and connectivity

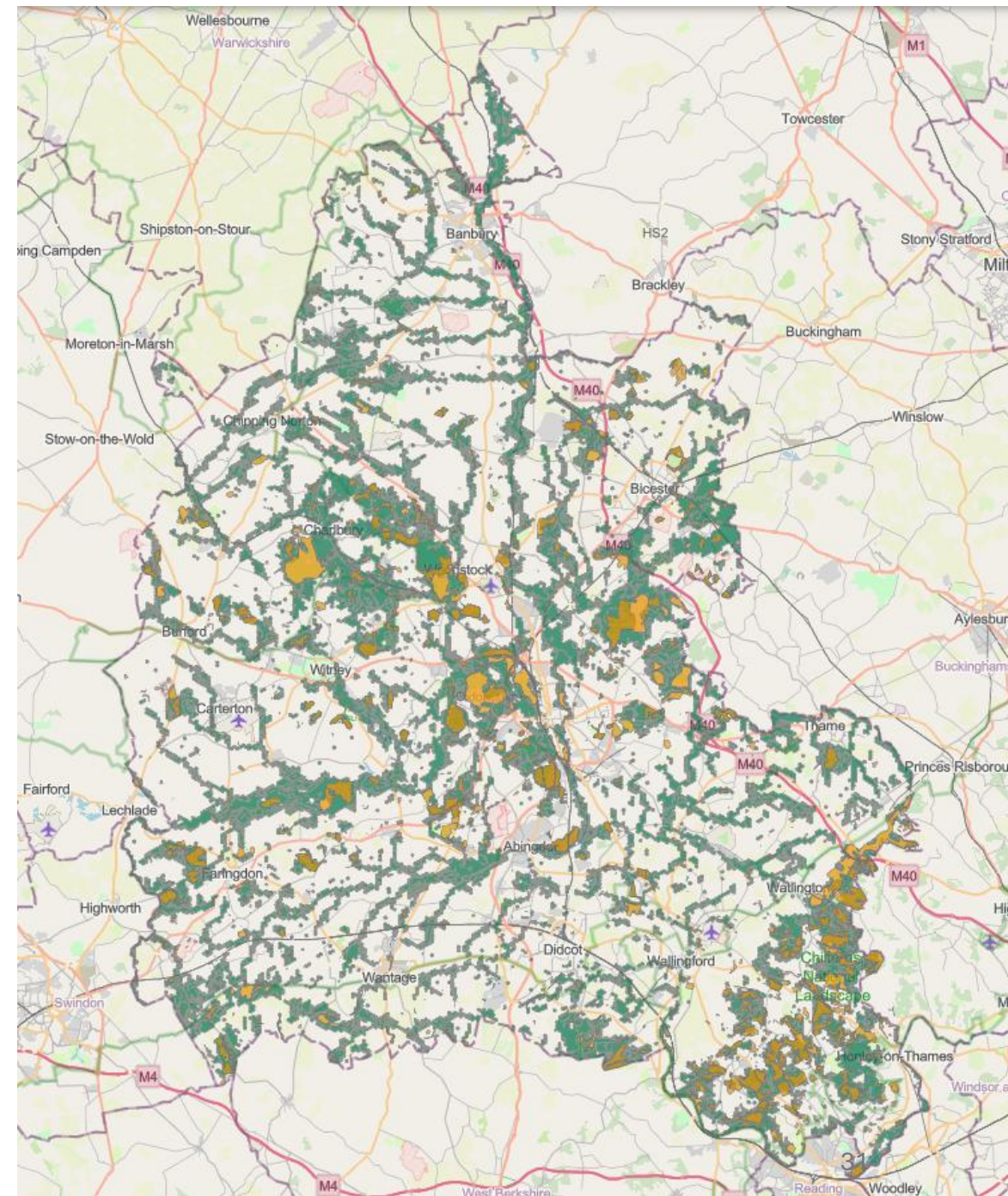
Run 4 – 35. Asked gaps along rivers to be filled and grassland targets to be met

Our draft map offered an answer to one of our original questions - where could we target limited resources to create a more connected network for nature in the county.

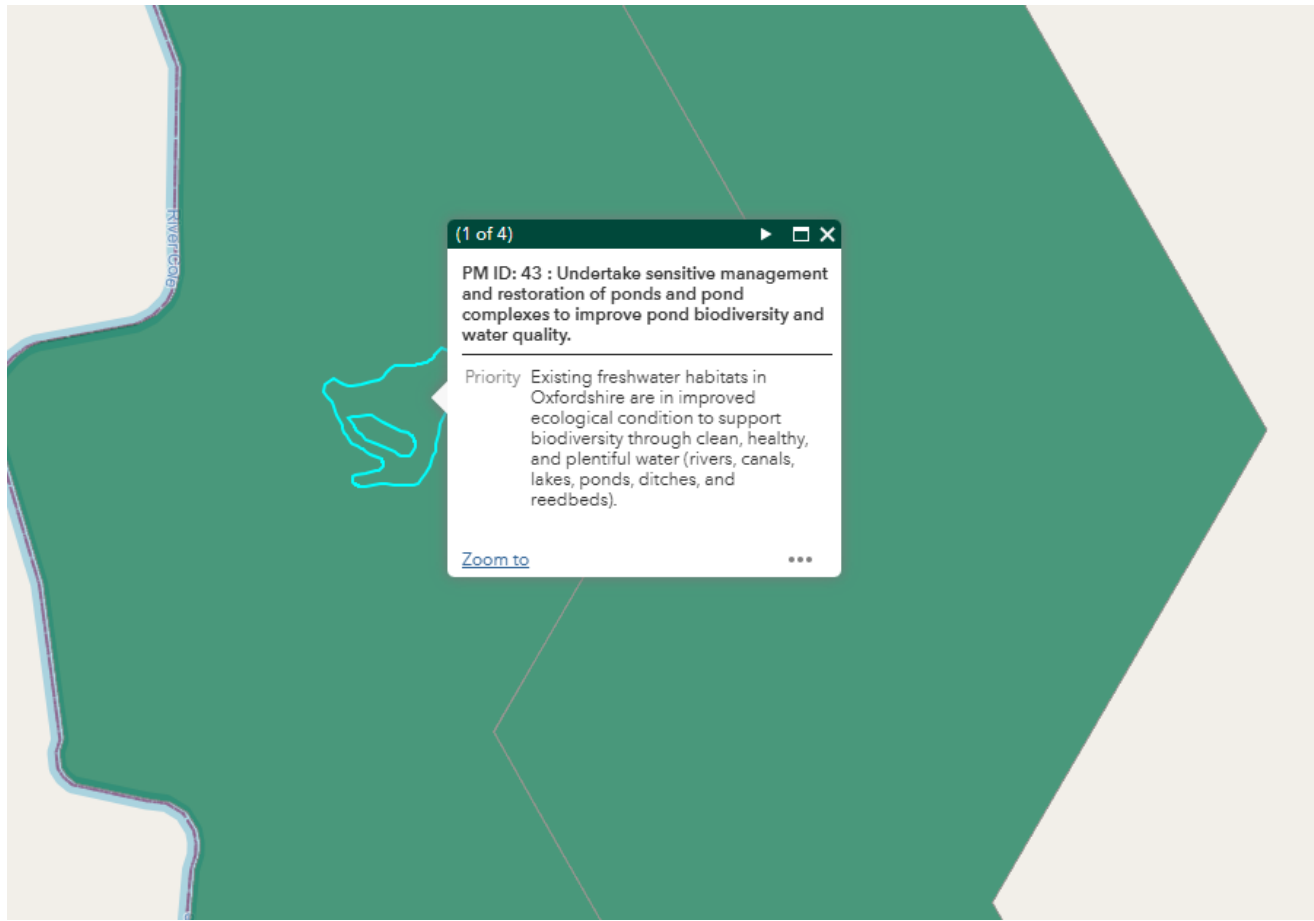
The green and orange areas were allocated with actions to either

- (1) **Create** new habitats
- Or (2) **Enhance** existing ones

People could click anywhere on the green/orange network to see which actions could be taken there to help achieve the targets.



Click any area within that network to see which actions could be suitable in those places. Despite being a large solution area, the suggested actions were still able to be very spatially targeted. And there are often multiple actions that could be achieved in a given area.

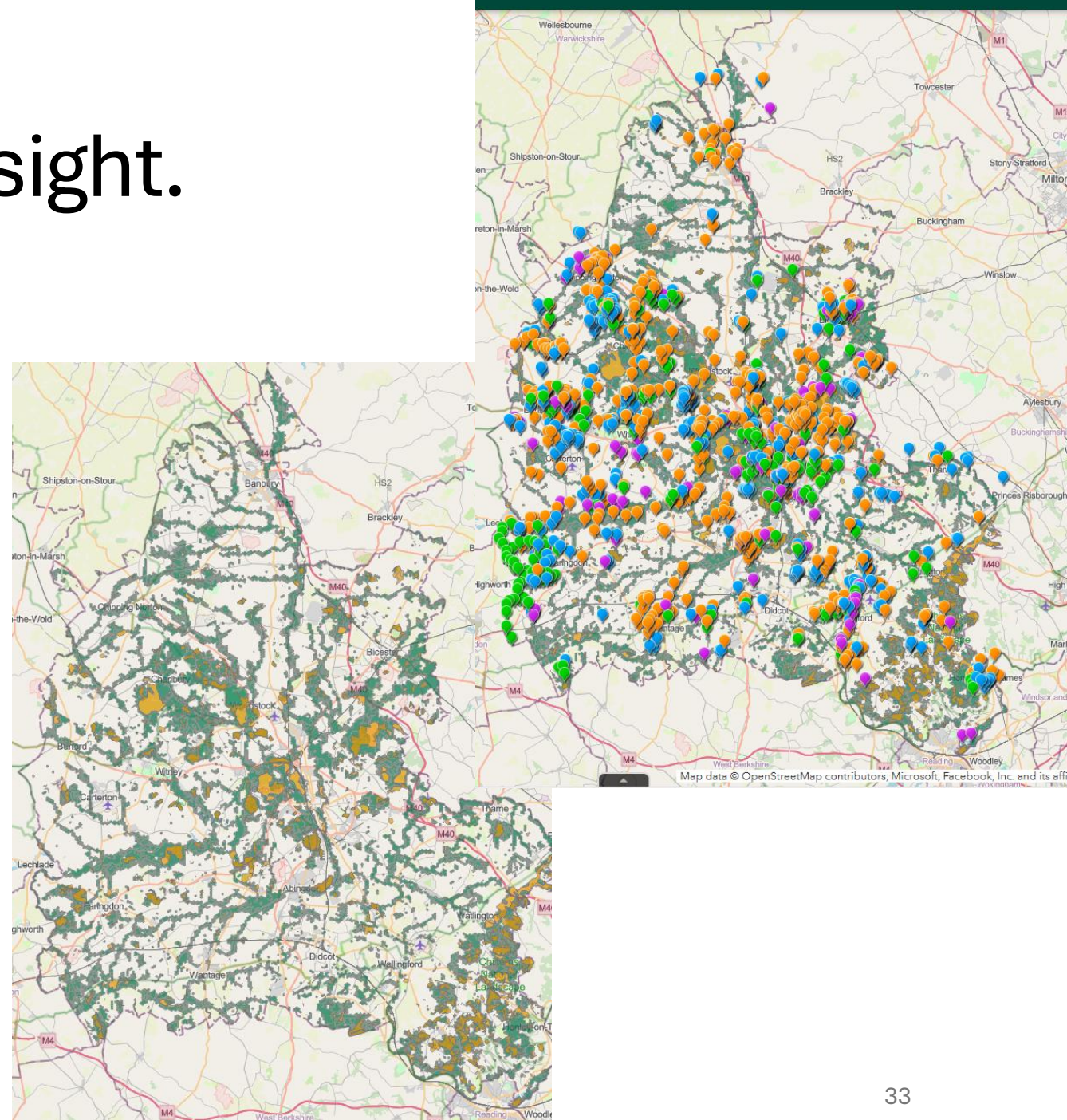


Last step: Human oversight.

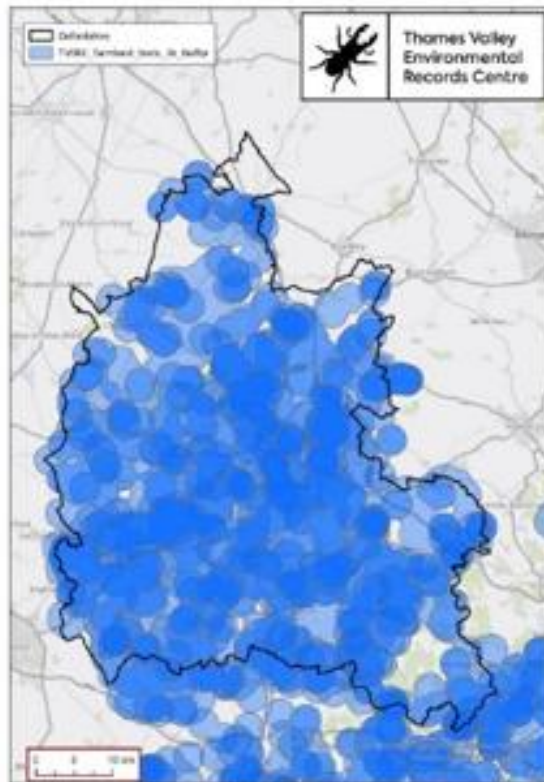
We knew the software's map offered a solution but there are human factors to consider e.g. what people are doing on the land currently, their future plans, local knowledge to help us ground-truth whether our data is different from what's on-the-ground, and other local knowledge that could help to improve the map.

We held a 6-week public consultation and attended over 50 events to invite people to respond. We received 2,143 responses to our draft map and written priorities. Lots of positive engagement, and lots of ideas and suggestions to fine tune the strategy (and map).

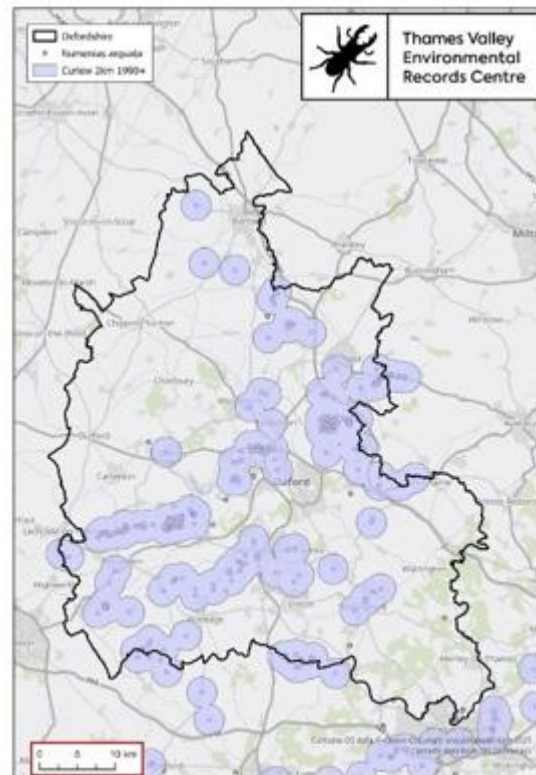
We're now actioning these changes. For example, adding fields where landowners told us that they wanted to revert arable to lowland meadow.



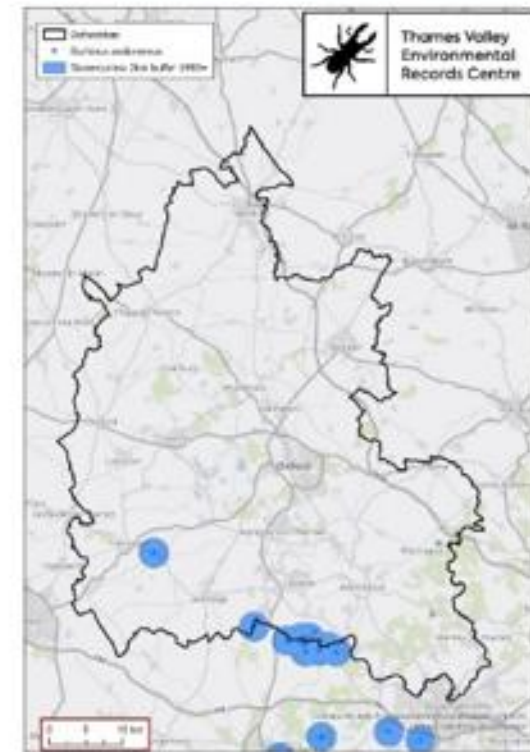
Farmland birds



Curlew



Stone Curlew



Quick final comments

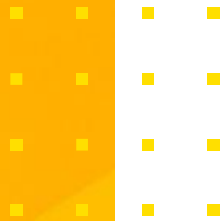
- 48 LNRs have taken different approaches. Not all LNRs used our process but many are writing up their methodologies and have worked hard to produce a transparent process, get in touch with yours to find out more.
- Your input absolutely should be part of this process if you can. Many LNRs are in draft stage at the moment.
- Please understand that the LNR mapping itself does not force you to take any of the mapped actions. Defra advised LNRs that being mapped should not constrain landowners/managers from taking other actions on the land.
- LNR mapping offers a financial uplift of 15% for those delivering appropriate Biodiversity Net Gain habitat actions in the mapped locations.
- View the mapped areas as opportunities to access more funding and investment if you choose to deliver nature recovery actions. They can be an option to diversify.
- LNRs will be reviewed and republished every 3 – 10 years in the future.



Thank you

ANDREW WATSON

Planning: the implications



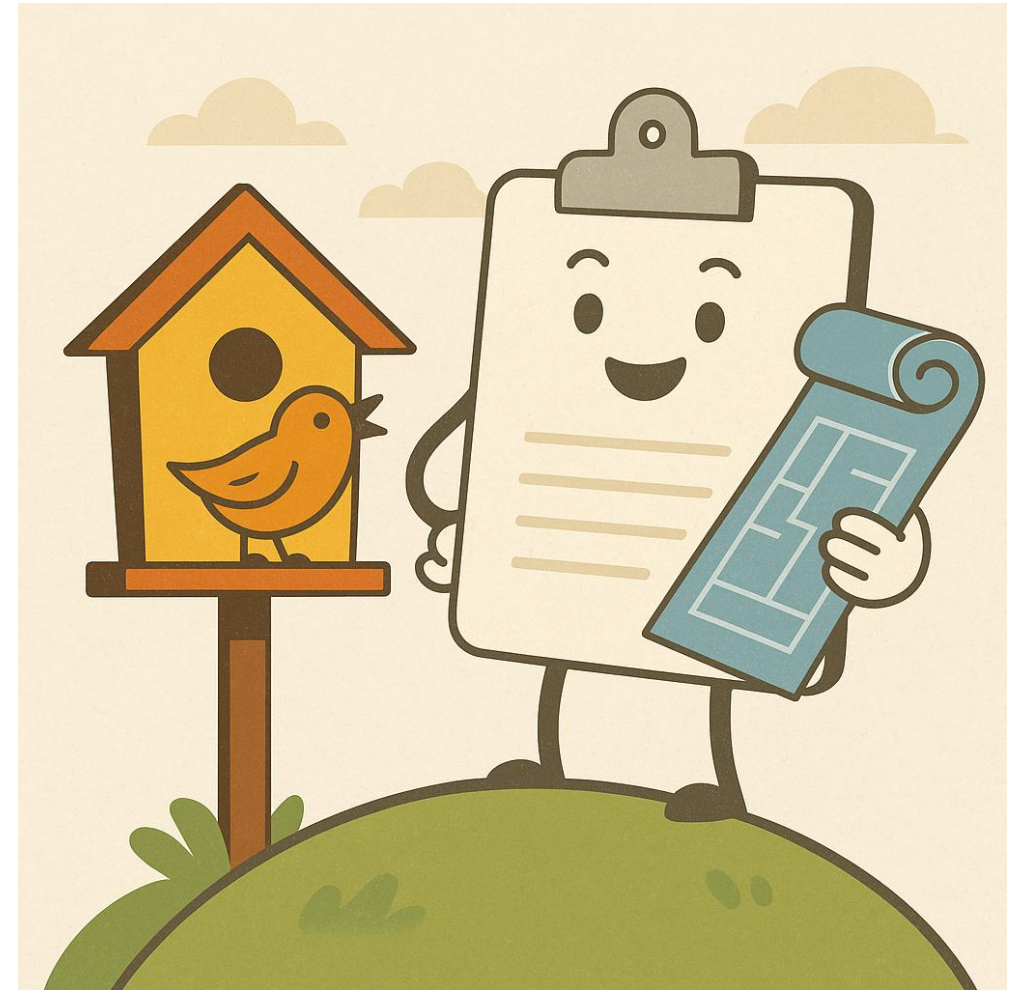
LNRS and **Policy-Making**

- LNRSs are now embedded in planning policy via the NPPF
- Local Plans must “have regard” to LNRS priorities
- Planning Practice Guidance (Feb 2025) reinforces this
- LNRS mapping will influence allocations—e.g. strategic green infrastructure designations
- LNRSs support both Local and Neighbourhood Plan policy



LNRS in **Planning Applications**

- LNRS as a material consideration in planning decisions
- Particularly relevant where Local Plans are silent or outdated on biodiversity
- Even draft LNRS data can carry weight in planning outcomes
- Developments conflicting with LNRS priorities may face redesign or refusal
- Alignment with LNRS goals can be a positive consideration in favour of a scheme



Development **Implications**

- May limit development on environmentally sensitive land
- Land within nature recovery areas may face new scrutiny or mitigation requirements
- LNRS-aligned land may offer new opportunities
- LNRS-friendly design can reduce risk and increase value

RISKS



OPPORTUNITIES



Practical Steps and **Advice**

- Know your LNRS – review maps and priorities for your area
- Stay engaged – follow updates and engage early
- Do ecological due diligence early
- Align with the strategy – design schemes to deliver LNRS goals where possible
- Plan BNG strategically – explore on- or off-site solutions aligned with LNRS



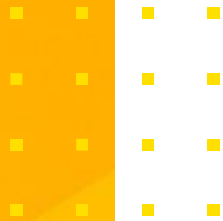
LNRS and **Strategic Delivery**

- LNRSs are a new essential “layer” in site assessment—like flood or heritage constraints
- Identify both constraints and opportunities
- Early adaptation can reduce planning risk and unlock value
- Environmental Delivery Plans will build on LNRSs to coordinate regional efforts



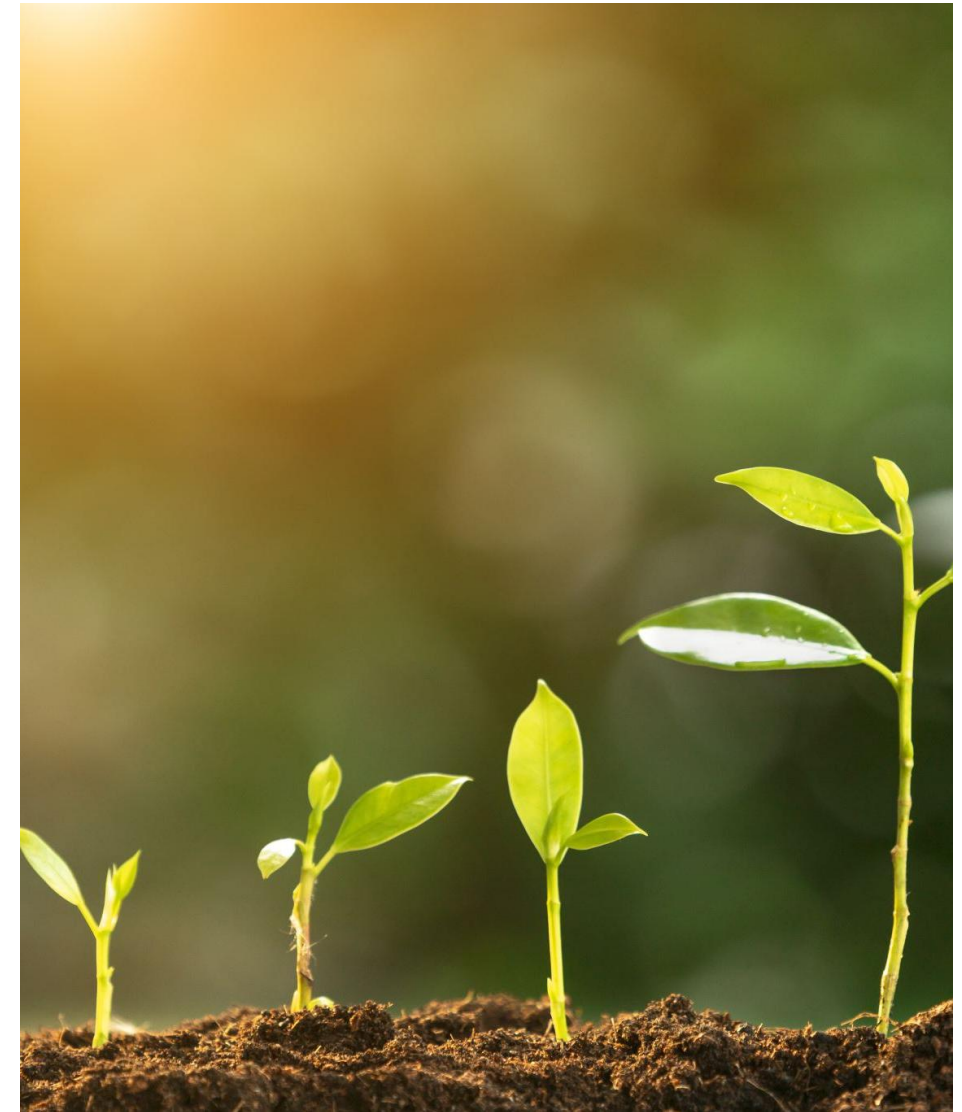
CONCLUSION

LNRS: The Opportunities



LNRS: Opportunities

- ✓ Be aware of what's going on locally, and engage in the process
- ✓ Help to shape the delivery of LNRS and nature recovery locally
- ✓ You know your land better than anyone – make it count
- ✓ Review BNG habitat banking opportunities in light of LNRS designations
- ✓ Use LNRS to inform and shape development master plans and Green Infrastructure strategies
- ✓ Share your stories – the good and the bad!





Q&A

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