



Blackdown Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Blackdown Hills AONB Nature Recovery Plan consultation

8 April 2021



Purpose of meeting

- **Bring partners up to speed** with progress on the Nature Recovery Plan for the Blackdown Hills AONB
- Discuss the evidence findings to date including the State of Nature report (part of a **Decision Support Tool**) and what the opportunity maps are highlighting
- **Discuss the 'fit' with other plans & strategies**, including emerging processes that will refine and formalise our approach in the future (e.g. Local Nature Recovery Strategies)
- **Debate the visualisations-** 'direction of travel'
- Draw together the mapping, report and visualisation threads to **co-create a rough plan of action** that is deliverable and highlight outline Nature Recovery Areas (could be sub-catchments)- to form a focus of effort and resources going forwards
- **Links** to neighbouring AONBs and other initiatives
- Agree **next steps**



Summary

- Context, background, purpose, fit, scope
- Special qualities
- State of Nature- habitats & species
- Opportunity mapping
- Strategic fit with other plans & strategies
- Visualisations
- Monitoring & evaluation

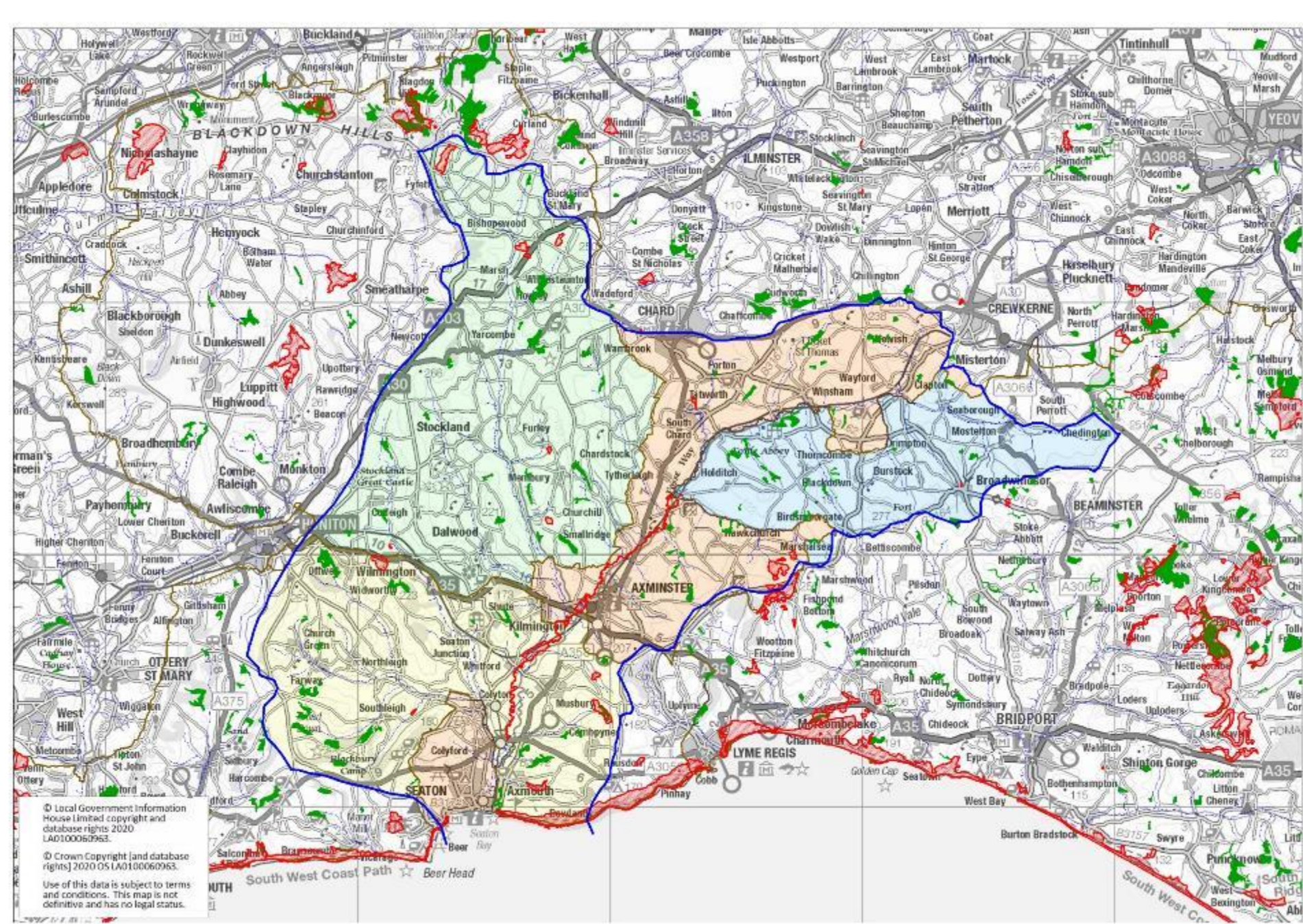
Colchester Declaration



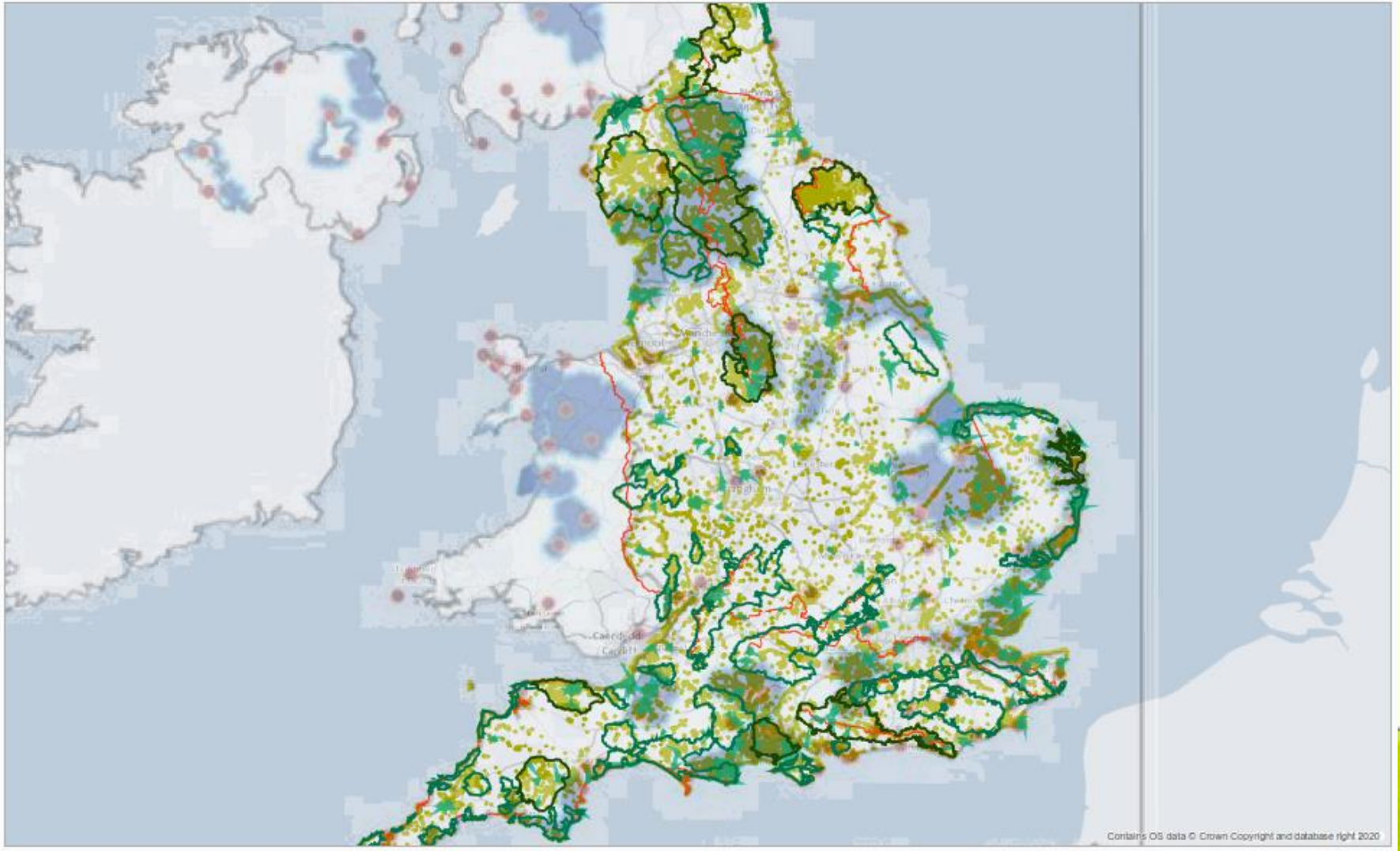
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1. Based on 25 YEP targets, but also applies to 30 by 30
2. AONB Nature Recovery Coordinator, in partnership with Natural England
3. Nature Recovery Plans being undertaken in collaboration using a shared framework
4. Species workshop with Natural England (14/9/2020)
5. Reaching out to diverse audiences workshop (7/10/2020)
6. Continuing conversations and development of the five national pilots
7. Plugging into NRN (including via the National Partnership) and LNRS processes





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Woodland cover options tool (Jon Burgess, FC)



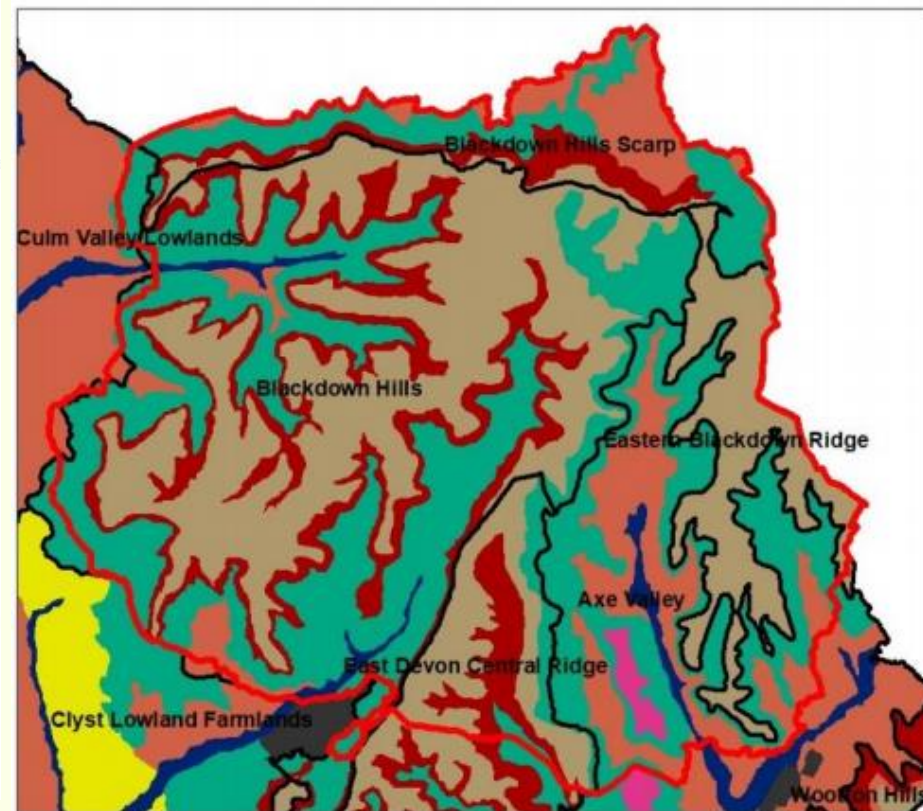
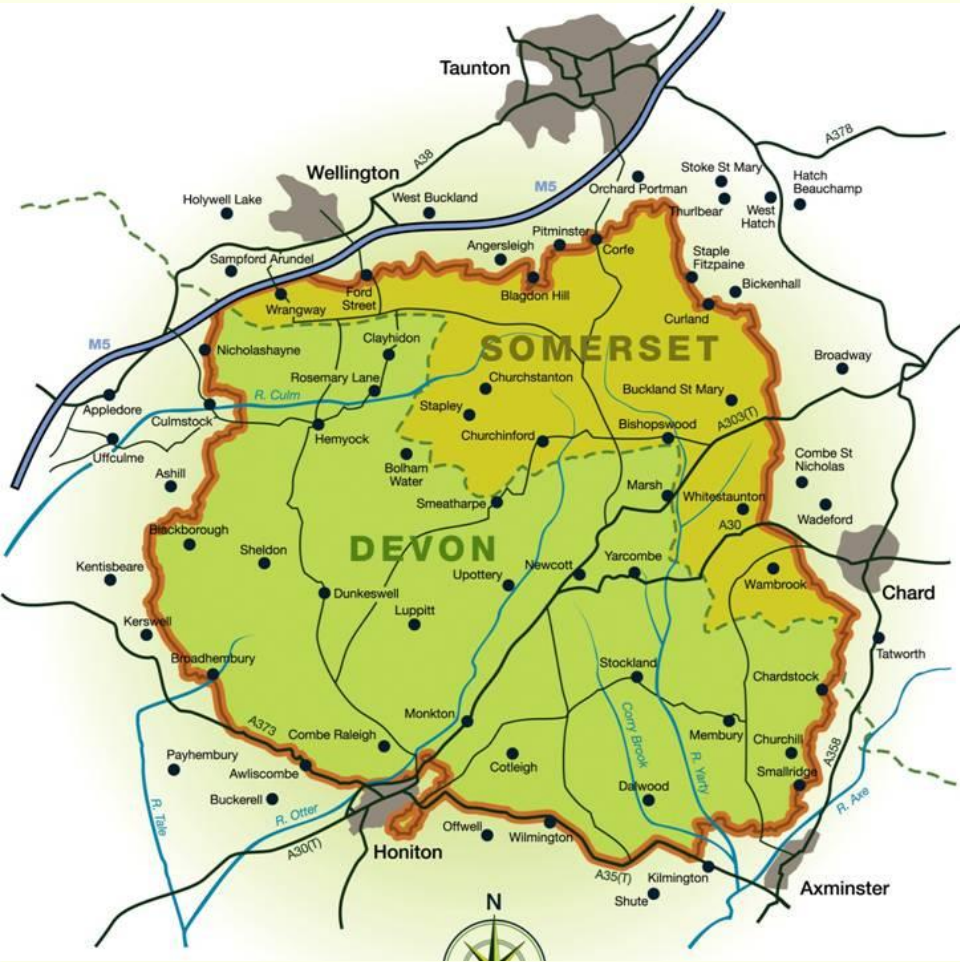
Context and fit

- South West AONBs collaborative approach, using the national framework for Nature Recovery Plans
- Add value to the statutory Blackdown Hills AONB Man Plan (2019-24), integrate at next review that starts 2022
- Integrated approach with climate change mitigation & adaptation, inclusion/ diversity and environmental land management
- Apply Lawton principles especially ‘at scale’
- Timescales for working Nature Recovery Plan- July
- County context and fit- Somerset & Devon partners- including State of Devon/ Somerset, statutory LNRS, NRN work in county and nationally



Blackdown Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Landscape Character Types

LCT_NO

- 1A: Open inland planned plateaux
- 1E: Wooded ridges and hilltops
- 2A: Steep wooded scarp slopes
- 3A: Upper farmed and wooded valley slopes
- 3B: Lower rolling farmed and settled valley slopes
- 3C: Sparsely settled farmed valley floors
- 3E: Lowland plains
- 7: Main cities and towns



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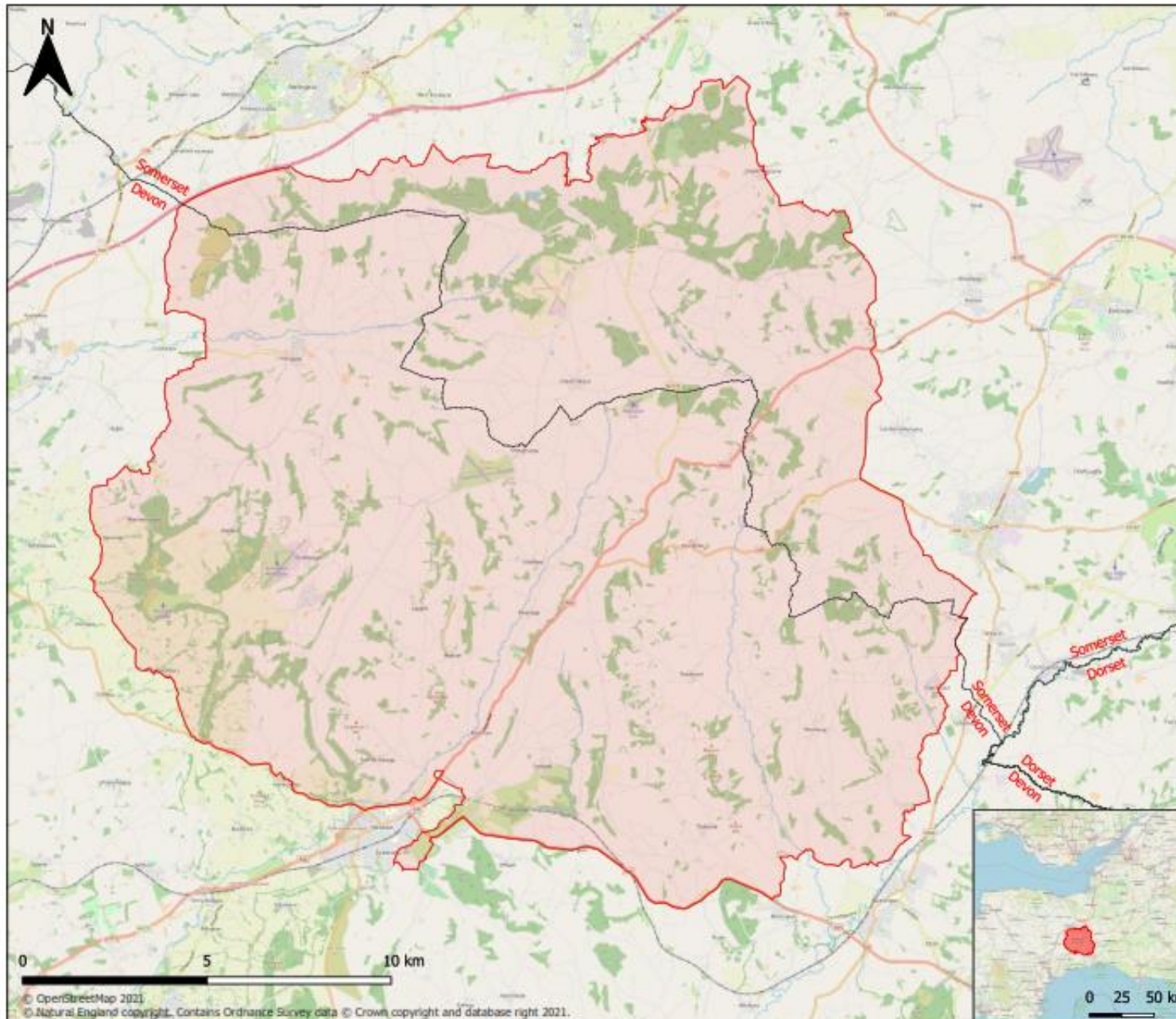
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Blackdown Hills
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Blackdowns AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Study Area

- Blackdowns AONB
- County boundary

The extent of data mapped is limited to the AONB boundary as a result of budget constraints.



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26/03/2021	V3	WSP	JF



Headlines

Headlines:

- Total area of AONB= 37,000ha
- 14% designated/ non-designated for nature
- Of that, 2% SSSI, 1 SAC (Quants)
- c12% woodland
- 692 farm holdings





Headlines- quantity

Priority habitat type (natural capital assets)	Area (hectares)
TOTAL area of priority habitat	2904
Lowland calcareous grassland	6
Traditional orchards	50
Lowland dry acid grassland	19
Lowland meadow	276
Lowland heathland	45
Purple moor grass & rush pasture	234
Wood pasture & parkland	127
Lowland deciduous mixed woodland	500
Upland oakwood or mixed ashwood	7

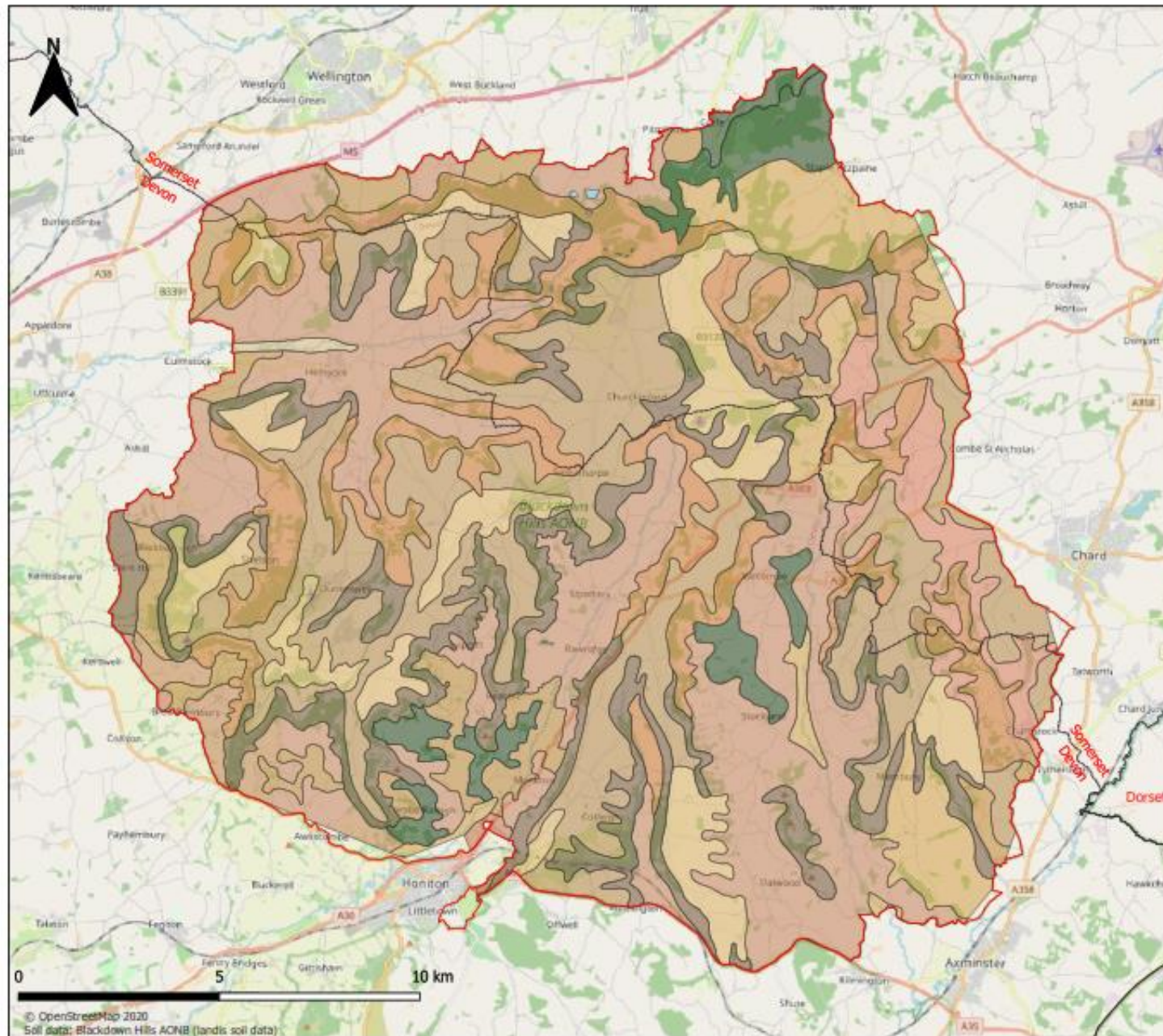
Headlines- woodland (12%)



Blackdown Hills
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Woodland type	Area (hectares)
Coniferous	1169
Broadleaf woodland	3092
Other woodland	318





Blackdowns AONB

Distribution of soil types within the Blackdowns AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Soil description

- Deep clay
- Deep loam
- Loam over gravel
- Deep silt to clay
- Deep red loam to clay
- Deep loam to clay
- Seasonally wet loam to clay over red shale
- Seasonally wet silt to clay over shale
- Seasonally wet deep clay
- Seasonally wet deep silty to clay
- Seasonally wet deep silt
- Seasonally wet deep peat to loam

Study Area

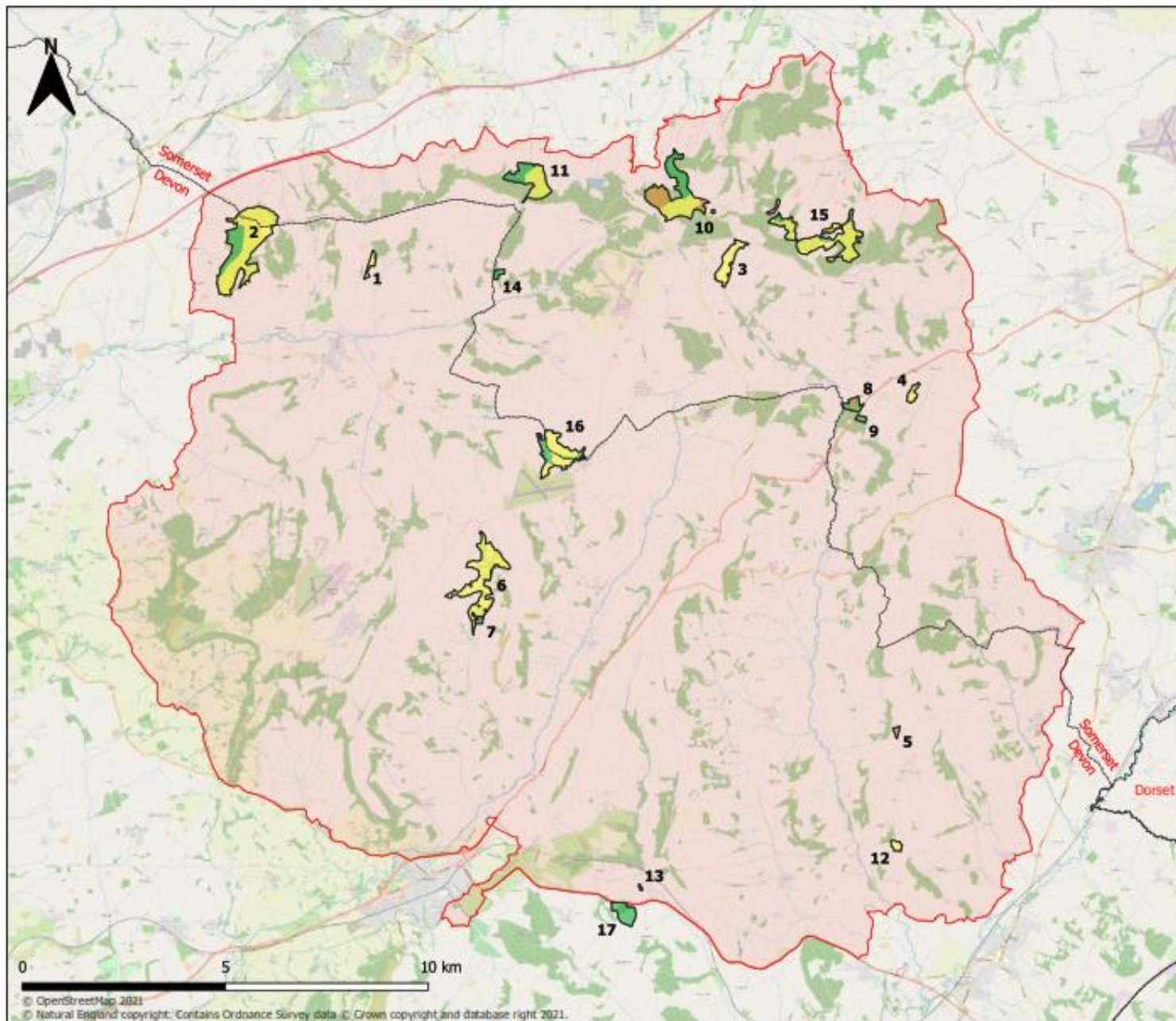
- Blackdowns AONB
- County boundaries

Soil types classified using the National Soil Map and Soil Classification guide (Cranfield University 2004)



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Blackdowns AONB

Condition assessment of Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the Blackdowns AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Condition of Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- Favourable
- Unfavourable recovering
- Unfavourable no change

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 1 Ashculm Turbary
- 2 Black Down and Sampford Commons
- 3 Deadman
- 4 Freshmoor
- 5 Furley Chalk Pit
- 6 Hense Moor
- 7 Hense Moor Meadows
- 8 Long Lye
- 9 Long Lye Meadow
- 10 Prior's Park & Adcombe Wood
- 11 Quants
- 12 Quarry Fields Farm
- 13 Reed's Farm Pit
- 14 Ringdown
- 15 Ruttersleigh
- 16 Southey and Gotleigh Moors
- 17 Wilmington Quarry

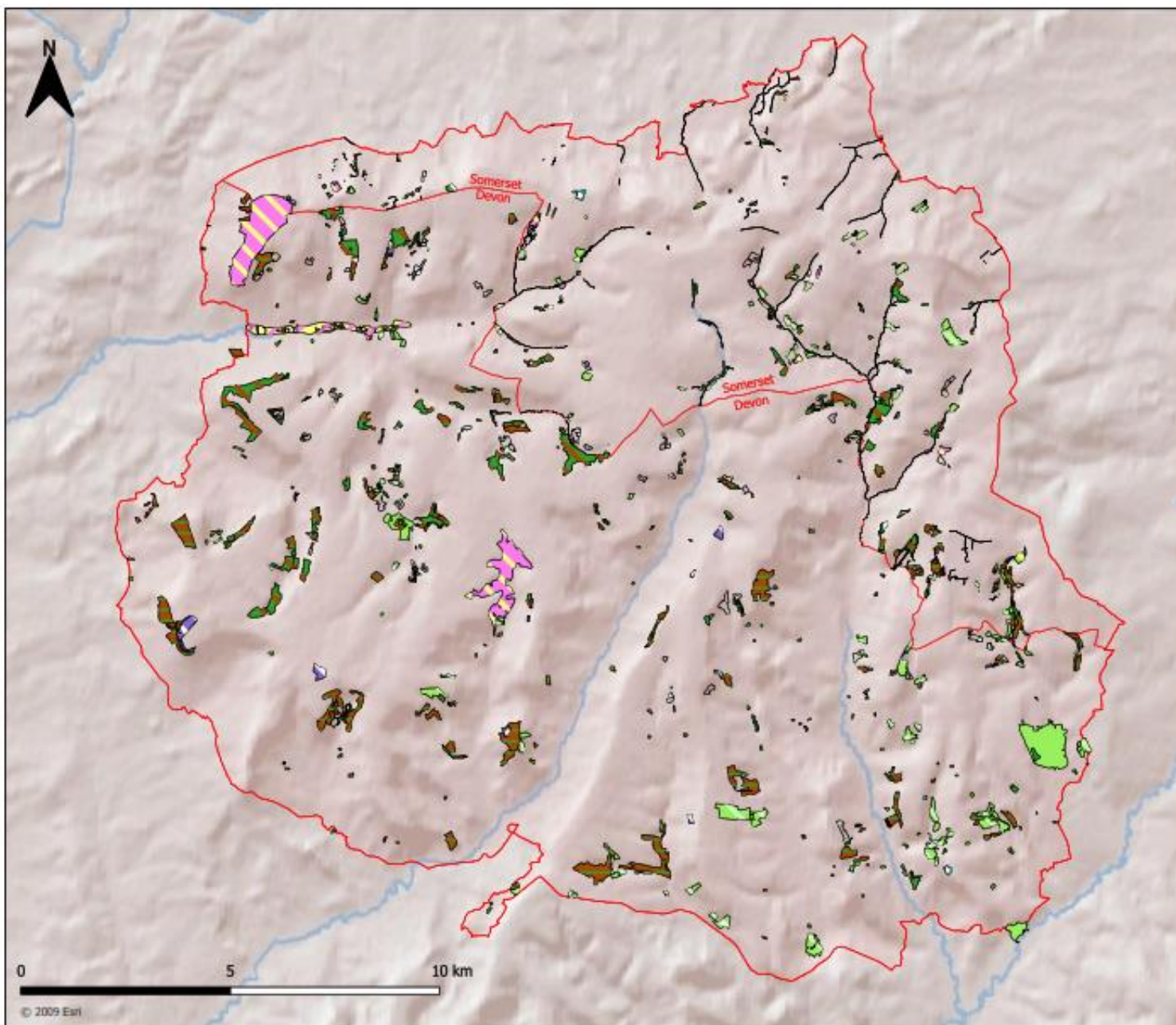
Study Area

- Blackdowns AONB
- County boundary



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Blackdowns AONB

Location of priority habitats within the Blackdowns AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Priority Habitats

- Wet Woodland
- Purple moor-grass and rush pasture
- Parkland
- Orchards
- Lowland Meadow
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Calc Grassland
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Fen
- Open Mosaic Habitat
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Upland oakwood
- Upland mixed ashwoods
- Hedgerow
- Arable field margins
- Dystrophic standing water
- Rivers and streams

Statutory Boundaries

- Counties Boundaries

Study Area

- Blackdowns AONB



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0 5 10 km

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AONB State of Nature

Provisional findings- for discussion:

- Varied geology/ soils reflects range of habitats, (many occurring in mosaics)
- Relatively low density of SSSI/SAC whereas varied priority habitat is well distributed, albeit fragmented
- This is our baseline
- Quality of habitat? (as well as quantity)
- Gaps? Hedgerow network, data gaps



Species

‘Champion species’ have been identified across the AONBs, mirroring the Devon Special Species methodology:

- hazel dormouse
- horseshoe bat (2 sps) & bechstein’s
- white-clawed crayfish
- brown hairstreak butterfly
- springline mire invert assemblage (marsh fritillary, double line moth, narrow bordered bee hawkmoth, small pearl bordered fritillary)
- beaver!



Apply Favourable Conservation Status nationally (and for habitats)

Do you support this list? Collate survey effort/ gaps

Blackdown Hills AONB

Distribution of champion species, filtered by the date of collection, within the Blackdown Hills AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Champion Species

2010 to Present

- White-clawed freshwater crayfish
- Greater horseshoe bat
- Double line moth
- Marsh fritillary
- Bechstein's bat
- Small pearl-bordered fritillary
- Hazel dormouse
- Lesser horseshoe bat
- Brown hairstreak

2009 and Older

- ◆ White-clawed freshwater crayfish
- ◆ Greater horseshoe bat
- ◆ Small pearl-bordered fritillary
- ◆ Marsh fritillary
- ◆ Hazel dormouse
- ◆ Double line moth
- ◆ Lesser horseshoe bat
- ◆ Brown hairstreak

Study Area

- Blackdown Hills AONB
- County boundary

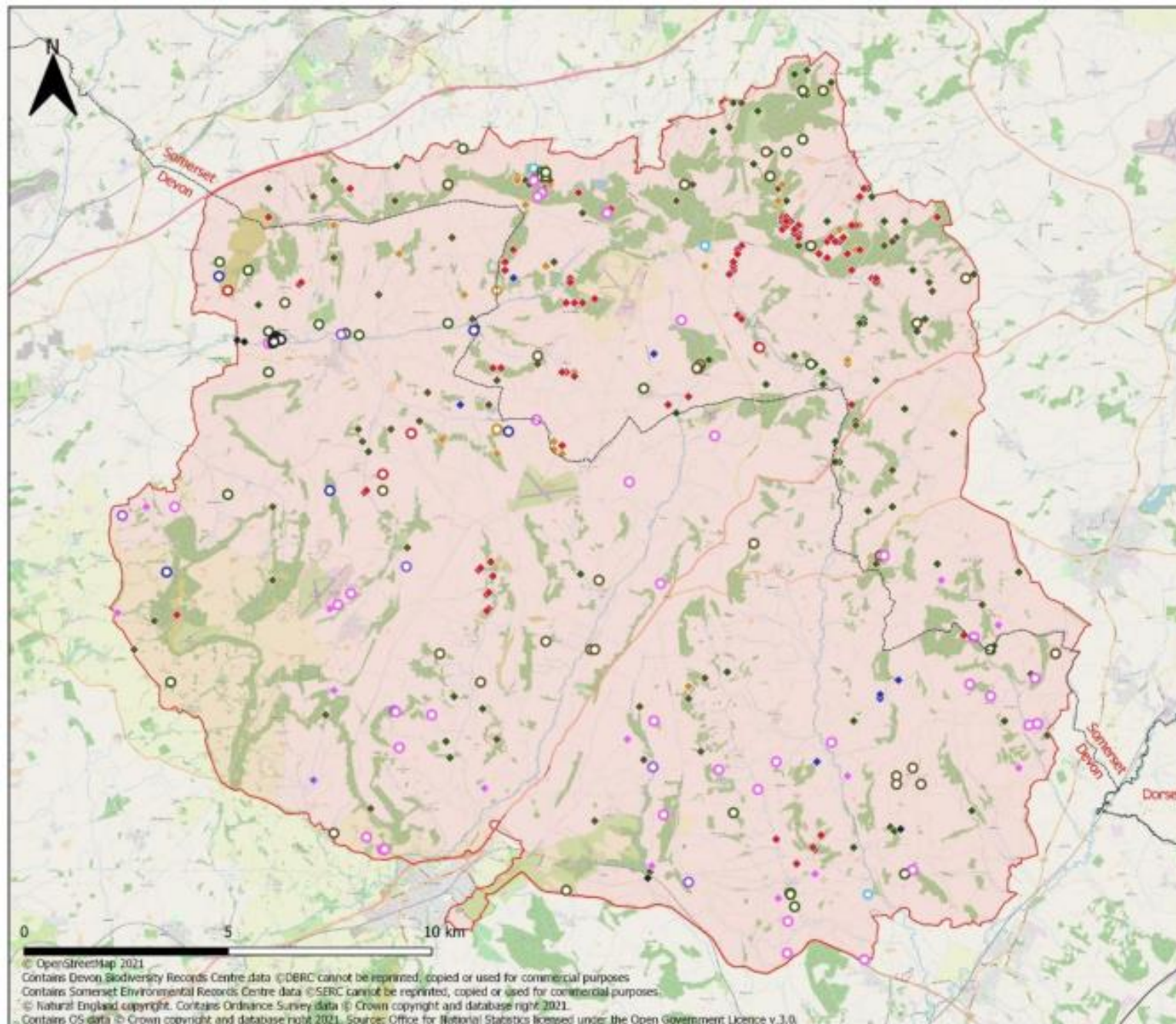
'Champion Species' data is separated by the year in which it was collected.

Note: Individual champion species points may represent multiple species records



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Strategic alignment

Obligations:

- Environment Bill Public Body duty
- AONB Management Plan
- Colchester declaration - NRPs
- Statutory sites





Strategic alignment

Opportunities:

- Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- E.L.M (paying farmers for public goods)
- Protected sites strategies
- Species conservation strategies
- Biodiversity net gain
- Conservation covenants



Strategic alignment

Natural Capital and the AONB:

Nature Recovery Plan suggested priorities:

- Achieves: Colchester declaration - embeds ecosystem services approach

Recommend include natural capital for:

- Catchment level projects
- Climate measures, including carbon budgets incl trees, net zero agriculture (sustainable farming, E.L.M)
- Well-being (integration with landscape & heritage; NHLF projects)

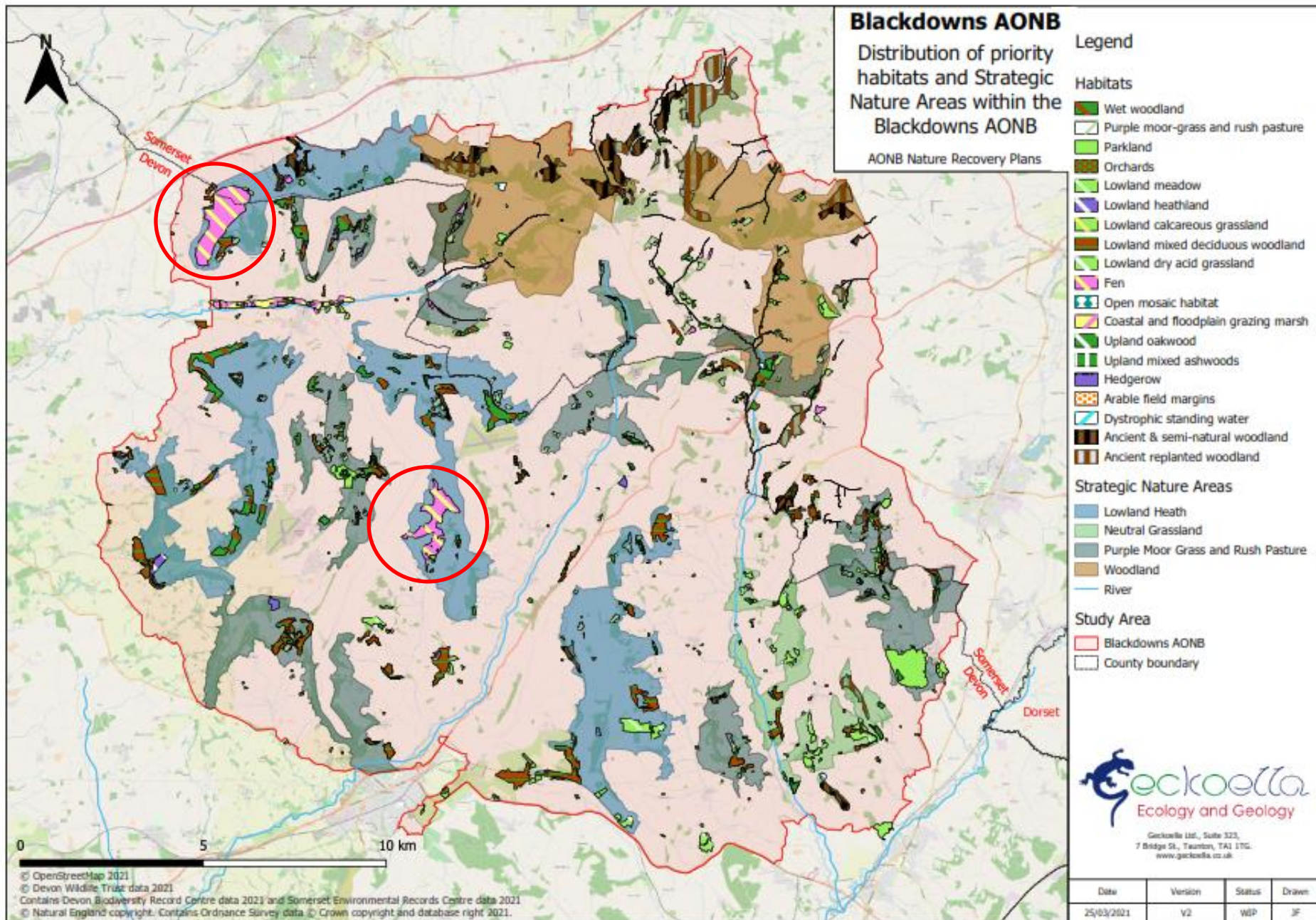
Beware 'black hole' of endless natural capital calculations based on data with uncertain ground-truth credibility.

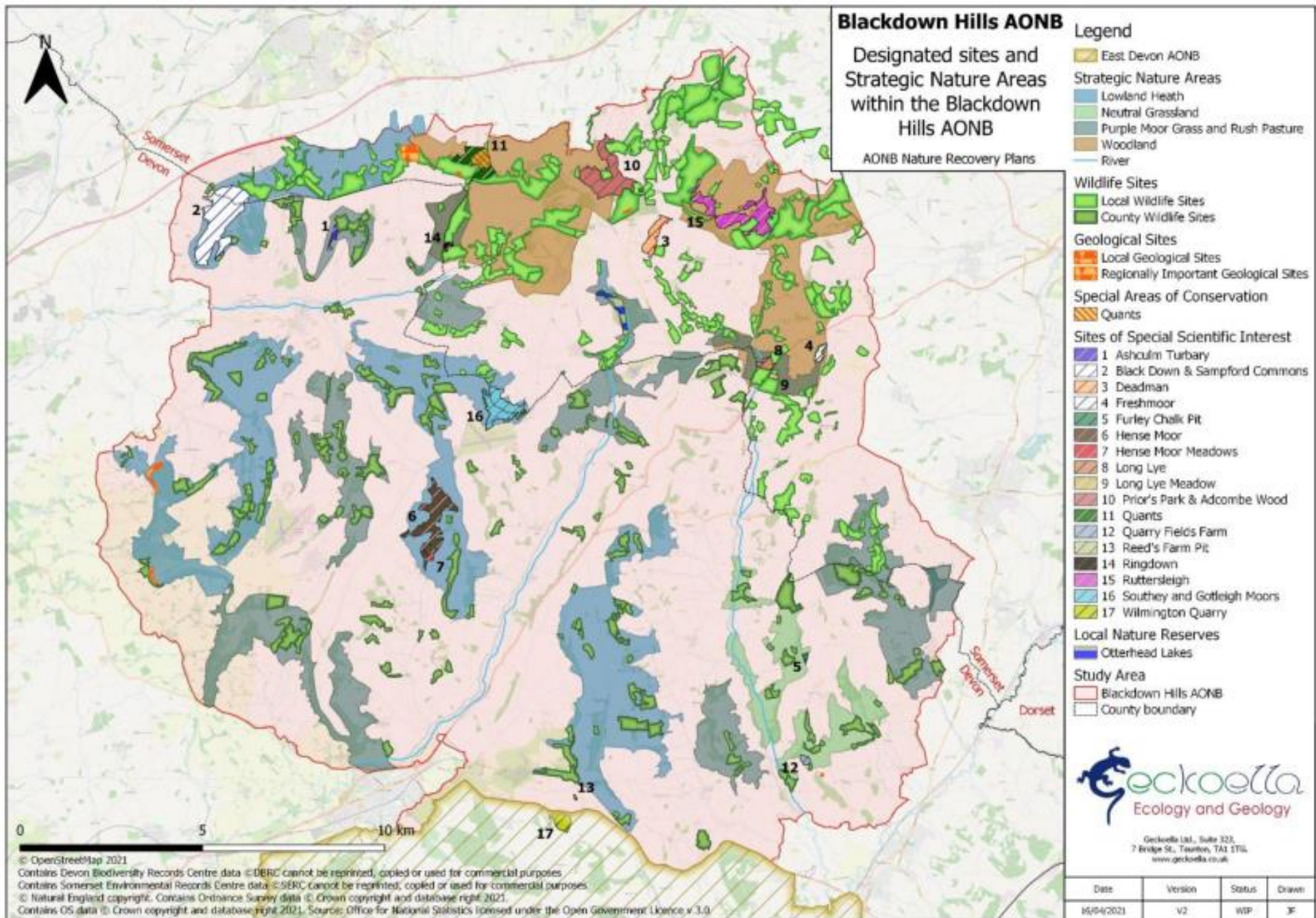


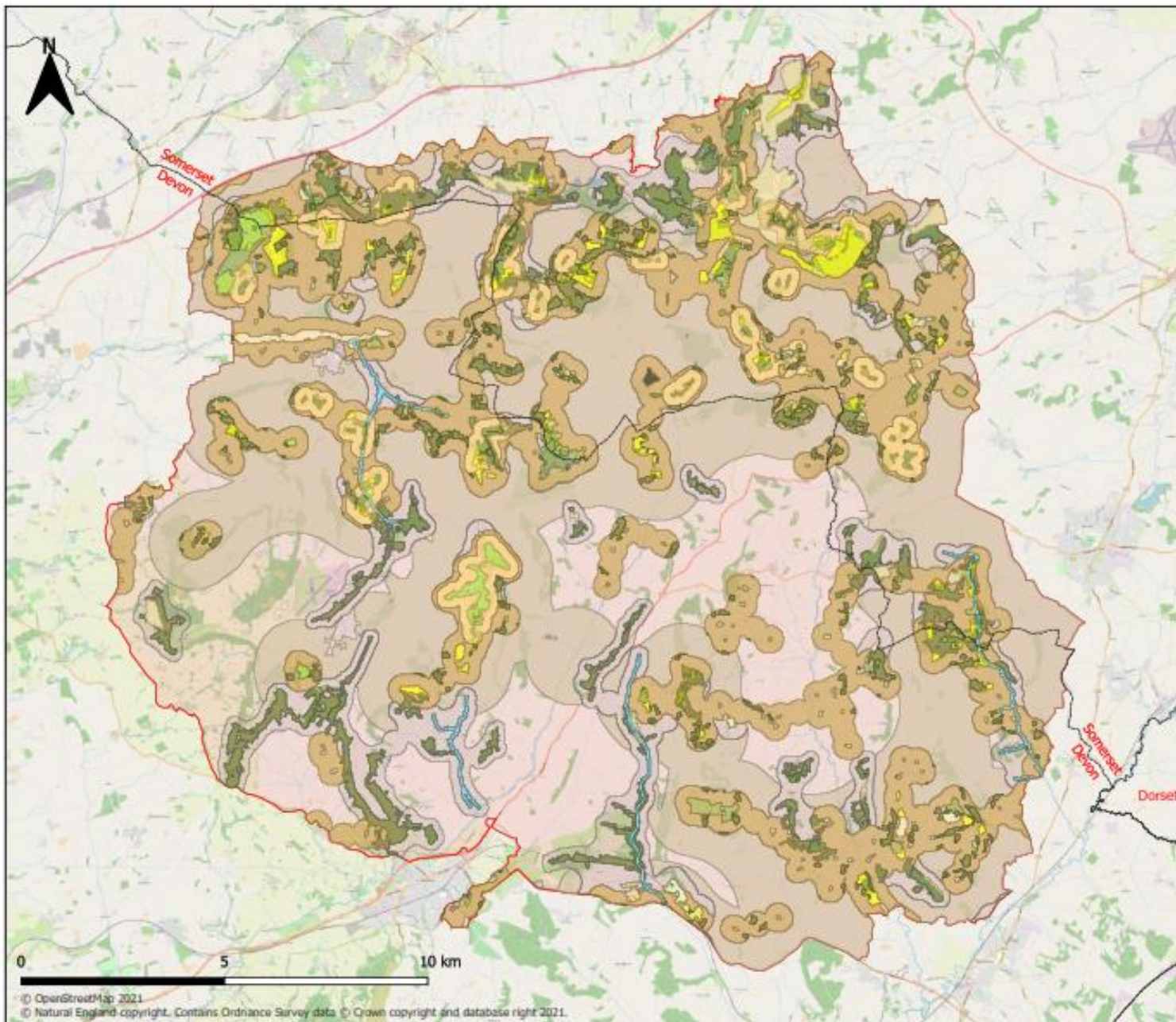
Opportunity mapping

Methodology:

- Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs) have been used to define landscape-scale opportunity areas, pending full & aligned eco network/ NRN for Somerset & Devon
- 4 types: woodland, grassland, heathland, wetland
- SNA size totals: lowland heath 4,700ha, purple moor grass 3,700ha, woodland 3,300ha (don't forget mosaics!)
- Other sources of info used to help inform







Blackdowns AONB

Combined Habitat Nature Networks within the Blackdowns AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Habitat Nature Networks

- Ancient woodland
- Fragmentation Action Zone
- Habitat Restoration-Creation
- Lowland calcareous grassland
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland heathland
- Lowland meadows
- Network Enhancement Zone 1
- Network Enhancement Zone 2
- Network Expansion Zone
- PHI_Other
- Purple moor grass & rush pastures
- Reedbeds
- Restorable Habitat
- Rivers
- SSSI
- Traditional orchard
- Wood pasture and parkland

Study Area

- Blackdowns AONB
- County boundary



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Opportunity mapping

Provisional findings for discussion:

- Strong correlation between SNA and SSSI/ county wildlife site (as you'd expect)
- There's a relatively good fit between the SNAs and the combined habitat nature networks
- (ultimately, opportunity is a key driver of change.....)



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Other evidence



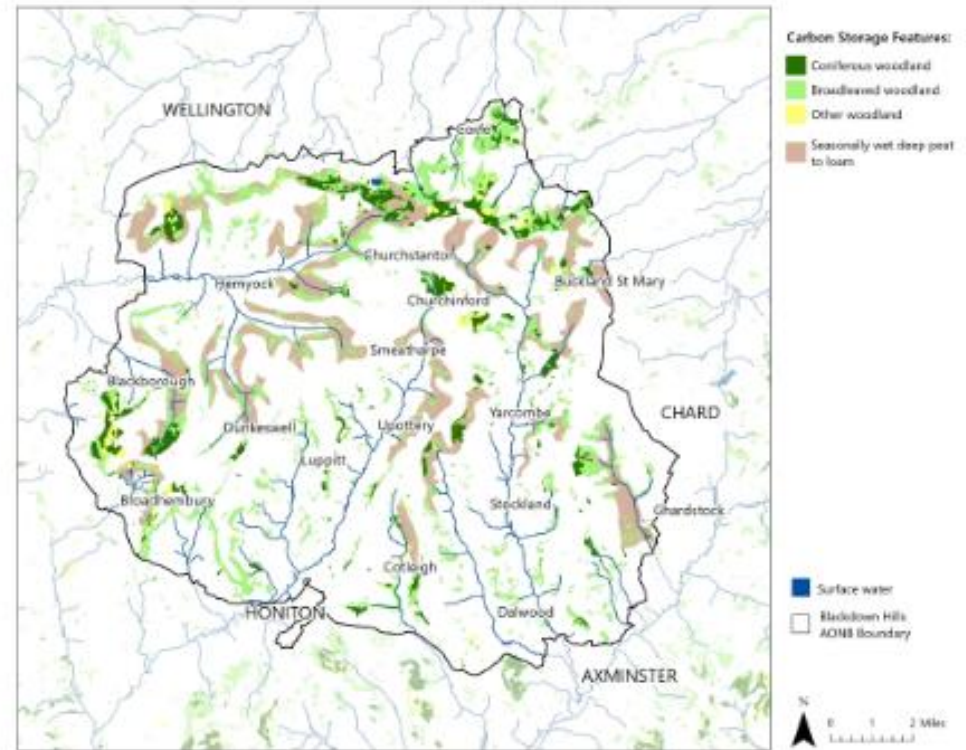
Natural capital mapping- carbon

Carbon Storage

Habitat types:

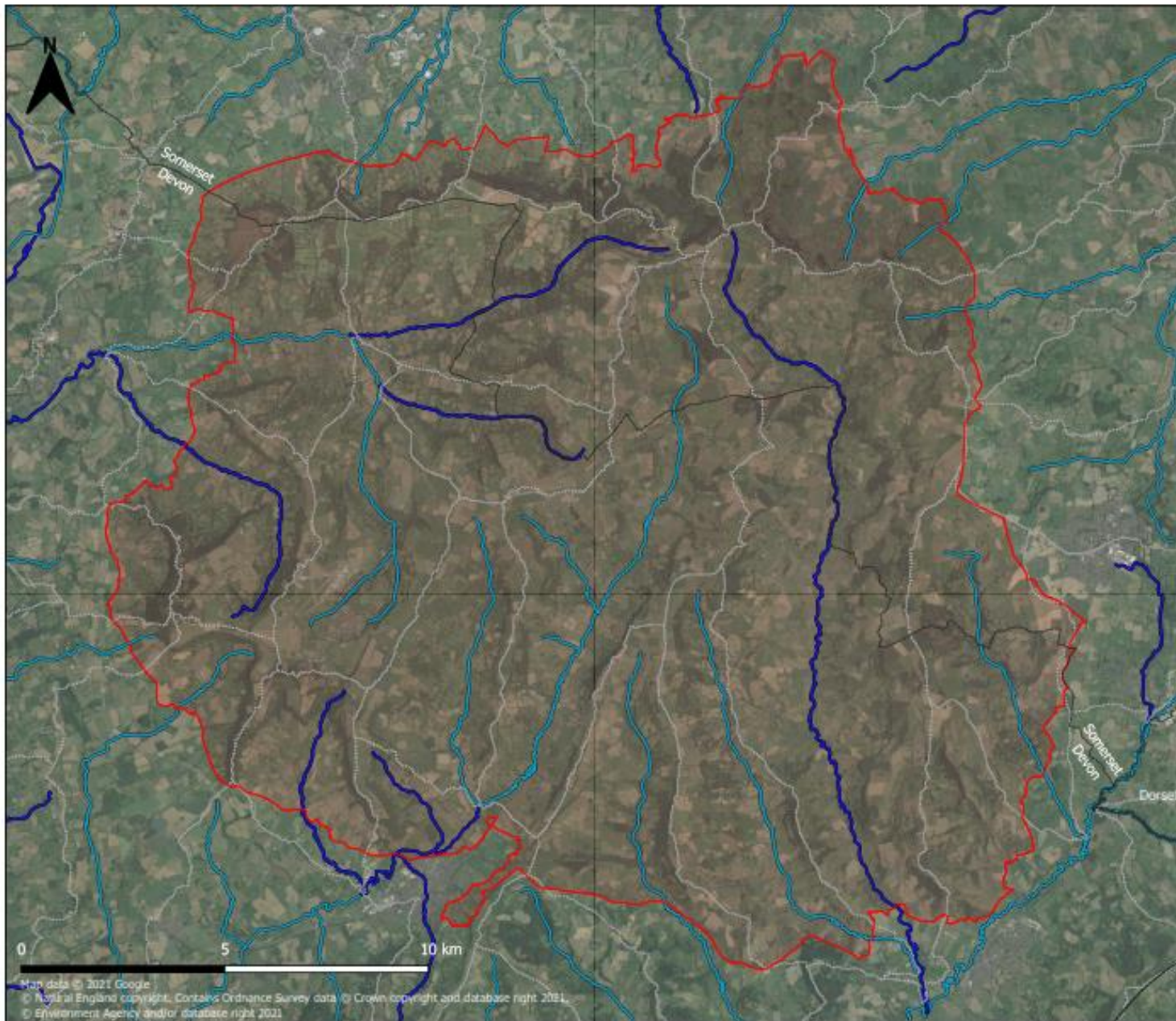


Ecosystem services:



A complete list of data sources is included on pages 39 and 40.

Carbon Storage Features	Area (ha)
Coniferous woodland	1,189
Broadleaved woodland	3,892
Other woodland	318
Seasonally wet deep peat to loam	5,460



Blackdowns AONB

River modification status
and water catchment
boundaries within the
Blackdowns AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

River modification status

- Does have a physical modification
- Does not have a physical modification

Study Area

- Blackdowns AONB
- County boundary
- Water catchment area boundary

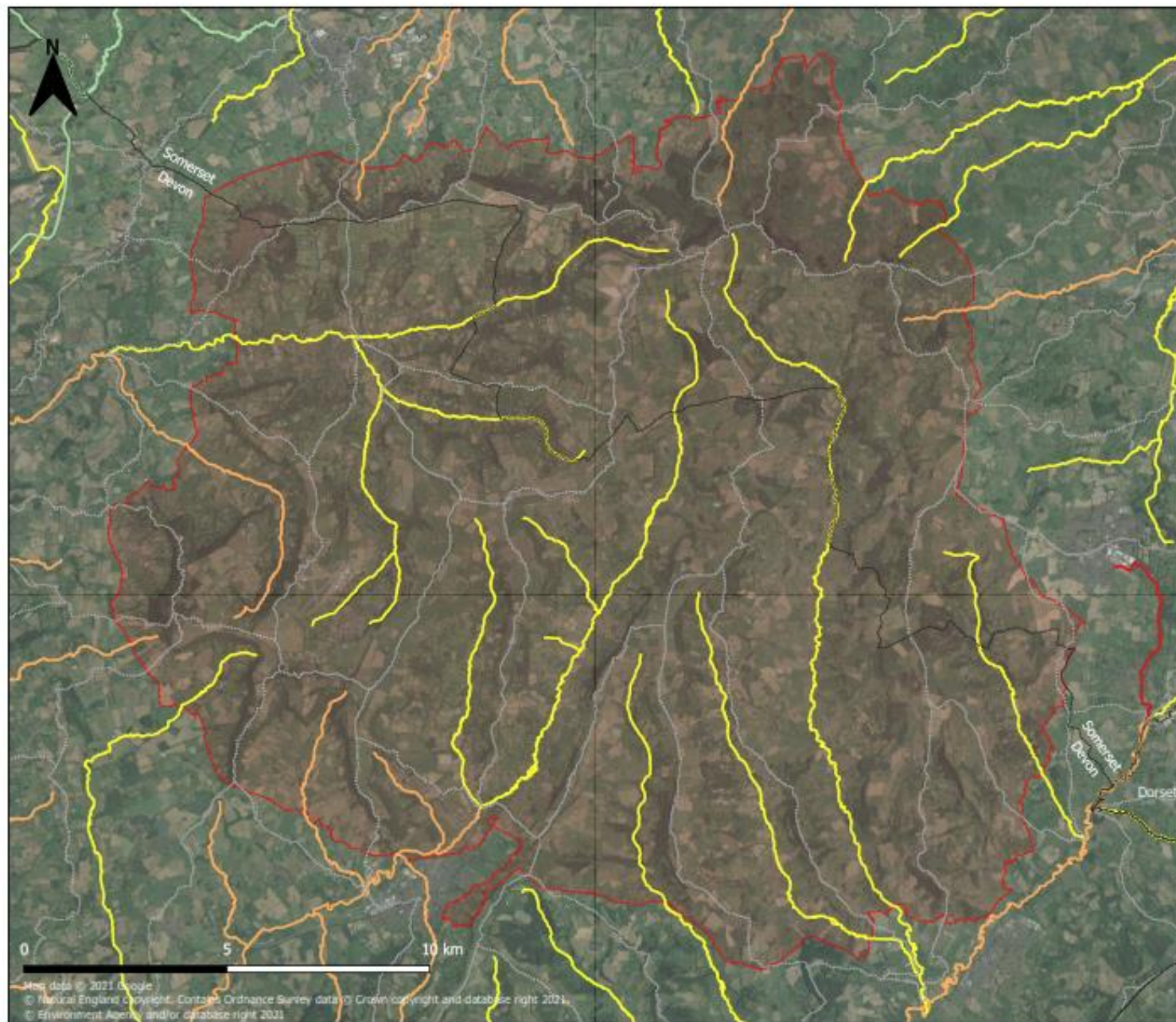
Physical modification: significant alterations that have resulted in substantial changes to the hydromorphology of a surface water body such that the surface water body is substantially changed in character. (Environment Agency 2020)



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Blackdowns AONB

Water quality of rivers and canals within the Blackdowns AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Water catchment boundaries

Water Quality

Bad
Poor
Moderate
Good
High

Study Area

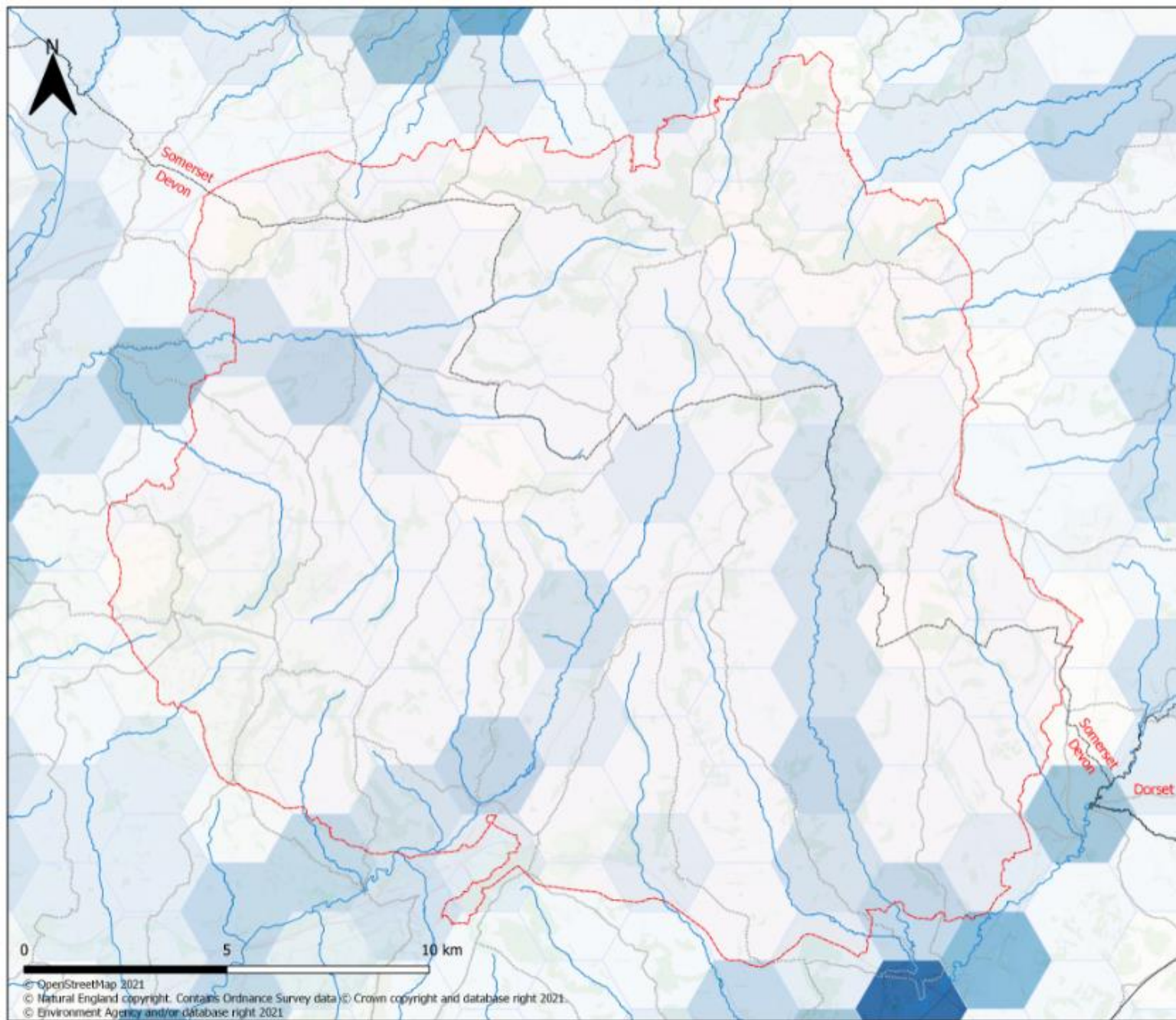
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The status of 'water quality' is determined by the overall biological, chemical, bacterial and viral condition of water. WFD Cycle 2 2016 data.



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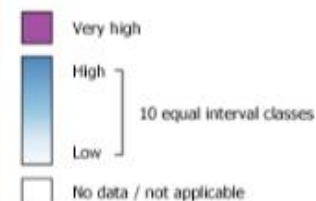
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Quantity of freshwater
floodplains within the
Blackdown Hills AONB

AONB Nature Recovery Plans

Legend

Indicator value:



Rivers and streams

Water catchment areas

Study Area

Blackdown Hills AONB

County boundary



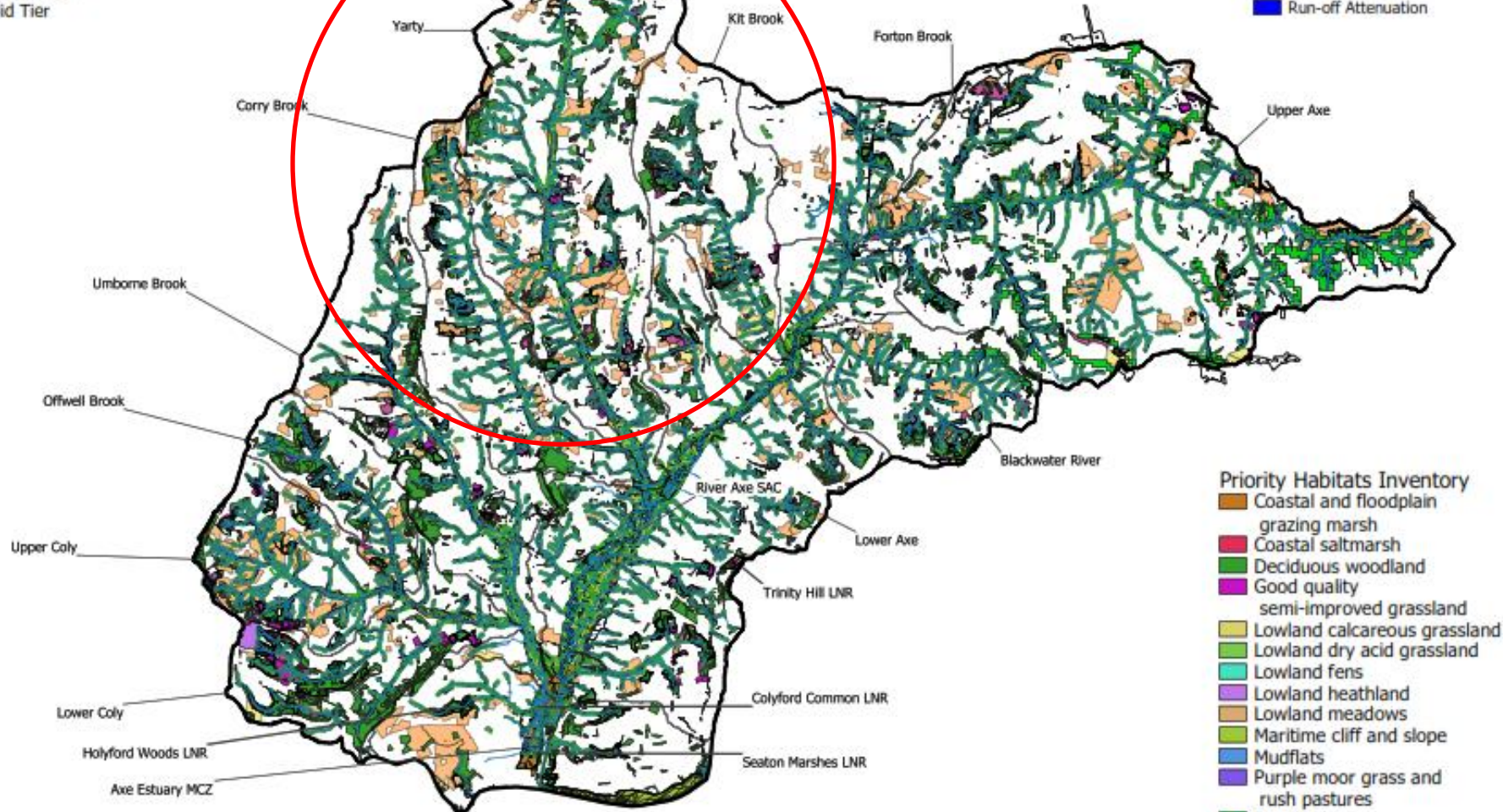
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Habitat Expansion Opportunities through WWNP

— Detailed River Network
 [Black Outline] Axe Project Catchment Area
 Countryside Stewardship
 [Yellow] Higher Tier
 [Orange] Mid Tier

[Yellow] WWNP Floodplain
 [Green] Reconnection Potential
 [Green] WWNP Floodplain
 [Green] Woodland Potential
 [Green] WWNP Riparian Woodland Potential
 [Green] WWNP Wider Catchment Woodland Potential
 [Orange] Gully Blocking
 [Blue] Run-off Attenuation



Priority Habitats Inventory

- [Orange] Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- [Red] Coastal saltmarsh
- [Green] Deciduous woodland
- [Purple] Good quality semi-improved grassland
- [Yellow] Lowland calcareous grassland
- [Green] Lowland dry acid grassland
- [Teal] Lowland fens
- [Purple] Lowland heathland
- [Orange] Lowland meadows
- [Green] Maritime cliff and slope
- [Blue] Mudflats
- [Purple] Purple moor grass and rush pastures
- [Green] Reedbeds
- [Red] Saline lagoons
- [Green] Traditional orchard

Map includes County/Local Wildlife Sites.
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‘Other’ opportunity mapping



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Provisional findings for discussion:

- Seasonally wet deep peat to loam- follows river valleys- accurate?
- Moderate to poor water quality
- Widespread ‘working with natural processes’ opportunities





Partner data/ evidence

- For example, Butterfly Conservation analysis of priority butterflies
- Other species surveys being undertaken
- Anecdotal evidence



Visualisations- 'Direction of travel'



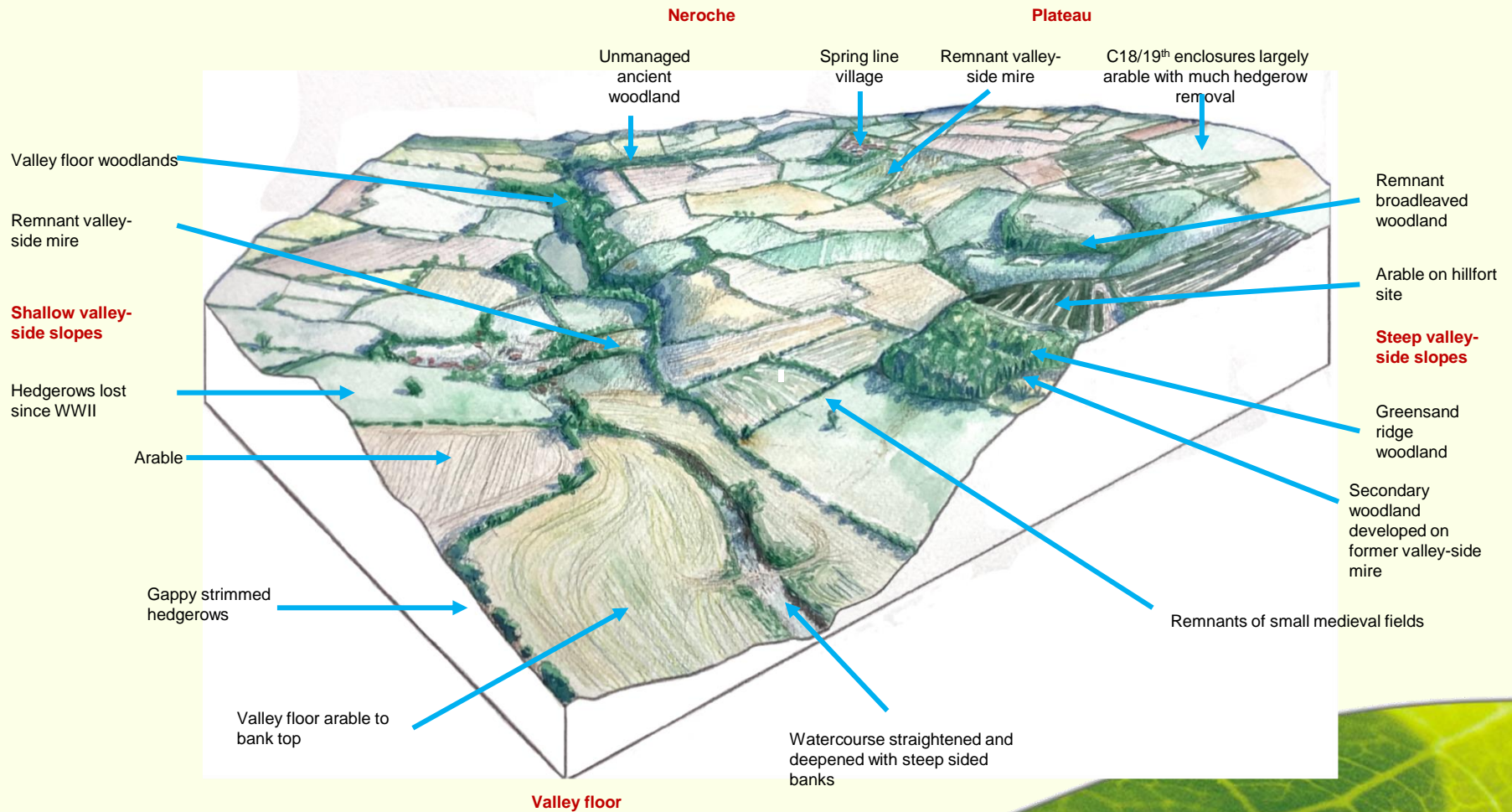
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Workshop discussion:

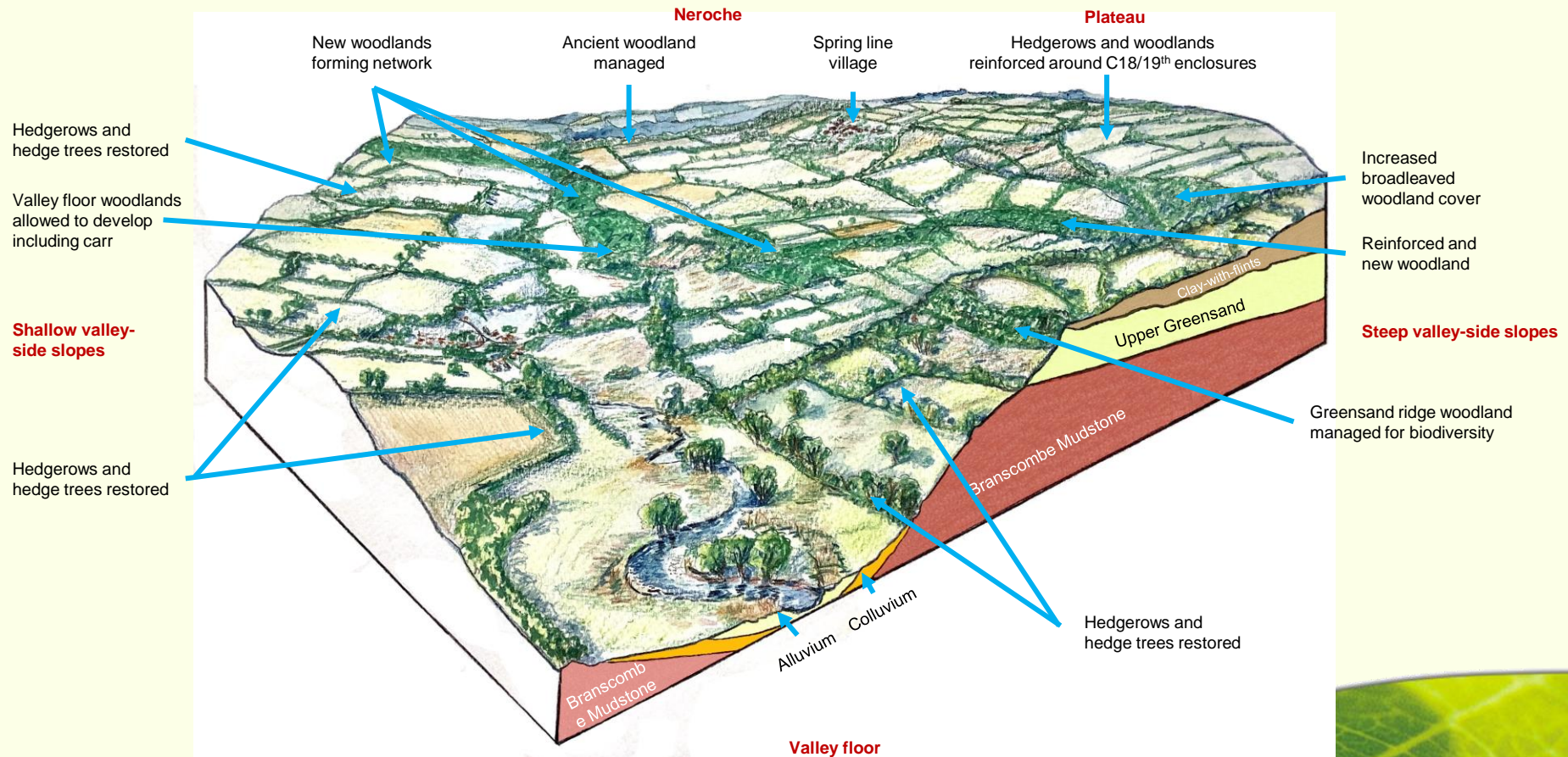
1. What should be our vision for nature's recovery (....and delivery of public goods), in the context of cultural & historic landscapes
2. What story are the visuals 'telling you'
3. Have all the special qualities been captured?
4. Do you agree with the 'direction of travel' from present day → to a resilient and nature rich landscape (delivering public goods & services) by 2030/ 42/ 50?
5. What does this mean for farming systems and local communities?
6. Could it be supported through proposed support mechanisms?
7. Is it enough to enable us to reach '30 by 30'?
8. Who should we consult further?



Blackdown Hills AONB - Current landscape

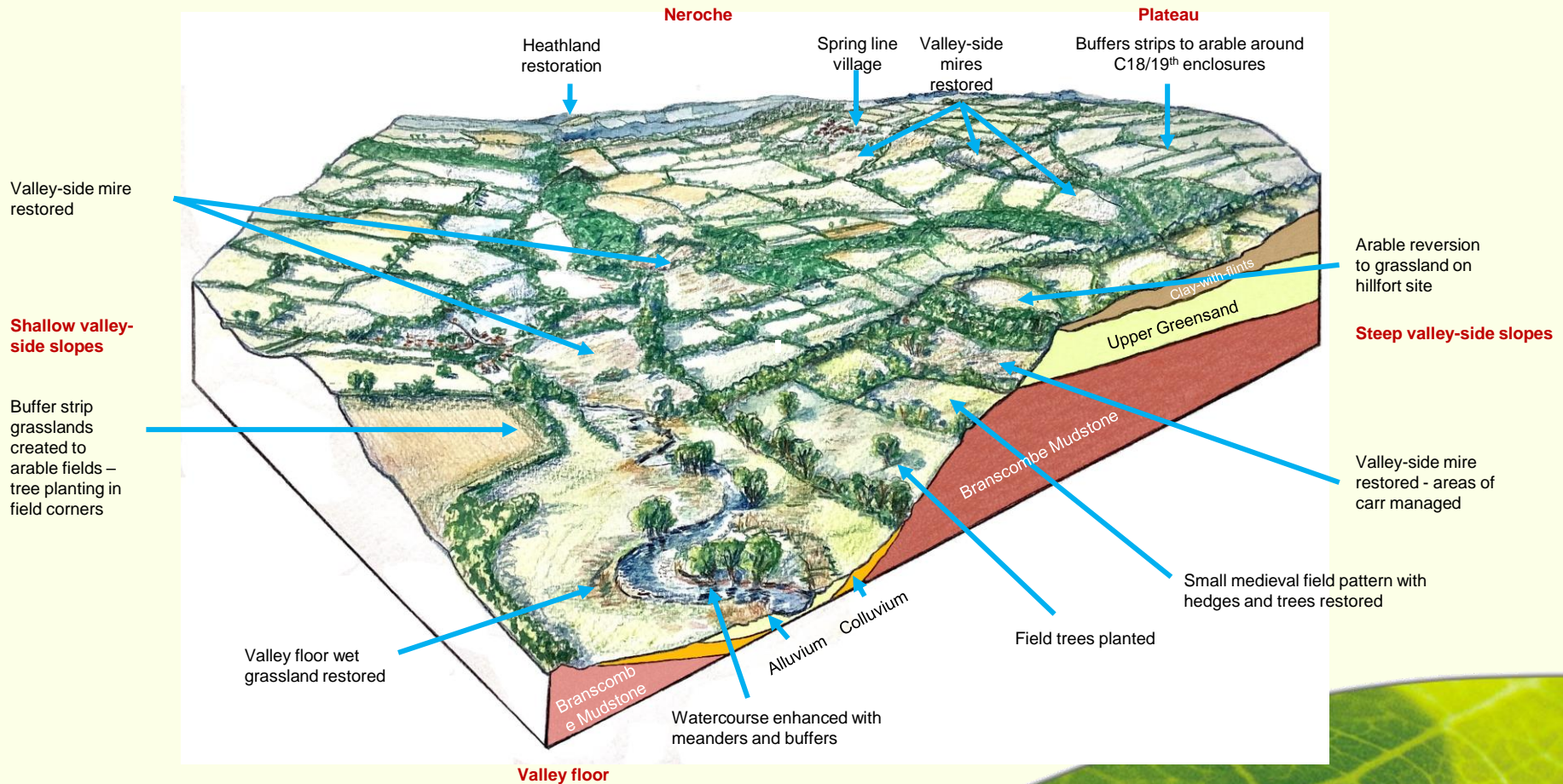


Blackdown Hills AONB – Visualisation





Blackdown Hills AONB – Visualisation Grasslands and mires



Visualisations- 'Direction of travel'



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Workshop discussion:

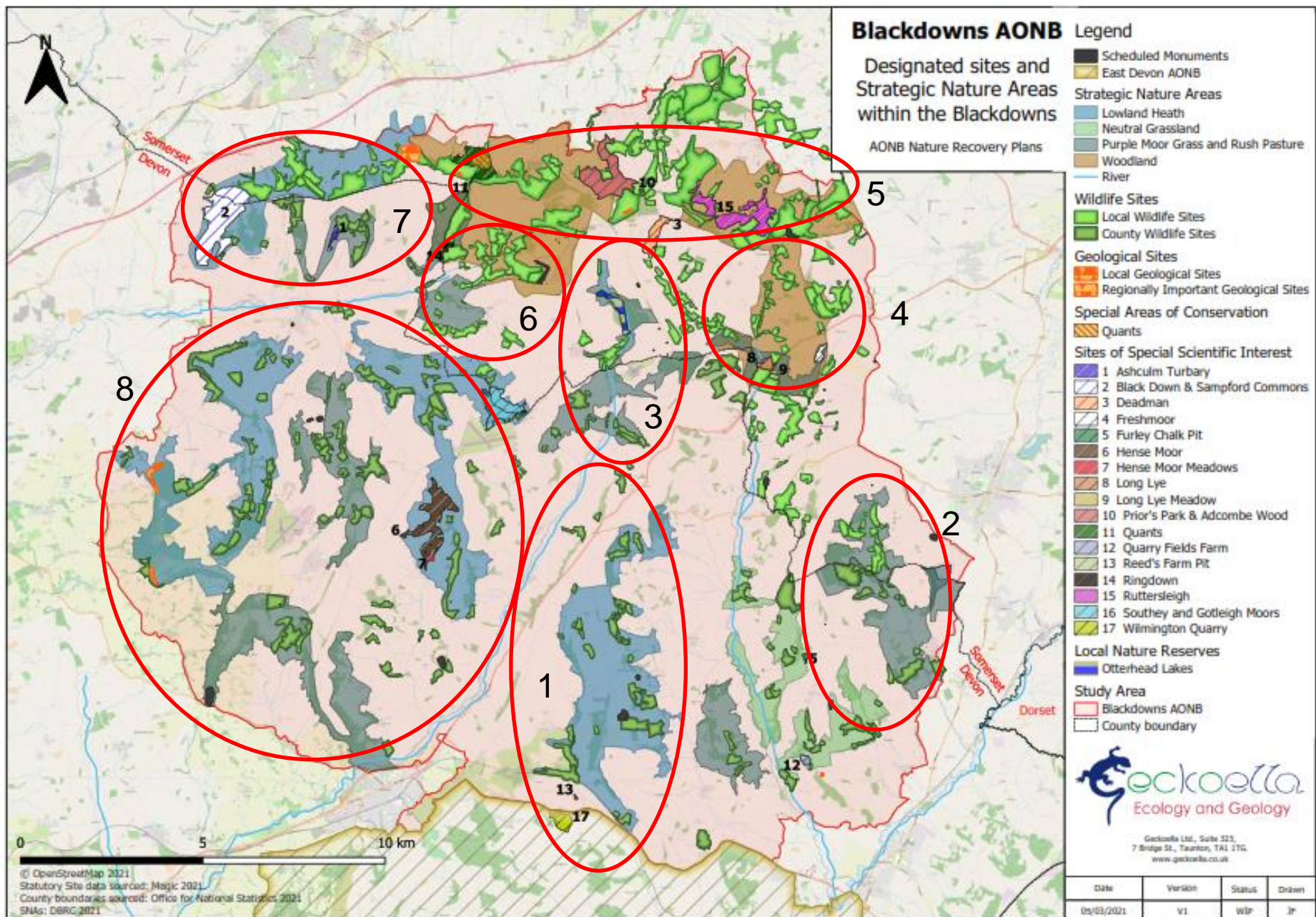
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Bringing everything together



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- What and where are our nature conservation/ resilient landscapes priorities?
- 6-8 Nature Recovery Areas?- see map
- On what basis should we define boundaries?- e.g. by sub-catchment or just SNA?
- Farmer clusters?- and other opportunities?
- Prepare a costed plan ready for funding opportunities





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General discussion





Draft Action Plan

- Integral part of the Nature Recovery Plan
- Define priorities for action (Nature Recovery Areas and sustainable land use area)
- What actions are required? Farmer clusters? Triage?
- Mechanisms and funding are? e.g. Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL), environmental land management (E.L.M), Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) etc.
- What projects are already running in the AONB Partnership and beyond that can contribute? e.g. Connecting the Culm, other partner projects

Monitoring & evaluation



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Plans to align with Defra KPIs/ Colchester Declaration targets



Credit- Simon Smith



Where do we go next

- A draft State of Nature Report will be sent out for consultation to you/ others this month (April)
- Your comments will shape the draft Nature Recovery Plan
- Are you willing to offer more time for more detailed, small group discussions?
- Aim to complete a 'working' Nature Recovery Plan by July 2021



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Final comments and thanks

