COTSWOLD
District Council

Wednesday, 25 February 2026

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CABINET

A meeting of the Cabinet will be held in the Council Chamber - Council Offices, Trinity Road, Cirencester, GL7 1PX on **Thursday, 5 March 2026 at 6.00 pm.**

Jane Portman
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Cabinet
(Councillors Mike Evemy, Juliet Layton, Claire Bloomer, Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Mike McKeown, Andrea Pellegram and Tristan Wilkinson).

Recording of Proceedings – The law allows the public proceedings of Council, Cabinet, and Committee Meetings to be recorded, which includes filming as well as audio-recording. Photography is also permitted.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings please let the Committee Administrator know prior to the date of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
   To receive any apologies for absence. The quorum for Cabinet is 3 members.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to items to be considered at the meeting.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 7 - 20)
   To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of Cabinet held on 5 February 2026.

4. **Leader's Announcements**
   To receive any announcements from the Leader of the Council.

5. **Public Questions**
   To deal with questions from the public within the open forum question and answer session of fifteen minutes in total. Questions from each member of the public should be no longer than one minute each and relate to issues under the Cabinet's remit. At any one meeting no person may submit more than two questions and no more than two such questions may be asked on behalf of one organisation.

   The Leader will ask whether any members of the public present at the meeting wish to ask a question and will decide on the order of questioners.

   The response may take the form of:
   a) a direct oral answer;
   b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
   c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

6. **Member Questions**
   No Member Questions have been submitted prior to the publication of the agenda.

   A Member of the Council may ask the Leader or a Cabinet Member a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the Cotswold District. A maximum period of fifteen minutes shall be allowed at any such meeting for Member questions.

A Member may only ask a question if:

a) the question has been delivered in writing or by electronic mail to the Chief Executive no later than 5.00 p.m. on the working day before the day of the meeting; or
b) the question relates to an urgent matter, they have the consent of the Leader to whom the question is to be put and the content of the question is given to the Chief Executive by 9.30 a.m. on the day of the meeting.

An answer may take the form of:

a) a direct oral answer;
b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

7. **Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members**

To note the decisions taken by the Leader and/or Individual Cabinet Members.

8. **Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance**

To receive any recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to consider any matters raised by the Audit and Governance Committee.

9. **Biodiversity Action Plan** (Pages 21 - 56)

Purpose:

To approve the biodiversity duty report for publication. Publication of this report is a legal requirement for all local authorities and must be completed no later than 26 March 2026.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Approve the biodiversity duty report within Annex A for publication.
2. Delegate to the Assistant Director – Planning Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to make presentational and minor editorial changes for publication.

10. **Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy** (Pages 57 - 218)

Purpose:

To endorse the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Endorse the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

11. **Infrastructure Funding - Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Project** (Pages 219 - 228)

Purpose:

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge levied on development to help fund infrastructure. It is a vital mechanism for supporting the delivery of infrastructure to underpin sustainable growth across the District, while also creating opportunities for projects that enhance local communities.

The Council introduced a CIL charge in 2019; at which time a process for stakeholders to apply for CIL funding was put in place. Now, with experience of operating the process, is an appropriate time to review it for best practice.

The existing process allows stakeholders to make 'bids' for CIL funding once a year, during the period of March – May. Concise guidance for making bids is available on our website. Once the bid period closes, an officer panel convenes to consider the bids, applying an existing high-level scoring system.

Having now completed two strategic bid rounds under the existing process, the Council has gained valuable insights, supported by stakeholder feedback, into how the process can be further strengthened. A review by officers has identified opportunities to enhance transparency, engagement, collaboration, and ensure ongoing alignment with the Council's strategic priorities and the Development Plan. There are opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the bid cycle, ensuring that CIL funding continues to be allocated legally, responsibly, strategically, and accountably, and in line with the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) support development of our area.

The purpose of this report is to seek delegated authority for the Associate Director of Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, to implement a programme of enhancements.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director, Planning Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing to implement a CIL Enhancement Programme detailed at Section 3 of this report.

12. **HomeSeekerPlus Policy Review** (Pages 229 - 248)

Purpose:

The HomeseekerPlus Policy has been in place since 2016 and was last reviewed in 2022.

Due to legislative and other changes, the policy needs to be updated. It is considered good practice to consult the public and associated stakeholders on the new policy therefore the HomeseekerPlus partnership is seeking approval to consult and implement suggested changes.

Although there are no recommended or set timeframes for how often allocations policies should be reviewed, it is anticipated that this the revised HomeseekerPlus Policy will remain in place until after the completion of the Local Government Reorganisation.

Recommendations:

That Cabinet resolves to:

1. Approve the draft Policy amendments for public consultation.
2. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and the Publica Executive Director – Operations, to adopt the new policy following consideration of the consultation responses.

13. **Delegated Approval to Award Contract (Parking)** (Pages 249 - 260)

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of delegated authority to award the contract for pay and display machines for car parks.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet:

1. Delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience to award the contract for the supply, installation and on-going services to the most advantageous supplier.

14. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Cabinet will be held on 16 April 2026 at 6.00pm.

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Cabinet
05/February2026

Minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on Thursday, 5 February 2026

Members present:

Mike Evemy (Leader)	Juliet Layton	
Patrick Coleman	Mike McKeown	Tristan Wilkinson
Tony Dale	Andrea Pellegram	

Officers present:

Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services
Angela Claridge, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer)
Tyler Jardine, Trainee Democratic Services Officer
Peta Johnson, Head of Waste and Environment
Nickie Mackenzie-Daste, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Helen Martin, Director of Communities and Place
Jane Portman, Chief Executive Officer
David Stanley, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer
Frank Wilson, Managing Director (Publica)
Stan Akhurst, Business Partner Health & Safety

Observers:

Councillor David Fowles

192 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

193 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

194 Minutes

The purpose of this item was to consider the minutes of Cabinet held on 8 January 2026:

Councillor Evemy requested that the word 'potential' be removed on page 19 minute 186.

The recommendation to approve the amended minutes was proposed by Councillor Mike Evemy and seconded by Councillor Juliet Layton.

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment on fees and charges item 186, the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8 January 2026 be approved as a correct record.

Voting record:
7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

To approve the minutes of a meeting of Cabinet held on 8 January 2026 (Resolution)		
RESOLVED that, subject to the amendment on fees and charges item 186, the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 8 January 2026 be approved as a correct record		
For	Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Andrea Pellegram and Tristan Wilkinson	7
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

195 Leader's Announcements

The Leader expressed sincere thanks to Nigel Robbins, who had stepped down from the Council after nearly 13 years of dedicated service as both a County and District Councillor for the Cirencester Beeches ward.
The Leader acknowledged Mr Robbins' significant contribution during his tenure, including serving as Leader of the Council for two years and as Leader of the Audit and Governance Committee for nearly four years. He had been an active and committed member throughout his service.
On behalf of the Council, the Leader formally expressed gratitude for his work and wished him well in his retirement.

The Leader informed Members that the Government's consultation on local government reorganisation in Gloucestershire had commenced that day and would run for seven weeks.
Members were reminded that three options had been submitted for consideration. Cotswold District Council had voted unanimously in favour of a single unitary option, which was also supported by Gloucestershire County Council, Tewkesbury Borough

Council and Stroud District Council. The two alternative proposals under consultation were the East–West split proposed by Cheltenham Borough Council and the Greater Gloucester model proposed by Gloucester City Council.
The Leader advised that the Council's Communications Team would encourage residents and stakeholders to participate in the consultation and submit their views to Government. It was noted that the Government was expected to make a decision before the summer recess, with an anticipated announcement in July, setting out how local government in Gloucestershire would be structured from 1 April 2028.

The Leader reported that a letter had been sent to Government earlier in the week regarding the Council's housing target. The letter requested a meeting with Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister for Housing, to discuss the matter further. The request drew on feedback from the recent budget consultation, which received nearly 2,000 responses. An update would be provided in due course.

The Leader was pleased to report positive media coverage regarding successful enforcement action taken by the Council in relation to littering. Officers had worked diligently on the case, supported by Councillor Slater, who had identified offending items that enabled the perpetrator to be traced and prosecuted.
The Leader welcomed recent positive media coverage following a successful litter prosecution. Thanks were extended to Councillor Slater, the Enviro-Crime Programmes Officer and the Counter Fraud team for their work.
The Leader reaffirmed the Council's commitment to maintaining a clean district and confirmed that enforcement action would continue where sufficient evidence was available.

196 Public Questions

There was one public question from Mr Gorin, who stated that he and his wife had owned a small second home in Cirencester since January 2013 and that he had researched the Council's policy to raise money for "affordable housing".

The question related to the current 100% Council Tax Premium on second homes, as provided for in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and approved by Cotswold District Council in March 2024 and at its Revenue Meeting in February 2025.

Mr Gorin asked whether Councillors were aware that, in its first year (2025/26), 1,856 properties had been identified, potentially raising £3.66 million. However, he stated that the Council did not have a way of determining the true number of second homes and that, in any event, once Class 1 exemptions were applied, the number subject to the premium had reduced to approximately 816 properties, some 1,040 fewer than the budget prediction. He further stated that the income had fallen well below the predicted £246,000, explaining that this lower figure arose because the Council's precept represented only 7% of the total Council Tax collected, and that this

percentage was also applied to the premium. As a result, he suggested that fewer people were paying less revenue, estimating the amount retained by the Council to be approximately £120,000, which he argued would not fund an affordable home.

Mr Gorin asked that, when debating the second home premium for 2026/27, the Council review its decision in line with the powers contained in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 to "vary or revoke a determination". He requested that the Council seek to identify accurately the total number of second homes, review the distribution of funds between preceptors, noting that the majority of the premium was allocated to Gloucestershire County Council rather than to the District Council, and ensure that any funds raised were directed towards affordable housing before voting to re-impose what he described as an unfair and punitive tax.

He further stated that the inequity of the current methodology was illustrated by the Council's decision not to apply the premium to second homes in the Cotswold Water Park, on the basis that they were not suitable or available for permanent occupation and would not bring additional accommodation into the market. He argued that it was anomalous that, where the purpose of the premium was to raise funds for affordable housing, certain second homes were not required to contribute.

In response, the Leader advised that, as former Portfolio Holder for Finance, he was familiar with the matter and would respond in the first instance.

It was noted that, at the time the legislation was introduced, representations had been made to Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, Member of Parliament for North Cotswolds, regarding the absence of any requirement for owners to self-identify second homes. However, this provision had not been included in the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023.

The Leader stated that, while the Council sought to identify second homes wherever possible, estimating the number eligible for the premium had been challenging. It was noted that, although approximately 1,800 properties had initially been identified, exemptions and prudent assumptions regarding collectability had reduced the forecast number subject to the premium to around 810 properties. It was further confirmed that only 7% of the total Council Tax collected, including the premium, was retained by Cotswold District Council, with the majority allocated to Gloucestershire County Council, the Police and parish and town councils. The distribution of the precept was fixed in law and could not be varied by the District Council.

Addressing the point regarding Cotswold Water Park properties, the Leader explained that these were designated holiday homes and not suitable for permanent occupation. As the purpose of the premium was to encourage the availability of residential properties, the rationale for applying the premium did not extend to such designated

holiday accommodation. It was confirmed that these properties paid 100% Council Tax but were not subject to the additional premium.
The Leader added that the decision to apply the premium was taken annually as part of the budget-setting and Council Tax process.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer), David Stanley, further advised that, although around 1,800 second homes were recorded, the Council was required to take a prudent view when setting the Council Tax base, including exemptions and assumptions about collectability, which had resulted in an estimated 810 properties being subject to the premium in 2025/26.
He reported that, in preparing the tax base for the forthcoming financial year, the number was closer to 1,800, reflecting validation work undertaken during the year. This had included working with parish and town councils and ward members to draw upon local knowledge. He reiterated that efforts to introduce a mandatory national register of second homes had not been included in the legislation, although representations had been made.
He concluded by noting that continued dialogue with residents would inform the annual review of the premium and support Members in considering future decisions.

In response to the explanations given Mr Gorin stated that he appreciated the complexities involved and had largely expected the explanation provided. He welcomed the indication that the Council was identifying more second homes, but reiterated his concern about the limited proportion of the premium retained by the District Council and the relatively small amount directed towards affordable housing, which he felt had been presented as a key justification for the policy.
He referred to the stated intention of the premium as a “disincentive” and suggested that it was intended to discourage second home ownership and return properties to the market. He explained that he and his wife had purchased their property with the intention of retiring to the area, but that family circumstances had delayed that move. He noted that they would continue to pay approximately £500 per month rather than £250 and expressed a wish for reassurance that the additional funds were directly supporting affordable housing.

The Leader thanked Mr Gorin for his comments and reiterated that the distribution of Council Tax was fixed in law and could not be altered by the District Council. The financial pressures facing Gloucestershire County Council were noted and it was explained that the policy had been introduced not only to raise funds but also to address the impact of high levels of second home ownership on the sustainability of local communities.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, added that the Council’s share of approximately £130,000 was being used strategically to support affordable housing delivery, including officer resource to work with registered providers to bring forward sites within the district.

The Leader thanked Mr Gorin for attending and raising his questions.

197 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

198 Schedule of Decisions taken by the Leader of the Council and/or Individual Cabinet Members

No delegated decisions had been taken by the Leader and/or Individual Cabinet Members since the publication of the agenda for Cabinet on 8 January 2026.

199 Issue(s) Arising from Overview and Scrutiny and/or Audit and Governance

Cabinet noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had met earlier in the week and had pre-scrutinised the item on Retail and Hospitality Sectors in the Cotswold District. As a result of this scrutiny five recommendations were made. The recommendations and the Cabinet's response are set out in a supplementary paper .

Councillor Wilkinson, portfolio holder for Economy and Council Transformation stated that the proposal was the result of significant work undertaken in response to a rapidly changing environment for high street businesses. He observed that businesses across the country, including within the Cotswold District, were facing increasing pressures from rising costs, including business rates, increases in the National Minimum Wage and National Insurance contributions. Concern that the current approach to business rates was arbitrary and disproportionate was expressed, and support for writing to local Members of Parliament to seek reform was confirmed.

The importance of vibrant high streets, particularly in rural areas with limited access to services, was emphasised, along with a caution that the loss of shops could undermine community sustainability. It was noted that many smaller settlements relied on a small number of local businesses.

Continued engagement with businesses and measures to support investment in high streets, while resisting the conversion of retail premises to residential use, were highlighted as important due to the cumulative impact on parking, footfall, and long-term viability.

Cabinet support was confirmed for four of the five proposed elements and a willingness to write to Government to highlight the local impact of national policy decisions was indicated.

Cabinet
05/February2026

200 Asbestos Management Plan

The purpose of the report was to submit an Asbestos Policy to Cabinet for approval, ensuring compliance with statutory duties and clarity regarding the Council's responsibilities as both an employer and a property owner.

Councillor Mike Evemy, Leader of the Council, introduced the report and highlighted that need to replace existing asbestos guidance with a comprehensive policy that clearly defined the Council's responsibilities for managing asbestos and asbestos-containing materials. This was intended to support delivery of the Health and Safety Work Plan and to ensure continued compliance with statutory duties, under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated legislation.

The Leader invited any questions or comments.

Councillors asked how staff responsible for asbestos management would gain practical experience if no asbestos was identified in the Council's buildings, and whether responsibility for social housing could be delegated to Bromford Housing.

Officers responded that the policy would be communicated across the Council and its partners via the Communications Team. Relevant staff had been identified for training through the IHasco programme, and recent in-depth sessions had been delivered by an asbestos expert. The Environmental Crimes Programmes Officer, had also been included due to potential exposure when managing fly-tipped materials.

Councillors welcomed the inclusion of operational staff in the training, noting the risks associated with asbestos and the importance of specialist handling. Councillor Pellegram expressed full support for the policy, emphasising the need for safe management and compliance as property owners and employers.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Mike Evemy and seconded by Councillor Andrea Pellegram.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

Voting record:
7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

To Approve the Cotswold District Council Asbestos Management Policy. (Resolution)		
Cabinet resolved to APPROVE the attached Asbestos Management Policy.		
For	Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Andrea Pellegram and Tristan Wilkinson	7

Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

201 Contract for Waste, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Services

The purpose of the report was to seek Cabinet approval to proceed with negotiations and to enter into a Common Service Agreement with Ubico Limited for the delivery of waste collection, street cleansing, and grounds maintenance services, with the new agreement proposed to replace the current contract which was due to expire on 31 March 2027.

Councillor Andrea Pellegram, Cabinet Member for Environment & Regulatory Services, introduced the report which described Cotswold District Council's current Service Contract with Ubico Limited for waste collection, street cleansing, and grounds maintenance which was due to expire on 31 March 2027. Ubico had proposed replacing individual contracts with a Common Service Agreement across its shareholder authorities, providing a single contractual framework while allowing for local service specifications.

Given the scale of Local Government Reorganisation and the need to maintain service continuity, the Common Service Agreement (CSA) was described as a proportionate and flexible approach, with the CSA providing a shared contractual framework across shareholder authorities while allowing locally tailored service specifications.

It was noted that the approach supported service continuity, allowed for future flexibility in light of Local Government Reorganisation, and enabled novation to a new Unitary Authority if required. Alternative delivery models were noted but, given the timing and scale of Local Government Reorganisation, continuation of the current delivery model was considered the most proportionate approach at this stage.

The Leader invited Councillors to speak.
Councillor Tony Dale stated that the proposal made considerable sense, noting his experience of the challenges faced by Ubico in managing diverse council requirements for waste collection and recycling. He commended the Chief Executive of Ubico for effectively coordinating multiple contracts and supported the move to a common services agreement, emphasising that it should benefit both Ubico and the councils involved, including the forthcoming unitary authority, by creating a more efficient and streamlined service.

The Leader noted that the current contract would end before the council's term and that renegotiating it now would be a distraction. He agreed that a common agreement would allow Ubico and the councils to plan future services across an expanded footprint, enabling greater flexibility and efficiency while providing a foundation for the new unitary authority to develop services consistently across Gloucestershire.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Andrea Pellegram and seconded by Councillor Mike Evemy.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

Voting record:
7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions

To approve the contract for waste, street cleansing and grounds maintenance services (Resolution)		
Cabinet resolved to AGREE to : 1. enter into a Common Service Agreement with Ubico as described in this report, and 2. delegate authority to the Director of Communities and Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Regulatory Services to agree the final terms of the agreement with Ubico.		
For	Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Andrea Pellegram and Tristan Wilkinson	7
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

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202 Revenue Budget 2026-27, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Strategy

The purpose of the report was to present the Revenue Budget for 2026/27, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27 to 2029/30 to Cabinet.

Councillor Patrick Coleman, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report.
It was noted that the Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, had been prepared in the context of ongoing financial pressures and a significant medium-term budget gap. Members noted that, while funding reforms and a three-year provisional

settlement provided increased certainty, savings and efficiencies would be required to maintain financial sustainability.

It was noted that there was no immediate risk of the Council requiring Exceptional Financial Support or issuing a section 114 notice. The 2026/27 budget was balanced through the use of reserves, with further gaps forecast in later years.

The Council proposed to increase Council Tax by £5 for a Band D property, which had received public support through consultation. Members also noted the planned use and maintenance of reserves, the continued requirement to deliver savings and transformation, and the proposed capital programme, including investment in waste and recycling infrastructure, funded without external borrowing.

The Leader noted the good level of response to the public budget consultation despite it being concurrent with pre-election period and overlapped with the local plan consultation, and thanked all those who had responded to the consultation, noting that approximately two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the Council's general approach, including the proposed 5% Council Tax increase, consistent with previous years. The responses to two specific questions were highlighted: 57% of respondents supported transforming services to be more cost-effective and customer-focused rather than maintaining the status quo, and 65% favoured prioritising delivery of capital projects within current capacity and finances rather than pursuing additional investment.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, provided a brief update on the financial position. He noted that, as of 28 January 2026, the forecast for business rates had increased by £178,000 due to retained renewable energy schemes, and the reconciliation of Publica contract sums for 2026/27 was improving the overall position. He cautioned that the final government finance settlement, due on 9 February 2026 , could pose a small risk of change, particularly regarding business rates pooling, but advised that any adjustments were unlikely to be implemented immediately and would more likely affect future years.

The Leader invited questions or observations from Members on the report. Councillors agreed that the Council's financial position had been managed exceptionally well, highlighting the prudence in business rates forecasting, the three-year settlement which reduced immediate risk, and the absence of a "cliff edge" in the budget. They welcomed the substantial capital investment of almost £8.5 million in the waste vehicle fleet, noting that it secured a high-quality, environmentally friendly service for at least six to eight years without external borrowing. The contribution from extended producer responsibility funding of £1.721 million was also acknowledged as helping to offset service costs.

Councillors noted the positive impact of budget allocations on local residents, including continued funding for the home energy efficiency officer, and the benefits of digital transformation and AI to improve service efficiency, reduce administrative workload, and enhance resident services. They highlighted the Council's support for local micro-businesses, of which there were approximately 9,000 in the district, and the importance of initiatives such as free two-hour parking in high streets like Bourton-on-the-Water to support local shops and maintain vibrant community centres.

Councillors agreed that the Council's strong financial position reflected sustained, detailed work by officers and councillors over several years, including careful review of fees and charges, long-term planning, and management of costs to ensure financial stability while delivering quality services. They welcomed the outcomes of the recent public consultation, noting that around two-thirds of respondents supported the general approach and the proposed five percent Council Tax increase, 57% supported transformation of services, and 65% favoured focusing on delivering capital projects within current capacity. They acknowledged that some feedback was critical or misinformed, but agreed that the consultation provided valuable insight into community expectations and reinforced the Council's commitment to prudent, accountable decision-making.

Councillor Coleman summed up saying that the Council had made significant progress in rationalising its financial reserves, reducing a long list of minor reserves to nine, with eight now considered significant. These included reserves for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) transition, capacity building, the local plan, and the climate emergency, reflecting the Council's priorities and focus on strategic objectives. Members noted that simplifying and clarifying the reserves structure made financial management more transparent and effective. It was also noted that the Council remained in a strong position, with no debt issues, well-maintained social housing stock, and high recycling performance, reflecting consistent good governance over time.

The recommendations were proposed by Councillor Coleman and seconded by Councillor Tristan Wilkinson.

The proposal was put to the vote and agreed by Cabinet.

Voting record:
7 For, 0 Against, 0 Abstentions.

To approve the 2026/27 Budget and MTFS for recommendation to Council (Resolution)

RESOLVED that Cabinet considered the budget report and approved for recommendation to Council:

1. the Medium-Term Financial Strategy set out in Annex B
2. the Budget Pressures and Savings for inclusion in the budget, set out in Annex C
3. the Council Tax Requirement of £7,419,716 for this Council
4. the Council Tax level for Cotswold District Council purposes of £163.93 for a Band D property in 2026/27 (an increase of £5)
5. the Capital Programme, set out in Annex D
6. the Annual Capital Strategy 2026/27, as set out in Annex E
7. the Annual Treasury Management Strategy and Non-Treasury Management Investment Strategy 2026/27, as set out in Annex F
8. the Strategy for the Flexible use of Capital Receipts, as set out in Annex H
9. that £2m is set aside in a new earmarked reserve Council Priority: LGR Transition through the releasing of £2m of the balance currently held in the Financial Resilience Reserve.
10. the balances and reserves forecast for 2026/27 to 2029/30 as set out in Section 7 of the report.

Cabinet approved delegation to the Council's Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Leader, and Cabinet Member for Finance

11. To agree changes to the General Fund Summary arising from the Final Local Government Finance Settlement and the Business Rates Retention Scheme estimates prior to submission to Council.

For	Patrick Coleman, Tony Dale, Mike Evemy, Juliet Layton, Mike McKeown, Andrea Pellegram and Tristan Wilkinson	7
Against	None	0
Conflict Of Interests	None	0
Abstain	None	0
Carried		

203 Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date of Cabinet was confirmed as 5 March 2026.

The Meeting commenced at 6.00pm and closed at 7.18pm

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**CABINET – 5 MARCH 2026**
Subject	**BIODIVERSITY DUTY REPORT**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Email: Juliet.Layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Geraldine LeCointe, Assistant Director - Planning Services Email: Geraldine.LeCointe@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Danielle Berry, Head of Natural, Built and Historic Environment Email: Danielle.Berry@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To approve the biodiversity duty report for publication. Publication of this report is a legal requirement for all local authorities and must be completed no later than 2 March 2026.
Annexes	Annex A – biodiversity duty report
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Approve the biodiversity duty report within Annex A for publication. 2. Delegate to the Assistant Director – Planning Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning to make presentational and minor editorial changes for publication.
Corporate priorities	• Responding to the Climate Emergency
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	An internal consultation was undertaken with the Extended Management Team and the Corporate Leadership Team to support the identification of existing and emerging opportunities for the

	Council to consider actions, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, that conserve and enhance biodiversity.

COTSWOLD
District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report is seeking approval of the Council's biodiversity duty report, a legal requirement under the Environment Act 2021. The report outlines the actions the Council has already taken to meet its biodiversity duty, identifies further opportunities for the forthcoming reporting period, and provides a summary of the biodiversity net gain achieved, or expected to be achieved, through the approval of biodiversity gain plans.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 England is widely recognised as one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. In response, the Government has made legally binding commitments to halt these declines and support nature's recovery. A key part of this effort is the strengthened biodiversity duty, introduced through the Environment Act 2021.

2.2 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 originally placed a specific duty on public authorities in exercising their functions to conserve biodiversity. The Environment Act 2021 has strengthened this duty by amending Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 so that public authorities are now required to conserve and enhance biodiversity through the exercise of its functions.

2.3 Furthermore, the Environment Act 2021 also introduced reporting obligations for local planning authorities, which must publish a biodiversity report (Annex A) to evidence the actions taken to enhance and conserve biodiversity.

2.4 Guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on when biodiversity duty reporting needs to be published states:

- The end date of the first reporting period should be no later than the 1st of January 2026.
- This report must be published within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date (26th March 2026).
- The next reporting period must be completed within 5 years from this end date.
- Local authorities must include the start and end dates of its reporting period in each report.

2.5 By law, the biodiversity duty report must include:

- A summary of the actions taken by the local authority to comply with the biodiversity duty.
- How the local authority plans to comply with its biodiversity duty in the next reporting period (2026-2030).
- Any other information the local authority considers appropriate.

2.6 Reports from local planning authorities must also include the following biodiversity net gain (BNG) information:

- The actions taken by the local planning authority to meet its BNG obligations.
- Details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from approved biodiversity gain plans.
- How the local planning authority plans to meet its BNG obligations in the next reporting period.

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 Annex A (Section 1 and Appendix 1) demonstrates and provides details on the policies, objective and actions that Cotswold District Council has implemented to meet the biodiversity duty across its function during this reporting period (1st January 2024 - 31st December 2025). The policies, objectives and actions in Appendix 1 provide either specifically, or in part, for biodiversity across the district.

3.2 Annex A (Section 2 and Appendix 1) outlines how Cotswold District Council intends to fulfil its biodiversity duty obligations during the next reporting period by continuing to apply and review its existing policies, objectives and actions. The Council will also prepare a new biodiversity action strategy, which will outline specific measures to conserve and enhance biodiversity across the district.

3.3 These measures will be guided by the opportunities identified in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and by the findings of the Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan review, scheduled for April 2026. Publication of the biodiversity action strategy will coincide with an update on the Council's Ecological Emergency Action Plan in 2027.

3.4 Annex A (Section 3 and Appendix 2) demonstrates how Cotswold District Council has met its Biodiversity Net Gain obligations this reporting period and how it will continue to meet these requirements in the next reporting period.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 There are no suitable alternative options. The preparation and publication of a biodiversity duty report is a statutory requirement under the Environment Act 2021, and is a vital mechanism for ensuring transparency, accountability, and demonstrating the meaningful impact of local nature recovery efforts.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The report raises no direct financial implications.

5.2 Members should be aware that as part of the funding simplification measures set out in the Local Government Finance Settlement (2026/27) the BNG grant for local authorities for financial years 2026-27, 2027-28 and 2028-29 has been consolidated into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and will be distributed to local authorities according to the new Fair Funding Assessment.

5.3 This means the Council no longer receive BNG funding through Section 31 Grant as was previously the case. Subject to the level of funding the Council receives in a given financial year, the level of funding available to support BNG may be lower than it would have been previously. The Council has retained BNG funding received in previous financial years of £45k in an earmarked reserve which can be drawn down to support BNG activities.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The report raises no direct legal implications.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 Cotswold District Council is legally required under the Environment Act 2021 to publish a biodiversity duty report. Failure to do so could expose the council to legal challenge and result in reputational damage.

7.2 There is a risk that Cotswold District Council may lose access to biodiversity-related grant funding if the reporting requirements are not met.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 The report raises no direct impacts.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The purpose of this report is to identify existing and emerging opportunities for the Council to consider actions, consistent with the proper exercise of its functions, that conserve and enhance biodiversity. As such, the report directly supports and addresses both the climate and the ecological emergencies.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None

(END)

COTSWOLD
District Council

Biodiversity Duty Report

January 2026

Contents

About Cotswold District Council

Cotswold District Council (CDC) is a district authority in Gloucestershire which covers an area of 450 square miles (1,165 square kilometres) and includes the Cotswolds, Severn and Avon Vales, and Upper Thames Clay Vales National Character Areas, formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The district has an extensive and rich history and is home to a variety of landscapes which support a wide and diverse range of ecosystems, habitats and species.

The area covered by CDC also contains many statutory and non-statutory designated sites including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) such as the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) such as the Cotswold Water Park SSSI, the Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods National Nature Reserve as well as Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites. These sites and other natural and semi-natural habitats within the district accommodate notable floral and faunal species, in addition to providing valuable connected ecological networks, natural resources and green space.

Introduction and Background

The biodiversity duty is a legal obligation placed on public authorities which operate in England to consider what can be done across the functions of the authority to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (as amended)[1] originally placed a specific duty on public authorities in exercising their functions to conserve biodiversity. The Environment Act 2021[2] strengthened this duty by amending Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 so that public authorities are now required to **conserve and enhance** biodiversity through the exercise of its functions – referred to as the 'biodiversity objective'.

In January 2023, the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP23)[3] was published by the government which set out specific actions and targets to improve and restore the natural environment and halt the decline in biodiversity. Under the 'apex goal' of improving nature, commitments were set out to protect land and sea for nature through the Nature Recovery

[1] Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents

[2] Environment Act (2021). Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted Accessed 5th April 2024

[3] Environmental Improvement Plan (2023). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64a6d9c1c531eb000c64fffa/environmental-improvement-plan-2023.pdf

Network and deliver on rolling out and implementing Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

By 2030, the Government committed to:

- Halting the decline in species abundance
- Protecting 30% of land in the UK

By 2042, the Government committed to:

- Increasing species abundance by at least 10% to exceed 2022 levels
- Restoring or creating at least 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats
- Reducing the risk of species extinction
- Restoring 75% of one million hectares of terrestrial and freshwater protected sites to favourable condition

The EIP was updated in December 2025[4] to build on the existing visions and goals presented in the 2023 EIP, providing further detail for measures and delivery actions required to preserve and prioritise the natural environment. The latest EIP sets out clear targets, including ten goals to:

- Restore nature
- Improve environmental quality
- Drive forward a circular economy
- Achieve environmental security, and
- Increase access to nature

The actions taken by CDC to meet the biodiversity duty will contribute to achieving the goals and targets set out within the EIP.

Public authorities were required to complete a 'first consideration' of what action to take for biodiversity by the 1st of January 2024 and agree policies and objectives as soon as possible after this date.

As part of the first consideration in December 2023, CDC:

- Reviewed the management of land within their ownership which is a small land parcel partially within the Cotswold Water Park SSSI
- Reviewed the Ecological Emergency Action Plan[5]. The review was undertaken by the CDC Biodiversity Team
- Proposed next steps to:

[4] Environmental Improvement Plan (2025). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/692d8d9cce50d215cae962a5/Environmental_Improvement_Plan_EIP_2025.pdf

[5] Cotswold District Council Ecological Emergency Action Plan (2020). Available at: ecological-emergency-action-plan-update.pdf

- Review the Ecological Emergency Action Plan by June 2024
- Set up a reporting framework to simplify the preparation of the first biodiversity duty report in 2026
- Provide parish and town councils with information on the enhanced duty
- Investigate the requirement for management plans for designated sites owned by CDC

The Biodiversity Duty

The NERC Act 2006 (as amended) states that *the action which may be taken by the authority to further the general biodiversity objective includes, in particular, action taken for the purpose of:*

a) conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a population of a particular species, and
b) conserving, restoring or otherwise enhancing a particular type of habitat.

The NERC Act enables public authorities to state that there is no further action to take, but if it is concluded that further action needs to be taken, S40 1(A) requires that the public authority must:

a) determine such policies and specific objectives as it considers appropriate for taking action to further the general biodiversity objective, and
b) take such action as it considers appropriate, in the light of those policies and objectives, to further that objective.

Section 40 (1B) enables for (1A)(a) to be satisfied by revising existing policies and specific objectives to further the general biodiversity objective. Section 40 (1E) requires that the determination of policies and objectives must be made as soon as practicable after consideration.

The NERC Act is amended by the Environment Act 2021 with reporting obligations placed on local authorities, including local planning authorities. Under Section 40A of the NERC Act, local authorities must publish a biodiversity report to evidence the actions taken to enhance and conserve biodiversity.

Guidance from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) on when biodiversity duty reporting needs to be published[6] states:

- The end date of your first reporting period should be no later than 1 January 2026
- After this, the end date of each reporting period must be within 5 years of the end date of the previous reporting period

[6] Reporting your biodiversity duty actions (17th September 2025). Available at: Reporting your biodiversity duty actions - GOV.UK

- You must include the start and end dates of your reporting period in each report
- You must publish all reports within 12 weeks of the reporting period end date

By law, the biodiversity duty report must include:

- A summary of the action you've taken to comply with the biodiversity duty
- How you plan to comply with the biodiversity duty in the next reporting period
- Any other information you consider appropriate

Reports from local planning authorities must also include the following BNG information:

- The actions you've carried out to meet BNG obligations
- Details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from biodiversity gain plans you've approved
- How you plan to meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

The guidance from Defra also includes a list of optional reporting elements to further communicate how the authority has taken steps to improve the environment. The biodiversity duty report looks at actions that have been taken by CDC, as well as actions that can be implemented in the future to meet the biodiversity duty.

Reporting Compliance with the Biodiversity Duty

This report covers actions taken by CDC to meet the biodiversity duty from the 1st of January 2024 to the 31st of December 2025 and adheres to the following structure to demonstrate compliance with the biodiversity duty reporting requirement, as set out in guidance on biodiversity duty reporting from Defra:

- Section 1: Policies, objectives and actions
    - The policies and objectives set to meet the biodiversity duty
    - The actions completed, either alone or in partnership with others, that benefit biodiversity

- Section 2: Future actions
    - How the local authority plans to fulfil the biodiversity duty over the next five years following the end of this reporting period

- Section 3: Biodiversity Net Gain information for the local planning authority
    - The actions carried out to meet BNG obligations
    - Details of BNG resulting, or expected to result, from approved biodiversity gain plans
    - How CDC will meet BNG obligations in the next reporting period

Section 1: Policies, Objectives and Actions

The table within appendix 1 demonstrates and provides details on the policies, objectives and actions that CDC has taken and implemented to meet the biodiversity duty across its functions. Policies, objectives and actions in appendix 1 provide either specifically, or in part, for biodiversity within the district and across the diverse functions of the Council.

In order to implement some of these policies, objectives and actions, CDC has operated in partnership with other organisations, stakeholders and groups including:

- The Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership
- The Cotswold Lakes Trust
- The Cotswold National Landscape Board
- The Cotswold Nature Recovery Forum
- NatureSpace
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- The Wildlife Trust
- Gloucestershire town, parish, district and county authorities
- Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund (GNCF)
- Authorities of other neighbouring counties

Section 2: Future Actions

CDC will meet the biodiversity duty over the next 5-year period through a combination of the continuation and review of existing policies, objectives and actions as detailed within appendix 1, and by taking the following actions:

1. Develop and implement a biodiversity strategy:
   - Create a CDC biodiversity action strategy which outlines specific measures to enhance biodiversity within the district
   - Align the biodiversity action strategy with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and national biodiversity targets

2. Continue to integrate biodiversity into decision making:
   - Ensure biodiversity considerations are embedded in planning policies and decisions
   - Land management and investment to benefit biodiversity
   - Require ecological assessments for relevant planning applications and promote nature-based solutions

3. Manage and enhance Council-owned land for nature:
   - Implement biodiversity-friendly land management practices on parks, verges, and public spaces (e.g., wildflower meadows, reducing mowing and additional tree planting)
   - Support the creation and improvement of wildlife corridors and green and blue infrastructure across the district to improve ecological connectivity and resilience

4. Collaborate with stakeholders and further engage in partnership working:
   - Work with local conservation groups, nature partnerships, landowners, and businesses to support biodiversity initiatives
   - Engage with the public and community groups to promote nature restoration and enhancement at a local scale

5. Reporting on actions and progress:
   - Publish reports every five years demonstrating how the Council is meeting its legal obligations regarding the biodiversity duty
   - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of biodiversity initiatives to show measurable improvements and to identify areas where further progress may be deliverable

Section 3: Biodiversity Net Gain Information for the Local Planning Authority

Under the Environment Act 2021, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory for major developments on the 12th of February 2024 and for minor developments on the 2nd of April 2024, which has required developers to deliver at least a 10% net gains for biodiversity through the following mechanisms, either alone or in combination:

- Delivery of on-site habitat creation and/or enhancements
- Delivery of off-site habitat creation and/or enhancements
- Purchase of off-site biodiversity units from a suitable provider such as a habitat bank or broker
- Purchase of statutory credits obtained from the government (considered as a 'last resort')

A list of exemptions and accompanying guidance was published by Defra[7]. Since the introduction of mandatory BNG in 2024, the Government publicly consulted on 'Improving the implementation of Biodiversity Net Gain for minor, medium and brownfield development'[8] which ran from the 2nd of May 2025 until the 24th of July 2025. The consultation included options around the extension of exemptions, simplification of the small sites metric, increasing ease of access to the off-site biodiversity units market and addressing challenges for BNG on brownfield developments. A formal response from the Government to the public consultation is expected in 2026.

In order to meet the BNG obligations, CDC has carried out the following actions:

- Applied the biodiversity gain hierarchy to non-exempt developments across the district
- Cross-boundary collaborative working with other local authorities in Gloucestershire to produce a county-wide guidance note for developers: 'Guidance on delivering Biodiversity Net Gain for planning applicants and developers in Gloucestershire'[9]
- Provided publicly available information on the planning sections of the CDC website for BNG with:

[7] Guidance for Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments (August 2024). Available at: Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments - GOV.UK

[8] Public consultation on improving the implementation of biodiversity net gain for minor, medium and brownfield development (May 2025). Available at: Improving the implementation of biodiversity net gain for minor, medium and brownfield development - GOV.UK

[9] Guidance on delivering Biodiversity Net Gain for planning applicants and developers in Gloucestershire (February 2024). Available at: BNG Guidance for LPA February 2024

    - links to statutory and small sites metric tools, relevant guidance and good practice documents from the Government and the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)
    - links to the county-wide BNG guidance document for Gloucestershire
    - guidance for planning applicants on how to discharge the biodiversity gain condition prior to commencing development, on-site significant BNG and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMPs)
    - guidance for securing significant on-site and off-site BNG, legal (S.106) agreements and financial contributions for Council BNG monitoring costs
    - links to guidance on habitat banks
- Updated local validation checklists for planning applications to include information for BNG requirements
- Created, and made publicly available, a BNG statement form for planning applicants to enable applicants to provide relevant information for BNG prior to the determination of planning applications
- Delivered internal training on BNG for relevant teams
- Monitored all applications subject to mandatory BNG, including subsequent biodiversity gain plans and legal agreements which have been submitted
- Acquired software to assist with assessing BNG for developments during the planning application stage, and to assist with the monitoring and enforcement of BNG after planning permissions have been granted, and the biodiversity gain conditions have been discharged
- Specific BNG training for the biodiversity team to assist with implementation of BNG within development management and policy functions
- Appointed an additional Biodiversity Officer to assist with biodiversity functions including BNG
- Supporting Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership (GLNP) and Gloucestershire Nature and Climate Fund (GNCF) in delivering for BNG off-setting across the district and county areas
- Collaborated with the responsible authority (Gloucestershire County Council) and other supporting authorities for the LNRS and its functions with regards to BNG
- Addressed BNG broadly through existing pre-application planning advice services

In order to meet the BNG obligations in the next reporting period, CDC will:

- Review existing BNG actions and CDC public guidance information, and update accordingly in response to new and emerging guidance and legislative changes
- Continue to secure BNG for non-exempt developments through the implementation of successful and relevant existing actions which have been implemented within development management and planning policy functions to address the requirements of BNG

- Continue to ensure that all biodiversity officers, planning officers and validation teams receive appropriate and up-to-date BNG training to enable the effective assessment of BNG during the planning application process
- Biodiversity officers will assess BNG applications in accordance with the adopted LNRS for Gloucestershire to ensure that BNG opportunities for developments have been adequately considered in the context of the LNRS
- Offer a BNG-specific pre-application service from the 1st of April 2026 which will enable developers to better understand the potential implications of delivering BNG through their proposed development
- Continue to monitor all major sites and significant on-site BNG applications and report to Defra in line with published guidance
- Continue to work with organisations such as GNCF to deliver habitat banks within the district

CDC has approved twenty-four biodiversity gain plans prior to the 1st of January 2026, between the 9th of October 2024 and the 21st of November 2025, with two S.106 legal agreements secured for developments with significant on-site BNG. Across the approved biodiversity gain plans, the following have been provided for BNG:

- 12.91 habitat units
- 0.04 watercourse units
- 2.65 hedgerow units

Appendix 2 contains additional details of approved biodiversity gain plans.

Appendix 1: CDC Policies, Objectives and Actions

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
Corporate Plan 2024-2028.	The Corporate Plan set out the Council's ambitions for delivering good services, responding to the climate emergency, delivering housing, supporting communities and the economy.	The Corporate Plan was published on the 16th of January 2024. The plan was refreshed in September 2025 to reflect national and local changes.	Continuation alongside annual review of the plan.	Leader of the Council.	https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/kbqdj51w/our-cotswolds-our-plan-action-plan-2024.pdf	Annually – September 2026.
Adopted Local Plan Policies EN7, EN8, EN9, and SP5. Other policies which provide for	Policies EN7, EN8, EN9, and SP5 of the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 provide for the natural environment, including designated sites, and protected and priority habitats and species.	The current Local Plan was adopted in August 2018 and is currently used as the strategic framework for development across the district.	Continuation of use of the current Local Plan until the adoption of a new plan. Undertake a review of the existing Local Plan policies ahead of the Local Plan submission in 2026.	Head of Planning Policy and Infrastructure.	Output file	Submission in 2026 for adoption in 2027.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
biodiversity in part include S2, EC3, EC4, EC5, INF7, INF8, INF9, INF10, SP3, SP6, DS1, EN1, EN2, EN3, EN5, EN6, EN10, and EC13.	Other policies in the Local Plan provide for biodiversity in part.					
Local Plan review including amendments to existing and inclusion of new biodiversity-related policies.	The process of reviewing and partially updating the existing Local Plan began in June 2020 with the intention of making the Plan green to the core. However, following the introduction of new housing targets	Submission of the Local Plan is expected in Winter 2026 with adoption anticipated in 2027. Additional policies added to the new Local Plan, including: EN16: Dark Skies.	Ongoing.	Chief Executive, Council Leader, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning. Planning Policy and Infrastructure Team.	Link to adopted Local Plan 2011 – 2031. Adopted Local Plan 2011-31 Regulation-18-issues-and-options-consultation-doc-feb-2022.pdf	Submission of the Local Plan is expected in Winter 2026 with adoption anticipated in 2027. Plan will run until 2043.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	from Government, Members agreed to proceed with a full update of the Local Plan. The commitment to making the Plan green to the core remains unchanged. A Habitats Regulations Assessment will be carried out to support the new Local Plan.	EN18: Sherborne Park Masterplan. EN19: Soils. EN20: Watercourses. EN21: Biodiversity Net Gain. CC7: Green Infrastructure.				
Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).	Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) is the responsible authority for the preparation of Gloucestershire's LNRS. Cotswold District Council has contributed to its	An LNRS officer has been appointed within GCC and is in post. Public consultation of the draft LNRS	CDC will continue to support the development of the LNRS until it is formally adopted by Gloucestershire County Council. Following adoption, Cotswold District Council will seek to implement the LNRS	LNRS Officer at Gloucestershire County Council.	Local Nature Recovery Strategy | Gloucestershire LNP A Nature Recovery Strategy for	Every 3 to 10 years after adoption.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	development through consultation alongside various other stakeholders including the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership.	now has closed. Adoption is anticipated in January 2026.	where appropriate. This will include integrating LNRS objectives into Local Plan policies and ensuring that the LNRS is considered during the delivery of development across the district, including through BNG.		Gloucestershire | Gloucestershire County Council	
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).	BNG is a mandatory approach to development whereby, developers must deliver at least a 10% net gain, ensuring habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before development.	Since the 12th of February 2024, the Council has been assessing and securing measurable Biodiversity Net Gain on developments subject to the mandatory biodiversity gain condition. To prepare for this change in the planning system, the Council has undertaken a	The Council will continue to adapt its BNG practices in line with any alterations to existing secondary legislation or guidance produced by Government or Governmental bodies. The Council will periodically review its processes, guidance documents and software to ensure its statutory reporting duty is met. Any additional training required for BNG will be	Development Management and the Natural, Built and Historic Environment Teams.	Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) - Cotswold District Council	Spring 2026 subject to any changes made by Government following the public consultation in 2025.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
		range of actions, including the development of a county-wide BNG guidance document (2024) to support applicants and developers in the delivery of mandatory net gain. In addition, the Council has worked with GNCF and the National Trust to secure habitat banks within the district.	provided to the relevant teams and Officers. Continue to work with external partners to secure habitat banks.			
Ecological Emergency Action Plan.	In July 2020, Cotswold District Council declared an ecological emergency and the following action plan	The Ecological Emergency Action Plan was approved on the 15th of July 2020. An update on	A review of the action plan is scheduled to take place in March 2026 with an update to be presented to members. This update will highlight	The Natural, Built and Historic Environment Team.	ecological-emergency-action-plan.pdf	March 2026.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	was prepared and adopted by the Council.	progress made was provided on the 7th of May 2024. The Plan continues to be implemented.	key successes and identify areas where further efforts are required.			
Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2030.	In July 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency, and the strategy was adopted by the Council on the 23rd of September 2020.	Climate action starting is to be implemented across multiple functions across the Council. Target of 80% reduction in emissions against 1990 baseline by 2030, 100% reduction by 2045. Direct control action areas for CDC include waste fleet possibly moving to electric	Continuation.	Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Team.	Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2030 Annex A Corporate Plan.pdf	There are currently no plans to review the Climate Emergency Strategy.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
		vehicles, affordable homes within the district being built to net zero carbon standards, additional staff training and retrofit and upgrades to energy systems at the Trinity Road offices.				
Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy. Green Infrastructure Pre-application Advice Note.	The Green Infrastructure Strategy was formally adopted by Cabinet on the 11th of January 2024. The Green Infrastructure pre-application advice note provides additional advice on green infrastructure	Strategy adopted and used as evidence for the Local Plan.	The GI strategy will be reviewed prior to the Local Plan Submission 2026.	The Natural, Built, and Historic Environment Team and the Planning Policy Team. Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning.	1-draft-green-infrastructure-strategy-draft-for-consultation-june-2021.pdf Green Infrastructure Strategy 2024 https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/	Review of the GI strategy prior to the Local Plan Submission 2026. No plans for review of the GI pre-application advice note.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	to highlight the importance of high-quality green infrastructure in delivering well-designed developments.				media/4sojaskr/green-infrastructure-planning-advice.pdf	
Cotswold Design Code.	The current design code sets out guidelines for achieving effective green infrastructure and high-quality landscapes for developments and provides for GI and biodiversity (local character, biodiversity mitigation and enhancements). Ecological design and effective GI are core components of the Design Code, with reference to	Local Plan policies are aligned, and development is delivered in accordance with the adopted Design Code.	A review of the existing Design Code will take place throughout 2025/26 and will increase the provision to deliver GI and biodiversity in the district.	The Natural, Built and Historic Environment Team and the Planning Policy Team.	https://cotswold.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=885eb94398bf4819b17bd66d64275e59	End of 2026 to accompany the Local Plan submission.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	ecological appraisals and local biodiversity data to inform design decisions.					
North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC Interim Recreation Mitigation Strategy (2023).	An interim strategy was published in May 2023 and prepared by Cotswold District Council in partnership with neighbouring authorities and Natural England.	The Strategy was developed as an interim measure pending the availability of more comprehensive monitoring data. Additional data collection, including a compaction study, was carried out in 2025 to inform future updates and decision-making. Currently, all developments	The effectiveness of the mitigation measures outlined in the interim strategy will be evaluated against the most recent survey work. An updated version of the strategy will then be prepared based on these findings. SAMM and SANG implementation to continue in accordance with the interim mitigation strategy.	The Natural, Built and Historic Environment Team and the Planning Policy Team.	North Meadow SAC Interim Mitigation Strategy	2026.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
		within the designated zones of influence that result in a net increase in residential or holiday accommodation are required to contribute financially to the mitigation strategy. These contributions are then used to deliver both Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures.				

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
Cotswold Beechwoods SAC Recreation Mitigation Strategy (2022).	The strategy was published on the 11th of May 2022 and prepared by Cotswold District Council in partnership with neighbouring authorities and Natural England.	Currently, all developments within the designated zone of influence that result in a net increase in residential or holiday accommodation are required to contribute financially to the mitigation strategy. These contributions are then used to deliver both Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring	SAMM and SANG implementation to continue in accordance with the mitigation strategy. The Strategy is scheduled for a detailed review on a 5-year basis.	The Natural Built and Historic Environment manager Team and the Planning Policy Team.	Cotswolds Beechwoods SAC Mitigation Strategy	2027.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
		(SAMM) measures.				
Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan.	The Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan superseded the 2007 – 2016 Cotswold Water Park Biodiversity Action Plan and was endorsed by Cotswold District Council on the 21st of June 2022.	The plan is currently used to guide planning decisions and local development, support biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration and to inform the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and other environmental initiatives.	Continuation. Cotswold Lakes Trust to update the plan.	Cotswold Lakes Trust in partnership with Cotswold District Council.	Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan: Technical Details Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan	Periodic updates expected as the Plan is intended to be a living document. The plan is to be updated – the Council is awaiting further details from Cotswold Lakes Trust.
Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan.	The Cotswold Nature Recovery Plan was adopted by the Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) Board and the Cotswolds Nature Recovery Forum	The plan is currently active and serves as a guidance document used to inform local decision making and strategies.	The Council will continue to use this document to deliver the outcomes of the management plan. Continue to liaise with CNRF in the	Cotswolds National Landscape Board and Cotswolds Nature Recovery Forum.	Cotswolds Nature Recovery Plan - Cotswolds National Landscape	A review date will be identified following the adoption of the LNRS.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	(CNRF) in October 2021.	The CNL board are formally consulted on planning applications following endorsement of the plan in May 2022.	development of the new Local Plan.			
Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.	This statutory plan was produced by the Cotswolds National Landscape Board, which sets out policies for the management of the Cotswold National Landscape.	The plan was endorsed at cabinet on the 8th of May 2025. This document will be used as evidence for the preparation and implementation of relevant Council strategies, policies and projects including but not limited to the Local Plan and Neighbourhood	The Council will continue to use this document to deliver the outcomes of the management plan.	Cotswold National Landscape Board.	CNL Management Plan 2025-2030	2030.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
		Plans. In addition, it is a material consideration when determining planning applications.				
Cotswolds Tourism Destination Management Plan.	CDC contributes to a regional Destination Management Plan (DMP) coordinated through Cotswolds Tourism (a shared team between CDC and West Oxfordshire District Council, which convenes a partnership approach to destination management across the broader Cotswolds area).	2022-2025 plan is active. Indirectly provides for biodiversity through sustainability, landscape protection and responsible tourism.	None identified.	Head of Economic Development and Communities.	Cotswolds tourism Destination Management plan	The DMP is likely to be refreshed in the next year – subject to external funding. The refresh presents an opportunity to reflect any synergy with the biodiversity duty.
Gloucestershire Tree Strategy 2020.	Gloucestershire Tree Strategy September 2020 (Gloucestershire	CDC seeks to ensure that its policies and practices accord	Continuation.	Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership.	APPENDIX A Gloucestershire Tree Strategy	Last reviewed on the 2nd of January 2025.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	Local Nature Partnership). Local Plan Policy EN7. CDC policy for the management of trees owned by the Council (2018).	with the Gloucestershire Tree Strategy 2020.			| Gloucestershire LNP	No future review date specified.
CDC policy for the management of trees owned by the Council (2018).	Produced by the Head of the Natural, Built and Historic Environment and the Tree Officers.	The policy was adopted by Cabinet on the 18th of January 2018. The policy seeks to maintain and enhance tree stock on Council-owned land.	Continuation.	Head of the Natural, Built and Historic Environment and the Tree Officers.	https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/ruyhk10e/policy-for-the-management-of-trees-owned-by-the-council-adopted-2018.pdf	No update planned.
CIL – 10% of the Community Infrastructure Levy is set aside as a	The purpose of the fund is to help deliver the Council's Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2030 and its Ecological	The Council will continue to work with external stakeholders to deliver infrastructure that	The process for bidding for funds from the CIL Climate and Ecological emergencies pot is to be reviewed by the CIL team in 2026.	Community Infrastructure Levy Team and the Natural, Built and Historic	Infrastructure spending and funding - Cotswold District Council	Yearly reporting schedule. A review for the bidding process and allocated

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
Climate and Ecological Emergencies fund.	Emergency Action Plan 2020.	supports the delivery of new green and ecological infrastructure projects and/or climate change mitigation or adaptation projects.	The CIL team are also to review the percentage allocated to the Climate and Ecological emergencies pots.	Environment Team.		percentages of funds to be undertaken in 2026.
Crowdfund Cotswold - Crowdfund Cotswold has funded biodiversity projects and requires applicants to say how they are addressing the climate and ecological emergencies.	Initiative run by CDC in partnership with Spacehive. Projects funded from inception in 2021 through to 2024 include KCG community and wildlife haven project, Ampney Crucis village hall solar panels, enable nature and wellbeing in Cirencester, wild flowering of Long Newnton verges,	Continuation.	Ongoing opportunity to support community led initiatives. There is scope to do some 'soft commissioning' through promotion of specific themes or additional project funds.	Head of Economic Development and Communities.	Crowdfund Cotswold - Home	No formal review date has been identified.

Policy, Strategy or Plan	Context and Relevance	Current Position	Future Work/Actions to be Undertaken	Persons/Team responsible	Hyperlinks	Next Review or Completion Date
	Cotswold Lakes Trust Educational trailer the 'Beaver Bus', Quenington wildflower and wildlife areas.					

Appendix 2: Information for Approved Biodiversity Gain Plans

Details in the table below relate to applications where the biodiversity gain plan has been discharged prior to the 1st of January 2026:

Planning reference	Date biodiversity gain plan discharged	On-site/Off-site/Units/Credits	BNG Units and Net Change Delivery					
			Habitats		Watercourses		Hedgerows	
			Units	*Net change %*	Units	*Net change %*	Units	*Net change %*
24/00158/FUL	09/10/2024	On-site	0.5	*10.16*	0	*0*	0.87	*56.98*
24/01688/FUL	22/10/2024	On-site	0.04	*10.30*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/01818/FUL	18/11/2024	On-site	0.032	*17.57*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/01922/FUL	22/11/2024	On-site	0.018	*30.33*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/02126/FUL	04/12/2024	On-site	0.024	*12.35*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/02629/FUL	18/12/2024	On-site	0.1	*10.43*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/01783/FUL	16/01/2025	On-site	0.14	*37.31*	0	*0*	0.16	*1,640.50*
24/02074/FUL	19/02/2025	On-site	0.56	*10.50*	0	*0*	0.19	*92.18*
24/02397/FUL	24/02/2025	On-site	0.25	*28.0*	0	*0*	0%	*0*
24/02232/FUL	21/03/2025	On-site	1.98	*10.18*	0	*0*	0.069	*25.67*
24/02073/FUL	16/04/2025	On-site	0.0088	*20.0*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/01467/FUL	29/04/2025	On-site	0.48	*11.25*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/02636/FUL	04/06/2025	Units	0.0063	*10.05*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/03647/FUL	04/04/2025	On-site	0.61	*14.79*	0	*0*	0.27	*52.33*
24/01998/TDC	18/06/2025	On-site	0.074	*10.99*	0.04	*11.40*	0.046	*10.87*
24/01364/FUL	04/08/2025	On-site	0.062	*54.80*	0	*0*	0.28	*173.54*
24/02773/FUL	20/08/2025	On-site	0.44	*10.39*	0	*0*	0	*0*
25/01240/FUL	28/08/2025	On-site	0.076	*13.52*	0	*0*	0	*0*
25/00634/FUL	10/09/2025	On-site	0.0072	*10.77*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/02539/FUL	10/10/2025	On-site	0.015	*14.18*	0	*0*	0.054	*29.30*

24/03839/FUL	31/10/2025	On-site	0.082	*47.83*	0	*0*	0.14	*16.34*
24/01739/FUL	17/11/2025	On-site	0.24	*18.71*	0	*0*	0	*0*
24/02161/FUL	17/11/2025	On-site	7.0	*55.55*	0	*0*	0.43	*10.90*
25/00958/FUL	21/11/2025	On-site	0.16	*11.82*	0	*0*	0	*0.14*

COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**CABINET – 5 MARCH 2026**
Subject	**GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Juliet Layton, Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Email: Juliet.Layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Geraldine LeCointe, Assistant Director - Planning Services Email: Geraldine.LeCointe@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Danielle Berry, Head of Natural, Built and Historic Environment Email: Danielle.Berry@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To endorse the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
Annexes	Annex A – Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Part 1 – Gloucestershire's Biodiversity and Opportunities for Nature Recovery Annex B – Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Part 2 – Gloucestershire's Biodiversity Priorities and Potential Measures Annex C – A link to the Local Habitat Map
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Endorse the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Corporate priorities	• Responding to the Climate Emergency
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	There was a public consultation (8th September – 19th October 2025) on the draft strategy which was open to all. Ward members were informed of the consultation timeline and were advised that they could respond directly to Gloucestershire County Council or share their comments with Cotswold District Council to be incorporated

	into a collective response. This response was submitted to Gloucestershire County Council on the 17th of October 2025. Following the public consultation, Gloucestershire County Council, as the responsible authority, circulated its final Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy to all supporting authorities (the county's district, borough and city councils). None of the supporting authorities submitted a publication advisory notice to the responsible authority, preventing publication of the strategy.

COTSWOLD
District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report is seeking endorsement of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (hereafter referred to as 'the strategy'). The strategy is a spatial tool, introduced under the Environment Act 2021, which identifies where and how nature recovery can be most effectively achieved across the county.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 England is widely recognised as one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. In response, the Government has made legally binding commitments to halt the decline in biodiversity and support the recovery of nature. A key part of this approach is the introduction of Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

2.2 The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has appointed 48 responsible authorities to lead the preparation of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for their respective areas. Gloucestershire County Council has been designated as the responsible authority for Gloucestershire. Collectively, the 48 strategies cover the whole of England, with no gaps or overlaps.

2.3 Working in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council, supporting authorities (the county's district, borough and city councils), together with key stakeholders such as, the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership and the Cotswolds National Landscape Board, have contributed local knowledge, expertise, and the best available information and data to inform the strategy.

2.4 Whilst every strategy will be specific and tailored to its area, every strategy must include the following:

- A local habitat map
- A written statement of biodiversity priorities.

2.5 These requirements must set out what the strategy aims to achieve and the practical actions that will support those aims. They should also identify where actions could be undertaken to achieve the greatest benefits and connect or expand existing areas that are important for nature.

2.6 All public authorities have a duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must 'have regard' to the relevant local nature recovery strategy when doing so. For example, plan-makers should use the strategy to inform how they meet the National

Planning Policy Framework requirement to protect and enhance biodiversity through the planning system.

2.7 The Environment Act 2021 also introduced mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, requiring applicants and developers to ensure that the natural environment is left in a measurably better state than before development takes place. Proposals that create, enhance, or restore habitat in locations identified within the strategy will receive a higher biodiversity value than those delivered elsewhere, as these areas are considered more strategically important for nature recovery. This approach will encourage applicants and developers to prioritise habitat enhancement, creation, and restoration that align with local nature recovery priorities.

2.8 There is no requirement that any specific proposed action set out in the strategy must be carried out. Instead, the strategy is intended to guide where public, private and voluntary sectors focus their nature recovery efforts to aid in nature recovery across the county.

3. MAIN POINTS

3.1 Part 1 (Annex A) of the strategy sets out its purpose as a spatial tool to guide the most effective opportunities for nature recovery across Gloucestershire. It is structured around six key aims:

- Safeguarding, mapping and enhancing existing biodiversity-rich sites
- Landscape scale connectivity
- Climate emergency
- Our relationship with water
- The value of mixed and wilder habitats
- Biodiversity in our developments and settlements

3.2 To support these aims, Part 2 (Annex B) of the strategy describes a range of Potential Measures, which are recommended actions or management options designed to deliver one or more of the 10 Biodiversity Priorities:

- Grassland, meadows and heathlands (open habitats)
- Woodland habitats
- Mixed and mosaic habitats
- Open water habitats

- Running water habitats
- Wetland habitats
- Estuarine habitats
- Nature-friendly farming and forestry
- Biodiversity in settlements and developments
- Species priorities

3.3 The Local Habitat Map (Annex C) identifies existing areas of high biodiversity value, known as Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity, as well as areas with potential for restoration or habitat creation, referred to as Areas That Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity. The map also spatially visualises the priorities and opportunities set out in parts 1 and 2 of the strategy.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 There are no suitable alternative options. Gloucestershire County Council has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to prepare and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Gloucestershire. Cotswold District Council has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity and must 'have regard' to the relevant local nature recovery strategy when doing so.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The strategy is a spatial tool, enabling a wide range of stakeholders to identify opportunities for habitat enhancement, creation, and restoration, helping to effectively target nature recovery across Gloucestershire.

5.2 The officer recommendation is to endorse the strategy.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The report raises no direct financial implications.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The report raises no direct legal implications. However, Cotswold District Council must 'have regard' to the strategy when making decisions and preparing plans.

COTSWOLD
District Council

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 Cotswold District Council, as a supporting authority, has been actively involved at key stages in the development of the strategy helping to mitigate any associated risks.

8.2 The Head of Natural, Built and Historic Environment, alongside the Head of Planning Services and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning collectively responded to the public consultation, further mitigating any associated risks.

8.3 Prior to publication, the final strategy was circulated to all supporting authorities to confirm that it was justified by the public consultation findings and not materially deficient. Cotswold District Council, along with the other supporting authorities, did not issue a publication advisory notice.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 In Gloucestershire, the Local Nature Partnership and Climate Leadership Gloucestershire advocate for all residents to live within 15 minutes of accessible, biodiversity-rich green space. This ambition seeks to reduce inequalities in access to nature, improve public health, boost the local economy, and enhance biodiversity. The strategy outlines opportunities and examples to support this ambition.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The strategy directly addresses both the climate and ecological emergencies, identifying opportunities to tackle them in tandem.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None

(END)

Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

2025

Gloucestershire's Biodiversity and Opportunities for Nature Recovery

PART ONE

glos nature
GLOUCESTERSHIRE LOCAL NATURE PARTNERSHIP

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

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Foreword

Gloucestershire is a treasure trove for nature, from its undulating chalk hills supporting species rich grasslands and ancient beech woodlands in the east to the Severn Estuary and its flood plain supporting aquatic and wetland species, to the rare flora and fauna found in woodlands and grasslands from the five valleys to the Forest of Dean. Even our largest towns like Cheltenham and Gloucester contain biodiverse parks and nature reserves being managed for nature and hosting rare and protected including orchids and bats, to name a few.

Gloucestershire's landscape and nature is important for its people too – feeding us and lifting our spirits, supporting our mental and physical health, holding water in the landscape, absorbing carbon and particulate pollution, and massively supporting our economy by attracting people to visit, live and work in the county.

But just as in the rest of the UK, one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, Gloucestershire's nature is under threat. With a large rural landscape come associated challenges: pollution from intensive agriculture and loss of ecological connectivity, and huge pressure for land use change and overdevelopment. The county's unique landscape and geology support rare and important habitats and species – but these are often fragmented and in decline. In the 1930s, 40% of what we now call the Cotswold National Landscape was wildflower rich grassland. Today, shockingly, that percentage has fallen to just 1.5%.

Gloucestershire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been developed by the county council and its expert partners to address this nature emergency. It is an astonishing piece of work, mapping not only sites with existing ecological value across the whole county but also the opportunities for nature recovery in each place, whether in city or countryside, woodland or wetland, hills or valleys. It provides the evidence with which developers and planners must now "have regard" for nature, whilst providing the tools to help steer planning strategies and development to enhance not damage nature. It also empowers local people, communities and organisations to do their bit for nature, equipping them with the ideas, guidance and resources to maximise nature recovery wherever they are in the county.

I want to pay tribute to the County Council team and our partners in the Local Nature Partnership and the wide range of professionals and local wildlife experts who have worked together to deliver this strategy, along with landowners and farmers and the public who have all had their say.

We have all made a huge effort to produce a strategy to support the habitats and species that are most important to Gloucestershire, creating a scientifically robust spatial plan for where we should focus our efforts and a usable tool for everyone in the county who cares about nature.

Cllr Martin Horwood
Member for Nature, Climate & Waste Reduction


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Executive Summary

The development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for every county in England was one of the key statutory requirements of the Environment Act 2021. Gloucestershire County Council was appointed by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) to lead on the preparation of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Gloucestershire County Council chose to co-produce the strategy with the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership who were commissioned to lead on its development. The strategy has been locally led and informed by the views from environmental professionals, farmers and land managers, foresters, our biological recording community, Gloucestershire Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils, environmental NGO's and others though a series of workshops, surveys, events and consultation. The maps have been produced by Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER). The engagement, mapping methodology and consultation responses can be found in appendices A and B, housed on the strategy website.

The key uses of this Local Nature Recovery Strategy are intended to be:

- A spatial strategy to guide the best opportunities for nature recovery across Gloucestershire;
- A guide for farmers, landowners and land managers – to show the best locations for accessing funding for habitat management, restoration and creation, and species-specific projects;
- A guide for developers and planners to support designs and master planning for green and blue infrastructure, wildlife corridors and habitat creation;
- Information to help create nature and biodiversity projects and town and parish biodiversity action plans and policies.

User guides for various users can be found on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy website – including how to use the Local Nature Recovery Strategy within Biodiversity Net Gain projects, and how it can be used to guide actions by local community groups. The main way to use this strategy is to click on your location of interest on the Local Nature Recovery Strategy map. This will show the range of opportunities for nature recovery that are priorities in that particular location, in the form of Potential Measures (detailed in Part 2).

The strategy does not force the owners and managers of the land identified to make any changes. Instead, the strategy shows the priority opportunities and options for maintenance and creation of habitats, wildlife corridors and species-specific actions. It should be noted that this strategy is a county-level guide based on modelling from existing sites and surveys, therefore all detailed decisions about land management should be made in relation to site-specific advice and surveys.

This strategy has been developed through a range of discussions and input of information from nature conservationists, planners, local authority officers and members, farmers, landowners, land managers, and members of the public in Gloucestershire. From these discussions and information we have drawn out six key messages which describe the main aims for nature recovery in Gloucestershire:

1 Safeguarding, managing and enhancing existing biodiversity-rich sites.

The complex ecological relationships between species in a habitat are difficult to recreate quickly once a habitat is degraded or destroyed. With the pressures on Gloucestershire's wildlife, the highest priority is to safeguard and enhance high quality nature sites and species populations. Landowners and land managers who are already doing this should be supported.

2 Landscape scale connectivity – Better, bigger, more and more joined.

Working from existing good habitat, these sites should be increased in size, with connective habitat created to join multiple areas of value for wildlife. This is the core theme of Nature Recovery as expressed in the Making Space for Nature report, with the aim of creating a resilient and coherent nature recovery network. Areas put forward for new habitat creation can contribute to meeting the Government's goal of 30 by 30 – at least 30% of land to be protected for nature recovery by 2030.

3 Climate emergency

Climate change is already affecting our wildlife, with temperature, rainfall and growing season changes affecting the timing of natural events such as emergence, pollination and where species can thrive. Nature based solutions can help mitigate some impacts of climate change. Landscape-scale nature recovery will allow species to move and migrate to new or cooler habitat, when the conditions in their existing habitat are no longer suitable due to the impact of climate change.

4 Our relationship with water

Management of our watercourses needs to focus on re-naturalisation, restoration of floodplains and improving water quality. Actions to restore natural meanders and wiggles, along with removing artificial barriers, can have a wealth of benefit both for people and nature, such as slowing the flow of water, creating natural flood resilience and allowing fish to move freely. It is recognised that efforts to improve water quality need to focus on both point and diffuse sources, tackling sources of pollution such as run off, as well as how it moves through the watercourse.

5 The value of mixed and wilder habitats

In the right location, allowing sites to become "messy" and a complex mosaic of scrub, species rich grassland with varying sward heights and bare ground can result in a diverse ecosystem, supporting a wide range of species. The variety in structure also improves climate resilience allowing species to adapt and move between different patches of habitat. These habitats can be created through "natural regeneration" – the process of allowing large herbivores shape and maintain the habitat mosaic, or manual techniques that mimic the way they shape the landscape.

6 Biodiversity in our developments and settlements

The importance of nature in our settlements, urban areas and new developments was emphasised by participants in our public engagement sessions, as well as by other stakeholders. Nature in amongst our urban areas and settlements is important for health and wellbeing, for nature connection, for climate change mitigation and for connecting habitats and wildlife areas within and adjacent to settlements.

Part 1 of the LNRS explores the challenges and opportunities posed by these key messages. Whilst these were deemed the most important areas to focus efforts, it was noted that there are a range of other pressures or standalone opportunities that should also be considered, which include:

Pressures:

- Recreational pressures and disturbance to wildlife
- Diseases and invasive non-native species
- Pressure on woodland regeneration from an increasing deer population

Opportunities:

- The importance of fungi and soil health
- Working with the archaeological and historic environment
- Minerals extraction and restoration
- The need for ecological recording and monitoring

To address the key messages and additional pressures and opportunities 10 broad Biodiversity Priorities have been set, which are detailed in Part 2 of the strategy. Each Potential Measure has been designed to meet the aims of the Biodiversity Priorities. This strategy also considers the wider benefits of each priority for the environment and people. These benefits are also known as ecosystem services, and include benefits that affect human health and wellbeing, as well as benefits that indirectly benefit us, such as carbon sequestration and flood management. To demonstrate the ecosystem service that each priority provides, the following icons are used:

Contents

Contents

1. What is a Local Nature Recovery Strategy?

The development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for every county in England was one of the key statutory requirements of the Environment Act 2021 [1]. The aim of a LNRS is to establish priorities and map proposals for actions to drive nature's recovery and wider environmental benefits.

The main elements of the Gloucestershire LNRS are:

1. Gloucestershire's Biodiversity and Opportunities for Nature Recovery (Part 1 of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy). This document sets the scene for the county of Gloucestershire, describing its existing wildlife and protected sites, and the key messages of the strategy, which underpin the nature recovery actions being recommended.
2. Biodiversity Priorities and Potential Measures (Part 2 of the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy). The **Potential Measures** are the recommended actions or management options that will help deliver the biodiversity priorities.
3. Long-list of rare and threatened priority species in Gloucestershire, arranged in assemblages or groups in relation to their habitat needs.
4. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy map or Local Habitat Map, which maps where the Potential Measures should be focused for the best biodiversity outcomes. This identifies Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance to Biodiversity, or where the recovery or enhancement of biodiversity could make a particular contribution to other environmental benefits. It also shows a baseline map of Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity – sites already designated for wildlife importance, nationally and locally, and irreplaceable habitats.


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1 Environment Act 2021 – https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents

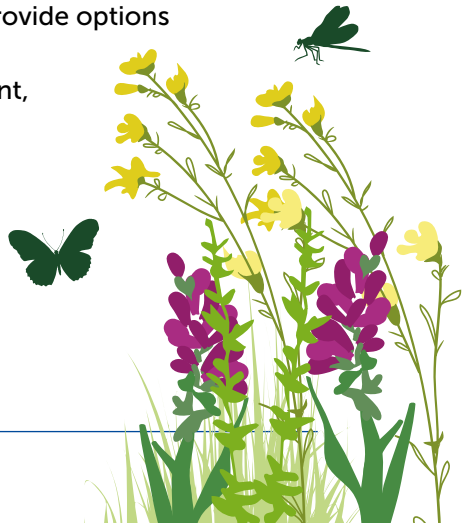
The main purpose of this strategy is to identify locations where creating or improving habitat will be most likely to provide the greatest benefit for nature and the wider environment. The strategy does not force the owners and managers of the land identified to make any changes. Instead, the strategy shows the priority opportunities and options for maintenance and creation of habitats, wildlife corridors and species-specific actions.

Gloucestershire County Council is the Responsible Authority appointed by the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) for the Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Responsible Authorities must review and republish this strategy when directed to do so by Defra, which could be between three and 10 years following publication. The mapping will be fixed until this review, to allow a consistent baseline for monitoring and informing actions, however any updates to data sets and local knowledge will inform changes that could be actioned during the review.

1.1 Who this strategy is for?

1.1.1 Farmers, landowners and managers

One of the key uses of this Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be as a guide for farmers, landowners, land managers and their advisors and land agents as to the best options for biodiversity in relation to the land they manage. This can help make decisions around conservation management, land-use changes, changes in farming options and help to provide options and supporting justifications for applications for agri-environment funding, natural capital investment, biodiversity net gain, natural flood management funding and other grant funding.



1.1.2 Planning and development

The Environment Act 2021 established two specific mechanisms to support the delivery of Local Nature Recovery Strategies – mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), and a strengthened Biodiversity Duty for Public Authorities. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy plays a key role in recommending where, and what, habitat creation and other measures should be incorporated within projects that are subject to BNG [2]. Under the Biodiversity Duty for Public Authorities, local authorities must "have regard to" the Local Nature Recovery Strategy in, for example, the local planning process, as information to take into account in Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments, to help seek opportunities for re-naturalisation of river corridors and natural flood management, and in making and monitoring Parish Biodiversity Action Plans.

Housing developers and other businesses who are making decisions that affect land or water management, can use this strategy to help steer their actions to help biodiversity in the most strategic direction. This can be done through BNG, and through designs and masterplanning for green and blue infrastructure, wildlife corridors and habitat creation, green building measures such as swift bricks and infrastructure improvements such as biodiversity-rich sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

1.1.3 Environmental NGOs and local groups

This strategy can also help inform anyone planning a nature or biodiversity project in Gloucestershire – nature conservation organisations, local companies, community projects, town and parish councils who are creating neighbourhood development plans or biodiversity action plans, and more, on actions that can make a difference to give nature a chance of recovery.

Covering settlement areas of Gloucestershire a set of Settlements and Developments Potential Measures provide a variety of actions that can help to safeguard and enhance biodiversity in our existing towns, villages and new developments. In rural areas of Gloucestershire, even outside the areas mapped as "Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity, there are many relevant Potential Measures that can support biodiversity and wider connectivity for nature recovery.

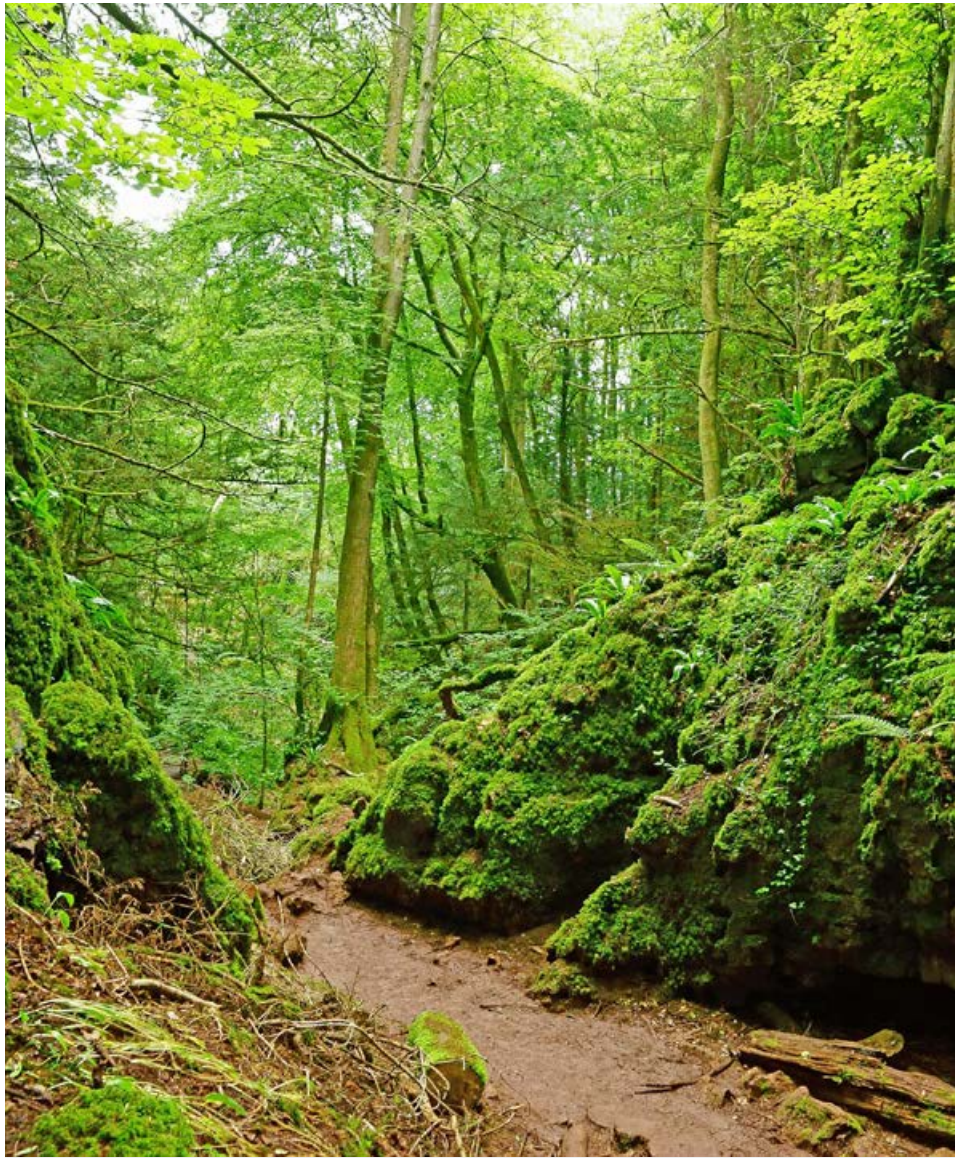
2 Biodiversity Net Gain is a mechanism for assessing a sites baseline and post-intervention ecological value. Most developments need to demonstrate a 10% "net gain" in biodiversity. https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/ecology-and-landscape/biodiversity-net-gain/

1.1.4 Considerations

An important caveat to take into account when using this strategy is that this is a high level county-scale strategy developed using the current best existing biodiversity information.

For all detailed decisions about habitat management or creation on any particular site, the general recommendations of this strategy should be supplemented with site-specific advice as appropriate, from ecologists, land agents, land managers, local authorities, Gloucestershire County Council Historic Environment Record, regulators including the Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Natural England, and within protected landscapes the National Landscape teams.

Site specific advice including baseline ecological surveys and/or soil tests should be taken before determining habitat management plans or the best options for land management on that site. Within National Landscapes, the statutory Management Plan and associated guidance including Nature Recovery Plans should be followed. If felling trees, consent and an approved felling licence may be required from the Forestry Commission. The ongoing management costs of habitat creation and enhancement should be planned for. Ongoing survey and monitoring is needed to assess the long term impact of conservation management interventions.



2. Gloucestershire and its biodiversity

2.1 Introduction to Gloucestershire

Gloucestershire is an administrative historic county within the South West region of England, bordering South East Wales, the West Midlands and South East regions (Map 1). At time of publication there are currently six administrative local authorities within the county: Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Stroud District, Cheltenham, Tewkesbury Borough, and Gloucester City. The county is approximately 270,450ha hectares in extent, at least 5,000ha of this being estuarine habitat. Gloucestershire has a population of over 630,000 residents which is likely to approach 700,000 by mid-century. The main areas of population (over 100,000) are situated in the largest settlements of Gloucester and Cheltenham but also within the wider adjoining Severn Vale.

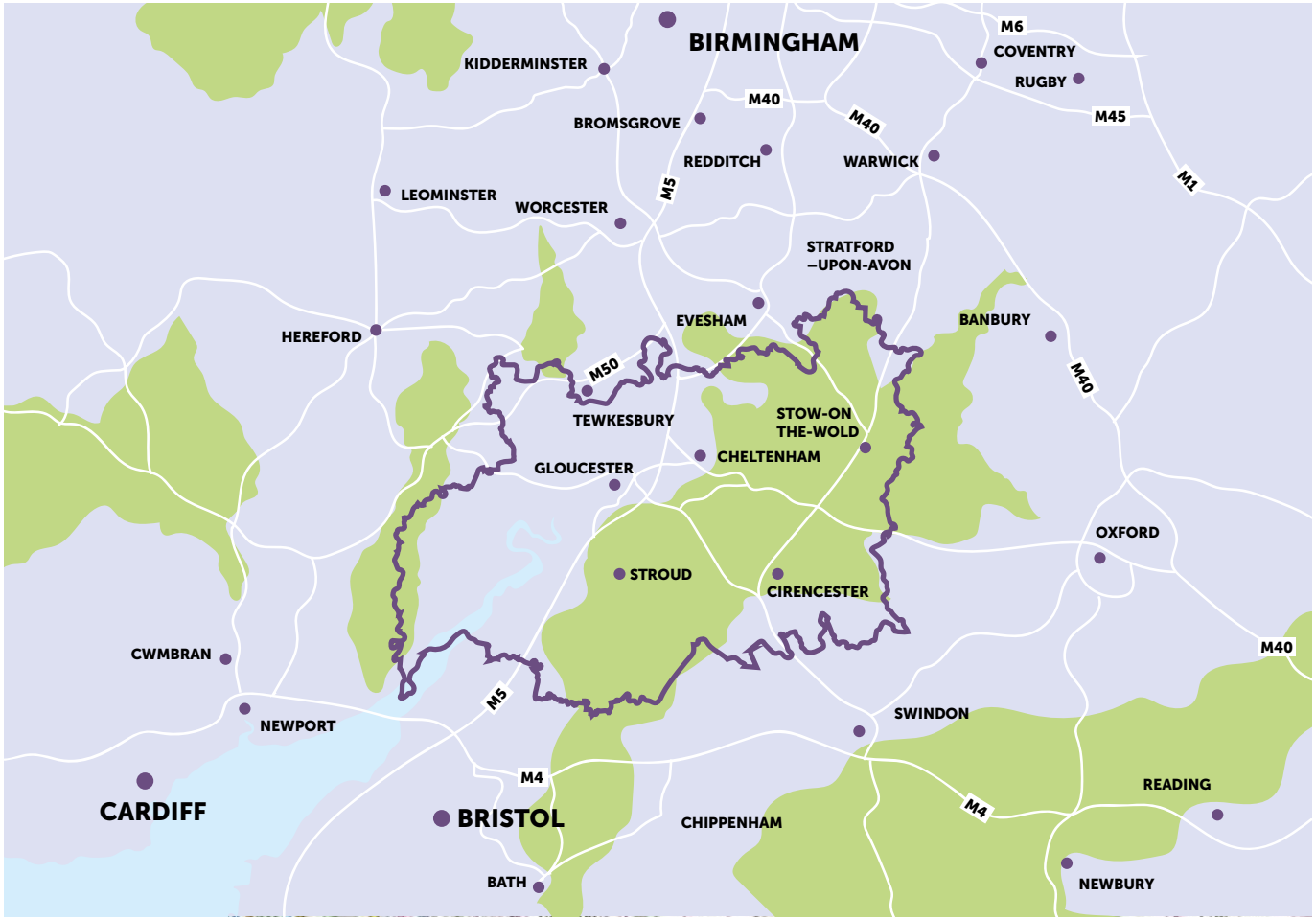


Figure 1 – Gloucestershire boundary

The total area of woodland in Gloucestershire is

36,028 hectares

Gloucestershire is a highly diverse county and is particularly special for its ancient woodland, unimproved limestone (calcareous) grassland, wetlands, old orchards, and species-rich hedgerows. It supports a range of protected and priority species, some of which are becoming increasingly rare such as a range of bat species, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, and rare plants.

Three National Landscapes (formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty); the Cotswolds, Wye Valley, and a small part of the Malvern Hills, overlap with the county. The National Landscapes collectively cover over 51% of the land area of Gloucestershire and all stretch well beyond the county boundaries into Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, South Gloucestershire, and Oxfordshire.

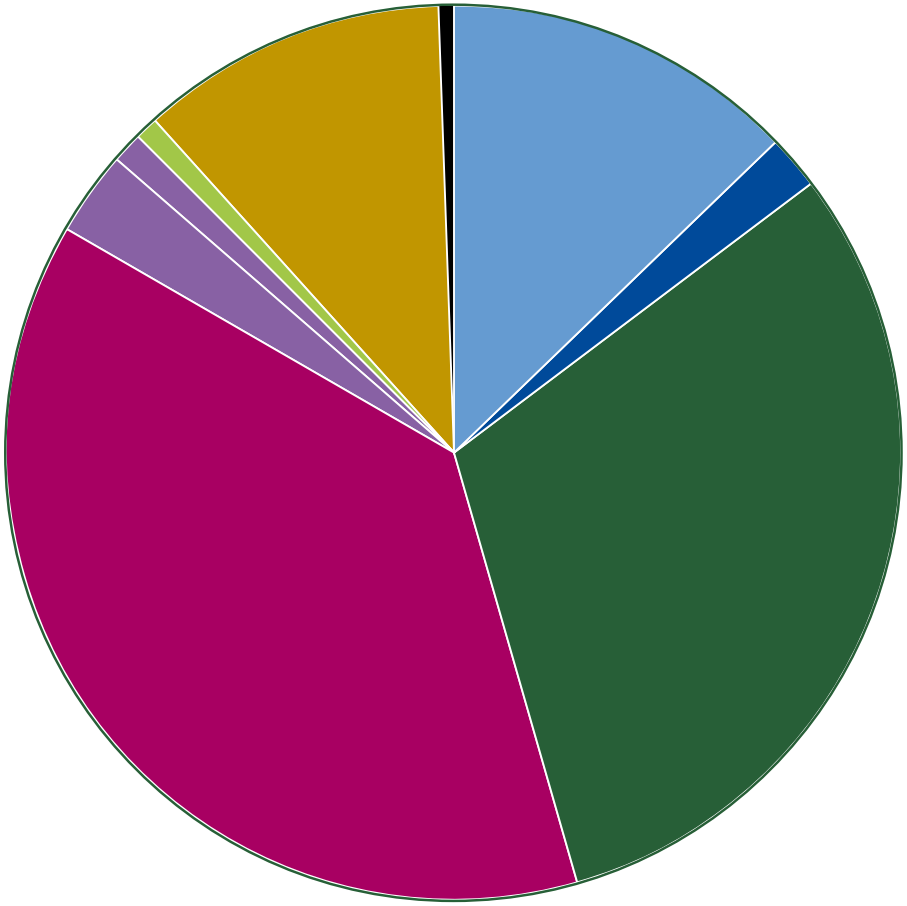
As well as encompassing the lower end of the UK's longest river, the River Severn (220 miles), Gloucestershire also hosts the source and upper parts of the Thames catchment (the UK's second longest river, 215 miles). Smaller river catchments occur throughout Gloucestershire, including the River Wye, River Frome and River Cam, with numerous tributaries.

Agricultural or horticultural practices occur on around 75% of Gloucestershire's total area and significant areas of forestry can be added to this. Gloucestershire's farmland area incorporates many types of habitat or features including disturbed or fallow ground, uncultivated field margins, hedgerows, ponds, grasslands (many flower-rich), small woods, and orchards. The total area of woodland in Gloucestershire is 36,028 hectares [3], with an extensive wooded area in the lower Wye Valley and Forest of Dean while the area around the Severn Estuary is the least wooded. In much of Gloucestershire outside of the Forest of Dean, woodland is relatively fragmented and consists of smaller patches of habitat.

3 National Forest Inventory 2021

Sixty nine percent of woodland in Gloucestershire is under sustainable management [4] with a proportion of this is managed commercially for timber, whilst some areas of privately owned woodland are unmanaged. Many forestry/ woodland areas are important for recreation and the enjoyment of the countryside.

Data from the Centre for Ecology and Hydrology [5] shows the general land cover categories in Gloucestershire are dominated by agriculture and improved grassland (68%) with urban areas taking up around 11% of the county. The most dominant natural habitat is broadleaved woodland, covering around 13% of the county.



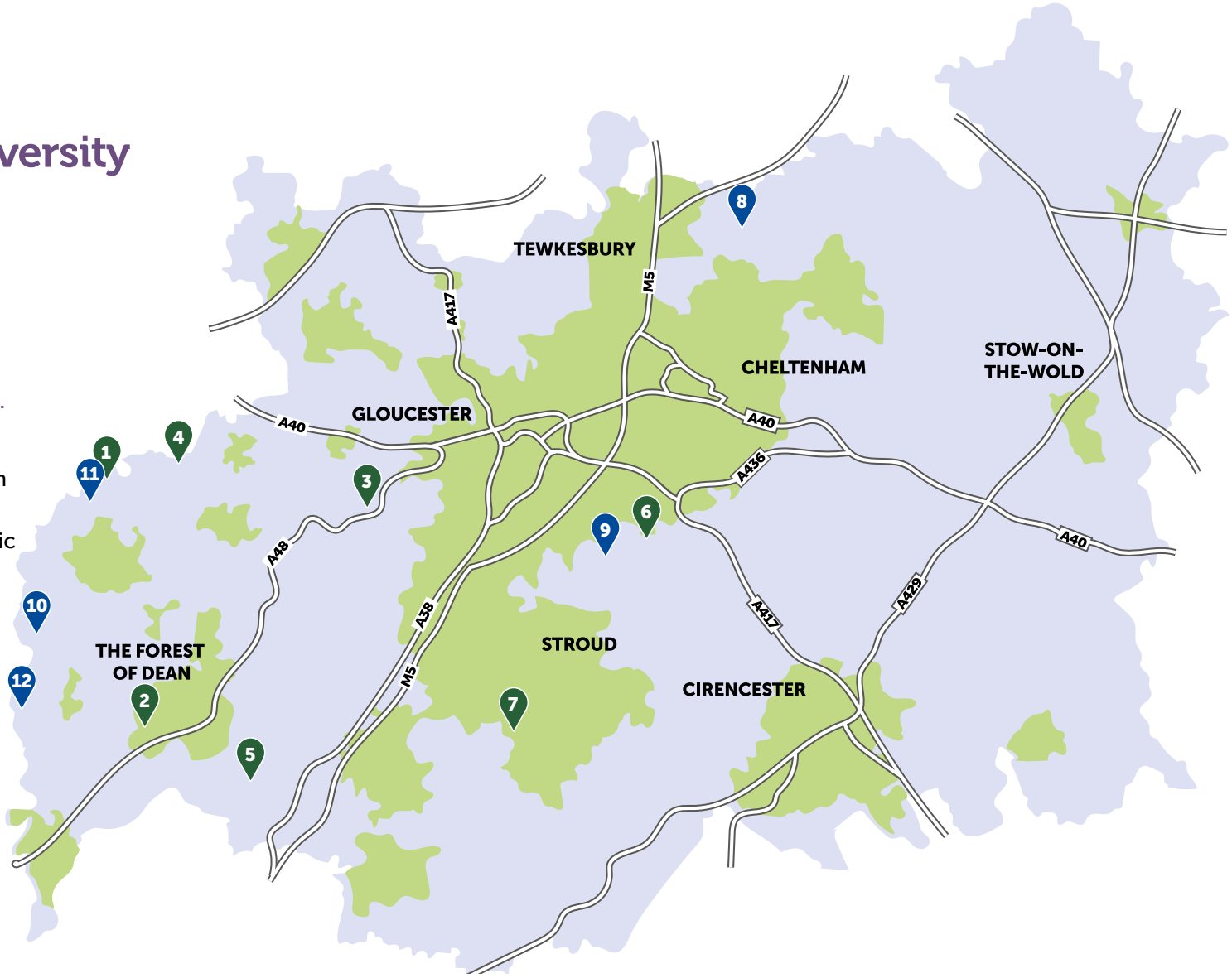
*other habitats such as wetlands, acid grassland, heaths and rock cover less than 1% combined.

4 Forestry England 2023 – https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1162830/Forestry-Commission-Key-Performance-Indicators-Report-2022-23.pdf
5 UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology 2024 – https://catalogue.ceh.ac.uk/documents/5af9e97d-9f33-495d-8323-e57734388533?_gl=1*6w8arc*_ga*MjIzOTQ5NDgyLjE3NjMwMzAzMTc.*_ga_27CMQ4NHKV*czE3NjQ3ODQ0MjckbzkkZzAkdDE3NjQ3ODQ0MjckajYwJGwwJGgw

2.2 Gloucestershire's existing protected biodiversity

In Gloucestershire, there are a significant number of designated sites of international and national importance for nature that are afforded special legal protection [6] as well as Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites that are given a level of protection through National and Local Planning Policy.

Internationally designated sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites. Nationally designated sites include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs). There is a need to update this baseline of designated sites, and to update the species and habitat information for which these sites are designated, for example, the important species of the Severn Estuary have been changing over time and with climate change.



Internationally important sites within Gloucestershire

Sites of national importance in Gloucestershire

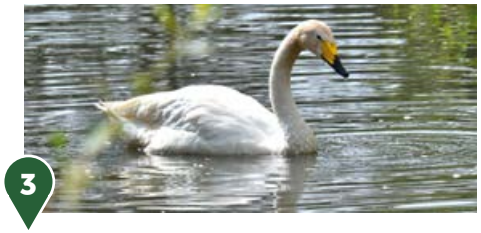
1 The Wye Valley Woodlands SAC 2 The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC 3 Walmore Common SPA 4 River Wye SAC 5 Severn Estuary SA 6 Cotswold Beechwoods SAC 7 Rodborough Common SAC 8 Dixton Wood 9 Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods NNR 10 Highbury Wood NNR 11 Lady Park Wood NNR 12 The Hudnalls NNR

6 Designated sites and information about them can be found on MAGIC Maps– https://magic.defra.gov.uk/

2.2.1 Internationally important sites within Gloucestershire

The Wye Valley Woodlands SAC is designated for its beech forests, lime forests of slopes, screes and ravines and yew woods.

The Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC, designated for supporting large populations of breeding lesser and greater horseshoe bats.



Walmore Common SPA is the only significant area of peat in Gloucestershire and the current SPA designation supports over wintering Bewick's swan.

River Wye SAC is designated for the watercourse type and assemblages of aquatic plants. The following species are also qualifying features: white-clawed crayfish, sea lamprey, brook lamprey, river lamprey, Twaite shad, Allis shad, Atlantic salmon, bullhead, otter and aquatic invertebrates.

Severn Estuary SAC, SPA and Ramsar designations. The SAC qualifying features are estuaries, mudflats and sandflats not covered by seawater at low tide, Atlantic salt meadows, sandbanks which are slightly covered by sea water all the time, and reefs. The site also supports sea lamprey, river lamprey, twaite shad, Atlantic salmon, European eel and sea trout. The current SPA designation supports an assemblage of at least 20,000 waterbirds, including overwintering gadwall, greater white-fronted goose, Bewick's swan, dunlin, common redshank and common shelduck. Similarly the Ramsar designation covers the habitats of intertidal mudflats, sand banks, saltmarsh, shingle, and rocky platforms, the invertebrate community, several species of waterbirds and passage and wintering waders, and several species of fish migrating between sea and river via the estuary.

Cotswold Beechwoods SAC is designated for being the most westerly extensive blocks of beech forests in the UK. The woods are floristically richer than the Chilterns, and rare plants include red helleborine, stinking hellebore, narrow-lipped helleborine and wood barley. The woods are structurally varied, including blocks of high forest and some areas of remnant beech coppice. Dry calcareous grasslands interspersed with scrub and rare orchids are also a qualifying feature.

2.2.1 Internationally important sites within Gloucestershire

7

Rodborough Common SAC is designated for its species rich dry calcareous grassland substrates, supporting important assemblages of orchids. Rodborough Common is one of the most extensive area of semi-natural dry grasslands surviving in the Cotswolds, and represents a species assemblage more or less confined to the Cotswolds.

8

Dixton Wood SAC is designated for violet click beetle. It is a small site with a large number of ancient ash pollards, and supports a rich fauna of scarce invertebrate species associated with decaying timber on ancient trees.

North Meadow SAC is in Wiltshire, but borders the Gloucestershire county boundary, and is an exceptional example of lowland floodplain meadow.

2.2.2 Sites of national importance in Gloucestershire

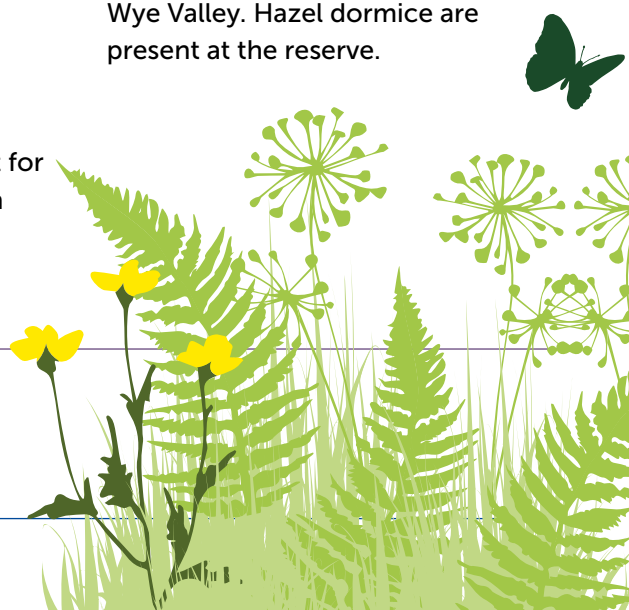
National Nature Reserves in Gloucestershire [7] include:

9

Cotswold Commons and Beechwoods NNR. At 7.5km2, it is the largest nature reserve in the Cotswolds. Consisting of limestone grasslands and woodlands, it follows the scarp slopes of the Painswick valley. It includes the internationally important Cotswolds Beechwoods SAC (described above). Among the wider woodlands Buckholt Wood is of note with over 780 species of fungi recorded. The grasslands support a wide range of flora and insects, including the rare Duke of Burgundy butterfly at Rudge Hill Common. The limestone headwaters on the scarp slopes provide some very good habitat for white-clawed crayfish, and high quality assemblages for aquatic invertebrates and bryophytes.

10

Highbury Wood NNR. Situated on the eastern bank of the River Wye, and part of an almost unbroken chain of ancient woods that link Chepstow (Monmouthshire) to Ross-on-Wye (Herefordshire), the 46 hectare wood is rich and diverse, noted for its variety of woodland types. The large-leaved lime, wild service tree, and whitebeam are examples of rare trees here, with the large-leaved lime particularly important as it is restricted to the Wye Valley. Hazel dormice are present at the reserve.



7 Gov.uk – https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gloucestershires-national-nature-reserves/gloucestershires-national-nature-reserves

11

Lady Park Wood NNR. An unmanaged and near natural woodland which is part of the Wye Valley Woodlands SAC (above), Lady Park Wood is home to both the UK's native species of lime tree as well as whitebeam. Rare bats have been recorded, especially greater and lesser horseshoe bats which are found in significant numbers.

12

The Hudnalls NNR. Also within the Wye Valley Woodlands SAC, and managed with minimum intervention, the lime-beech-oak woodland on strongly acid soils is of a type virtually unknown outside of the Lower Wye Valley. Alongside the other woodland NNRS, rare plants are found here supporting rich insect and bird communities, including some rare members of the true fly (*Diptera*) family.

There are 123 [8] Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) designated in Gloucestershire. Some of the largest are recognised internationally as SACs/SPAs (for example, Severn Estuary, River Wye, Cotswolds Commons and Beechwoods). Other large SSSIs include Minchinhampton Common, nationally important for calcareous grassland plants and fungi, and Cleeve Common, which at 455 hectares is Gloucestershire's largest common comprising an extensive area of biodiverse limestone grassland. Woodchester Park is another large SSSI, with diverse mix of animals plants and fungi associated with the mix of grassland, woodland and wetland habitats on site. A notable species found at Woodchester is the greater horseshoe bat, a rare and highly protected species. The Cotswold Water Park covers more than 170 lakes that support 35,000 waterbirds in winter and a range of aquatic plants, and recently had its designation boundary expanded.

Among the many examples of smaller SSSIs, that are still extremely important biologically, is Badgeworth SSSI. This is one of only two sites in the UK where Adder's-tongue Spearwort can be found, with its own name locally, "Badgeworth buttercup". Wotton Hill is another example of a small site with high value, with the woodland here being one of only two UK sites where the rare limestone woundwort is present.

8 Natural England – https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteList.aspx?siteName=&countyCode=16&responsiblePerson=&DesignationType=SSSI

2.2.3 Irreplaceable Habitats

Irreplaceable habitats were defined in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain guidance in 2024. The irreplaceable habitats, according to this initial definition, present in Gloucestershire are:

- **Ancient woodland – this includes**
  - Ancient Semi-Natural Woodlands
  - Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites
  - Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland
  - Infilled Ancient Wood Pasture and Parkland
- **Ancient and Veteran Trees**
- **Lowland Fens**

Within Gloucestershire 17,928 hectares of the woodland is ancient (6.8% of Gloucestershire), and Gloucestershire currently has 351 [9] identified Ancient and Veteran Trees (Ancient Tree Inventory, Woodland Trust).

Ancient & Veteran Trees

351

identified trees in Gloucestershire

Ancient woodland in Gloucestershire

17,928

*equivalent to **6.8%** of all land in Gloucestershire*

2.2.4 Sites of county importance

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) [10] are declared by local authorities (councils) on land they control that is of importance for wildlife, geology or environmental education and is accessible to visitors for the enjoyment of nature. These specially selected sites number just over 10 in Gloucestershire include well known sites such as Robinswood Hill and Alney Island.

Local Wildlife Sites are designated at a county level [11] , and at date of publication there are 902 Local Wildlife Sites in Gloucestershire. These are part of a nationwide non-statutory site protection system which collectively form the bulk of the county's identified natural heritage. Yet, they cover only about 1% of the county's land area, a clear indication that although we have many biodiversity-rich sites, they are small and fragmented and although they have some policy protection, they have no real legal status. There is an identified need to resource the review and updating of Local Wildlife Site designations and monitoring.

Conservation Road Verges – Road verges can sometimes support remnants of old and species-rich meadows and be bounded by species-rich hedgerows or mature trees. A selection of the most important road verges for biodiversity has been identified by Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust working in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council, and these are designated in the county as conservation road verges [12]. At date of publication there are 109 conservation road verges in Gloucestershire. Road verges can be useful refuges for wildlife and can act as corridors connecting species and habitats across the county.

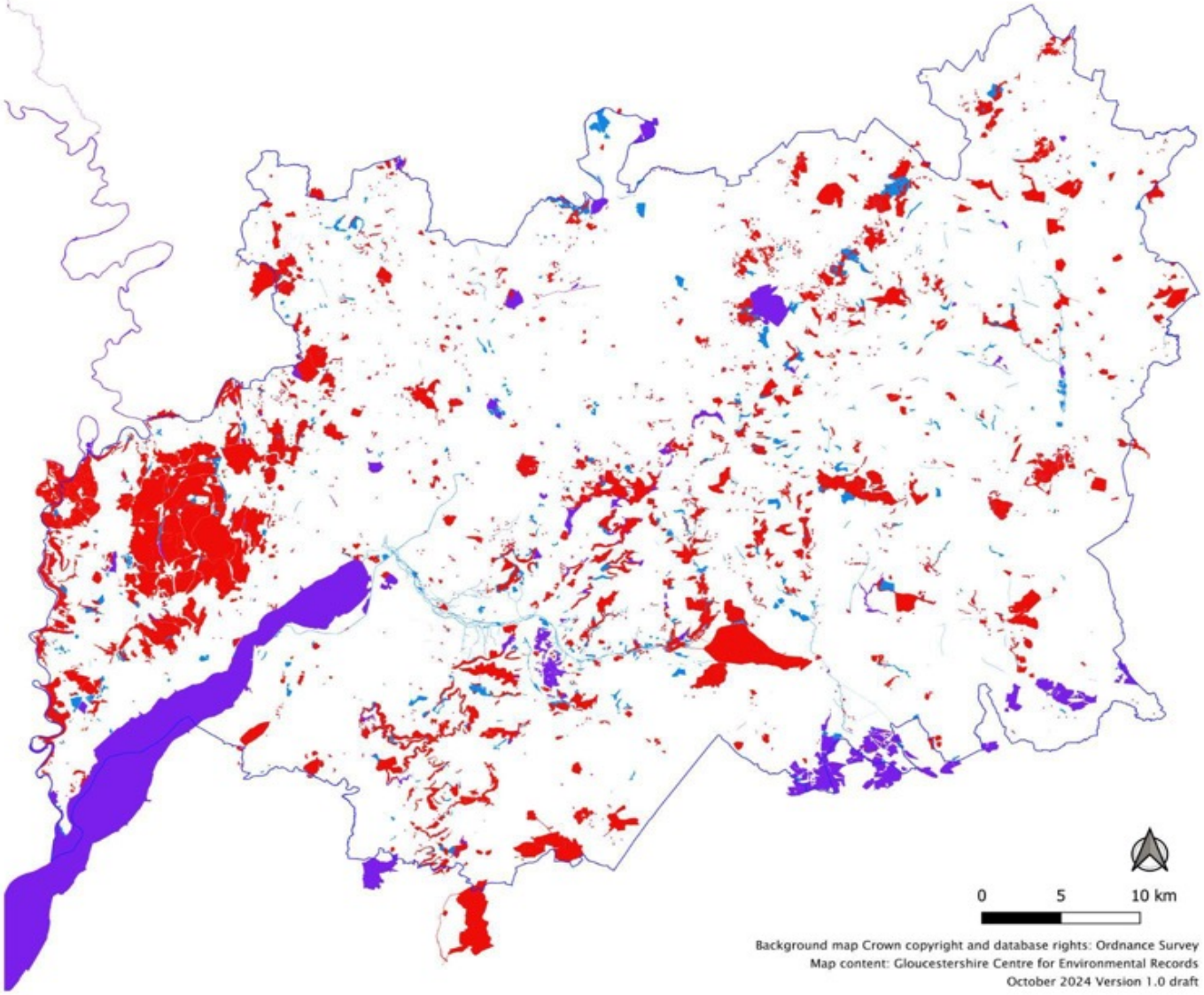
9 The Ancient Tree Inventory is in part, developed through voluntary submissions of ancient trees, so not all existing trees within the county will be included in this figure. This figure also does not include trees that have restricted access, as the data is not publicly available to download.
10 Gov.uk – https://www.gov.uk/guidance/create-and-manage-local-nature-reserves
11 Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust – https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/wildlife/local-wildlife-sites
12 Gloucestershire County Council – https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/plans-policies-procedures-and-manuals/biodiversity-and-highways/

2.2.5 Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity

A key part of the LNRS involves mapping areas of habitat that already have a level of legal protection, to recognise that these areas should be protected and to inform how networks of potential habitat creation should be designed to expand and link these. Combining the internationally, nationally and locally (county importance) designated sites with irreplaceable habitats, forms the **Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity** mapping layer.

Priority Habitats [13] – a list of important habitat types recognised for their ecological value – that are not currently classified as "Irreplaceable" can be found within the Local Habitat Map within a range of measures relating to managing existing habitats. They are not, however, included within the Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity layer due to the country-wide Local Nature Recovery Strategy guidance. Collectively, these sites cover roughly 15% of the county.

Figure 1 – Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity



13 Gov.uk – https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/habitats-and-species-of-principal-importance-in-england

2.3 Biodiversity in each National Character Area

Gloucestershire's rich and diverse habitats are a reflection of the underlying geology and historic land use influences. As a result, the county contains five very distinctive National Character Areas, which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than county or district boundaries:

- NCA 105: Forest of Dean and Lower Wye
- NCA 107: Cotswolds
- NCA 106: Severn and Avon Vales
- NCA 108: Upper Thames
- Clay Vales
- NCA 104: South Herefordshire and Over Severn

Natural England National Character Area profiles [14] (NCAs) describe these landscapes in more detail and demonstrate the continuing connectivity of these landscapes beyond the county boundary. A further three National Character Areas overlap the county by a small amount (Bristol Avon Valleys and Ridges; Herefordshire Lowlands; Malvern Hills).

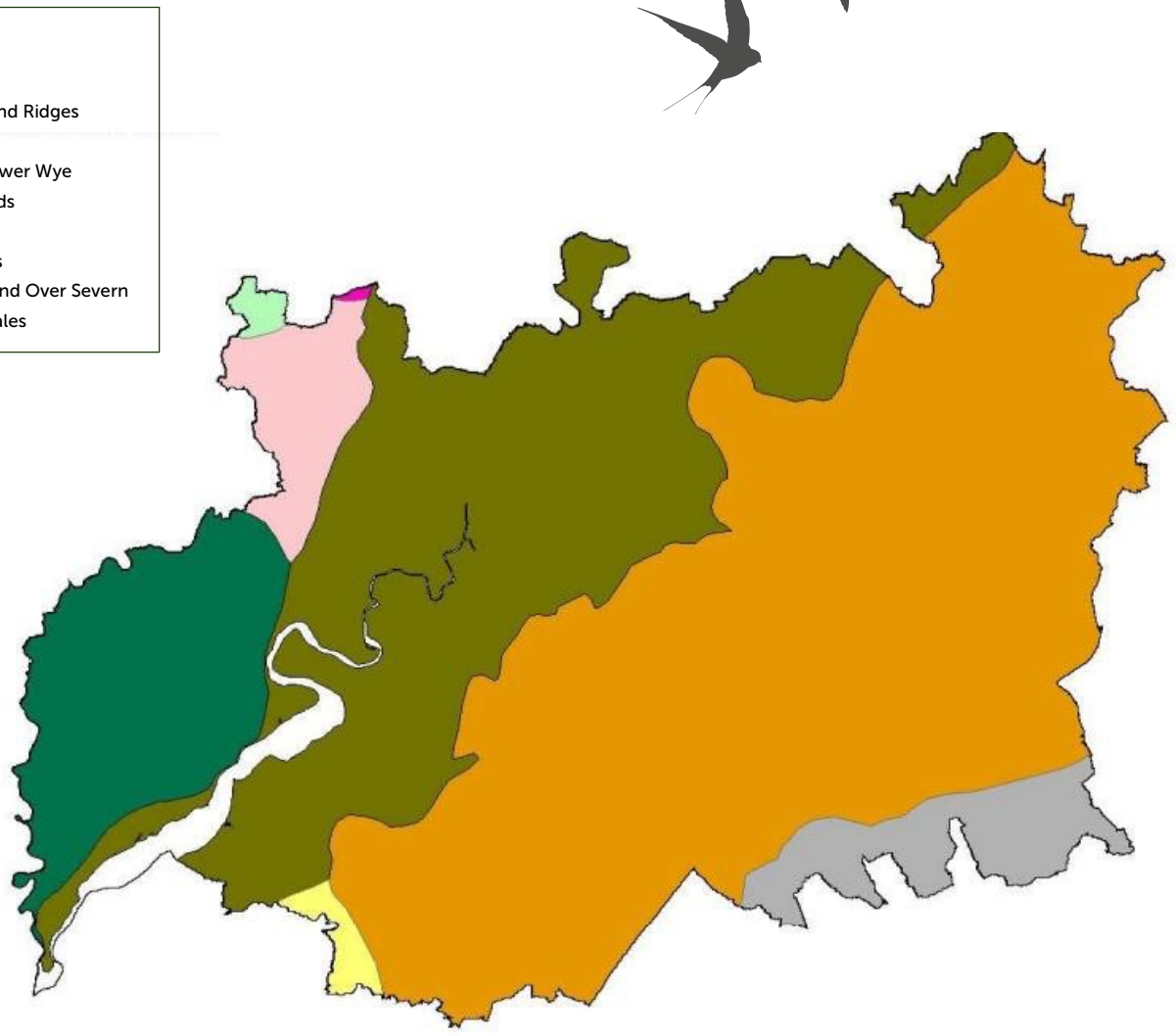


Figure 2 – National Character areas in Gloucestershire

14 Gov.uk – https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-character-area-profiles-information-for-local-decision-making

This section describes the context of the main priority habitats and species for each of the main National Character Areas that are in Gloucestershire.

2.3.1 Forest of Dean and Lower Wye

The Forest of Dean and Lower Wye (NCA 105) forms a large distinctive landscape in the west of the county bordering Wales and Herefordshire. The Forest of Dean consists of mainly higher ground and ridges with extensive woodland and more open ground that merges into the Severn Vale, Leadon Valley and the Lower Wye Valley which is part of the Wye Valley national Landscape [15].

In the Forest of Dean, the geology, topography and past land use dominate with large impacts evident from past mining, industry, and more recently from forestry and agriculture. The landscape is a mosaic of open and wooded ground characteristic of medieval hunting forests. The location has extensive archaeological remains and historic structures, and forestry tends to be more common on the higher ground. The Forest of Dean is a stronghold for nature [16], with large areas of woodland, including ancient semi-natural woodland, plus open space that provide a mosaic of habitats for a great range of species. Of note are the colonies of greater and lesser horseshoe bats, the largest colonies of these species in Europe. The Forest of Dean has the largest population of lesser horseshoe bats in the UK, at 26% of the UK population. The Forest of Dean is also well known for its diversity of plants, birds, and invertebrates and there is the aspiration for the Forest of Dean to become a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

15 Wye Valley National Landscape – https://www.wyevalley-nl.org.uk/
16 Forestry England – https://www.forestryengland.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Our%20Shared%20Forest%20-%20Forest%20of%20Dean%20Land%20Management%20Plan%20published%20June%202019.pdf

Gloucestershire has a relatively small but important amount of acid grassland and heathland, which is mainly found within the Forest of Dean area, as well as Cleeve Common, and this strategy has a range of Potential Measures relating to these habitats. There is some potential to restore mires and lowland peat in small areas of the Forest of Dean through re-wetting or the actions of beavers – these potential areas are limited in geographical extent but highly important habitats, including for carbon sequestration.

There is a strong water connection between the Forest, the Wye, the Severn and its estuary, so Potential Measures about river re-naturalisation and riparian tree planting, as well as tufa (relatively rare calcium deposits in river headwaters which benefit specialised invertebrate and other species) are important in this area, with the Forest to Sea programme by the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership being a key way these are being progressed. There are also isolated populations of white-clawed crayfish in the Forest of Dean, with the potential to create ARK sites to boost and protect populations.

The Lower Wye Valley part of the National Character Area (NCA 105) sits within the Wye Valley National Landscape Area. The River Wye and its limestone gorge dominate in Gloucestershire and adjoining Monmouthshire. There are steep wooded slopes and in places open pasture and meadow bounded by old hedgerows or stone walls. There is a tidal influence on the Wye in the county and like the Severn, the Wye is important for migratory fish. The Lower Wye Valley has a wealth of woodland and meadow species including rare mammals, plants, and insects.

Traditional orchards, providing an excellent habitat for veteranised wood and a mixed mosaic habitat, and important for species such as the noble chafer beetle, are an important habitat within the Forest of Dean and Lower Wye area, as well as other parts of Gloucestershire, so there is a Potential Measure for traditional orchard management, restoration and creation. Opportunities should be taken to create more landscape scale connectivity of wooded habitats between the Wye and Forest of Dean and Wales, especially to encourage movement of pine marten populations.

The Forest of Dean area owned and managed by Forestry England is a great example of a working forest which is supplying sustainably-sourced timber whilst conserving plant and animal species, recovering vital ecosystems and returning missing species to our landscapes [17]. The Forest has seen some great work in terms of species recovery projects including pine marten and beaver.

*The **Forest of Dean** has the **largest population** of*

lesser horseshoe bats

*in the UK, at **26% of the UK population**.*

17 Forestry England – https://www.forestryengland.uk/the-forest-dean/our-work

35 pine martens

*were reintroduced to the **Forest of Dean** between 2019–2021 through a **partnership of conservation organisations**.*

Under a partnership between Forestry England, Natural England and the Beaver Trust, beavers were reintroduced in 2018 and 2024 into two separate enclosures in the Forest [18] (Greathough Brook and Perry Hay). Beavers are 'ecosystem engineers' and the dams they create can slow the flow of water at times of heavy rainfall, releasing it slowly during dry periods thereby reducing the ecological impacts of drought. They have now settled in and are having multiple positive impacts on biodiversity, habitats, water quality and flow rates. The beavers at Greathough Brook have even managed to reduce flooding in a village downstream.

Also, between 2019 and 2021, a collaboration between Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, Forestry England, Forest Research and Vincent Wildlife Trust saw 35 pine martens being successfully released into the Forest of Dean [19]. Monitoring shows that they have been spreading via connected nature networks and habitat corridors across the region, with some spreading throughout the Forest, and others venturing across the Wye into Wales, others northwards following the Wye, and one marten was even found in the Stroud Valleys. This project will bolster the expanding Welsh population and help establish a resilient pine marten population in the south-west. The 'Martens on the Move' team is now leading on monitoring as they continue to spread [20]

18 Forestry England – https://www.forestryengland.uk/the-forest-dean/beavers-the-forest-dean
19 Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust – https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/project-pine-marten
20 Vincent Wildlife Trust – https://www.vwt.org.uk/projects/martens-on-the-move-a-new-era-of-pine-marten-conservation

2.3.2 Cotswolds

The Cotswolds National Character Area (NCA 107) is extensive and although most of it is located within Gloucestershire it also stretches well beyond the county boundaries to the north, south and east. There are two main areas of semi-natural habitat within the NCA that have been identified previously as local Nature Improvement Areas and form significant parts of the local Nature Recovery Network mapping.

Arable farming is extensive across the high ground and dip slope of the Cotswolds but there is permanent pasture on the steeper slopes. The unimproved calcareous grasslands, lowland meadow in the valley bottoms, ancient woodland, limestone watercourses including tufa formations, and open farmland are of significant biodiversity value.

The Cotswolds are nationally important for unimproved calcareous grasslands, which have become increasingly fragmented over the last 70-80 years. Unimproved calcareous grasslands can be extraordinarily rich in plant species (with up to 40 species per square metre [21]) but this may become more limited in smaller isolated patches. Scattered scrub is an important element for many species including butterflies. There are therefore Potential Measures in this strategy for managing, restoring and creating lowland calcareous grassland as well as a range of measures for some of the species found on calcareous grassland, such as juniper, large blue, Duke of Burgundy and more.

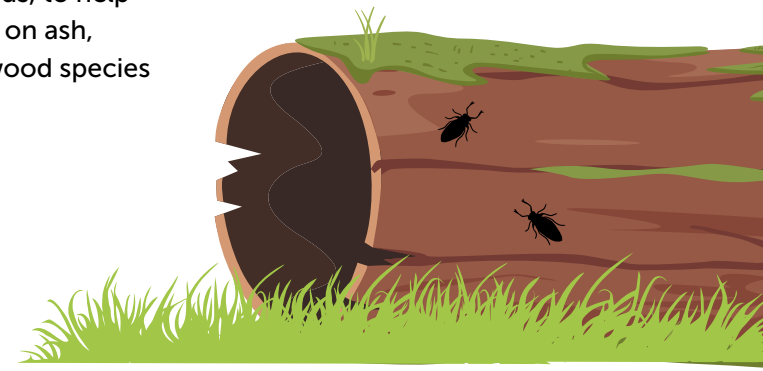
Cotswolds National Landscape's Glorious Cotswold Grasslands project [22] has been running since 2019, working with landowners to create and restore species rich lowland calcareous grassland and lowland meadows. The National Trust's Stroud Landscape Project [23] is taking a landscape-scale approach between Crickley Hill and Wotton-under-Edge in working with landowners to restore, create and connect habitats including species-rich lowland meadow and calcareous grassland. Other projects such as the Grasswolds landscape recovery project proposal will add to this work. Opportunities should be identified to further consolidate this work which will increase the connectivity and resilience of the open habitat network in the Cotswolds.

21 Forestry Research – https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/bpg_18.pdf
22 Cotswolds National Landscape – https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-work/nature-recovery/glorious-cotswold-grasslands/
23 National Trust – https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/gloucestershire-cotswolds/minchinhampton-and-rodborough-commons/stroud-landscape-project

Neutral and floodplain meadows are found in the deeper soils of the valley bottoms (often grading into calcareous grassland further up the slope), these require an appropriate cycle of grazing or hay cutting to maintain their species diversity. There are concentrations of this habitat particularly around the east flowing rivers that form the Cotswold rivers Nature Improvement Area. Where possible opportunities should be taken to reconnect rivers with their floodplain to allow the natural cycle of overtopping. Often the meadows are very small and fragmented. As well as increasing patch size, connectivity could be enhanced through flower rich arable field margins.

The steepness of the scarp, and therefore its lack of suitability for arable farming means that there remains a spine of ancient woodland and unimproved calcareous grassland stretching north to south. This forms the Cotswold scarp local nature improvement area and a key part of the nature recovery network. While there is this spine of core habitat, it is significantly fragmented in places and opportunities should be taken to improve the quality of semi-natural grasslands and woodland through appropriate management, increasing the extent of the habitat areas and creating connectivity between them. Care should be taken not to cut off the open habitat network through establishment of woodlands. Where these networks intersect, matrix habitats like grassland with scattered scrub, or woodlands with large glades and rides can form appropriate network intersections.

Veteran ash pollards are characteristic of the Cotswolds area, and their importance as a habitat is increased as ash dieback significantly reduces the number of ash trees. There is therefore a species Potential Measure to conserve veteran ash pollards, to help vulnerable species that rely on ash, such as lichens and dead-wood species especially click beetles.



The rivers represent key examples of oolitic limestone rivers, have high wildlife value and are of national importance. The quality of these rivers is threatened where unsympathetic land management causes diffuse water pollution, and from point source pollution from sewage outfalls during release events. There are opportunities to create habitat next to rivers to help improve their ecological condition, including river buffer strips, riparian tree planting or management or creation of floodplain meadows. Adaptation to climate change, including the need to hold back water, would benefit from relinking watercourses with their floodplain and using in-stream natural flood management techniques, potentially including beaver.

The limestone of the Cotswolds results in a good number of tufa formations. Sensitive land management is needed to ensure that they survive [24] .
They support plants, mosses, liverworts and algae, and specialist invertebrate communities including a number of species of conservation concern.
These tufa springs, slides and steps/cascades are vulnerable to changes in the water table e.g. below water table quarrying and disruption to natural spring lines by drainage works and by overgrowth of vegetation such as invasive non-native species.

By working with landowners, work in recent years has been targeted to create viable habitat for water voles based upon minimum viable area (MVA) methodology. Adjoining flood plain areas, such as at Sherborne Water Meadows, have also been a focus for activity which has benefitted a wide range of plants and animals. There are opportunities to continue this work and replicate the approach further downstream in Oxfordshire.

24 Buglife – https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2019/08/Sheet-2-General-guidance-web.pdf

Improvement in water quality will need to focus on the management of the adjoining valley sides where there is a great opportunity to create wildlife corridors based on a mosaic of woodland, scrub and limestone grassland running north and west from the rivers Thames and Avon to the Cotswolds scarp. There is a Potential Measure on improving the ecological condition of rivers (**Measure 022**), as well as a number of measures about ways to improve water quality, including **Measures 038**, **044**, **046** and **047**.

Improving water quality will greatly benefit species including white clawed crayfish, water vole and otter and a wide range of invertebrates. There are some small catchments in the Cotswolds where the native white clawed crayfish is withstanding competition from the American signal crayfish, and a Potential Measure on white clawed crayfish aims to bolster efforts to help this continue.

The open arable areas of the Cotswold dip slope are particularly important for farmland birds and rare arable plants. Across the wider farmed landscape, particularly of the dip slope, the opportunity is to integrate wildlife into productive farming through a regenerative or eco-agricultural approach. Management to support good soil structure and the integration of margins, buffer strips, bigger bushier hedgerows, trees, ponds and wild corners, enabling integrated pest management, across the whole farmed landscape would enable many more species to thrive. Agroforestry should also be considered as a farming practice, due to its range of benefits for both productivity, biodiversity and improved climate resilience. Extensive conservation grazing will help support the restoration of species-rich grassland. Where land is marginally productive it may be better to revert to grassland.

*Improving water quality will greatly benefit species including white **clawed crayfish**, **water vole** and **otter** and a wide range of **invertebrates***

2.3.3 Severn and Avon Vales

The Gloucestershire part of the Severn and Avon Vales, NCA 106, is the **Severn Vale**, an open low-lying agricultural landscape that dominates the central region of Gloucestershire. It is linked to the Avon Vale in the north and stretches from Tewkesbury to the border with Wales at Chepstow in the south. This is the landscape where the City of Gloucester is situated with the M5 motorway running through it and Cheltenham nestling beneath the Cotswold scarp. At the southern end the meandering central River Severn slowly transforms to become the Severn Estuary where the landscape is even more open. The two main aspects of importance for biodiversity in this area are one, the tidal estuarine ecosystems, and two the grasslands, wetlands, hedgerows and orchards of the vale.

The Severn Estuary in Gloucestershire is dominated by the powerful River Severn with an estuary with the second biggest tidal range in the world. A meandering river channel is flanked with extensive banks of sand and mud that are flooded at high tide. Areas of salt marsh vegetation are currently limited in extent. The ecosystem of this estuary is of international importance for birds and migratory fish and is bordered by floodplain grazing land and eroding cliffs and rocks in places [25]. There are two small harbours (ports) in the central zone at Lydney and Sharpness which are accessible only at certain parts of a very large tidal range. Relative lack of human disturbance across the Severn and shoreline helps maintain important habitats for wildlife.

The value of the estuary and floodplain for birds is widely acknowledged and internationally recognised. Large populations of numerous bird species rely on the Severn for wintering and migration, including birds stopping to feed as part of their migration journeys (stopovers), in addition to species that are present year-round. The estuary is of significance for migratory fish, linking breeding, maturing and spawning grounds in freshwaters for

25 See Severn Estuary designated sites in section above.

endangered species including European eel, twaite shad, salmon, lamprey and sea trout. It has the most diverse range of fish species in Britain and some of the country's most important nursery sites [26]. Although invertebrate communities are less well studied they are known to play a key role in supporting the biodiversity of the area, for example attracting bird life. Scarce plants can also be found here, connected to the saltmarshes, such as the Slender Hare's-ear. The overall scale of the ecosystem and it's habitats together are a critical part of it's significance for nature.

It is important to protect the Severn Estuary SPA through careful Strategic Local Development Plans, ensuring the approved mitigation strategy is followed, ensuring suitable sustainable accessible natural greenspace (SANGs) recreation areas are established away from ecologically sensitive sites.

There are important opportunities in the Severn Vale for floodplain meadows, fens and wetlands. We should take opportunities to plan for a landscape scale expansion of wetlands, intertidal habitats, rhines and unimproved grasslands along river floodplains through restoration, expansion and re-linkage of existing remnant areas of semi-natural habitat. Opportunities should be taken to create biodiverse floodplain habitats along the Severn Vale to support recovery of species including European eel and true fox-sedge, for example through the Eelscapes project [27].

The floodplain of the River Severn is highly productive agricultural land. There are a significant number of good sites of species-rich grassland, including floodplain meadows. Much of the area is important for over wintering waterbirds, and a series of core areas which remain wet in summer support breeding waders, as well as actingas drop in locations for migrating waders.

26 Severn Estuary Partnership – https://severnestuarypartnership.org.uk/the-estuary/physical-natural-environment/fish/
27 Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust – https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/what-we-do/current-projects/eelscapes

The Severn Vale has limited woodland cover today but has traditional orchards, hedgerows with trees plus important areas of lowland meadow and floodplain grazing marsh. The area is known for its variety of birds, invertebrates, flora and fungi, including the relatively rare native black poplar which is characteristic of the Severn and Avon vales, and globally vulnerable Orchard Toothcrust fungus. It is a significant area not just for biodiversity but also for food production, flood regulation and recreational opportunities.

Regenerative farming principles should be taken up, to incorporate more opportunities for biodiversity into productive farmland and protect ecosystem services, particularly soil and water quality.

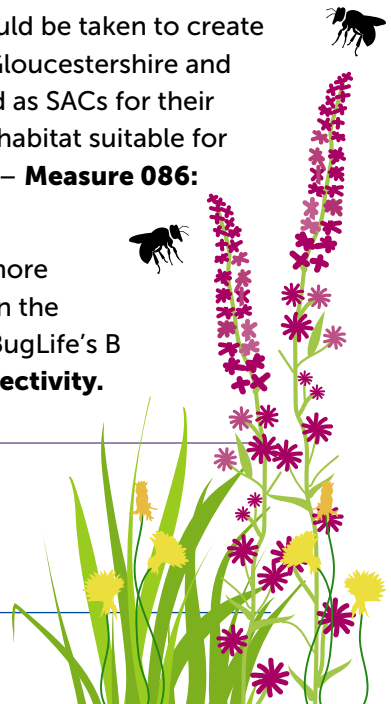
Traditional orchards in the Severn Vale should be retained and restored, and links created through habitat creation, hedgerow management and hedgerow and in field tree planting, with woodlands and veteran trees to create a long term sustainable resource for deadwood fungi, invertebrates and cavity nesting species.

There are important horseshoe bat commuting routes through the Severn Vales, between the Forest of Dean and the Cotswolds. Dark hedgerow and woodland corridors should be safeguarded for horseshoe bats and other bat species, as described in **Measure 075**: **Greater horseshoe bat flightlines**.

The Severn Vale area contains hills which are outliers of the Cotswold oolitic limestone: Bredon, Dumbleton, Churchdown and Robinswood Hills. These hills are the same limestone formation as the Cotswold hills but are separated from them by lower lying land of the Severn and Avon Vales. Robinswood Hill and Churchdown Hill are at particular risk of ecological connectivity being cut off from the main Cotswolds Hills due to urban expansion. Ecological connectivity should be maintained through an undeveloped green corridor to enable genetic exchange to occurbetween populations on the outliers and the main Cotswolds. Between

Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, opportunities should be taken to create greater habitat connectivity between Dixton Wood in Gloucestershire and Bredon Hill in Worcestershire (both sites are designated as SACs for their deadwood invertebrate interest), to expand the size of habitat suitable for the rare violet click beetle and other rare invertebrates – **Measure 086: Strengthen violet click beetle population.**

Other opportunities should also be taken to establish more east-west connectivity of semi natural habitats between the Cotswolds and Leadon Vale, particularly in relation to BugLife's B Lines [28] – **Measure 030**: **Create wildlife corridor connectivity.**



28 Buglife – https://www.buglife.org.uk/our-work/b-lines/

2.3.4 Upper Thames Clay Vales

The Cotswold Water Park is part of the Upper Thames Clay Vales, NCA 108, and covers the south eastern corner of Gloucestershire and extends into Wiltshire and small parts of the administrative areas of Swindon and West Oxfordshire. Amidst this area of open, gently undulating farmland there are around 200 lakes present in this upper part of the River Thames catchment. These lakes have been created since the mid-20th Century primarily for sand and gravel extraction [29] and constitute the most extensive marl lake system (highly calcareous) in Britain.

Alongside the lakes there is other associated wetland habitat and a landscape that supports distinctive aquatic plant communities and significant breeding and wintering water bird populations. The wider mixed farmed landscape has some important species rich lowland meadows and floodplain meadows including North Meadow and Clattinger Farm SAC and NNR but there is little woodland but hedgerows and trees in places. The Cotswold Water Park is well visited with the growing settlements of Swindon and Oxford not far away. This is another important recreational location and a long valued biodiverse part of Gloucestershire.

Species associated with the lakes of the Cotswold Water Park include charophytes, waterbirds, passerines, bats, dragonflies, barberry carpet moth, and black poplar. This area is important for neutral lowland meadows and floodplain meadows, and meadow species such as snakes head fritillary. There are opportunities to create more meadow and grassland connectivity along the Thames and to the Cotswold rivers. There are also opportunities for further creation of wet woodland habitat in the Cotswold Water Park area.

© D Hall – Cotswold Lakes Trust

29 Cotswold District Council 2021 – https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/media/wwferfcb/cotswold-water-park-nature-recovery-plan.pdf

2.3.5 South Herefordshire and Over Severn

The Leadon Vale is part of the South Herefordshire and Over Severn, NCA 104, to the north west of Gloucester, a rural landscape that continues into South Herefordshire. It includes the distinctive high point of May Hill, many woods, neutral and calcareous grassland, traditional orchards, and the River Leadon, and its floodplain, which flows into the Severn. The area is mainly a mix of arable and livestock farming and is well known for its populations of wild daffodils. May Hill is registered as a Site of Special Scientific Interest in relation to acid grassland and heath vegetation on a specific geology of Silurian sandstones which is not found elsewhere in Gloucestershire [30].

It is important for traditional Orchards and their associated species, such as noble chafer, lesser spotted woodpecker and mistletoe marble moth. Opportunities should be taken to create more landscape scale connectivity of wooded habitats through this area, to connect the Wye and Forest of Dean northwards into Herefordshire and Worcestershire towards the Wyre Forest – the Severn Treescapes project.

The River Leadon has extensive poor water quality, with agricultural inputs having a significant impact. Better land and soil management could help to improve this. There are also a number of barriers to fish along the river which could be removed or bypassed to facilitate fish movements. One of the Leadon's key tributaries – the Glynch Brook – also has low flow issues which need to be addressed. Improvements could be made by delivering the proposed Wilder Leadon programme, through the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership.

30 Natural England – https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1001791.pdf

3. Opportunities for recovering or enhancing biodiversity in Gloucestershire

3.1 Why is Nature recovery needed?

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. The regular UK State of Nature reports show how the abundance and diversity of our wildlife have been declining for decades. The 2023 UK State of Nature report states that the abundance of 753 terrestrial and freshwater species has on average fallen by 19% across the UK since 1970 [31].

This average rate of decline is getting worse. Four years earlier the average rate of decline of UK species abundance was reported as 13% since 1970 [32].

Although these statistics use a 1970 baseline, our wildlife habitats and species have been reducing since before that. Examples cited in the 2013 UK State of Nature report [33] include:

- The area of coppiced woodland in the UK fell by at least 90% from 1900 to 1970, affecting invertebrates and wildflowers;
- The area of lowland meadow in England and Wales declined by 97% between the 1930s and 1984, affecting wildflowers and insects;
- Declines in farmland birds, such as corn bunting, were already being recorded during the 19th century. The agricultural intensification changes driven by the 1947 Agriculture Act led to hedgerows being lost as fields became larger, chemical use increased and the quality and quantity of farmland habitats diminished.

*The area of **coppiced woodland** in the UK fell by at least*

90%

from 1900 to 1970

*The area of **lowland meadow** in England and Wales declined by*

97%

from 1930 to 1984

31 State of Nature 2023 – https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/TP25999-State-of-Nature-main-report_2023_FULL-DOC-v12.pdf
32 State of Nature 2019 – https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/State-of-Nature-2019-UK-full-report.pdf
33 State of Nature 2013 – https://stateofnature.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/state-of-nature-report-2013-uk.pdf

Not only is our wildlife greatly diminished through direct habitat loss, loss of resources, pollution and factors that lead directly to the death of animals and plants, it also now has to deal with the impacts of climate change. Wildlife can try to adapt to climate change by moving across the landscape to a new climate space, but where habitats and the species that live in them have become isolated, this has become increasingly difficult. In the northern hemisphere this is normally northward, towards cooler parts of the landscape, and to allow species to do this we need ecological networks with habitat corridors, easier "stepping stones" between habitats and features such as field margins, hedgerows and wildflower headlands that make the landscape more permeable. Species will also adapt to climate change through micro-climate opportunities such as slope directions or gradients, height of vegetation and opportunities for shade, and to help this we need larger wildlife sites with a diverse variety of conditions and habitats, sometimes described as mosaic habitats. Gloucestershire is already very important for nature, supported by many land managers, but we need to develop robust nature recovery networks to support adaptation to climate change at the scale required.

3.1.1 Habitat loss and species decline in Gloucestershire – Case Studies

Gloucestershire is home to many rare and important habitats and species, many of which Gloucestershire is a stronghold for. For some, we know we have the potential to improve populations that have declined or lost, but this can only be done through collaborative working and safeguarding areas for nature recovery. Existing work to protect and support these habitats and species demonstrates how with the right measures and a collective effort, these habitats can thrive and species can come back from the brink.

40% *of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was covered in wildflower-rich and fungi-rich grassland on calcareous soils,*

and today that has fallen to less than ***1.5%***

© Simon Smith

Calcareous grassland in the Cotswolds

Cotswolds National Landscape Board reports that in the 1930s, 40% of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was covered in wildflower-rich and fungi-rich grassland on calcareous soils, and today that has fallen to less than 1.5% [34]. However, many farmers, landowners and organisations such as Cotswolds National Landscape Board, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the National Trust are already managing existing good quality meadows, and restoring and creating new meadow habitat, through agri-environment schemes and projects such as Cotswold National Landscape's Glorious Cotswold Grasslands project and the National Trust's Stroud Landscape Project. This strategy has Potential Measures for both managing, and restoring and creating, lowland calcareous grassland, and there is hope that this will encourage expansion of existing sites, as well as creating connectivity throughout the landscape.

34 Cotswold National Landscape – https://www.cotswolds-nl.org.uk/our-landscape/wildflower-grassland/


© Sarah Meredith, Habitat Designs

Large Blue Butterfly

The large blue butterfly, an iconic species once found in the Cotswolds and a small number of other sites in the South West, became extinct in the UK in 1979, as a result of factors including direct habitat loss and agricultural intensification [35]. The species has a rather niche lifecycle, with the larvae primarily feeding on wild thyme, a plant largely found in calcareous grasslands (which have declined in Gloucestershire), and relies on the red ant species *Myrmica sabuleti* for a key part of its lifecycle, which had also faced huge declines. The species has recently been successfully reintroduced to Daneway Banks nature reserve and other sites in Gloucestershire, by a partnership of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust and the Royal Entomological Society, thanks to new research and understanding of the grazing and management patterns which best support the food plants and the red ant the large blue depends on. See **Measure 089: Strengthen Large Blue population**.


© Dan Gornall/WWT

Curlews in the Severn and Avon Vales

This migratory species comes to the UK to breed and rear young, preferring wetland, marshes mudflats and moorland habitat. Britain holds a quarter of the world's curlew population, but the success of chick rearing is increasingly low, which poses a major threat to their global population. This decline stems from a range of factors, such as habitat loss, increased predator abundance and climate change, impacting nest location conditions. Gloucestershire Naturalists Society and WWT [36] are working together to monitor and protect curlews in the Severn and Avon Vales. During 2023 they worked with local farmers to protect 27 nests, from which nine curlew chicks fledged. However, this number of new chicks is not enough to maintain overall curlew population numbers in the long-term, and these efforts will need to continue along with expansion of habitat, to boost survival chances. **See Measure 071: Strengthen breeding curlew population**.

35 Centre for Ecology and Hydrology – https://www.ceh.ac.uk/our-science/case-studies/case-study-large-blue-butterfly
36 WWT – https://www.wwt.org.uk/our-work/projects/eurasian-curlew-recovery

3.2 The key messages of this strategy

This strategy has been developed through a range of discussions and input of information from nature conservationists, planners, local authority officers and members, farmers, landowners, land managers, and members of the public in Gloucestershire. From these discussions and information we have drawn out some overall key messages for this strategy.

These six key messages describe the main challenges faced by nature and pose solutions and ideas to help tackle these challenges and recover nature in Gloucestershire:

	Safeguarding, managing and enhancing existing biodiversity-rich sites
	Landscape scale connectivity – Better, bigger, more and more joined
	Climate Emergency
	Our relationship with water
	The value of mixed and wilder habitats
	Biodiversity in our developments and settlements

3.2.1 Safeguarding, managing and enhancing existing biodiversity-rich sites

In 2010, the Making Space for Nature Report [37] (also known as the Lawton Report) was published, setting out aims of Nature Recovery. This report eventually led to the Environment Act 2021 which legislated for Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Biodiversity Net Gain, and the Biodiversity Duty for public authorities.

The recommendations of the Making Space for Nature report can be summarised with the phrase of "bigger, better, more and more joined, in a more permeable matrix". This phrasing has now become an intrinsic part of designing nature recovery projects, both on a small and landscape scale. There is a hierarchy to the recommendations, with "Better" – the maintenance, protection and improvement of existing good wildlife habitat, being the highest priority. Making Space for Nature says:

"In general, the first priority is to enhance the quality of remaining wildlife habitat. Increasing connectivity helps, but first there needs to be high quality sites with thriving wildlife populations to connect."

Landowners and land managers who have already improved habitat for wildlife and who are already maintaining wildlife sites well for biodiversity should be supported, however the resources that are needed to continue good management for biodiversity are not always fully recognised and supported. It is hoped that this strategy can underline the need to fund the maintenance and improvement of existing good quality habitat and support mechanisms to secure ways to resource this.

Many of our existing important wildlife habitats have developed over long periods of time – for example, ancient woodland, traditional meadows, old orchards or heathland – and in relation to ongoing methods of management. The complex ecological relationships between species in a habitat, including the soil ecology, microbes and mycorrhizal fungi, are difficult to recreate quickly once a habitat is degraded or destroyed. Therefore, safeguarding existing high quality sites of importance to biodiversity from harm is a top priority.

Because of the importance of safeguarding, managing and enhancing existing biodiversity-rich sites, for most of the key habitats in Gloucestershire there are Potential Measures about how to manage or safeguard that habitat.

37 Lawton et al 2010 – https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-published-today

3.2.2 Landscape scale connectivity – Better, bigger, more and more joined

The Making Space for Nature Report 2010 also informed the Government that the existing network of protected sites was not preventing species declines, because sites were too small and too isolated. It advocated the need to create a healthy ecological network operating across the landscape as a whole, to help reverse biodiversity loss and provide resilience to external threats and pressures, including the impact of climate change.

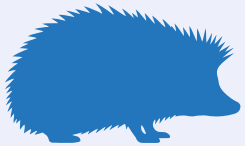
The hierarchy of importance of the five recommendations of "better, bigger, more and more joined, in a more permeable matrix" are shown below:

Making Space for Nature recommendations		
Priority level	**Summary word(s)**	**Recommendation**
1	BETTER	Improve the quality of current sites by better habitat management and maintain them in good condition
2	BIGGER	Increase the size of current wildlife sites to maintain sustainable populations of the species that depend on it
3	MORE JOINED	Enhance connections between, or join up, sites, either through physical corridors, or through 'stepping stones'.
4	MORE	Create new sites
5	A MORE PERMEABLE MATRIX	Reduce the pressures on wildlife and allow more free movement by improving the wider environment

Based on these principles, this Local Nature Recovery Strategy sets out how existing biodiversity sites, priority habitats and species can survive better by making small patches bigger and making sure they are well enough connected for species to be able to move between them. Gloucestershire's Nature Recovery Network mapping [38], was a starting point for the strategy to build towards connected habitats. The Nature Recovery Network map shows the current core areas of good quality wildlife habitats – the focus of the "Better" element of maintaining and improving the quality of current sites. It also expresses the best opportunity zones for extending and buffering habitat, creating new habitat and starting to connect these up – the "Bigger, More and More Joined" elements. There are more details about the Nature Recovery Network mapping in the Technical Appendix – Data, Evidence and Methodology.

The Nature Recovery Network mapping forms a foundation of the mapping of the "Areas which Could Become of Importance for Biodiversity" in this Local Nature Recovery Strategy. These zones are where improved habitat management and new habitat creation will be of the most benefit to our wildlife when taking into account these Lawton principles. They therefore are where we would propose that nature conservation management and habitat creation is focused, where feasible, in order to join up the existing wildlife sites. These zones are the main areas where Potential Measures for restoring and creating key habitats are focused.

In 2020 the UK government committed to protect and conserve a minimum of 30% of UK land and sea for biodiversity by 2030, as part of the international UN 30 by 30 commitment. Creation of new habitat within the recommended areas to create and improve wildlife-rich habitat identified by this Local Nature Recovery Strategy can help contribute towards meeting the goal of 30 by 30.



In 2020 the UK government committed to ***protect and conserve*** *a minimum of*

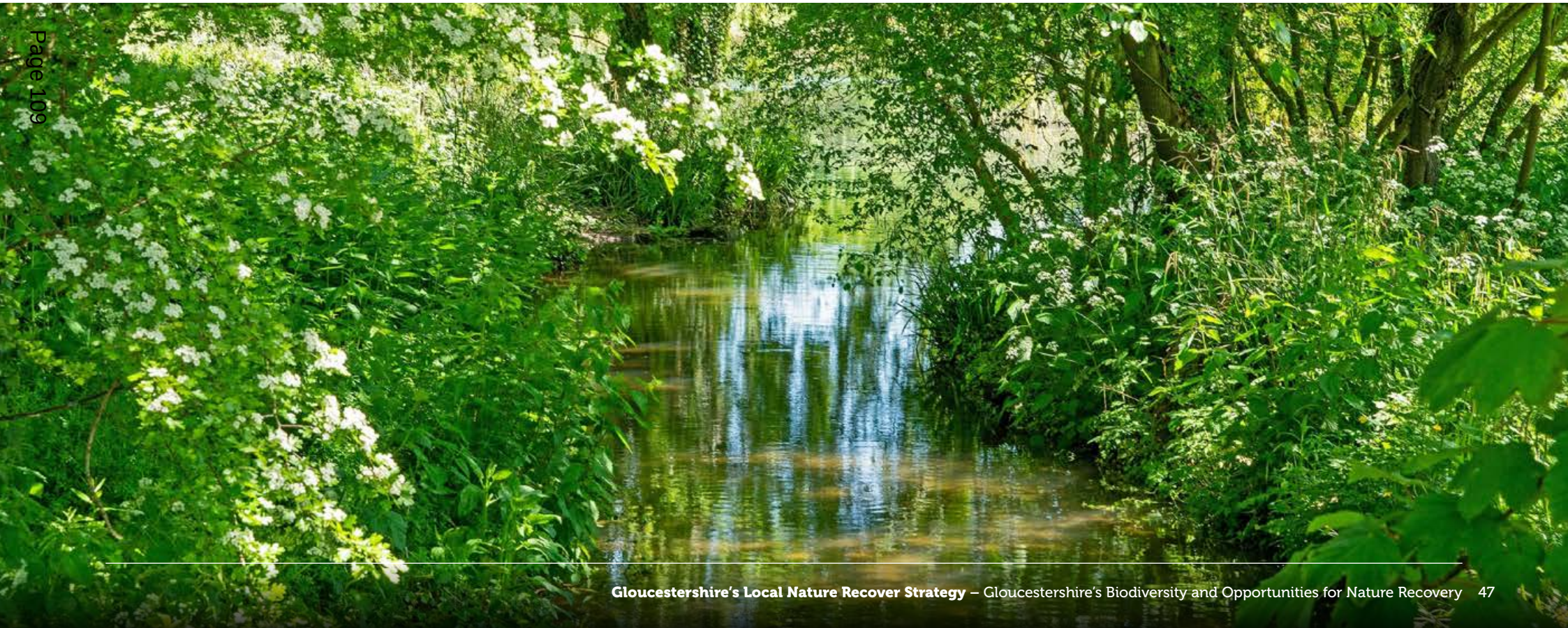
30% ***of UK land and sea for biodiversity by 2030***

38 Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records – https://naturalcapital.gcerdata.com/

In these priority map zones for "bigger, better, more and more joined" habitat creation, particularly the areas identified in the strategy map as Areas that Could Become of Particularly Importance for Biodiversity, it would be beneficial to reduce habitat loss and pressure from new developments, where this can be achieved in Local policy.

In relation to the fifth Making Space for Nature recommendation of a more permeable matrix for wildlife across our landscape, by improving the wider environment, actions to increase biodiversity and habitat connectivity in the wider countryside are recommended, such as field margins, river buffer zones, hedgerows and ponds, and strengthening the species populations of farmland birds and rare arable plants. Even in "open" habitats, linear corridors of rough grassland banks, and open wood-meadow provide important stepping stone habitats and corridors through the landscape. Similarly, existing monoculture or derelict woodland can be managed with wildlife in mind, with woodland rides and clearings, and diversifying native tree species like birch and lime in beech woodland, managing for deer and creating a biodiverse understory. Relevant potential measures include:

- **Measure 045:** Field margins, hedgerows, buffer strips, ponds, trees and sustainable farming and forestry
- **Measure 049:** Sustainable forestry and nature recovery
- **Measure 056:** Riparian buffer strips
- **Measure 098:** Individual species needs of farmland birds
- **Measure 106:** Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi



3.2.3 Climate Emergency

The global climate and nature crises are inter-linked. With the Wildlife Trusts' Adaptation Report 2022 stating: "Climate change is driving nature's decline, and the loss of wild spaces is leaving us ill-equipped to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. Meanwhile, degraded habitats are actively emitting carbon instead of storing it. The risk of species extinction is estimated to increase ten-fold for a warming level of 3°C compared to 1.5°C" [39].

In the Gloucester City Council Climate Change Strategy [40], Environmental Consultants and Gloucester City Council used the latest UK Climate projections (UKCP18) and related tools to identify projected changes in climate for Gloucester City, that by the 2080s:

- The average summer day could be up to 5^{oC} warmer
- Increased winter rainfall by over 20%
- Reduced summer rainfall by over 35%
- An increase in the number and severity of wildfires
- Three times fewer frost days and a reduction in snowfall
- A shift in the growing season
- An increased likelihood of surface water and river flooding, influenced by tides and extreme rainfall
- Heatwaves occurring six times more often
- An increase in the frequency and intensity of storms

These changes are likely to be applicable to all of Gloucestershire. In addition, there will be hotter average temperatures in our rivers, water bodies and the Severn estuary. The Cotswolds high wold in particular is expected to experience more dry and drought conditions. Climate change

exacerbates the risk that non-native species (including pests and pathogens) may establish and spread.

There are a range of ways in which the theme of climate change is part of this strategy. These include:

1. How climate change affects nature and how we can respond to that:

- Help species movement through a resilient nature network
- Control spread of pests, diseases and invasive non-native species
- Protect the habitats and species most vulnerable to climate change
- Respond to coast changes from sea level rise

2. How nature can help us adapt to climate change:

- Help to reduce the effects of drought
- Help to reduce the risk of flooding
- Provide shading and micro-climates to reduce the effects of extreme heat and increased fire risk

39 Wildlife Trust 2022 – https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/AdaptationReport.pdf
40 Gloucester City Council – https://democracy.gloucester.gov.uk/documents/s60448/appendix 1 climate change strategy and action plan.pdf

3. How nature can mitigate the effects of climate change through carbon sequestration.

A key impact of climate change is the how temperatures can shift the timings of species lifecycles, such as when they flower, fruit, emerge or hibernate. Where different species have different levels of sensitivity to these changes, this can have a knock on impact to the species that rely on them for food, for example. Increasingly warm and early spring weather, is resulting in early budding and blooming of tree species. Where insects' life cycles are also impacted by the warm weather, they also emerge early, but this has a knock on effect up the food chain when it comes to migratory birds, that arrive too late to forage on larvae and caterpillars. At the other end of the year, warmer winters mean that species who are adapted to go into torpor (a version of hibernation), wake frequently, and subsequently need to forage, when there is no longer food (usually insects or fruits) available.

As average temperatures rise, the geographical range of many species will need to move northwards, or to new areas of less impacted habitat, including higher up slopes. Whilst this can mean the range of some protected or notable species expanding, it will have a negative effect on other species, with them needing the ability to move in response to extreme weather events and other changes. The "Making Space for Nature" vision of larger, less fragmented and better connected wildlife sites will help improve the resilience of wildlife species populations and increase the ability of those species that can move in response to climate change.

Some habitats are particularly vulnerable to climate change. The Natural England and RSPB Climate Change Adaptation Manual 2015 [41] assessed the relative sensitivity of habitats to climate change. Of Gloucestershire's key habitats, these are the ones with high sensitivity to climate change:

- Coastal saltmarsh
- Standing water
- Lowland fen
- Rivers and streams, including ephemeral waterbodies

Of Gloucestershire's key habitats, these are the ones with medium sensitivity to climate change:

- Floodplain grazing marsh
- Lowland Meadows (wet)
- Calcareous grassland
- Reedbeds
- Lowland Heathland
- Intertidal Mudflats
- Lowland beech and yew woodlands
- Wet woodland

41 Natural England 2015 – https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5679197848862720

Calcareous grasslands

Invertebrate populations in calcareous grasslands can also be severely impacted by heatwave and drought conditions, as flowering plants respond by reducing or ceasing nectar production and butterflies stop flying over a certain temperature [42].

Woodlands

Climate change will affect the health, growth, survival and reproduction rates of tree species. Current guidance on climate change and future resilience advises growing a mixed and large suite of species (including native and non-native)[43] [44].

This goes for new planting of woodlands and individual trees, but also in restocking after felling of commercial woodlands and in restoration of plantations on ancient woodland sites.

Beech trees, characteristic of the Cotswold scarp, are one of the species whose growth and health could be significantly reduced by climate change [45]. There is likely to be a range shift northwards for beech woodland as well as other woodland types. **See Measure 035: Woodland climate adaptation.**

Decisions about suitable tree species can be made with the help of resources such as Forest Research's Ecological Site Classification [46] tool to incorporate future suitability into planting decision.

Beech trees, *characteristic of the* ***Cotswold scarp****, are one of the species whose growth and health could be* ***significantly reduced by climate change.***

42 Hayes et al. 2024 – https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10841-024-00556-5
43 Forest Research 2022 – https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/05/UKFSPG026.pdf
44 Gov.uk – https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-englands-woodlands-in-a-climate-emergency
45 European Commission 2022 – https://environment.ec.europa.eu/news/europes-beech-forests-threatened-climate-change-2022-10-26_en
46 Forest Research – https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/tools-and-resources/fthr/ecological-site-classification/

Estuarine habitats

With sea level rise and increased temperatures, there is a risk that saltwater intrusion may start to impact freshwater habitats on the floodplain, that floodplain land will flood for longer or more frequently, and also that increased water temperatures will reduce the levels of dissolved oxygen and increase algal growth, affecting wildlife.

The Severn Estuary Shoreline Management Plans [47] indicate which areas are already intended for Managed Realignment, or for Hold The Line, in relation to likely changes to the coastline from sea level rise. There are opportunities for habitat restoration to help better achieve the managed realignment in the zones where this is recommended – see the Potential Measures in relation to Estuarine habitats.

Adapting to climate change

The Potential Measures recommended in this strategy contain many that will help adapt to, and reduce the effects of, drought, flooding, extreme heat or fire risk. These include measures where trees, scrub or changes in topography can provide more shade to reduce the temperatures of rivers, of urban areas, or of grassland plants, which struggle to maintain sufficient nectar production in higher temperatures. There are other measures that aim to enhance and maintain soil health and resilience to drought, through sustainable and regenerative farming techniques. Natural flood management measures, re-naturalisation of river corridors, and habitat creation measures (such as creating more wet woodland across the county and heath and associated mossy bogs in the Forest of Dean) will help reduce flood risks.

Maintaining and restoring semi-natural habitats, including woodland, wetlands, saltmarsh, heath and unploughed meadow grassland, can actively create carbon sinks that sequester carbon in the long-term, as carbon is captured within biomass and in the soil. WWT's project to recreate saltmarsh habitat within a 148 hectare site on the Awre peninsula, including by engineering a breach in the sea wall, is a great example of such habitat creation that will sequester carbon and help adapt to sea level rise, erosion and flood risk, as well as improving biodiversity.

Regenerative farming techniques which promote healthier soils with living roots and minimal soil disturbance, also help to increase carbon sequestration in the soil – see **Measure 047**: **Soil health and regenerative farming**. The Natural England Carbon Storage and Sequestration by Habitat report 2021 [48] is a good source for information on the different carbon sequestration potential from different habitats.

47 Severn Estuary Coastal Group 2010 – https://severnestuarycoastalgroup.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/07/smp2partamainreportfinal-160323161232.pdf
48 Natural England 2021 – https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5419124441481216

3.2.4 Our relationship with water

A range of aspects of our relationship with water were key themes emerging in many aspects of the discussions held while developing this strategy.

The challenges...

Un-natural and artificial water systems

As a result of traditional agricultural and land management, Gloucestershire's landscape is heavily drained. This, in conjunction with straightening and further modification of rivers for a wide variety of purposes, has left a legacy of drained fields as well as restricted, culverted and canalised rivers. Weirs, gates and locks restrict the movement of species within our rivers, as well as inhibiting natural processes. Physical barriers also restrict diversity of flow patterns and vegetation structures both within the channel and along the banks.

Pollution

Water pollution is a significant issue, both for our wildlife and the condition of waterways, and subsequently for people. Within Gloucestershire the sources of pollution vary, with some of these being national issues, and some being felt particularly strongly in our county. These include uncontrolled and untreated overflows of sewage and waste water (known as "point" source pollution), as well as excess nutrients, pesticides and herbicides, as a result of run-off from farmland, roads and hard surfaces, or in relation to the disposal of manures (known as "diffuse" pollution). Soil compaction from machinery, or bare earth (associated with ploughing or crops such as potatoes) at times of high rainfall can also lead to soil erosion and sediments entering water courses.

Flood risk

As touched on above, climate change is resulting in increased rainfall, leading to flooding of both rural and urban areas. These straightened and canalised watercourses exacerbate flood risks, including in downstream areas. These are all pressures and threats for our wild species, resulting in a lack of diverse morphology and vegetation structures both within the channel and along the banks.

The solutions...

The challenges we face are all interlinked – with flood risk exacerbating pollution, and artificial waterways increasing flood risk; but this does mean that many of the actions we can take will have wide ranging and knock on benefits.

In February 2024, Chris Uttley of Stroud District Council opened an event called "Flood Management with a Time Machine" [49, 50], that told stories of the changes we have made to rivers over the last 100 years, and how we can repair them, and celebrated wetland habitats in the Stroud Valleys that slow, store and filter water with these words:

"We think we know the stories of flooding. We see them in the news every year. They are stories of grannies being rescued from houses by men in inflatable boats. Helicopters flying over floodplains to show us that they are flooded. People driving cars into floods and inevitably, farmers pulling cars out of floods with tractors. And of course, lives ruined and sometimes sadly lost.

But there are different stories too. Stories we don't hear much about – about how sometimes the best flood defence is a beach, a saltmarsh, a bog or a forest, or a field of healthy soil. About how the choices we make about managing our landscape, about the food we put on our plates will affect how much flooding we get. Stories about farmers and communities helping each other, working together to make many small changes to reduce flooding."

Image from Sound of a River comic by Joe Magee and Chris Uttley

49 Slow the Flow – https://slowtheflow.net/flood-management-with-a-time-machine/
50 Stroud District Council – https://www.stroud.gov.uk/environment/projects/stroud-valleys-natural-flood-management-project/

River or watercourse re-naturalisation

We should take the opportunity to re-naturalise our rivers and floodplains. Rivers need to be dynamic and currently do not have the space to do what they need to do – they are too contained in their linear channels. We should see the land next to watercourses as functionally-linked land, where the river can re-establish its course, provide space for flood-plain habitats, and where some habitats can help reduce water pollution. Getting more water back into Gloucestershire's landscape and soils can help with carbon sequestration and with natural flood management, as well as increase opportunities for biodiversity. Key Potential Measures in relation to this are **Measure 020: River re-naturalisation and Measure 037: Floodplain reconnection**, with a range of other inter-related measures.

In addition to increasing and enhancing the diversity of species, restoring and naturalising watercourses can help to re-wet areas, increasing the recharge of groundwater in the right locations and the storage of water within soils. This increases the resilience of watercourses to drought, and by extension the security of our water resources.

Riparian management and habitat creation

We should improve the connectivity and ecological functionality of the watercourses, through focusing on habitat immediately adjacent to watercourses (known as riparian habitat) By identifying gaps in the presence of good riparian habitat, we can target habitat creation or management that will reestablish a functional "riparian zone". A functional riparian zone intercepts surface water flows before they meet a flowing stream or other drainage channel – forcing the surface water to slow down and filter through the ground vegetation before meeting the main channel, which allows carried sediment to drop out.

Our woodlands can become sponges, holding up sufficient water through natural and human intervention woody debris blockages in the watercourses that flow through them. The wooded flood plains will largely be riparian woodland (wet woodland), with tree species that are appropriate to this wet situation such as willows, aspen and alder.

Regenerative farming

In relation to run-off of nutrients and soils from farms, regenerative farming principles can play a key part in reducing the amount of diffuse pollution even reaching our riparian habitat. For example using cover crops will reduce the amount of exposed soil, and minimising soil disturbance and retaining living roots can also help reduce the level of silt run off. Reduction in use of some key pollutants, such as pesticides will of course reduce the amount that ends up in our waterways, and this can be compensated for my using farming methods that result in natural biological control, such as flower rich margins and good management of hedgerows, increasing the presence of natural predators to pests. There are a range of Potential Measures relating to water quality and soil or nutrient run-off, including:

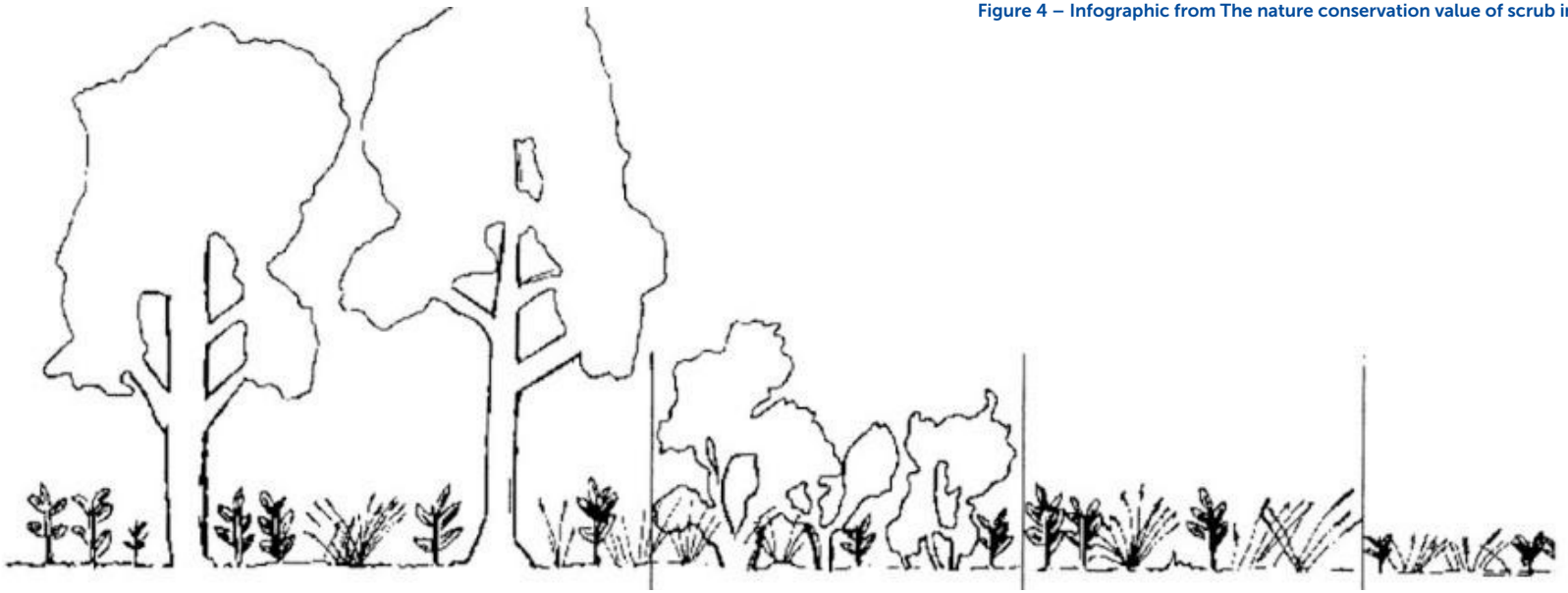
- **Measure 022:** Improve ecological condition of rivers
- **Measure 038:** Water quality
- **Measure 039:** Sewage and wastewater
- **Measure 044:** Limit groundwater abstraction and surface flow abstraction
- **Measure 046:** Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs
- **Measure 047:** Soil health and regenerative farming

3.2.5 The value of mixed and wilder habitats

A strong theme that came through in many strategy discussions, including the Nature Recovery Working Group, the species task and finish group and the public engagement events, was the value of mixed or mosaic habitats of scrub, grassland of different heights and structures, trees and disturbed ground, which can be of great benefit to many species that required a range of habitats and structures to live in. In many places this can be achieved through a mix of allowing natural processes of succession to happen, and manual site management to provide varied habitat structure. **See Measure 014: Create mixed mosaic habitats including scrub, including orchard.**

In some places a mixed or mosaic habitat approach will challenge ideas about what "looks nice" therefore it is important to promote the benefits of "messy" habitats for wildlife. We need to be prepared to evolve our societal views on how green spaces and landscapes should look, if these views restrict biodiversity, climate resilience or sustainability. At the heart of many of the discussions had during the public engagement events [51], was a feeling that for nature to recover, we need to reclaim and celebrate messiness over straight lines, variety over monoculture and the 'wild' over the manicured.

Figure 4 – Infographic from The nature conservation value of scrub in Britain, JNCC 2000 [52]



Zone A – Woodland lacking grassland plant species

Zone B – 'Mantel' zone of shrubs many of the Rose (Rosaceae) family. Ground flora consists of woodland and 'Saum' plant species unless grazed where grassland species would predominate

Zone C – 'Saum' Zone dominated by tall herbs and grasses including rare species. Many typical grassland plants occur as usual large forms.

Zone D – 'True' grassland in which low growing species are more abundant

51 GLNP 2024 – https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/_files/ugd/5c4a64_7a965c0b0cfb45cb83fcf8e1293dd56a.pdf
52 JNCC 2000 – https://data.jncc.gov.uk/data/39590874-8927-4c42-b02a-374712caccd6/JNCC-Report-308-SCAN-WEB.pdf

A key aspect of this mixed habitat theme is the concept of ecotones between different habitats – see **Measure 033: Ecotones and edges**. Ecotones are gradual changes in habitat structure, for example between woodlands and a neighbouring field, or between hedgerows, field margins and field, to enable a variety of scrub or shrubs and longer grasses and plants, sometimes known as "saum", rather than sharp boundaries between different habitats.

Creating varied ecotones, and creating areas where natural processes are allowed to create a complex and dynamic mosaic of habitats:

- provides a varied habitat structure that benefits many species, including adders and newts and many butterfly species that need a variety of habitat types within a small area;
- provides wildlife corridors to enable movement of species through the landscape, including small mammals and bats;
- provides shade to maintain nectar production in grassland flora and refuge for invertebrates in higher temperatures.
- provides diverse food sources for a range of species including farmland birds.

In many cases, a mosaic habitat could have the following target features:

- a dynamic mosaic of bare or disturbed ground, species-rich grassland, scrub and trees, and/or wetland and ponds where relevant
- an average tree and scrub canopy cover of between 10% and 30% across the site; the closer to 20% the better
- the height and density of scrub and grassland should vary across the site. Scrub should be managed to have complex variation in height and to have gaps in canopy cover to allow other ground flora to grow. The more structural variety, the better.
- varied ground levels with different aspects and gradients can provide different microclimates and species niches.

Mosaic habitat is great for wildlife at any scale but the bigger the better, ideally this should be created on sites large enough for allow "natural regeneration", resulting from the use of low intensity grazing from large herbivores. Whilst manual habitat management can replicate the effects of using animals to shape the landscape, we should strive to use them where possible, with many recent "rewilding" projects showing the benefits of these methods – with pigs being used to disturb the ground, encouraging dormant seeds to germinate, and creating microhabitats, mimicking the habits of wild boar. Use of old native breeds such as English Longhorn cattle to carry out extensive [53] grazing can be an effective tool for creating mosaic habitats too. This breed for example, will pull down small branches with their horns, to rip of twigs and forage on the leaves – providing a natural mechanism for pruning and coppicing [54]. They will also happily rest and lay up in woods, again, creating disturbance and ensuring movement around a large site. GPS collars can be used on grazing animals to control movement and target areas, minimising the occurrence of hard edges and over grazing.

An example of a local project using these techniques is Elmore Farm [55], a 160 hectare site, previously a mix of commercially grazed and arable fields, set in the River Severn flood plains, with a network of drainage ditches to manage water levels for farming. Since 2020 they have started a natural regeneration process, bringing in longhorn cattle, and with plans to also introduce Exmoor ponies and Tamworth pigs in future. Their work to restore wetlands and re-connect the floodplain has resulted in a measurable increase in biodiversity, with a 186% increase in the diversity of bird species on site, and a 125% increase in the number of birds seen.

186%
increase in the diversity of ***bird species on site***

125%
increase in the number of ***birds seen***

©Anselm Guise – Longhorn Cattle at Elmore Farm

53 Extensive refers to allowing a smaller number of livestock to remain on site throughout the year, usually allowed to roam over a large area.
54 Knepp – https://knepp.co.uk/rewilding/free-roaming-herbivores/longhorn-cattle/
55 Elmore Farm Rewilding – https://www.rewildthings.com/rewilding/

3.2.6 Biodiversity in our developments and settlements

Much of the landscape-scale vision of "bigger, better, more and more joined" involves habitat maintenance and creation across our rural and farmed landscape. Urban wildlife, green spaces and blue spaces (water-related) are also part of this potential for habitat connectivity.

Importantly, nature in our settlements and urban areas, such as trees, green spaces and biodiverse sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), brings huge benefits for our health and wellbeing and economy with this collectively known as "ecosystem services". It strengthens our ability to connect and engage with nature, cools the local climate through shading, improves air quality, and supports flood management, through permeable surfaces and storing water.

The importance of this theme was insisted on during the public engagement sessions where it was clear that recovering nature can't just be about our countryside, it also needs to be about our urban spaces. Along with ecosystem service benefits, it was recognised that connection to nature starts with our urban spaces, and in turn nature connection results in increased action for nature by the local community, such as joining volunteer groups or practicing nature friendly gardening.

A systematic meta review of the health benefits of green social prescribing in 202456 concluded that there is clear evidence of the benefit for improving mental health, from engagement with and access to nature. Since 2021 the NHS also trialled a series of initiatives around the country, to boost the use of green social prescribing, recognizing the potential value [57].

*Here is clear evidence of the benefit for improving **mental health**, from engagement with and **access to nature**.*

56 Coventry et al 2021 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8498096/
57 NHS England https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/green-social-prescribing/

In Gloucestershire, there are inequalities of access to nature, with the communities that are in the lowest 20% of the Index of Multiple Deprivation being mainly in the urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham, and having a strong correlation with the areas of Gloucestershire highlighted in the Tree Equity Index [58]. that highlights inequitable access to trees in urban and settlement areas:

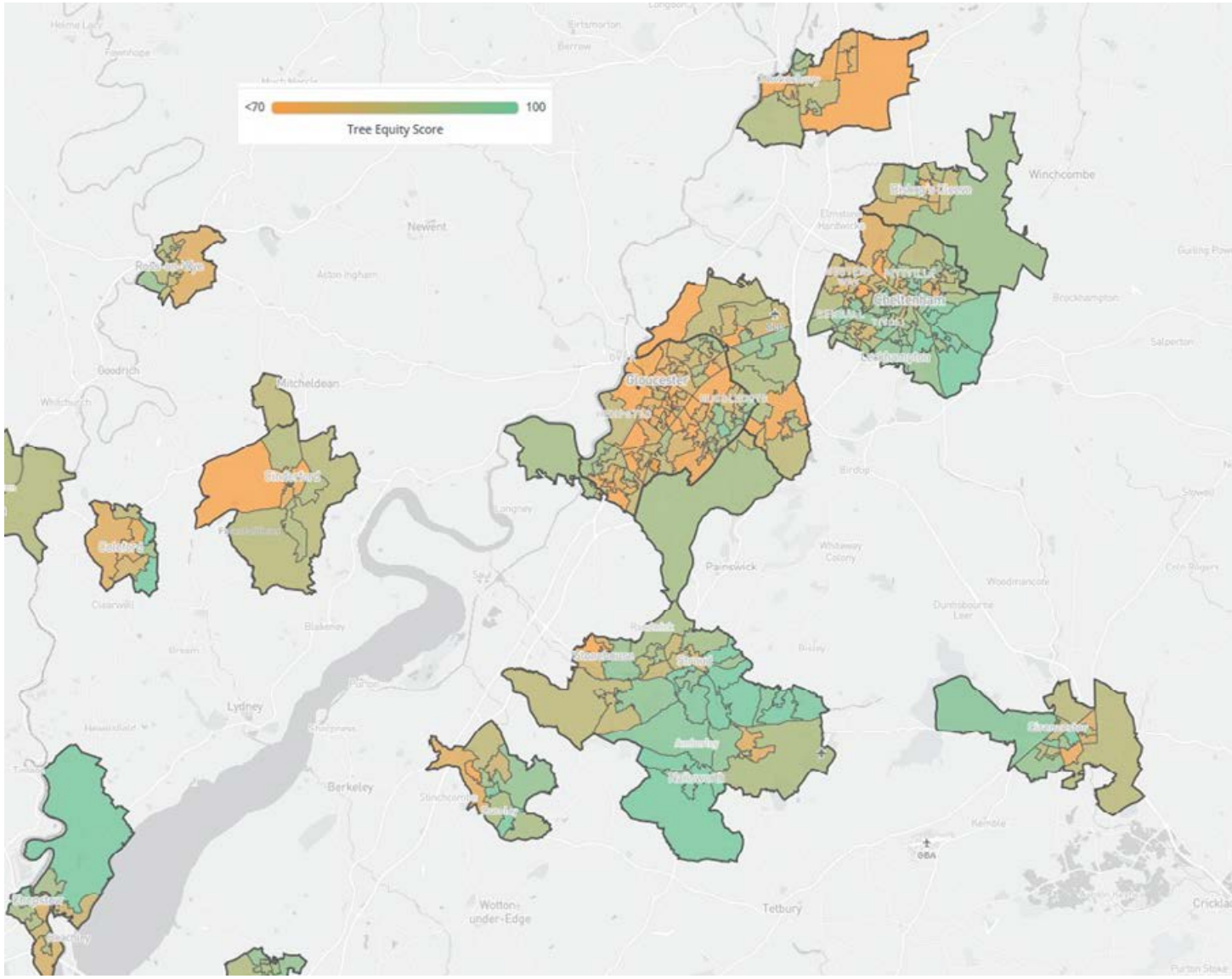


Figure 5 – Tree Equity Index for Gloucestershire. Map data from https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright

58 Tree Equity Score UK – https://uk.treeequityscore.org/map

The communities in Gloucestershire that are within the most deprived 20% in the Index of Multiple Deprivation:

- Gloucester: Barton & Tredworth, Coney Hill, Kingsholm & Wotton, Matson & Robinswood, Moreland, Podsmead, Tuffley (south part of ward), Westgate (east part of ward).
- Cheltenham: Hesters Way, Oakley, Springbank, St Marks (south-west part of ward), St Pauls, Swindon Village (south part of ward).
- Cinderford West
- Tewkesbury South

Forestry Research have published research [59] showing existing provision of public access to woodlands in England, as well as opportunities for increasing access. Whilst areas like the Forest of Dean have good access to woodlands through public paths, urban areas, such as Gloucester and Cheltenham.

In Gloucestershire, the Local Nature Partnership and Climate Leadership Gloucestershire [60] call for an aim for everyone to live within 15 minutes of biodiversity-rich accessible green space, in order to reduce these inequalities of access to nature, improve health and local economy, and benefit biodiversity.

For areas where new developments are proposed, there is the opportunity, and in most cases the requirement, to create new blue and green infrastructure and wildlife corridors within its design. This strategy advocates for new developments to incorporate wild areas and linear wildlife corridors as wide as possible into their design to encourage species movement and habitat connectivity, with a principle of creating connectivity to areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity, or areas of good habitat that have been mapped on the Local Habitat Map as areas we should retain and "manage". We endorse the Woodland Trust recommendation for creating 30% tree cover in new developments. Where development falls over Areas that Could Become of Importance For Biodiversity, it is also important that where possible, the target habitats set out on the mapping are considered.

Gardens, allotments, churchyards and urban green spaces and parks can all be managed to be important for wildlife and biodiversity, and to form part of wider habitat connectivity. One of the threats to urban biodiversity and a threat to increasing the likelihood of flooding is the replacing of gardens or green spaces with impermeable surfaces. Planning regulations, development design and choices in the home and garden should aim to avoid replacing gardens and lawns with parking spaces, astroturf or hard landscaping.

Local policies will be required to 'have regard' to this Local Nature Recovery Strategy. In doing so, this will ensure that these policies are based on a shared vision for each town, developed with the community, as recommended by the Urban Design Group's "Achieving good town form" [61] 2024 paper. The restoration of nature and strategies such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should be part of the shared local vision for the basis of local planning.

59 Forest Research 2025 https://www.forestresearch.gov.uk/publications/access-to-woodland-in-england/ and https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/5451463d27e44e5ca23a0d2a52be20c6

60 Gloucestershire County Council – https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/greener-gloucestershire-climate-dashboard/our-partners/climate-leadership-gloucestershire-clg/greener-gloucestershire-action-plan/biodiversity/

61 Urban Design Group 2024– https://www.udg.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/files/Achieving%20good%20town%20form%20Final.pdf

Green and Blue Infrastructure standards, such as Building with Nature [62] standards or Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework should be used to design and deliver biodiversity in developments and urban areas. Gloucestershire has a Strategic Framework for Green Infrastructure [63] giving an overview for the county.

Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems are important to hold water in the catchment for longer, reducing flooding and draining overflows, while also creating green space and connectivity in urban areas. Along highways, the use of gully pots should be reduced if feasible, and where they are used they should be sited away from kerb edges, and ladders used in gully pots, to help prevent amphibians and other species from getting stuck. Gully pots can cause mortality for wildlife and should not be used if possible.
Good Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) design can remove the need for gully pots and this approach should be promoted.
See **Measure 070: Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems**.

There are four over-arching Measures in relation to most settlements and development areas which link to a wider set of Development and Community Measures:

- **Measure 057:** Urban green spaces, blue spaces and wildlife corridors
- **Measure 057:** Biodiversity in gardens
- **Measure 059:** New developments and green and blue infrastructure
- **Measure 060:** Green bridges and wildlife crossings

62 Building With Nature – https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/
63 GLNP 2019 – https://www.gloucestershirenature.org.uk/green-infrastructure-pledge

3.3 Other pressures and opportunities

Whilst our key messages cover the main pressures and opportunities we wish to address through this LNRS, the development process identified a range of other pressures or threats to nature, which are just as important to address, along with specific opportunities for actions.

- Recreational pressures and disturbance to wildlife
- Diseases and invasive non-native species
- The pressure on woodland regeneration from an increasing deer population
- Conservation grazing
- The importance of fungi and soil health in nature recovery
- Working with the archaeological and historic environment
- Minerals extraction and restoration
- The need for ecological recording and monitoring

3.3.1 Recreational pressures and disturbance to wildlife

Access to nature is vital for human wellbeing, and we should increase the opportunities for everyone to live within 15 minutes from biodiversity-rich accessible green spaces. However, pressure from outdoor recreational activities and other human activities can create disturbance to wildlife, particularly in more sensitive habitats. Effective nature recovery should address these pressures through informed planning, public engagement, and targeted action. Some examples of these types of pressures include:

- Dogs that enter ponds and waterways can disrupt water plants and the breeding and foraging activities of species such as the great crested newt. In addition, commonly used veterinary treatments like imidacloprid and fipronil –found in anti-flea and tick products used on dog's fur -wash off dogs into ponds and streams, where they are toxic to aquatic invertebrates and insects, which is shown to have knock on effects for animals further up the food chain. Dog poo that is not picked up also leaves harmful pathogens that can be harmful to livestock [64].
- Severn Estuary and floodplain waterbirds can be disturbed by ramblers, dog-walkers, wildfowlers, clay pigeon shooting, sailing boats, jet-skis and low-flying helicopters.
- Ground-nesting birds and their young are vulnerable to off-path walkers, free-roaming dogs, and mountain biking.
- Trampling from pedestrians and cyclists away from designated paths can cause degradation to sensitive groundflora, and erosion of soils.
- On steep slopes in the Wye Valley there are rare ferns, bryophytes, whitebeams and service trees which should be protected from physical damage from recreational activities such as rock-climbing.
- Artificial lighting at night affects the behaviour and survival of nocturnal species, especially bats and insects.
- Bats rely on undisturbed roosts, particularly in old buildings and caves. Development, renovation, or unregulated access to these roosts could cause Gloucestershire's bat populations to significantly drop.
- Wildlife crime, including hare coursing, can directly reduce species abundance.
- The siting of new energy infrastructure should be carefully managed to avoid adverse impacts on wildlife and habitats.

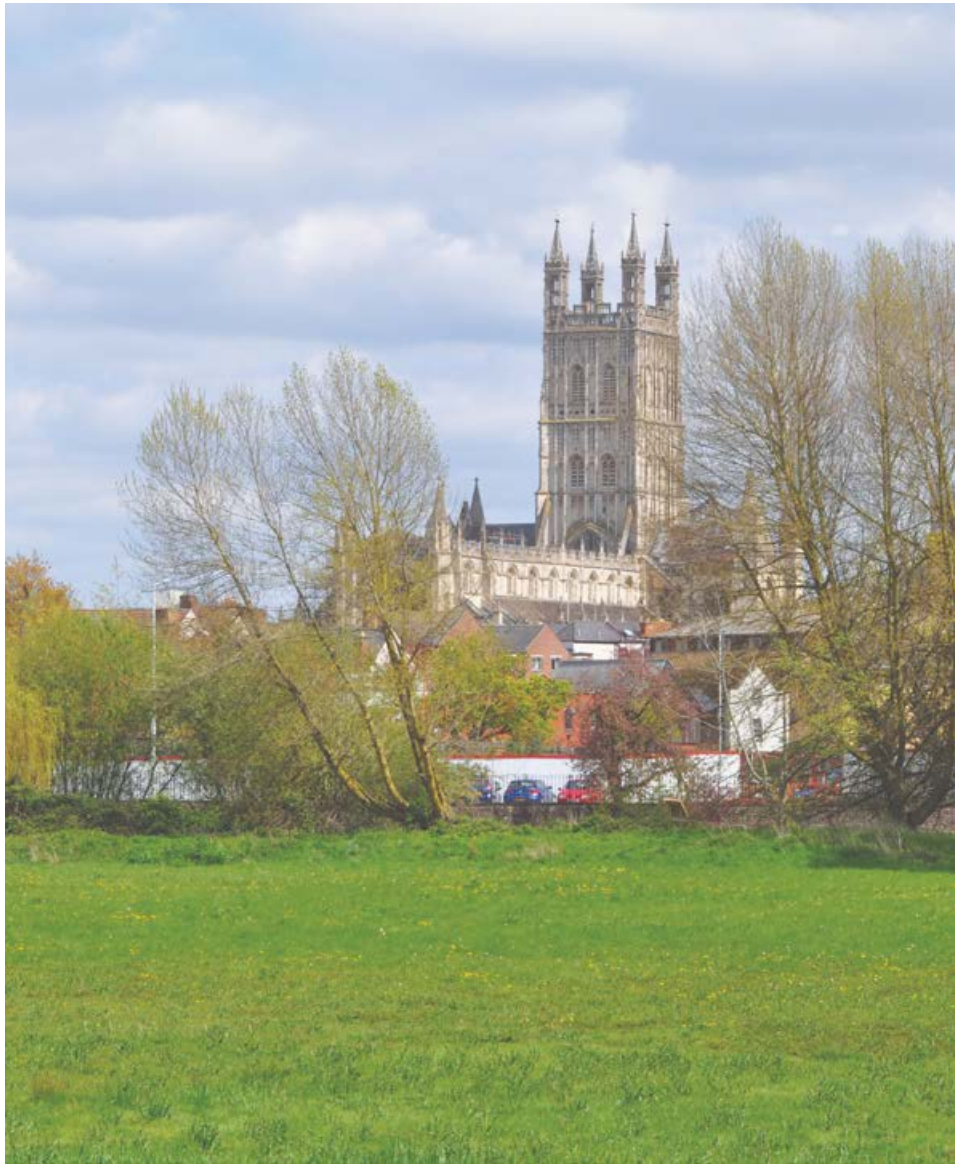
64 Nature Scot 2018 – https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/sites/default/files/2018-09/Risk%20of%20the%20spread%20of%20disease%20in%20livestock%20from%20dog%20faeces%20-%20Briefing%20note%20for%20Access%20Authorities.pdf

Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGS) can be developed in some cases as places which can contribute towards reducing recreational pressures on existing important wildlife sites. The creation of SANGS sites should also be a good opportunity to achieve some new habitat creation. However, it is important to ensure that Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space recreation areas are established away from ecologically sensitive sites.

Existing and potential wildlife sites can also have access that is designed to keep some areas more private or with restricted access – either through simple fencing or creating barriers like scrub.

Relevant Potential Measures include:

- **Measure 018:** Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife
- **Measure 040:** Reduce impacts from dogs
- **Measure 065:** Dark Skies
- **Measure 066:** Access to biodiversity-rich green spaces
- **Measure 110:** Wye Valley bryophytes and distinctive species
- **Measure 112:** Strengthen Severn Estuary and Floodplain waterbird populations and
- **Measures 074** – 080 about different bat species.



3.3.2 Diseases and invasive non-native species

Climate change exacerbates the risk that new wildlife diseases, pests and invasive species will establish and spread – either from these arriving on migratory species or through our climate becoming more suitable to support them.

A key threat for woodland habitats is the ash chalara disease (commonly referred to ash die-back) causing our ash trees to die, starting from the shoots and crown. The pathogen can be spread through soils, therefore biosecurity (reducing the spread of the pathogen from things like footwear, and wheels/machinery) is key. As well as changing woodland habitats too rapidly and affecting the retention of dead wood to support a range of species, there are some plant and insect species that rely on ash, and attention should be paid to efforts to mitigate the loss of biodiversity from ash dieback. Relevant Potential Measures include **Measure 036: Ash dieback response and Measure 108: Veteran ash pollards**.

The term invasive non-native species refers to plants, animals and microorganisms causing negative impacts (environmental, social or economic) when moved to an area beyond their natural range, intentionally or unintentionally, by humans. Invasive non-native species present in Gloucestershire include Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed, *Crassula helmsii*, American signal crayfish, American mink, Elodea species, American skunk cabbage, muntjac deer and sika deer.

It is important to note that any list of invasive non-native species affecting Gloucestershire is likely to change over time. Water hyacinth, for example, may become more of an issue as climate change progresses, and new species may also be introduced. A small number of new non-native species establish in the UK every year (10-15), with at least one predicted to become invasive [65].

One of the ways invasive non-native species affect local ecology is by outcompeting native species. Himalayan balsam forms dense vegetation across large areas shading out native plants, and by producing high numbers of seeds that disperse up to 7m from each plant, they can spread rapidly [66]. *Crassula helmsii*, a problematic wetland plant, can form a dense matt across water bodies, shading and out-competing native species, and is a considerable issue in the Cotswold Water Park.

Invasive non-native species present in Gloucestershire include ***Himalayan balsam***, ***giant hogweed***, ***Crassula helmsii***, ***American signal crayfish***, ***American mink***, ***Elodea species***, ***American skunk cabbage***, ***muntjac deer*** *and* ***sika deer***

65 UK Parliament Post 2022 – https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pn-0673/
66 Gloucester City Council – https://gloucester.gov.uk/environment-waste-recycling/nature-and-conservation/invasive-non-native-species-inns/

As well as competition, invasive non-native species may also impact native species through predation, introducing disease, and altering habitats, or a combination. The American signal crayfish is larger than our native white clawed crayfish, burrows into river banks causing erosion and collapse, and has brought with it a fungal disease called the "crayfish plague", fatal to the native species. White clawed crayfish are primary reason for the selection of the River Wye as a Special Area of Conservation, and have experienced devastating declines throughout the UK with only a few strongholds left.

The American mink was inadvertently introduced to the wild through escaping fur farms in the 1950-60s, but has caused devastation to water vole populations across the country, through predation, as mink are often small enough to enter water vole burrows at the waterline and take their young. There is hope however, and across the country, efforts to control mink have resulted in successful re-establishment of water vole populations. In Gloucestershire there is a stronghold for water vole within the Severn basin [67], as well as more isolated populations elsewhere in the county, such as the stroud canal. These should be monitored and protected from mink to ensure the populations continue to thrive and do not shrink.

Due to their devastating ecological impact on native species and habitats, controlling invasive non-native species in Gloucestershire remains an essential aspect of supporting local nature to flourish. Relevant Potential Measures include **Measure 041: Remove invasive non-native species and Measure 084: Strengthen white-clawed crayfish population**.

67 The Wildlife Trusts – https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/national-water-vole-database-project

3.3.3 Pressure on woodland regeneration from an increasing deer population

To regenerate a woodland, the deer population needs to be approximately 2 to 4 deer per square kilometre [68] for the period of time it takes to establish the woodland, however the deer population in England as a whole is increasing and becoming a significant issue for woodland creation and regeneration. If we want to regenerate our woodlands and wood pastures, as well as create new woods and orchards, management of deer needs to be prioritised, as they have no natural predators to maintain their population levels. Actions include tree protection, fencing, and using drone surveys to monitor and help manage deer movements effectively. Relevant Potential **Measures include Measure 054: Protecting tree growth.**

Muntjac deer are an invasive non-native species [69] that forage on regenerating trees and shrubs, as well as many flowering plants. They breed all year round instead of seasonally like most larger deer, which also results in more rapid population growth than other species. Gloucestershire marks the edge of their distribution, providing an opportunity to prevent further expansion or restrict their distribution, with careful management and collaboration with Herefordshire. Sika deer are also an invasive non-native species and also have a very destructive effect on regeneration and ground flora. There is still a good opportunity for it to be feasible to remove Sika deer herds from Gloucestershire. The Central Cotswold Hills Deer Management Group have experienced an increase in the native deer populations too, impacting ground flora diversity and establishment. Control of herd size is becoming increasingly important.

To regenerate a woodland, the deer population needs to be approximately ***2 to 4 deer per square kilometre***

68 Putman et al. 2011 – https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1365-2907.2010.00173.x
69 British Association of Shooting and Conservation – https://basc.org.uk/invasive-non-native-deer-species-in-the-uk/

3.3.4 The importance of fungi and soil health in nature recovery

Fungi are ecosystem engineers that sustain the health and diversity of almost all ecosystems on the planet, including those of Gloucestershire, and influence almost every aspect of human life. Fungi build soils and maintain healthy soils, and sustain almost all plant life by providing them with crucial nutrients, and defending them from disease and drought. The metabolic activities of fungi also regulate the composition of the atmosphere through facilitating carbon sequestration in soils – which amounts to twice the amount of carbon found in plants and the atmosphere combined.

Despite the vital role of fungi in driving biogeochemical processes and sustaining global biodiversity, they can be overlooked in strategies for nature [70]. There are however, many threats to fungi, each with significant knock-on effects. A large number of species are intimately associated with plants and so are impacted by activities that result in habitat loss, such as deforestation and loss of species rich grasslands to development or agriculture. Fungi are also subject to additional disruptions, from ploughing and the overuse of fungicides and fertilisers, to habitat fragmentation.

The urgent need for fungal conservation is becoming ever more widely accepted among decision makers, with the Fungal Conservation Pledge launched in 2024 by the UK and Chile. The pledge seeks to advance concrete measures to prioritise fungi in national and international legislation, policies, and agreements, and will hopefully be adopted by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat at the next COP (Conference of the Parties) of the CBD, paving the way for a new era in fungal conservation. Between 2014 and 2025 an additional 1000 fungi were assessed as part of the Global Red List [71], a stark increase on only 2 species being assessed between 1954 and 2014. there are now over 1300 fungi species on the List, with 77 from the UK.

Work is now being progressed on a Great Britain Red List, which will show which fungi are at risk and need protection.

Fungi in Gloucestershire are under-recorded relative to animals and plants, and we lack thorough baseline surveys at the time of publication. However, lack of data does not mean that fungi aren't present and playing vital roles, and efforts should be made to increase data collection for this group. Habitat management, creation, and restoration projects, together with environmental land management schemes and gardens in Gloucestershire should make an effort to implement the latest guidelines for fungal conservation. Some of the Potential Measures that refer to this include Measure 047: Soil health and Regenerative Farming;
Measure 106: Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi; and Measure 107: Dead wood.

70 IUCN Fungal Conservation Committee – https://www.iucn-fungi.org/recent-work
71 Natural England 2025 – https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2025/10/10/a-landmark-year-for-englands-fungi/

3.3.5 Working with the archaeological and historic environment

Conserving and enhancing the archaeological and historic environment is an integral part of protecting, managing, and planning for nature and landscapes to deliver sustainable nature recovery. Human activity has shaped our nature and landscapes for millennia – from woodlands to water bodies, and calcareous grassland to river valleys, each landscape and habitat has been influenced and shaped by human activity. The natural and historic environment working in synergy can produce multiple environmental outcomes and public benefits, including preserving heritage features, habitats, and landscapes by making them more resilient to change, engaging and enthusing new audiences, boosting value for public money, contributing to a circular low-carbon economy, reinforcing cultural identity, and connecting people with nature.

Heritage assets and historic landscapes are also habitats, and their characteristics will often dictate what species can and cannot thrive, and inform decisions about restoration options and appropriate management. For example, industrial heritage such as the former mines and quarries of the Forest of Dean and Cotswolds, can provide valuable mosaic habitats, as well as open space and fringe habitats in woodland, and therefore be important for protected and priority species such as birds, bats, reptiles and invertebrates, as well as having heritage value. A range of old and historic buildings provide important habitat for bats and for nesting birds. Historic routeways, designed landscapes and other heritage assets are often wildlife rich sites which, if appropriately managed, can help form the essential linkages within biodiversity networks. Heritage can also help us build resilience, understand how people and places have responded to climatic events through history and how earlier solutions may suggest contributions to resolving current problems, for example the management of water meadows of the Cotswold rivers and Severn Vale.

Habitat creation and restoration projects in Gloucestershire should consult the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record[72] to identify any known archaeological sites within proposed areas for tree planting and seek specialist advice on their management, such as avoiding damage from tree planting, tree roots and forestry operation, informing the design of a planting scheme in relation to the historic woodland character of an area, or considering the use of glades or fire breaks to maximise the protection to archaeological features.

Biodiversity projects should also follow the four core principles of Natural England's guidance for nature recovery and the historic environment [73] including considering the historic environment from the outset as part of maximising environmental benefits, ensuring that the legal, policy and guidance requirements for its protection are abided by and damage to it is avoided wherever possible or harm is minimised and mitigated appropriately.

There is potential to maximise benefits for both the historic environment and nature through:

- Using historic records to understand whether certain habitats and species will prosper and to inform decisions about restoration options and appropriate management.
- managing historic routes, designated landscapes and other heritage assets rich in wildlife as important links in a national biodiversity network.
- understanding how people have responded to climatic events through history to tell the story of climate change as part of the project.
- minimising soil disturbance, reducing erosion and protecting embedded carbon to improve soil health, air and water quality at the same time as protecting and enhancing archaeology.
- using the historic environment as an engagement tool and lens through which to experience nature, by providing access through heritage sites to the countryside and bringing about wider benefits such as tourism and volunteering.

72 Gloucestershire County Council – https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/planning-and-environment/archaeology/request-archaeological-data-from-gloucestershires-historic-environment-record-her/
73 World Heritage UK – https://worldheritageuk.org/articles/latest-news/nature-recovery-the-historic-environment/

3.3.6 Minerals extraction and restoration

The Cotswolds Lakes/Cotswold Water Park area of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire is a patchwork of lakes, wetland and floodplain habitats along with agricultural, urban and industrial land uses, largely created or restored after mineral extraction and quarrying. Future mineral extraction, including at the planned Down Ampney quarry site, has the effect of significant landscape change in the short-term, but in the long term, the minerals restoration planning process represents an opportunity for nature recovery and to create a net gain for biodiversity once extraction has finished.

Instead of restoring sites back to a species poor habitat, for example, restoration plans can be ambitious in specifying the creation of high value habitats such as wetlands, and open mosaic habitat (a mix of exposed stone/rubble, bare earth, wetland features and scrub, often naturally formed on old brownfield sites) [74]. This should continue to be applied within Cotswold Lakes/ Water Park area, with input from local communities and nature conservation partners, and should be considered in other parts of Gloucestershire where minerals extraction is taking place. The restoration of minerals workings should take account of the Cotswold Water Park Nature Recovery Plan [75] and take opportunities for wider connections for wetland habitats.

74 Buglife 2020 – https://cdn.buglife.org.uk/2020/01/Identifying-open-mosaic-habitat.pdf
75 https://www.cotswold.gov.uk/planning-and-building/landscape/cotswold-water-park/

3.3.7 The need for ecological recording and monitoring

The evidence base for Gloucestershire's first Local Nature Recovery Strategy has benefited from a huge collaborative effort from the combined skills and knowledge of hundreds of expert naturalists, ecology professionals and dedicated volunteers. Both challenges and opportunities for improving the evidence base were identified at an early stage. Challenges mostly concern gaps in skills, recording effort or geographic coverage of information, both for species and habitats. Opportunities relate strongly to human resources, both in terms of experts and new opportunities for volunteer input and Citizen Science projects.

Species recording

Verified records from local volunteer naturalists, professional ecologists and national recording schemes have built a historical database within Gloucestershire which was used by the Species Task and Finish Group to create the Priority Species list of rare and/or threatened species in Gloucestershire. It is recognised, however that species records are indicative of surveyor effort and may not truly reflect the biodiversity within Gloucestershire as many taxa have been under-recorded, such as fungi, soil fauna, fish and mustelids (weasel family), along with geographic areas. The process not only identified gaps in recording effort, both geographically and for particular species groups, but also gaps in our understanding of species life-cycles and management needs, particularly for fungi and invertebrates.

The gaps in knowledge raised during the work of the Species Task and Finish Group revealed a need for a county-wide monitoring strategy, and a need to identify opportunities for broadening the geographic reach of monitoring, along with targeting less recorded species. This can be done in part, by making efforts to encourage delivery partners of the LNRS, to consider carrying out their own monitoring of sites, or linking them with volunteers that can do so. This will increase the geographical range of species monitoring, with the inclusion of private land in monitoring efforts, and result in gathering meaningful data on the success of projects. Future iterations of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy should incorporate these species once additional scientific research has been conducted and more informed management requirements have been established.

Habitat recording

New local habitat survey information, including from Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust's Habimap [76] project and from Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group South West [77], and commercial / development projects has helped to improve the accuracy of the national datasets of information about habitats in Gloucestershire. These habitat records in turn helped to update and improve the basis of the Nature Recovery Network mapping which formed the basis for many of the mapped focus areas for Habitat Potential Measures and for the Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity. However, there is still a long way to go to record comprehensive and fully up-to-date habitat information across Gloucestershire. New schemes such as BNG mandate monitoring of habitat creation sites, and more can be done to pool existing data around existing and proposed habitats, through working with local authorities, developers and landowners in Gloucestershire.

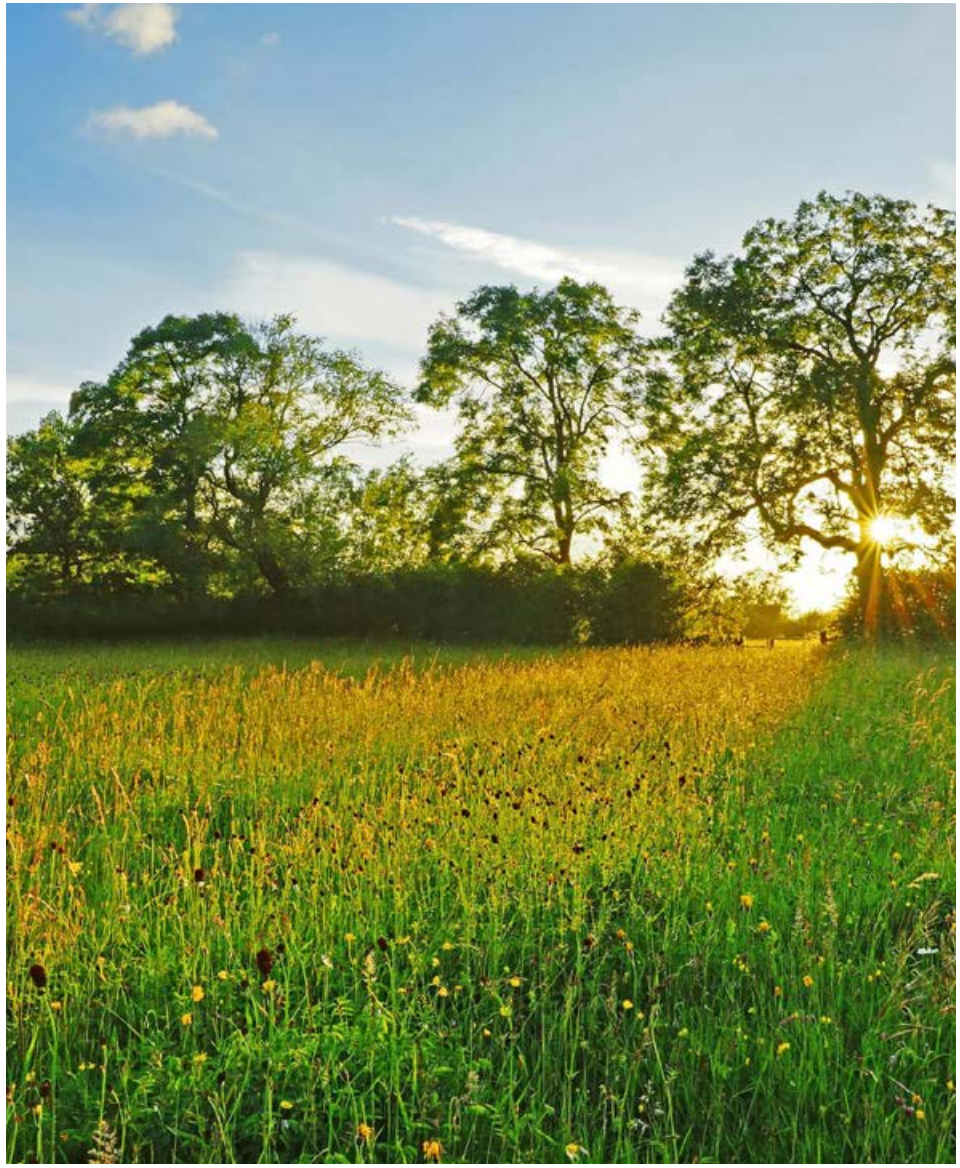
Training

Both species and habitat recording are crucial to maintaining a robust and relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Local expertise and an increasing interest in Citizen Science have combined well in Gloucestershire to provide a good baseline for the Strategy. The process has however highlighted a need within the monitoring strategy to develop and train experts in specific taxonomic groups to address recording gaps and ensure that under-represented taxa are effectively surveyed and understood over time. These skills are vital for accurate recording and also for ensuring that data from Citizen Science projects can be verified and kept to the highest standard. The ongoing process of training, supporting and inspiring habitat surveyors for Habimap and other projects mirrors the need for expert species knowledge and identification skills.

Delivery of recording and monitoring

The delivery phase of this Strategy should have a strong focus on prioritising and resourcing high quality ecological recording and monitoring of habitats and species in Gloucestershire and growing the expertise needed to achieve an excellent evidence base for practical nature restoration.

76 Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust - https://www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk/habimap
77 ELM 3 Test and Trial project by FWAG South West: Creating an on-farm assessment and analysis methodology for Landscape Recovery that helps farmers become investment ready



3.4 Ecosystem services and biodiversity

Although our species and habitats have their own intrinsic value, our natural environment also provides us all the resources we need for survival, and mechanisms for ensuring the places we live in are functioning and habitable (ecosystem services). Biodiversity (the variety of living things) underpins the delivery of all ecosystem services, that is, without biodiversity we would not have the resources we need to live.

Some examples of these ecosystem services are shown below. For some of these we show a symbol, used with permission from the Natural Capital Team at the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency's Natural Capital Team has developed a set of natural capital icons for use in their own tools, guidance, and products, as well as those of their partners, that support a natural capital approach. These icons are designed to give natural capital a strong, recognisable identity, making it easier for people to identify and engage with it. These symbols will appear next to Potential Measures in Part 2, to show how different measures contribute to these wider environmental benefits:

Many of these ecosystem services are benefits that a number of Potential Measures of this strategy contribute to, such as new woodland and tree cover increasing carbon sequestration, and shading and local climate regulation. However, some ecosystem services are directly referenced by Potential Measures of this strategy, examples being Potential Measure **024: Natural Flood Management and Potential Measure 065: Access to biodiversity-rich green spaces.**

		Symbol
Provisioning services	Food provision	
	Water supply	
	Raw materials including wood and fibres	
	Energy – hydro or biomass	
Regulating services	Carbon storage and sequestration	
	Air pollutant removal	
	Water quality	
	Water flow regulation / flood management	
	Local climate regulation / shading/ urban cooling	
	Pollination	

		Symbol
	Soil erosion prevention	
	Soil health	
	Biological pest and disease control	
	Waste decomposition	
Cultural services	Recreation	
	Education	
	Interaction with nature /health and wellbe-ing	
	Landscape beauty /Sense of place	

4. Wider Ecological Connections beyond Gloucestershire

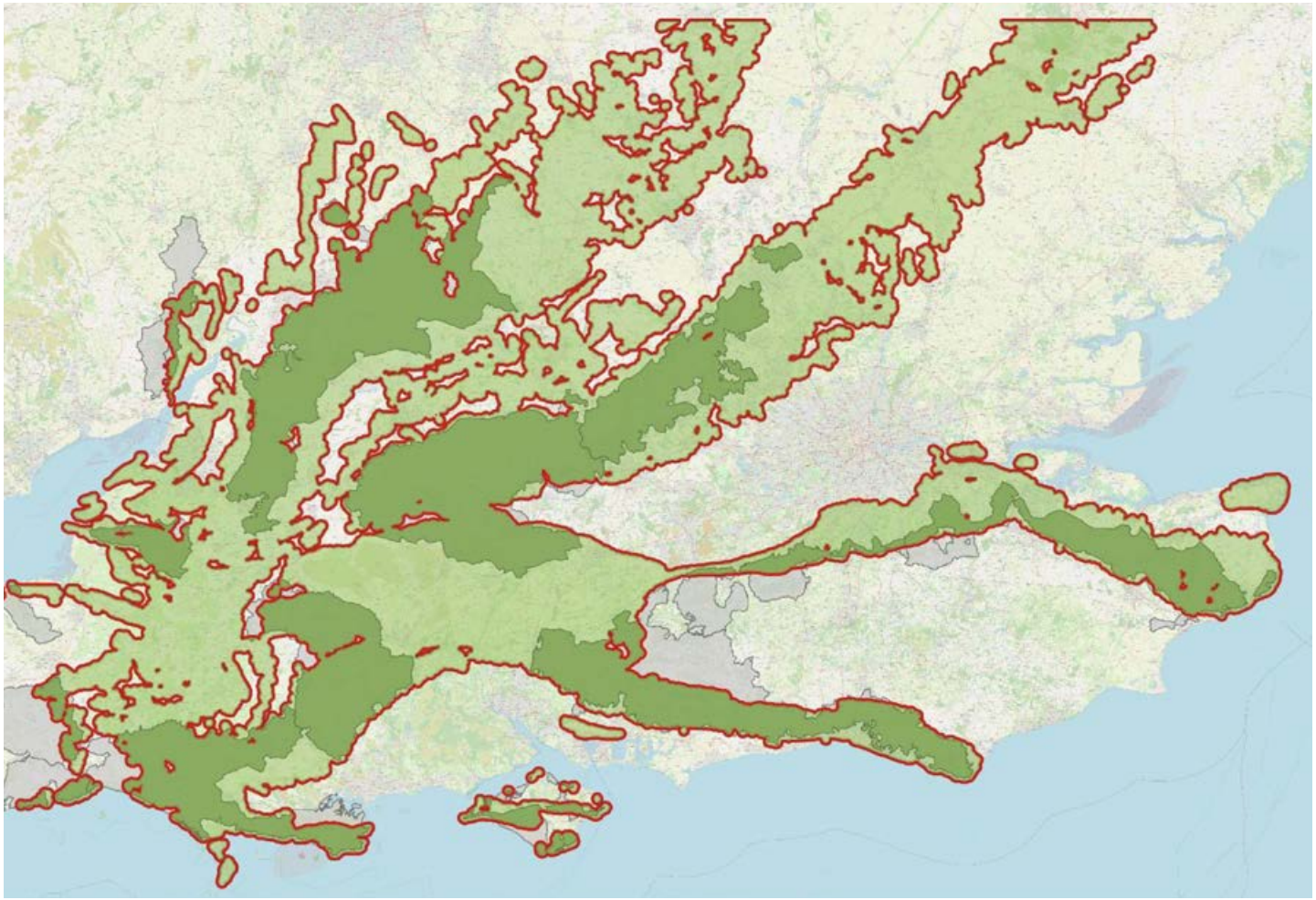
In order to secure the recovery of nature in the face of climate change we need to plan and act to help nature move through the landscape as it adapts to a warming climate. We need to think about Gloucestershire's future wildlife. What species will be living here in 10, 50 and 100 years time and how will they get here? More mobile species are already moving at a scale greater than an individual county and Gloucestershire has a number of features that make it important for supporting movement at this scale.

4.1.1 Limestone and Big Chalk

Calcareous (limestone and chalk) landscapes in the south of England contain the most species-rich habitats within the UK. When combined across the whole landscape, these habitats make the calcareous landscapes one of the best places to allow wildlife to recover and adapt to climate change.

With a north south reach of 171 miles, Big Chalk [78] represents one of the best opportunities offered by the English landscape to support the northward movement of species to a new climate space. Gloucestershire plays an important role as both a destination for these species and as part of a route further north.

78 Big Chalk - https://www.big-chalk.org/



Big Chalk is a pan-England partnership programme designed to facilitate this recovery and movement across the calcareous (chalk and limestone) landscapes of southern England. It seeks to amplify the efforts of partners to create a robust ecological network on a scale hitherto unimagined.

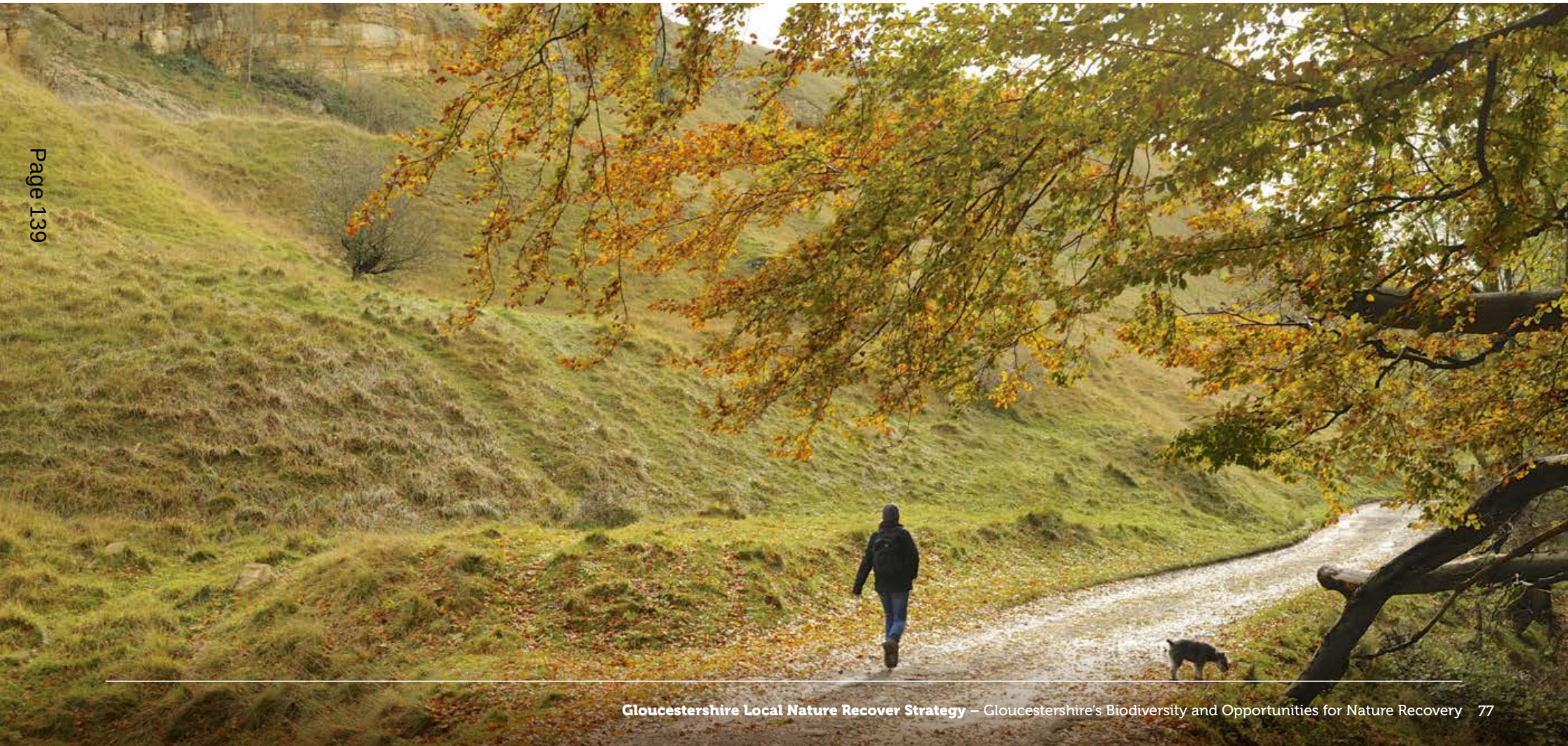
The Big Chalk area is huge, covering some 259,317 km2, or 20% of England and there are many people, organisations and partnerships striving to deliver the Big Chalk vision in a variety of ways. It is important that the Big Chalk partnership champions and supports these efforts rather than competes with them.

Big Chalk seeks to do this in two main ways:

- Championing and connecting the contributions of partners across political and institutional boundaries.
- Defining priorities, influencing funders and policy makers to support and secure resources for new activities.

The partnership is headed by a Board and topic groups and conferences bring partners together across an array of subject areas. A wider membership list keeps people in touch. Individual projects can apply for Big Chalk accreditation through a project registration scheme.

The Big Chalk Partnership is already proving to be influential with funders and policy makers. As nature recovery effort continues to grow Big Chalk can combine our voices and efforts to better create and realise opportunities for the recovery of nature.



4.1.2 Migrating Birds

Gloucestershire already plays an internationally important role in supporting migratory birds. The Cotswolds scarp functions as a north-south route rich in cover and food utilised by many birds. The regular seasonal sightings of the mountain nesting ring ouzel at Cleeve Common whilst on migration illustrates this well.

The Severn Estuary is recognised internationally as important for numerous species of migrating and wintering birds, through its Ramsar site designation. Birds visiting the Severn Estuary seasonally include populations of Bewick's swan, greater white-fronted goose, common shelduck, gadwall, dunlin and common redshank [79] amongst many others. The habitats of the Severn Estuary provide a key refuelling point where birds will stop and rest as they travel the "North Atlantic Flyway", a bird migration route linking Siberia, Europe and Africa [80].

It is likely that the number and type of birds visiting the Severn and the wider county will change over time, with southerly-distributed waterbirds likely to benefit as the climate warms, meaning their populations may increase and expand their range. Overall, however, migratory bird populations, already declining widely around the world at a rapid pace, are one of the bird groups thought most likely to be affected by climate change in a negative way [81]. This means whilst the species migrating through Gloucestershire are likely to change, perhaps significantly, its natural habitats will continue to play an important role for birds.

In addition to the climate-caused changes in distribution and abundance of species, the Severn Estuary can play an important role in particularly cold years in the UK, where the temperatures negatively affect more northern and easterly bird populations. In these years numbers of migratory birds in Gloucestershire and the Severn are likely to increase.

79 Natural England – https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5601088380076032
80 RSPB – https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-we-do/influence-government-and-business/casework/the-severn-estuary
81 British Trust for Ornithology 2021 – https://www.bto.org/our-science/publications/research-reports/climate-change-and-uks-birds

4.1.3 River Catchments

Rivers and tributaries link Gloucestershire to surrounding counties and parts of England and Wales further afield. Rivers act as wildlife corridors, providing paths through the landscape and a flow of resources including food sources. They are one of the richest freshwater habitats, supporting plants and animals that need running water to survive. The longest river in the UK, the Severn, starts in Wales and flows through the English counties of Shropshire and Worcestershire before flowing through Gloucestershire. Near Tewkesbury, the Warwickshire Avon meets the Severn, as its easternmost and largest tributary.

The Severn tributaries are particularly important for connectivity with regard to migratory fish in the River Severn. Some major barriers to fish passage for the Severn have been addressed in Worcestershire in the River Severn itself. However, Gloucestershire needs to address the barriers posed by Upper Lode weir and Maisemore weir for species needing to complete upstream and downstream migrations, opening up access to and from the Warwickshire Avon as well as the Severn. Other significant barriers need to be addressed in the Frome and Leadon catchments as well as across the Forest of Dean and through our urban areas of Gloucester and Cheltenham. The majority of the tributaries that discharge into the Severn and Severn estuary have flapped outfalls, restricting access to fish, eels and lamprey, denying access to more suitable habitat for their respective life stages. Fish passage needs to be enabled at all confluences to the Estuary.

The River Thames catchment is also a significant feature of the Gloucestershire landscape. The source of the River Thames is near Kemble, and several Cotswolds rivers feed into the Upper Thames: the Churn, Coln, Leach, Windrush, and Evenlode. Cotswold Water Park, a series of 180 lakes formed in sites of gravel extraction, is located in the Thames catchment, with around 23 miles of the Thames River running through the area.

The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) and local Catchment Partnerships bring together organisations from all sectors to work towards a healthy water environment [82]. Those catchment partnerships that include part of Gloucestershire include the Severn Vale, The Upper Thames, Windrush, Evenlode, Warwickshire Avon, and Bristol Avon Catchment Partnerships. The Severn Vale Catchment Partnership has developed a number of flagship programmes that if delivered could significantly improve a large number of waterbodies – these are the Wilder Frome, Wilder Leadon, Forest to Sea, Our Living Rivers (Gloucester and Cheltenham) and Flourishing Floodplains Programmes.

82 Catchment Based Approach - https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/about/

5. National Environmental Objectives

The Environment Act 2021 and the government's 2025 Environmental Improvement Plan [83] created a range of national environmental objectives which each local nature recovery strategy should contribute to. These are summarised below, with indications of the main ways this strategy helps to contribute.

5.1 National targets set under the Environment Act (2021)

Objective	Main Relevant Potential Measures
Biodiversity on land – Restore or create more than 500,000 hectares of a range of wildlife-rich habitat outside protected sites by 2042, compared to 2022 levels. An interim target to restore or create a 250,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats outside of protected sites by 2030.	All Potential Measures about restoration or creation of habitats.
Biodiversity on land – Halt the decline of species abundance by 2030. Ensure that species abundance in 2042 is greater than in 2022, and at least 10% greater than 2030.	All Potential Measures contribute to this main aim.
Biodiversity on land – reduce the risk of species' extinction by 2042, when compared to the risk of species' extinction in 2022.	All Potential Measures about habitat quality, resilience, size and connectivity, and priority species measures supporting recovery of additional rare and threatened species.
Woodland cover – Increase total tree canopy and woodland cover in England from 14.9% of land area in 2022 to at least 16.5% by 2050, and increase by 0.33% (an increase of 43,000 hectares) by 2030.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 010: Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland.** **Measure 011: Establish new woodland and tree cover.** **Measure 050: Agroforestry** **Measure 067: Urban tree planting and management**

83 Environmental Improvement Plan 2025 – https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-2025/environmental-improvement-plan-eip-2025

Objective	Main Relevant Potential Measures
Improve water quality and availability – Reduce nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and sediment pollution from agriculture into the water environment by at least 40% by 2038, compared to a 2018 baseline.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 047: Soil health and regenerative farming** **Measure 046: Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs** **Measure 038: Water quality**

5.2 Key additional (relevant) commitments from the revised Environmental Improvement Plan (2025)

Commitment or Goal	Main Relevant Potential Measures
Commitment 86: Make sure that everyone has access to green or blue spaces within a 15-minute walk from home.	**Measure 066: Access to biodiversity-rich green space**
Commitment 63: Restore approximately 280,000 hectares of peatland in England by 2050.	**Measure 026: Restore and create wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic** **Measure 027: Manage and restore fens, mires and lowland peatland sites**
Goal 3: Water – Ensure English waters are clean, resilient and plentiful.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 018: Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife** **Measure 019: Manage lakes for biodiversity** **Measure 022: Improve ecological condition of rivers** **Measure 038: Water quality** **Measure 039: Sewage and wastewater** **Measure 044: Limit groundwater abstraction and surface flow abstraction** **Measure 046: Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs**
Commitment 7: Effectively conserve and manage 30% of the UK's land by 2030 (30by30).	All Potential Measures about management of habitats and about restoration or creation of habitats.
Commitment 12: Support farmers and land managers to create or restore 48,000km of hedgerows by 2037 and 72,500km of hedgerows by 2050.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 045: Field margins, hedgerows, buffer strips, ponds, trees and sustainable farming and forestry** **Measure 053: Hedgerows**

Commitment or Goal	Main Relevant Potential Measures
Goal 6: Resources – Ensure that natural resources are produced, managed and consumed sustainably.	**Measure 049: Sustainable forestry and nature re-covery**
Commitment 8: By December 2030 50% of SSSI features to have actions on track to achieve favourable condition.	All Potential Measures about management of habitats.
Commitment 65: Integrate climate resilience into decision making across the EIP programme to support the delivery of our outcomes in the context of climate change. Commitment 66: Enhance the adaptive capacity and resilience of the treescape by increasing its extent, connectivity and diversity, improving its condition and conserving the genetic diversity within and between species.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 024: Natural Flood Management** **Measure 030: Create wildlife corridor connectivity** **Measure 032: Physical structure** **Measure 035: Woodland climate adaptation** **Measure 037: Floodplain reconnection** **Measure 047: Soil health and Regenerative Farming** **Measure 048: Drought resilient farming techniques**
Goal 8: Reducing environmental hazards – Reduce the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy from natural hazards.	**Measure 024: Natural Flood Management**
Commitment 13: By 2043, increase saltmarsh by 15% compared to 2009 levels, seagrass by 15% compared to 2024 levels and create functional oyster reef habitat at ecosystem scales in 5 to 8 suitable English water bodies.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 028: Protect and manage saltmarsh and mudflats** **Measure 029: Restore and create saltmarsh** **Measure 042: Severn Estuary marine biosecurity**
Commitment 19: Deliver 2030 emissions targets to reduce anthropogenic emissions for the following pollutants against a 2005 baseline level: ammonia (NH3) 16% reduction; nitrogen dioxide (NO2) 73% reduction.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 038: Water quality** **Measure 046: Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs** **Measure 047: Soil health and Regenerative Farming** **Measure 056: Riparian buffer strips**

Commitment or Goal	Main Relevant Potential Measures
Commitment 81: Reduce the rate of establishment of INNS by at least 50% by December 2030, compared to 2000 levels.	Main relevant Potential Measures: **Measure 041: Remove invasive non-native species** **Measure 042: Severn Estuary marine biosecurity** **Measure 054: Protecting tree growth** **Measure 084: Strengthen white clawed crayfish population**
Commitment 16: By 2030, double the number of farms providing sufficient year-round resources for farm wildlife, compared with 2025.	All Potential Measures about management of habitats and about restoration or creation of habitats, as well as: **Measure 045: Field margins, hedgerows, buffer strips, ponds, trees and sustainable farming and forestry** **Measure 098: Individual species needs of farmland birds** **Measure 106: Rare arable plants ad soil fauna, flora and fungi**

Gloucestershire
Local Nature Recovery Strategy

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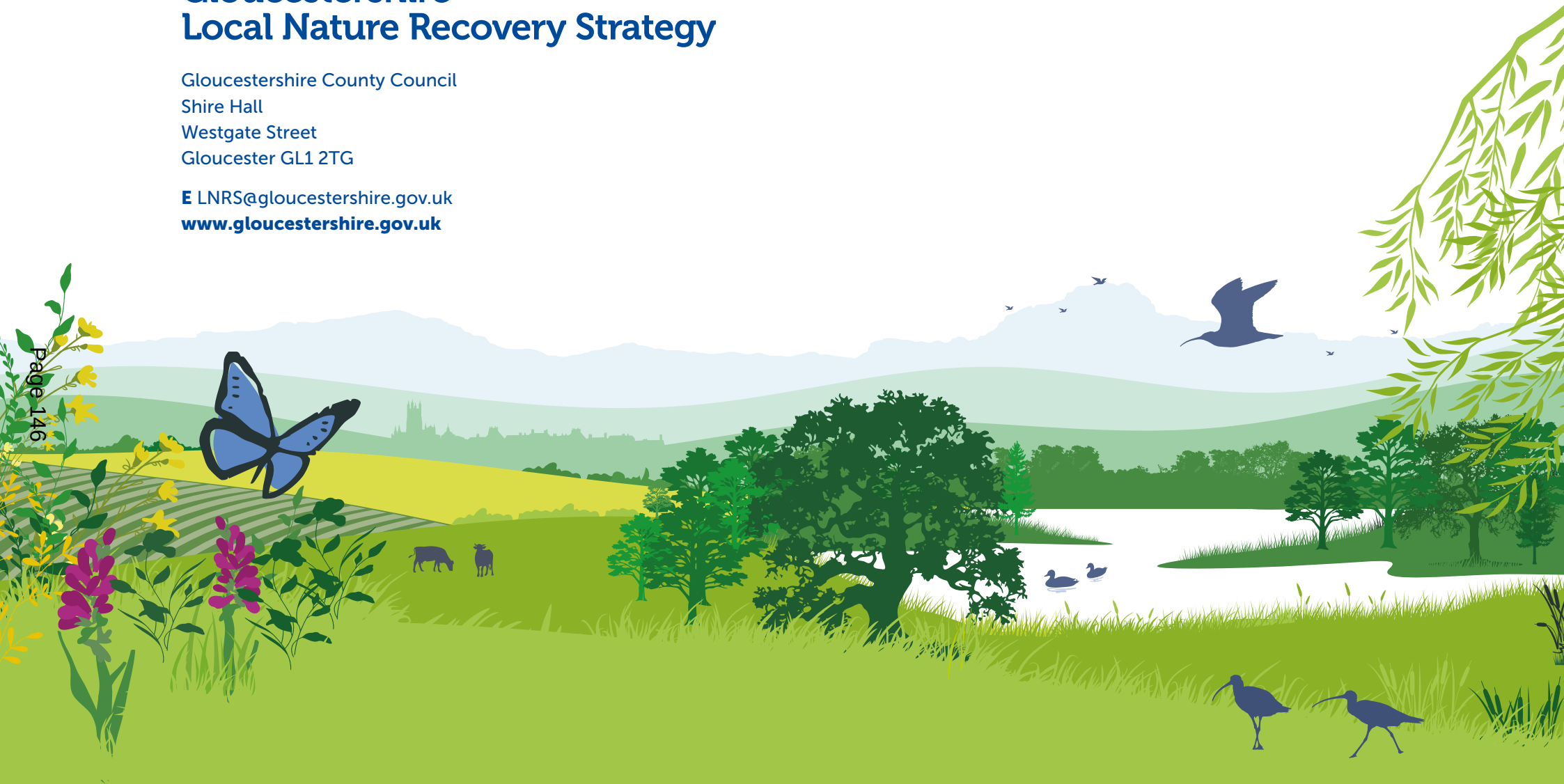

Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

Part 2 - Gloucestershire's Biodiversity Priorities and Potential Measures

Contents

Introduction

Part 2 of the strategy draws from the pressures and opportunities highlighted in Part 1 and sets out the practical actions that can be taken to both protect our existing wildlife and biodiversity, and expand and create new wildlife rich habitat. These actions for nature are described as "Potential Measures", with each linking directly to achieving the aims of 10 Biodiversity Priorities set out in this document. These Biodiversity Priorities are also linked directly to the Key Messages of this strategy, as defined and expanded on in Part 1.

The Key Messages of this strategy

This strategy has been developed through a range of discussions and input of information from nature conservationists, planners, local authority officers and members, farmers, landowners, land managers, and members of the public in Gloucestershire. From these discussions and information, we have drawn out some overall key messages for this strategy:

1. **Safeguarding, managing and enhancing existing biodiversity-rich sites –** The complex ecological relationships between species in a habitat are difficult to recreate quickly once a habitat is degraded or destroyed. With the pressures on Gloucestershire's wildlife, the highest priority is to safeguard and enhance high quality nature sites and species populations. Landowners and land managers who are already doing this should be supported.

2. **Landscape scale connectivity: Better, bigger, more, and more joined** – Working from existing good habitat, these sites should be increased in size, with connective habitat created to join multiple areas of value for wildlife. This is the core theme of Nature Recovery as expressed in the *Making Space for Nature* report, with the aim of creating a resilient and coherent nature recovery network. Areas put forward for new habitat creation can contribute to meeting the Government's goal of 30 by 30 - at least 30% of land to be protected for nature recovery by 2030.

3. **Climate emergency** – Climate change is already affecting our wildlife with temperature, rainfall and growing season changes affecting the timing of natural events such as emergence, pollination and where species can thrive. Nature based solutions can help mitigate some impacts of climate change. Landscape-scale nature recovery will allow species to move and migrate to new or cooler habitat, when the conditions in their existing habitat are no longer suitable due to the impact of climate change.

4. **Our relationship with water** – Management of our watercourses needs to focus on re-naturalisation, restoration of floodplains and improving water quality. Actions to restore natural meanders and wiggles, along with removing artificial barriers, can have a wealth of benefit both for people and nature, such as slowing the flow of water, creating natural flood resilience and allowing fish to move freely. It is recognised that efforts to improve water quality need to focus on both point and diffuse sources, tackling sources of pollution such as run off, as well as how it moves through the watercourse.

5. **The value of mixed and wilder habitats** – In the right location, allowing sites to become "messy" and a complex mosaic of scrub, species rich grassland with varying sward heights and bare ground can result in a diverse ecosystem, supporting a wide range of species. The variety in structure also improves climate resilience allowing species to adapt and move between different patches of habitat. These habitats can be created through "natural regeneration" – the process of allowing large herbivores shape and maintain the habitat mosaic, or manual techniques that mimic the way they shape the landscape.

6. **Biodiversity in our developments and settlements** – The importance of nature in our settlements, urban areas and new developments was emphasised by participants in our public engagement sessions, as well as by other stakeholders. Nature in our urban areas and settlements is important for health and wellbeing, for nature connection, for climate change mitigation and for connecting habitats and wildlife areas within and adjacent to settlements.

Statement of Biodiversity Priorities

The statement of Biodiversity Priorities identifies ten categories of actions, arranged mainly by habitat type. The description of each Biodiversity Priority sets out an aim, highlighting the ways in which the strategy and Potential Measures will improve biodiversity, connectivity and climate resilience, in both existing and newly created habitats.

1. **Grassland, meadows and heathland** (open habitats): Improve the condition of and increase the resilience of grassland, meadows and heathland by striving towards achieving species-rich sward (calcareous and neutral grasslands), and a diversity in structure to create micro-habitats and shelter for small mammals, invertebrates and reptiles. The extent of these species-rich grassland, meadows and heath habitats needs to be significantly increased, along with connectivity, including through road verges and arable field margins.

2. **Woodland habitats**: Improve the condition of and increase the resilience of woodlands and tree habitats, through creating diversity in structure in existing woodlands by coppicing and thinning, and increasing the species diversity where is has not established in newer woodlands or where it has been previously lost in established woodlands.. Woodland creation should focus on species diversity for climate resilience, extending existing woodlands and forming connectivity between them.

3. **Mixed and mosaic habitats**: Create complex and dynamic mosaics of scrub, grassland, trees and wetland. These mosaic habitats can be strategically placed to act as stepping stones between existing woodland and grassland habitats, and their diversity and complexity supports species that need variety in structure and food sources.

4. **Open water habitats**: Improve the ecological condition of ponds and lakes which are increasingly under threat from drought, pollution, and invasive species, which have a negative impact on the diversity of species they support. Creating new ponds and scrapes provides connectivity between existing features, also allowing for migration of semiaquatic species.

5. **Running water habitats**: Create more natural river courses and river banks, and dynamic mosaics of linked wetlands and floodplain habitat. Together these measures can alleviate flooding by slowing the flow and increasing water storage. Improving water quality by reducing pollution and improving riparian buffers benefits both riverine species and people.

6. **Wetland habitats**: Improve the condition of and increase the resilience, extent and connectivity of wetland habitats by creating connections between open water and river habitats and managing invasive species.

7. **Estuarine habitats**: Protect and enhance internationally important estuarine habitats through limiting disturbance from recreational pressure and restoring and creating new saltmarsh.

8. **Nature-friendly farming and forestry**: Build the health of soils through reducing the intensity of farming practices, and utilising the farmed landscape to increase connectivity and food sources for wildlife. Reduce the use of pesticides and herbicides to protect wildlife and reduce pollution into

surrounding landscape and habitats. Provide food sources for wildlife and habitat connectivity through our countryside.

9. **Biodiversity in settlements and developments**: Increase biodiversity and wildlife corridors in the land around residential areas by ensuring green space is created in new developments and is improved for wildlife in existing areas, as well as increasing the biodiversity of habitat found on urban corridors such as road verges, canals, and cycleways.

10. **Species priorities**: Strengthen the resilience of rare and threatened species that need specific management measures by targeting habitat management to support them and strategically creating connectivity between places where they are known to have strongholds.

Categories of Potential Measures

- Habitat Measures (mapped)
- General Measures (unmapped): These can be applied in relation to a range of other measures, but it is not appropriate to map them spatially.
- Nature-friendly farming and forestry Measure (mapped)
- Nature-friendly farming and forestry Measures (unmapped)
- Biodiversity in settlements and developments Measures (mapped)
- Biodiversity in settlements and developments Measures (unmapped)
- Species Measures (partially mapped)

Where potential measures have been mapped, this mapping expresses the most effective places to deliver the measures in order to achieve the biodiversity priorities of this strategy. Habitat management and creation will also be relevant outside the zones mapped in the strategy, but this mapping represents the *best* opportunities for increasing connectivity and expanding existing sites.

An important caveat - site specific management advice and monitoring

An important caveat to take into account when using this strategy is that this is a high-level county-scale strategy developed using the current best existing biodiversity information.

For all detailed decisions about habitat management or creation on any particular site, the general recommendations of this strategy should be supplemented with site-specific advice as appropriate, from ecologists, land agents, land managers, local authorities, Gloucestershire County Council Historic Environment Record (HER), regulators including the Forestry Commission, Environment Agency and Natural England, and within protected landscapes the National Landscape teams.

Site specific advice including baseline ecological surveys and/or soil tests should be taken before determining habitat management plans or the best options for land management on that site. Within National Landscapes, the statutory Management Plan and associated guidance including Nature Recovery Plans should be followed. If felling trees, consent and an approved felling licence may be required from the Forestry Commission. The ongoing management costs of habitat creation and enhancement should be planned for. Ongoing survey and monitoring is needed to assess the long-term impact of conservation management interventions.

Wider Environmental Benefits or Ecosystem Services

This strategy also considers the wider environmental benefits of nature recovery. These wider environmental benefits are also known as ecosystem services, which is a way to demonstrate how biodiversity is essential for the resources we need to live. Symbols for some of these key ecosystem services, or wider environmental

benefits, are shown next to the potential measures which make a significant contribution to one or more of these wider environmental benefits.

These symbols are used with permission from the Natural Capital Team at the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency's Natural Capital Team has developed a set of natural capital icons for use in their own tools, guidance, and products, as well as those of their partners, that support a natural capital approach. These icons are designed to give natural capital a strong, recognisable identity, making it easier for people to identify and engage with it.

Key to symbols for key wider environmental benefits / ecosystem services

Carbon storage and sequestration	
Air pollutant removal	
Water quality	
Water flow regulation / flood management	
Local climate regulation / shading / urban cooling	
Soil health / Soil erosion prevention	
Cultural / Recreation / education / health and wellbeing / landscape beauty / sense of place	

Guidance links and funding sources

We have not included links to further guidance and best practice, or links to potential funding sources in this document, because these are likely to be updated or change during the lifetime of this strategy. Instead, through the Local Habitat Map website you can access summary documents in pdf format for each Potential Measure, which bring together in one place:

- All the relevant text of the main Potential Measure and those Potential Measures that apply in relation to and alongside it
- The important caveat on site-specific management advice and monitoring
- The species from the Gloucestershire Priority Species List that could benefit from the actions of this Potential Measure
- Symbols showing the main Ecosystem Services or wider environmental benefits
- Further guidance links (which may be updated)
- Potential funding sources (which may be updated)

Biodiversity Net Gain

Areas covered by the most strategic habitat measures combine to form the Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACIB). Users can apply high strategic significance on the Statutory Metric for implementing a mapped Potential Measure in Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity. The relevant potential measures can be found under the ACIB layer group on the LNRS Local Habitat Map.

Where hedgerows, riparian tree planting or riparian buffer strips are Potential Measures that are listed as applying alongside or in relation to a Potential Measure in the Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance, users can also apply *high* strategic significance on the Statutory Metric for carrying out this action, in the location of the ACIB measure. Habitat creation that meets the criteria for the "other potential measures" and "species measures" listed on the Local Habitat Map is still considered important but is less strategic and therefore will only achieve *low* Strategic Significance.

Note that whilst some species measures align with the Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity, it is the Habitat measure underlying that must be actioned to achieve *high* Strategic Significance within the Statutory Metric.

Potential Measures that are relevant to Biodiversity Net Gain are described using UK Habitat Classification[1] habitat names, and where habitat condition is also given, this corresponds to the Biodiversity Metric[2].

[1] UK Habitat Classification https://www.ukhab.org/
[2] Statutory Metric User Guide - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/689c5ee17b2e384441636196/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_-_July_2025.pdf

Summary of Potential Measures

Habitat Potential Measures (mapped)

Grassland, meadows and heathland

001. Manage lowland calcareous grassland
002. Restore and create lowland calcareous grassland
003. Manage neutral grassland and lowland meadows
004. Restore and create neutral grassland and lowland meadows
005. Manage floodplain meadows
006. Restore and create floodplain meadows
007. Manage acid grassland and wet and dry heath
008. Restore and create acid grassland and wet and dry heath

Woodland

009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland
010. Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland
011. Establish new woodland and tree cover
012. Restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites
013. Manage and expand wet woodland

Mixed and mosaic habitats

014. Create mixed mosaic habitats including scrub and orchard
015. Manage wood pasture and parkland
016. Restore and create wood pasture and parkland
017. Traditional orchard management, restoration and creation

Open water

018. Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife
019. Manage lakes for biodiversity

Running water

020. River re-naturalisation
021. Remove in-stream barriers
022. Improve ecological condition of rivers
023. Safeguard tufa and headwater springs
024. Natural flood management

Wetland

025. Manage wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic
026. Restore and create wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic
027. Manage and restore fens, mires and lowland peatland sites

Estuarine habitats

028. Protect and manage saltmarsh and mudflats
029. Restore and create saltmarsh

General Potential Measures (unmapped)

030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity
031. Road verge biodiversity
032. Physical structure
033. Ecotones and edges
034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees
035. Woodland climate adaptation
036. Ash dieback response
037. Floodplain reconnection
038. Water quality
039. Sewage and wastewater
040. Reduce impacts from dogs
041. Remove invasive non-native species
042. Severn Estuary marine biosecurity
043. Slow the flow
044. Limit groundwater abstraction and surface flow abstraction

Nature-friendly farming and forestry Potential Measures (mapped)

045. Field margins, hedgerows, buffer strips, ponds, trees and sustainable farming and forestry

Nature-friendly farming and forestry Potential Measures (unmapped)

046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs
047. Soil health and regenerative farming
048. Drought resilient farming techniques
049. Sustainable forestry and nature recovery
050. Agroforestry
051. Field margins
052. Conservation grazing
053. Hedgerows
054. Protecting tree growth
055. Riparian tree planting
056. Riparian buffer strips

Biodiversity in settlements and developments (mapped)

057. Urban green spaces, blue spaces and wildlife corridors
058. Biodiversity in settlements and gardens
059. New developments and green and blue infrastructure
060. Green bridges and wildlife crossings

Biodiversity in settlements and developments (unmapped)

061. Canals, rivers and urban blue spaces
062. Green Infrastructure Standards for Nature
063. Swift, house martin and bat bricks
064. Biodiversity in gardens
065. Dark skies
066. Access to biodiversity-rich green spaces
067. Urban tree planting and management
068. Wildlife corridors on travel routes
069. Highway amphibian protection
070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems

Species Measures

071. Strengthen breeding curlew population
072. Increase resilience of wood warbler population
073. Strengthen hazel dormouse population
074. Strengthen Bechstein's bat population
075. Strengthen greater horseshoe bat population
076. Greater horseshoe bat flightlines
077. Strengthen lesser horseshoe bat population
078. Strengthen western barbastelle population
079. Strengthen serotine population
080. Strengthen soprano pipistrelle population
081. Beaver reintroduction and habitat creation
082. Strengthen adder population
083. Strengthen great crested newt population
084. Strengthen White clawed crayfish population
085. Strengthen scarce blue-tailed damselfly population
086. Strengthen violet click beetle population
087. Strengthen rugged oil beetle population
088. Strengthen hairy click beetle population
089. Strengthen large blue population
090. Strengthen Duke of Burgundy population
091. Strengthen wood white population
092. Strengthen lead belle population
093. Strengthen *Phyllonorycter sagitella* population
094. Maintain chalk carpet population
095. Strengthen *Lauria sempronii* snail population
096. Strengthen juniper population
097. Strengthen black poplar population
098. Individual species needs of farmland birds
099. Add food sources for ground-nesting adult farmland birds
100. Add food sources for ground-nesting farmland bird chicks
101. Add food sources for hedge-nesting adult farmland birds
102. Add food sources for hedge-nesting farmland bird chicks
103. Pearl-bordered fritillary and small pearl-bordered fritillary
104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland
105. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants in woodland
106. Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi
107. Dead wood
108. Veteran ash pollards
109. Fly orchid and white helleborine
110. Wye Valley bryophytes and distinctive species
111. Moths dependent on small- and large-leaved lime
112. Strengthen Severn Estuary and Floodplain waterbird populations
113. Strengthen River Severn fish populations

Potential Measures

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	1. Grassland, meadows and heathland			
001	**Measure 001: Manage lowland calcareous grassland.** Manage wildflower grasslands according to the broad requirements of the habitat whilst allowing for the specialist needs of any priority species, through light grazing, cutting and scrub management.	Management may involve a mid to late summer hay cut with follow-on grazing until late winter or early spring. Ensure that autumn/winter grazing and/or cutting (with the removal of cuttings) prevents nutrient levels from building up. Extensive year-round grazing may be suitable for some large sites. Ensure that a thick thatch of grassy matter doesn't develop to increase nutrients, suppress wildflowers and create a fire risk. Maintaining a low sward by low-level grazing in some areas will encourage mycorrhizal fungi fruiting. Consider a certain level of scrub and scattered trees to provide shade, to reduce flowering plants reacting to drought conditions by reducing or ceasing nectar production, for stock, and for refugia for insects. Prevent scrub from completely overrunning wildflower grasslands. Avoid activities that cause soil compaction.	031. Road verge biodiversity 032. Physical structure 033. Ecotones and edges 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 052. Conservation grazing 053. Hedgerows 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	
002	**Measure 002: Restore and create lowland calcareous grassland.** Restore and create new areas of wildflower grassland, especially by	Create new areas of wildflower grassland, especially by increasing size, variety and connectivity of existing grassland. Aim for the creation of lowland calcareous grassland, but if this is not achievable then create other calcareous grassland in good condition, as species-rich as possible. If	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 031. Road verge biodiversity 032. Physical structure 033. Ecotones and edges	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	increasing size, variety and connectivity of existing grassland.	surveys or soil tests indicate calcareous grassland is not feasible, create neutral grassland of equivalent distinctiveness. Slopes where the soils are thinner are particularly good for grassland restoration. Semi-improved or modified grasslands can be diversified by light harrowing and over-seeding. Arable can be reverted to wildflower grassland through seeding, following site preparation. Plants grown as plugs can be used for species that do not spread well as seed. Use brush-harvested seed or plug sources of local provenance and similar soil conditions. Green hay from similar wildflower meadows can be spread as an alternative to seed. Consider a certain level of scrub and scattered trees to provide shade, to reduce flowering plants reacting to drought conditions by reducing or ceasing nectar production, for stock, and for refugia for insects. Avoid activities that cause soil compaction. To increase fungi species, use local inoculants, such as molehill soil or turf, to introduce native beneficial fungi.	053. Hedgerows 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	
003	**Measure 003: Manage neutral grassland and lowland meadows.** Manage wildflower grasslands according to the broad requirements of the habitat whilst allowing for the specialist needs of any priority species, usually through a mid to late summer hay cut with follow-on grazing until late winter or early spring.	Ensure that autumn/winter grazing and/or cutting (with the removal of cuttings) prevents nutrient levels from building up. Ensure that a thick thatch of grassy matter doesn't develop to increase nutrients, suppress wildflowers, waxcaps and other grassland fungi, and create a fire risk. Where appropriate, consider a certain level of scrub and scattered trees to provide shade, to reduce flowering plants reacting to drought conditions by reducing or ceasing nectar production, for stock, and for refugia for insects. Prevent scrub from completely overrunning wildflower grasslands.	031. Road verge biodiversity 032. Physical structure 033. Ecotones and edges 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 052. Conservation grazing 053. Hedgerows 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
004	**Measure 004: Restore and create neutral grassland and lowland meadows.** Restore and create new areas of wildflower grassland, especially by increasing size, variety and connectivity of existing grassland.	Aim for creation of lowland meadow, but if this is not achievable then create other neutral grassland in good condition, as species-rich as possible. If surveys or soil tests indicate calcareous grassland is not feasible, create neutral grassland of equivalent distinctiveness. Slopes where the soils are thinner are particularly good for grassland restoration. Semi-improved or modified grasslands can be diversified by light harrowing and over-seeding. Arable can be reverted to wildflower grassland through seeding, following site preparation. Plants grown as plugs can be used for species that do not spread well as seed. Use brush-harvested seed or plug sources of local provenance and similar soil conditions. Green hay from similar wildflower meadows can be spread as an alternative to seed. Where appropriate, consider a certain level of scrub and scattered trees to provide shade, to reduce flowering plants reacting to drought conditions by reducing or ceasing nectar production, for stock, and for refugia for insects. To increase fungi species use local inoculants, such as molehill soil or turf, to introduce native beneficial fungi.	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 031. Road verge biodiversity 032. Physical structure 033. Ecotones and edges 053. Hedgerows 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	
005	**Measure 005: Manage floodplain meadows.** Manage and protect existing species-rich floodplain meadow habitat, usually with an annual hay cut between late June and September, with one late cut every 3-5 years, then graze.	Remove livestock before the ground becomes too wet to avoid poaching and soil compaction. Be flexible with the timing and extent of these management options in response to long term changes and seasonal variability in conditions. Wet grasslands need an adequate supply and quality of water to adapt to changes in climate.	040: Reduce impacts from dogs 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
006	**Measure 006: Restore and create floodplain meadows.** Create new areas of floodplain meadow grassland, where possible by increasing size, variety and connectivity to existing grassland.	To restore or create floodplain meadow it is important to use seed, plugs or green hay sourced from local floodplain meadows and from similar soil conditions. Semi-improved or modified grasslands can be diversified by light harrowing and over-seeding with appropriate species mix for the soil and geohydrology. Arable can be reverted to wildflower grassland through seeding, following site preparation. Plants grown as plugs can be used for species that do not spread well as seed. Use brush-harvested seed or plug sources of local provenance and similar soil conditions. Green hay from similar meadows can be spread as an alternative to seed. Consider creation of floodplain scrapes to increase floodplain storage and improve habitat. Incorporate the creation and management of floodplain meadows into river restoration and natural flood management solutions.	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 037. Floodplain reconnection 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	
007	**Measure 007: Manage acid grassland and wet and dry heath.** Protect and manage existing heath and acid grassland habitats. Encourage a mosaic of wet and dry heath.	Manage grasslands according to the broad requirements of the habitat whilst allowing for the specialist needs of any priority species. This may involve light grazing all year round or seasonal grazing. Grazing should be reactive and site specific, tailored to climatic and vegetational changes. Cutting and removing arisings can be beneficial in restoration but longer-term maintenance must be sustainable to avoid a boom and bust cycle in diversity. Consider a mosaic of scrub and scattered trees to assure reptile refuge, bird nesting, and invertebrate life-cycles. Prevent invasive scrub from dominating or converging - this will depend on nutrient levels. A network of breaks in scrub will ensure good grazing penetration. Water sources such as ponds also facilitate well dispersed grazing especially with cattle who drink most regularly. Principles of structure and age class apply equally to dwarf shrub mosaics such as heather and gorse. Identify at	040: Reduce impacts from dogs 043. Slow the flow 052. Conservation grazing 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
		least four age classes of priority vegetation and ensure they are equally represented. This avoids all degenerate heather from expiring due to heather beetle defoliation for example. Pioneer heathers are a good indication of heathland health as is a varied structure of gorse. Degenerate gorse should be less than 10% and gorse connectivity should be assessed in terms of fire risk (fuel load). Fire breaks help ensure better manageability of any wildfires but also ensure a framework of structural diversity that can be built on with accessibility for volunteer work parties and grazing livestock.		
008	**Measure 008: Restore and create acid grassland and wet and dry heath.** Restore previous heathland habitats, create new areas of extensively grazed acid grassland and heath, and create habitat to connect heath patches. Encourage a mosaic of wet and dry heath.	Increase size, variety and connectivity of existing grassland and heath. If the creation of lowland dry acid grassland is not achievable then create other lowland acid grassland in good condition. Invest highly in ground preparation that assures longer term maintenance. Scraping topsoils into south facing beetle banks works well for basking reptile and butterflies and slows succession of bare mineral soils exposed. Remove brash and store in islands of refugia preferably under adjacent wood edge (shade). Avoid linear bunds favoured by plant machinery as this will hinder grazing access and stimulate dominance by coarser invasive plants such as bracken. Integrate ponds to support any livestock grazing aims for widespread roaming. Identify water flows across the site and delay drainage to encourage percolated flow across wider areas of habitat. This often requires plant machinery to remove drainage ditches and is important to apply at the restoration phase before sensitive species colonise. Focus on hindering dominant vegetation early rather than promoting desirable vegetation as ultimately efforts will be more successful.	043. Slow the flow 049. Sustainable forestry and nature recovery 104. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	2. Woodland habitats			
009	**Measure 009: Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland.** Manage woodland to improve and maintain ecological condition, including improved structural diversity and availability of dead wood habitat.	Manage woodland to the UK Forestry Standard as a minimum. Create diversity in woodland age, species, provenance and structure through thinning, coppicing, creation of rides and glades, and restocking through a combination of planting, natural regeneration, coppice regrowth and restoration of natural ecological function. Strategically locate rides and glades to encourage greater continuity and connectivity of grassland and grassland edge habitats. Maintain existing coppice rotations and restore or create new coppice woodland in suitable areas. Ensure some areas of minimally managed, undisturbed, moist, low-light semi-natural ancient woodland with mature and veteran trees to offer a good environment for mycorrhizal fungi, heartwood and dead wood species. If needed, consider nest boxes, if they can be maintained, for species including pied flycatcher, marsh tit, redstart and spotted flycatcher. Include standing dead wood for species including lesser spotted woodpecker. Introduce fire breaks where climate change may increase the risk of fire. Eradicate invasive non-native plants such as laurel and rhododendron. Avoid placing game bird pens in woodland areas with a high botanical value or within 500 metres of a SSSI or other site with high biodiversity value.	034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 035. Woodland climate adaptation 036. Ash dieback response 053. Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 105. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants in woodland 107. Dead wood	
010	**Measure 010: Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland.** Create or	Establish connective habitat by natural regeneration and colonisation or by planting. Favour natural regeneration over the planting of trees in the creation of new woodlands, especially near existing ancient woodland. Plant a range of fruiting species which fruit through different times of the	011. Establish new woodland and tree cover 033. Ecotones and edges	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	establish native woodland, hedgerows, scrub and rough grassland around ancient woodland and other existing woodland.	year including cherry, hornbeam and yew, to support species including hawfinch which has rare, important populations in Gloucestershire. Beech should be included in planting and restocking mixes in the Cotswolds. Creation of woodland more than 2 hectares in size may require an Environmental Impact Assessment; you can contact the Forestry Commission to check this.	034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 035. Woodland climate adaptation 053. Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 105. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants in woodland 107. Dead wood	
011	**Measure 011: Establish new woodland and tree cover.** Design new woodlands and tree cover in the right place appropriate to the identified landscape character, with a varied ecological structure.	Include a wide variety of tree species, prioritising native species, but including non-native tree species in some cases using evidence-based advice, for resilience and adaptation to climate change, and to maximise genetic diversity and resistance to pests and diseases. Manage new woodlands to promote biodiversity, including by diversifying the woodland structure with coppicing, dense shrubby edges, rides and glades. Introduce fire breaks where climate change may increase the risk of fire. Creation of woodland more than 2 hectares in size may require an Environmental Impact Assessment; you can contact the Forestry Commission to check this. Consult the Gloucestershire Historic Environment Record to identify any known archaeological sites within the proposed area of planting and seek specialist advice on tree planting and management around archaeological or historic landscape character features. Ensure that other existing priority and species-rich habitats are	016. Restore and create wood pasture and parkland 017. Traditional orchard management, restoration and creation 033. Ecotones and edges 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 035. Woodland climate adaptation 050. Agroforestry 053. Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 055. Riparian tree planting 067. Urban tree planting and management 105. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants in woodland	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
		not planted up and avoid blocking opportunities to expand and link other priority habitats.	107. Dead wood	
012	**Measure 012: Restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites.** Restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to a more semi-natural composition.	Gradually reduce the proportion of non-native and conifer tree species during thinning and harvesting, to restore semi-natural habitat structure. Consent and an approved felling licence may be required from the Forestry Commission. Encourage Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites survey and assessment to identify ancient remnants and important features are protected during works, and to identify opportunities for management.	009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 033. Ecotones and edges 035. Woodland climate adaptation 054. Protecting tree growth 105. Butterflies and moths with specific food plants in woodland 107. Dead wood	
013	**Measure 013: Manage and expand wet woodland.** Manage, expand and create wet woodlands in appropriate locations, including by natural regeneration, and manage existing wet woodlands for the benefit of wildlife.	Increase the extent of wet woodland and the wetness of existing woodlands by blocking previous drainage. Ensure there is standing dead wood for willow tit.	020. River re-naturalisation 055. Riparian tree planting 081. Beaver reintroduction and habitat creation	
	3. Mixed and mosaic habitats			
014	**Measure 014: Create and manage mixed mosaic habitats including**	Allow natural processes to form a complex and dynamic mosaic of habitats of scrub, grassland, bare and disturbed ground and trees, with an	002. Restore and create lowland calcareous grassland	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	scrub and orchard. Create areas where natural processes are allowed to create a complex and dynamic mosaic of scrub, grassland, disturbed ground, ecotones and edges, and trees.	average tree and scrub canopy cover of between 10% and 30%, and complex structural variety. Manage through extensive, low intensity grazing to retain this structural variety. Apply the appropriate grassland creation measures at an early stage to give the site an initial injection of species richness. Where appropriate, manage scrub to create a varied age and physical structure including glades and scalloped edges. Encourage trees to self-seed where scrub or other protection can protect saplings from grazing. Consider natural regeneration or rewilding principles as the preferred methods for the creation of new mosaic habitats that include trees and small woody areas. Value dynamic scrub and complex grassland/woody mosaic habitats and resist the perception of them as being unmanaged, neglected, messy or overgrown. Planting traditional orchards can also help create extensively grazed mosaic habitats.	004. Restore and create neutral grassland and lowland meadows 008. Restore and create acid grassland and wet and dry heath 017. Traditional orchard management, restoration and creation 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 032. Physical structure 033. Ecotones and edges 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 052. Conservation grazing 053. Hedgerows 107. Dead wood	
015	**Measure 015: Manage wood pasture and parkland.** Manage and improve the ecological condition of ancient wood pasture and parkland, and other similar wood pasture, including improved structural diversity and availability of dead wood habitat, the presence of grazing animals,	Manage the grassland understory for species diversity, with seasonal grazing or cutting, in the ways set out in the relevant open habitats measures. Create a more dynamic mosaic of successional semi-natural habitat and retain large dead wood and brash piles. Protect and buffer areas around trees, including by fencing. The nature of wood pasture and parkland as an irreplaceable habitat should be the focus of the management.	001. Manage lowland calcareous grassland 003. Manage neutral grassland and lowland meadows 033. Ecotones and edges 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 036. Ash dieback response 052. Conservation grazing	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	microhabitats, and nectar sources for invertebrates.		107. Dead wood	
016	**Measure 016: Restore and create wood pasture and parkland.** Establish new wood pasture habitats and connect and buffer areas of ancient wood pasture and parkland, extensively grazed mosaic habitats which include trees, scrub, and small woody areas rich in edge habitats.	Restore and create new wood pasture using a variety of tree species such as common and sessile oak, lime and beech. This can include woodland with substantial glades and rides. Establish fringe areas around existing ancient wood pasture and parkland habitat for natural colonisation of trees, and for the creation of native woodland, hedgerows, scrub and rough grassland, and to provide connections to other woodland, open or hedgerow habitats. Consider planting traditional orchard and fruit trees as a faster maturing interim stage towards a veteran tree habitat. Restore the grassland understory for species diversity, with seasonal grazing or cutting, in the ways set out in the relevant open habitats measures.	002. Restore and create lowland calcareous grassland 004. Restore and create neutral grassland and lowland meadows 010. Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland. 030. Create wildlife corridor 033. Ecotones and edges 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 053: Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 107. Dead wood connectivity	
017	**Measure 017: Traditional orchard management, restoration and creation.** Maintain and improve existing traditional orchard sites and create or restore traditional orchard habitat, deadwood habitat or wood	Expand existing traditional orchard habitats. Plant new orchards and/or wood pasture or create deadwood habitat in locations that can form habitat stepping stones between known or likely noble chafer and orchard toothcrust orchards, including on historical former orchard sites. Increase the species and structural diversity of orchards at a site and landscape-scale to reduce vulnerability.	001. Manage lowland calcareous grassland 002. Restore and create lowland calcareous grassland 003. Manage neutral grassland and lowland meadows	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	pasture and parkland, especially within 200 metres of existing traditional orchards, to increase the viability of deadwood habitats including for the noble chafer and for fungi.	Continue or reintroduce low input, active orchard management, responding to weather patterns and seasonal variations. Leave standing deadwood for noble chafer habitat. Produce habitat boxes to trial the effectiveness of using artificial deadwood habitat as replacement orchard habitat/stepping-stones between known or likely noble chafer orchards. Reduce or stop the use of pesticides. Retain and manage mistletoe. Prune orchard trees for longevity - traditional orchards provide trees with veteran features on a much shorter timescale. Plant a good genetic variety of orchard trees including local heritage varieties which are less likely to depend on pesticides and fungicides, and a range of pollinator groups to increase the length of time a site has trees in bloom, to increase nectar availability. When planting, use home-produced local inoculants, such as molehill soil, instead of commercial mycorrhizal inoculants which can introduce unwanted mycorrhizal species. Encourage the growth of trees on traditional non-dwarfing rootstocks which tend to live longer and give rise to better dead wood opportunities and consider planting ungrafted trees on their own rootstocks. Manage the grassland understory for species diversity, with seasonal grazing or cutting, in the ways set out in the relevant open habitats measures, retaining some areas of long grass for overwintering animals. Consider wildflower grassland creation and restoration measures when creating new orchards.	004. Restore and create neutral grassland and lowland meadows 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 053. Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 107. Dead wood	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	4. Open water			
018	**Measure 018: Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife.** Retain existing good quality pond habitats, improve condition of existing ponds and create new ponds for wildlife with a clean water source, without fish, and with varying depth profiles, hydrological regimes, shapes, sizes and shading.	Use Freshwater Habitats Trust pond management guidance, in particular the risk assessment for identifying valuable ponds. Avoid fencing ponds unless necessary to restrict disturbance or to manage livestock access at an acceptable level. Limit pond disturbance by people and dogs. Also retain ephemeral or seasonally wet ponds as an important wildlife habitat – these are particularly vulnerable. Ensure existing ponds include a buffer of terrestrial habitat to connect to over-wintering habitat in the surrounding landscape (for amphibians). Manage for a diverse pondscape of different ages, shading, sizes and designs. Create new ponds for wildlife in locations with restricted public access and a clean water source, including on agricultural land, gardens and green spaces. Consider a buffer zone of restricted public access to ensure undisturbed terrestrial habitat for newts. Restore old ponds, or ghost ponds, where they will meet clean water criteria and be of high value to biodiversity. Incorporate the creation and management of ponds into river restoration and natural flood management solutions. Assess the risk of damaging habitat or archaeology before undertaking pond restoration and creation. Use the Freshwater Habitats Trust pond creation toolkit and risk assessment. Ensure shallow banks and a variety of profile gradients and designs including deeper areas to maintain wetness in summer and to create varying levels of succession. Do not add fish to wildlife ponds.	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 041. Remove invasive non-native species 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 083. Strengthen great crested newt population 084. Strengthen white clawed crayfish population 085. Strengthen scarce blue-tailed damselfly population	
019	**Measure 019: Manage lakes for biodiversity.** Protect and enhance	Maintain or restore lake marginal habitat and particularly communities of emergent plants which protect shores from wave action, reduce	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	lakes to provide high quality, undisturbed, semi-natural open water lake and lakeshore habitats for the specialised suite of species that use them.	disturbance and provide high quality habitat. Survey and monitor lakes for aquatic macrophytes, including charophytes, and protect areas where notable plant assemblages occur. Where appropriate, diversify shoreline and lakebed morphology with the provision of inlets, bays, promontories, berms, islands and areas of shallow water. Manage shoreline tree cover to ensure sufficient open areas and sufficient light penetration for emergent, floating and submerged flora communities. Improve land management practices to reduce eutrophication, creating buffers along waterbodies upstream of lakes. Manage and remove invasive non-native species. Monitor and carefully manage human usage and disturbance of high biodiversity value lakes including fishing, watersports, sailing, bathing and dog-swimming.	038. Water quality 040. Reduce impacts from dogs 041. Remove invasive non-native species 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs	
	5. Running water			
020	**Measure 020: River re-naturalisation.** Where appropriate, restore and re-naturalise the channels of rivers and streams and reconnect to their floodplains, restoring the wider footprint of river corridors, creating buffer habitat in riparian corridors and increasing morphological diversity of river in-channel and bankside.	Where appropriate, restore and re-naturalise river and wetland habitats to a structurally diverse condition. Restore natural floodplain connection, securing flood risk and wetland habitat benefits. Restore natural processes to encourage development of meanders, pools, and riffles that can enhance fish spawning opportunities. Raise the channel bed and reconnect the river with the floodplain to form mosaics of wetlands, riparian woodlands and floodplain meadows. Wherever possible and appropriate, remove and realign culverts and artificial bed and bank materials and obstructions. Check for historic riverine features such as culverts, weirs and fish traps before undertaking any restoration works. Consider restoration of paleochannels as part of the re-naturalisation approach, reversing historic straightening and excessive erosion in rivers.	013. Manage and expand wet woodland 026. Restore and create wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic 037. Floodplain reconnection 043. Slow the flow 044. Limit groundwater abstraction and surface flow abstraction 055. Riparian tree planting 056. Riparian buffer strips	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
		Give the river room to change naturally by allowing it to spread out over its floodplain and create multi-threaded systems, with full floodplain reconnection - this approach is often termed 'stage 0 restoration'. Avoid dredging where possible. • A range of interventions should be considered such as:Improving lateral connectivity between the river and its floodplain by removing embankments, lowering banks and gradients, raising the riverbed, and introducing woody material to encourage flow diversity and "spillage" into adjacent floodplain areas. Reconnecting the river to its floodplain can support the creation and re-establishment of wetland mosaics, riparian woodlands, and floodplain meadows. • Where appropriate, removing artificial in-channel obstructions and restoring natural bed and bank characteristics to re-establish natural flow regimes and to support hydrological and ecological processes. • Promoting morphological complexity within modified and straightened rivers by restoring natural sinuosity, re-creating in-channel features such as meanders, pools, and riffles, and enhancing habitat diversity through the introduction of natural materials such as gravels and woody debris. • Providing room for the river to function dynamically, encouraging natural features like braided channels, active floodplain	081. Beaver reintroduction and habitat creation 113. Strengthen River Severn fish populations	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
		inundation, making space for beavers, and sediment deposition associated with a 'stage 0' state. • Enhancing river resilience by provisioning riparian buffer strips and avoiding damaging activities that compromise natural processes, such as dredging and channel realignment.		
021	**Measure 021: Remove in-stream barriers.** Remove artificial in-stream barriers where appropriate, to help fish populations to move, and to increase river connectivity for re-naturalisation processes. Solutions for fish passage can include weir removal, bypassing channels or installing fish passes or rock ramps, and creation of wetland habitat around the barrier.	Aim to remove barriers to fish passage and restore geomorphological processes such as gravel movements in priority catchments and main stems of watercourses such as the River Frome and Nailsworth Stream. Increase the chances for fish to migrate in and out of the river systems by modifying weirs such as those on the River Severn to allow upstream and downstream passage. Where white-clawed crayfish populations are present, in-stream barrier removal may not be appropriate, as the barriers can prevent spread of the invasive American signal crayfish. Feasibility and design of river restoration should consider geomorphological processes, and check for historic riverine features such as culverts, weirs and fish traps, before undertaking any removal or restoration works.	081. Beaver reintroduction and habitat creation 113. Strengthen River Severn fish populations	
022	**Measure 022: Improve ecological condition of rivers.** Improve the ecological condition of rivers, including water quality, by ensuring low levels of contaminants and suspended sediment, and high quality in-channel and riparian	Establish unsprayed buffer strips alongside watercourses in areas with high levels of diffuse pollution and surface water runoff. Add large woody debris and gravel where appropriate to narrow channels, to act as filters. Minimise soil erosion and silt runoff from farmland by creating low bunds to intercept overland flow paths, cover crops, contour ploughing, margins and buffer strips across slopes. Block drainage ditches to allow land to re-wet. Create ponds connected to or near streams to capture and filter	038. Water quality 039. Sewage and wastewater 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 047. Soil health and regenerative farming	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	habitat protected from degradation, to support diverse aquatic wildlife.	runoff prior to discharge into larger watercourses. Avoid arable cropping on steep slopes and intensive grazing along river banks. Establish 10-50m buffer strips with both open and shaded habitat to provide a mosaic of habitats and resilience to climate change through river cooling. Fence livestock from accessing rivers and in vulnerable areas, convert arable fields to species-rich grassland. Where appropriate, undertake rotational vegetation management on river banks to maintain structural diversity and create niches. Promote local litter picks from rivers and install a sea cleaning device such as a Seabin at Lydney Harbour to reduce plastics entering the Severn Estuary. Kingfishers nest in the banks of rivers and streams and so can be particularly susceptible to increasingly frequent spring flood events. Creation of artificial nesting banks above past flood-levels can provide safe nesting sites.	055. Riparian tree planting 056. Riparian buffer strips 113. Strengthen River Severn fish populations	
023	**Measure 023: Safeguard tufa and headwater springs.** Protect tufa depositing springs, streams and watercourses with tufa dam sequences; retain and maintain in good condition.	Ensure forestry activities and vehicles do not damage tufa features. Avoid damage from recreational and livestock access to streams. Avoid direct water abstraction from tufa springs. Drainage into tufa streams should be restricted or reduced to improve water quality and water levels to ensure invertebrates and chemical conditions are protected and kept at correct levels. Maintain or establish native riparian woodland buffers in agricultural areas to shade tufa springs and watercourses, to benefit cold-adapted (sometimes glacial relict) invertebrate communities.	044: Limit groundwater abstraction and surface flow abstraction 055: Riparian tree planting	

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024	**Measure 024: Natural flood management.** Manage flood risk using the 'Working with Natural Processes' methodology in High and Medium risk catchments, as identified in the Government's spatial prioritisation of catchments suitable for using natural flood management, to protect communities, as well as restore nature.	Work in High and Medium priority catchments to slow flows of water by (i) increasing surface roughness (ii) storing water in the landscape and (iii) take up of water by trees and vegetation on flow pathways. Natural flood management is an approach to flood risk reduction rather than a single action. The approach is outlined in the 'Working with Natural Processes' methodology. Projects that can demonstrate they will achieve these aims may be eligible for funding through local and national flood funding streams. Integrate additional and best outcomes and measures for biodiversity while implementing nature based solutions.	005. Manage floodplain meadows 006. Restore and create floodplain meadows 013. Manage and expand wet woodland 020. River re-naturalisation 026. Restore and create wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic 037. Floodplain reconnection 043. Slow the flow 047. Soil health and regenerative farming 055. Riparian tree planting 056. Riparian buffer strips 070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems 081. Beaver reintroduction and habitat creation	
	6. Wetland			
025	**Measure 025: Manage wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic.** Manage wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic habitat for biodiversity to support thriving and diverse species,	Maintain and improve the biodiversity of wetlands. Undertake vegetation management (e.g. cutting) on rotation, as appropriate, to maintain structural diversity and create variety in habitat structure. Avoid drying out of wetlands as a result of excessive tree and scrub growth (such as willow). Consider light grazing or browsing by livestock to replicate natural	020. River re-naturalisation 032. Physical structure 033. Ecotones and edges 037. Floodplain reconnection 040: Reduce impacts from dogs	

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	contribute to natural flood management and sequester carbon.	herbivory patterns and create structural diversity and dynamic mosaic habitat. Conserve mature pollarded willows to support birds including redstart. Some very long-established heronries need continued protection and quality habitats for their sustenance zones.	046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs	
026	**Measure 026: Restore and create wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic.** Create new functional wetlands appropriate to the site, including fens, reedbeds, marshes, wet woodland, or floodplain wetland mosaic habitat, with a diversity of niches and micro-habitats, in locations where natural processes can optimise habitat quality.	Re-profile drainage ditches and other low-lying areas subject to inundation, where desirable, to create new marginal habitat and wetland. Undertake vegetation management (e.g. cutting) on rotation, as appropriate, to maintain structural diversity and create niches. Consider whether a new wetland may offer water storage opportunities during high rainfall events. Large-bodied birds, particularly those which form flocks, can be a safety hazard to aircraft, especially close to airfields. Therefore, creation of open water or other habitat attractive to these birds is subject to restrictions within 13km or 8 mi of airfields, including MoD sites.	013. Manage and expand wet woodland 020. River re-naturalisation 032. Physical structure 033. Ecotones and edges 037. Floodplain reconnection 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs	
027	**Measure 027: Manage and restore fens, mires and lowland peatland sites.** Retain, maintain and restore existing fen, mire and lowland peatland sites in good ecological condition, and ensure that water quality does not impact the ability of these habitats to survive.	Maintain water levels of fen, mire and lowland peatland sites by manipulation of ditches and streams, and prevent scrub from taking over. Use 'Working with Natural Processes' techniques such as ditch-blocking and allowing areas to re-wet. Where there are peaty soils already, enhance semi-natural habitat to keep wetness. Grazing should be assessed and any over grazing brought under control, including from deer and rabbits. Reduce air pollution which can hinder the growth of sphagnum. Ensure no peat exploitation for horticulture or fuel.	038. Water quality 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs	

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	7. Estuarine habitats			
028	**Measure 028: Protect and manage saltmarsh and mudflats.** Protect and manage existing areas of intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat.	Minimise physical disturbance to saltmarsh and mudflats from trampling by people and dogs and from coastal development. Maintain the natural functioning and dynamic processes of the estuarine system, to enable mudflats to form and move. Undertake sustainable grazing management of saltmarsh, ensuring that soil health, vegetation diversity and sward condition are protected.	037. Floodplain reconnection 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 042. Severn Estuary marine biosecurity	
029	**Measure 029: Restore and create saltmarsh.** Where opportunities arise, create more saltmarsh habitat.	Where opportunities arise, use techniques such as managed realignment or regulated tidal exchange to create new saltmarsh, within areas above an appropriate salinity threshold. Keep Shoreline Management Plans updated.	037. Floodplain reconnection 042. Severn Estuary marine biosecurity	
	General Measures (unmapped)			
030	**Measure 030: Create wildlife corridor connectivity.** Develop wildlife corridor connectivity between habitats and across our landscape, by creating and maintaining structurally diverse habitats including woodland, scrub, tree cover, wetlands, wet woodland, rough grasslands, field margins, riparian buffer strips and hedgerows.	Aim to increase habitat connectivity across farmland. Create linked and transitional habitats to enable movement of species through the landscape to reach different feeding or resting sites. Connectivity also allows movement in response to climate change.	011. Establish new woodland and tree cover 013. Manage and expand wet woodland 014. Create mixed mosaic habitats including scrub and orchard 026. Restore and create wetland and floodplain wetland mosaic 031. Road verge biodiversity 033. Ecotones and edges	

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			034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 050. Agroforestry 051. Field margins 053. Hedgerows 056. Riparian buffer strips 107. Dead wood	
031	**Measure 031: Road verge biodiversity.** Aim for floral biodiversity in road verges by avoiding cutting between April and July and through natural recolonisation or planting of native species.	Exceptions to avoiding cutting between April and July would be for safety cuts, where it is operationally not viable, or to control coarse grasses and non-native species. Ideally, annually mow road verges in August or September. Collect cuttings if possible and place in a sacrificial area away from any watercourse or take away for green recycling. Vary cutting height and frequency to create different zones or sections to benefit a larger range of species including invertebrates. Allow taller, more infrequently cut vegetation, including scrub and trees, towards the back of the verge, unless alongside a dry stone wall. Establish new biodiversity-rich road verges through natural recolonisation, by strewing local green hay in late summer, potentially from adjacent conservation road verges, or by planting native species. Avoid using topsoil for new verges. Verge restoration can include topsoil removal.	033. Ecotones and edges 070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems	
032	**Measure 032: Physical structure.** Within grassland and mixed mosaic habitat sites, maintain and consider the creation of a more varied physical	This variety in physical structure is similar to the lumps and bumps of small historic shallow quarries which increase species richness and microclimates. Include rocky bare ground, disturbed ground or thin skeletal soils which are required by some of Gloucestershire's most endangered species, including mosses such as *Weissia sterilis*,		

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	ground structure of different aspects and gradients.	*Gymnocarpium robertianum* and *Weissia condensa*. Subject to checks for archaeology, consider scrapes and pits.		
033	**Measure 033: Ecotones and edges.** Promote gradual changes in habitat structure, or ecotones, between habitats.	These gradual changes should be developed to reduce sharp boundaries between different habitats by encouraging scrub, shrubs and longer grasses and plants. For example, these can be developed between hedgerow and field or between woodland and grassland.		
034	**Measure 034: Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees.** Conserve existing ancient and veteran trees and establish and safeguard the next generation of veteran trees outside woodland.	The irreplaceable habitat of ancient and veteran trees should be identified and maintained along with old (but not ancient) trees with future conservation interest. Use halo-thinning or creation of an exclusion zone around the root protection area where it is vulnerable to ground compaction. Connect areas of ancient or veteran trees with more woodland, traditional orchard, wood pasture or parkland, trees, hedgerows, scrub and rough grassland, via planting and regeneration. Establish future veteran trees and plant new generations of appropriate species and genotypes to replace veteran trees before they are lost.	067. Urban tree planting and management 107. Dead wood 108. Veteran ash pollards	
035	**Measure 035: Woodland climate adaptation.** Assist the northward migration of woodland core species through the translocation of deadwood and flora and the inoculation of sites with woodland soil, in line with Forestry Research guidance to avoid the spread of pests and pathogens.			

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036	**Measure 036: Ash dieback response.** Retain ash, and leave dead and dying trees standing, where it is possible and safe to do so, maintain lichens, and encourage a variety of trees and shrubs to mitigate for the loss of ash.	Retain ash where it is possible and safe to do so since they may have genetic tolerance to dieback, thus enhancing the prospects for future populations of healthy ash in Gloucestershire's landscape. Leave dead and dying trees standing where safe to do so and retain deadwood stumps. Create and maintain optimum conditions for ash tree lichen and fungi by managing any retained ash trees and ensuring open, well-lit but sheltered conditions around veteran trees within traditionally grazed habitats. Replacement species for ash: plant a variety of trees and shrubs that can mitigate for the loss of ash and its reliant species. Refer to the Natural England AshEcol guidance for replacement species, especially where there are known rare or semi-obligate ash dependent species. Consider leaving areas previously dominated by ash to develop through natural regeneration. Refer to the most recent research on responding to ash dieback.	108. Veteran ash pollards	
037	**Measure 037: Floodplain reconnection.** Hydrologically reconnect floodplain to river, through the removal or breaching of flood banks and bunds.	Expand areas of floodplain meadow and fen by linking isolated sites where possible. Where agricultural land is on the floodplain facilitate inundation and farm it differently at different times of year. Remove or breach flood banks and bunds if appropriate after consultation with flood risk authorities. Subject to checks for archaeology, restore floodplain features such as scrapes, sluices and channels. Check for archaeology before removing any banks or bunds as they may be historically significant.		
038	**Measure 038: Water quality.** Ensure high water quality by monitoring and addressing point source and diffuse water quality issues, including both	Consider natural flood management and biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems on a wide scale throughout catchments to intercept and slow flows, reduce poor water quality and create habitat for increased biodiversity. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems should also be	024. Natural flood management 070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems	

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	surface water and groundwater, depending on the specific hydrology of the waterbody or wetland.	included at industrial sites. Contact the Environment Agency in relation to discharge licences.		
039	**Measure 039: Sewage and wastewater.** Ensure that treated effluent from wastewater treatment works is of optimum quality and eliminate untreated overflows of sewage and wastewater.	Increase treatment capacity and reduce overflow into rivers. Invest in separation of clean water from sewerage systems. Invest in biodiversity-rich urban Sustainable Drainage Systems. Beyond infrastructure and effluent quality improvements, consider natural wetland treatment systems using reedbeds to create more wetland habitat. Contact the Environment Agency in relation to discharge licences.	070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems	
040	**Measure 040: Reduce impacts from dogs.** Reduce wildlife disturbance, nutrient loading from urination and defecation and spread of pathogens resulting from dogs.	In publicly accessible wildlife-rich sites use signage and fencing to minimise disturbance and impacts from dogs. Signage should inform the public about the impacts of dog fowling on soil nutrients, spread of pathogens and insecticides (e.g. wormers and flea treatment), and the impact of dogs on ground nesting birds or other sensitive wildlife. Sites can be designed to have natural barriers, such as scrub, to prevent access to sensitive areas, or temporary fencing at certain points of the year (for example nesting season). Signage can also be used around aquatic habitats (rivers, ponds and lakes) to warn of the effects of flea treatment on these habitats, and to limit disturbance to more sensitive areas, such as ponds with great crested newts.		
041	**Measure 041: Remove invasive non-native species.** Control, and where possible or necessary, eradicate invasive non-native species in water bodies, ponds and rivers.	Promote good biosecurity to slow the spread of invasive non-native species and associated diseases.	084. Strengthen white clawed crayfish population 042. Severn Estuary marine biosecurity	

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042	**Measure 042: Severn Estuary marine biosecurity.** Raise awareness of the Severn Estuary cross-border Biosecurity Plan and follow best practice biosecurity recommendations and actions to mitigate against the spread of invasive non-native species in the Severn Estuary.		041. Remove invasive non-native species	
043	**Measure 043: Slow the flow.** Introduce large woody debris, deflectors and dams in streams and roughened ground to slow the flow of water at times of high flow.	Roughen the ground to create diversity of habitat and reduce speed and volumes of overland flows before water enters drains or streams. Check for historic water management features before building dams and creating rough ground. Large woody debris should be as natural and leaky as possible and not create new barriers across watercourses.	024. Natural flood management	
044	**Measure 044: Limit groundwater abstraction and surface flow abstraction.** Ensure that groundwater and surface flow abstraction is limited to protect river and wetland habitats from low flows.	Contact the Environment Agency in relation to abstraction licences, including for potable drinking water supply or irrigation. Review and limit groundwater abstraction in aquifer areas which are proven to be hydraulically connected to rivers, wetlands and spring outflows such as tufa springs.		
	8. Nature-friendly farming and forestry (mapped)			

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
045	**Measure 045: Field margins, hedgerows, buffer strips, ponds, trees and sustainable farming and forestry.** Increase diversity and resilience of species in the wider countryside, including by increasing habitat connectivity through hedgerows, field margins and headlands, riparian buffer strips, biodiversity in road verges, sustainable or regenerative farming, increasing tree cover and sustainable forestry.	Minimise the use of fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. Protect existing mature ancient and veteran trees and allow veteran trees to establish. Protect and create hedgerows and create new ponds. Create grass or wildflower field margins, conservation headlands and plant nectar strips. Create 10-50m riparian buffer strips with a mosaic of open and shaded habitat along all watercourses. Dry stone walls can create beneficial microclimates and habitats for invertebrates and reptiles.	011. Establish new woodland and tree cover 018. Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 031. Road verge biodiversity 033. Ecotones and edges 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 047. Soil health and regenerative farming 048. Drought resilient farming techniques 049. Sustainable forestry and nature recovery 050. Agroforestry 051. Field margins 053. Hedgerows 056. Riparian buffer strips 079. Strengthen serotine population 106. Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi 107. Dead wood	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	Nature-friendly farming and forestry (unmapped)			
046	**Measure 046: Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs.** Minimise the use of fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides, especially on catchment slopes and in the immediate surrounds of water bodies. Use integrated pest management where appropriate.	Implement sensitive land management practices to reduce diffuse pollution from excess soil nutrients, including timing of field operations to reduce soil compaction during wetter periods, run-off management and soil erosion control. Ensure drainage ditches are not over-dug. Revert arable to species-rich grassland in high-risk areas to reduce diffuse pollution. In agricultural settings, follow *Catchment Sensitive Farming* guidance and the legal requirements of *Farming Rules for Water*. Contact the Environment Agency in relation to discharge licences.		
047	**Measure 047: Soil health and regenerative farming.** Improve soil health, including increasing the biomass of soil fungi, hyphae and mycorrhizae, to improve carbon sequestration, reduce soil erosion and support greater biodiversity.	Improve soil health and organic matter in soils, by continuing or establishing pasture-based farming and regenerative management practices. Use cover crops and herbal leys to improve soil cohesion and water retention. Use the principles of agro-ecological farming, and/or the 5 principles of regenerative farming (livestock at low density, protect and cover the soil surface, minimise soil disturbance, crop diversity, and maintain living roots). Minimise soil erosion and silt runoff from farmland by creating low bunds to intercept overland flow paths, sowing cover crops, contour ploughing, and creating margins and buffer strips across slopes. Avoid arable cropping on steep slopes and intensive grazing along river banks. Review growing of high-risk crops for soil erosion (for examples maize, potatoes and other crops that leave soil bare) and late harvesting on sandy soils in high-risk areas such as Wye Valley and Leadon Vale.	046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 048. Drought resilient farming techniques 106. Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
048	**Measure 048: Drought resilient farming techniques.** In areas of Gloucestershire which are becoming drier due to climate change, such as the Cotswolds, incorporate dry farming practices which reduce the irrigation needs of crops and increase and utilise soil moisture.	Build up organic matter in the soil through regenerative farming, adding organic amendments and rotational grazing on arable land. Study water flow across the land, creating opportunities to store water in ponds, wetlands and lakes while ensuring flow is maintained across the waterbody. Repair drainage and irrigation infrastructure to reduce risk of soil damage through flooding, stagnation and eutrophication. Reduce soil compaction to increase volume of water held in soil structure by reducing grazing pressure. Select crops that are adapted to the appropriate soil type, rainfall and predicted climate. Plant a diversity of crops to be adaptive to climate change.	106. Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi	
049	**Measure 049: Sustainable forestry and nature recovery.** Introduce and sustain ecological practices in woodlands used for timber production, to increase biodiversity and develop greater resilience to threats including climate change and pests and diseases.	Adopt ecologically sound forestry practices to UK Forestry Standard and above in woodlands used for timber production. These include low impact silvicultural systems, which attempt to mimic natural processes and make best use of natural regeneration for restocking, integration of areas and corridors of native broadleaved woodland in coniferous forests, and diversifying woodland structure and range of tree species. Establish practices that minimise disturbance to all nesting birds and ensure no disturbance to Schedule 1 listed species. Where there are populations of nightjars, tree pipit, woodlark and adder, use rotational clearfell of compartments to restore open heathland and provide additional suitable habitat to reinforce these populations. Restore Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to a more semi-natural composition. Create new multifunctional or productive woodlands	008. Restore and create acid grassland and wet and dry heath 033. Ecotones and edges 036. Ash dieback response 050. Agroforestry 107. Dead wood	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
		providing timber within wildlife-rich forest design. Minimise soil erosion from woodland during felling operations.		
050	**Measure 050: Agroforestry.** Integrate more agroforestry practices within the farmed landscape to combine food production and farm businesses with tree planting and tree cover.	Agroforestry practices include arable (silvoarable) and grazing (silvopasture) systems. Agroforestry can include planting Optimal Shelterbelts to create a protective micro-climate for crops from wind damage and for wildlife and livestock by providing shade. Care must be taken to site agroforestry away from sites which are strongholds for species that require open landscapes such as lapwing, corn bunting and skylark	098. Individual species needs of farmland birds	
051	**Measure 051: Field margins.** Create grass or wildflower field margins and conservation headlands in arable fields to provide a diversity of wildflowers, wildflower seed and invertebrates for farmland birds. Leave areas and field margins unsprayed.	Plant nectar strips and cultivated headlands for arable plants. Include species and cultivars in planted field margins that can tolerate and flower under hotter and drier summers. Use variable mowing regimes to ensure cover for small mammals and winter refugia for invertebrates. Where possible mow annually in August-September, and remove arisings after mowing to avoid the build-up of nutrients. Consult the Gloucestershire HER to check where archaeological sites/features are present and would also benefit from being protected by conservation headlands in field margins.	053. Hedgerows 098. Individual species needs of farmland birds 099. Add food sources for ground-nesting adult farmland birds 100. Add food sources for ground-nesting farmland bird chicks 101. Add food sources for hedge-nesting adult farmland birds 102. Add food sources for hedge-nesting farmland bird chicks	

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			106. Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi 107. Dead wood	
052	**Measure 052: Conservation grazing.** Manage grassland, meadow, mosaic, wood pasture and heath habitats with extensive (light) or seasonal grazing, ideally by native breeds.	GPS collar virtual fencing can allow for targeted grazing without excess fence infrastructure, helping to allow a varied sward structure to be maintained, areas protected for scrub and trees where appropriate, and areas protected for rare plants, ground nesting birds or great crested newts breeding ponds. Manage grazing of sites flexibly in response to seasonal variations in vegetation growth, increased climatic variation and increases in extreme events. Where feasible, use rotational management to leave some areas uncut and ungrazed each year. Cattle and ponies in combination are best as they simulate the grazing pressure that plant communities and wildlife originally developed in adaptation to. Cattle are excellent non-selective grazers, taking a little from each vegetation type. Horned cattle breeds have the added capacity to pull down small sapling trees to browse, limiting succession rates. Ponies are very hardy and suited to year-round applications but have a stronger grass bias resulting in stronger contrast between short pastures and tall scrub. Sheep are beneficial where bramble dominates and for some species measures and grassland restorations.		

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053	**Measure 053: Hedgerows.** Manage and improve the biodiversity of hedgerows and increase the connectivity of hedgerows across the landscape.	Manage hedgerows to a thick and tall condition (at least 1.5m wide and 1.5m tall). Gap up and thicken weakened hedges. Create new species-rich hedges of 5 or more species and reinstate ancient hedgerows. Include native fruit species, hawthorn and cherry plum, as hedgerow trees for nectar, bird food and for habitat stepping stones between orchards. Include elm, wych elm and hazel to support species including butterflies, moths and dormice. Introduce goat willow as an early source of nectar for bees emerging from hibernation. Tag occasional tree saplings (for example oak, field maple or sycamore) so they are allowed to grow into full size standards. Rotate hedge management years, and lay or coppice hedgerows, with protection from livestock, on a long rotation to improve cover and structural complexity and to regenerate their growth. Hedgerows should ideally be cut in late winter, outside the nesting season and once any berries have been eaten. Avoid trimming hedgerows where possible. If necessary, trim to a high A profile or just trim one side per year. Ensure any hedgerows near to any existing populations of corn bunting, skylark or lapwing are kept short.	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 031. Road verge biodiversity 033. Ecotones and edges 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 051. Field margins 107. Dead wood	
054	**Measure 054: Protecting tree growth.** Collaborate across land ownership boundaries to control deer, grey squirrels and wild boar at a scale that will enable natural regrowth, regeneration and woodland management.	Control muntjac and sika deer as invasive species whose browsing is particularly destructive to habitats and significantly reduce fallow deer populations and carry out ongoing roe deer control. Ensure natural regeneration and planting are protected during establishment. Preferably use thorny vegetation to envelope trees, rather than tree guards. If not possible, use alternatives to plastic tree guards.		

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055	**Measure 055: Riparian tree planting.** Plant or encourage natural regeneration of corridors of wet woodland broadleaved tree species alongside watercourses.	Include alder, willow, aspen and black poplar, with other native broadleaf species forming a minor component. Within the Forest of Dean, introduce 10 and 20 metre riparian buffer zones to priority watercourses, with their own management coupe and restocking coupe, as guided by Forestry England's Forest Waters team in the Forest of Dean. Gradually remove non riparian tree species such as non-native conifers from riparian areas and replace with riparian trees. Care must be taken to site riparian tree planting away from sites that are (or have potential to become) strongholds for breeding waders such as lapwing and curlew.		
056	**Measure 056: Riparian buffer strips.** Establish and maintain riparian buffer strips of 10-50 metres plus on each side of rivers and watercourses.	Larger buffers encourage greater biodiversity along rivers and add protection from pressures (such as agriculture) in surrounding habitat. Buffer strips should comprise a mosaic of vegetation including trees, species-rich grassland and reedbeds. Where grazing livestock is present, fencing can be used in areas where banks are particularly vulnerable to erosion, for the safety of livestock, or where vegetation is at risk of being over grazed and unable to recover/regenerate. Some shallow areas with livestock access can be beneficial however, to create variety in structure and areas of bare mud which are beneficial for invertebrates. Buffer strips should be fenced, including an access gate for vegetation management or pulse grazing to retain some open habitat. This will improve river ecology through creating a mix of open and shady habitats, establishing partial river cooling, creating natural wildlife corridors, reducing pollution from reaching rivers and providing natural flood management benefits. Where appropriate around deeper sections, meander bends and pools below riffles and increase the amount of tree cover to ensure rivers are kept cool for fish species.		

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	9. Biodiversity in settlements and developments Measures (mapped)			
057	**Measure 057: Urban green spaces, blue spaces and wildlife corridors.** Manage, restore, improve and create new wildlife habitats, wildlife corridors and habitat edges in urban green spaces and parks, allotments, churchyards and blue spaces (rivers, canals and water-related).	Ensure existing green spaces and nature reserves have good connections, as wide as possible, to the wider countryside, with a priority of linking to the nearest core habitat in the Nature Recovery Network map. Ensure ecological connectivity through undeveloped green corridors to enable movement and genetic exchange to occur between species populations on the Cotswold outlier hills such as Robinswood Hill and Churchdown Hill, and the main Cotswolds. Use grass cutting regimes to create a diversity of heights of grassland, and where feasible no cutting between April and July except for safety cuts or to control coarse grasses with the aim of eventually restoring species diversity, or controlling non-native invasive species. Plant trees and hedgerows and create wildflower meadows, prioritising native species. Manage and create water features for habitat creation and flood risk benefits. Find areas where paving and hardstanding can be safely removed and replaced with planting spaces to reduce the amount of impermeable surfaces.	003. Manage neutral grassland and lowland meadows 004. Restore and create neutral grassland and lowland meadows 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 061. Canals, rivers and urban blue spaces 066. Access to biodiversity-rich green spaces 067. Urban tree planting and management 068. Wildlife corridors on travel routes 107. Dead wood	

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058	**Measure 058: Biodiversity in settlements and gardens.** Maintain and improve the biodiversity and habitat connectivity potential of urban areas and settlements, gardens and green and blue spaces.	Create and manage habitats, wildlife corridors and connectivity, increased tree planting, water management schemes and other appropriate measures, to help increase tree equity and mitigate and reverse the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss.	018. Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife 020. River re-naturalisation 031. Road verge biodiversity 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 061. Canals, rivers and urban blue spaces 062. Green Infrastructure Standards for Nature 063. Swift, house martin and bat bricks 064. Biodiversity in gardens 065. Dark skies 066. Access to biodiversity-rich green spaces 067. Urban tree planting and management 068. Wildlife corridors on travel routes 069. Highway amphibian protection 070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems 107. Dead wood	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
059	**Measure 059: New developments and green and blue infrastructure.** Create green and blue infrastructure, maximally wide wildlife corridors, biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems and other wildlife-friendly measures in new developments and infrastructure projects, to increase connectivity across the landscape with priority given to linking to the nearest core habitat in the Nature Recovery Network map. An effective habitat management plan for wildlife corridors and areas should be agreed with the local planning authority.	Avoid isolating nature reserves and wildlife sites through development. These sites must remain connected to similar features in the surrounding environment where possible. Include more wildlife corridors connecting larger areas of trees, woodlands or open space. Carry out soil sampling of proposed development sites to ensure that landscaping and habitat creation proposals are feasible with the existing soil conditions. Design open spaces in relation to the principles in Potential Measures 057 Urban green spaces, blue spaces and wildlife corridors and 064 Biodiversity in gardens. Consider the ambition for 30% tree cover in new developments, as recommended by the Woodland Trust. Establish 10-50m riparian buffers along waterbodies with a mosaic of open and shaded habitats. Avoid removing wild privet during building site developments and encourage planting of wild privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) instead of the non-native garden privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) to benefit the Barred Tooth-striped moth.	011. Establish new woodland and tree cover 018. Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 031. Road verge biodiversity 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 056. Riparian buffer strips 057. Urban green spaces, blue spaces and wildlife corridors 062. Green Infrastructure Standards for Nature 063. Swift, house martin and bat bricks 064. Biodiversity in gardens 065. Dark skies 066. Access to biodiversity-rich green spaces 067. Urban tree planting and management 068. Wildlife corridors on travel routes 069. Highway amphibian protection 070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems 107. Dead wood	

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060	**Measure 060: Green bridges and wildlife crossings.** Where appropriate, create green bridges, underpasses, overpasses or mammal gantry bridges to connect habitats and facilitate movement across busy roads in core habitat areas for species such as pine marten, hazel dormouse, amphibians and reptiles.		031. Road verge biodiversity 068. Wildlife corridors on travel routes 070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems	
	Biodiversity in settlements and developments Measures (unmapped)			
061	**Measure 061: Canals, rivers and urban blue spaces.** Protect, manage and create wildlife corridors along urban rivers and disused and active canals and protect and maintain wetland in disused canals.	Manage canals so that they can act as wildlife corridors through urban and rural landscapes. Where possible, instate a wide riparian buffer consisting of a mix of vegetation types, such as marginal and bankside vegetation, that provide shelter for aquatic or semiaquatic species within the canal, and a mix of scrub, trees and grassy habitat beyond the bank. If feasible, revert some areas of canal banks to water vole friendly soft banks with a more natural structure. Provide opportunities for combined blue-green infrastructure.	021. Remove in-stream barriers 057. Urban green spaces, blue spaces and wildlife corridors 068. Wildlife corridors on travel routes 021: Remove in-stream barriers	

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062	**Measure 062: Green Infrastructure Standards for Nature.** In line with Gloucestershire's Strategic Framework for Green Infrastructure, use Green Infrastructure Standards for Nature for designing and delivering biodiversity in new developments, for example, Building with Nature standards or Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework.	Use of these Green Infrastructure Standards includes protecting and enhancing existing good quality wildlife habitat on the site, ensuring that new developments maintain and deliver Green Infrastructure that provides wildlife habitat connectivity to ecological features and networks beyond the development boundary, and incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems. Include biodiversity advice in welcome packs given to new residents, emphasising the importance that private gardens can have in providing stepping-stones and corridors for wildlife, and the importance of permeable surfaces in flood alleviation.	064. Biodiversity in gardens 070. Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems	
063	**Measure 063: Swift, house martin and bat bricks.** Provide swift bricks, house martin nesting features, bird boxes and integrated bat boxes in new buildings, extensions and retrofit to existing buildings.	Protect existing swift nesting sites and bat roosts in buildings. National Planning Policy Guidance recommends that developments should include integrated nest boxes (commonly known as swift bricks), with the general aim across a development of a minimum of one nest box per unit. Swift bricks should be installed above 5m and away from driveways and windows, ideally on north-facing or east-facing walls, avoiding unshaded locations to avoid overheating. Masonry-fronted swift bricks may be installed in unshaded locations, as the mass of the masonry protects against overheating. Integrated bat boxes and roof access tiles can be included in new or renovated houses. These should provide access to the roof void and be		

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		located above 4m or under eaves, with an uninterrupted flight path, away from strong artificial light, in a warm south, south-east or south-west facing location for exposure to the sun for part of the day. For new build developments, integrated bat boxes ensure a suitable safe roosting space for the bats.		
064	**Measure 064: Biodiversity in gardens.** Increase biodiversity, habitats and the habitat connectivity potential of gardens and allotments.	Plant a range of nectar source plants including fruit trees, create small ponds, leave patches of longer grass and nettles, and plant native wildflowers and trees (as locally native as possible). Provide homes for wildlife such as brash and log piles, bird and bat boxes, and bee and insect hotels. Provide bird feeders and water for birds. Avoid the use of slug pellets, herbicides, fungicides, insecticides and peat-based garden products. Keep a compost heap for grass cuttings, leaves and organic kitchen waste. When planting, use home-produced local inoculants, such as molehill soil, instead of commercial mycorrhizal inoculants which can introduce unwanted mycorrhizal species. Create rain gardens from rainwater harvesting. Ensure gaps in fences between gardens to allow species movement, including hedgehogs. Plant native species in preference to non-native if there is an option. Plant or retain wild privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) instead of the non-native garden privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) to benefit the Barred Tooth-striped moth. Avoid replacing natural lawns and gardens with hard landscaping, parking spaces or astroturf.		
065	**Measure 065: Dark skies.** Exterior lighting and street lighting that affect roosting, foraging and/or commuting	Ensure light distribution is always downward facing (using hoods) and use dimmer lights at dusk and dawn, lights in the red spectrum that bats can better tolerate, and movement-triggered lights. Protect existing and		

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	habitat for bats should be avoided or minimised.	create new dark vegetated corridors to enhance connectivity and dispersal routes between bat roosts. Dark skies policies can reduce pressure on nocturnal species including pollinating insects. Exterior lighting should conform with the latest best practice guidelines outlined by the Bat Conservation Trust and the Institute of Lighting Professionals.		
066	**Measure 066: Access to biodiversity-rich green spaces.** Take actions to increase the potential for everyone to live 15 minutes from biodiversity-rich accessible green spaces.			
067	**Measure 067: Urban tree planting and management.** Maintain urban trees, woodlands and hedgerows, and plant and foster the survival of new street trees.	Maintain urban trees through management practices including mulching, appropriate pruning, reducing soil compaction, and creating an exclusion zone around the root protection area. Ensure inspections and bat surveys are conducted on trees with potential bat roosts before any tree works are undertaken. Plant new street trees in appropriately designed and maintained tree pits and pre-plan their watering and establishment to foster their survival. Plant a wide variety of street trees suitable for each location including insect and wind pollinators, and species that are adapted to future climates, prioritising areas that will connect existing green spaces and areas with low Tree Equity scoring.		
068	**Measure 068: Wildlife corridors on travel routes.** Protect, manage and create wildlife corridors and habitats along cycle paths, disused and active	Protect and maintain existing hedgerows, scrub and trees, and protect and maintain wetland in disused canals. Improve the biodiversity of grassland through native wildflower planting and seeding, and reducing nutrient load through clearing arisings when mowing. Plant native species including trees and hedgerows to increase wildlife habitat connectivity.	031. Road verge biodiversity 061. Canals, rivers and urban blue spaces	

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	railways, and disused and active canals.	Where new cycle paths and footpaths are created, take opportunities to deliver better wildlife connectivity, by incorporating existing habitats such as hedgerows, and creating a mosaic of linear habitats such as scrub, woodland and grassland edges. These should then be maintained in the long-term.		
069	**Measure 069: Highway amphibian protection.** Along highways, reduce the use of gully pots. Where used, place and site gully pots away from kerb edges and place ladders within gully pots to prevent amphibians and other species getting trapped.			
070	**Measure 070: Biodiversity-rich Sustainable Drainage Systems.** Create blue-green infrastructures in the form of Sustainable Drainage Systems along highways and verges, to create connectivity of green spaces in the urban environment while holding water in the catchment for longer.	Above ground drainage pathways, such as vegetated swales, should be prioritised over piped networks, and flood storage at rain gardens and wetlands should be prioritised over below ground attenuation, to ensure that all four pillars of sustainable surface water drainage (water quantity, water quality, amenity, and biodiversity) are achieved. Wetlands or permanent water level should be incorporated into flood attenuation where feasible to increase biodiversity and amenity benefits. Drainage strategies for new development adjacent to watercourses should mimic natural hydrological regimes by avoiding a single point of discharge and spreading attenuated runoff across the watercourse boundary. Highway, cycleway, car park, and public area upgrades should incorporate the retrofit of Sustainable Drainage Systems as these are likely to be the most cost-effective way of retrofitting blue-green infrastructure into the existing	024. Natural flood management 043. Slow the flow	

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		urban environment. All future drainage improvements in these spaces should include water quality mitigation to enhance environments further down the catchment.		
	11. Species Measures - Individual			
071	**Measure 071: Strengthen breeding curlew population.** Within floodplain meadow sites, provide bespoke support for Gloucestershire's threatened curlew population.	Maintain current grassland management practices of late hay cuts. Monitor and protect curlew nests from predators in fields where they are nesting. Increase the area of meadows managed with a late hay cut. Create new wetland sites for feeding near existing populations and near large late cut hay meadows suitable for nesting. See Severn Estuary Bird measure (112) in relation to overwintering curlews.	040: Reduce impacts from dogs 112. Strengthen Severn Estuary and floodplain waterbird populations	
072	**Measure 072: Increase resilience of wood warbler population.** Maintain minimum viable habitat size of mature closed canopy woodland to support wood warbler population.	Ensure woodlands have large areas of oak dominated, dense and closed canopy woodland with an open structure beneath canopy. Maintain and increase the area of suitable habitat.		

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073	**Measure 073: Strengthen hazel dormouse population.** Maintain and enhance the dormouse population in Gloucestershire, (which marks the edge of its reducing range in England), by encouraging appropriate woodland, hedgerow and scrub management and maintaining and enhancing habitat connectivity.	Within woodland, maintain, enhance and connect scrub and understory, ideally by appropriate ride management which can then be linked to areas of rotational hazel coppice. Within the wider countryside, maintain and enhance thick hedges that include hazel and a range of fruit and berries, and areas of dense scrub, by appropriate annual management and rejuvenate when necessary. Ensure veteran trees are retained to provide rot-holes for nesting and refuge for hazel dormouse and other species.	014. Create mixed mosaic habitats including scrub and orchard 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 053. Hedgerows 060. Green bridges and wildlife crossings	
074	**Measure 074: Strengthen Bechstein's bat population.** Protect, maintain and increase the population of Bechstein's bat, as Gloucestershire is near the north-west edge of its range in the UK.	Maintain all known Bechstein's bat maternity roosts and hibernation sites in a favourable condition, according to statutory guidance. Safeguard foraging habitat around Bechstein's bat maternity and hibernation sites by maintaining connectivity of hedgerows, tree lines and vegetated waterways between woodland roosts and foraging grounds of riparian vegetation, unimproved grassland, marsh, wetland habitats or coastal grassland within a 7km radius of the sites. Maintain and extend ancient woodlands in a favourable condition, where Bechstein's bats roost. These bats require a diverse three-tiered woodland structure with numerous mature trees with deep cavities available for roosting. Protect and maintain veteran trees within 1km of known roosts. Implement measures to limit the loss of structure and understorey, as a result of over-browsing by deer, heavy thinning, or intensive coppicing. Outside woodlands, individual trees should be connected by hedgerows or tree lines. This should also include at least 4 standing large girth dead or dying trees per hectare, where it is safe to do so, to provide Bechstein	009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 010. Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 053. Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 065. Dark skies 107. Dead wood	

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		bats with splits and cavities within which to roost. Where lacking in large old trees, veteranisation of trees within 7km range of Bechstein bat roosts should be considered. A second option is to install suitable bat boxes or create artificial veteran trees by strapping dead trunks with holes to live trees. Restrict use of pesticides, insecticides and herbicides.		
075	**Measure 075: Strengthen greater horseshoe bat population.** Protect, maintain and increase the population of greater horseshoe bat, a rare species highly sensitive to disturbance.	Maintain all known greater horseshoe bat maternity roosts and hibernation sites in a favourable condition, according to statutory guidance. Prevent old buildings which host maternity roosts from deteriorating and avoid physical disturbance and lighting. Avoid disturbance to hibernating bats by preventing access to caves and mines where they are found and repairing and replacing damaged fencing or grills when necessary. To support foraging habitat, encourage grazing of permanent pasture by livestock, preferably cattle, within a radius of at least 4km of maternity roosts and 2km of hibernation sites. Around maternity roosts, maintain and enhance a mixed landscape of pasture, scattered trees and scrub, close to ancient woodland and linked with an abundance of tall bushy hedgerows. Maintain and create hedgerows and treelines within a 4km radius of known roosts (see hedgerow Measure). Do not use avermectin-based veterinary products on livestock, and restrict use of pesticides, insecticides and herbicides, so that livestock dung can provide habitat for beetles and flies upon which the bats feed. Refer to the requirements of the Natural England supplementary advice for the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC.	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 053. Hedgerows 065. Dark skies	

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076	**Measure 076: Greater horseshoe bat flightlines.** Improve habitat to encourage bats to move between Forest of Dean and Stroud Valleys to improve genetic diversity in the greater horseshoe bat population.	Maintain habitats within known greater horseshoe bat flyways for navigation between summer and winter sites or hibernacula. For this purpose, linear features of mature and tall, bushy hedgerows and treelines, and grazed pastures and saltings are important. To ensure continued connectivity, gaps should be closed within existing hedgerows and the creation of new interconnecting hedgerows should be considered. Do not use avermectin-based veterinary products on livestock, and restrict use of pesticides, insecticides and herbicides.	030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 053. Hedgerows 065. Dark skies	
077	**Measure 077: Strengthen lesser horseshoe bat population.** Protect, maintain and increase the population of lesser horseshoe bat, to recover from significant declines in abundance.	Maintain all known lesser horseshoe bat maternity roosts and hibernation sites in a favourable condition, according to statutory guidance. Prevent the buildings which host maternity roosts from deteriorating and avoid physical disturbance and lighting. Avoid disturbance to hibernating bats by preventing access to caves and mines where they are found and repairing and replacing damaged fencing or grills when necessary. These bats forage in woodland, therefore, ensure there is tree cover and woodland adjacent to maternity roosts. Within at least a 3km radius of known maternity roosts, create and maintain a foraging landscape of grazed permanent pasture and ancient and semi-natural woodland, linked with an abundance of continuous, tall, bushy hedgerows. Refer to the requirements of the Natural England supplementary advice for the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC.	009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 010. Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 053. Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 065. Dark skies 107. Dead wood	

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078	**Measure 078: Strengthen Western barbastelle population.** Protect, maintain and increase the population of Western barbastelle, a rare bat species found in scattered locations in Gloucestershire.	Maintain all known Western barbastelle bat maternity roosts and hibernation sites in a favourable condition, according to statutory guidance. Safeguard foraging habitat around Western barbastelle bat maternity and hibernation sites by maintaining connectivity of hedgerows, tree lines and vegetated waterways between woodland roosts and foraging grounds of riparian vegetation, unimproved grassland, marsh, wetland habitats or coastal grassland within a 7km radius of known maternity roosts. Within ancient woodland, a broad range of tree age classes, including ancient and veteran trees should be promoted. This should also include at least 4 standing large girth dead or dying trees per hectare, where it is safe to do so, to provide Western barbastelles with splits and cavities within which to roost. Veteranisation of trees within 7km range of Western barbastelle roosts should be considered. Implement measures to limit the loss of structure and understorey, as a result of over-browsing by deer, heavy thinning, or intensive coppicing. Install bat boxes where there is suitable foraging habitat.	009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 010. Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 053. Hedgerows 054. Protecting tree growth 065. Dark skies 107. Dead wood	
079	**Measure 079: Strengthen serotine population.** Protect, maintain and increase the population of serotine bats, which are moving north and west into Gloucestershire due to climate change.	Maintain all known serotine bat maternity roosts and hibernation sites in a favourable condition, according to statutory guidance. Prevent buildings which host maternity roosts from deteriorating and avoid physical disturbance and lighting. To support foraging, enhance, extend and create a landscape of wood pasture and parkland, with pasture preferably grazed by cattle, and ancient woodland, linked with an abundance of tall, bushy hedgerows. Do not use avermectin-based veterinary products on	009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 010. Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
		livestock, and restrict the use of pesticides, insecticides and herbicides, so that livestock dung can provide habitat for beetles and flies upon which the bats feed.	natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 053. Hedgerows 065. Dark skies	
080	**Measure 080: Strengthen soprano pipistrelle population.** Protect, maintain and increase the population of soprano pipistrelle bats, which are often associated with lakes, wetlands and watercourses for foraging.	Maintain all known soprano pipistrelle bat maternity roosts in buildings and hibernation sites in a favourable condition, according to statutory guidance. Prevent buildings hosting roosts from deteriorating. Consider installing bat boxes within suitable riparian corridors to provide alternative roosting sites and improve resilience. Avoid physical disturbance and lighting. Maternity roosts of soprano pipistrelle are strongly associated with open waterbodies, often over 0.8 hectares in area. Maintain and enhance emergent vegetation and fringing riparian woodland around open water bodies**.** Ensure clean water enters lake and millpond catchments. Create shallow berms and banks in restored former gravel pits. Ensure there is undisturbed connectivity between the foraging grounds and potential roost sites, provided by wooded vegetation including hedgerows, linked trees and scrub. Provide opportunities for roosting Soprano pipistrelle around gravel pit lakes by providing bat boxes or pole mounted bat boxes where trees and buildings are not available.	009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 010. Expand and buffer ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 053. Hedgerows 065. Dark skies	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
081	**Measure 081: Beaver reintroduction and habitat creation.** Create favourable habitat next to watercourses in anticipation of arrival of beaver populations and to facilitate beaver releases.	Encourage and enable beavers to settle, remain and increase in abundance to provide ecological functionality through naturalisation of stream channels, connection to floodplains and creation of diverse wetland habitats. Facilitate colonisation in socially and ecologically appropriate areas by planting favoured broadleaved species, including willow and aspen, in the riparian zone. Allow a wooded buffer of 20m between water's edge and adjacent land use to minimise conflict and improve foraging and burrowing opportunities. Consider installing 'beaver dam analogues' to impound water in strategic locations. If necessary, when and where beavers are present, protect individual trees of value using sand paint or mesh guarding. Support the set up and functioning of beaver stakeholder and management groups to help maximise benefits for people and nature and to minimise risks to property and infrastructure, potentially including reintroduction of free-living beaver where ecologically and socially feasible. This could be in locations where downstream flood risk alleviation is possible, in well-buffered streams or lakes with a riparian mosaic of trees, shrubs and soft vegetation, and where there is low risk of land-use conflict.	020. River re-naturalisation	
082	**Measure 082: Strengthen adder population.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of adder. This is particularly important as Gloucestershire is one of the few	Where adders have been identified, limit disturbance, particularly by discouraging disturbance by dogs and machinery. To retain and attract adders, ensure there is a mix of grassland or bare/rocky habitat for basking on south facing slopes, and mosaic scrub habitat and hedgerows for shelter. Maintain or introduce corridors of vegetation cover such as rough grass, hedgerows or scrub, to aid adders movement within. Adder	040: Reduce impacts from dogs	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	remaining areas for adders in the Midlands.	hibernacula are usually underground in burrows, or in crevices in dry stone walls and log or brash piles.		
083	**Measure 083: Strengthen great crested newt population.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of great crested newt, to support recovery following historic declines in abundance and distribution.	Protect ponds with an existing great crested newt population and manage these ponds sensitively, including reducing disturbance from people and dogs and preventing eutrophication. Create new fish-free freshwater ponds relatively close to existing ponds with newts. Ensure there is a variety of habitats close to ponds for cover and dry shelter, including hedgerows, rough vegetation, dead wood, dry stone walls, woodland or grassland. Eliminate or minimise fertiliser, herbicide and pesticide use around ponds.	018. Manage, improve and create ponds for wildlife 030. Create wildlife corridor connectivity 038. Water quality 040: Reduce impacts from dogs 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 069. Highway amphibian protection	
084	**Measure 084: Strengthen white clawed crayfish population.** Retain and expand existing white clawed crayfish habitats and populations through translocations and establishment of Ark sites.	Where populations are known to exist, monitor for signal crayfish. Identify ark sites through assessing habitat suitability, ensuring signal crayfish and crayfish plague are not present. Favourable sites may include isolated areas with less connectivity, such as spring-fed ponds higher up the catchment, including creation of new ponds (as these are less likely to be impacted by crayfish plague).	041. Remove invasive non-native species	
085	**Measure 085: Strengthen scarce blue-tailed damselfly population.** Support the survival of the scarce blue-tailed damselfly that needs shallow water and bare or disturbed ground.	Retain colonies of scarce blue tailed damselfly, as its small-scale habitat requirements can be difficult to maintain. Scarce blue tailed damselfly require small, shallow, warm pools and puddles with some emergent plants and bare ground. Sites should be maintained at early successional stage. Create new ponds close to existing sites.		

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
086	**Measure 086: Strengthen violet click beetle population.** Support the survival of the violet click beetle and encourage its spread and that of other click beetles into Gloucestershire from Bredon Hill in Worcestershire, one of only three population sites in the UK.	Increase habitat for violet click beetle through tree veteranisation techniques and beetle boxes in vicinity of Bredon Hill. Protect veteran ash and beech trees and leave as much of ash trunks and wood as is safe when working on infected ash trees. Increase planting of beech and encourage growth and maintenance of existing ash. Adding additional organics (bat droppings, prey remains and corpses) at base of newly excavated tree hollows will create the necessary conditions for black wood mould to thrive, which is beneficial for beetle species such as violet click beetle. Beetle boxes can be installed to mimic cavities in areas where they are naturally sparse.	034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 036. Ash dieback response 107. Dead wood 108. Veteran ash pollards	
087	**Measure 087: Strengthen rugged oil beetle population.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of rugged oil beetle, which is scarce and needs specific grassland management on calcareous grassland sites.	On calcareous grassland sites, maintain a mosaic of shorter turf, bare soil and longer swards and tussocks through conservation grazing in the autumn and winter, ensuring open grass swards by removing or reducing livestock during the spring and summer. Areas of bare earth or scrapes in sheltered, sunny spots will provide nesting opportunities for solitary bees, which are hosts for rugged oil beetle larvae, and for adult rugged oil beetles. Leave some areas uncut or ungrazed each year on rotation.	001. Manage lowland calcareous grassland 052. Conservation grazing	
088	**Measure 088: Strengthen hairy click beetle population.** Hairy click beetles need reed canary-grass and common reed vegetation on river banks with brackish influence.	Ensure the riparian vegetation (herb rank as well as reed) is not cut before July, to ensure appropriate habitat is present when adult beetles emerge. Depending on the size and height of the bank, an earlier 'safety cut' of the top of bank and around a flail width down the bank can be undertaken to ensure the bank top and sides are visible. Avoid disturbance of the top spoil without appropriate mitigation measures in place. In addition to habitat management and creation, consider translocations and reintroductions to new sites from captive rearing and breeding.		

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
089	**Measure 089: Strengthen large blue population.** Support the continued reintroduction and re-establishment of large blues in Gloucestershire.	On calcareous grassland sites, maintain a short sward through targeted conservation grazing to promote a warm microclimate for red ant *Myrmica sabuleti* to act as host for butterfly larvae. Retain some sheltered scrub areas for roosting adult butterflies. Ensure wild thyme and marjoram is available as food plants, with plug planting of local provenance in the autumn if necessary. Continue reintroductions of large blues on suitable sites, working with the Royal Entomological Society large blue programme and other stakeholders.	001. Manage lowland calcareous grassland 052. Conservation grazing	
090	**Measure 090: Strengthen Duke of Burgundy population.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of the duke of burgundy butterfly which has declined by over 50% in recent decades.	In calcareous grassland habitats, maintain a mosaic of open, sunny grassland with abundant cowslips, primroses or false oxlips in medium height swards, with scrub edges or patches comprising up to 20% of the grassland area. Utilise north or west-facing slopes for more humid conditions. Maintain taller vegetation for breeding butterflies and shorter vegetation to ensure continuity of cowslip and primrose food plants. Maintain habitat through extensive winter conservation grazing with cattle and regular scrub management to create a mosaic of different aged but predominantly young scrub, a varied age of cowslips and to prevent the sward becoming closed in. Avoid sheep grazing in the summer on Duke of Burgundy sites. In woodland clearings and short-rotation coppice, ensure abundant primroses in open, sunny conditions, and control regrowth of scrub, brambles and coarse grasses, removing cut material.	001. Manage lowland calcareous grassland 009. Manage ancient semi-natural woodland, semi-natural woodland and broadleaved woodland 052. Conservation grazing	
091	**Measure 091: Strengthen wood white population.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of wood white butterfly, as key national	Maintain open sunny rides with lightly shaded grass margins in woodland, and sunny but sheltered habitat in hedgerows and mosaic habitats, with abundant vetches as foodplants. Cutting of clearings and rides at any time of year is very likely to affect or destroy some butterfly life stages so it is		

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	populations are present in the Forest of Dean, Wye Valley and Stroud district areas of Gloucestershire.	important to only cut part of the verge in any one year and to monitor the impact.		
092	**Measure 092: Strengthen lead belle population.** Support populations of lead belle moth that rely on gorse, with the population at Cleeve Common being one of a small number south east of the Tees-Exe line.	Ensure food plants of gorse, broom, petty whin and Dyer's greenweed are available to support populations of Lead Belle moth. Manage gorse in a sensitive way, with long-term rotational cutting.		
093	**Measure 093: Strengthen *Phyllonorycter sagitella* population.** Support the survival of the *Phyllonorycter sagitella* moth which is rare in Gloucestershire and the UK.	Maintain and increase extent of coppiced aspen in Highnam Woods, ensuring a mix of trees of different ages, as foodplant for *Phyllonorycter sagitella* moth.		
094	**Measure 094: Maintain chalk carpet population.** Support the survival of the chalk carpet moth which is rare in the UK and found at Cleeve Common.	In the area of former quarries in the east part of Cleeve Common, maintain a mosaic of varied vegetation structure, with patches of bare ground and areas of short turf and controlled scrub, and availability of foodplants of trefoils, clovers and vetches.		
095	**Measure 095: Strengthen *Lauria sempronii* snail population.** Protect the *Lauria sempronii* snail that is	Protect dry stone walls where *Lauria sempronii* is recorded by not excessively removing foliage and not removing stones, and by preventing encroachment by a thick cover of ivy. If possible, extend known sites with dry stone walls with cracks and fissures or loose rocks.		

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	found in the UK only within Gloucestershire.			
096	**Measure 096: Strengthen juniper population.** Support the survival of juniper which is rare and characteristic in the Cotswolds and is facing significant decline across lowland Britain.	Protect and encourage juniper where it is present through management of scrub to avoid encroachment or shading of juniper bushes, and deer and rabbit control to prevent over browsing. Introduce juniper to new sites to assist migration of this tree species northwards due to climate change, and to increase its extent. Juniper seeds require bare subsoil to germinate, often with rubble and bedrock exposed and little topsoil present, followed by a long period without disturbance to enable the seedlings to grow. Juniper scrapes are a proven technique to support germination and specialist advice should be sought in creating them. Seed shelters can be used to prevent seeds and seedlings from being eaten.		
097	**Measure 097: Strengthen black poplar population.** Protect, maintain and increase the population of rare and characteristic black poplar trees in Gloucestershire.	Ensure existing black poplar trees are protected. Seek opportunities for new planting within the floodplain and near rivers and wetlands, either through propagation from cuttings or by working with black poplar breeding programmes, ensuring that native black poplars are planted, not hybrid cultivars. Plant black poplar in male and female pairs to help improve the genetic stock.		
	12. Species Measures - Groups			
098	**Measure 098: Individual species needs of farmland birds.** Increase, expand and re-establish populations of rare and threatened farmland birds including corn bunting, grey	Within fields, field margins and hedges, provide plants and habitats that meet the nesting and feeding needs of both adult farmland birds (predominantly seed) and chicks (predominantly invertebrates), within the same location. Nearly all species will benefit from the creation of invertebrate and seed rich habitat such as tussocky grass field margins and	040: Reduce impacts from dogs 051. Field margins 053. Hedgerows	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	partridge, lapwing, linnet, skylark, tree sparrow, turtle dove, woodlark and yellowhammer.	wildflower margins or plots, and of winter supplementary feeding to overcome the hungry gap in later winter. Add over-winter stubbles for winter feeding and roosting. In addition to this, different species have specific needs: **Corn bunting** - Corn bunting require open habitats so planting trees or tall hedgerows in corn bunting strongholds should be avoided, however occasional small trees and shrubs for song-posts are beneficial. They benefit from dense patches of double-drilled cereal crop to nest in. These areas should be sited away from field margins and tramlines used by predators and left unharvested, or harvested very late (June onwards) to avoid impacting nests, as corn bunting are late nesters. Ideally these measures should be sited within their favoured crop of spring barley. Corn buntings prefer barley seed for winter feeding. **Grey partridge** - Grey partridge particularly benefit from the creation of tussocky margins alongside dense hedgerows and in-field beetle banks, as well as protection from predation. **Lapwing** - Lapwing nest in both wetland sites and the farmed landscape. On farmland, lapwing tend to nest on open arable adjacent to damp pasture on which they can feed their chicks once they've hatched. Spring-sown crops are suitable but autumn-sown cereal will be too tall by the spring, so lapwing plots (large in-field bare areas) can be created in autumn-sown cereals to create suitable nesting areas. Lapwing plots are ideally situated in fields next to damp pasture or wetland sites. Lapwing are very susceptible to nest destruction and so working with landowners	099. Add food sources for ground-nesting adult farmland birds 100. Add food sources for ground-nesting farmland bird chicks 101. Add food sources for hedge-nesting adult farmland birds 102. Add food sources for hedge-nesting farmland bird chicks	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
		to locate nests within crops in April and protect them from agricultural operations can significantly help survival. Protection from predators through electric fencing or predator control is also beneficial to both farmland and wetland nesting lapwing. Lapwing require open habitats, so planting trees or hedgerows in lapwing strongholds should be avoided. **Skylark** - Skylark require open habitats, so planting trees or tall hedgerows in skylark strongholds should be avoided. Skylark have been shown to benefit from the creation of skylark plots (small, in-field, bare areas) to feed in and access nests. These should be sited away from field margins and tramlines used by predators. Skylark strongly favour over-winter stubble fields outside the breeding season. **Tree sparrow** – Tree sparrows respond well to the provision of nest boxes in colonies, and have been shown to do well if they have access to ponds and wet areas that boost invertebrate numbers. This will help re-establish tree sparrow populations. Tree sparrow prefer millet for winter feeding. **Turtle dove** – Turtle dove particularly benefit from bespoke food plant seed mixes, access to ponds and wet areas, creation of dense scrub, thick and tall hedges, and edge scrub habitat with seed-rich herbs. This will help re-establish turtle dove populations. **Woodlark** - Woodlark occasionally nest on farmland in the Cotswolds. They require bare stony areas to nest and forage and can benefit from lapwing-style plots (large, bare, in-field areas), located close to field or woodland edge, in areas where they are known to be present. They are a		

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		Schedule 1 protected species and so no field operations should be carried out in fields where they are suspected to be nesting from March to July. **Yellowhammer** – Yellowhammer require dense hedgerows with adjacent tussocky margins to provide safe nesting sites protected from predation and agricultural operations.		
099	**Measure 099: Add food sources for ground-nesting adult farmland birds.** Adult farmland birds (other than lapwing) tend to feed predominantly on seeds throughout the year.	Options for food sources include arable weed seeds, wildflower seeds, split seed from cereal crops and supplementary winter food. Encourage a diversity in food sources by sowing cover crops, limiting herbicide use to ensure presence of arable weeds, and by providing supplementary food.	098. Individual species needs of farmland birds	
100	**Measure 100: Add food sources for ground-nesting farmland bird chicks.** Farmland bird chicks feed almost exclusively on invertebrates.	Options for food sources include insects, spiders, larvae and worms. Invertebrate abundance can be boosted by creating – wildflower or tussocky field margins, beetle banks or other buffer strips, or other areas of rough grassland.	098. Individual species needs of farmland birds	
101	**Measure 101: Add food sources for hedge-nesting adult farmland birds.** Adult farmland birds tend to feed predominantly on seeds throughout the year. Hedges or scrub, ideally with adjacent field margins, are needed for nesting.	Options for food sources include arable weed seeds, wildflower seeds, split seed from cereal crops and supplementary winter food. Encourage a diversity in food sources by sowing cover crops, limiting herbicide use to ensure presence of arable weeds, and by providing supplementary food.	098. Individual species needs of farmland birds	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
102	**Measure 102: Add food sources for hedge-nesting farmland bird chicks.** Farmland bird chicks feed almost exclusively on invertebrates. Hedges or scrub, ideally with adjacent field margins, are needed for nesting.	Options for food sources include insects, spiders, larvae and worms – which can be found in field margins, beetle banks or other buffer strips, wildflower margins or plots or other areas of rough grassland.	098. Individual species needs of farmland birds	
103	**Measure 103: Pearl-bordered fritillary and small pearl-bordered fritillary.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of the pearl-bordered and small pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies.	Pearl-bordered fritillary needs violets amongst dead leaf litter (usually oak, bramble or bracken) with live green grass for warmth, within coppice, clearfells and young plantations. Small pearl-bordered fritillary needs extensive violet flushes along bracken edges or amongst short grass cover, usually in long-term woodland clearings. Woodland clearings, glades and rides should therefore be maintained within their colonisation range, including through rotational coppicing and felling, to enable a continuity of habitat as clearings become more shaded and less suitable as the coppice regrows.		
104	**Measure 104: Butterflies and moths with specific food plants on grassland.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of butterflies and moths with specific food plants, including Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Blue, Dingy Skipper, Marsh	Maintain and increase extent of specific food plants, by planting plugs and seeds, to help butterflies and moths in open grassland habitats: Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Common Dog Violet and Marsh Violet Small Blue - Kidney Vetch Adonis Blue - Horseshoe Vetch Dingy Skipper - Common Bird's-foot-trefoil and Horseshoe Vetch		

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	Fritillary, Liquorice Piercer, Chalk Hill Blue, Grizzled Skipper, and *Agonopterix atomella*, as many of these species are highly localised and several have declined with a marked contraction of their range.	Marsh Fritillary - Devil's-bit Scabious Liquorice Piercer - Wild Liquorice Chalk Hill Blue - Horseshoe Vetch Grizzled Skipper - A variety of plants from the Rosaceae family *Agonopterix atomella* - Dyer's Greenweed		
105	**Measure 105: Butterflies and moths with specific food plants in woodland.** Protect, maintain and increase populations of butterflies and moths with specific food plants, including Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, Liquorice Piercer, Barberry Carpet, Plumed Prominent, Grizzled Skipper, White-letter Hairstreak, White-barred Clearwing, Barred Tooth-striped, and *Caryocolum kroesmanniella*, as many of these species are highly localised and several have declined with a marked contraction of their range.	Maintain and increase extent of specific food plants, by planting plugs and seeds, to help butterflies and moths in woodland, hedgerow and woodland edge habitats: Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Common Dog Violet Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary - Common Dog-violet and Marsh Violet Liquorice Piercer - Wild Liquorice Barberry Carpet - Common Barberry (not a cultivar) Plumed Prominent - Field maple and Sycamore Grizzled Skipper - A variety of plants from the Rosaceae family White-letter Hairstreak - Elm species White-barred Clearwing - Alder Barred Tooth-striped - Wild Privet *Caryocolum kroesmanniella* - Greater Stitchwort and Bog Stitchwort		

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
106	**Measure 106: Rare arable plants and soil fauna, flora and fungi.** Leave areas unsprayed and annually cultivate to support arable wildflowers and soil fungi, particularly in areas where important species are present.	Manage arable fields and their margins with important populations of arable flowers present for those species. Shallow till margins around fields. Cultivate both autumn and spring germinating arable plant species.	047. Soil health and regenerative farming 051. Field margins	
107	**Measure 107: Dead wood.** Ensure the dead wood conditions that invertebrates and fungi need for food, shelter or survival are created and managed.	Retain standing and fallen deadwood where safe to do so. Create additional dead wood resource through tree veteranisation techniques, aiming for microhabitats including large diameter hollowing trees, decaying wood, rot holes, ageing bark and fallen but regenerating trees. Create brash and log piles, including partially buried log piles, to benefit some saprophytic beetles and fungi.	034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 036. Ash dieback response 108. Veteran ash pollards	
108	**Measure 108: Veteran ash pollards.** Take action to mitigate the effect of the loss of ash trees on the most vulnerable species that rely on ash, such as lichens, fungi, and dead-wood species, especially click beetles.	Conserve existing ash pollards as long as possible, where safe to do so. To help mitigate the eventual loss of these pollards, with expert advice, consider pollarding nearby younger ash trees. Avoid coppicing, re-pollarding out-of-cycle pollards or tree surgery on veteran ash.	034. Safeguard and establish ancient and veteran trees 036. Ash dieback response 086. Strengthen violet click beetle population 107. Dead wood	
109	**Measure 109: Fly orchid and white helleborine.** Where fly orchid and white helleborine occur in beech woodland, they need open or bare	This open ground cover at the woodland edge can be achieved by targeted and rotational scrub removal, strimming or conservation grazing.		

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	ground cover, relatively free of brambles, at the woodland edge.			
110	**Measure 110: Wye Valley bryophytes and distinctive species.** Protect rare ferns, bryophytes, hieracium species, whitebeams, service trees and other distinctive Wye Valley species from disturbance including land management operations and recreational pressure, including rock-climbing.	Maintain some open disturbed areas on thin soils and screes to benefit rare bryophytes and ferns. Ensure that bryophytes that require very open habitats on thin soils such as quarry areas, have these areas kept open. This may require the maintenance of a short turf assisted by a degree of trampling and grazing, for example by rabbits or sheep. Consider micro-management for individual endangered species where present. Notable whitebeam species in the Wye Valley include English whitebeam, round-leaved whitebeam and grey-leaved whitebeam.		
111	**Measure 111: Moths dependent on Small- and Large-leaved Lime.** Protect and maintain long continuity Large-leaved and Small-leaved Lime woodland characteristic of Wye Valley and the invertebrate species dependent on these.	Maintain and increase extent of Large-leaved Lime and Small-leaved Lime in the Wye Valley, by planting plugs both within the existing woods and adjoining areas.		
112	**Measure 112: Strengthen Severn Estuary and Floodplain waterbird populations.** Maintain and improve the capacity of the Severn estuary and surrounding land to support waterbirds and waders, including Bewick's swan, wigeon, teal, pintail,	Maintain and increase floodplain meadow, wetland, pasture and open water habitat in the Severn and Avon Vales, and field margins and stubble in arable fields, for favourable conditions for feeding and roost sites for wintering and migrating birds. Maintain and increase floodplain meadow habitat for nesting sites for waders including lapwing, curlew, redshank, oystercatcher and avocet. Protect their nests from predators, by installing electric fences around fields where they are nesting, and monitor nests.	005. Manage floodplain meadows 028. Protect and manage saltmarsh and mudflats 029. Restore and create saltmarsh 037. Floodplain reconnection	

Number	Potential Measure	Potential Measure Additional Detail	Other measures that apply in relation to and alongside this potential measure	Wider Environmental Benefits
	ringed plover, dunlin, shelduck, lapwing, curlew, redshank, oystercatcher, avocet and little ringed plover.	Protect wintering waterbirds from first arrivals in June to last departures in April by reducing disturbance along the foreshore of the Severn Estuary SPA. The disturbance is caused by a wide range of activities. Examples include ramblers, dog-walkers, wildfowlers, clay pigeon shooting, sailing boats, jet-skis and low flying helicopters.	071. Strengthen breeding curlew population	
113	**Measure 113: Strengthen River Severn fish populations.** Maintain, enhance and expand access to fish spawning habitats.	Ensure no significant deterioration in the available spawning substrate for Atlantic salmon, trout, shad and lamprey species in the main River Severn and flagship programme areas identified by the Severn Vale Catchment Partnership. Ensure that abstraction pressure is carefully managed and causes no significant deterioration in river flows on the River Severn and tributaries. Enhance resilience to extreme high and low flows through catchment-wide actions to naturally slow the flow of water, conserving lamprey and elver habitats and reducing the need for de-silting of channels by dredging. Ensure a diversity of in-river habitat and vegetation cover throughout Gloucestershire, to maintain cool rivers in summer and provide varying habitats that can support thriving populations of coarse fish, salmonids and eels. Where feasible, improve the potential for eel movement through removing river barriers and estuarine and floodplain habitat improvements.	020. River re-naturalisation 021. Remove in-stream barriers 022. Improve ecological condition of rivers 037. Floodplain reconnection 038. Water quality 039. Sewage and wastewater 042. Severn Estuary marine biosecurity 044. Limit groundwater abstraction and surface flow abstraction 046. Reduce pollution from agricultural inputs 055. Riparian tree planting 056. Riparian buffer strips 061. Canals, rivers and urban blue spaces	

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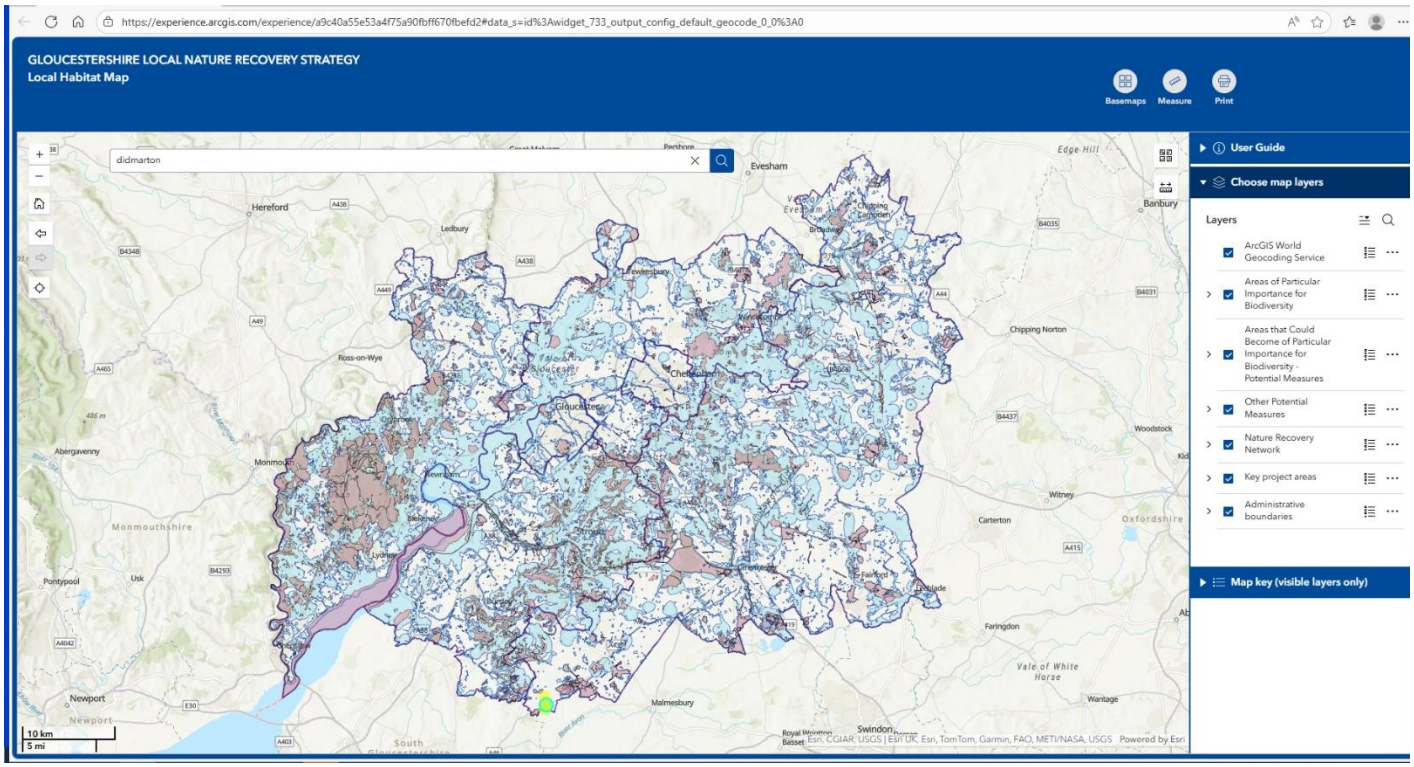
[Gloucestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy]



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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**CABINET– 5 MARCH 2026**
Subject	**COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) ENHANCEMENT PROJECT**
Wards affected	All
	Juliet Layton- Member for Housing and Planning Email: juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Helen Martin – Director of Communities and Place Email: helen.martin@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Kim Langford-Tejrar – Infrastructure Delivery Lead (Shared) Email: kim.langford-tejrar@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a charge levied on development to help fund infrastructure. It is a vital mechanism for supporting the delivery of infrastructure to underpin sustainable growth across the District, while also creating opportunities for projects that enhance local communities. The Council introduced a CIL charge in 2019; at which time a process for stakeholders to apply for CIL funding was put in place. Now, with experience of operating the process, is an appropriate time to review it for best practice. The existing process allows stakeholders to make 'bids' for CIL funding once a year, during the period of March – May. Concise guidance for making bids is available on our website. Once the bid period closes, an officer panel convenes to consider the bids, applying an existing high-level scoring system. Having now completed two strategic bid rounds under the existing process, the Council has gained valuable insights—supported by stakeholder feedback—into how the process can be further strengthened. A review by officers has identified opportunities to

	enhance transparency, engagement, collaboration, and ensure ongoing alignment with the Council's strategic priorities and the Development Plan. There are opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the bid cycle, ensuring that CIL funding continues to be allocated legally, responsibly, strategically, and accountably, and in line with the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) support development of our area. The purpose of this report is to seek delegated authority for the Associate Director of Planning, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, to implement a programme of enhancements.
Annexes	None.
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Delegate authority to the Assistant Director, Planning Service in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing to implement a CIL Enhancement Programme detailed at Section 3 of this report.
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Supporting Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The CIL enhancement programme will be delivered through collaborative working and active engagement with stakeholders. It will include developing a suite of new documents, guidance materials, and procedures informed by contributions from both internal and external stakeholders.

COTSWOLD
District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The Council collects funding from development through Community Infrastructure Levy. A portion of the levy goes towards a strategic fund (Community Infrastructure Levy Strategic Fund (CIL SF)), which must be used to respond to growth in our area and deliver infrastructure to meet our resident's needs. Since introducing the levy in 2019, the Council has collected circa £7 million; once CIL administration fees and Neighbourhood CIL (NCIL) have been paid, this has left the Council with circa £5 million in the CIL SF fund. Under £1 million of this total has been committed to existing bids. There is no time limit to spending these funds.

1.2 To access CIL SF funding, the Council is open to receive 'bids' from stakeholders between March to May annually. This bidding opportunity is advertised on our website and officers also alert key stakeholders to the opening of the bid window. Once received, the bids are considered by an officer panel, which applies a high-level scoring system based on the existing Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016 (IDP), and makes recommendations as to which bid projects should receive funding. Cabinet then considers those recommendations and decides whether funding should be extended to the bidders. If successful, bidders must also sign a legal agreement before any funds are transferred.

1.3 The bids reviewed by the Cabinet in December 2025 were the second round of bids submitted by stakeholders since CIL was introduced in 2019. This experience, alongside stakeholder feedback, has allowed officers to review the process and identify potential enhancements. The process would benefit from:

Forward planning and fund-management via procedural alignment to the Council's capital programme,

- A greater lead-in time for bids to allow stakeholders to seek advice and to prepare high-quality bids Clearer up-front information requirements for all bids to ensure bids proactively address due diligence, meet a reasonable evidential standard and address local need.
- Clearer and more detailed scoring, to enable bids to be prioritised and to ensure funding is balanced across; 'critical' and 'essential' infrastructure identified in the IDP as part of the Development Plan, climate and ecological emergency responses; and supporting healthy and sustainable communities.

Transparent criteria for the composition and quorum of the officer bid consideration panel

- Improved communication across the board, both internally and externally to engage and/or inform residents, stakeholders, members, service areas and officers of the process and its positive outcomes for the district.

2. BACKGROUND

This section of the report sets out the background for the CIL Enhancement Programme as set out at Section 3 of this report.

Timing and timescales for CIL bids-

2.1 The limited bid period (from the beginning of March until end of May) has proved challenging for bidders and has resulted in the bidding window being missed or some bids being incomplete or providing little evidence base. Stakeholder's feedback was that the window does not necessarily align with their own programmes for infrastructure projects and the period is too short to enable proper engagement with the Council. The short window for bids also creates a challenge for officers to adequately review the bids and prepare a panel to consider the bids.

2.2 The timing of the bid period also generated internal feedback. There is a statutory requirement that the Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) be published by the end of December each year. The IFS must report on CIL receipts and spending for the current financial year (31 March – 01 April) and include a list of infrastructure projects CIL is likely to be spent on during the coming financial year. By spanning two financial years (March-May), the bid period creates uncertainty about the IFS infrastructure list and spending. Moreover, the critical work to process bids coincides with financial year-end reporting for the Council's financial team and infrastructure delivery team.

Requirements for submitting bids-

2.3 The current bid application form requires bidders to answer several short questions about their bid. Bidders shared that they found it difficult to understand how to maximise the scoring potential of their bid given the limited nature of the questions

and the relatively high proportion of score attributed to each (circa 20 points per question out of 100 available points). The quality of the contents of the bids varied greatly.

2.4 Whilst there is a robust system in place to ensure that successful bids and bidders are subject to due-diligence checks bidders are required to comply with a legal agreement after bids have been recommended for approval by Cabinet, there would be time saving and efficiency benefits to considering this information earlier in the process. Upfront minimum requirements would make the process more transparent.

Consideration of the bids-

2.5 The officer panel considering the bids provided similar feedback as bidders; the broad scoring requirements did not allow for prioritisation of bids beyond high-cost transport projects contained in the IDP. Moreover, the sole focus on the IDP in the current scoring system means that bids which seek to support healthy and sustainable communities or respond to climate and ecological emergencies would naturally score lower. The criteria for considering bids also does not set out parameters for when bids would be disregarded (for example, where the bid seeks more than the available funding or the lion's share of the whole fund).

2.6 The panel had several questions relating to match funding, timescales for delivery, project planning, planning permissions, detailed works included in the bid, delivery partners involved, strategic impacts, evidence base for need and detailed costings which could not be answered simply by reference to the questions in the application form.

2.7 The Council received feedback in respect of transparency in terms of the panel. Stakeholders wished to be reassured that the panel make-up reflected a wide range of expertise, whilst internal stakeholders wished to ensure appropriate and proportionate representation across service areas.

Forward planning CIL-

2.8 As well as ensuring the CIL bid scoring system reflects the Council's priorities for infrastructure, in line with the Development Plan, it would also be beneficial to address the overall management of CIL. In 2024 the Infrastructure Delivery Team

introduced an Infrastructure Tracker to identify potential projects which may come forward and track those underway.

Beyond this, CIL has been treated as a standalone fund outside of the Council's capital programme which can be applied as a grant to discrete projects. CIL is essentially an unapplied contribution to capital funding. The most recent successful bids have been added into the Council's capital fund. This allows for funding to be considered in the round; ensuring all funding opportunities are considered and CIL funded infrastructure projects are properly programmed.

Communication and engagement before, during and after the process-

2.9 Stakeholders feedback was that the website did not provide sufficient engagement on the bid process and did not alert them sufficiently to bid opportunities, but they had benefited from increased officer engagement during the most recent bid period. Many members and internal stakeholders first became aware of the bids when they were brought to Cabinet following the officer panel.

2.10 CIL SF funding has a positive impact on the lives of our residents and the vibrancy of our communities. The Communications Team has worked closely with the Infrastructure Delivery Team to ensure that these outcomes are captured and disseminated to members of the public, and it would be an improvement to embed this into the annual process.

2.11 A new approach to communications surrounding the bids could result in greater transparency and engagement both internally and externally.

3. CIL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME

3.1 The recommendation of this report is to seek delegated authority for the Assistant Director of the Planning Service, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Planning, to implement a CIL Enhancement Programme.

3.2 The Enhancement Programme will implement:

(a) an extended bidding period to allow bids to be submitted year-round. Bids to be considered in the third financial quarter (October-December) and officer

recommendations on funding to be considered by Cabinet and published at the beginning of the fourth financial quarter (January).

(b) Create a validation checklist for CIL bids to be registered, ensuring a minimum standard of information, evidence and due-diligence is provided up-front.

(c) Develop and implement a detailed scoring matrix for bids, to ensure an appropriate balance of projects can be funded. This balance is to focus on meeting the needs of our residents by prioritising infrastructure which is:
- Identified as 'critical' and 'essential' in our Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the Development Plan,
- Responds to the climate and ecological emergency; and,
- Supports healthy and sustainable communities.

(d) Introduce a minimum score for bids and disqualification criteria.

(e) Set standards for the quorum and constitution of the officer panel.

(f) Create a communications and engagement strategy for the process, increasing awareness of the bidding opportunity, process and outcomes.

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1 A CIL bid enhancement project could add value, transparency and greater opportunities for engagement in infrastructure funding. Ringfencing part of the CIL SF towards healthy and sustainable communities, as well as towards meeting the challenges of climate and ecological emergencies would have positive impacts on these areas.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Community Infrastructure Levy is a significant funding source that can be used to support the delivery of infrastructure projects across the district. CIL is not available to support the wider capital programme.

5.2 Whilst CIL is in effect a specific source of funding for infrastructure projects, the Council should not allocate more funding than is available. As set out in Section 5 and for the avoidance of doubt, the closing balance from the previous financial year will be taken as the maximum amount that can be allocated in the following financial year's bidding rounds.

5.3 Successful CIL bids will then be included in the Council's Capital Programme to ensure CIL schemes are fully financed and that CIL-related schemes are subject to the same monitoring and reporting framework that all other capital schemes are subject to as part of the wider Capital Programme

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Carrying out due-diligence at the earliest stages will underpin a robust funding and delivery process.

6.2 Any successful bids are to comply with relevant CIL legislation and guidance.

6.3 Legal services have provided legal agreements, which will be reviewed and signed/sealed before any funds are drawn down. The agreements contain requirements for reporting and monitoring to mitigate misuse or risk of loss of the relevant CIL funding, together with clawback of unspent funds.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 There are no significant risks to the Council in respect of CIL SF funding, other than the potential for external factors which might stymy the delivery of the infrastructure projects being delivered by the bidders (infrastructure stakeholders). This risk is discrete and isolated, and the Enhancement Programme would decrease risk, providing mitigation as above.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 The infrastructure funded in part or in full by the CIL SF fund will meet the needs of a wide demographic of residents and none of the projects funded would be inaccessible to any groups or individuals. The CIL SF funding has a positive impact of equality, and the needs of all groups are considered in decision making.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The detailed scoring matrix for CIL funding would allow climate and ecological emergency responses to be appropriately and proportionately prioritised.

COTSWOLD
District Council

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public: n/a

10.2 These documents will be available for inspection online at www.cotswold.gov.uk or by contacting democratic services democratic@cotswold.gov.uk for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting.

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**CABINET – 5 MARCH 2026**
Subject	**HOMESEEKERPLUS POLICY REVIEW**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Juliet Layton, Deputy Leader, Housing and Planning Email: juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing, Executive Director Operations Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Caroline Clissold, Business Manager Housing Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	The HomeseekerPlus Policy has been in place since 2016 and was last reviewed in 2022. Due to legislative and other changes, the policy needs to be updated. It is considered good practice to consult the public and associated stakeholders on the new policy therefore the HomeseekerPlus partnership is seeking approval to consult and implement suggested changes. Although there are no recommended or set timeframes for how often allocations policies should be reviewed, it is anticipated that this the revised HomeseekerPlus Policy will remain in place until after the completion of the Local Government Reorganisation.
Annexes	Annex A – Equalities Impact Statement
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to: 1. Approve the draft Policy amendments for public consultation 2. Delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing, in

	consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and the Publica Executive Director – Operations, to adopt the new policy subject following consideration of the consultation responses.
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services • Delivering Housing • Supporting Communities
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	The HomeseekerPlus Partnership will undertake a full public consultation to run for 4 weeks to seek views on the proposed Policy amendments and to ensure that residents, stakeholders and all other interested partners are able to have their say.

COTSWOLD
District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 HomeseekerPlus is a choice-based lettings (CBL) scheme run by the seven local authorities in partnership with social housing landlords operating within Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire.

1.2 The seven local authorities are West Oxfordshire District Council, Gloucester City Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Stroud District Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Cotswold District Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council.

1.3 Demand for affordable social housing within the HomeseekerPlus area is very high so any allocations policy must be fair, transparent and must prioritise those in housing need. The policy explains who is eligible and qualifying to apply on HomeseekerPlus and sets out how applications will be assessed based on housing need.

1.4 Due to legislative and other changes, the policy needs to be updated. It is considered good practice for the partnership to consult the public and associated stakeholders on the new policy.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Ministry of Housing and Local Communities (MHCLG) sets out Statutory Guidance relating to the fair and transparent allocation accommodation in the 'Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authority's' document. The introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 has also impacted on how those applicants who are threatened with homelessness or are homeless should be assessed. Homeless applicants are given reasonable preference for social rented allocations.

2.2 Local Authorities are tasked with ensuring that all affordable and social rented accommodation made available through its Choice Based Lettings scheme is allocated fairly, transparently and to those in the highest housing need.

2.3 HomeseekerPlus is a choice-based lettings (CBL) scheme run by the seven local authorities in partnership with the Social Housing Landlords operating within Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire. This enables Social Housing Landlords to advertise their homes and for applicants to bid for properties they are interested in. The HomeseekerPlus Policy was created to provide the framework for making those decisions and to ensure that all its partners were acting in a consistent way.

2.4 The Policy explains who is eligible and who qualifies to apply on HomeseekerPlus and sets out how applications will be assessed and awarded a subsequent Emergency, Gold, Silver or Bronze banding based on housing need.

2.5 A full review of the Policy, including a public consultation was carried out in 2022, however since then there have been further legislative changes. Officer working groups have also identified some inconsistencies in language requiring clarification as well as best practice changes learnt over the years since the previous review.

2.6 To remove ambiguity, add clarity and explore wider options for groups such as Armed Forces Veterans an updated Policy is being proposed.

2.7 The partnership is seeking approval from each of its own governance systems to run a public consultation regarding these proposed changes. This consultation will run through May 2026.

2.8 The Forest of Dean District Council is the Lead Authority responsible for HomeseekerPlus so will coordinate the consultation on behalf of the partnership.

3. PROPOSED CHANGES

3.1 A summary of the major changes is outlined below:

Qualification Criteria

- Shift in assessment of financial resources from ability to purchase a property to assess whether applicants have sufficient resources to access housing that meets their needs across multiple tenure types.
- Applicants who deliberately worsen their housing situation will be placed in lowest priority band for 6 months. After this period, they can only move to a higher band if they demonstrate reasonable steps to find alternative housing and actively try to resolve their situation.
- Only the main or joint applicant's employment (not other household members) would count toward establishing local connection, except in exceptional circumstances.
- Expand Armed Forces local connection options for members/former members can apply for connection to all HomeseekerPlus partners or select specific partners. Should this expansion be:
    - **opt-in** (choose districts),
    - **opt-out** (automatic for all partners unless applicant opts out), or;

- **No change** beyond current legislation.

Assessment and Prioritisation

- Higher banding will only be awarded if applicants act on reasonable professional advice; the Lead Authority decides what is reasonable.
- Emergency banding for downsizing would only apply if the move released a property in high demand or limited supply (currently awarded automatically for moves from family to non-family housing).
- Time-limited bands: set a fixed 6-month demotion period for applicants who do not act urgently. Reassess after 6 months, if no reasonable steps have been taken, lower banding remains indefinitely until evidence of improvement provided.
- Additional bedroom need:
    - add category for couples unable to share a bedroom due to medical/disability reasons (assessment may consider alternatives e.g. separate beds).
    - 3rd trimester of pregnancy

3.2 There are a number of other minor changes to the policy however these are predominantly housekeeping changes

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 It is proposed to consult the public on the policy for 4 weeks during May 2026 which will ensure an open, transparent and fair process.

4.2 The consultation will seek comments from the public and a range of stakeholders on the proposed changes in Policy

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1 In order to ensure an open, transparent and fair process to changes in Policy there are no other alternative options.

6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 To remove ambiguity, add clarity and explore wider options for groups such as Armed Forces Veterans an updated Policy is being proposed.

6.2 Approval is sought from Cabinet to carry out a public consultation regarding these proposed changes. It is anticipated that the consultation will run for 4 weeks during May 2026 (to be inclusive of any pre- and post-election periods)

6.3 Further approval is sought from Cabinet to delegate authority to the Business Manager for Housing, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning and the Publica Executive Director – Operations, to adopt and implement the new Policy following consideration of the consultation responses.

6.4 A full report detailing the results of the consultation will be shared at Informal Cabinet ahead of adopting the new policy.

6.5 Should the outcome of the consultation differ significantly or raise strong objections to any of the points under consideration, Informal Cabinet may decide to bring forward a further report to Cabinet to consider.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The adoption of the updated HomeseekerPlus Policy will have no financial implications.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Housing Act 1996, Part VI (''the Act'') sets out Local Authority responsibilities in the Allocation of Housing Accommodation. S166a of the Act states that 'Every local housing authority must have a scheme (their 'allocation scheme') for determining priorities and as to the procedure to be followed in allocating housing accommodation.'

8.2 The Localism Act 2011 introduced significant amendments to the Act including Section 166a, amongst others, but notably: To include assurance that certain categories of applicants are given reasonable preference including ex-Armed Forces personnel and their families (s166A(3)) or consideration of anti-social behaviour (s166A(5)(b)).

8.3 The requirement for an allocation scheme to contain a statement of the Authority's Policy on offering a choice of accommodation or an opportunity to express preferences about their accommodation (section 166a (2))

8.4 Publica's Legal Team have reviewed all proposed changes on behalf of Cotswold District Council, Forest of Dean District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council,

as have One Legal on behalf of all the other partners and have deemed them compliant with current legislation.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 Should all seven HomeseekerPlus Partners not agree to the Policy update, this may result in dissolution of the Partnership

9.2 If the Partnership dissolves due to non-agreement, the financial implications would be significant, with increased costs for each of the partnership organisations

9.3 The HomeseekerPlus partnership already offers a strong Countywide approach (in Gloucestershire) to the allocation of social rented accommodation which may carry on beyond Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Dissolving the partnership prior to LGR could cause additional and potential unnecessary uncertainty and disruption to both staff and applicants.

9.4 To not bring the HomeseekerPlus Policy up to date with recent legislation changes could leave the Partner Authorities open to legal challenge or criticism should a complaint escalate to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

10. **EQUALITIES IMPACT**

10.1 Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out – Annex A

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 None

(END)

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Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the 'protected characteristics' may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Thomas See/Caroline Clissold	
Date of assessment: 26 January 2026	Telephone: Email:

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

HomeseekerPlus Common Allocations Policy Document

Is this a new or existing one? Existing

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

The HomeseekerPlus Allocations Policy aims to:

- Ensure fairness, transparency, and equality of opportunity in the allocation of social housing.
- Prioritise households with the greatest housing need, while supporting sustainable communities.
- Provide applicants with informed choice and accessible processes, including support for less able applicants.
- Make best use of available housing resources, including enabling mobility within social housing and giving priority to those with a local connection where appropriate.
- Help local authorities meet their statutory duties under housing and homelessness legislation.
- Contribute to tackling discrimination and promoting inclusion across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire.

HomeseekerPlus is a sub-regional housing allocations scheme using choice-based lettings that operates across Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire to oversee the allocation of social housing in the area.

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

The policy is regularly reviewed to make sure it reflects:

- national policy and legislation
- new case law,
- local policy changes, and
- local housing need/supply

Since the policy was last reviewed, amended and adopted in March 2022, there have been some external considerations that need to be taken into account. These include (not exhaustive):

- The Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities in England (2020) has been revised in 2025. The updated version includes strengthened provisions for domestic abuse survivors, care leavers, and Armed Forces personnel.
- A new statutory instrument — The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Victims of Domestic Abuse and Care Leavers) (England) Regulations 2025
- Cheltenham Borough Council – new Housing, homelessness and rough sleeping strategy 2023 – 2028
- Cotswold District Council - Preventing homelessness strategy 2025-2030
- Stroud – new Housing, homelessness & rough sleeping strategy 2024-2029
- Tewkesbury Borough Council housing and homelessness strategy 2022-26
- Forest of Dean District Council – new Preventing homelessness strategy 2025
- West Oxfordshire – new Preventing homelessness strategy 2025-2028

The proposed changes result from the latest review of the policy. The HomeseekerPlus partnership is governed by a HomeseekerPlus Management Board. The Board includes representatives from all of the partner Councils. All of the changes have been considered and agreed by HomeSeekerPlus Management Board.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	✓	• Demographic data extracted from the Locata housing allocations software system • Census 2021 data on: sex; age; religion; race; disability
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	✓	• 6 of the 7 participating councils within the HomeseekerPlus Scheme have published new housing and/or homelessness strategies over the last 3 years. There will be research and data underpinning and informing these, especially strategies covering homelessness. There is a legal requirement to complete a comprehensive review of homelessness in your area to inform your homelessness strategy. These strategies have informed and been a point of reference for the allocations policy development.
Results of recent consultations and surveys	✓	• Where significant changes are proposed to a housing allocations scheme, the housing authority must ensure that affected customers and Registered Provider partners are informed within a reasonable timeframe and that appropriate consultation is undertaken. • A 4 week consultation process as outlined above will be undertaken using Survey Monkey and links provided to all current applicants. Additional stakeholder engagement sessions will also be held during the consultation process.
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	✓	• Equalities monitoring data from the Locata housing allocations software system
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	✓	• The 4-week consultation includes requesting feedback from: Registered Provider partners operating in the area; County Councils; NHS; Social Care; Internal colleagues.

Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	✓	• ARK Housing consultancy supported part of the process of reviewing the current HomeseekerPlus allocations scheme/policy. ARK support reviews of council housing allocations schemes across the country so bring knowledge of other policies and practice for comparison.
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	✓	• The allocation of social housing processes include a legal right to review decisions made in relation to processing housing applications and allocation of social housing. Representatives on the HomeseekerPLus Partnership Board have used data on review decisions to inform the proposed changes to the policy.
Other:	✓	• Trends and data relating to complaints and the Ombudsman has also been taken into account.

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

No gaps – see above.

7. Will any consultation been carried out?

Yes -

<u>Details of Consultation</u>

Where significant changes are proposed to a housing allocations scheme, the housing authority must ensure that affected customers and Registered Provider partners are informed within a reasonable timeframe and that appropriate consultation is undertaken. A 4-week consultation process will be undertaken using Survey Monkey and and links provided to all current applicants. Additional stakeholder engagement sessions will also be held during the consultation process.

If NO please outline any planned activities

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	☐
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	✓
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	☐
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	☐

Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact?

The policy changes include some amendments to 'tidy' the document up, provide procedural clarity and improved transparency. These changes are not considered material. These changes should help staff giving them more clarity regarding the policy and enabling them to apply it consistently.

There are some more major changes proposed. The majority of these changes are NOT likely to impact a large number of applicants although limited data is available to quantify this. The changes are outlined below:

- **Who does not Qualify:** We are considering a change to how we assess who may not qualify for social housing. We are considering whether all tenure types should be considered when assessing if applicants have sufficient financial resources to adequately resolve their own housing need. Previously, this was limited to whether an applicant had sufficient financial resources to resolve their housing needs by purchasing a property. This change is not likely to impact a specific group of applicants but will impact households across the scheme in a range of circumstances/with a range of characteristics if they have financial means to resolve their own housing needs.
- **Deliberate worsening of circumstances:** we are considering a change to how deliberate worsening of circumstances is treated. These applicants would be placed in the lowest priority band (Bronze) for six months. After that, they would only move to a higher band if they can show they have taken all reasonable steps to find alternative accommodation and actively tried to resolve their situation. This change is not likely to impact a specific group of applicants but will impact households across the scheme in a range of circumstances/with a range of characteristics if they have deliberately worsened their circumstances.
- **Acting on professional advice:** A new rule is being considered to ensure applicants follow reasonable steps before a higher banding is awarded. Applicants are sometimes given advice or recommendations by the Council or other professionals to help improve their housing situation. Under this proposal, if applicants choose not to follow reasonable steps, they may not be awarded a higher banding
- **Employment & local Connection:** HomeseekerPlus is reviewing how employment is used to establish local connection. At present, any household member included on an application who works in the district can help establish a local connection. Under the proposed change, only the main or joint applicant's employment would count — unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- **Expanding Local Connection Options for members of the Armed Forces:** Recent legislation has come into effect regarding the exemption of all members and former members of the Armed Forces from the Local Connection test. This has been implemented and all applicants who meet the criteria are awarded a local connection to a Local Authority of their choosing. We are proposing to expand this further to allow members or former members of the Armed Forces the opportunity to apply for a local connection to all the HomeseekerPlus partners, or to choice some of the partners who they would like to be given a local connection to. This is not likely to apply to many applicants, however as this is being offered over and above legislation and to a specific demographic and not to all applicants generally, could disproportionally affect others.
- **Emergency banding for downsizing:** Emergency Banding is sometimes awarded to social housing tenants who agree to move to smaller housing. At present, social housing tenants in Gloucestershire and West Oxfordshire who are willing to move from family accommodation to non-family housing within the partnership area are automatically awarded Emergency Banding. The proposed change is that this banding would only be awarded if the move releases a property that is in high demand or limited supply.
- **Additional bedroom need:** To allow couples who cannot share a bedroom due to medical or disability reasons to be awarded an additional bedroom. In these cases, consideration may be given to whether separate single beds could resolve the issue without needing an extra bedroom.
- **Demotion Period & Reassessment:** Some categories of housing need are time limited to recognise urgency. Applicants in these categories are expected to bid for all suitable properties each week and across a wide range of locations. If, at the end of the time limited period, it appears that an applicant is waiting for a particular property and not treating their circumstances as urgent, they may be demoted to a lower banding. At present, demotion periods vary case by case. The proposed change is to set a fixed demotion period of 6 months. After this, the local authority would reassess the applicant's situation. If the applicant has not taken all reasonable steps to resolve the issue that led to the demotion, the lower banding would remain in place indefinitely until sufficient evidence is provided.
- **Additional Bedroom for pregnant households:** The current policy does not recognise unborn children as part of the bedroom need assessment until their birth. It is proposed that households who currently have a one bed housing need and include a pregnant applicant will be assessed as needing an additional bedroom once the pregnancy reaches 28 weeks / the start of the third trimester.

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;
Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;
Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			**X**	The proposed changes are anticipated to have a neutral impact on younger people on the housing	

				register/HomeseekerPlus scheme. 70% of people on the housing register/HomeseekerPlus scheme are aged 20-49 years. More younger people are applying to join the housing register/HomeseekerPlus scheme in Gloucester City.	
Age – Old People	**X**	**X**	**X**	There are limited numbers of older people on the Housing register/HomeseekerPlus scheme. For those that are on the register/scheme the changes are anticipated to have a mixed impact – see below. • The change in emergency banding for downsizing is more likely to have a negative impact on older people as they are more likely to be under-occupying family housing than younger households. • The change related to an additional bedroom is more likely to have a positive impact on older people as the prevalence of disability and medical issues increases with age. • The employment and local connection change is likely to have a neutral impact on older people as they are less likely to be working or have working children in their household who the change would apply to.	• Retain Emergency Banding where downsizing releases larger family homes or adapted properties in high demand. • Allow discretion for older or disabled tenants where moving supports health, mobility, or independence. • Publish clear guidance with examples so applicants understand when Emergency Banding applies. • Monitor Emergency Banding awards by age profile and review criteria if older tenants are disproportionately affected.
Disability		**X**		• Additional bedroom need: allowing those households who cannot share a bedroom due to medical or disability reasons to be awarded an additional bedroom should have a positive impact on applicants on the housing register/HomeseekerPlus scheme.	

				There are just over 6,000 households registered on the HomeseekerPlus scheme with a disability, but we do not hold data on how many of these would benefit from the proposed new category for being awarded an additional bedroom.	
Sex – Male			**X**	Changes proposed are not anticipated to have a specific impact on applicants according to gender.	
Sex – Female			**X**		
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			**X**	The race of applicants on the housing register is predominantly white – more so than England as a whole but this is reflective of the wider population of the area. The only slight variation is that in Gloucester City there are less white persons and more Black or Mixed Ethnic group households than the wider population in that area. There are very limited numbers of GRT households on the housing register/HomeseekerPlus scheme. GRT groups can be disadvantaged by local connection criteria so it has been recommended that working procedures clarify that special circumstances in relation to the local connection qualification criteria should apply to GRT households so that the local connection requirement does not apply to these households.	Procedures will clarify that local connection requirements do not disadvantage GRT households, with officer training and monitoring to ensure consistency
Religion or Belief			**X**	Changes proposed are not anticipated to have a specific impact on applicants according to religion.	

Sexual Orientation			**X**	Only 388 applicants completed the sexuality field on their housing application so this data is not statistically reliable. However, the changes proposed are not anticipated to have a specific impact on applicants according to sexual orientation.	
Gender Reassignment			**X**	Changes proposed are not anticipated to have a specific impact on applicants according to gender reassignment.	
Pregnancy and maternity			**X**	There were nearly 600 households on the housing register/HomeseekerPlus scheme who included a pregnant woman. However, the changes proposed are not anticipated to have a specific impact on applicants according to pregnancy & maternity.	
Geographical impacts on one area			**X**		
Other Groups			**X**		
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			**X**	None of the changes are specific to geography and not expected to impact rural areas more than urban areas.	

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale
Downsizing change: Draft clear guidance on when Emergency Banding applies, with examples, including safeguards for older/disabled tenants.	HomeseekerPlus Policy Lead	Officer time	Before policy implementation

Ensure discretion is retained for older/disabled tenants where downsizing supports health, mobility, or independence	Local Authority Housing Managers	Existing staff capacity	Ongoing from implementation
Monitor Emergency Banding awards for downsizing by age profile and report to Partnership Board	HomeseekerPlus Data Analyst	Locata system data Officer time	Quarterly monitoring reports
Train staff on equality considerations in banding decisions, including trauma-informed and disability-aware practice	HomeseekerPlus Partnership Training Lead	Training budget	Within 6 months of implementation
Review outcomes after 12 months; adjust criteria if older tenants are disproportionately affected	HomeseekerPlus Management Board	Officer time	12 months post-implementation

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?

Research into creating this EIQ was carried out by ARK Consultancy on behalf of the HomeseekerPlus Partnership

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Thomas See/ Caroline Clissold	Date:	26/01/2026
Line Manager:	Jon Dearing	Date:	26/01/2026

Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:	Cheryl Sloan	Date:	29/01/2026

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COTSWOLD
District Council

Council name	**COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL**
Name and date of Committee	**CABINET – 5 MARCH 2026**
Subject	**DELEGATED APPROVAL TO AWARD CONTRACT (PARKING)**
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Tony Dale-Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience Email: tony.dale@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Claire Locke – Director of Corporate Services (Publica) Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Maria Wheatley – Parking Manager Email: Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	Delegate the approval to award the contract for pay and display machines for car parks.
Annexes	Annex A – Equalities Impact Assessment
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet: 1. Delegates authority to the Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Health, Culture and Visitor Experience to award the contract for the supply, installation and on-going services to the most advantageous supplier.
Corporate priorities	• Delivering Good Services • Responding to the Climate Emergency • Supporting Communities • Supporting the Economy
Key Decision	YES

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Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	N/A

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District Council

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Cotswold District Council owns and operates 31 pay and display machines across 15 charged car parks. Customers may pay for parking at these machines with cards. The alternative method of paying for parking is via a mobile phone by phone call, text or app.

1.2 The existing machines are nearing end of life.

1.3 There is a need to tender for the purchase of new machines, the associated ground works and on-going services.

1.4 Tender evaluation will be carried out by officers from the car parking team, with assistance, where necessary from Finance, Procurement and Legal.

1.5 To expedite the tender acceptance process it is recommended that authority to accept the tender be delegated to the Section151 officer in consultation with the Leader and relevant Cabinet Member on receipt of a tender report from officers and subject to it falling within approved financial parameters.

2. THE TENDER PROCESS

2.1 The tender is being carried out by an open tender method and the invitations to tender are currently being advertised via the e-procurement system in line with the procurement strategy.

2.2 The tender is open for 4 weeks from the go live date of 20 February 2026.

2.3 The evaluation will follow and take approximately 2 weeks depending on the number of submissions.

2.4 The evaluation is estimated to be complete by 3 April 2026 at which point letters will be sent out to both the successful and unsuccessful bidders. This is followed by an 8-day statutory standstill period.

2.5 Assuming no challenge to the tender award is made, the council's legal team will engage with the successful supplier to complete the contract week commencing 13 April 2026.

2.6 The contract start date is anticipated to be end of April.

2.7 The parking team will engage with the supplier to establish the schedule of works. This will largely be influenced by the lead time for the new machines.

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3. THE EVALUATION

3.1 The evaluation will be carried out by the 3 members of the parking team including the parking manager supported, where necessary, by Finance, Legal and Procurement officers.

3.2 The evaluation will have a 60% quality score and 40% price score reflecting the need for the most advantageous tender, to provide good quality and reliability given the impact on service users.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are 3 elements to this procurement, purchase of machines, ground works and ongoing services.

4.2 Funding for the contract costs are a mixture of one-off capital costs (machines and groundworks) and revenue (annual maintenance and running costs).

4.3 The Capital Programme, approved by Council at their meeting on 23 February 2026, included budget provision of £0.165m for the replacement of the car park ticket machines and associated additional works outlined in the report.

4.4 The Financial Performance Report – Q2 2025/26 approved by Cabinet at their meeting on 08 January 2026, transferred the forecast £0.155m additional car park fee income to an earmarked reserve to provide funding for the revised capital scheme in 2026/27. The forecast for car park fee income will be updated in the Q3 2025/26 Financial Performance report to Cabinet in April 2026.

4.5 The on-going services will replace the existing maintenance and service charges, and the card processing fees, which are met from the revenue budget.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Legal services will draw up a contract, the on-going contract will be in place for an initial period of 4 years with the option to extend by 1 year.

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.1 There is a risk that the tender sum falls outside the financial envelope within the capital and revenue budgets. Should this be the case a further report will be brought forward for members consideration.

6.2 There is a risk the procurement fails, or there are no bids which would result in a repeat process with revised documents.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 There are no unacceptable adverse effects on the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010. There are no changes proposed to the provision of free parking for the use of the blue badge parking bays in the car parks.

7.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached at Annex A.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The current pay and display machines are mains powered with backup batteries, partially powered by the solar panels.

8.2 The tender includes are requirement for the tenderers to propose alternative power supplies where possible and feasible. If a machine has a very high turnover of payments and ticket issue in a certain time period, this may impact the power supply.

8.3 There may be an option to have hybrid machines that take advantage of an alternative power supply with the stability of mains electricity.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

9.1 The council could opt to not procure new machines, remove current machines and rely solely on payment via mobile phones.

(END)

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Appendix A **Equality and Rurality Impact Assessment Form**

When completing this form you will need to provide evidence that you have considered how the 'protected characteristics' may be impacted upon by this decision. In line with the General Equality Duty the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to:

a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;

b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

This form should be completed in conjunction with the guidance document available on the Intranet

Once completed a copy should be emailed to cheryl.sloan@publicagroup.uk to be signed off by an equalities officer before being published.

1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

Names: Maria Wheatley	
Date of assessment: 18.2.26	Telephone: 01285 623228 Email: maria.wheatley@publicagroup.uk

2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

Tender process for new pay and display machines, installation and ongoing services. This procurement is to replace the existing machines that are near end of life.

The new machines should make the payment for parking more efficient and easier for the users.

3. Briefly describe it aims and objectives

The report requests delegated authority to award the contract.

4. Are there any external considerations? (e.g. Legislation/government directives)

Procurement rules and regulations are being followed.

5. What evidence has helped to inform this assessment?

Source	✓	If ticked please explain what
Demographic data and other statistics, including census findings	☐	Car parking strategy
Recent research findings including studies of deprivation	☐	
Results of recent consultations and surveys	☐	Data and feedback gathered during car parking strategy
Results of ethnic monitoring data and any equalities data	☐	Data and feedback gathered during car parking strategy
Anecdotal information from groups and agencies within Gloucestershire	☐	Data and feedback gathered during car parking strategy
Comparisons between similar functions / policies elsewhere	☐	Market research on technology
Analysis of audit reports and reviews	☐	
Other:	☐	

6. Please specify how intend to gather evidence to fill any gaps identified above:

Faults and problems with the current machines can be evidenced via the faults system and through customer complaints. All new equipment will be compliant with industry standards.

7. Has any consultation been carried out?

Yes The council carried out extensive consultation as part of the evidence gathering for the Parking Strategy. The Strategy produced an action plan: one action is to 'Upgrade parking payment equipment reflecting on what our customers have told us'

If NO please outline any planned activities

N/A

8. What level of impact either directly or indirectly will the proposal have upon the general public / staff? (Please quantify where possible)

Level of impact	Response
NO IMPACT – The proposal has no impact upon the general public/staff	☐
LOW – Few members of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	☐
MEDIUM – A large group of the general public/staff will be affected by this proposal	x
HIGH – The proposal will have an impact upon the whole community/all staff	☐
Comments: e.g. Who will this specifically impact? All users of the car parks, that choose to pay using the pay and display machines, will be positively affected.	

9. Considering the available evidence, what type of impact could this function have on any of the protected characteristics?

Negative – it could disadvantage and therefore potentially not meet the General Equality duty;
Positive – it could benefit and help meet the General Equality duty;
Neutral – neither positive nor negative impact / Not sure

	Potential Negative	Potential Positive	Neutral	Reasons	Options for mitigating adverse impacts
Age – Young People			x		
Age – Old People			x		
Disability			x		
Sex – Male			x		
Sex – Female			x		
Race including Gypsy and Travellers			x		
Religion or Belief			x		

Sexual Orientation			x		
Gender Reassignment			x		
Pregnancy and maternity			x		
Geographical impacts on one area			x		
Other Groups			x		
Rural considerations: ie Access to services; leisure facilities, transport; education; employment; broadband.			x		

10. Action plan (add additional lines if necessary)

Action(s)	Lead Officer	Resource	Timescale

11. Is there is anything else that you wish to add?

Declaration

I/We are satisfied that an equality impact assessment has been carried out on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function and where an negative impact has been identified actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact. We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the District Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment.

Completed By:	Maria Wheatley	Date:	18.2.26
Line Manager:	Susan Hughes	Date:	19.2.26
Reviewed by Corporate Equality Officer:		Date:	

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