

Verge management for biodiversity now and aspirations for the future



Gloucestershire



**What are
roads for?**

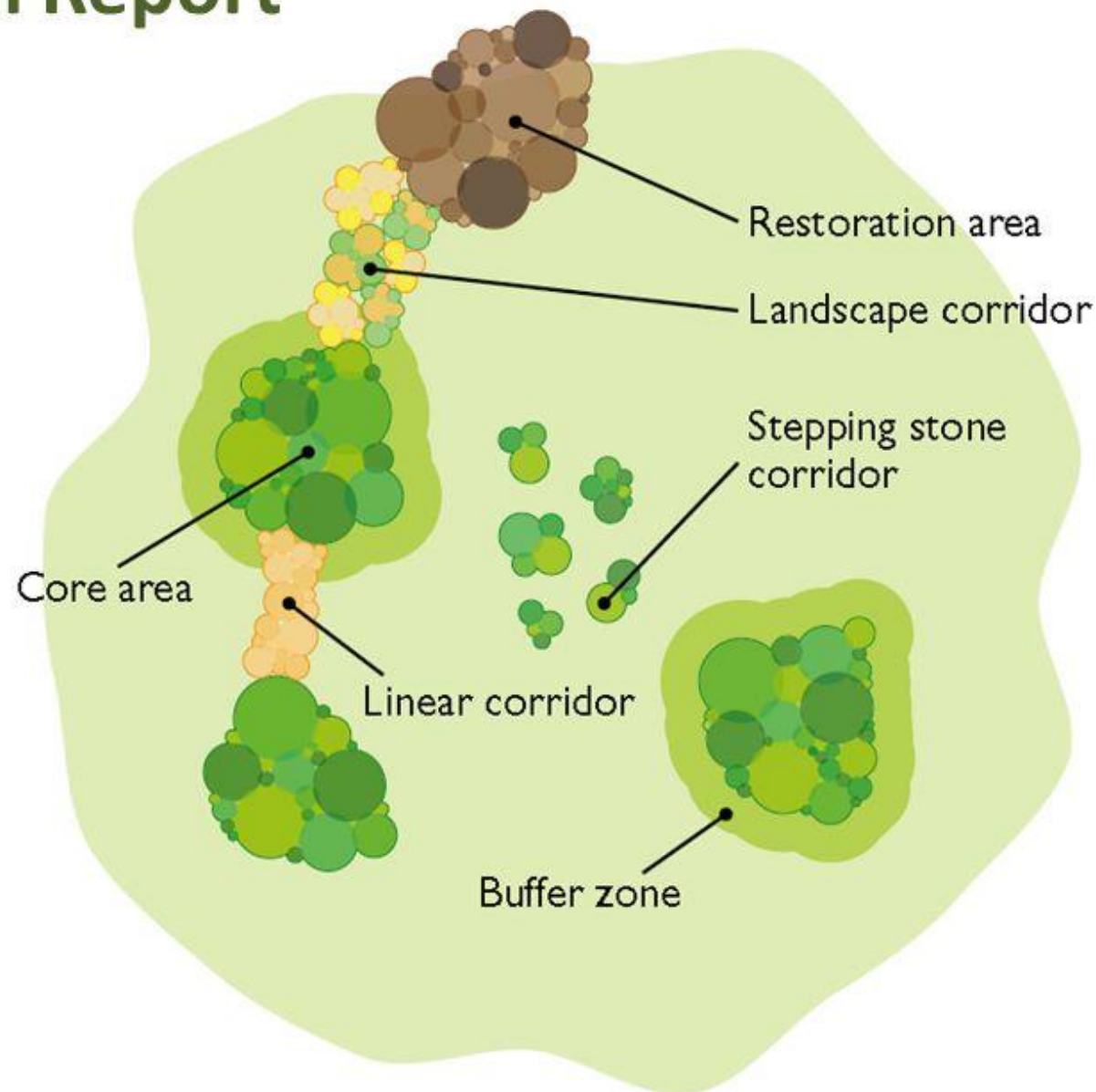


Connectivity is also a major challenge for wildlife

The Lawton Report

- Bigger
- Better
- Connected

Put the
Right Habitat
in the
Right Place



Making Space for Nature: a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological networks: defra 2010

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world

Where are we now?



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- 108 Designated Conservation Road verges.
- GCC supporting regular surveys and feeding into the planning system.
- Partnership approach between GWT, GCC and GCER has received national recognition.
- Many high quality verges that haven't been assessed yet.



Why is managing verges for biodiversity important

Legislation

Public authorities have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity as part of their policies or decision making and should be able to demonstrate this when they manage and develop road infrastructure (NERC Act 2006).

There will be new statutory environmental principles and an Office of Environmental Protection to enforce environmental law (Draft Environment Bill, 2018)

National Policy

25 Year Environment Plan: *Develop a Nature Recovery Network to protect and restore wildlife, and provide opportunities to re-introduce species that we have lost from our countryside*

National Planning Policy Framework: *Planning policies and decisions should*

- *protect and enhance sites of biodiversity and preventing development from contributing to unacceptable levels of soil, air or water pollution.*
- *promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.*



A Sustainable County

More efficient use of resources and
more use of sustainable energy

Gloucestershire Looking to the Future

2019-2022



gloucestershire.gov.uk



*Transport Economy
and Infrastructure:
More efficient use of
resources and more
use of sustainable
energy*

Promoting active
travel, including
walking
and cycling

Embedding green infrastructure
into our
thinking and planning for
Gloucestershire's
future development and
regeneration

Why is managing verges for biodiversity important



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UK study showed that 90% of people do not oppose reduced mowing of verges for wildlife benefits (Garbuzov et al. 2014)



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future



Gloucestershire
GREEN
INFRASTRUCTURE
Pledge



Gloucestershire

What could we do better?



Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

Use highways to deliver broader public benefit

Sustainable drainage schemes can reduce flooding



Biodiverse verges can significantly increase walking and cycling rates



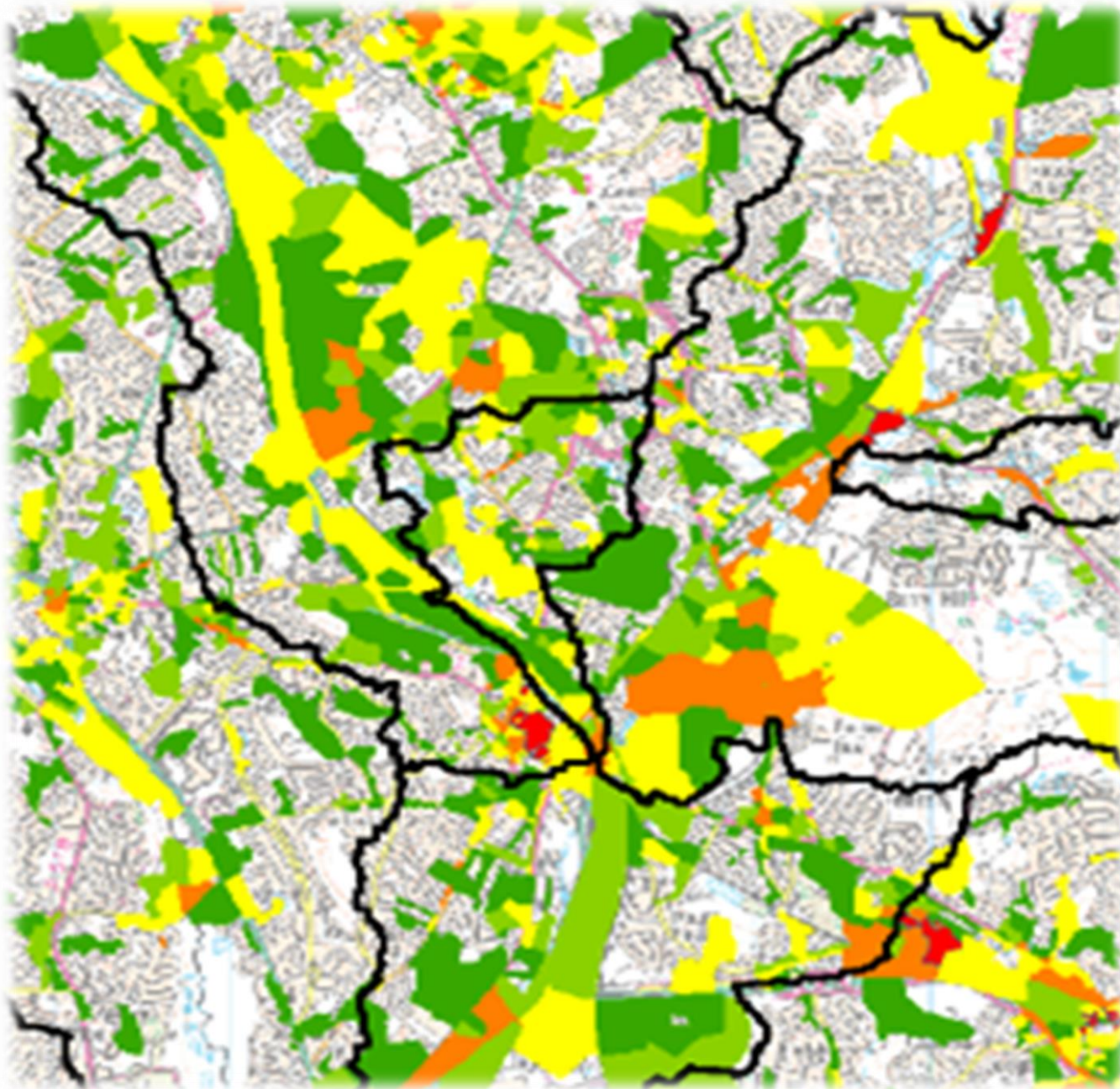
Verge trees can improve air quality, capture carbon and cool urban areas.



Verges mown once per year provide cost savings and 50x more butterflies



Green highways supporting economic growth?

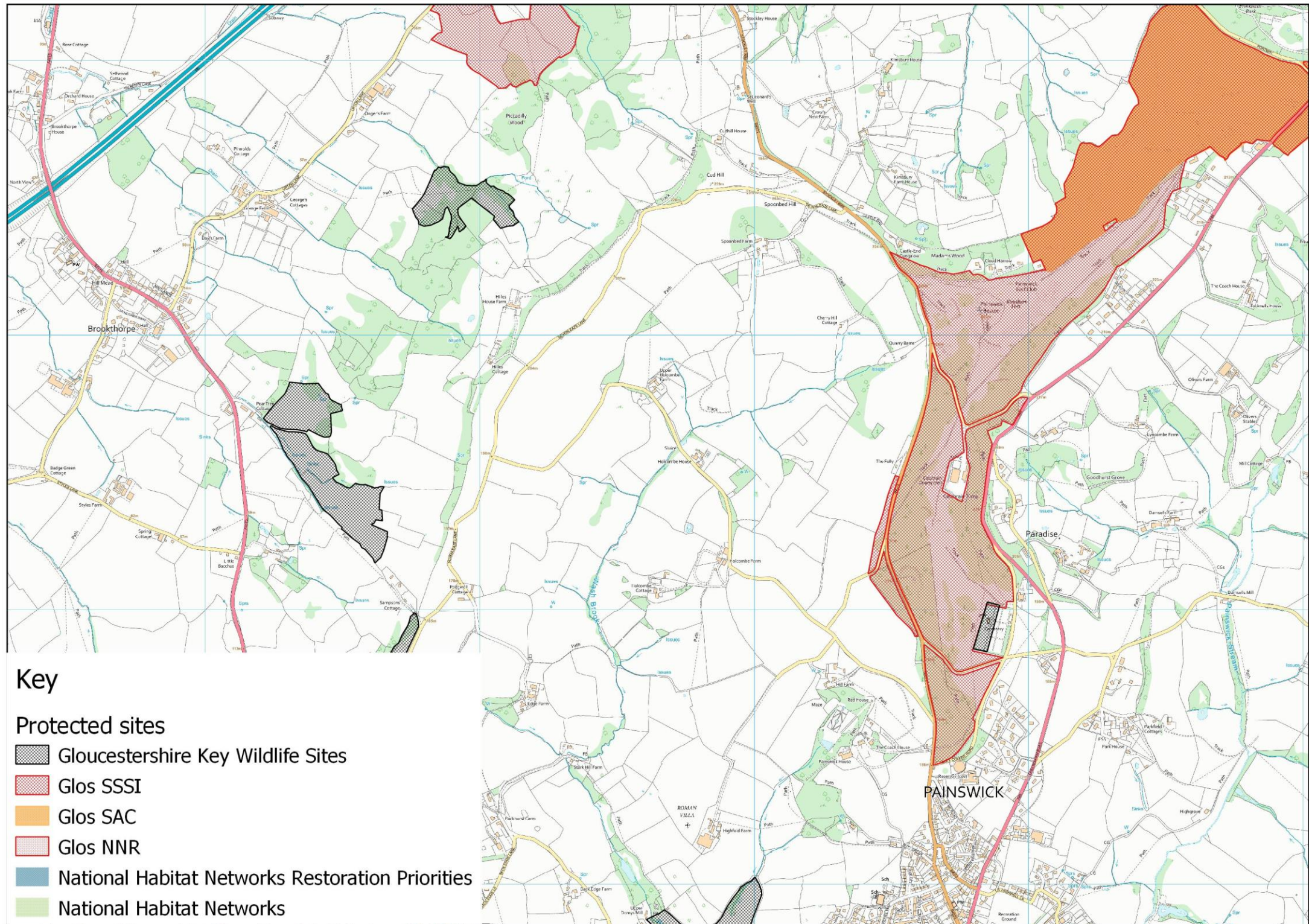


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- Integrated Environmental Mapping Tool being produced by the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership.
- Will identify where there are environmental constraints to development and how these could be unlocked.
- Will also show where there are opportunities to make better use of natural capital and enhance it.

Use the Nature Recovery Network to identify where highways can make the biggest contribution to restoring Gloucestershire's wildlife



Highways management for wildlife beyond verges



Pitfalls to avoid



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Local delegation of management has its advantages but oversight and expert input from GCC is needed to deliver the biggest public benefit.

The most vocal opponents are unlikely to represent the majority view in their communities.



Proactive communication of the benefits is crucial to supporting behaviour change



Seed mixes are a quick fix but costly, non-sustainable and often from non-native species.