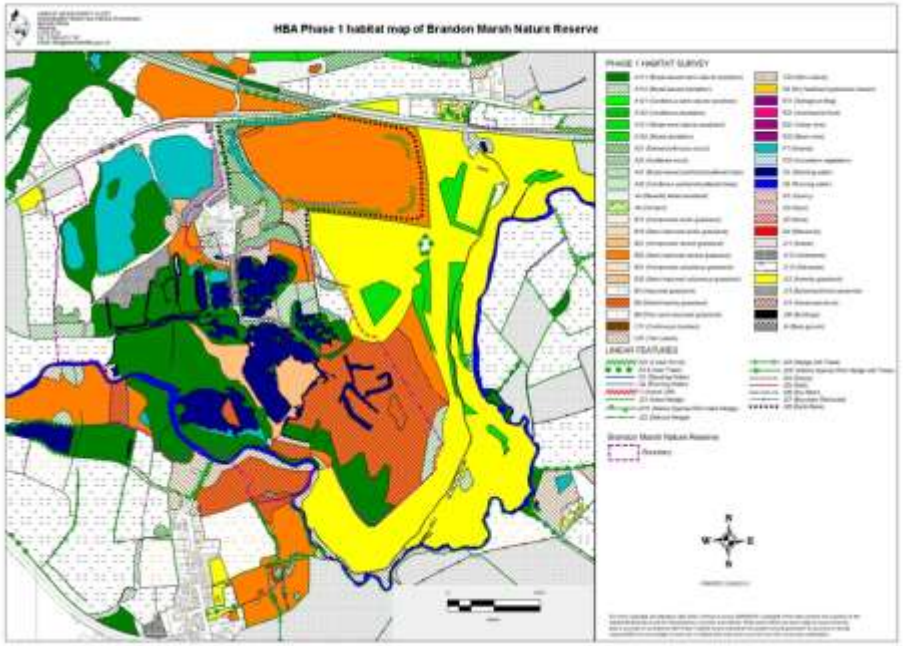
20 Years of Valuing Nature

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull
Habitat Biodiversity Audit (HBA)
Partnership Anniversary

Chris Talbot
Biodiversity Project Manager

The HBA does exactly what it says on the map



What have we done in 20 years?

- Surveyed and mapped the Warwickshire sub region to field level with regular revisions
- Identified and mapped 534 local wildlife sites and more than 1,300 potential local wildlife sites
- Consistently provided the evidence base for every green Infrastructure plan and ecological reports for partners since the project started
- Database for Planning Development Control
- Informed 25 habitat Local Biodiversity Action Plans
- Contributed to a wider understanding of wildlife habitats and people by working with volunteers, parish and local wildlife groups, and individual landowners – face to face on the ground
- Provided information to many wildlife projects
- Free information resource to students and researchers

Value for money?

'The partnership provides the basis by which fundamental ecological studies can be carried out at an affordable cost and without the need to replicate work by each Authority'

HBA Project manual (1995)

Estimated start up cost HBA - £90,000 (£105,000) over 2 years

'The current cost of HBA and Wildlife Sites is £88,000 shared between eight funding partners. The equivalent cost of delivery through external consultants is estimated to be in the region of £150,000 based on day rates of £300 - £350 per day.

HBA Partnership Benefits document 2015 (partnership core funding)

The estimated cost saving to the Partnership is approximately £62,000 per annum

HBA cost 2015 (excluding LWSP) - £46,884 a 4% increase 1995-2015

HBA Phase 1 – Value for Money?

Note: values include both core funding, project and data supply as reported to Steering Group , excludes LWSP

3 key ingredients

- A Strong Partnership
- The Phase 1 habitat survey methodology
- The Phase 1 field survey programme

A Strong partnership

UK: Warwickshire – sub regional Habitat Biodiversity Audit:

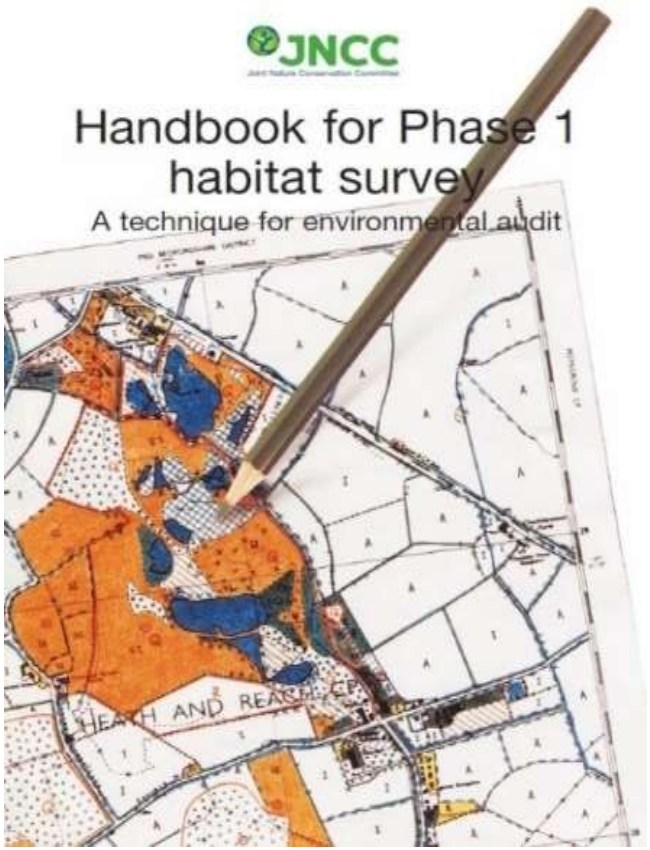
'This ground breaking initiative is being used by all the unitary, county and district authorities in the sub-region for influencing policies and for subsequent monitoring in development control, forward planning, biodiversity action plans, mineral extraction, land restoration/creation plus agri-environment schemes…..

A target programme of re-survey keeps the resource up-to-date and accurate – which needs continuing funding from all partners.'

European Union – Committee of the Regions 2006 – Halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010 – and beyond. Brussels 18 September 2006

The Phase 1 habitat survey method

- Introduced in 1995 reprinted with minor revisions largely stood the test of time and continues to be used as the standard ‘phase 1’ technique for habitat survey across the UK
- Industry standard used and recommended by ecological consultancies and conservation groups
- Straightforward system for training volunteers and ecological trainees, introduction to field surveying

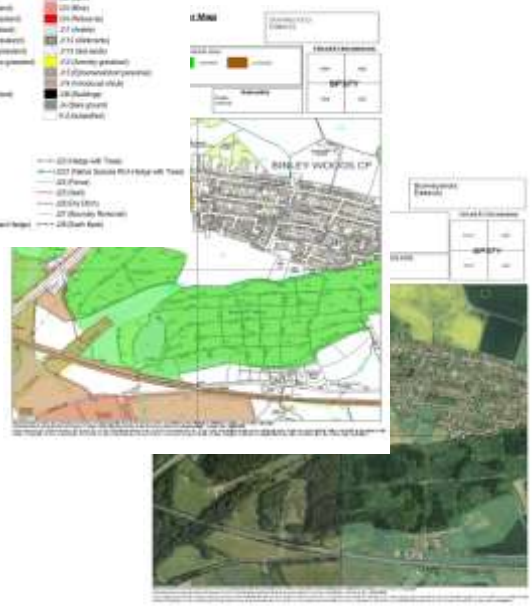


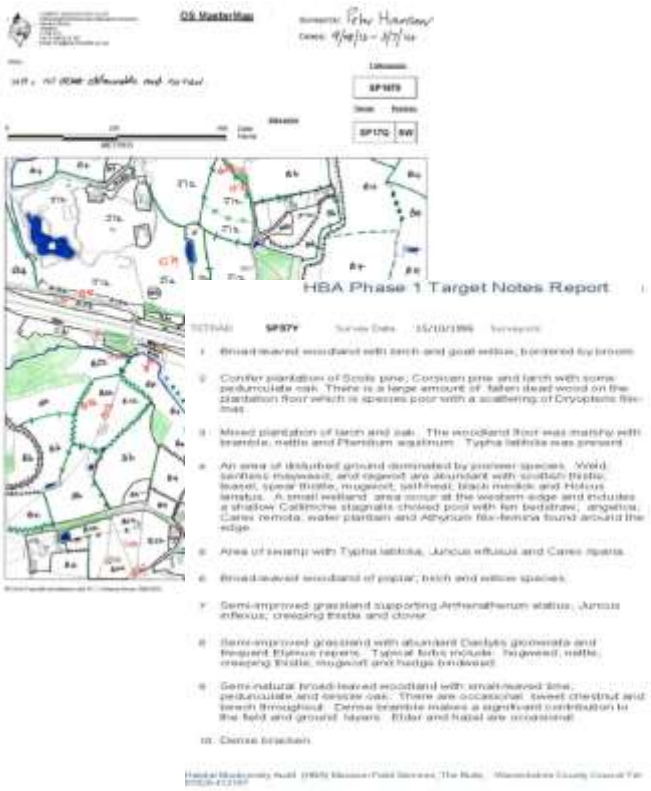
HBA Phase 1 habitat surveying 20 years on…

GIS digitised maps

Field surveys

Survey results





The field survey programme:

- A dedicated and knowledgeable team
- Annual Phase 1 training programme(s)
- No charge to participants in return for a completed survey
- Regular core of volunteers – recruited and retained
- Ecological training e.g. jobs for the future and ecology graduates all gain valuable field surveying experience
- Community engagement wildlife groups; land owners

Citizen Science?

Role Title Phase: 1 Volunteer Habitat Surveyor

Purpose of your role:

Contribute to the Habitat Biodiversity Audit Phase 1 survey for Warwickshire, Solihull and Coventry

Tasks you will be involved with:

- **Phase 1 habitat surveying in your local area**

Skills and abilities required:

- **An interest in or a basic knowledge of plant identification**
- **Reasonable level of fitness to be able to walk local footpaths, road verges etc.**
- **Map reading skills**

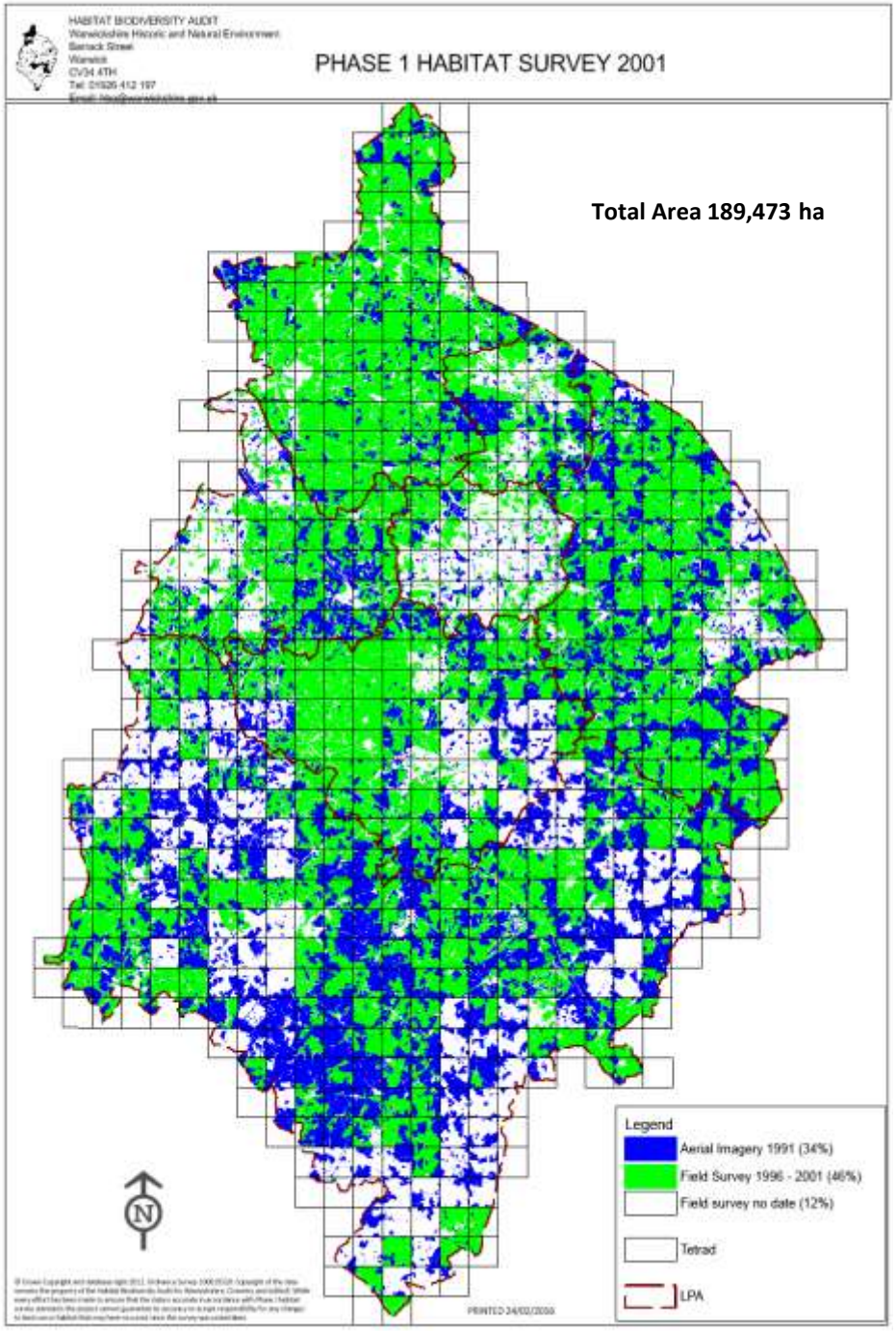
You will be based at: Field surveying in your local area

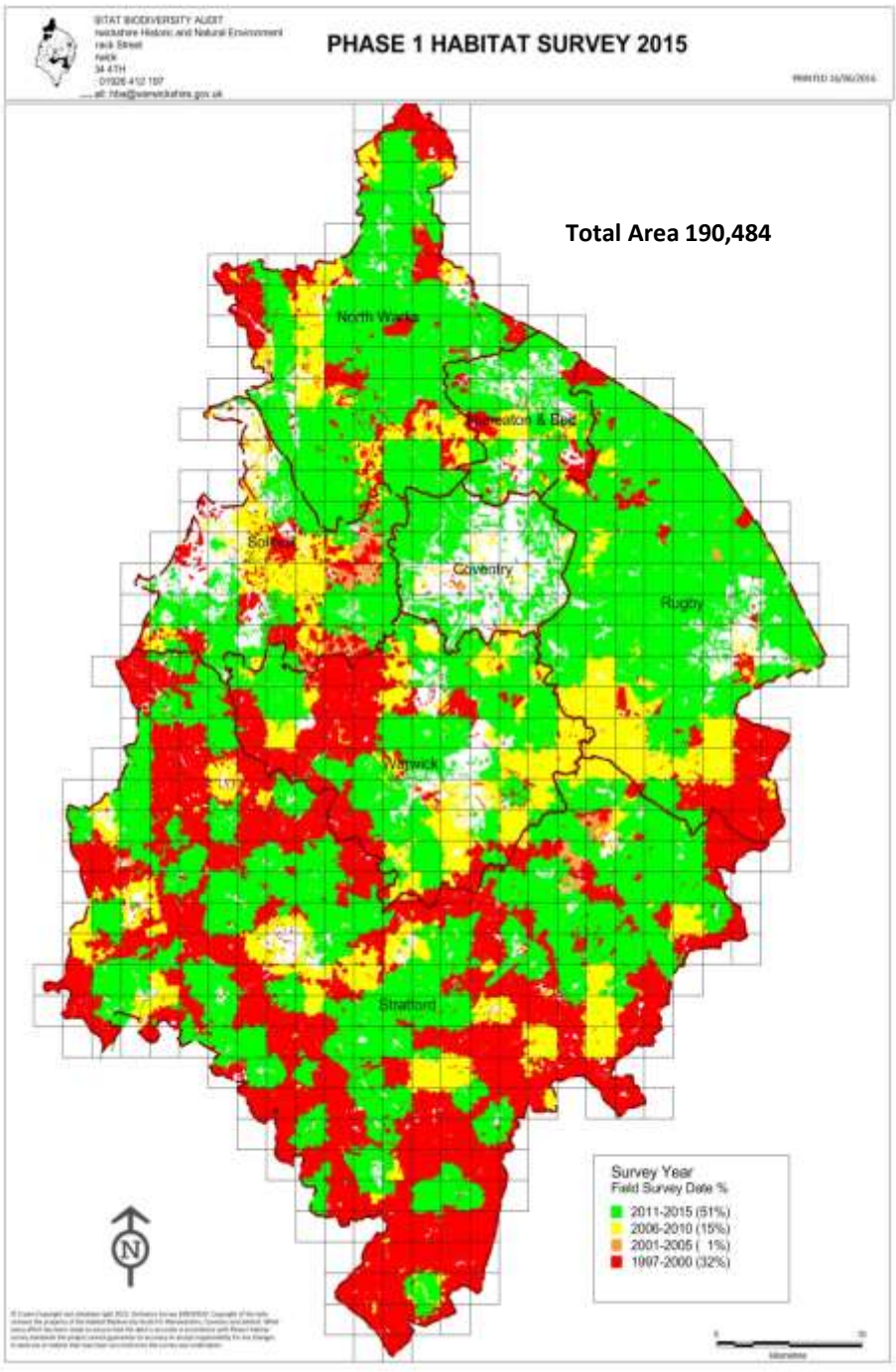
Times/days we would like you to be available: Survey in your own time at your own pace

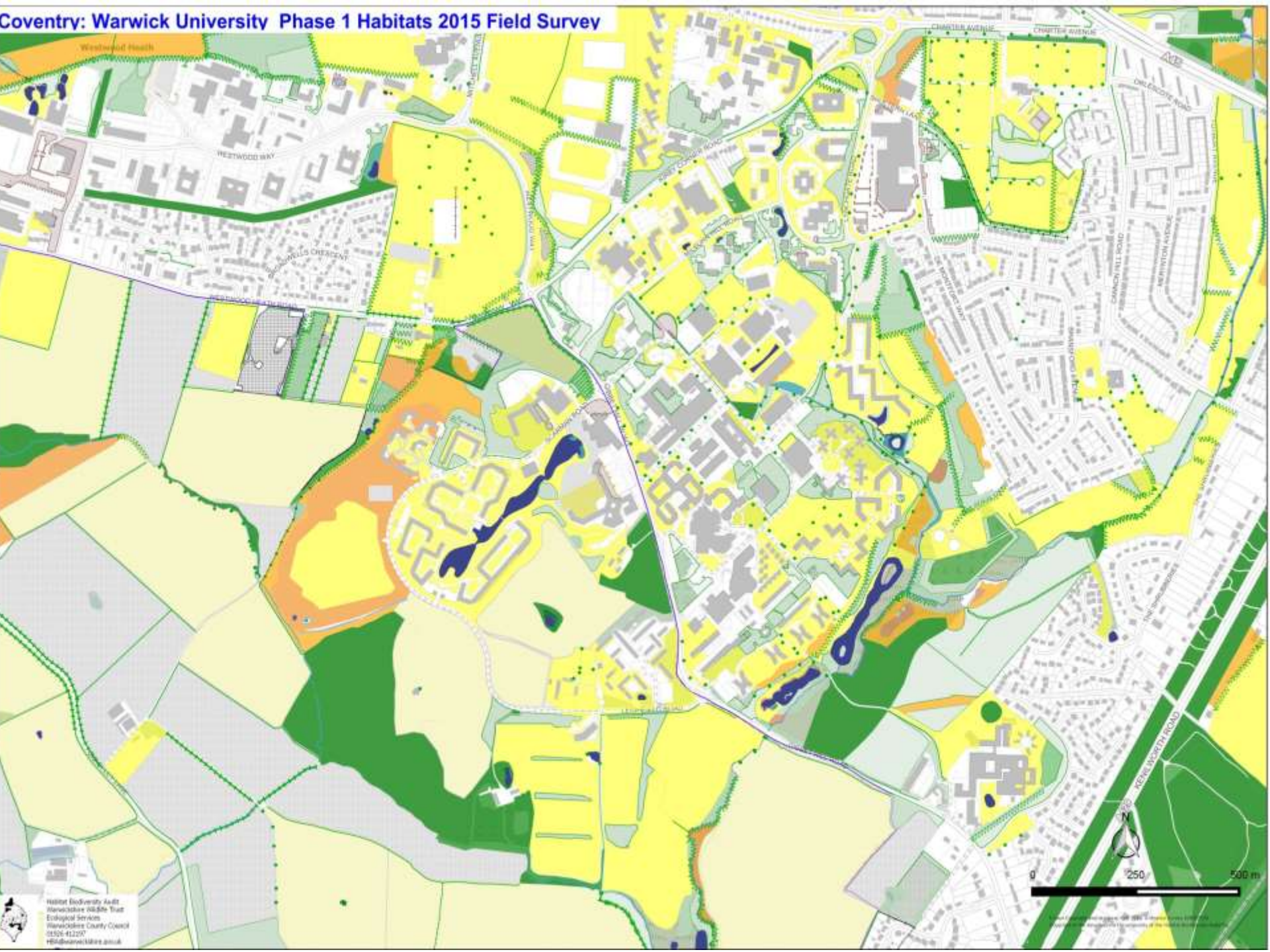
Benefits to you:

- **An introduction to Phase 1 habitat surveying**
- **Improve your plant identification skills**
- **Gain experience of surveying in the field**
- **Opportunity to visit local areas and identify the habitats close to you or an area you are interested in**

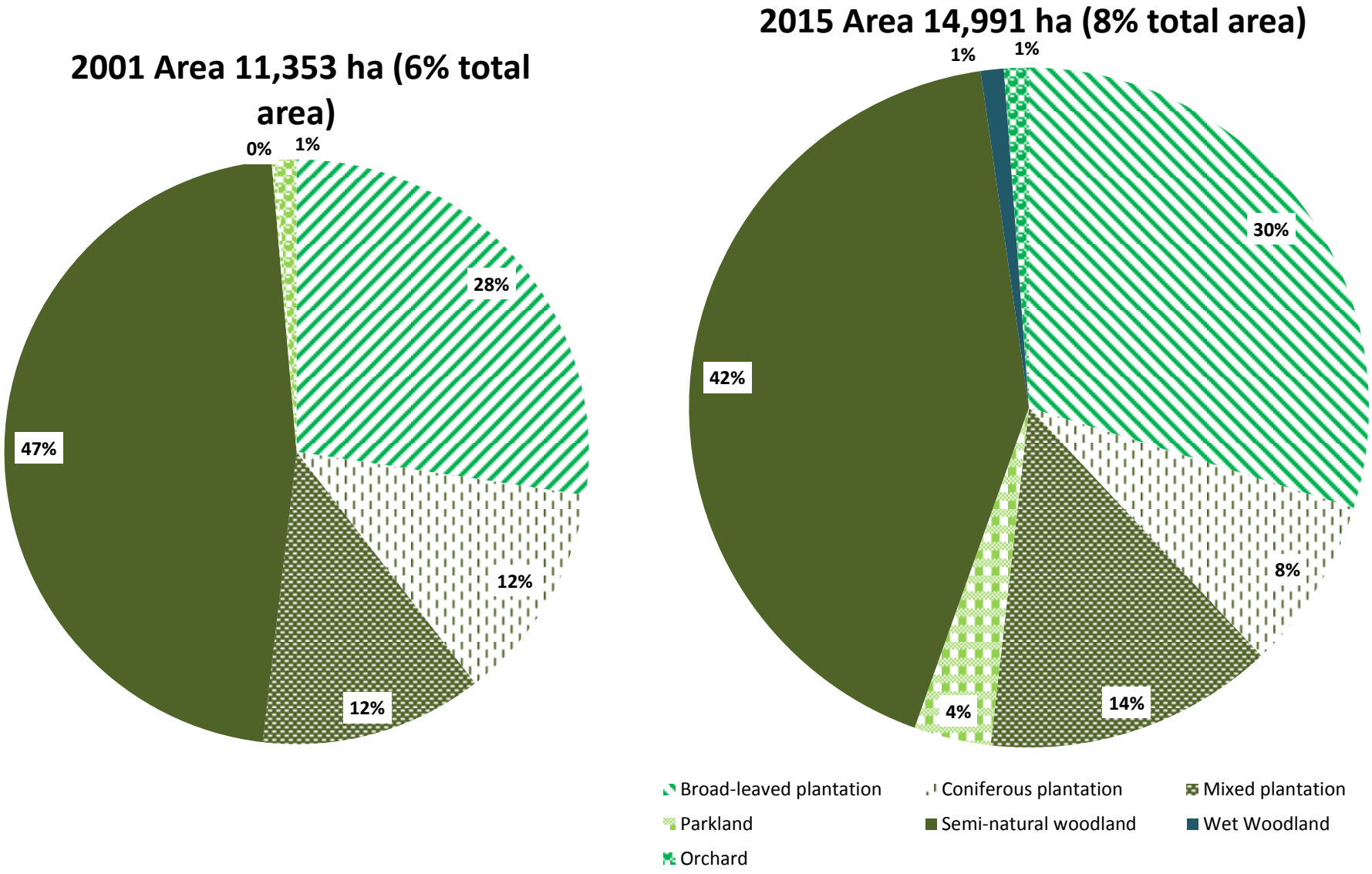
Your staff contact: HBA Phase 1 officer


HABITAT BIODIVERSITY AUDIT
Warwickshire Historic and Natural Environment
Barrack Street
Warwick
CV34 4TH
Tel: 01926 412 197
PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY 2001
Total Area 189,473 ha
Legend
Aerial Imagery 1991 (34%)
Field Survey 1996 - 2001 (46%)
Field survey no date (12%)
Tetrad
LPA
N
PRINTED 24/02/2006


PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY 2015
Total Area 190,484
North Warks
Nuneaton & Bed
Solihull
Coventry
Rugby
Warwick
Stratford
Survey Year
Field Survey Date %
2011-2015 (51%)
2006-2010 (15%)
2001-2005 (1%)
1997-2000 (32%)
N


Coventry: Warwick University Phase 1 Habitats 2015 Field Survey
Westwood Heath
WESTWOOD WAY
CHARTER AVENUE
A46
KENILWORTH ROAD
0
250
500 m

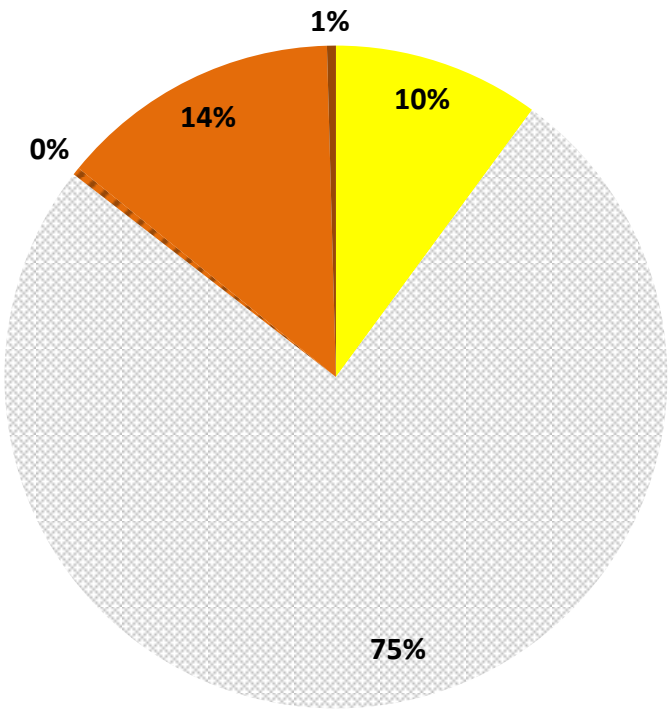
Woodland Habitat change 1996 - 2015



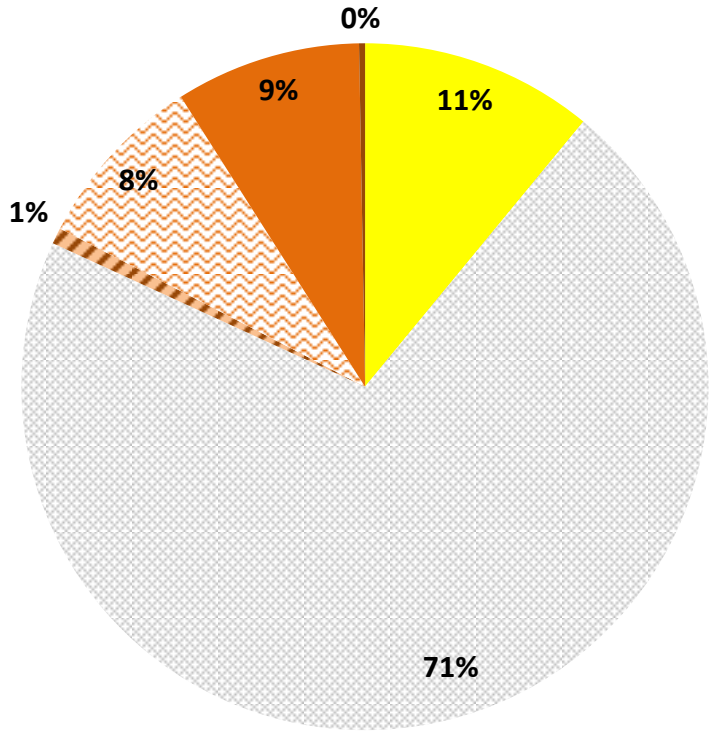
Note Wet woodland new habitat category equivalent semi-natural woodland. Parkland previously recorded as semi-natural woodland.

Grassland Habitat Change 1996 - 2015

2001 Area 71,951 ha (38% total area)



2015 Area 73,248 ha (38% total area)



Amenity grassland
Improved
Marsh/marshy
Poor semi-improved
Semi-improved
Unimproved

Notes: Unimproved grassland equivalent SSSI's – national importance, semi-improved Warwickshire priority grasslands – LWS and Marsh/Marshy grasslands. Poor-semi-improved species poor – degraded grasslands old grazing pastures. Agriculturally improved grasslands or intensively grazed very little biodiversity left

Phase 2 - Local Wild Sites

- Identifying Local Wildlife Sites - Sites of County importance
- Non-statutory but of **local** importance
- Land ownership and advice for:

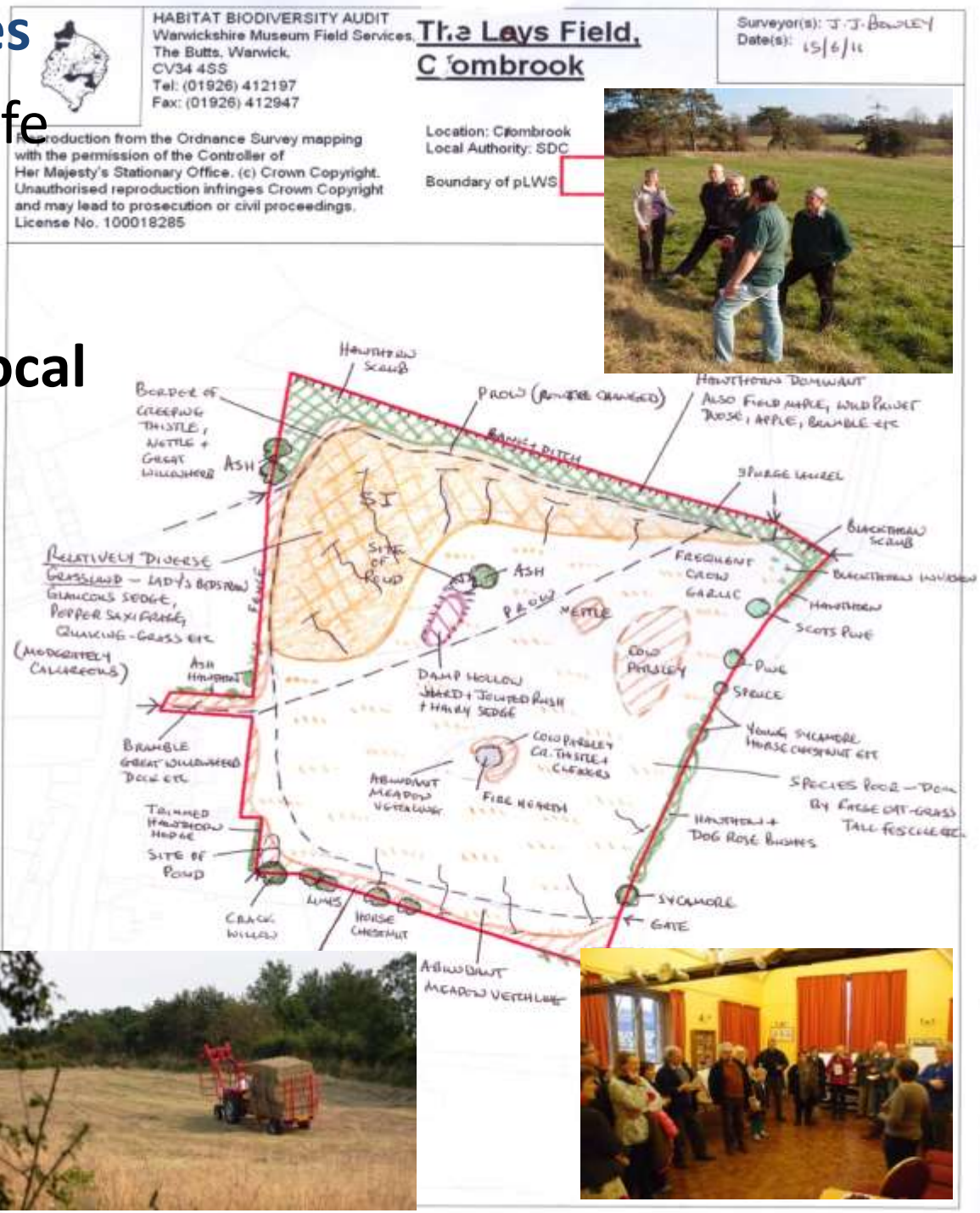
  Local authorities

  local communities

  nature reserves

  farmers

  small holdings



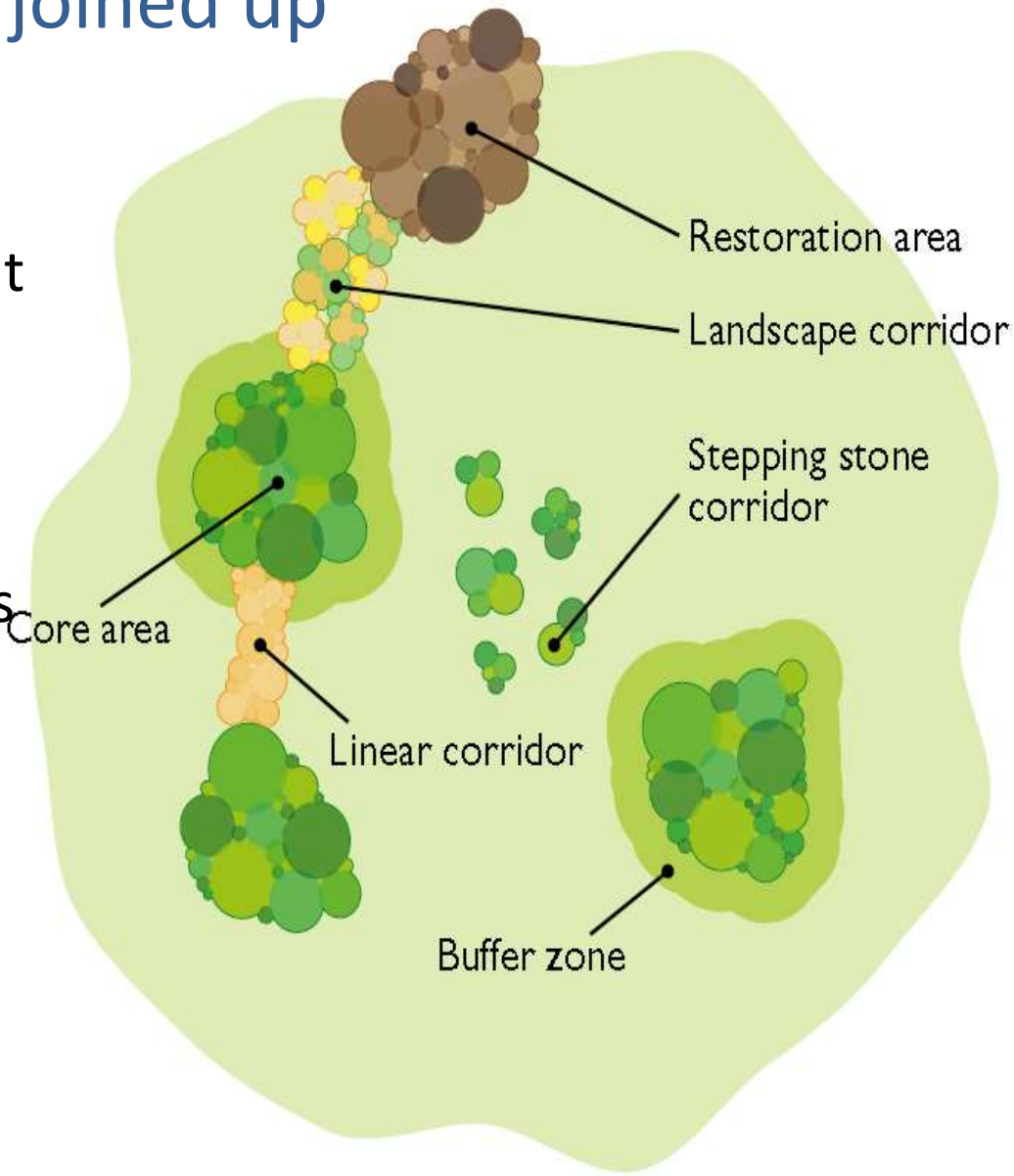
Information base for 25 habitat local biodiversity action plans

Progress 2011-2015 Key to status: ↑ Good progress ↑ Some progress ↔ No change ↓ Decline

ACTION PLAN	STATUS 2008-2010	KEY ACTIONS IN THE PLANS SELECTED FOR REPORTING IN 2015	STATUS 2011-2015 ACTION	STATUS 2011-2015 PLAN
ACID GRASS-LAND	↑ denoted any progress	Continue to select all qualifying lowland acid grassland sites as **LWSs**. **5 achieved**	↑	↑
		Ensure that new minor or major developments result in **net biodiversity gain** through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. **Ongoing**	↑	
		Maintain favourable ecological condition of **all 72.75ha (HBA, 2012) of existing acid grassland.** **15.78ha achieved**	↑	
		Continue to achieve favourable condition of **6ha of existing acid grassland by 2015**. **0.25ha achieved**	↑	
		Continue restoration of degraded acid grassland **at SSSIs** and other sites. **7.55ha achieved**	↑	
		Expand the area of acid grassland **by 3ha by 2015**, including **one site of at least 3ha.** **No known progress**	↔	
		Work at a landscape scale, focusing effort on identified important clusters of acid grassland to maximise benefit. Target area is the **Hartshill Ridge.** **In progress**	↑	
		Identify **plant indicator species** for assessing the quality of acid grassland. **Achieved**	↑	
HEATH-LAND	↔	Continue to select all qualifying heathland sites as LWSs. **6 achieved, 1 potential**	↑	↑
		Ensure that new minor or major developments result in **net biodiversity gain** through adherence to the mitigation hierarchy. **Ongoing**	↑	
		Maintain favourable ecological condition of **all 7.76ha (HBA, 2012) of existing heathland.** **1.70ha achieved**	↑	
		Manage or create areas of **scrub**, to a maximum 0.5% of each site. **1 site achieved**	↑	
		Continue to achieve favourable condition of **6ha of existing heathland by 2015.** **0.5ha achieved**	↑	
		Continue restoration of degraded heathland at the **SSSIs** and other sites. **2.04ha achieved**	↑	
		Continue to expand the area of heathland **by 2ha by 2015,** including **one site of at least 2ha.** **2ha min. achieved**	↑	
		Identify **plant indicator species** for assessing the quality of heathland habitat. **Achieved**	↑	
ROAD-SIDE VERGES	↔	Continue to identify and select all qualifying verges as **LWSs.** **9 achieved**	↑	↑
		Encourage the incorporation of habitat creation into **new road building / widening schemes** wherever feasible to increase the extent of the resource. **Ongoing**	↑	
		Include reference to enhancing the biodiversity value of roadside verges and hedgerows within **Local Authority biodiversity policies**. **Achieved**	↑	
		Include an environmental statement within **Neighbourhood Plans** for the conservation of biodiversity on parish roadside verges. **6 achieved, 6 in progress**	↑	
		Produce management plans for **all** currently designated LWSs. **2 achieved, 1 in progress**	↑	
		Produce **management guidelines** to maximise the wildlife value of verges. **In progress**	↑	
		Implement **management plans** for LWSs and manage other sites. **2 plans/6 sites achieved**	↑	
		Survey suitable verges for **LWS status** or as interim sites of importance. **1 achieved**	↑	
		Explore opportunities for projects relating to **verge restoration.** **1 in progress**	↑	
		Establish a **monitoring group** involving local communities. **S. Warwickshire achieved**	↑	
		Investigate the possibility of a '**Best Management for Wildlife'** competition. **In progress**	↑	
SCHOOL GROUNDS	↔	Survey, designate and record qualifying educational establishments as **LWSs**. **0 achieved,1 potential**	↔	↑
		Talk to **30 schools** regarding the inclusion of a biodiversity statement in their 'School Development Plans' and /or 'Eco Action Plans. **91 achieved**	↑	
		Identify **10 schools** that are managing their grounds for wildlife, to act as 'Best Practice' Case Studies. **35 achieved**	↑	
		Identify **10 schools** using their school grounds as a learning resource **38 achieved**	↑	
		Develop an easy to use biodiversity survey form and circulate to **all** schools. **Achieved**	↑	
		Develop a database / collate evidence of **school grounds undertaking positive habitat management** and including any wildlife records. **Achieved by WCC, SMBC**	↑	
		Monitor and record biodiversity in **30 schools** and send to the Warwickshire Biological Record Centre. **In progress**	↑	

The Lawton Report: Improving ecological networks – bigger, better and more joined up

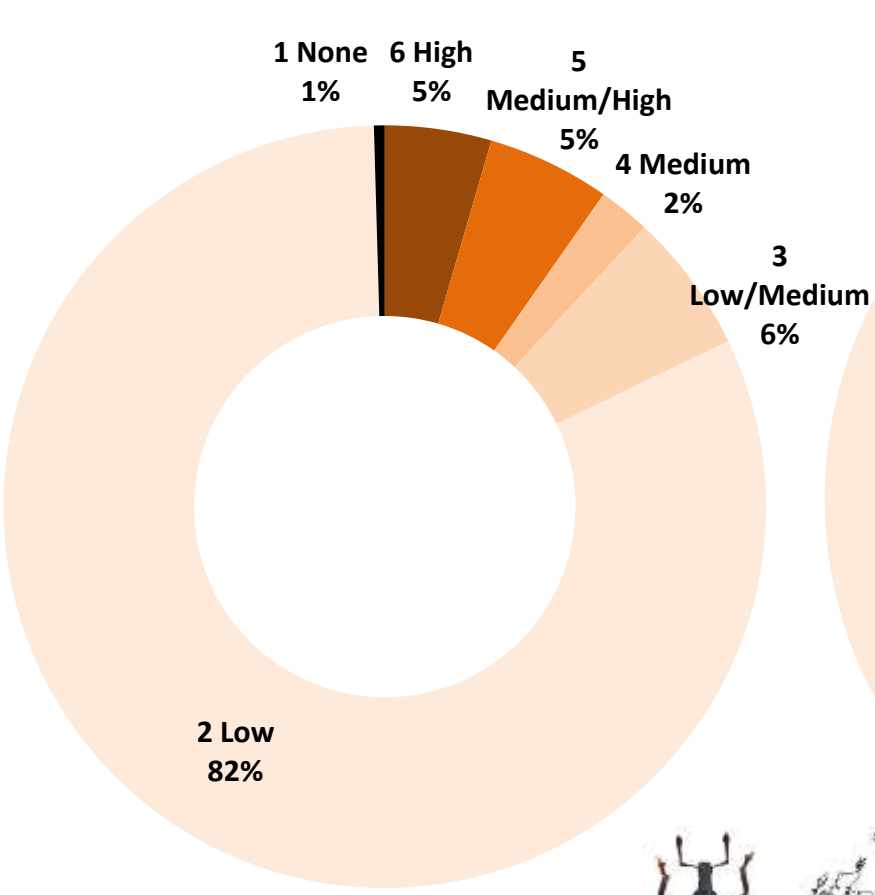
- Protecting what we have and improving the quality of sites by better habitat management
- Increasing the size of wildlife sites
- Enhancing connection by creating new wildlife corridors or stepping stones
- Creating new sites to expand
- Reducing the pressure on wildlife by improving the wider environment through buffering wildlife sites



'Making space for nature': a review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network– The Lawton Report (2010)

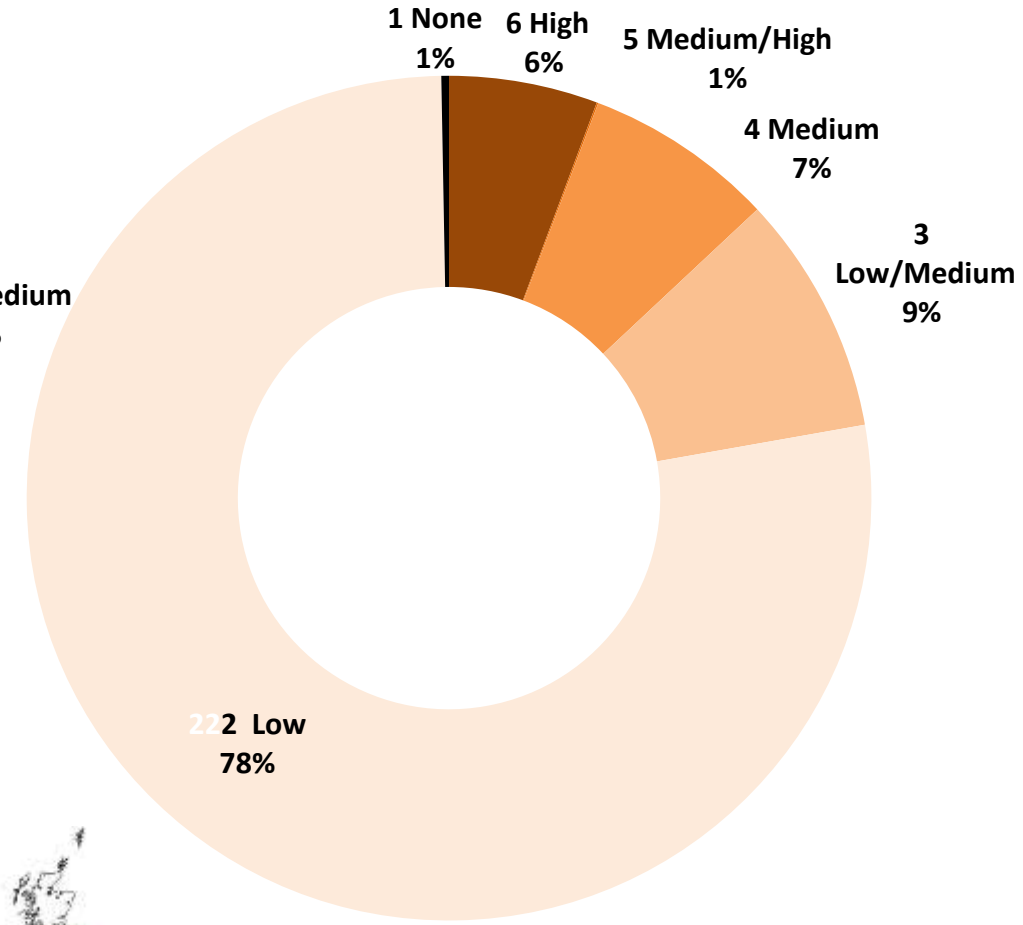
Biodiversity offsetting - habitat distinctiveness

Biodiversity Habitat Scores 2001 (% ha)



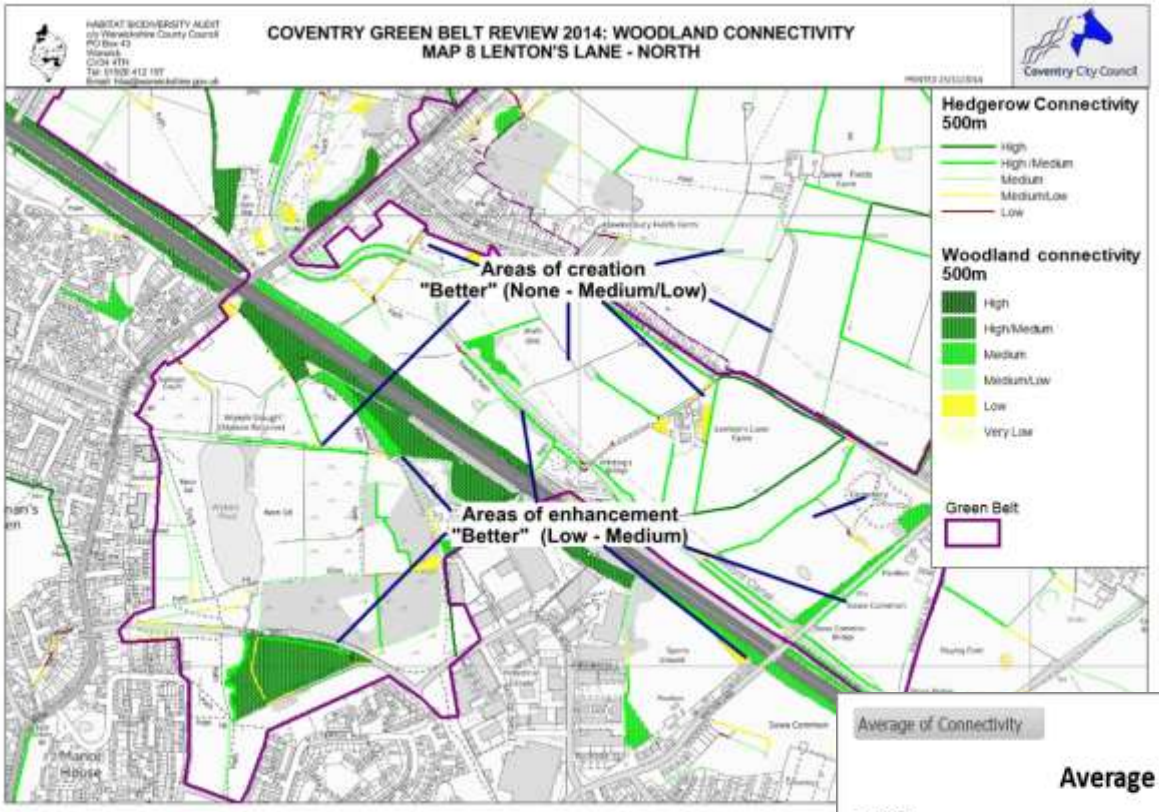
Total 189,473 hectares

Biodiversity Habitat Scores 2015 (% ha)



Total 190,484 hectares

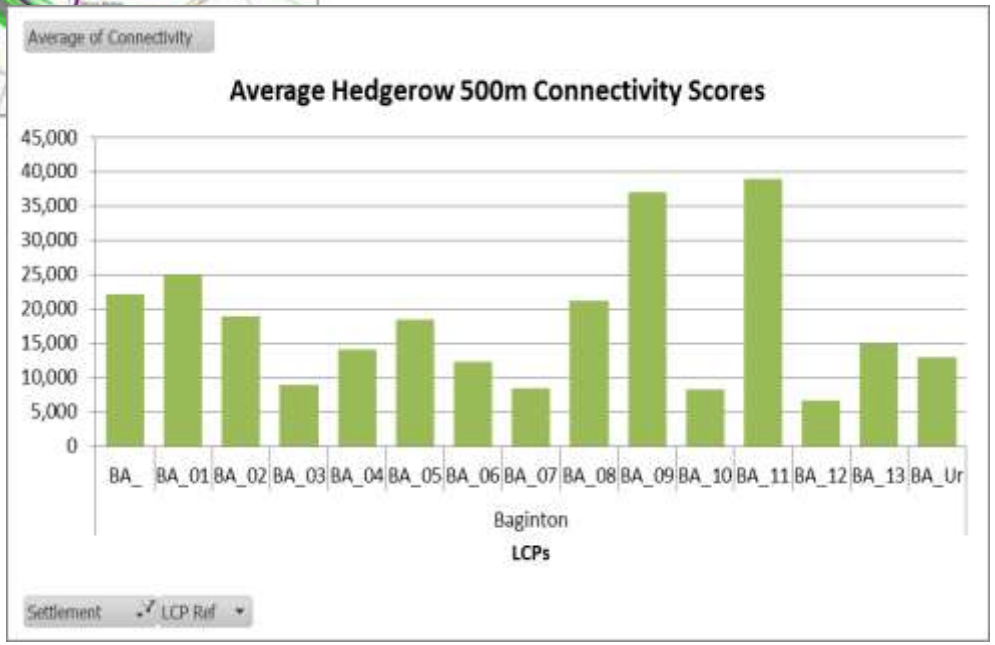
Habitat Connectivity



Area feature connectivity:

- High scores areas to protect and enhance "Better"
- Medium-high scores areas for enhancement "Connected"
- Low scores areas of creation "Bigger"

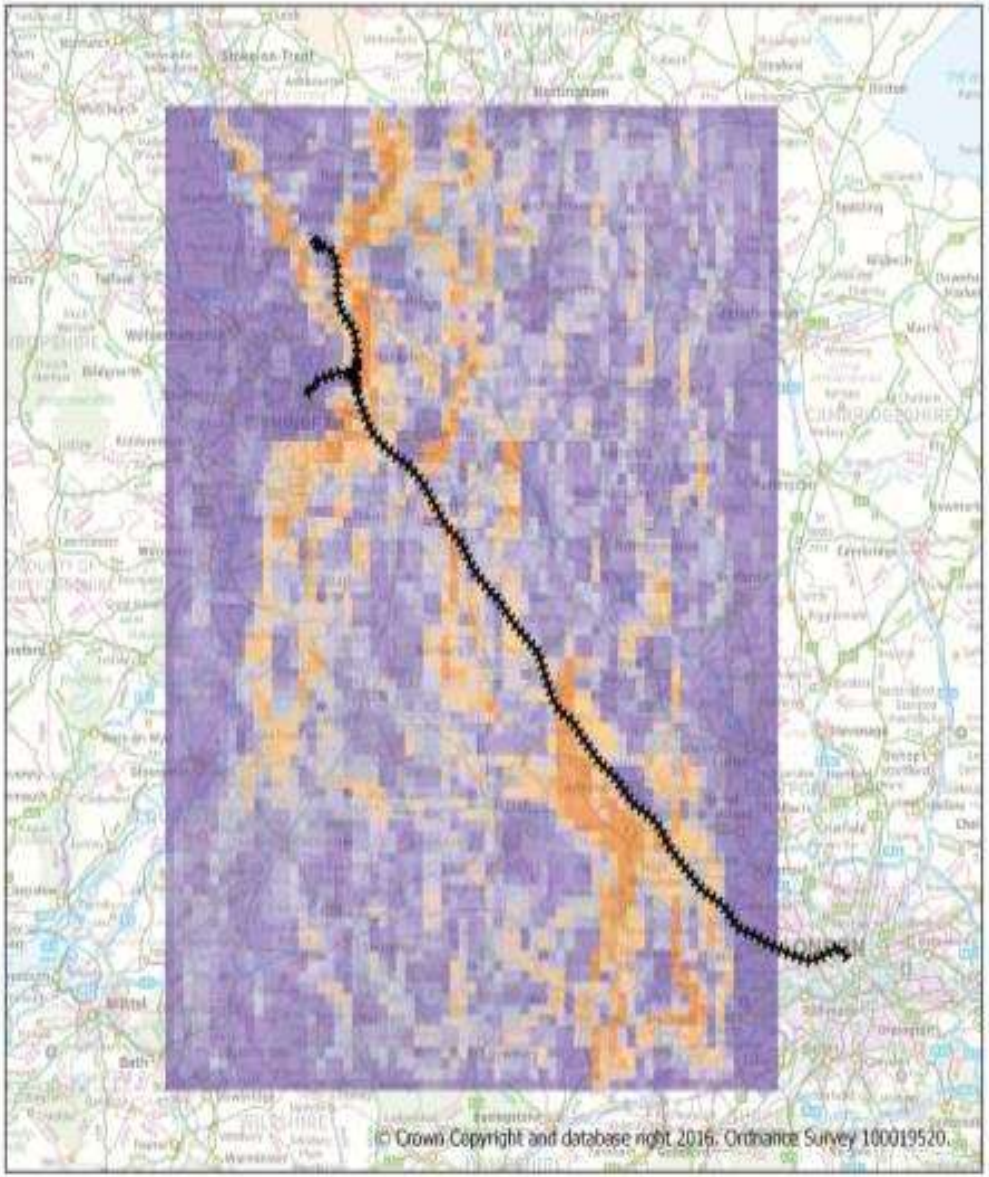
Linear feature connectivity: hedgerows and trees



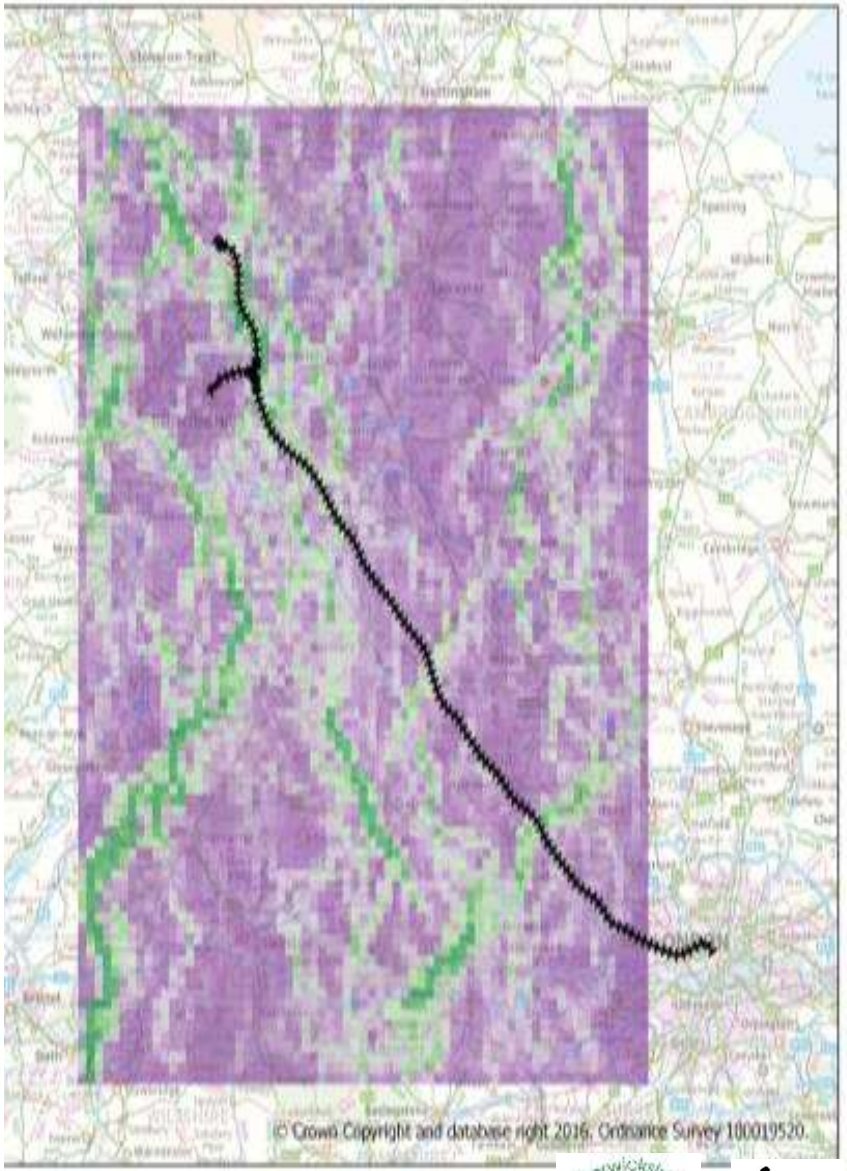
THE UNIVERSITY of York

Warwickshire Biological Records Centre

Ecological connectivity Condatis flow outputs HS2



Grassland



Woodland

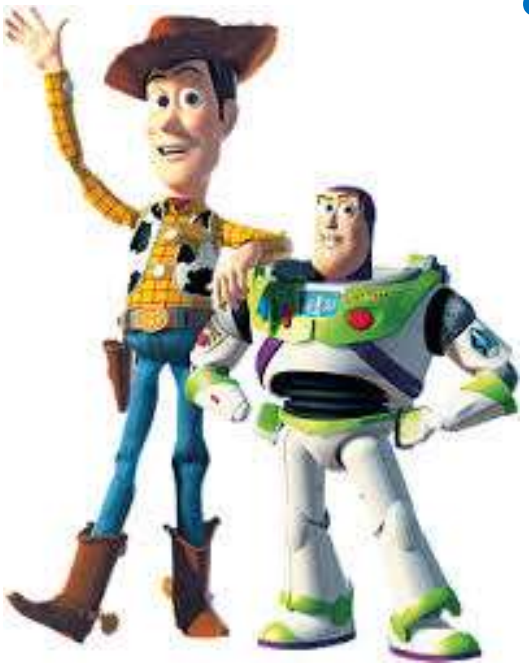
Project Delivery

- Longest continuous Phase 1 survey has created unique record of habitat and land use change in the UK
- Longest running volunteer Phase 1 training programme – Citizen Science and community engagement in wildlife
- Consistently delivered ecological information and reports for green infrastructure planning
- Rich source of information for research projects

Challenges

- Halting habitat loss and fragmentation
- Continued reliance on HBA partnership for core funding and support
- Finding alternative income streams to support the project objectives
- Engaging with local communities
- Valuing Nature
- Remaining viable and relevant in a changing world

20 years and still going..



Thanks partners, volunteers and the team!

Camille

Gareth

Jon

Sarah