

# Bigger, better, more, and more joined up

A vision for nature recovery across  
Gloucestershire

*“I dream of insects covering my car windscreen”*

# Community input into Gloucestershire's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

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## Forward: Facilitator Reflections

“What are your dreams for nature where you live?” was our opening question for those attending nature recovery workshops across Gloucestershire over the spring of 2024. The responses were as inspiring as they were moving.

Participants described an abundance of nature; ‘insects covering my car windscreen’, ‘a willow bent low across a buzzily wetland expanse’ or ‘a full dawn chorus bursting with birdsong.’ We heard how participants dream of sharing our landscape with a wide variety of different species; ‘darting dippers, spawning salmon and burrowing water voles’, ‘fish migrating upstream from the estuary’ and ‘house martins, swallows and swifts darting into buildings’. There is nostalgia for the nature lost: ‘turn back the clock 50 years so I can hear crickets in the long meadow grass’, and dreams for a more nature-rich future with ‘wildflowers along all the roads’, ‘bus shelter rooftops covered with wild growth’ and ‘rivers clean enough to swim in’. A clear shared vision of nature in all its abundance, variety and messiness is expressed with dream of “flourishing wildlife able to move seamlessly across the landscape” and a wish to ‘be submerged in nature - the sights and sounds to drown out human noise’.

These dreams and many more emerged from six workshops that took place across the county and online, as part of a wider consultation to develop Gloucestershire’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). All counties across the country have been tasked with developing a strategy for nature recovery. In Gloucestershire, the [Local Nature Partnership](#) has been commissioned by Gloucestershire County Council to lead on the development of the strategy. They have both chosen to work with us at [Holding the Space](#) to run community workshops to enable local communities to feed into the process of developing this new strategy at an early stage.

As we listen to people speaking about their dreams, concerns and suggestions for nature recovery at the workshops, we’re struck by the passion, knowledge and clarity with which people speak. Those who attended these workshops care deeply about nature recovery across Gloucestershire. Some have extensive expertise or personal experiences to share. Others already work tirelessly to protect nature in local places. And many have clear views on what they believe needs to change if we are to create a Gloucestershire teeming with nature.

As we start to explore what local people want the LNRS to cover, clear themes begin to emerge. Farming, our relationship with water, and nature in urban areas are all areas of focus. Community access to, and involvement in, nature protection is considered key. People also stress the need to improve the connectivity of nature and our understanding of what nature needs.

Participants are clear that they want a LNRS that protects and enables the areas, species and habitats they love to thrive. They share details of the many different local nature protection projects and work already going on across Gloucestershire. They also share the areas they feel are neglected or being let down.

Participants also have a desire for a strategy that is more than words. They want it to be visionary, but they also want it to be implemented and funded. For this to be possible, they want to see changes in local and national policy to enable the wider changes that are needed to enable nature to recover. Only then do they believe we will be able to reach the shared vision for nature recovery in Gloucestershire that is ‘bigger, better, more, and more joined up’.

Anya Hyndside and Sue Gibbs, Freelance facilitators at [Holding The Space](#)

## Nature recovery workshop process

Over the spring of 2024, six community workshops were held across Gloucestershire and online to enable local communities to input into the early stages of Gloucestershire’s Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

Date	Location	Participants	Documents
8 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	Friendship Café Gloucester	18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Agenda</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Meeting report</a></li> </ul>
13 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	Westwoods Centre Northleach	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Agenda</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Meeting report</a></li> </ul>
18 <sup>th</sup> March	Online	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Agenda</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Meeting report</a></li> </ul>
9 <sup>th</sup> April 2024	Online	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Agenda</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Meeting report</a></li> </ul>
18 <sup>th</sup> April 2024	The Wesley Cinderford	22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Agenda</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Meeting report</a></li> </ul>
20 <sup>th</sup> April 2024	The Subscription Rooms Stroud	55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Agenda</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Meeting report</a></li> </ul>

The community workshops were facilitated by Anya Hyndside and Sue Gibbs from [Holding the Space](#) in collaboration with Nicola Hilary from Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership and Kelly Osbourne from Gloucestershire County Council. We would like to thank the following experts, who facilitated and supported thematic conversations within the workshop series:

- Ellie Jones, WWT
- Pete Belk, Gloucestershire County Council
- Simon Smith, Cotswold National Landscape
- Nick Critchley, Wye Valley AONB
- Cathy Beeching, Environment Agency
- Clare Mahdiyone, Stroud Valleys Project
- Tina Bouttle, Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records

The aim of the workshops was to enable communities across Gloucestershire to shape and feed into the LNRS, as well as to ensure that local knowledge and expertise could be incorporated into the map and strategy development. The workshops therefore focused on hearing from participants. They also covered a [summary of what the LNRS is](#) and [resources](#) on how participants can continue to be involved in nature work across Gloucestershire.

This report provides a summary of some of the key themes and learnings emerging across the workshops. Individual summaries for each workshop can also be found through the links in the table above.

## Themes emerging from the workshops

The people who attended the workshops across Gloucestershire had a huge range of expertise, local knowledge and questions to share. The issues raised ranged from the global, such as the ecological emergency and climate change to the hyper-local, such as run-off from one field or a particularly inspirational local project.

Despite the variety, there were many issues that came up time and time again; from our relationship with water to the importance of hedgerows; the concern around the planning process or the need for financing of nature protection. The following section outlines some of these key emerging themes. Quotes from the participants have been used throughout, to illustrate what they felt was important.

### Relationship with water

“Our rivers should be restored to health so that my grandchildren can swim wildly”

Across Gloucestershire, local communities are concerned about the poor water quality in many water courses. There is particular concern about the impacts of run-off from agricultural land and industrial poultry units. Participants feel there needs to be ongoing engagement with businesses and farmers and more agri-environmental schemes for water, such as buffer zones and pond creation. People want to see local sewage treatment plants upgraded. They want more, better, and more joined-up water quality monitoring and for water companies, farmers and businesses to be held to account for how they use or pollute water.

Participants expressed a collective desire for water courses to be restored to health, clean enough for swimming, and supportive of diverse wildlife populations. The banks of rivers and canals could also form important wildlife corridors. There is a wish to see water species such as curlews, bullheads, minnows, and plovers thriving.

Flooding is a concern across the county, and natural flood management is considered essential to help address this. There were calls for beavers to be re-introduced to help ‘slow the flow’ in our rivers. Participants felt that water courses should be ‘allowed to breathe’ rather than being ‘straight jacketed’ which can contribute to flooding. The importance of not building on floodplains was reiterated many times, as was the need to de-pave driveways, reduce concrete and return gardens to grass. Buffer zones for water courses were considered essential, with concerns that agricultural land, urban developments, and industrial activity are currently too close to many water courses.

Rivers often form the border between Gloucestershire and other neighbouring authorities. Participants felt close cooperation with our neighbours is essential to create a shared strategy for water.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- State in the strategy what the minimum functionally linked land in Gloucestershire is for wetland birds.
- Keep the way that the map shows wetlands as an overlay to everything else.
- New developments should include drain water catchment and flood and waste escape routes.

- Sewage treatment facilities, drainage areas, water abstraction points, areas of frequent flooding, and freshwater springs should all be marked on the map.
- Different farming practices have different impacts on local water quality. At the moment the large areas of white farmland on the map do not distinguish how farmland is managed.
- Ditches next to roads can provide natural filtration for water but need ongoing maintenance.
- All watercourses should have catchment management plans.
- Thames Water now has a sewage map – all companies should disclose this data and it should be included on the maps.
- Join up voluntary water monitoring data being collected to get a clearer picture of water quality across the county.

## Farming and nature

“Farmers need to be confident of their income”

There is a huge variety of different landscapes across Gloucestershire, from the arable scarp of the Cotswolds, the thick forest in the Forest of Dean, the many streets that surround Gloucester’s Cathedral spire, or the deep valleys that carve through the Stroud District.

As a rural county, agriculture and farming are felt to be essential to how nature is protected and recovered across all our landscapes, and the role of farmers and landowners key to delivering this strategy. Farming and agriculture are seen as both a threat and also as a potential solution to nature recovery. Many participants stressed the importance of distinguishing between different farming practices with some being seen as far more harmful than others. Some farmers and landowners are already doing a lot to protect nature, and more the interest in nature-friendly farming is growing.

Many participants stressed the need to continue to work with farmers and landowners to understand what the barriers are to changing farming practices. Farmers can be ‘caught in the middle’ between supermarkets, consumers, and conservationists and are often trying to balance making a living alongside producing food and nature conservation. The farming population is ageing. There is a need to work with trusted sources such as land-agents and farm leaders to facilitate changes in practice.

Participants felt that nature-friendly farming needs to be financially incentivized. There should also be financial penalties for practices that damage nature. There were particular concerns raised about intensive farming, industrial poultry units, and pesticide use. Many workshops stressed the need for clarity on future farming subsidies, with a need for more information on what funding is available from different sources.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- At each stage in the strategy, the agricultural benefits of nature-friendly farming should be clearly identified.
- Clear, simple information on subsidies and different funding sources are needed.
- There is a need for an audit of farmland across the county.
- It is problematic that farmers with land under 5 hectares don’t have access to a lot of funding, even if their land is extremely important for biodiversity reasons.
- We need a national conversation about how we are to balance food security needs with sustainable agriculture.
- Concerns were raised about the impact of shooting and the import of non-native pheasants and lead shot

## Community, urban and access

'Concrete should come under threat from nature'

'If I grow one carrot, I'm happy'

'My son would insist we went to the city farm every day'

'We want starlings and sparrows as well as curlews'

All the nature recovery workshops were clear that recovering nature can't just be about our countryside, it also needs to be about our urban spaces. Participants want to see more rewilding of urban space, existing green space protected, and an abundance of biodiversity in urban areas. Whether it's gardens, road verges, school grounds, disused railway lines, parks, council-owned land, or allotments, the role of urban areas in nature recovery is important both for its own sake as well as to help create wildlife corridors and connect habitats with one another.

Not only are pockets of urban nature important for biodiversity, but they are also important for people and communities in many other ways. The co-benefits of nature recovery were felt to include a whole raft of community, mental, and physical health benefits. Participants felt that enabling people to connect with nature also encourages communities to care about nature and therefore to care for it. They can also be crucial for community cohesion and recruiting nature volunteers, who play a vital part in much of the nature conservation work taking place across Gloucestershire.

The importance of communities being able to access nature was stressed, particularly in the workshops in more urban areas. The phrase 'we are nature' was raised many times, with participants rejecting the separation between nature and humans. In some cases, there was strong opposition to any guidance that the co-benefits nature brings should not be covered in the LNRS. Participants felt that if communities do not feel part of, and represented within, the strategy, then the strategy will not be implemented.

Challenges around how to get the right balance between protecting nature and enabling human access were also explored. This could include tourist sites where a balance may be needed between visitor numbers and conservation. Some areas may need to be prohibited from human access entirely to protect nature. The need for dogs to be kept on leads at certain times of year for ground-nesting birds was also used as an example of this tension.

There were clear visions about how our built environment can do so much more to support nature's recovery, with specific suggestions including swift bricks, green roofs, rain gardens, avenues of trees, community composting, and rainwater harvesting. At present the Environment Bill and biodiversity net gain do not cover buildings, yet there is much that can be done to enable buildings to help restore nature. There were also examples of how nature can be used to help our resilience to climate change, including shading from trees and natural flood management. There was support for the idea of urban areas being covered as a core habitat within the strategy. Participants also want to see a focus on maintenance of urban nature and a commitment to sufficiently resource ongoing upkeep. Trees need to be not just planted but also maintained. Litter and roadkill were also cited as particular challenges.

Community gardens and food growing projects were emphasised as being important for linking people with where their food comes from. Participants want local communities to be able to buy locally sourced sustainable food. They want urban spaces with fruit trees by our roads and in our parks, and vegetables and herbs growing on our streets.

Urban areas are full of private gardens, and there was much discussion about the ways in which these could aid nature recovery. Many people wanted more guidance and education on how individuals can help support nature in their own gardens. Initiatives such as hedgehog holes can help transform gardens into essential wildlife corridors. Many people are concerned about the wide use of concrete, tarmac, gravel and astroturf both in terms of reducing natural habitats and because it can create more water run-off which leads to flooding. The importance of unmown lawns and grass verges was raised. Participants want to see 'messy' gardens, rich in biodiversity and teeming with life through an 'urban mosaic of habitats'.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- More signage about keeping dogs on leads for areas with grown-nesting birds.
- Feedback to the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) that local communities in Gloucestershire want this strategy widened out to include human benefits to nature recovery, including health and wellbeing and the importance of communities being able to access areas of nature.
- Keep urban areas as a core habitat within the strategy.
- Remove council bureaucracy for becoming a 'friends of' group would help enable more local communities to play their part.
- Scaffolding suppliers should be given nesting and bat boxes to be installed while they are working on rooftops.
- Map where there is the most frequent roadkill to prioritise animal crossings and slower speeds in these areas.
- We need a 'garden retrofit for nature' service where local experts are funded to come and advise people about their gardens and how to make them more nature-friendly in a similar way to energy audits in homes.

## Climate

'I dream of climate resilience'

The climate emergency was an underlying theme running through all the workshops. There was general recognition amongst participants of the many challenges that the climate emergency brings, both for people and nature. Some of the challenges mentioned included flooding, drought, change in seasons and extreme weather.

Both the impact the climate emergency will have on nature, and the way in which nature can support climate resilience, for example through natural flood management or the cooling effect of urban trees, were raised. There was agreement that the LNRS needs to be a strategy fit for the future, with participants keen to see plans for species migration, and proactive creation of new habitats for a warmer climate, as well as a focus on the use of nature for climate mitigation and adaptation. Participants want to see more awareness of the overlap between the climate and nature emergencies.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- Mapping habitats for 30 years' time, based on what we know about climate. We need more studies on heat stress and climate adaptation for species.
- It was suggested that carbon sequestration potential should be mapped.



## Development and planning

'I dream that every new development in my town has investment in nature as part of it – swift bricks, hedgehog holes in fences, trees and wildflowers in gardens...'

'No building on flood plains!'

The impact of planning decisions on nature, and in particular new developments, were raised in many of the workshops. Participants are keen to understand how the strategy will integrate with the planning system, and whether the LNRS could impact future planning decisions. There was recognition that biodiversity-net gain is going to have a significant impact in the future, but that good guidance, expertise and enforcement will be needed to ensure it has maximum impact.

Many participants felt that historically housing demands have been met at the expense of nature, and that the planning process does not protect nature enough. They want to see important areas for nature given permanent protection from developments. There are many needs from our land including food production, housing and nature recovery. More joined up thinking about how to navigate these competing demands is required.

Concerns were raised that developers sometimes only pay lip service to nature protection and creation. Participants felt that promises are often not delivered and spaces for nature are not maintained. Participants want developers to only receive funding once their biodiversity action has been taken and want to see more follow up and enforcement with developers. People also feel that national legislation, such as the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act is not always adhered to, and that enforcement is weak. The relationship between new developments and water was emphasised. Participants unequivocally want no further building on floodplains, and want new developments to consider water quality, run-off and flood mitigation.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- Funding for a development should be phased and only given once biodiversity action has been taken.
- The planning permission processes needs to include expertise on how to do good biodiversity net gain.
- Developers should include swift and bird bricks into new housing.
- Developers leaving poor ground or rubble underneath turf in gardens must be stopped.
- All new developments should include drain water catchment and flood and waste escape routes.

## Messiness, connectivity and corridors

'Rivers of wildlife and flowers'

A vibrant, messy, varied abundance of nature was central to the way that many participants described their vision for nature across Gloucestershire. There was wide recognition that for nature to thrive, edges, variety and connection are essential. Participants shared visions of long verges, gardens teeming with wildflowers, woodland gradually merging into scrub, and hedgerows full of variety and life. At the heart of many of the discussions 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. This was seen as a mindset change as much as a practical shift.

The importance of nature corridors and connecting different habitats was keenly felt. Participants discussed the potential for using disused railway lines, cycle paths, river edges,

hedgerows, and rows of gardens as wildlife corridors. The importance of hedgerows was particularly stressed with many participants keen to see more and thicker hedgerows in farmland. It was noted that in urban areas the largest areas of green are often private gardens. Engagement with communities could help enable these to become important wildlife corridors. Community engagement could be done street by street for example through hedgehog holes, or by planting pollinating wildflowers in areas on the bee-lines. The importance of connecting urban and rural was a recurring theme. Nature corridors also need to cross geographical boundaries if they are to be effective, so good cooperation with neighbouring counties and countries is essential.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- Can funding through biodiversity net gain be used to fund projects that help with connectivity of nature (such as green bridges) as well as nature creation?
- Mark disused railway lines on the map as nature corridors.
- Street-by-street garden campaigns to help create wildlife corridors around particular themes (e.g. hedgehog holes).
- Guidance and monitoring on hedgerows.

## Engagement, education and narrative

'They are not weeds but food for bees'

'We are nature!'

Across Gloucestershire the people who attended workshops were passionate about not just writing, but crucially also implementing a strategy to restore nature. Wide engagement was considered essential for the LNRS to be successfully developed and implemented. To do this buy-in will be needed; from farmers, communities, County, District and Parish Councillors, garden owners, planners, landowners and developers to name a few. Good engagement, education and narrative-setting were seen as crucial in ensuring that any strategy is implemented. It was also seen as key for triggering some of the mindset shifts that will be needed to enable nature to thrive in the future, such as understanding why no-mow is important or why human access may need to be restricted in some places. Participants want nature to be valued in its own right and 'not just for what it gives humankind'. The importance of nature education for all parts of society was highlighted. This needs to be tailored to different demographics and groups.

Schools and education institutes of all sorts were highlighted as important for nature recovery in many ways. Forest school is already used as a way of teaching children, and this could be expanded so nature and outside learning become key to how children are taught. School grounds can be used to help nature recovery and to teach children about the connections between the food they eat and where it comes from. Engaging with children can be a key way to pull in, engage with and educate parents too.

Working with young people needs to go beyond schools to include youth clubs, colleges, universities and training institutes. Participants would like to see specific engagement in the LNRS for young people, who often want to take action for nature but face barriers that prevent them from doing so. Schemes like Duke of Edinburgh provide ideal ways for young people to be involved in nature volunteering, and the LNRS should help to identify where action would be most valuable. More coordination is needed for people to be active for nature restoration. There were also calls for more apprenticeships, vocational and heritage training such as hedge-laying and dry-stone walling, to create nature-positive rural employment opportunities.

Participants want to see more and ongoing work with landowners and farmers who are the custodians of much of the land across Gloucestershire. There are many different community, environmental and nature groups across Gloucestershire and there is a need for better coordination and information sharing between them.

The role of Town and Parish Councils was particularly emphasised as being key going forward, and there was a desire to see the consultation extended to include them specifically. There were questions about the relationship between the LNRS, Local Nature Action Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. Town and Parish Councils have new biodiversity requirements, and many are currently writing biodiversity action plans. Questions were raised about how these will be integrated with the LNRS, and the lack of capacity amongst many Town and Parish Councils.

The narrative of the strategy is considered important to promote what is unique about Gloucestershire's nature, to enable buy-in from a broad range of people and to encourage multiple partners to play their part.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- Develop a list of local nature projects which need managing and invite local communities to take ownership of them.
- A focus on the positive is important. Events that showcase what local groups are doing and how more people could get involved would be good.
- Avoid jargon to make nature work as accessible as possible.
- Share ways that people can report wildlife sightings to build up more data on what species live where.
- Extend LNRS consultation to include Town and Parish Councils and provide support and expertise to help them develop their biodiversity action plans. This could include having a paid ecologist working with them to develop their plans.
- Consult and engage with young people on the development of the LNRS.
- Consult 'know your patch' community groups across the county.

## Process, implementation and how the LNRS fits into the national picture

'I really hope that the data collected is useful, but more importantly that the plans have clear deliverables, timelines for delivery and ultimately funding.'

The workshops were rich in the discussion of specific species or local sites and challenges. But they also consistently focused on the wider context; how this strategy could be implemented and funded and how it will fit into the national and international picture. There was particular concern about the lack of implementation power that the LNRS will have.

Questions were raised about the way in which the strategy would fit into other national policies, in particular biodiversity net gain, post-Brexit agri-environmental schemes (including sustainable farming incentives), water and chemical-use regulations and the National Planning Policy Framework. Similarly, at the district and county level, local planning, transport and housing policies were also seen as critical to future nature restoration.

People were clear that it is impossible to adequately implement nature recovery across Gloucestershire without changes to other national and local legislation to support the LNRS. They want to see this fed back to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and local authorities. Similarly, participants want to see better regulation and

enforcement, particularly around pollution, for private businesses such as water companies, agri-businesses and developers.

Alongside the need for wider policies and regulations to be changed, the desire for the strategy to have adequate funding and be legally enforceable was also stressed. Participants want to see clear deliverables, timelines and allocated responsibility outlined within the strategy.

Nature doesn't follow district, county or national boundaries, and the need to work with neighbouring authorities and make sure that different LNRS' are coordinated across these boundaries was emphasised. In the Forest of Dean, this includes working seamlessly across the English/Welsh border. The importance of this for water-course habitats was particularly emphasised, as there are many rivers on the boundary between Gloucestershire and neighbouring authorities.

There is a desire to see the strategy and map updated more regularly than proposed. Maintaining some sort of live mapping was discussed, even if the map for the LNRS must be a static document. Participants would like to ensure that work already undertaken for Gloucestershire's Biodiversity Action Plan is incorporated into the new strategy. There were also questions about how communities can continue to input.

The competing demands on land-use were discussed in many of the workshops. There is a recognition that land is needed for nature, but also for food production, housing or renewable energy generation, to name just a few. How we prioritise our land-use is therefore integral to this strategy, and participants felt that the conversations around nature restoration need to be part of wider conversations to develop a national land-use strategy for our county and country.

Suggestions for the strategy include:

- Feed back to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and local authorities the need for changes to other policies and regulation to enable the LNRS to be implemented.
- Participants want to see a strategy that has adequate funding and greater implementation powers.
- The LNRS needs to feed into a wider Land-Use Policy for our County and Country.

## Place-based and specific suggestions from the workshop

Whilst there were many themes that emerged in multiple locations, there was also local variations in what was raised. In Cinderford in the Forest of Dean, for example, the impact of wild boar was raised as a particular opportunity, with differing views expressed on how they should be managed. The importance of the forest was also stressed, as was the importance on working across not just county but also national boundaries along the English/Welsh boarder in the Forest of Dean.

In Northleach in the Cotswolds, the importance of working with large estates and landowners was emphasised, while in Gloucester the importance of urban farms and access to nature for urban communities was stressed. In Stroud, the importance of canals was reinforced as crucial, while online participants who lived alongside the river Severn stressed the important of water quality.

The many different local issues and suggestions that were raised have been grouped into themes below.

## Relationship with water suggestions:

- Margins along rivers and water courses to be created.
- Natural flood management on every river in the county.
- Headwaters should be identified and mapped.
- Hydrology should be restored.
- More high-quality ponds; water quality in ponds needs to be included in the strategy.
- More, better, and more joined up water monitoring is needed.
- Catchment management plans for all water courses.
- Expansion of the national flood management programmes and sustainable drainage solutions (SUDS).
- Natural water management, especially through the use of beavers. There was a call for beavers to be protected and unenclosed in the Stroud area.
- More scrape creation for wading birds.
- Better licensing for leisure activities.
- More agri-environmental schemes for water, for example buffer zones and pond creation.
- More incentives for rainwater capture.
- Reducing household water use.
- Less concrete in buildings to help prevent run-off.
- Reduction in water use in new housing by rain capture and brown water use.
- Use wetlands to prevent flooding.
- New flooding interventions should not damage water, for example using generators to pump water out.
- No more building on flood plains.
- Ditches next to roads can provide natural filtration, but they need to be maintained.
- Better sewage management and water quality improvement.
- Healthy River Severn and tributaries, clean flowing rivers again full of wildlife.
- More wetland habitats.

## Farming and nature suggestions

- One point of access for funding streams for farmers.
- Create a guide for supporting nature for farmers, with details of available financial support.
- Agricultural benefits of each stage of the strategy to be laid out to farmers to encourage their engagement.
- Use local branding to promote the benefits of farming, especially if linked with nature friendly farming.
- Contour planting to manage pollution in agricultural areas.
- Hedges should be restored, and existing hedges should be thicker.
- Mentors for farmers to help with biodiversity planning.
- Once priority areas have been identified, consult farmers and landowners on what they need to ensure their support.
- Recruit leaders within the farming community as role models for others within the farming community.
- A set definition of what constituted a hedgerow including a specific width. Hedgerows should also be graded.
- Significant financial penalties for farming practices that damage nature.
- No more bare fields in winter – there should be cover crops and restoration of soils.

- It was suggested that there should be an audit of farmland in the region.

## Community, urban and access suggestions

- Hedgehog safe road crossings, signs through the suburbs, hedgehog-hole-building DIY squad to deploy local residents.
- 'Ivy forests' – free standing chain-link fences to grow ivy up and support pollinators and nesting birds, potential use as hedging or fencing.
- All bus shelter roofs covered with wild growth.
- Greater use of margins of parks, football fields and school grounds.
- Garden ponds developed to support wildlife not tropical/specimen fish.
- Shared vegetable growing in public space; vegetables grown in front gardens.
- Messy gardens and no astroturf.
- A program to match people with underused gardens to people who love gardening and wildlife but don't have the space.
- More orchards, including communal orchards and herb gardens.
- Composting accessible for all.
- Funding for experts to come and advise people on their gardens, offering a 'garden retrofit for nature' service.
- More traditional orchards.
- Use the fringes of parks and gardens to create saum.
- More nature recovery areas with restricted or no public access, or where there is no human admission.
- Dogs should be kept on leads in nature reserves.
- Access for both people and dogs should be controlled on the commons and along the canal (especially when skylarks are nesting).
- Removing bureaucracy for local groups would help enable local communities to play their part in managing local habitats.
- Community groups to be invited to take-over management of projects.
- Licence scheme for volunteers to help farmers survey their land.
- Wildlife consultation support for community groups creating neighbourhood plans would be helpful.
- A nature warden scheme.

## Development and planning suggestions

- More consideration around cutting back trees and hedges as part of road improvements and new developments.
- Potential for more tree-planting in new developments. Vintage trees in such developments should be protected with limits set to how close building are allowed.
- The councils should be given enforcement powers to stop people tarmacking driveways rather than putting soak away surfaces that are much needed in urban areas to mitigate flooding.
- Scaffolding suppliers should be given a stock of nesting and bat boxes to be installed while they are working on rooftops.
- Planning guidance for 'cat palaces' in back yards to keep cats from free roaming and killing wildlife.
- Nature regeneration to be an integral part of urban and other developments.
- Every new development has investment in nature as part of it, e.g. swift bricks, hedgehog holes, trees and wildflowers in gardens.
- Planning permission needs to include expertise on how to do good biodiversity net gain and brownfield sites should be used as a priority for development.

- Developers should be required to leave better ground behind.
- Better enforcement to ensure that developers fulfil their environmental obligations and fines and penalties if they fail to do so. Ideally funding for a development should be phased, and only given once their biodiversity action has been taken. It should be a priority not an afterthought.
- Consider how long-term contracts can be influenced, for example mowing contracts within the NHS, MOD, District and County Councils.

## Messiness, connectivity, corridors, habitat and species suggestions

- Habitats – Questions raised:
  - Will habitats be prioritised, for example ancient woodland? How will this be actioned in the LNRS?
  - Is lowland heath included in open habitats?
  - What about those area outside of identified priorities for nature but still key in achieving nature recovery? Is there a risk that while key habitats are being protected and enhanced, others are sacrificed?
- Derelict urban sites could be used for habitats.
- Habitats for climate change, not just for now, need to be created with more studies on heat stress and climate adaptation for species.
- Change in policy for developers with better enforcement.
- More emphasis needed on ongoing maintenance as well as just habitat creation (e.g., who is responsible for maintenance of newly planted trees).
- Cycle paths, gardens, disused railways lines, were all suggested as wildlife corridors including in urban areas.
- Consider if stretches of river and the area either side of them can be used as wildlife corridors.
- There should be insect corridors as well as wildlife corridors.
- There are already ‘messy’ areas along the railways; work with the railways authority to maintain these areas and manage them for wildlife
- Discuss possible wildlife corridors along the M5 with the Highways Authority. Possible planting along the M5 should be included on the map.
- The possibility of green bridges/tunnels over or under the M5 and other safe ways for animals to cross roads were raised.
- Can funding through biodiversity net gain be used to fund things that help with connectivity of nature (such as green bridges) as well as nature creation?
- Cross country and cross border working, especially with Wales and Herefordshire.
- More deer control is needed, with lynx being used to control them in a natural way.
- Road verges should be managed and there should be open grass areas for wildflower meadows, particularly to promote pollinators.
- Verges should be litter picked before being mown.
- Increased use of grass verges to support wildlife.
- Add white clawed crayfish to species list.
- An assemblage for sub-soil/in the soil species.
- Include bats and amphibians.

## Engagement, education and narrative suggestions

- Primary schools should have tree nurseries.
- Under-utilised school environments used to improve biodiversity.

- Provide more vocational training opportunities like hedge-laying and dry-stone walling.
- Increase education on wildlife habitats and species, including forest schools and school gardens.
- Funding to ensure young people's engagement and a project put together to draw on support from young people; use schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh to help enable young people to get involved in nature projects.
- Information boards to keep local communities abreast with what's happening and e.g. where areas are not being mown.
- Campaign sharing to report wildlife sightings to build data on what species live in particular areas.
- A social media network for nature supporters.
- Hold a summer event to show work in progress.
- Hold nature festivals in every district and large towns across the county.
- Make sure public consultation is accessible and creative in how it's approached to increase likelihood of input.
- Proactively approach 'know your patch groups' and ask them to feed into the LNRS.
- Liaise with Parish Councils regarding Local Nature Actions Plans. The consultation should include Parish and Town Councils
- Use parish council websites for green space feedback and calls for volunteers to help support their green spaces.
- An ecologist should be employed to work with Parish Councils to ensure that nature is re-prioritised and incorporated into neighbourhood plans and policies.

## Actions and questions related to the maps

### General

- Difficulties with using the map were raised where the information is too dense and the colour too similar (although it was acknowledged that it was easier to unpack on the on-line version).
- It was noted that Gloucestershire Archives had a lot of information which could be used on the maps.
- Participants also asked about the gaps on the map and it was asked whether there could be priorities and measures for every square.
- There was concern that the nature recovery map 'washes over' some areas; the LNRS map needs to make sure that it better reflects urban duality.
- Cross reference the wetness index map that was produced as part of Foresters Forest with this one.
- The Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland's (BSBI) dataset highlights records of rare, scarce and threatened plant species and could be used to ground truth the map.
- There was a suggestion that some of the grasslands on the map were a bit random

### Suggestions for additional things that should be marked on the maps:

- Sewage treatment facilities to understand where sewage is entering rivers.
- Drainage areas and river catchments - participants want to be able to see where water flows.
- Floodplains and areas with frequent flooding as well as potential new places for sustainable drainage solutions.
- Freshwater springs - both historic and current.
- Water abstraction points - where is water being taken out (e.g. for bore-holes etc)



- There are large white areas on the map which cover farmland. No distinction is made between how land is managed on these farms, but for water quality, whether a farm is for example organic has a big impact.
- Integrate all the information that the Rivers Trust collects into the strategy and the map.
- Thames Water have a new sewage map which shows their sewage treatment plants. All water companies should disclose this data and it should be included on the map.
- The map also needs to be a map of habitats in 30 years' time, based on what we know about climate. Allow for the addition of additional layers over time.
- It was suggested that carbon sequestration potential should be mapped.
- Ensure that information on habitats held by the Wildlife Trust and Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records is captured.
- Disused railway lines which could be used for wildlife corridors should be marked

### Map related questions:

- Could satellite data be used instead of ground truthing?
- Is the habimap a separate map from this one?
- Would it be possible to have a priority habitat map of sequestration potential, particularly looking at coastal marshland and saltmarshes along the Severn? Peat bogs, wet woodland as well as farmland could all be used for better carbon sequestration.
- How will areas that are missed now, or that become good for wildlife in the future be incorporated? Could the gap be bridged with a live version of the Nature Recovery Network map?
- Roadkill is a problem. Could areas where animals are most likely to cross roads be mapped?

### Local knowledge and sites

Participants were asked to feed in local knowledge and expertise, particularly for use in the mapping part of the LNRS. Below are the many local sites and suggestions that were inputted:

- **Gloucester Park** needs more trees, plants, and green space.
- **St James' City Farm** has important mental and physical health benefits as well as biodiversity benefits.
- **Sudbrook Fields** – neglect has led to fly-tipping.
- **Tredworth High Street** wildflowers should be diversified.
- There is a public **climate change garden in Stonehouse**.
- **Skylarks** have been seen on **Selsley and Rodborough Commons**.
- Several local developments were mentioned as missed opportunities including **Tewkesbury Garden Town, Walton Cardiff in Tewkesbury**, and the **cycle path in Bishops Cleeve**.
- Impact of the alterations at the junction at the **Air Balloon Roundabout**. This is in the centre of an area of high importance for biodiversity.
- **River Leaden**: There were concerns about the pollution of rivers upstream, particularly the River Leaden, where agricultural inputs in Herefordshire were affecting water quality in Gloucestershire.
- There was also concern about pollution in the **River Wye**.
- **Robinswood Hill** is used by many local people and more diverse community groups should be involved in its management.
- **Stonehouse community arboretum** which is discussed around the world – see John Parker Arbocultural Association Ted Talks for more information.
- **St Pauls soil snack** in Gloucester is a project on **edible wildflower corridors**.

- An area of land **behind Stonehouse station** has applied for **Town Green Status** (See below).



- **Verney Field:** Fences have been erected which prevents animals moving through. There is a local campaign to get this opened out as a green space to preserve the area for wildlife. Polecats have been sighted there.
- A new **cycle path south of Bishops Cleeve** saw a lot of **hedgerows removed**. This is unnecessary. It was also suggested that cycle paths could be wildlife corridors (see below).
- **Novorten woods** should be shown as priority woodland (see below).

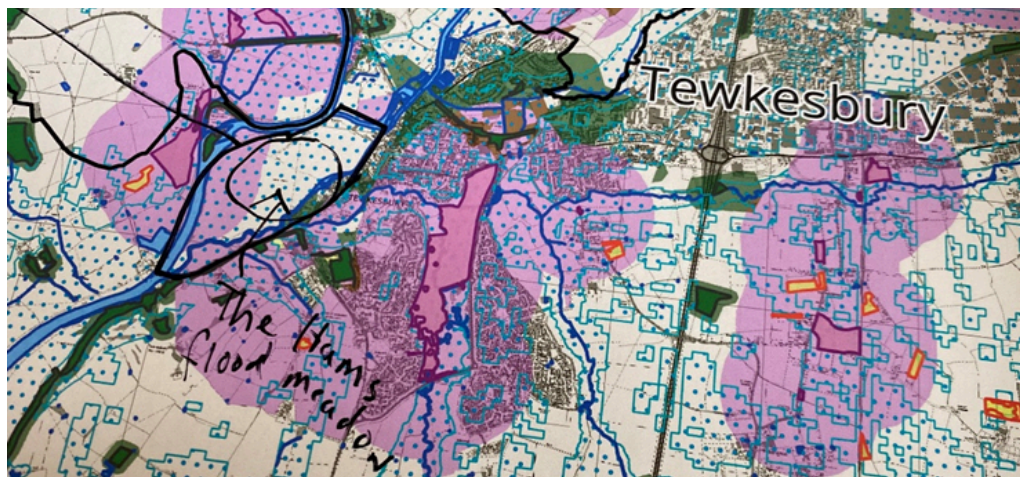


- There is a desire for **more tree planting in Southern Gloucester**. In addition, it was pointed out that there is **not much high priority area for woodland shown on the maps for Gloucester**, especially when you compare it to Cheltenham

- **Saintbridge Pond:** Community group would like to be involved in decision-making and be kept informed. The habitat around the pond is managed and local people need to be consulted and included. Water quality in the pond is a concern, and it was asked if this could be tackled before it reaches the pond. There were also concern over several invasive species which were reducing the habitat for other species. This included the wrong type of reeds which had been planted and which were now taking over. It was suggested that it should be linked with Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust. Saintbridge Pond and meadow should be shown as a priority habitat area on the maps. Contact Friends of Saintbridge Pond (fosp.org.uk) for more information (see below).

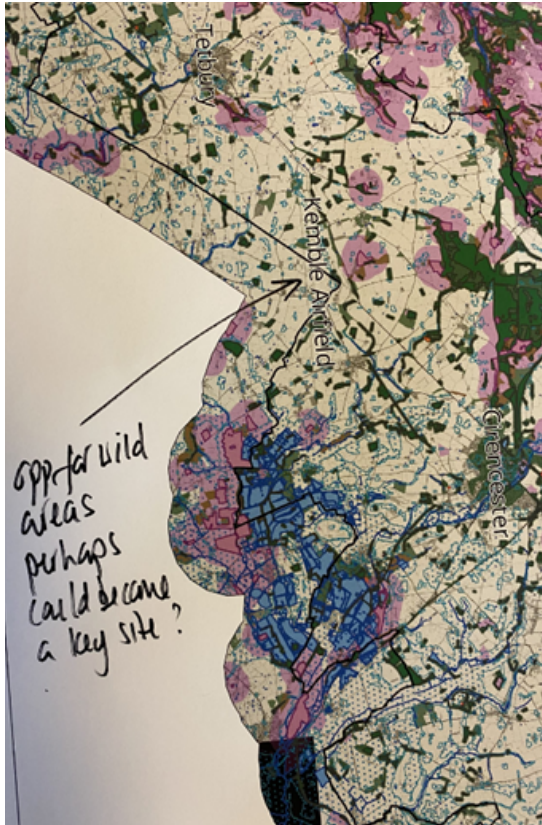


- **Severn Hams SSI flood plain and meadow** should be a **priority habitat** (see below).



- Otters in are living in **Pittville Park**.
- **Winchcombe to Warwickshire Steam Railway** – inactive parts could be wildlife corridors.
- **Sherborne: West, East and South Belts** – thinning woodland to encourage plants; ambition for curlews in the water meadow.

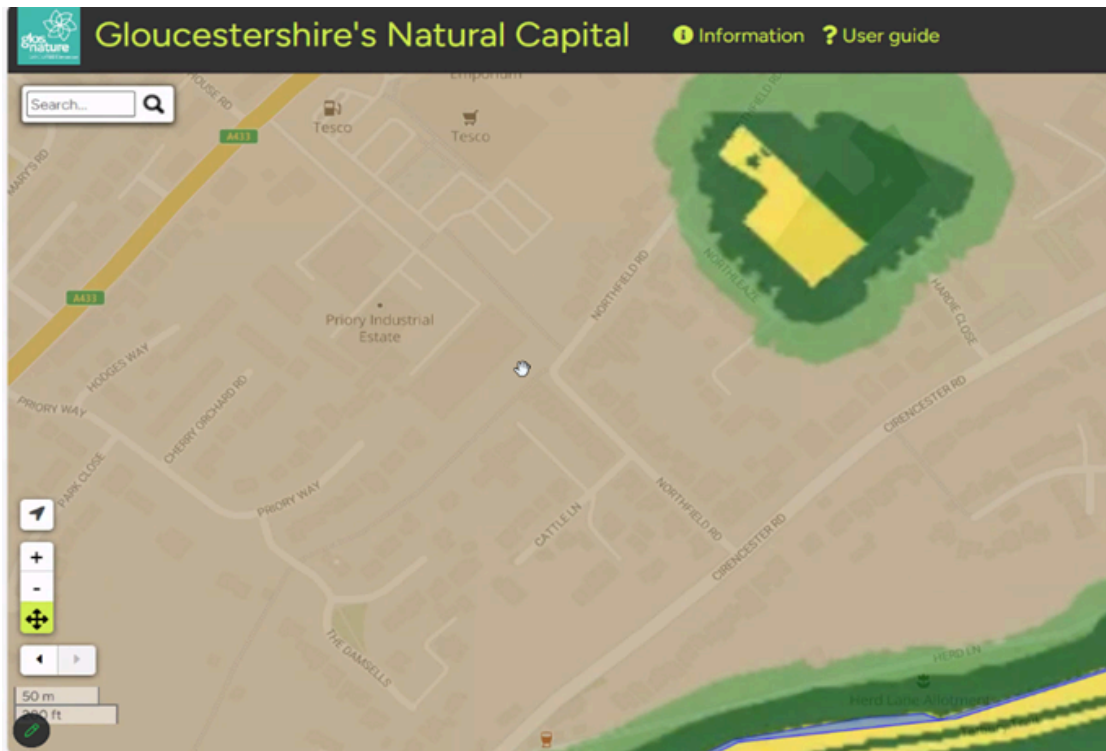
- **Lodge Park & Sherborne:** Plans for tens of thousands of trees, with deer fencing.
- **Bathurst Estate Wood** – Pearl Bordered Fritillary are there. Concerns around the change of access.
- **Sherborne Brook** - discourage walkers to help ground nesting birds.
- **Sherborne** - butterfly conservation surveys – white squares are included where there are no records, but is this because we know where the species are or because there are no recorders?



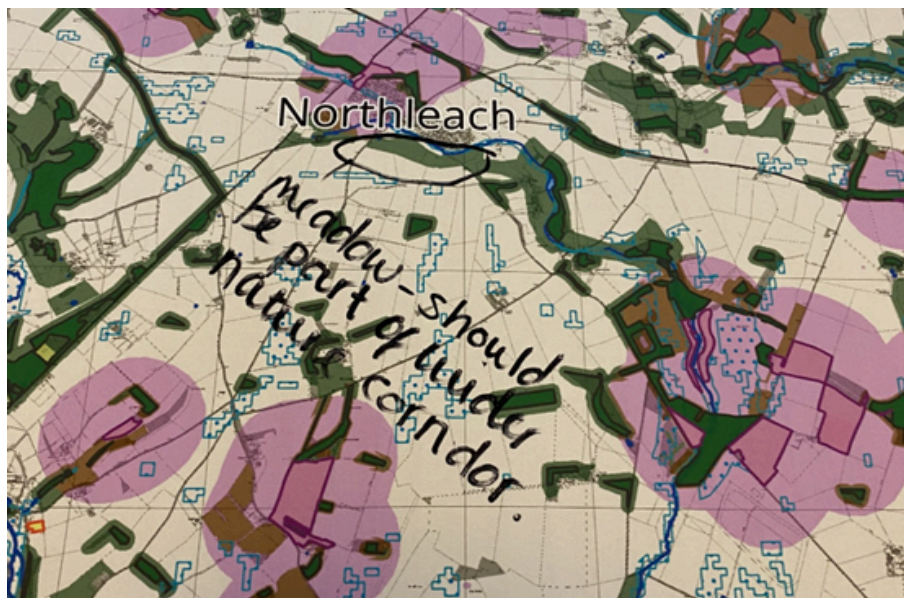
- **Kemble airfield** could be an opportunity for wildlife (see left).
- The area north of the **Forest of Dean** does not connect easily to the north Cotswolds because of the River Severn.
- Whole of the **Forest of Dean** area has unique habitats and species.
- Orchards in the mid-north of the **Forest of Dean:** Could these be planted in a wider spatial area? More orchards and wood pasture are needed.
- Farmed areas around **Cam and Dursley** appear game for solar farms and new housing.
- Land adjacent to **National Trust Tinkley Gate** – land has been farmed organically for a long time, meadow grazed with sheep and 1 hectare of trees have been planted. Farming like this has created a type of grassland which is important for sequestering carbon.
- **Minchinhampton Common** – it was questioned whether this includes random spots of wetland opportunity areas as indicated on the map.

- **Northleaze Lane Tetbury** – is someone's garden core habitat?
- Beavers in the **Forest of Dean** should be free roaming.
- Pine Marten are moving northwards through the **Forest of Dean**; the most northerly sighting is in **Cinderford**.
- **Fox's Bridge Bog** is an example of 'roughening work' along water courses. More instances of schemes such as this are needed.
- A huge field near **Kerne Bridge on the Wye and Bishops Wood** are examples of areas which desperately need a buffer zone.
- The potential of **Walmer Common** for wetlands was suggested; it was noted that this area floods anyway.
- **Chapel Street** is an example of where nature could be extended with wildflowers, yellow rattle and more street trees and a community orchard.
- **Middle Hill:** A triangle of land there could be a wildflower meadow.
- In the **Forest of Dean**, Islands of wood pasture within larch plantations could be linked to reduce larch and create more diverse woodlands.
- The high elevated wetlands in the **Forest of Dean** are unique and should be protected.
- **Wallbridge Fields.** This is a 3-hectare piece of land below Rodborough Avenue now owned by Rodborough Parish Council and maintained for wildlife and people. It is a corridor to the River Frome, grassland, grassland, badger setts.

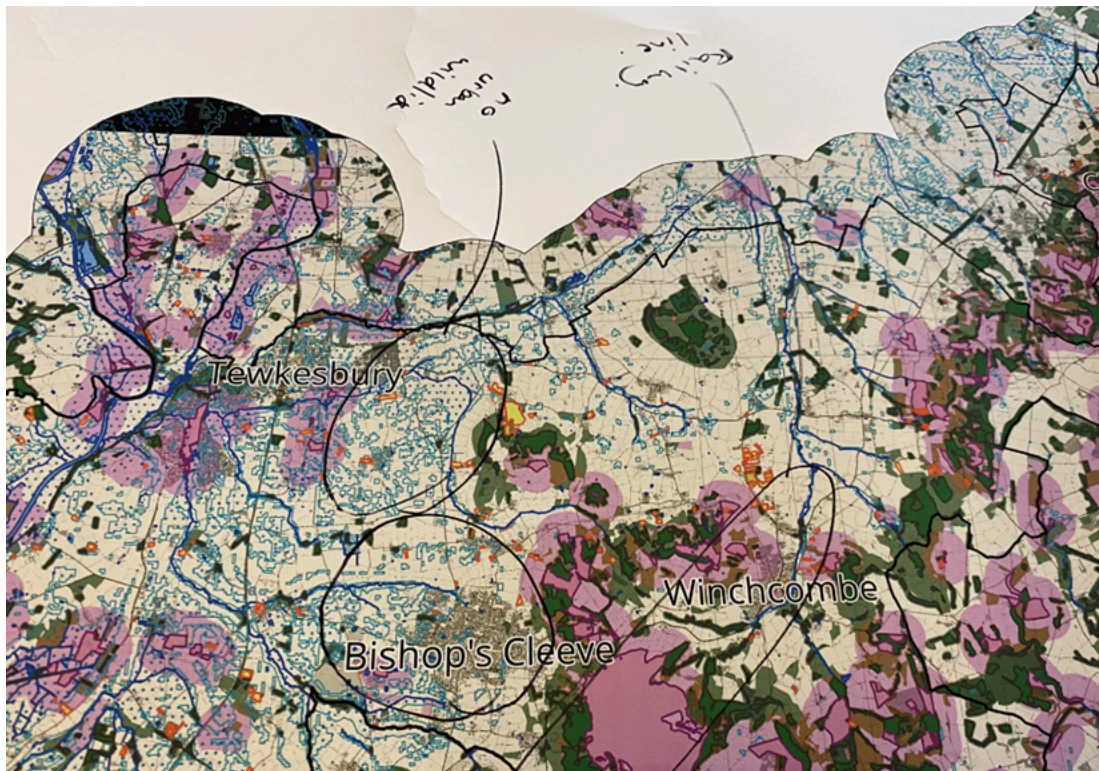
- **Heavens Valley Project**, 102 acres of bio-diverse land which is looking to come into community ownership with a focus on land management. Wardening was suggested, along the lines of Daneway Banks at Painswick Beacon.
- There are only 3 green spaces in **Cainscross**
- **Tetbury** – row of oak trees not showing up (See below where hand is on screenshot below) – these need to be added.



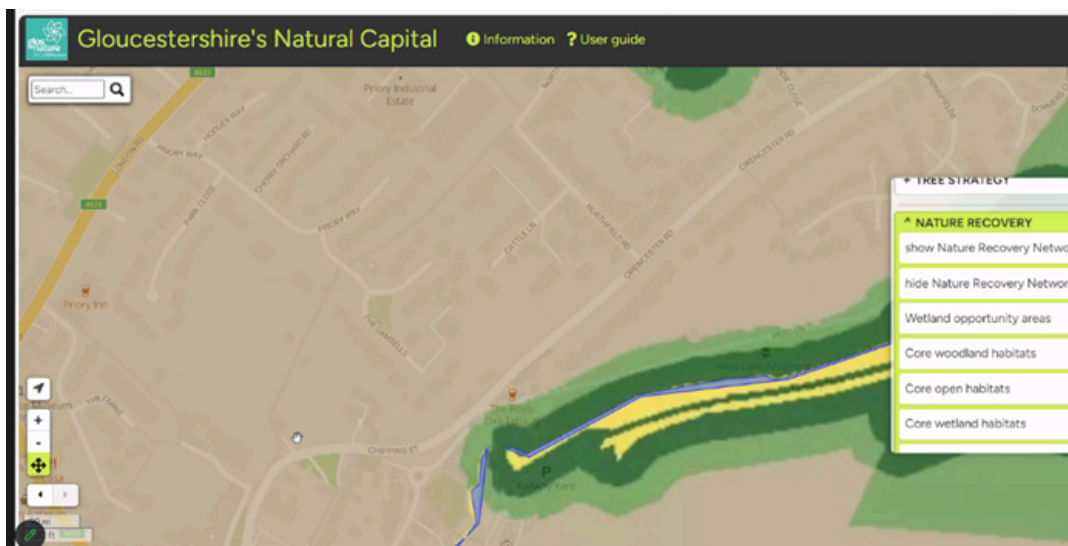
- The derelict area in **Siccaridge Woods** is an important part of the woodlands. A strategic decision needed to be made whether there should be further clearance by the Canals Trust there.
- **Minchinhampton Common** sign raising of awareness of what's in the wood as you're driving past.
- The land above **Bisley** was cited as an example of old-fashioned mixed farming.
- In the **Forest of Dean**, Islands of wood pasture within larch plantations could be linked to reduce larch and create more diverse woodlands.
- Meadow in **Northleach** should be included in a nature corridor (see below)



- More urban wildlife in **Tewkesbury and Bishops Cleeve** (see below)



- **Cinderford Northern Quarter** – will LNRS help to protect this?
- **Chalford** – scheduled cutting to improve biodiversity.
- Replace derelict sites around **Cinderford** with habitats.
- Plant trees connecting the **statutory Forest to the woodlands of the Wye Valley**.
- **Tetbury** – wilder area where you can walk and where goldcrests have been sighted to be added where hand is on screenshot below.



- Disused railway in Tetbury to be added to the map

- A number of very specific areas in the **Forest of Dean** were discussed in relation to the maps:
  - **Beachley** needs to be looked at.
  - Wildlife corridor joining the Severn Treescapes area is being developed.
  - **DYRFA and the Golden Triangle – Newent area** – should this be open habitats? This area must be protected and should be marked on the map.
  - **North Cinderford** key area, shows in 'good' colours on the map.
  - More beavers in **Lydney and Cinderford Brook** to address issues with water highlighted.
  - River fly monitoring was discussed including how this might be shown on the map. It was suggested that connections should be made with **Foresters Forest** and the **Dean Meadow Group** and that these should be incorporated into the map.
  - **Forest** specific targets for species to capture the public's imaginations like the curlew at Slimbridge, for example lamprey fish or birds.
- Showcase **Benhall Park Meadows** as an example of urban nature recovery
- Balsam are a problem at **Whitminster**.
- BISCAN is putting up swift boxes including at **Thomas Keble School** where there are speakers to broadcast the call.
- There is a residual swift colony in **Eastcombe**, with swift boxes and nesting sites, as well as swift boxes in the tower of **Eastington Church**. There are also nesting sites in the old buildings in **Minchinhampton**.
- Swallows in the barns next to **Eastcombe Meadow** had disappeared 4 years ago, but one pair are back this year.
- More communing of sheep in the **Forest of Dean**.
- Dippers have been seen along the **River Frome**. The water quality in the Frome should be maintained with an approach along the lines of the Centre for Catchment Management was suggested.
- Potential wetland to prevent flooding in Cirencester, and potential beavers in Cotswold water park (see below).

