



Stepping Stones

● Creating and linking wildlife-friendly spaces



National
Trust

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Stepping Stones Project Manager

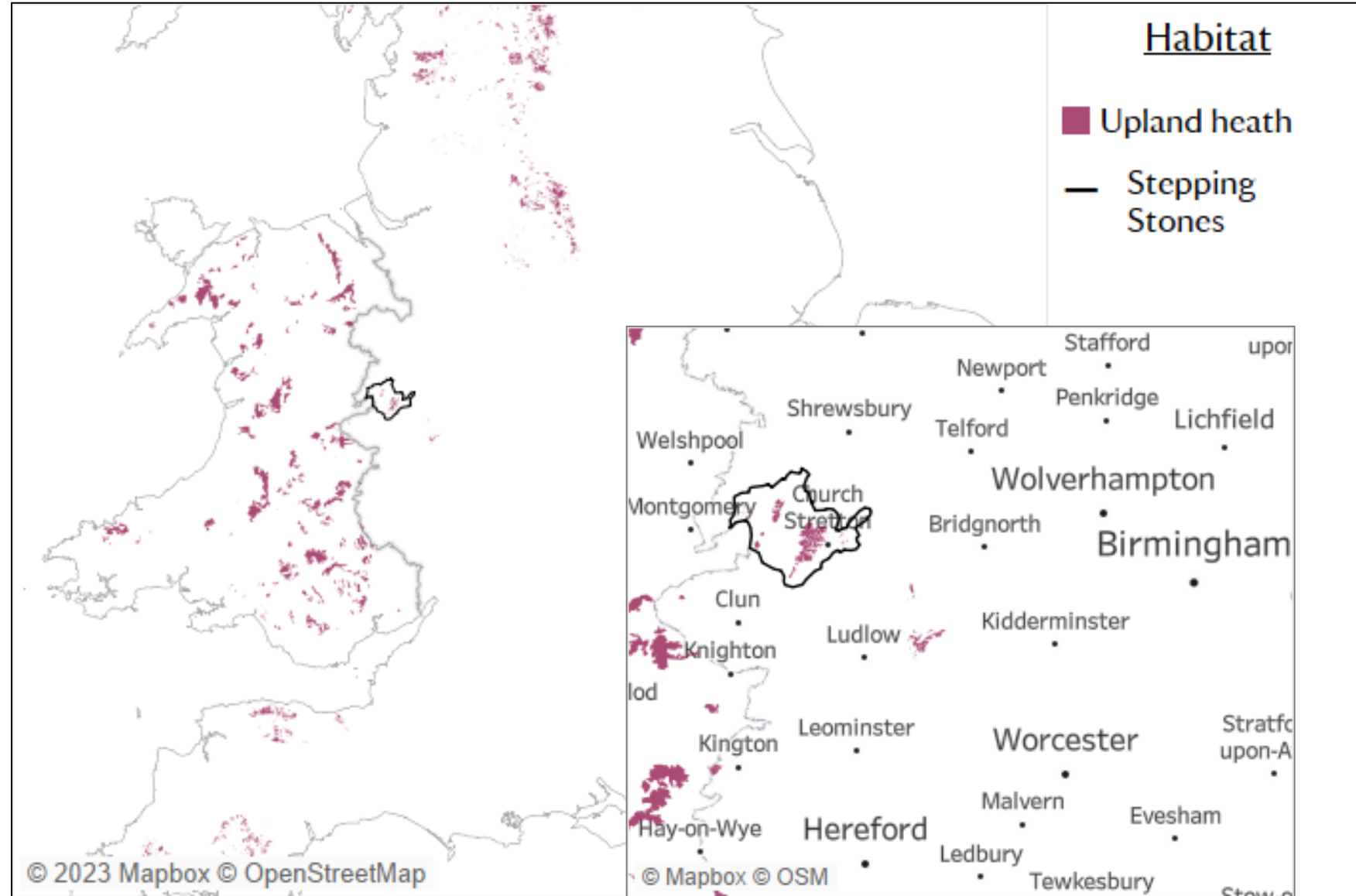
Stepping Stones Vision - 2070

Nature-rich habitats are connected via wildlife corridors, and the people who live, work and visit here feel connected to the landscape and to each other.



Where are we?

- Largest concentration of priority habitats in West Midlands
- Unique mix of southern & northern vegetation types – frontier of climate change
- Only site of upland in England between South West (Exmoor & Dartmoor) and North (Staffs Moors & Peak District)
- Nationally significant concentration of flush and spring-fed wetlands
- Sources: Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Scottish Environment Protection Agency

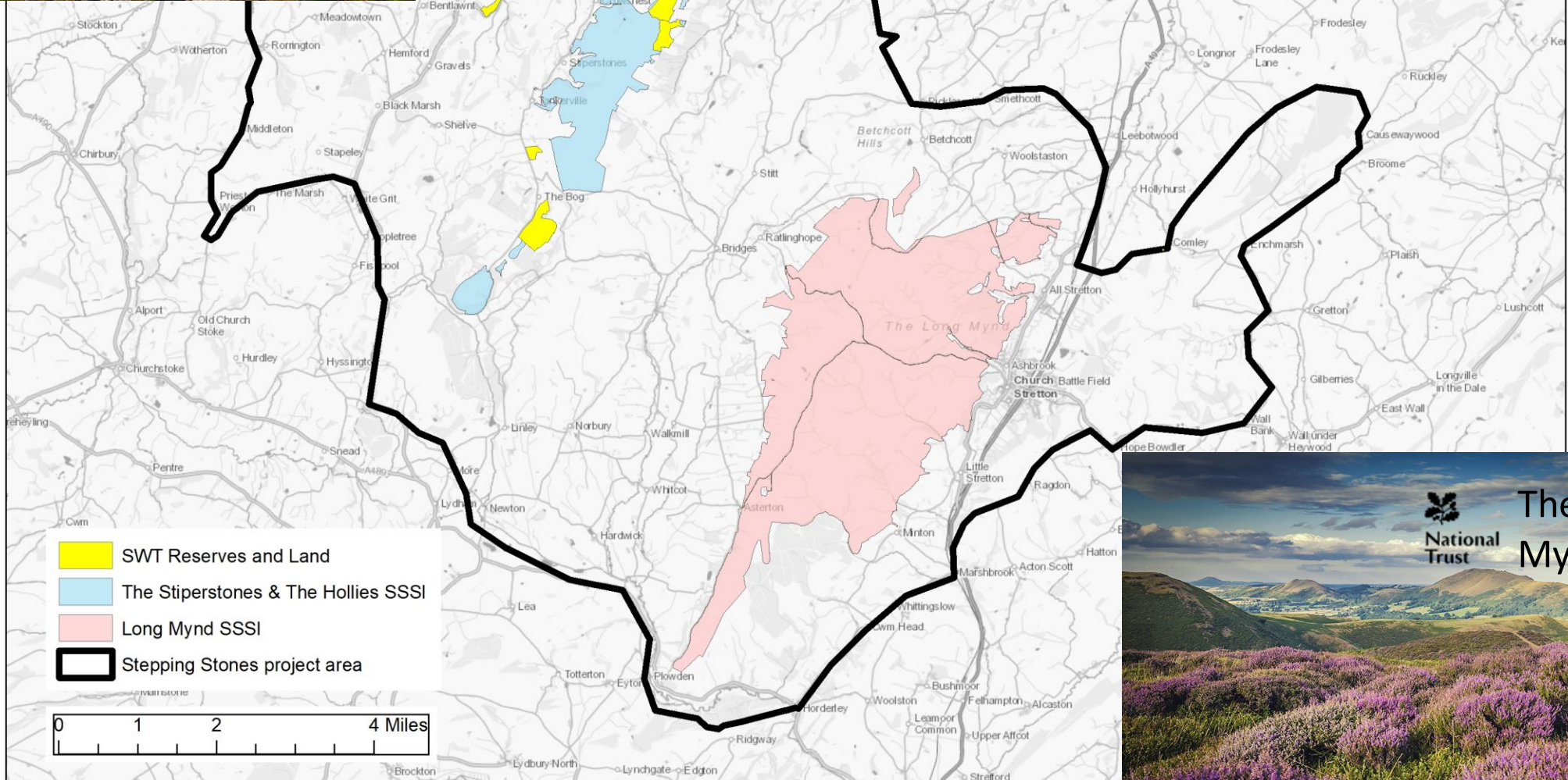




Stiperstones NNR



The Stepping Stones Project Area



The Long Mynd SSSI

What's the problem?

Landscape change - loss of habitats and species,
failure of 'ecosystem services'



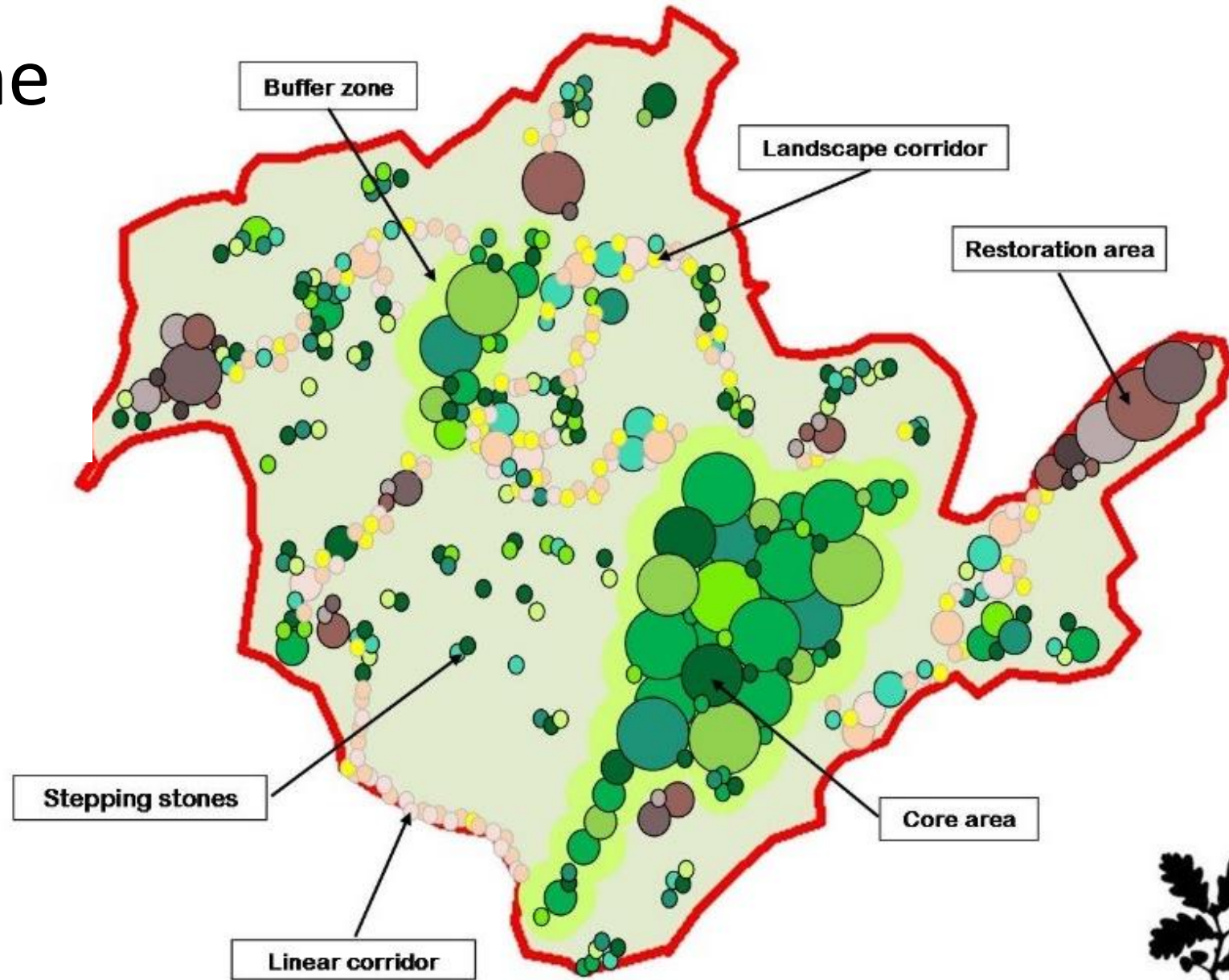
What's the problem?

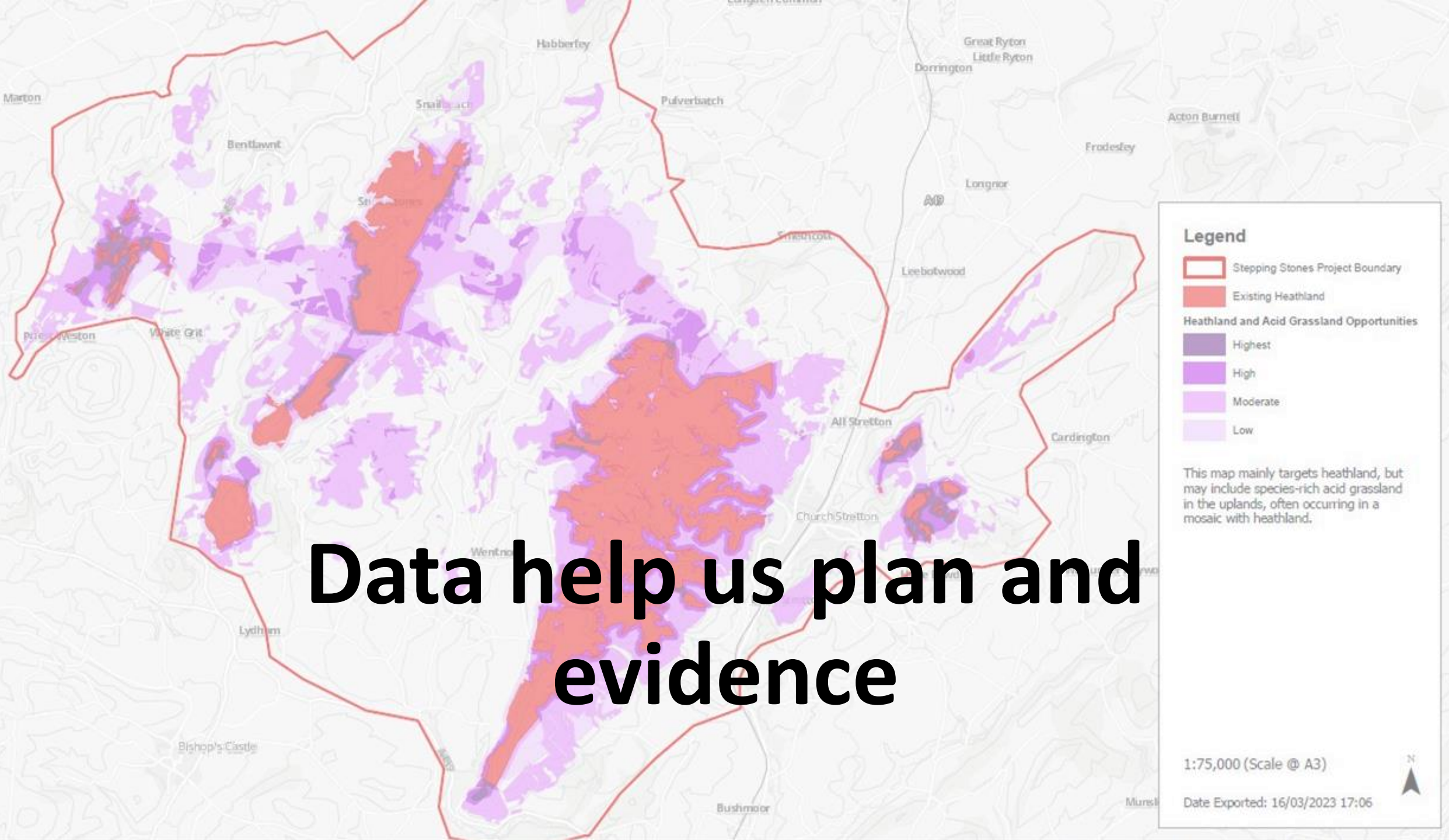
Disconnection of people with nature – reduced health and wellbeing, lack of understanding of crises (and solutions)



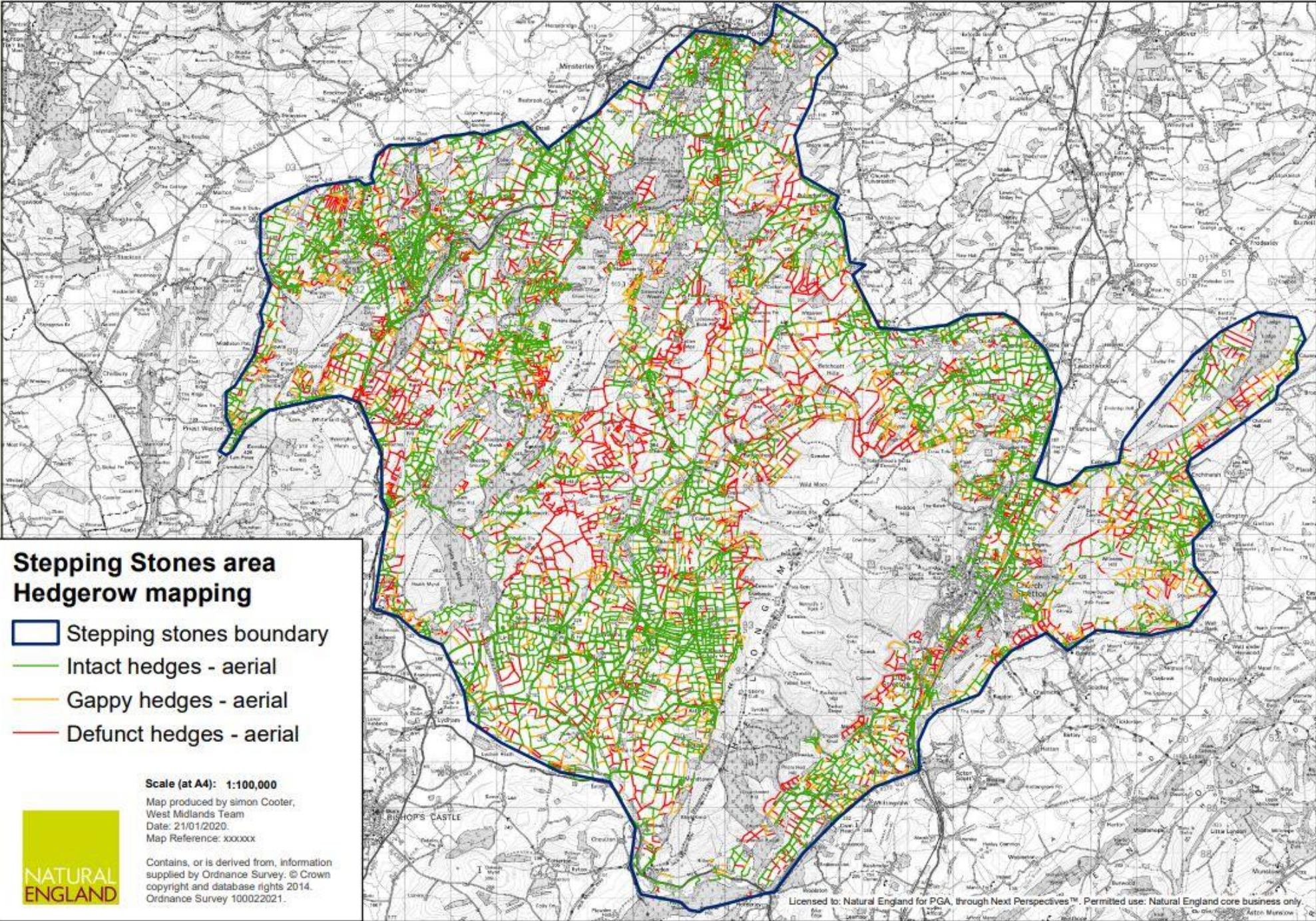
What's the solution?

More, bigger, better, joined





Hedgerow condition mapping



Hedgerow condition map

Can't do it alone! Different approaches to nature recovery

Local farmers - UOFG

Local community
groups & volunteers

Nature conservation



Species Action Plans

- SNIPE
- SMALL PEARL-BORDERED FRITILLARY
- WILLOW TIT
- OTTER
- DORMOUSE
- DEVIL'S BIT SCABIOUS
- COWBERRY
- MOUNTAIN PANSY
- UPLAND DRAGONFLIES
- BILBERRY BUMBLEBEE
- TREE PIPIT
- DIPPER



Species Action Plan

Stepping Stones Project

Last updated: January 2024

Common name: Devil's-bit Scabious

Scientific name: *Succisa pratensis*

Conservation status: Not protected. Local. Declining.

Habitat: Devil's-bit scabious is found in a variety of damp or moist habitats, including meadows and marshes, damp pastures, marshy hollows within fields, wet flushes, valley mires and areas of grassy moorland. It frequently occurs on peaty or clay soils with impeded drainage and a high water table, but also occurs on soils ranging from strongly calcareous to mildly acidic. It does not tolerate heavy shading, preferring full sun or partial shade, but is tolerant of livestock grazing. Devil's-bit scabious is a good indicator of unimproved grassland and can often be found amongst herb-rich grassland communities with low soil nitrogen levels. It is not limited by altitude, being found in areas of suitable habitat high up on the Long Mynd, Stiperstones and Clee Hills.

Identification: Devil's-bit scabious has flattened, rounded flower heads that range in colour from mauve to dark purplish-blue. It differs from small scabious and field scabious in that its leaves are undivided, only lightly hairy, and are long and oval. On field scabious, all leaves are roughly hairy and while basal leaves tend also to be oval, they are toothed along the edges, whilst leaves occurring on the flower stem are deeply lobed.

County distribution: Locally frequent, especially in the uplands of Shropshire, Devil's-bit scabious is rare or absent from arable areas in the north-east of the county.

Population trends: Declining, both nationally and across the



Devil's-bit Scabious



National Trust

Aims of SAPs

- Raise awareness and create momentum around these species locally
- Gather together key info for these species which can act as a baseline
- Outline activities and actions which can shape projects and/or be lifted straight into funding bids (example of where this has already happened – SRP)



Species Factsheets

- As well as SAPs we are developing factsheets for each species
- One page summary factsheets for all Species Action Plans will be developed, aimed at a less specialist audience.
- Focus is on what people can **do**

All these can be found on the Middle Marches Community Land Trust webpage



Species Factsheet

© David Williams

Bilberry/mountain bumblebee

Scientific name: *Bombus monticola*

Conservation status: Localised and in serious decline

Breeding habitat: Almost exclusively upland moorland, heath and grassland

Food: and foraging habitat: Bilberry is the main nectar source in spring and early summer, but this may reflect availability. *B. monticola* will forage on a range of other species in nearby meadows, gardens and heathland, if available



How you can help

If you have a garden within 500m of heathland...

...you can help feed hungry bilberry bumblebees. This will be especially important in the 'hungry gap' between the flowering of bilberry in spring and heath in autumn.

If you manage a meadow or heathland...

...see overleaf for info on how you can manage these areas for bumblebees.

If you spot a bilberry bumblebee...

Try and photograph the bee so we can verify your sighting. Make a note of the location (grid reference or what.three.words) and date. You can submit your record by scanning the QR code below or using the iRecord website or app.



Use our online form



Use our iRecord activity

Role of T&P Councils

- Although the Stepping Stones Project can take a coordinating role, cannot lead on the delivery of action for all the species.
- We need to publicise the 12 Species Action Plans and ensure that key individuals/ organisations are aware of them and have access to them.
- Town & Parish Councils could play an important role in adopting species recovery plans and integrating them into e.g. climate action plans, parish plans other local planning activities.



Species Recovery Project

Funded by NE Species Recovery Capital grant scheme c. £280,000

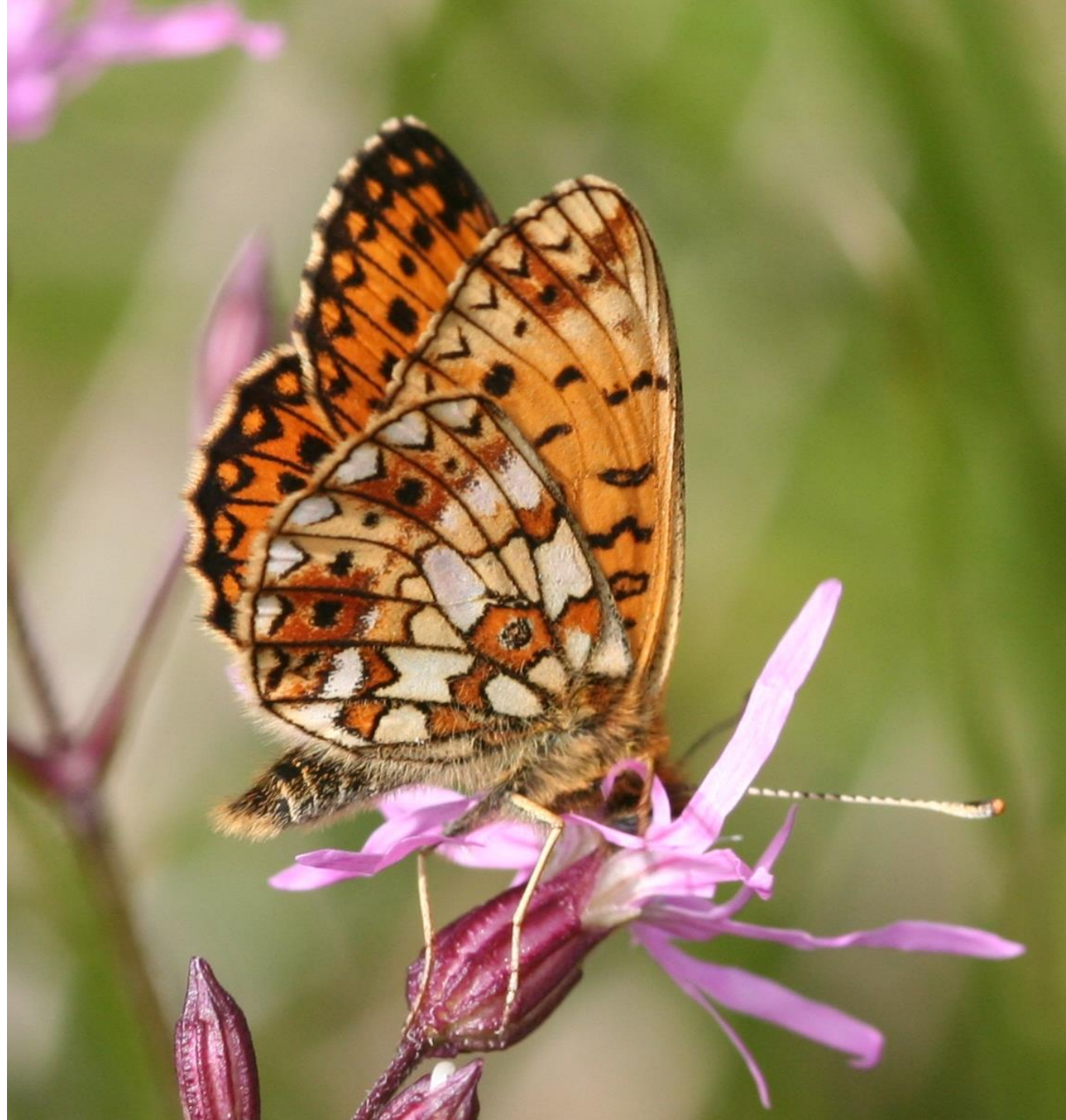
Delivered by Stepping Stones

Ends Mar 2025

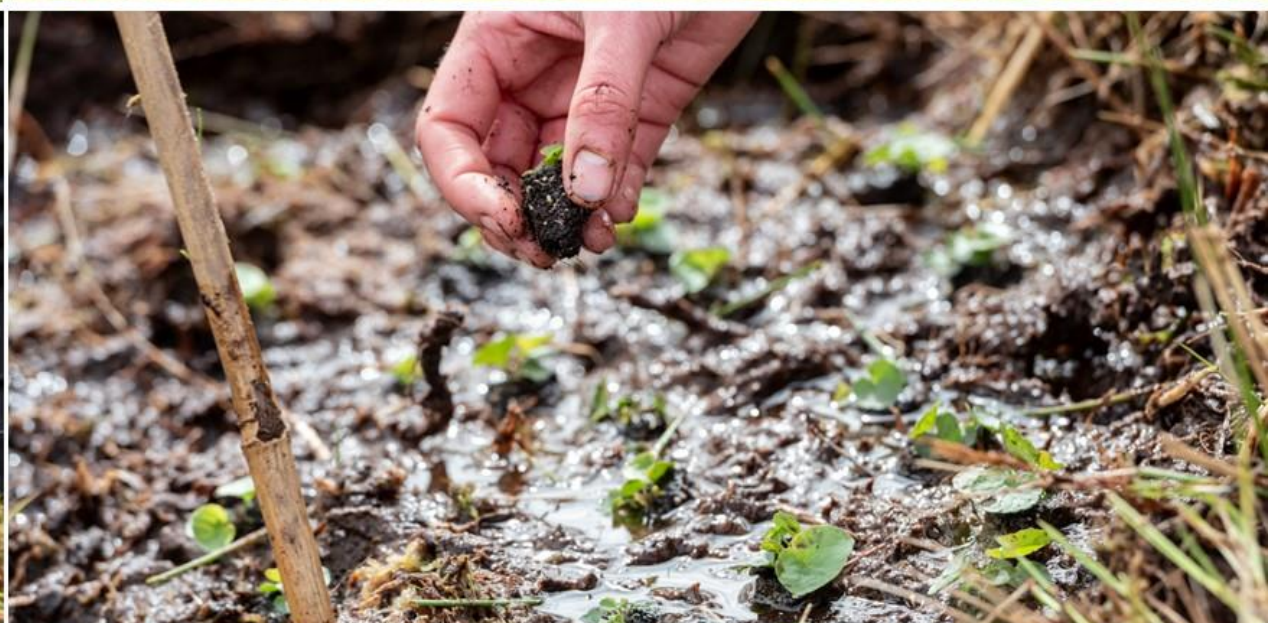


Small pearl-bordered fritillary

- Create local stock of marsh violet plants for the future
- Plant out 20,000 marsh violet plugs
- Continue management of bracken & rush pasture









7.5km hedgerow
across 3 sites

Dormice



Otter

- 3 holts to be installed
- Camera traps to be installed at each of them





THE HAWAIIAN TRUCK CENTER MILLER ST. 434

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CAMERA3

Willow tit

Barns Farm

- Willow tit surveys
- Wet woodland creation/enhancement
- 10 willow tit nest boxes installed and monitored with camera traps



Wider project area

- Training for volunteer surveyors
- Surveys in spring 2024
- New willow tit sites identified
- Landowner workshop Jan 2025



Role of T&P Councils

Town & Parish Councils can play an important role by integrating nature recovery into climate action plans, parish plans other local planning activities.

They can also help engage residents with nature by leading by example.

We need action NOW – it's not about saving the planet/these species, it's about safeguarding a habitable (and enjoyable) planet for future generations of all species including us.



A photograph of a residential yard. In the background, a house with horizontal siding and a glass door is visible. A gravel path leads from the house towards the foreground. The foreground is dominated by tall, green grasses interspersed with numerous small purple flowers. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

The Stepping Stones vision works at any scale and in any location.

Towns and parishes could become a phenomenal network of 'stepping stones' for wildlife...over to you!