Strategic Green Infrastructure & Nature Recovery Infrastructure Delivery Plan Topic Paper

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This paper considers the overall provision of strategic green infrastructure (GI) and nature recovery across the district, and specifically sets out the current context, condition and delivery mechanisms for strategic scale GI and nature recovery in South Gloucestershire. It excludes discussion on formal public open space provision (formal parks, outdoor sports pitches, SUDs and allotments) typically associated with new development, which will be dealt with in a separate paper.

1.2 Green Infrastructure is the term used to encompass all the natural environment assets of an area or site and to maximise their benefits through integrated area/site planning, with good design being the key to this integrated approach to land use. At its heart, the aim of GI is to manage the many, often competing, pressures for housing, industry, transport, energy, agriculture, nature conservation, recreation, and aesthetics.

1.3 GI may be defined as '*a strategically planned and managed green and blue infrastructure (GI/BI) network of natural and semi natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities*'. Individually, these elements are GI assets, and the roles that these assets play are GI functions. When appropriately planned, designed, and managed, these assets and functions have the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits – from providing sustainable transport links to mitigating and adapting the effects of climate change. The planning, management and investment in GI is fundamental and is required at all levels of planning, from strategic, to local, to site specific plans.

2.0 National Policy Framework

2.1 There has been a significant advance in requirements and consideration for both GI and nature recovery since the last local plan (2013) and it is now required that these are recognised at an early stage in the development process, in both national and local policy and guidance.

Green Infrastructure

2.2 The NPPF NPPG and National Design Guide all recognise the importance of integrating GI into development. This guidance gives substantive weight to the need for plan making, policy development and economic development to be sustainable including through the integration, development and maintenance of Green Infrastructure.

2.3 The key components for the requirement for GI are further embedded in the National Design Guide (NDG). The NDG recognises that nature contributes to the quality, health

and resilience of a place, and to people's quality of life, and that well planned, designed and managed GI is a critical component of well-designed places. Natural features should be integrated into well-designed development. They include natural and designed landscapes, high quality public open spaces, street trees, and other trees, grass, planting and water.

2.4 As a result, Natural England, in coordination with DEFRA and other partners, has developed a national GI framework of standards and guidelines[1], which aim to provide clarity and help local authorities, developers and communities plan and design GI to provide environmental and quality of life benefits for communities. The National GI Standards Framework sets out principles, attributes and guidance which can be applied to drive a partnership approach to the development and delivery of good multifunctional GI that responds to the needs of people and the environment at all scales and contexts. The approach is reflected in a new Local Plan GI policy, acknowledging that some aspects such as urban greening factor are currently not mandatory.

The five Natural England Green Infrastructure Standards are:

S1: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard

S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard

S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard

S4: Urban Greening Factor Standard

S5: Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard

Nature Recovery

2.2 The **Government's 25 Year Environment Plan**, now enacted through the Environment Act (2021), sets out the Government's vision and legal framework and governance to help the natural environment to regain and retain good health. The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023, is the first revision, which builds on the 25year vision with a new plan to deliver each of the goals for improving the environment. It focuses on enhancing natural capital, defined as: "*The elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value for people, including ecosystems, species, freshwater, land, minerals, air and oceans, as well as natural processes and functions*". GI consists of these natural capital assets, which underpin the provision of ecosystem services. The State of Natural Capital Report for England is now published – Natural England (2024) also sets out how our economy, society, and all aspects of our lives fundamentally depend on a healthy natural environment and living systems and the natural capital value of nature to our economy.

[1] Green Infrastructure Home (naturalengland.org.uk)

2.3 **The Environment Act (2021**), through the local nature recovery regulations (2003) now requires Responsible Authorities to prepare a Local Nature Recovery Strategy in partnership with Local Planning Authorities and Natural England for their local area, which acts as an ecological network spatial planning tool for recovering nature at a landscape scale.

2.4 **Biodiversity Net Gain** is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a measurably better state than it was before the development occurred. Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) must deliver a minimum of 10% BNG, quantified using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool. Developers must follow the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy and deliver 10% gain on site where possible through the retention, enhancement or creation of new habitats. This is followed by off-site gains, and as a last resort, statutory credits can be purchased from the government.

2.5 Development projects that create, enhance or recover habitat in locations which are mapped in a **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** will get a higher biodiversity value in the biodiversity metric than they would in other locations. This is because they are in a more strategic location for nature recovery. This will encourage the people in charge of projects to make changes that meet local priorities for nature recovery. LNRS should be used by plan-makers to inform the way they address the National Planning Policy Framework requirement for plans to protect and enhance biodiversity.

2.6 **The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023** led to a review and update by government of the National Planning Policy Framework. These updates will include how local nature recovery strategies should be given weight in the plan-making process. Government will also provide separate guidance on how local authorities will be expected to comply with their duty to have regard to LNRS through their planning functions.

2.7 Government (DEFRA) launched a rapid review of the **Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) 2023,** in July 2024 (Government launches rapid review to meet Environment Act targets - GOV.UK) to be completed by the end of 2024 on progress to deliver legally binding national targets to restore nature. The Government will therefore develop a new, statutory plan to protect and restore our natural environment with delivery plans to meet each of the Environment Act targets. This will focus on cleaning up our waterways, reducing waste across the economy, planting millions more trees, improving air quality and halting the decline in species by 2030.

2.8 The **Environment Act 2021** has also extended the 'biodiversity duty' (NERC Act) section 40 on public authorities to report to Government on the actions taken to 'further' the general biodiversity objective (including implementing BNG).

2.9 The Severn Estuary 'European Marine Sites' (EMS) consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and globally important wetland Ramsar site. As a Competent Authority, under the Habitat Regulations the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must carry out a **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA).** The HRA screening report on the newly emerging South Gloucestershire Local Plan identifies that the Plan is likely to have a significant effect on the Severn Estuary European Site from recreation pressure. The **Appropriate Assessment (AA)** is in progress and will identify the nature and scale of impacts, both alone and in combination with other plans and projects, along with the mitigation measures needed to avoid adverse effects on the integrity of this site. To inform the AA, visitor surveys were undertaken by Footprint Ecology in October 2024, which found that most visitors (75% of interviewees) lived within 12.3km of the survey points. The Visitor Survey Report will include the survey methodology, findings and recommendations. Through our Duty to Co-operate with neighbouring authorities, the Council will take into account and build on the adopted Severn Estuary Recreation Mitigation Strategy for Gloucestershire. The **South Gloucestershire Severn Estuary Recreation Mitigation Strategy** will set out the mitigation requirements relating to impacts from recreational pressure (associated with new residential, tourist and other relevant types of development) on the Severn Estuary.

2.10 Mitigation measures funded by developer contributions are likely to include: **SAMMS (Strategic Access Management and Monitoring)**, On-site developer led **SANGs (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace),** or Off-site infrastructure including SANGs. SAMM measures generally comprise: dedicated staff; signs and interpretation; education and awareness raising; parking and travel related measures and monitoring. Whereas SANGs provide new or enhanced green infrastructure to help alleviate the level of additional recreation pressure on the estuary associated with new development. By addressing risks up front, the strategy will provide a proactive, cross-boundary solution that ensures cumulative impacts of growth are taken into account. The strategy will ensure necessary supporting green infrastructure, resources and costs are secured and will provide clarity for developers when bringing forward sites for development.

3.0 Local Policy Framework

Adopted Core Strategy, and Policies, Sites and Places, Policy

3.1 Adopted Core Strategic Policy **CS2: Green Infrastructure** and **PSP19: Wider Biodiversity** continue to be the starting point for how the Council seeks to deliver effective GI through new development in South Gloucestershire and have been updated to reflect latest planning guidance. The value of other, complementary strategies has also been recognised to help support our GI objectives. These act as

other material considerations in the overall planning balance. The principle one is the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which was adopted in November 2024 and produced by WECA[2], who are the Responsible Body. South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council, Bath and North-East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council and Natural England are Supporting Authorities for the West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

3.2 Related, adopted planning policies that require, expect & encourage the provision and integration of GI into new development are listed in Appendix 1. Some of these policies are now being superceded by new policies in the new Local Plan. Our Biodiversity and Planning SPD was adopted in April 2023[3] and explains how South Gloucestershire will support biodiversity through the determination of planning applications, together with providing clear guidance for developers regarding what will be required. The SPD is also currently being updated to reflect new guidance.

South Gloucestershire Council Climate and Nature Emergency declaration and Action Plan

3.3 Since the adoption of our Core Strategy GI policy in 2013, GI and nature recovery has taken on increased significance as part of our work and response to the climate and nature emergency, and the mitigation and adaptation required. Our adopted PSP policies PSP1-PSP6 provide current policy guidance on climate change mitigation. South Gloucestershire Council declared a Climate Emergency on 17th July 2019. As part of this declaration, the Council pledged to provide the leadership to enable South Gloucestershire to become carbon neutral by 2030, urgently prepare for the local impacts of a changing climate and protect and restore nature. In line with regional and national goals, the council and our partners are working together to deliver the following goals for nature recovery across South Gloucestershire:

- **Double tree canopy**

'Plant and establish trees across South Gloucestershire by 2030, to double tree canopy cover at maturity.'

- **30% of land managed positively for nature**

'Increase the area of land managed positively for nature – 30% by 2030'

- **Connect sites for nature**

'Close at least 24 of the 60 Nature Recovery Network connectivity gaps through the creation of new habitat by 2030'

- **Improving our river catchments**

'Work with partners to increase the number of catchments in our area which have moderate or good ecological status by 2030'

3.4 In the **GI and Nature Recovery Action Plan to 2030**, the Council made a corporate commitment to *'lead by example to deliver net gain for nature (Biodiversity Net Gain)*

[2] https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/the-local-nature-recovery-strategy/
[3] https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/aa6caecc3e7207cfbffa7d2dd7c08b39/Biodiversity-and-Planning-SPD.pdf

in all new Council infrastructure and transportation projects', and the Council provides an update in the annual Climate and Nature Emergency reporting to Cabinet and Council.

4.0 Emerging GI and Biodiversity Evidence Base

4.1 Updated GI and biodiversity policies are currently being developed as part of our new Local Plan and these are underpinned by an extensive technical evidence base, recently completed:

- **GI Guidance for New Development SPD[4];** this was adopted in April 2021 and sets out best practice for inclusion of GI on development sites. It divides the planning process into 8 stages and includes a step-by-step guide through each stage and what's expected from applicants and developers. Supplementary Planning Documents for Trees on Development Sites, and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) also include key and complementary information on guidance and requirements regarding GI.
- **Strategic GI Corridor Mapping project[5];** by overlaying the Core Strategy Figure 1 diagram with the WENP mapping data, the main concentrations of GI and ecological assets are seen to form a series of 9 blue and green infrastructure corridors throughout the district. These corridors can be used to focus retention and enhancement of the existing GI assets and help to determine locations for future projects to increase GI and biodiversity.
- **Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) SPD refresh;** our LCA originally produced in 2005 and reviewed and adopted in 2014 is being refreshed, to reflect new national and local policy guidance and recent new development across the district (Including renewable energy schemes) with updated text and photographs. This will form an important supplementary planning tool to support a revised policy CS2. The updated SPD is due for adoption early 2025.
- **Visually Important Hillsides;** originally defined within policy CS2 Figure 1 and listed in the GI SPD, our visually important hillsides have been further mapped and evaluated against a set of assessment criteria and have been included in both the Strategic GI Corridor Mapping Project and refreshed LCA SPD (Annex 1).
- **Strategic Viewpoints;** strategic viewpoints have been identified where these capture key landscape features and built landmarks or help interpret the varying character of the district, and have been evaluated in accordance with a set of assessment criteria, and included in both the Strategic GI Corridor Mapping Project and refreshed LCA SPD (Annex 2).
- **West of England Woodland Opportunity Mapping;** this also includes a Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, which evaluates the capacity of the landscape to accept different types and scales of woodland planting,

[4] https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/static/c7a8346c52dc1f7fc934eca6f4b5a1a3/2602-Green-Infrastructure-SPD.pdf
[5] https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/publications/local-plan-2020-phase-2-urban-rural-and-key-issues/strategic-green-infrastructure-network

depending on the distinctive characteristics, topography and vegetation pattern of a given area. This work is due to be published soon.

4.2 This evidence is being used to inform new Local Plan policy and, guide new development away from our most sensitive areas or require new development to incorporate appropriate GI and nature recovery strategies, and focus priorities and projects for GI enhancement by spatially defining our landscape and ecological assets.

5.0 GI and Nature Recovery Delivery

5.1 At regional level, the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council, Bath and North-East Somerset Council, North Somerset Council endorsed a **Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy (JGIS)** in June 2020[6]. The JGIS sets out the West of England (WoE) goals and objectives to enhance and optimise GI across the West of England. It also includes an Action Plan which sets out priorities for action & strategic GI programmes intended to build capacity, develop and deliver GI priorities at regional and local level. This includes landscape scale programmes which cover areas which have a diverse land ownership including private landowners, large country estates with tenanted land as well as land owned by statutory bodies, utilities or environment charities such as the Wildlife Trusts.

5.2 The Climate and ecological action plan - West of England Combined Authority 2023 (CESAP) was adopted by the West of England Combined Authority, South Gloucestershire Council, the other West of England Unitary Authorities and partners, and sets out agreed priorities for action across the region including the role of green infrastructure and nature based solutions. Other regional plans and strategies which include GI related actions (green and blue infrastructure) in South Gloucestershire include the Bristol Avon Catchment Plan (Catchment Plan 2022-2027 | Bristol Avon Catchment Partnership), The Forest of Avon Plan | Forest Of Avon Trust, the West of England Nature Partnership Priority Programmes and the West of England Nature-and-Health-Strategy-2023-1.pdf.

5.3 **Adaptation Plans** are being prepared at local and regional level to reduce the risks of the local impacts of the changing climate which includes the role of well planned, designed and managed GI to improve resilience and other benefits. Both the West of England Combined Authority and South Gloucestershire Council have prepared Adaptation Reporting Power fourth round (ARP4) reports which have been submitted to Defra.

5.2 South Gloucestershire has an adopted **GI Strategy**[7] which is a non-statutory 'corporate' document that brings together the Council and our partner's commitments regarding GI alongside setting out the standards, priorities and approach the Council takes to managing Council owned and or maintained green space assets. The Councils GI and Nature Recovery Plan to 2030 sets out priority commitments and areas for action and

[6] https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/west-of-england-joint-green-infrastructurestrategy/
[7] https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/publications/greener-places/

annual reporting on progress is provided as part of the Councils annual Climate and Nature Emergency reporting

5.3 **South Gloucestershire Tree Asset Management Plan**[8], adopted in 2018, this document was developed as a tool to describe the policies and strategies used by the Council in making management decisions on their tree resource. It sets out how the Council will maximize the value of our tree assets and aim to increase the existing tree canopy cover in South Gloucestershire on public and private land across the district. A recent assessment estimates canopy cover will need to be increased to 22% to aid climate change mitigation. This represents establishing a further 5900 hectares of tree canopy cover from existing levels.

5.4 Given the wide variety of delivery organisations, new funding sources and mechanisms, and emerging policy it is not possible to provide a definitive list of projects or funding streams. As well as GI provided alongside new development (funded via section 106 legal agreements), Council the Council is involved in the strategic projects listed in Appendix 2. Other strategies, action plans and key areas of work include:

- Supporting preparation and delivery of Local Climate and Nature Action Plans (LCNAP) by Town & Parish Councils including improvements to GI assets owned by Town and Parish Councils to deliver climate and nature objectives.
- SNCI review including ecological surveys to update the evidence base regarding local nature sites to inform decision making and planning
- Tackling Transport Severance (reducing habitat severance for wildlife cause by roads and other infrastructure)
- South Gloucestershire Investing in Climate and Nature Scheme (ICaN)
- Delivering the objectives of the Bristol Avon Fish Recovery Strategy[9]
- Reducing the chemical and particulate load of Highway Run Off
- Highlighting the role of GI and nature recovery in contributing to adaption and resilience to our changing climate in local and regional Adaptation Plans
- Working with regional partners to implement the West of England LNRS

5.5 Other organisations, both public and private are also funding and delivering green infrastructure projects. South Gloucestershire Council would welcome any information on significant strategic scale projects being carried out in South Gloucestershire or across border to add to our understanding and database.

5.6 South Gloucestershire has a rich and diverse set of strategic GI assets. These include:

- Severn Estuary shore and levels habitat
- Cotswolds National Landscape (Cotswold AONB)
- Rivers including the Bristol Avon, Little Avon, Boyd and Bristol Frome
- Ancient Woodlands such as Lower Woods

[8] https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/tree-management-plan
[9] https://www.bristolavoncatchment.co.uk/bristol-avon-fish-recovery-strategy/

- SSSI Grasslands and Commons
- Orchards, hedgerows and veteran trees

Moving forward, and in summary, these assets have now been mapped using the (WENP) WENP mapping data as a base[10] alongside other data sets to identify and map Strategic GI Corridors in South Gloucestershire. The West of England Local Nature Recovery Strategy has been recently launched, with WECA appointed as the Responsible Authority.

The 'gaps' identified in the nature recovery network have been analysed through the process of preparing the LNRS, and projects are being developed to enhance connectivity and biodiversity. Capital funding for these projects is required, and where appropriate new development will make a contribution, either directly or via mechanisms such as BNG and the Community Infrastructure Levy, as well as via other organisation's projects and programmes.

[10] https://wenp.org.uk/nature-recovery-network/

APPENDIX 1 – Current Local Plan Policy

Core Strategy

Policy CS1 – High Quality Design, requires that existing features of the landscape, nature conservation…are safeguarded and enhanced, plus the highest possible standard of design and site planning demonstrating that the proposal will connect to the wider network of foot, cycle and public transport links and enhance or develop the public realm including the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and disabled and older people. **BEING REPLACED BY NEW POLICY – CREATING WELL DESIGNED PLACES**

Policy CS2 – Green Infrastructure, required that GI is planned, delivered and managed as an integral part of creating sustainable communities. It is supported by the Strategic Green Infrastructure Network which displays those current and potential GI assets which are important at a strategic scale. Some of these assets are protected by existing development plan policies, whilst other areas provide opportunities to extend (through the creation of new assets) and introducing enhancements to the network. **BEING REPLACED BY NEW POLICY – STRATEGIC GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

Policy CS9 – strategic policy that promotes the use of GI in the broadest sense to protect sensitive locations and landscapes from the effects of development and the effects of natural and manmade environments, such as flooding and contaminated land on new development.

Policy CS24 - Green Infrastructure, Sport and Recreation Standards Policy, requires that where existing facilities are inadequate for the needs of new occupiers of a development, new provision will be required. It states that GI is an integral to a development and provision for GI, outdoor space, sport and recreation facilities will be sought according to 3 principles: 1) New developments must comply with local standards 2) Should be delivered on site unless it is demonstrated that provision off-site creates a more acceptable proposal; and 3) The functionality and usability of spaces and facilities must be suitable for their intended purposes. This is further developed in our Playing Pitch and Sports Strategy. **SAVED POLICY**

The Policies Site and Places DPD

Policy PSP2 – Landscape, requires a high standard of landscape design for all amenity space, hard and soft landscape works and open space provision, appropriate to the use and character of the development and its location; and designed as an integral part of the development, incorporating - existing landscape features where appropriate, for the benefit of the development proposal.

Policy PSP3 - Trees and Woodland, requires development proposals to minimise the loss of existing vegetation on a site that is of importance in terms of ecological, recreational, historical or landscape value. Our Designated Local Green Spaces Policy PSP4 protects valued local designated areas from development and are identified on the policies map.

Policy PSP4 – Designated Local Green Spaces and **Policy PSP5 – Undesignated Open Spaces within Urban Areas and Settlements –** protects local designated and undesignated green spaces.

Policy PSP18 – Statutory Wildlife Sites: European Sites and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and **PSP19 – Wider Biodiversity -** protects statutory wildlife sites and require every effort to be made to maximise biodiversity net gain on a site, retaining and enhancing those habitats identified though the site survey work and incorporating them within the scheme.

Policy PSP20 – Flood Risk, Surface Water and Watercourse Management – seeks to ensure new development doesn't cause further flood risk and protects development from flooding.

APPENDIX 2: Green Infrastructure Projects

Scheme	Stage	Funding Source(s)	Cost	Expected Start & Completion date	Aims / Implications for sustainable communities	SGC Local Plan Strategic GI Network Corridor where applicable Strategic Green Infrastructure Network | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council (southglos.gov.uk)
Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise area (ASEA) Flood Resilience and Ecological Mitigation project	Delivery	West of England Local Enterprise Partnership Economic Development Fund, administered by WECA. Other sources of funding are DEFRA and the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.	£103m	2020 - 2026	Providing 17km of flood defences to reduce flood risk to 2,500 homes and businesses across both South Gloucestershire and Bristol and creation of new wetland habitat for birds along the internationally important Severn Estuary RAMSAR site (approx. 80ha in total). Planting within the project also returns the area to native tree species - silver birch and hornbeam, and shrubs (approx 2Ha) and improved public access routes are also being delivered. Avonmouth and Severnside Enterprise Area – Ecology Mitigation and Flood Defence Project (asea-flood-ecology.co.uk)	**Corridor A** - Shepperdine – Oldbury on Severn – Severn Beach (Severn Estuary and Levels)
Resilient Frome – made up of 6 workstreams including Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDs)	Delivery	DEFRA	£1m: (£600k NFM £400k SuDS)	March 21-end of March 27	Provide localised flood protection within Bristol Frome headwaters and reduced flood frequency/duration of highway flood locations. Improved biodiversity and water quality. Resilient Frome | Engage Environment Agency (engagementhq.com)	**Corridors C & G** Corridor C - Winterbourne – Kendleshire – Yate (River Frome Corridor) Corridor G - Wickwar – Iron Acton –

						Yate (Ladden Valley)
Frome Valley River Reserve (River Frome)	Delivery	WECA Green Recovery Fund	£1.1 m	Sept 2022-March 2025	Improve wetland and riparian habitat to deliver nature recovery, flood and drought resilience, improved water quality, access, and amenity. Potential for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). River Frome reconnected | BETA - South Gloucestershire Council (southglos.gov.uk)	**Corridor C** - Winterbourne – Kendleshire – Yate (River Frome Corridor)
Common Connections	Delivery	WECA, SGC Climate and Nature Emergency Action Plan budget, Enovert Community Trust (ECT) funding secured by the Friends of Siston Common through the 'Landfill Communities Fund'	£1.2 m	2022 – 2026	A landscape scale habitat restoration project to restore and connect habitat including linking registered common land, unimproved grasslands, woodlands and associated habitats along the South Gloucestershire urban fringe. https://beta.southglos.gov.uk/common-connections#Who%20We%20Are%20Working%20with	**Corridor D** - Wickwar – Westerleigh – Bitton (Westerleigh Vale Oldland Ridge/ East Fringe)
Assley, Hareley, Inglestone and Hawkesbury Common	Delivery	DEFRA - Higher Tier, Countryside Stewardship and Trees for Climate funding through the Forest of Avon Trust	£350k	10 years. January 2021-December 2030	Assley, Hareley, Inglestone and Hawkesbury Commons are managed under a Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship scheme which enables the council to continue to work with commoners and the local community to manage these commons for the benefit of all who use them. They will be enhanced for nature through tree planting, scrub management, grassland and pond enhancements.	**Corridor D** - Wickwar – Westerleigh – Bitton (Westerleigh Vale Oldland Ridge/ East Fringe)

Lower Woods Link	Concept/OBC	Dept for Levelling Up (administered and managed by WECA)	TBC	2025 TBC	Increasing woodland connectivity. This programme aims to create additional buffer habitats around Lower Woods and improve links to Cotswold woodland. Lower Woods is the most extensive area of ancient woodland in the West of England. However, it is isolated from other woodland which may help explain the recent loss of breeding nightingales from the area.	**Corridor D** - Wickwar – Westerleigh – Bitton (Westerleigh Vale Oldland Ridge/ East Fringe)
Linking the Levels	Delivery	Section 106 (Avalon Works) and WECA GRF funding	£370,000 WECA and £50,000 WECA plus match funding	2024-2026 Development Stage	Funding has been secured to enabled programme development and initial delivery. this strategic GI and nature recovery programme aims to connect and restore wetland habitat of the protected Ramsar area and buffer area of the low-lying vales and coast of the Severn Estuary, to support resilience of the area, deliver nature recovery and improve community participation.	**Corridor A** - Shepperdine – Oldbury on Severn – Severn Beach (Severn Estuary and Levels)
Little Avon River Catchment	Concept stage	Funding being sought to prepare an Outline Business Case	TBC	TBC	At concept stage, this catchment-based programme aims to gather data, and engage partners, statutory agencies, landowners and stakeholders to prepare a catchment plan which identifies priorities and a business case outlining the case and delivery priorities which will make the case for attracting further external investment for capital delivery from a range of sources.	**Corridor I** - Huntingford – Charfield – Wickwar (Little Avon River Corridor)
Thriving Waters – Siston Brook and river Boyd	Concept stage	Funding being sought to prepare an Outline Business Case	TBC	TBC	At concept stage, this catchment-based programme aims to gather data, and engage partners, statutory agencies, landowners and stakeholders to prepare catchment plans which identify priorities and a business case outlining the case and delivery priorities which will make the case for attracting further external investment for capital delivery from a range of sources.	**Corridor D** - Wickwar – Westerleigh – Bitton (Westerleigh Vale Oldland Ridge/ East Fringe)

Tree Canopy Project	Delivery	West of England Combined Authority (WECA) Green Recovery Fund	£1.1m	January 2023 – end of March 2025	Delivering tree planting to achieve shading, cooling, SUDs, air quality, biodiversity and nature recovery, landscape, amenity, regeneration, carbon sequestration, place making and place shaping benefits. – District wide	**All corridors**
Highway Verges – LiveLabs 2	Delivery	Department for Transport (DfT)	£4 million (shared with West Sussex County Council)	April 2023 – 2026	Reducing grass maintenance operational greenhouse gas emissions, increasing soil carbon sequestration, increasing biodiversity and ecosystem services particularly pollinator services (increased wildflowers and pollinating insects) and SuDS. – District wide	**All corridors**
Kingswood Park restoration	Delivery	National Heritage Lottery Fund	£3.36m	2024-2026	This project is delivering community asset improvements to Kingswood Park, a formal park, by restoring and improving facilities, access infrastructure, landscaping and an engagement programme to deliver climate resilience, biodiversity, health and social cohesion benefits.	
Western Forest	Concept	TBC – bid submitted to Forest for the Nation funding by the Forest of Avon Trust	£9million partnership bid submitted	TBC	Where heritage meets innovation, the Western Forest will cultivate a greener, more connected future by creating a unified new landscape with trees and woodlands at its heart across Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and the West of England.	**Corridor D** - Wickwar – Westerleigh – Bitton (Westerleigh Vale Oldland Ridge/ East Fringe)
WENP Priority Programmes Priority Programmes https://www.wenp.org.uk/priority-	Stage varies for each programme	TBC	TBC	TBC	The West of England Partnership launched 9 Priority Programmes for nature recovery in November 2024. This includes some of the projects in South Gloucestershire listed in the above table. The programmes are: • **Western Forest** • **Grassland Connections** • **Severn Shoreline, Levels and Moors** • **Restoring our Rivers**	**All corridors** – see specific programmes for detail

programmes					• **Urban Nature** • **Tackling Transport Severance** • **Returning Species** • **Local Wildlife Sites and 30 by 30** • **State of Nature Monitoring**	