



Implementing Making Space for Nature

A view from the statutory sector

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Outline of presentation



- Nature Conservation context for the review
- Opportunities and constraints
 - Identifying and protecting England's ecological network
 - Managing components of the network
- The future of ecological restoration – an integrated approach
 - Establishing new components
 - Improving the wider countryside
- Not going to go through all 24 recommendations (though we like them!)

Context for the review



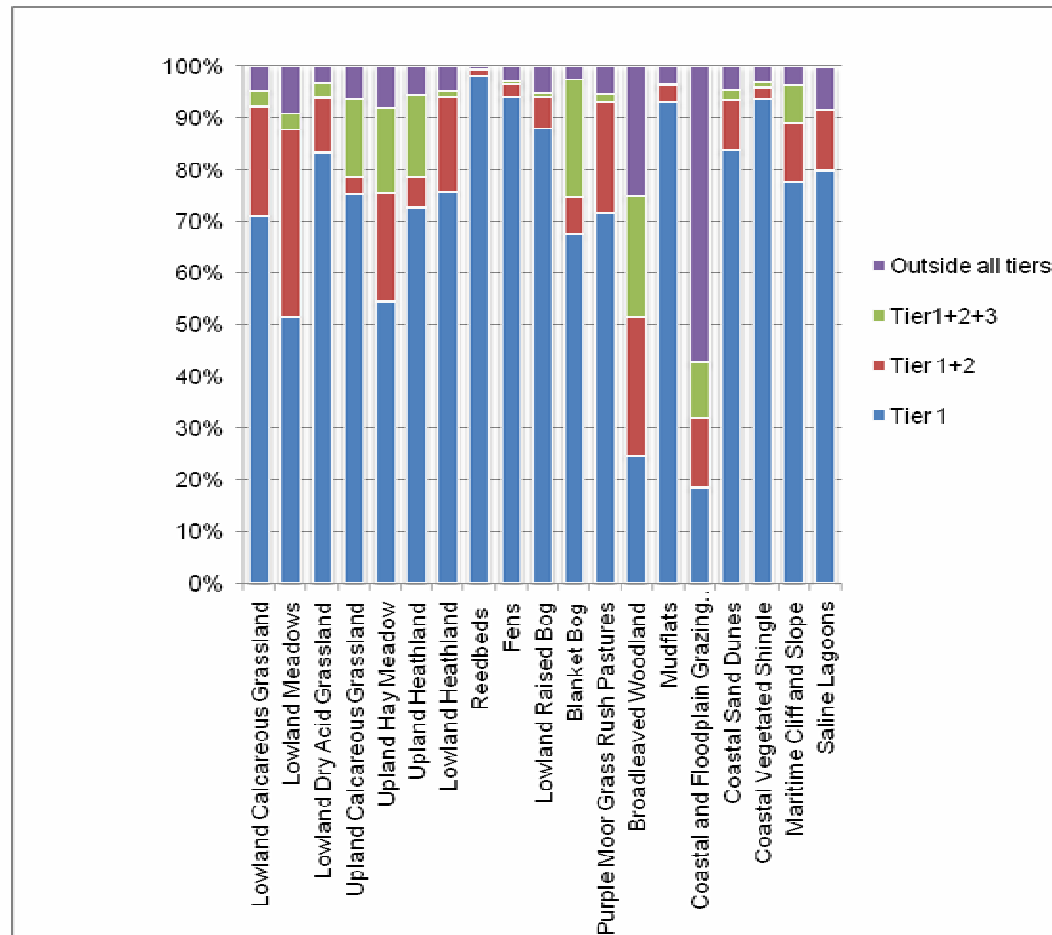
- SSSIs getting better, biodiversity still declining (2010 targets missed)
- Landscape-scale conservation becoming the dominant conservation paradigm (taking over from protected areas and habitat/species based approaches)
- 'Protected areas' seen as out-dated (at least by some)
- Localism/ Big society solutions



Identifying and protecting network components



- Context:
 - 6.1% England in SSSIs (above MHW)
 - Most remaining priority habitat now in 'wildlife sites'



Identifying and protecting network components



- NE will NOT be designating thousands of new SSSIs!
- NE will designate some SSSIs where key gaps exist
- NE will take account of the review when designating new sites (e.g. in determining site boundaries)
- 'Protect' by incentivising those who look after wildlife habitats



Identifying and protecting network components



- Review envisaged key role for the planning system. Statutory conservation body roles include:
 - setting standards and providing data for identifying network components (e.g. habitat inventories)
 - supporting development of ecological restoration zones
 - restoring dynamic systems – especially rivers and coasts



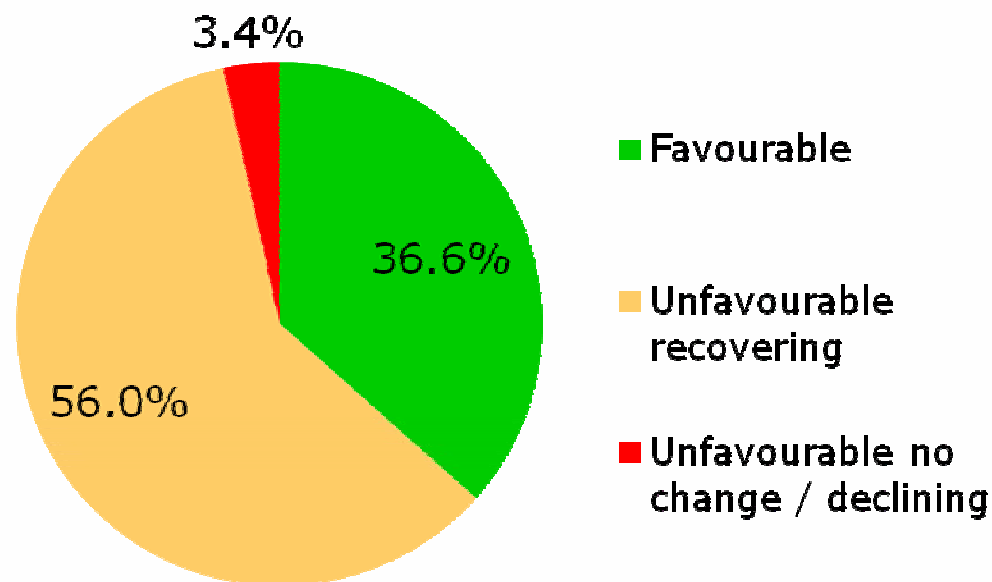
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Managing network components



Context:

- SSSI condition



- Local Wildlife Sites – 40% 'under management' (NI 197)
- AONBs/ National Parks – value added for biodiversity is ambiguous (cf. SSSIs and farmland birds)

Managing network components



- SSSIs – trajectories estimate 50% favourable by 2020 (but many factors causing unfavourable condition are 'off-site')
- Local Wildlife Sites and other wildlife habitats represent an enormous challenge
 - none of 100 non-SSSIs heathlands are currently favourable
 - Median LWS = 4.6 ha; 90th percentile = 31 ha
 - A good start would be notifying LWS owners where they are and what they need
- Environmental Stewardship (and Flood Risk Management funding) needs to be properly targeted where it is most needed.
- 'MESME' aims to improve matters e.g. by rewarding landowners who work together

Managing network components

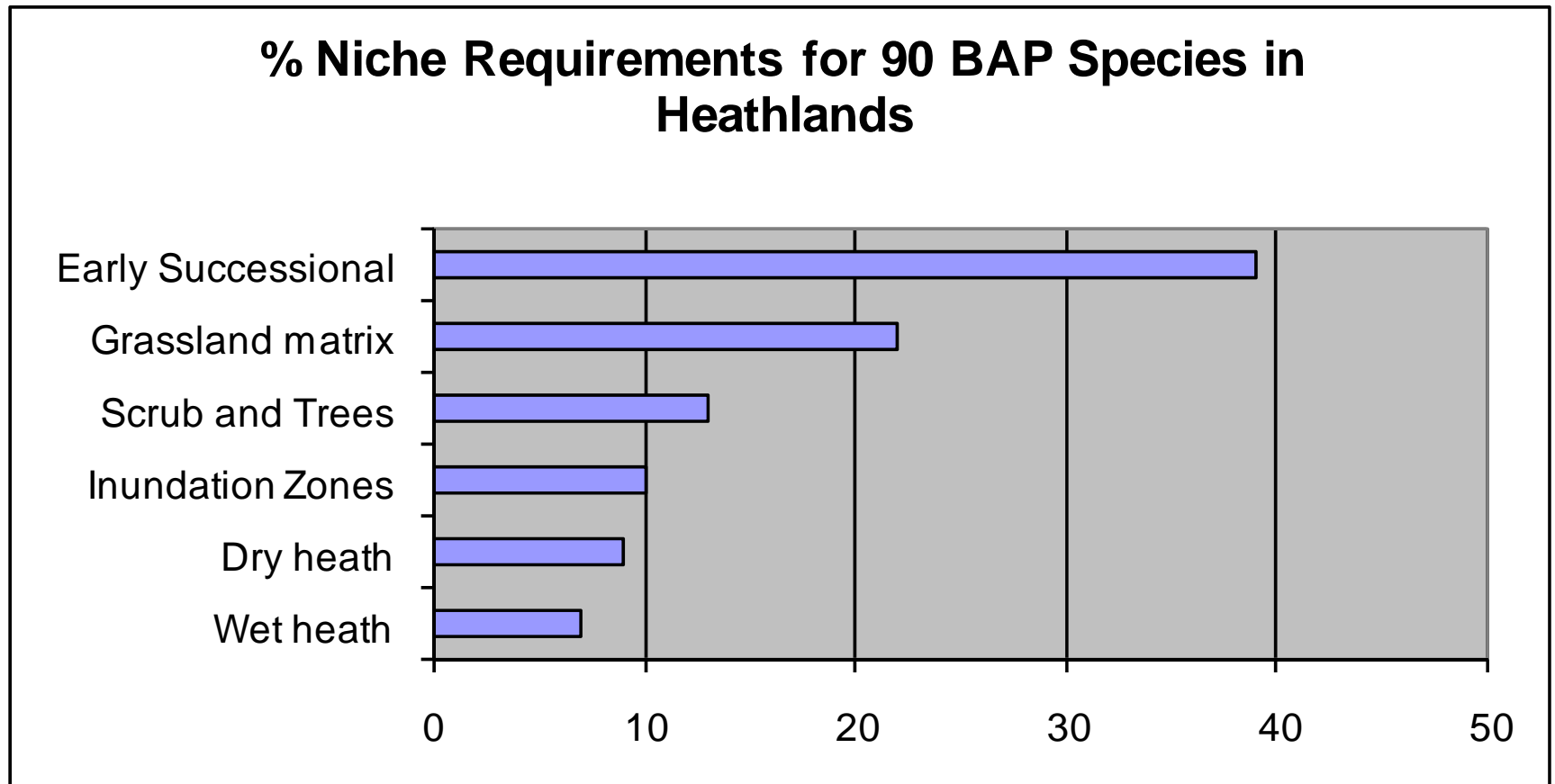


- The review identified 'better' as the most important ecological solution
- Make our remaining sites work harder for wildlife – create thriving populations of species that can then both persist better where they are and colonise new sites
- Future-proof management – shift towards managing for habitat heterogeneity and ecological processes instead of specific species/ features

Why manage for heterogeneity?



But what do 'heathland species' need?



Future heathland...

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Managing for heterogeneity – practical issues

- How do we set and monitor site objectives for heterogeneity – is there a risk of lazy management?
- What are the right scales (in time and space) for heterogeneity?
- Should we move towards managing wildlife networks rather than individual sites?
- Smaller-scale management is more expensive and may be impractical:
Lowland heathland management 'unit' = 30 ha
- Can we develop cost-effective and practical management at these scales?

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John Vidal

guardian.co.uk, Sunday 17 April 2011 18.26 BST

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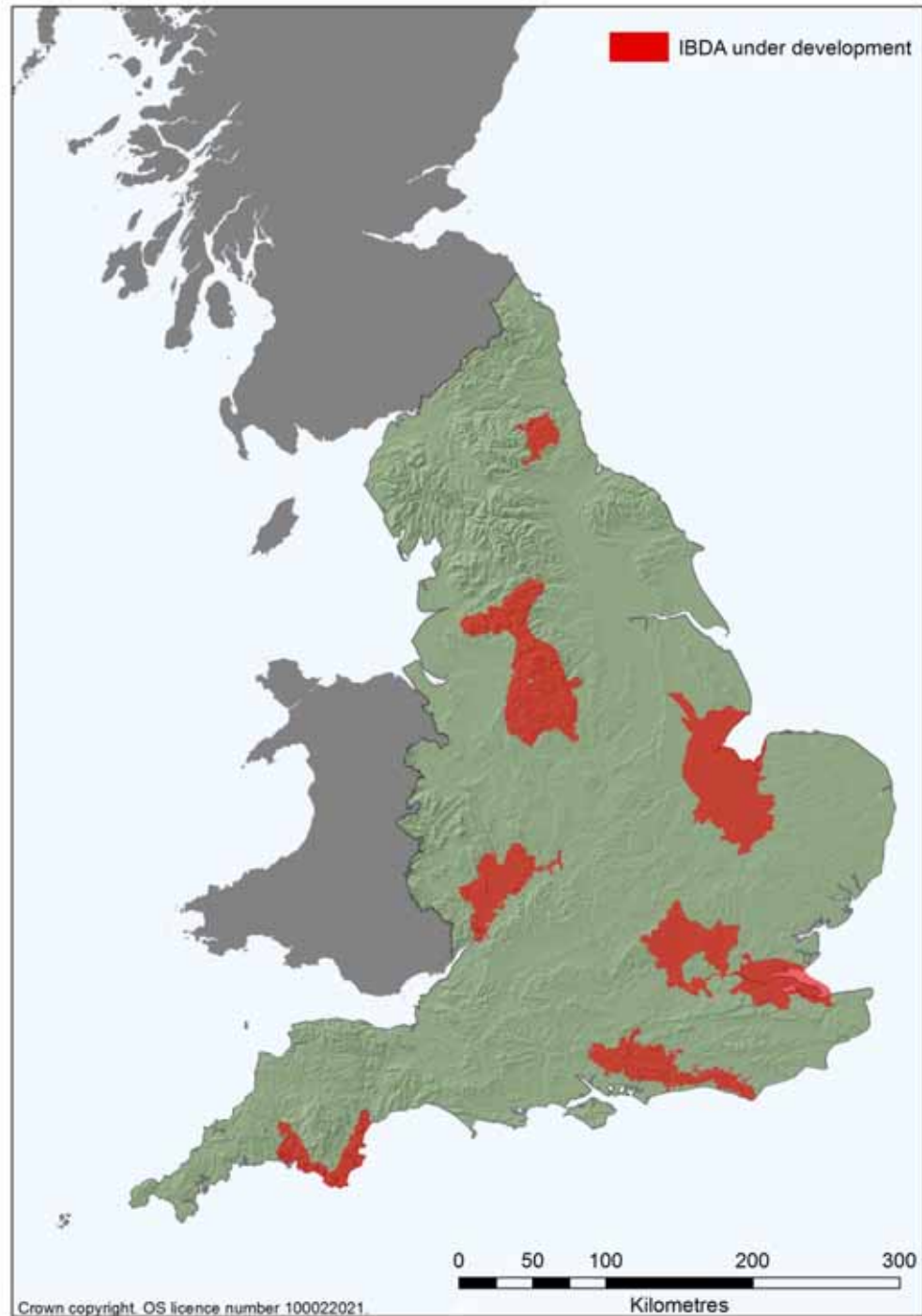
Integrated approach to ecological restoration

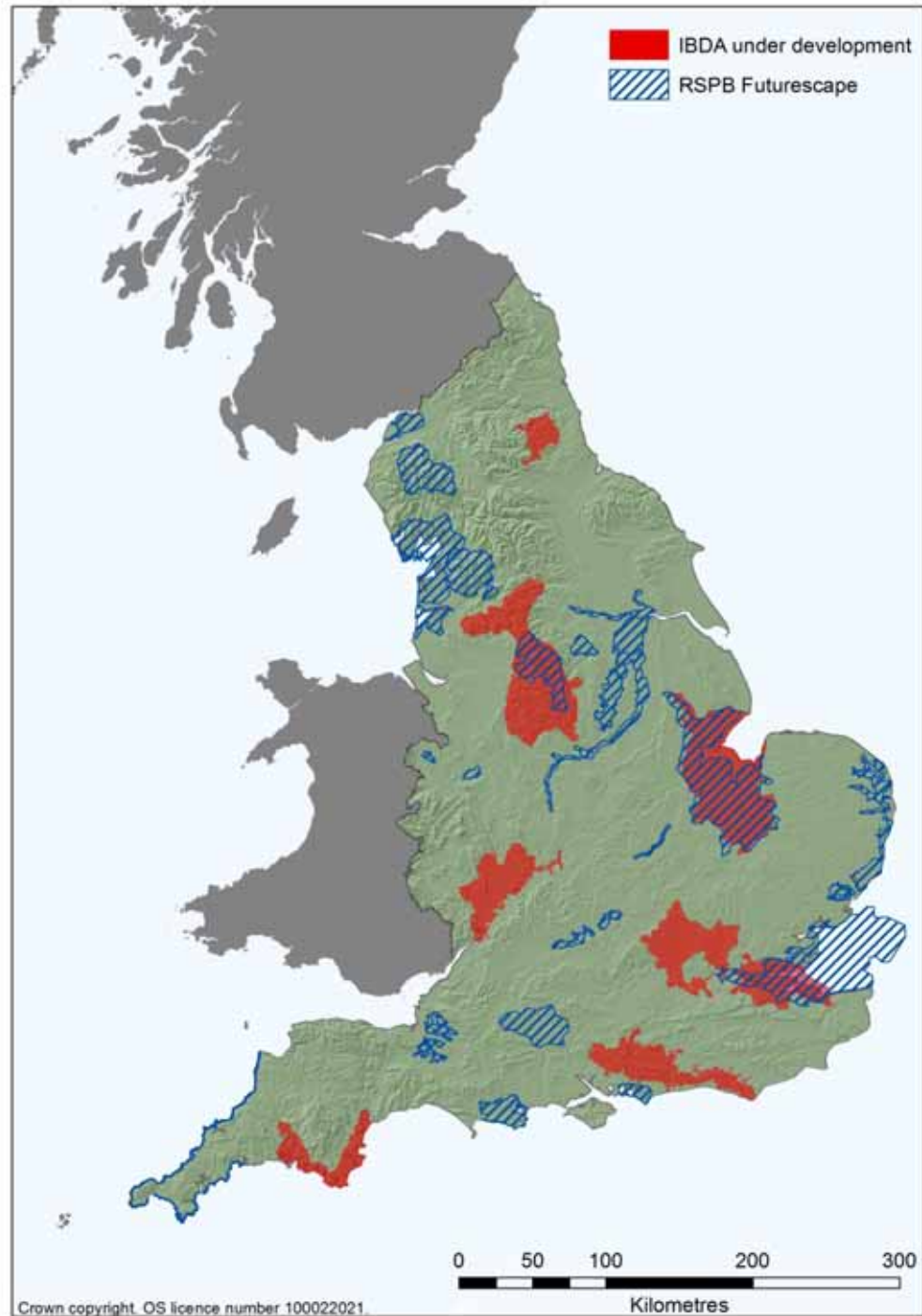


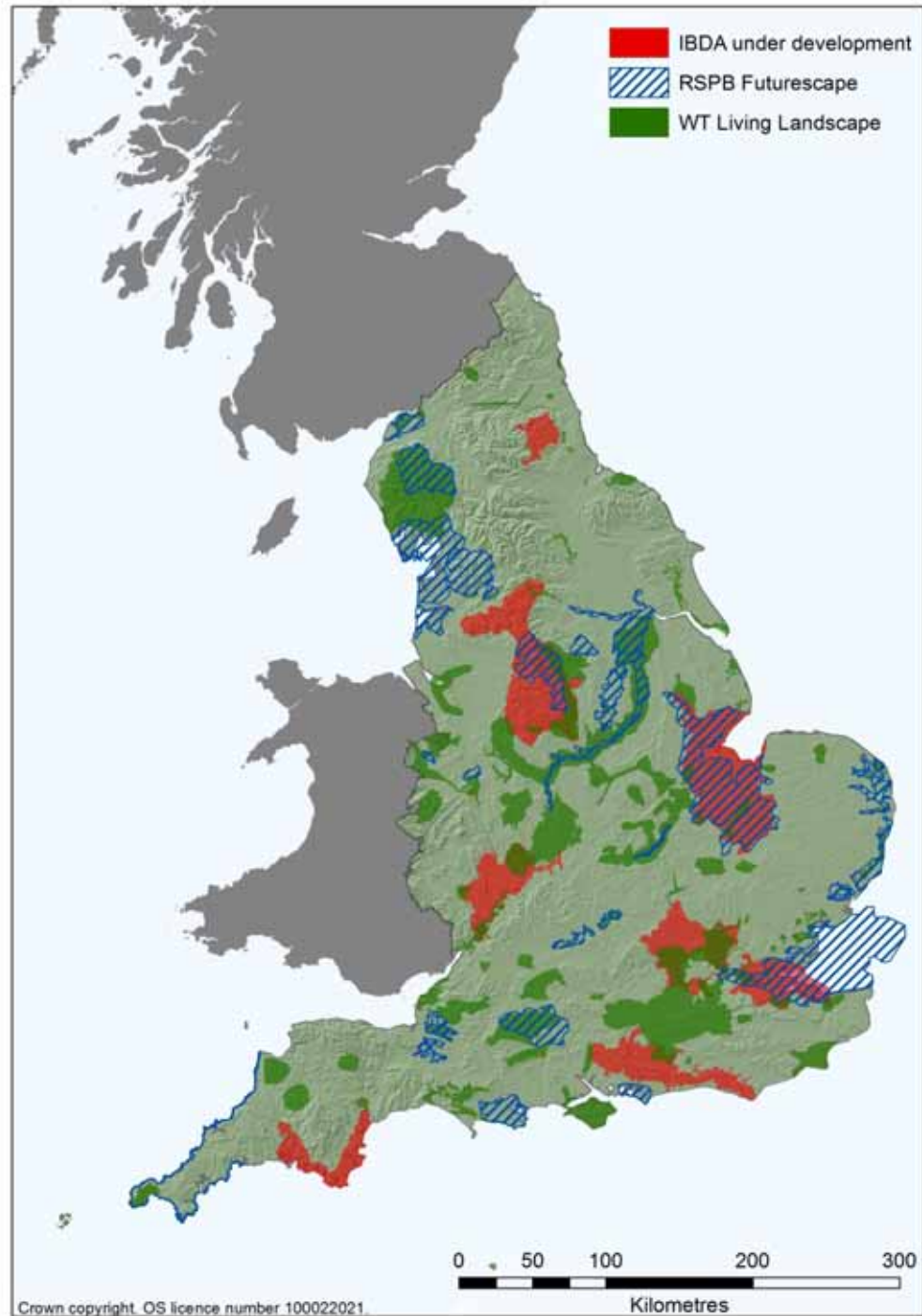
- Establishing new components
- Improving the wider countryside
- Context:
 - Restoration + Creation BAP habitat targets = 1.5% England
 - Making Space for Nature recommendations:
 - Priority for creation/ restoration is to make existing sites bigger and create stepping stones
 - In some places the scale of the challenge and opportunity warrants the establishment of new 'ecological restoration zones'
 - Use ERZs as focus for habitat creation/ restoration effort
 - Techniques for habitat creation are still imperfect

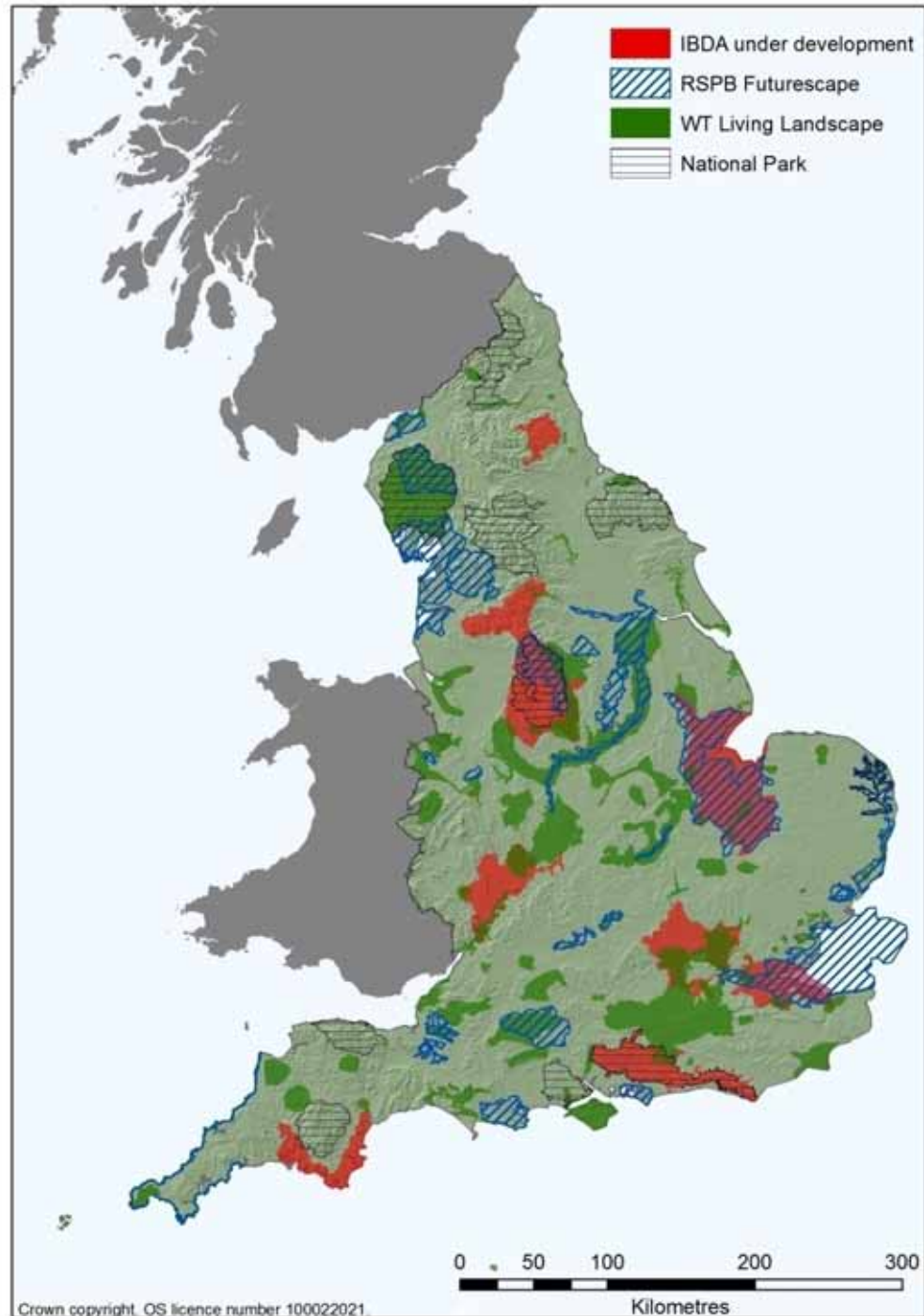
Many landscape-scale initiatives are planned or underway (and have been since the 1980s)

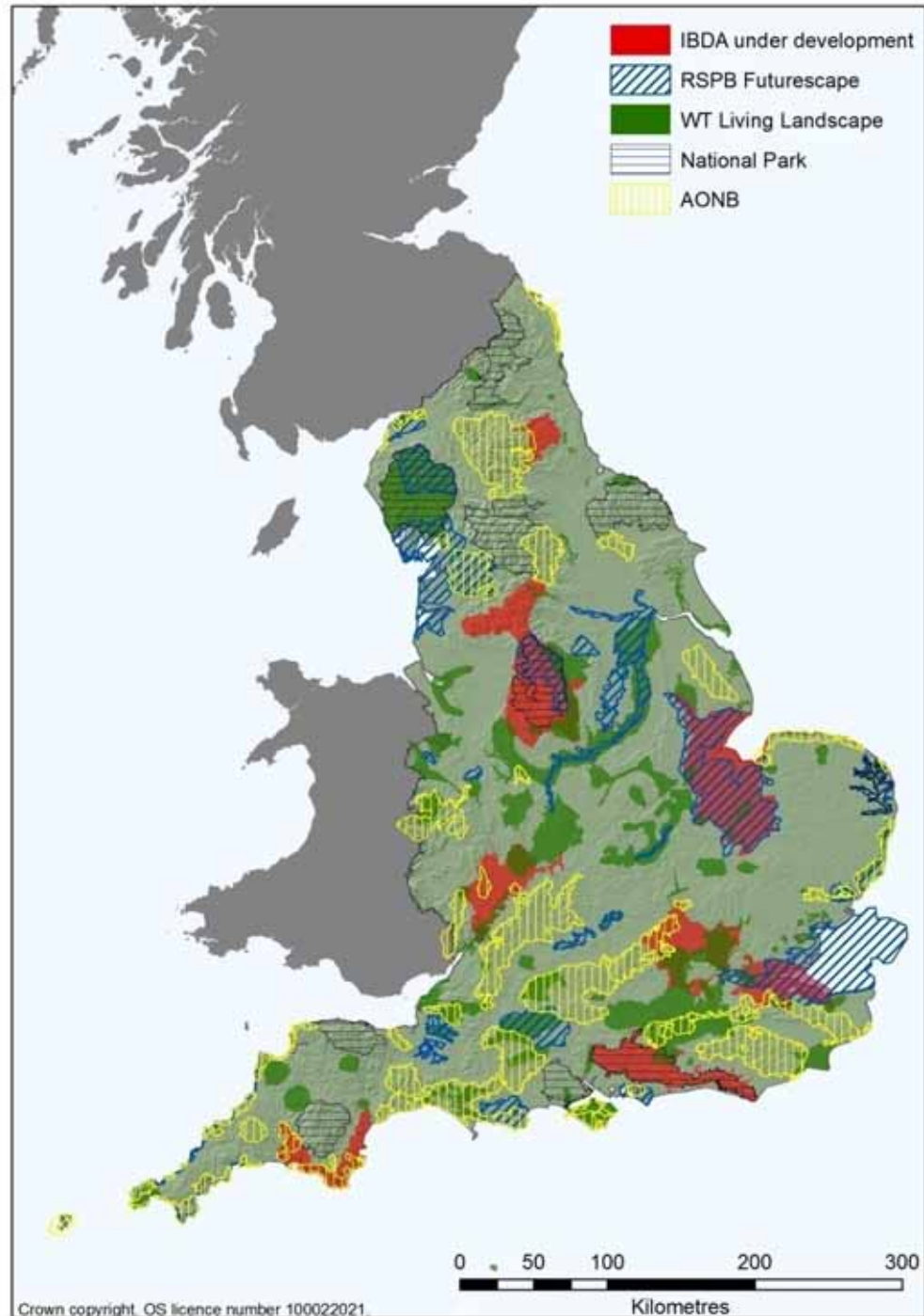














The landscape-scale delivery challenge

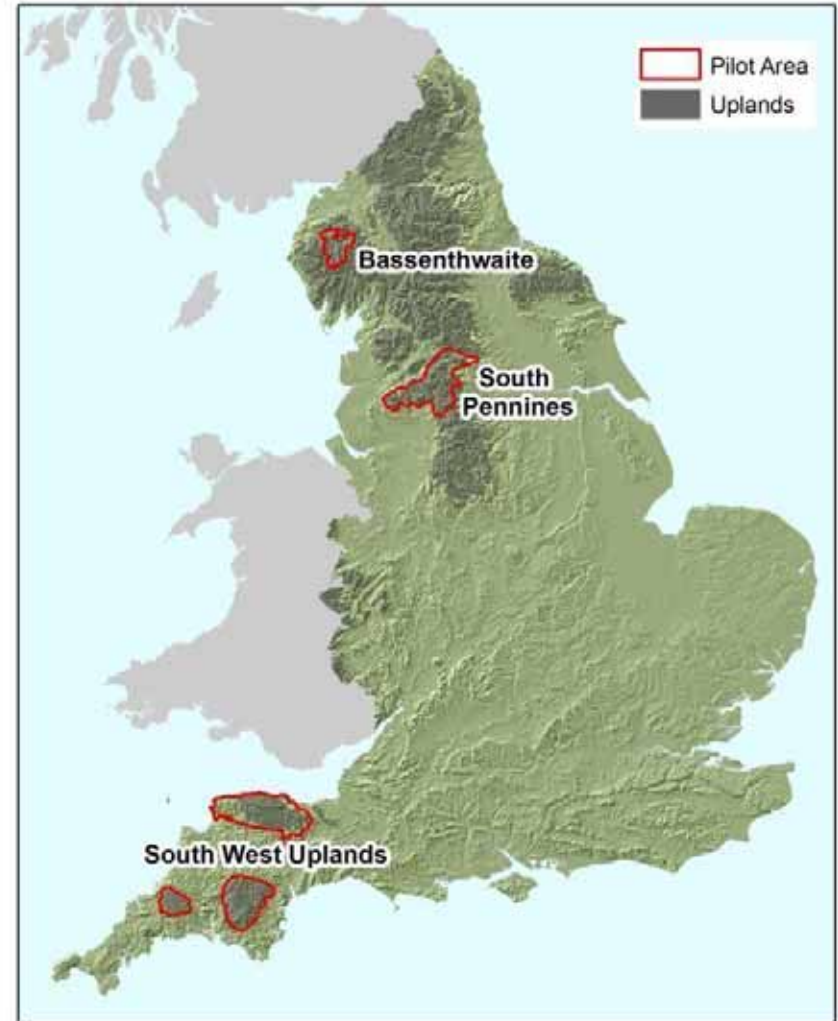
- Not enough “biodiversity resource” to go around – how do we avoid spreading it too thinly?
- Achieving buy-in across any particular area involves people! The solutions are often as much social as they are ecological or incentive-led. Do we have the skills?
- Societal concerns about competing demands on land (e.g. food vs. biodiversity) and constraints on economic growth
- Achieving the right balance between national and local decision-making and control
- We need concentration spans that last longer than 3 years!

Ecosystem service pilots

There are three pilot areas:

- Bassenthwaite Lake catchment, Cumbria
- South Pennines National Character Area, Yorkshire
- Dartmoor and Exmoor, South West

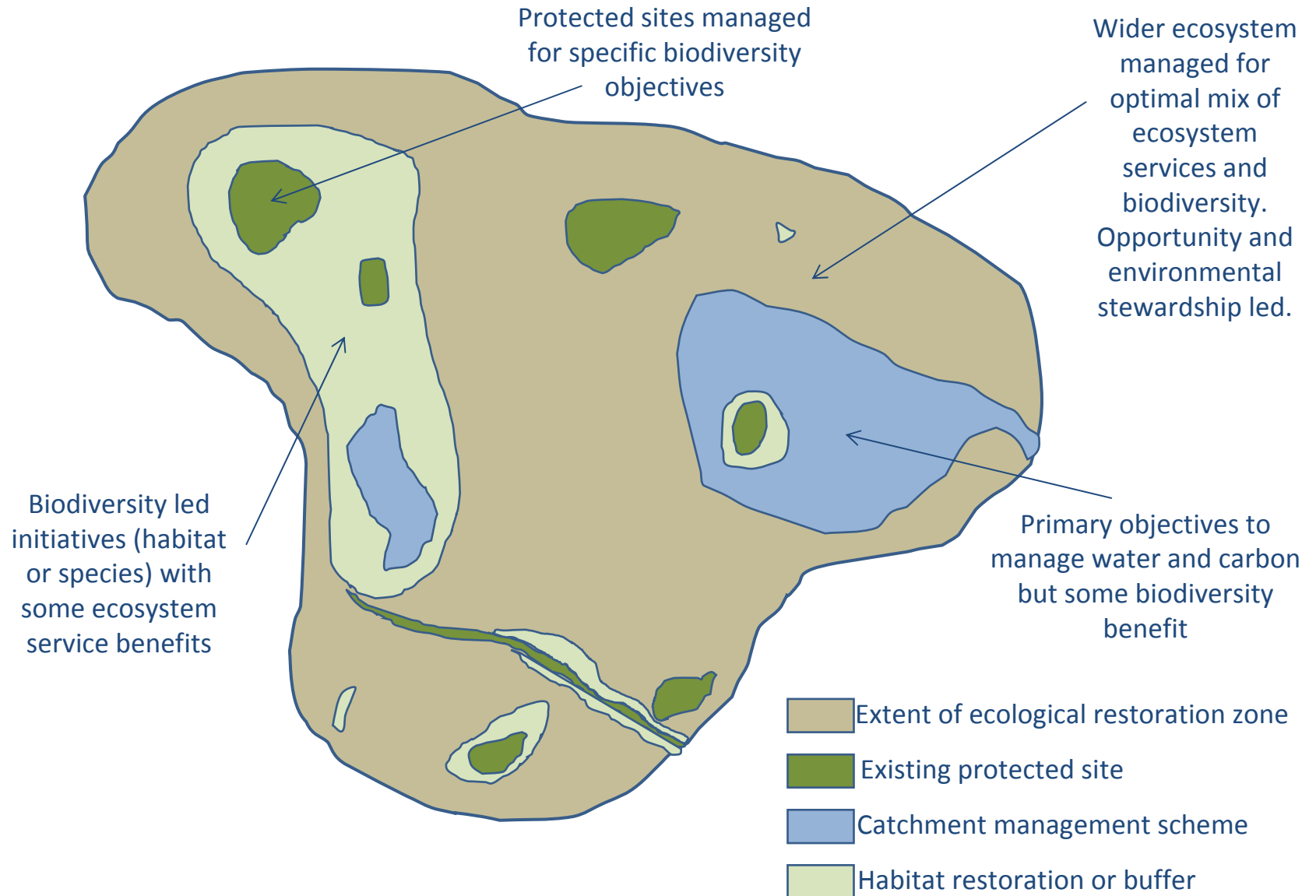
Each is being run regionally with stakeholder groups



What we are learning

- We can do a lot more with existing funds – e.g. in Bassenthwaite new HLS and renewed Catchment Flood Management Plans offer significant opportunities
- You can reach a consensus view but need to talk to lots of people: Bassenthwaite pilot has involved over 70 people (20 organisations) in planning future land and water management
- We will never have all of the evidence required to make all decisions – portfolio approaches spread risk
- It matters where you do things – need to understand soils, hydrology and vegetation but we *can* manage 'assets' (habitats, soils, water)

Combining different objectives in the landscape. A large scale initiative (e.g. ecological restoration zone) might consist of a suite of projects across the landscape, each with different objectives, led by different partners and funded from multiple sources.





Take home messages

- Statutory bodies are fully committed to implementing the Making Space for Nature Review – and will work together to do so
- We still have a long way to go to halt current biodiversity losses, let alone improve matters
- Wildlife sites will remain important but we need to move beyond 'traditional' management by implementing an ecosystem approach
 - enhance heterogeneity
 - develop new management techniques, including ones integrated with economically efficient solutions
 - people at the heart of the solution, not just the problem