Data to Decisions

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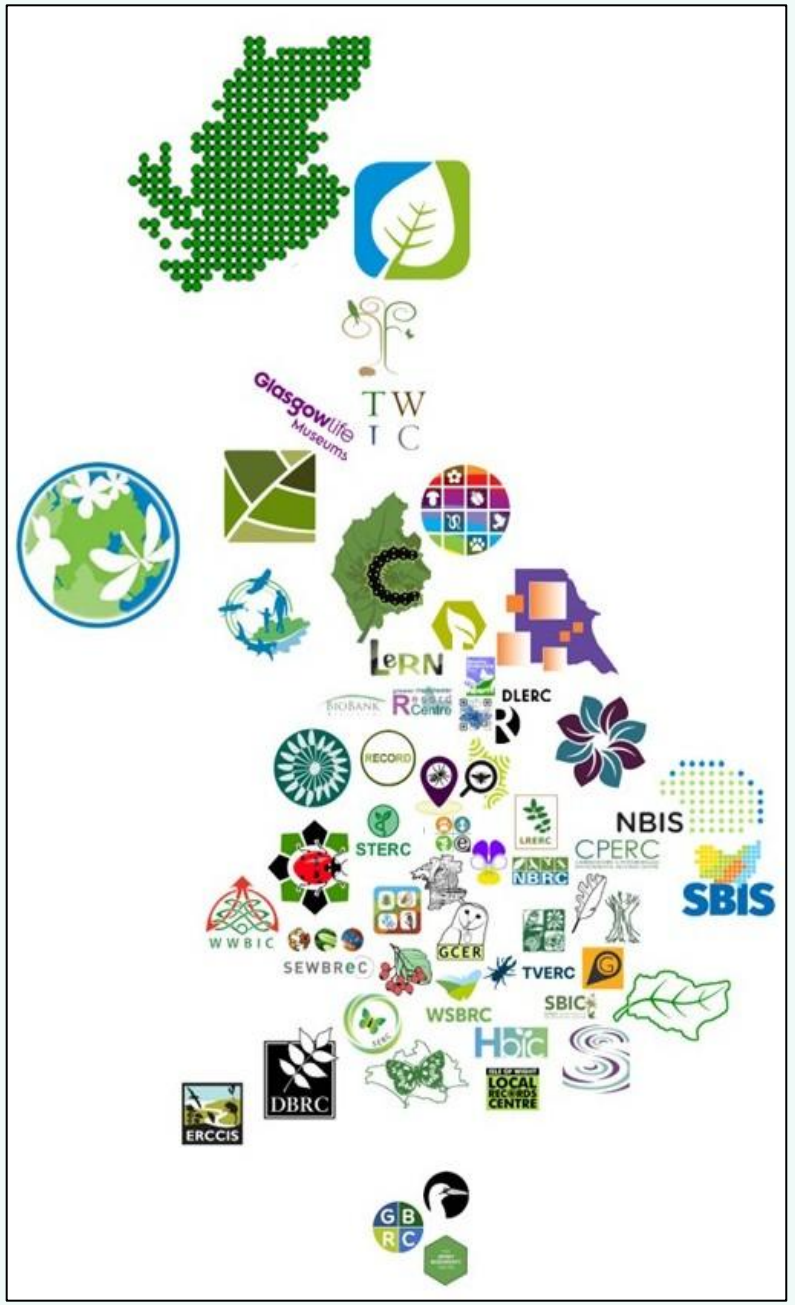
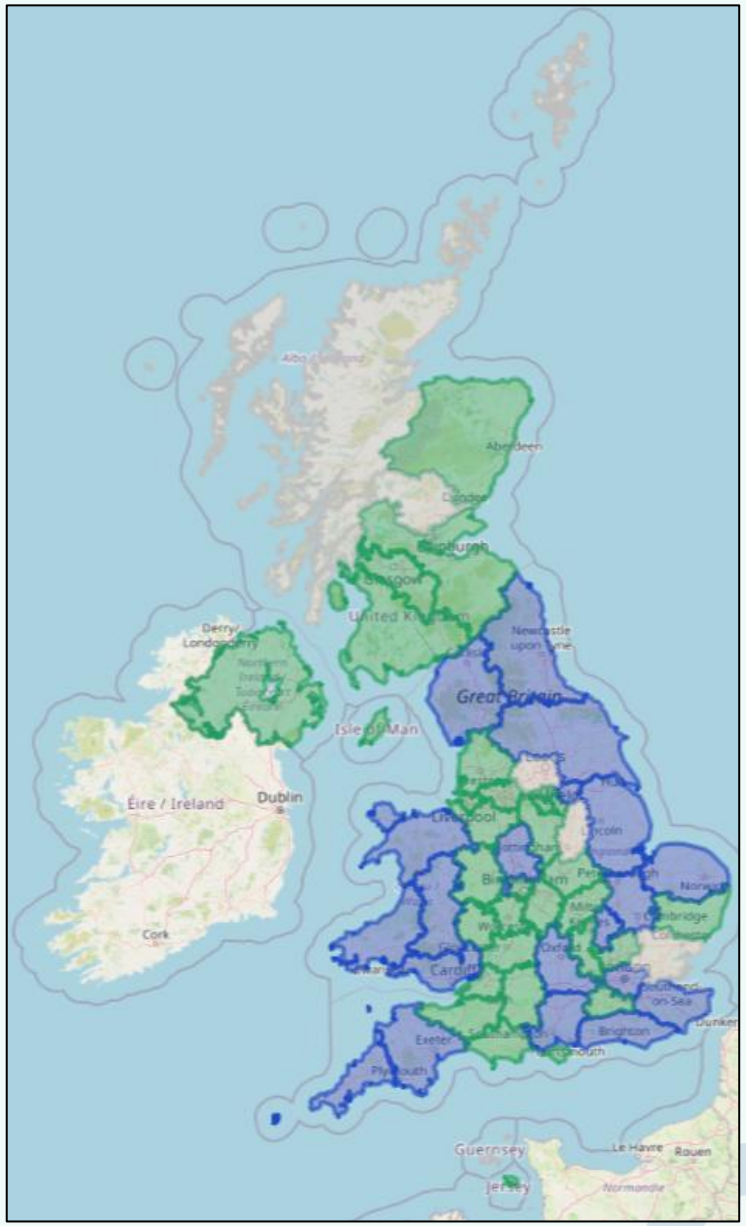
ALERC
Association of Local Environmental Records Centres



- 54 ALERC members
- 80% of the UK
- 20 Accredited LERCs (blue on map)
- 200+ people employed
- 11 independent charities/CIC
- 43 hosted by another organisation



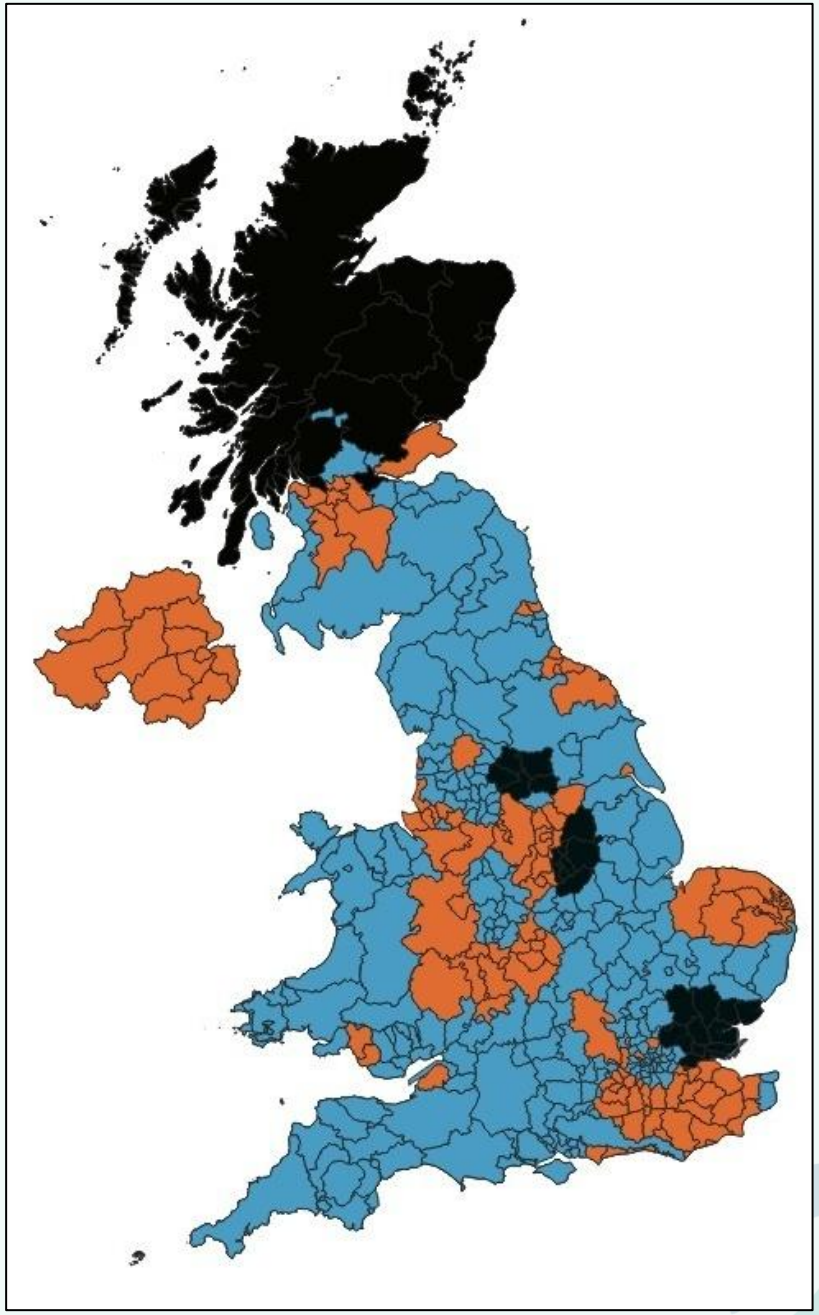
Local Environmental Records Centres

- LERCs support Local Planning Authorities
- 213 - Service Level Agreements for biodiversity Data. (blue)
- 124 – Lapsed, in discussion or don't exist (orange)
- 42 – not covered by ALERC member

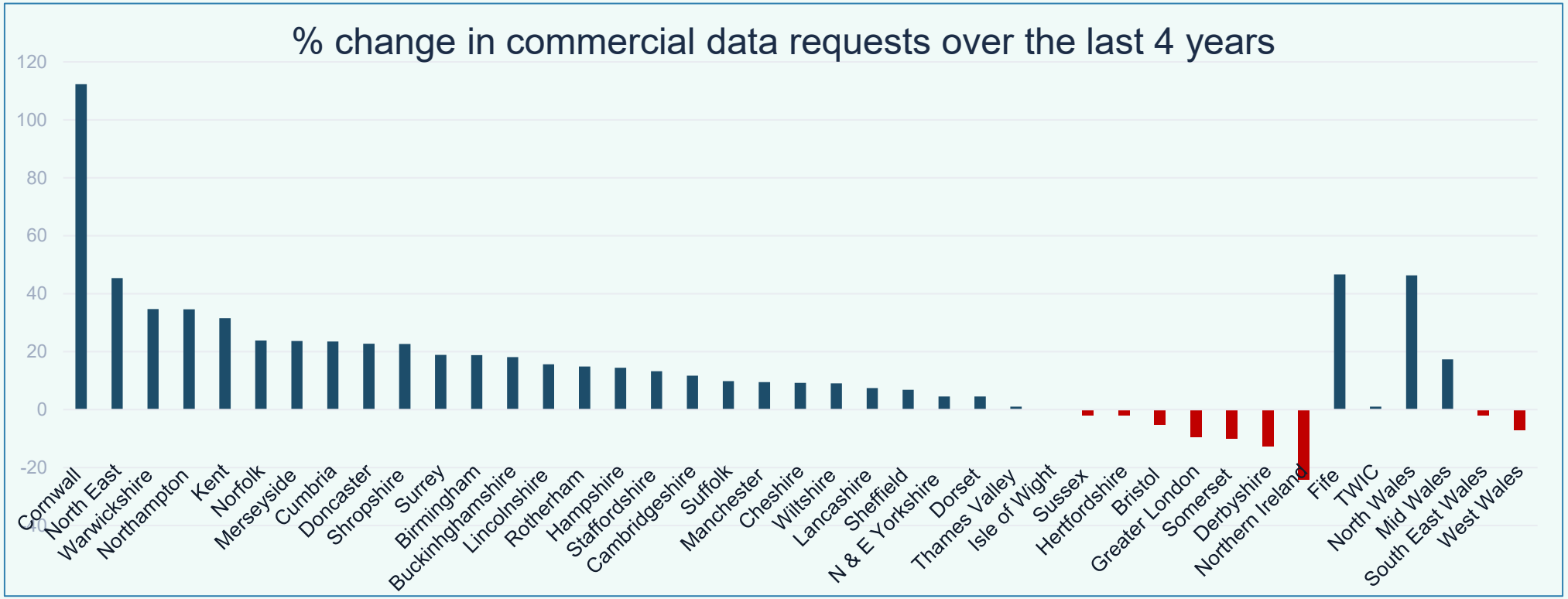
But…Is the data fully utilised?

"Although an SLA is in place and data supplied, we believe the data is only partially utilised by the planning authority in planning screening."

Working with Local Planning Authorities



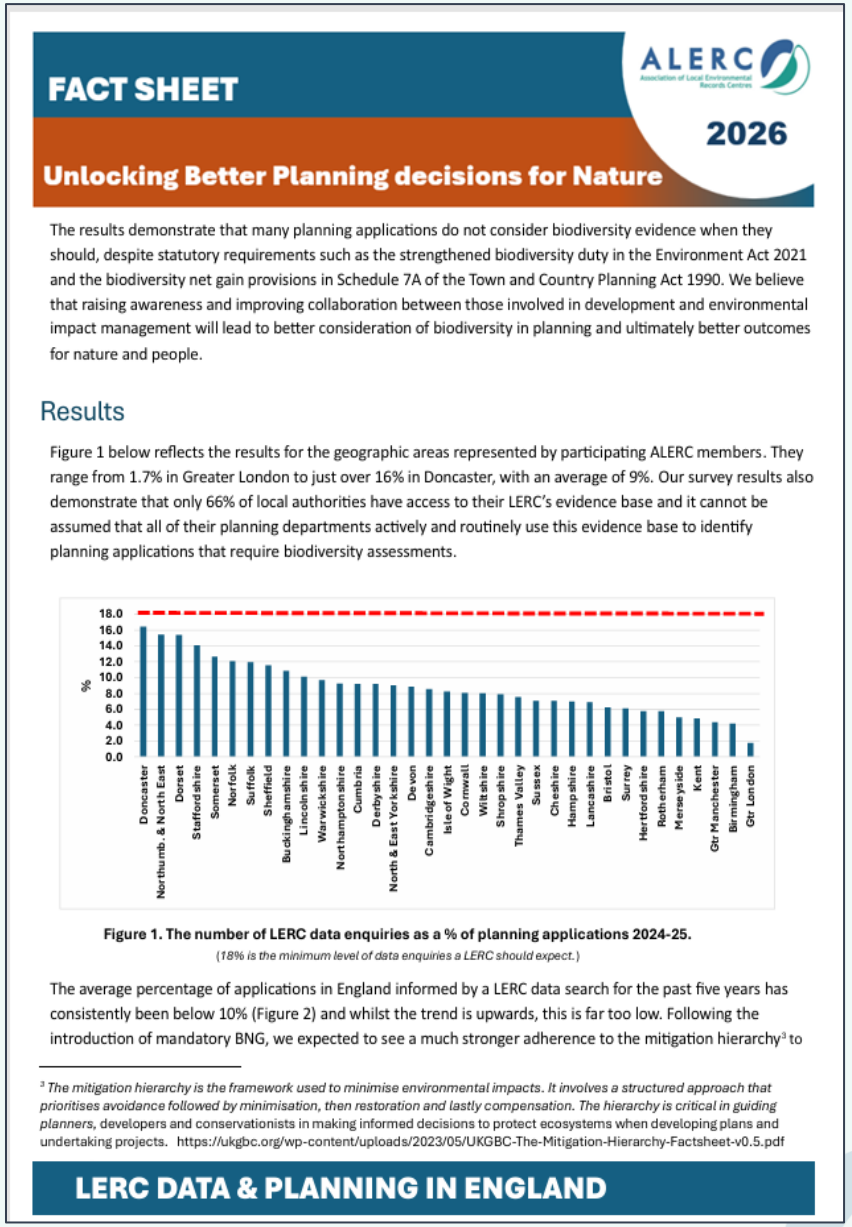
- LERC commercial data enquiries risen by 11% over last four years
- 21,000 commercial data enquiries
- Over £5.1 million each year



Increasing requests for LERC services from ecologists and consultants

- 18-22% = average % of planning and development applications requiring a LERC data search
- 9% = average value for England
- 10% = average value for Wales
- 16% - Doncaster LERC
- 2% - Greater London
- Fact Sheet
- Meetings with CIEEM and Planning Advisory Service

Better Planning Decisions for Nature



FACT SHEET

ALERC Association of Local Environmental Records Centres

2026

Unlocking Better Planning decisions for Nature

The results demonstrate that many planning applications do not consider biodiversity evidence when they should, despite statutory requirements such as the strengthened biodiversity duty in the Environment Act 2021 and the biodiversity net gain provisions in Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. We believe that raising awareness and improving collaboration between those involved in development and environmental impact management will lead to better consideration of biodiversity in planning and ultimately better outcomes for nature and people.

Results

Figure 1 below reflects the results for the geographic areas represented by participating ALERC members. They range from 1.7% in Greater London to just over 16% in Doncaster, with an average of 9%. Our survey results also demonstrate that only 66% of local authorities have access to their LERC's evidence base and it cannot be assumed that all of their planning departments actively and routinely use this evidence base to identify planning applications that require biodiversity assessments.

Figure 1. The number of LERC data enquiries as a % of planning applications 2024-25.

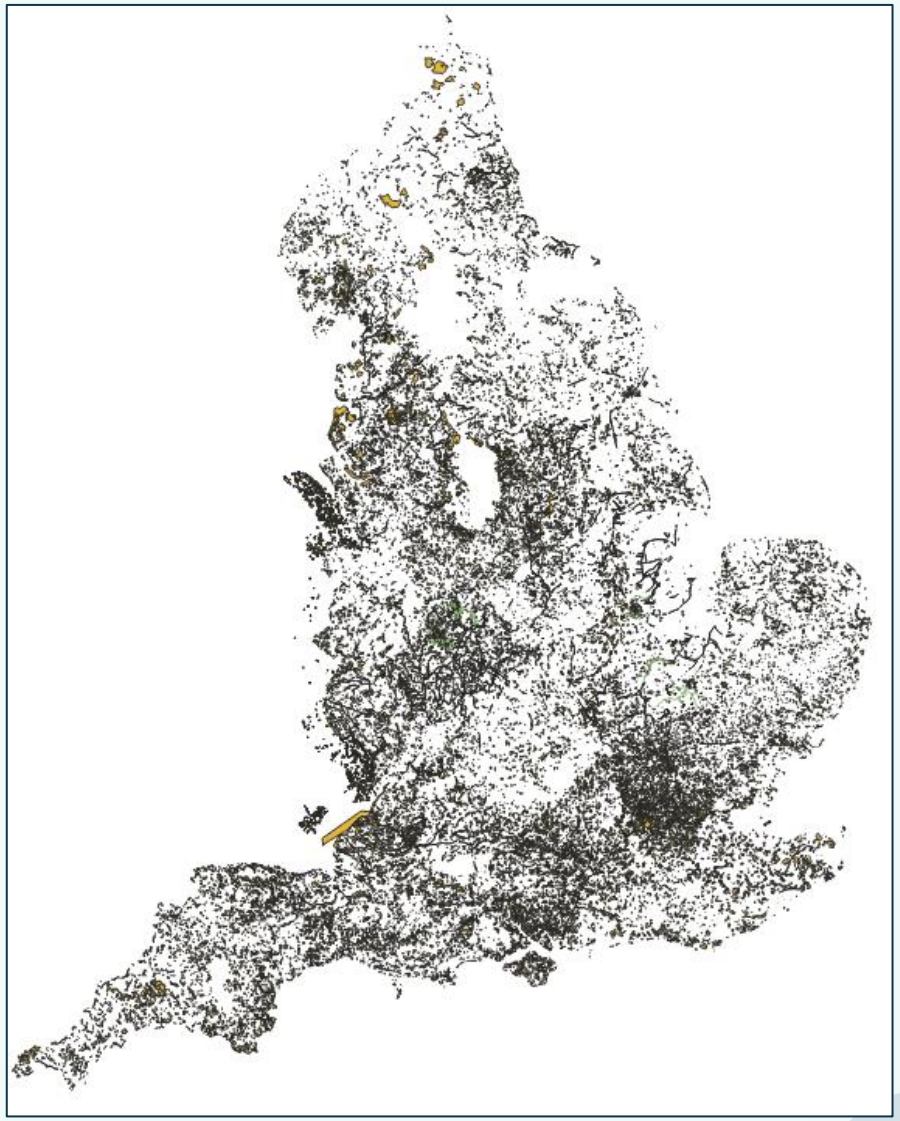
(18% is the minimum level of data enquiries a LERC should expect.)

The average percentage of applications in England informed by a LERC data search for the past five years has consistently been below 10% (Figure 2) and whilst the trend is upwards, this is far too low. Following the introduction of mandatory BNG, we expected to see a much stronger adherence to the mitigation hierarchy[3] to

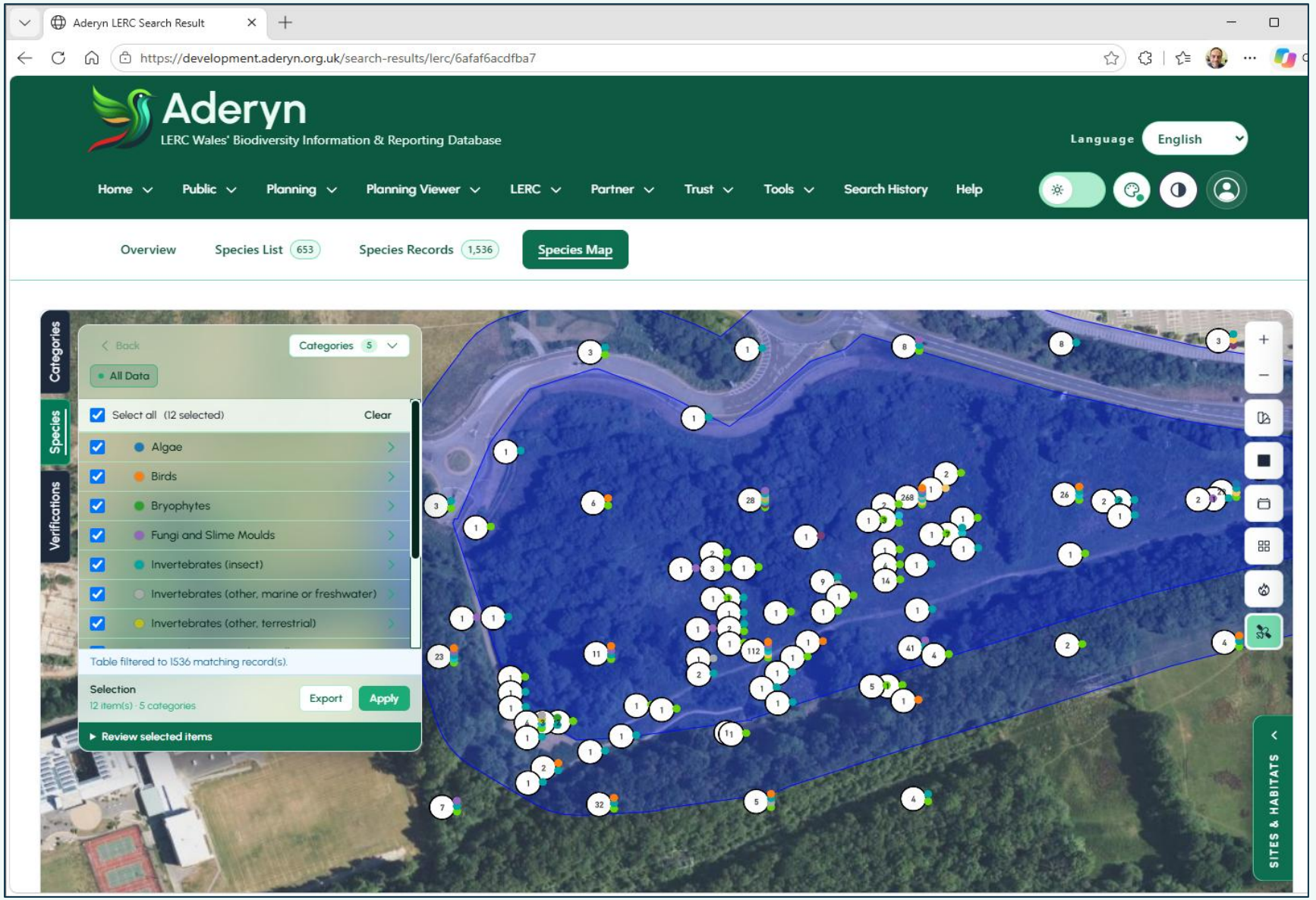
[3] *The mitigation hierarchy is the framework used to minimise environmental impacts. It involves a structured approach that prioritises avoidance followed by minimisation, then restoration and lastly compensation. The hierarchy is critical in guiding planners*, developers and conservationists in making informed decisions to protect ecosystems when developing plans and undertaking projects. https://ukgbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/UKGBC-The-Mitigation-Hierarchy-Factsheet-v0.5.pdf

LERC DATA & PLANNING IN ENGLAND

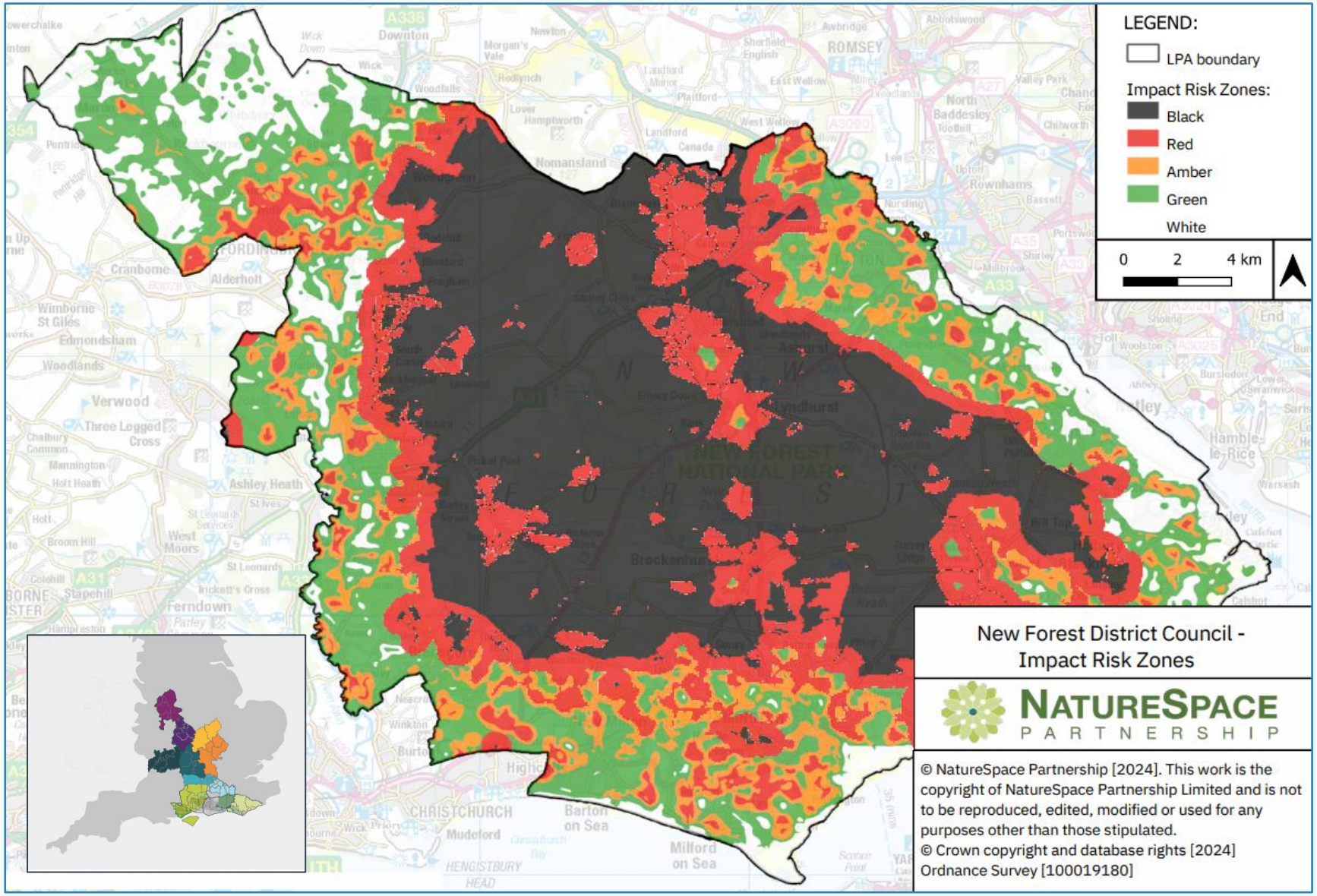
- Scotland
  Biodiversity Duty Reporting
- NI
  Review of the conservation status of 32 species and 52 habitats
- England
  Supporting The Wildlife Trusts Dashboards and Heatmaps



Supporting national decision making across the UK



Screening Planning Applications in Wales



Improving decision making through partnership

- South East Wales BRC, developers and land managers
- Connected, resilient nature network across Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Improving habitat management on land with planning obligations
- Creating corridors and stepping stones
- Influencing future planning
- Engaging local communities

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Building Nature Networks in Rhondda Cynon Taf

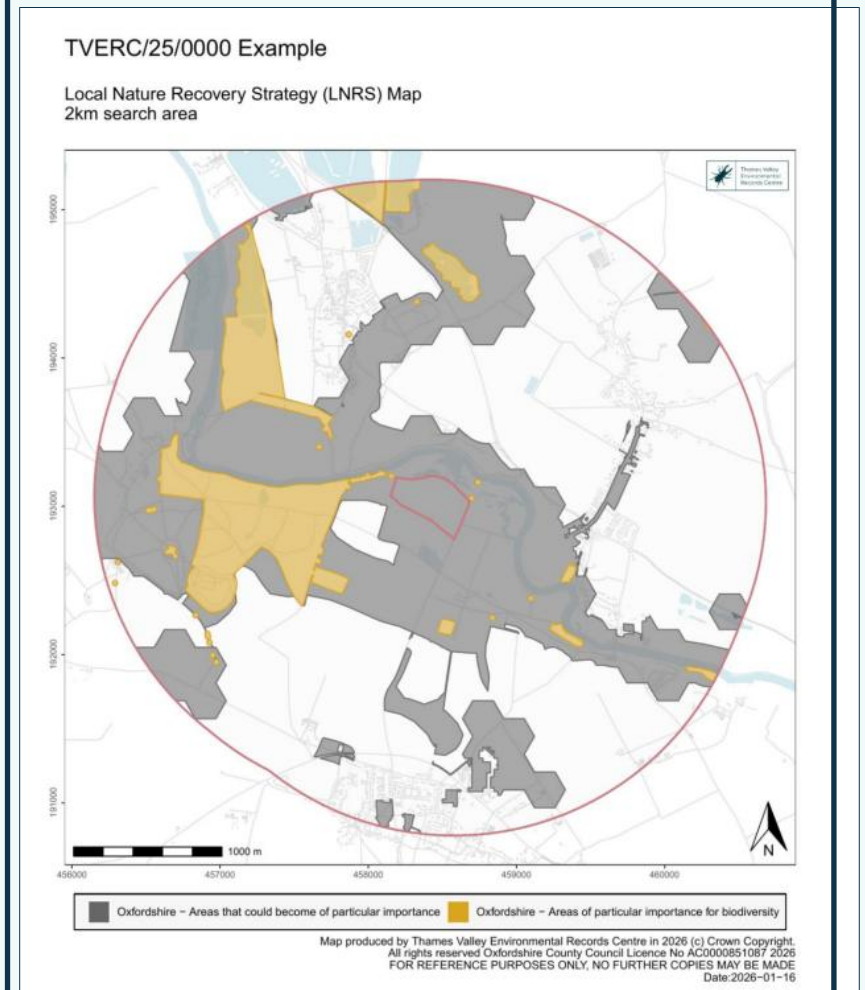


LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY (LNRS) REPORT

Site: Example
TVERC Ref: TVERC/25/0000
Prepared for: Example
On: 2026-01-16
By: Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
datasearch@tverc.org
https://www.tverc.org/

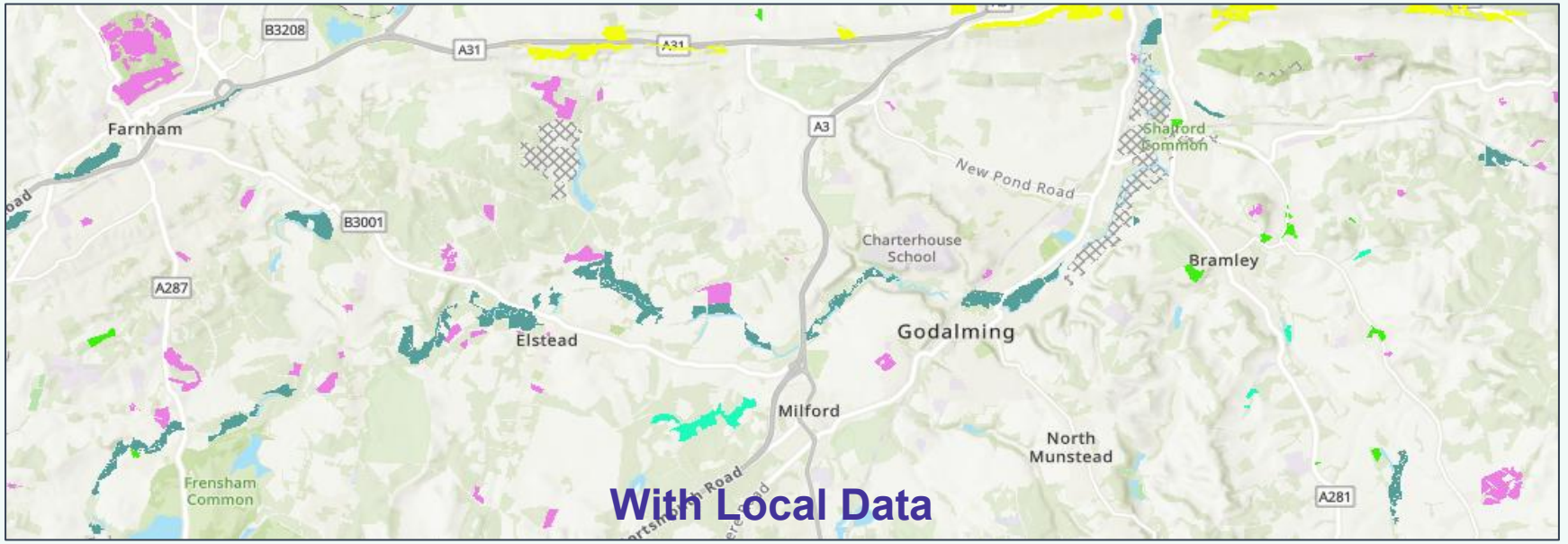
The LNRS data is published under Open Government Licence. This report should not be passed on to third parties or published without prior permission of TVERC.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre



Improving services for ecologists in the Thames Valley

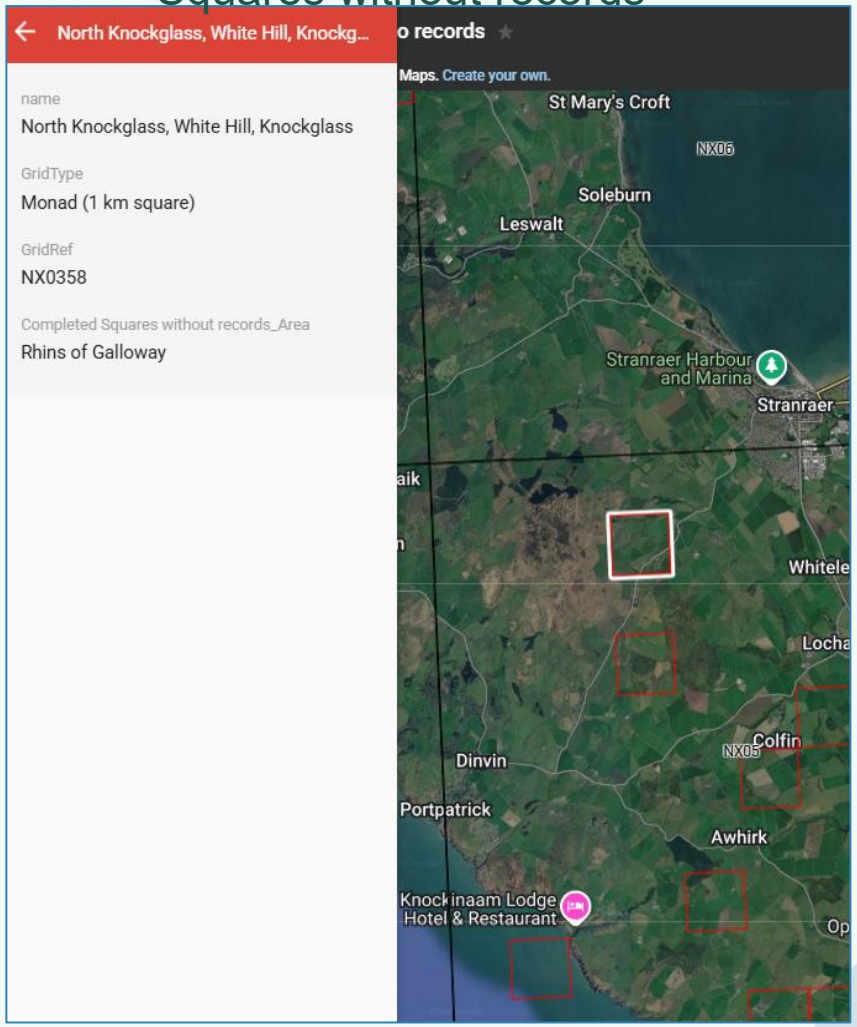




Responding to Local Needs – Surrey Important Grassland Inventory

- Verification
- Places with no records at all
- Gaps in species distribution
- Updating site and habitat surveys
- Local recorders and citizen scientists
- Data sharing with Local and National schemes

South West Scotland Environmental Information Centre:
Squares without records



Continuously improving data



We still need knowledgeable, enthusiastic, wildlife loving people

Thank You

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