Greater Sedgemoor Landscape Recovery

Development Phase update

SOMERSET RIVERS AUTHORITY - March 2025

FWAG SouthWest

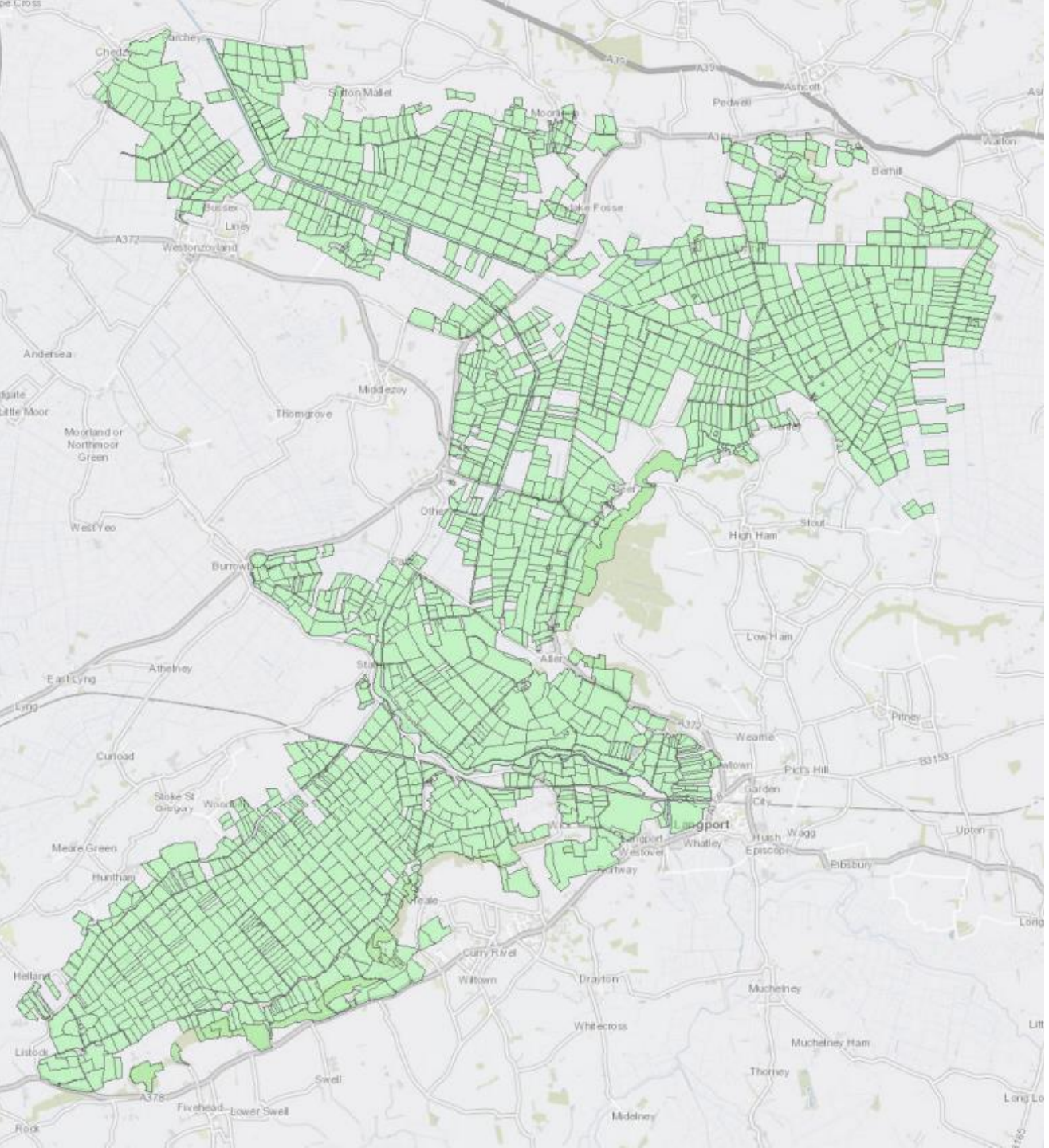
RSPB ENGLAND

Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

Environment Agency

NATURAL ENGLAND

Landscape Recovery



Highest tier of Defra's Environmental Land Management Scheme

120 landowners signed up to this development phase

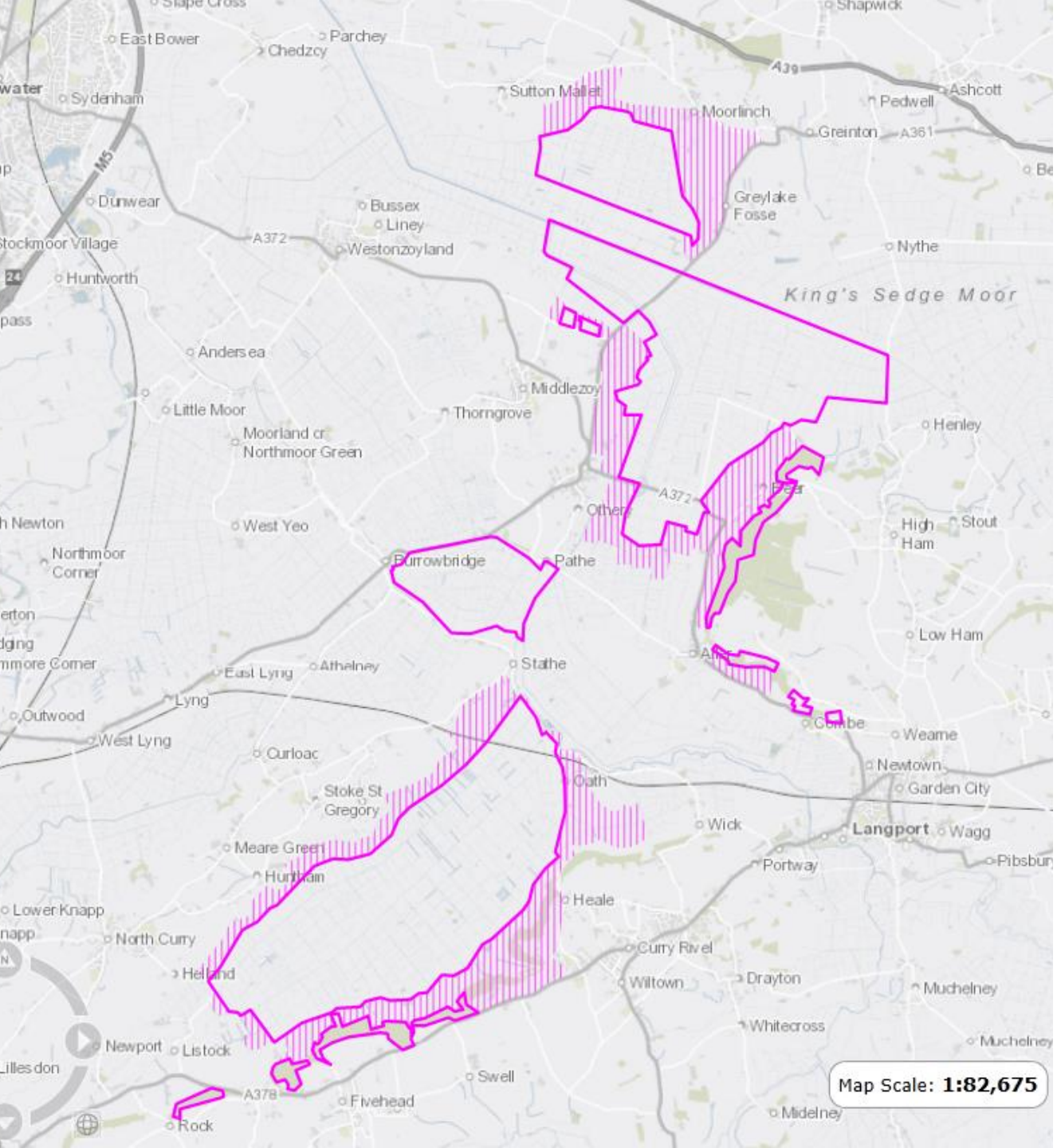
2,500+ separate land parcels – majority on floodplains - with over 5,000ha of land.

20yr agreement for those that wish to take it up – due to start April 2026.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Enhancing and buffering the 'protected sites' (SSSIs SPA).
- Increasing resilience to impacts of climate change and provide long term security for farm businesses.
- Creating more and better quality habitat.
- Supporting transition to 'Net Zero' carbon emissions.
- Enhancing access and nature connection with local communities

Lawton Principles: Bigger, Better, More, and more connected.



Enhancing and Buffering of SSSIs

Nutrient management:

Adjacent land options to ‘buffer’ the SSSIs eg reduce likelihood of diffuse pollution to water courses.

Implementing targeted land use change to reduce nutrient inputs along main supply feeds to ditch networks both within and outwith protected sites.

Change of land management practice on lowest blocks of land within key sites to remove as much P as possible through annual harvesting of wetland material.

Enhancing Ecologial connectivity:

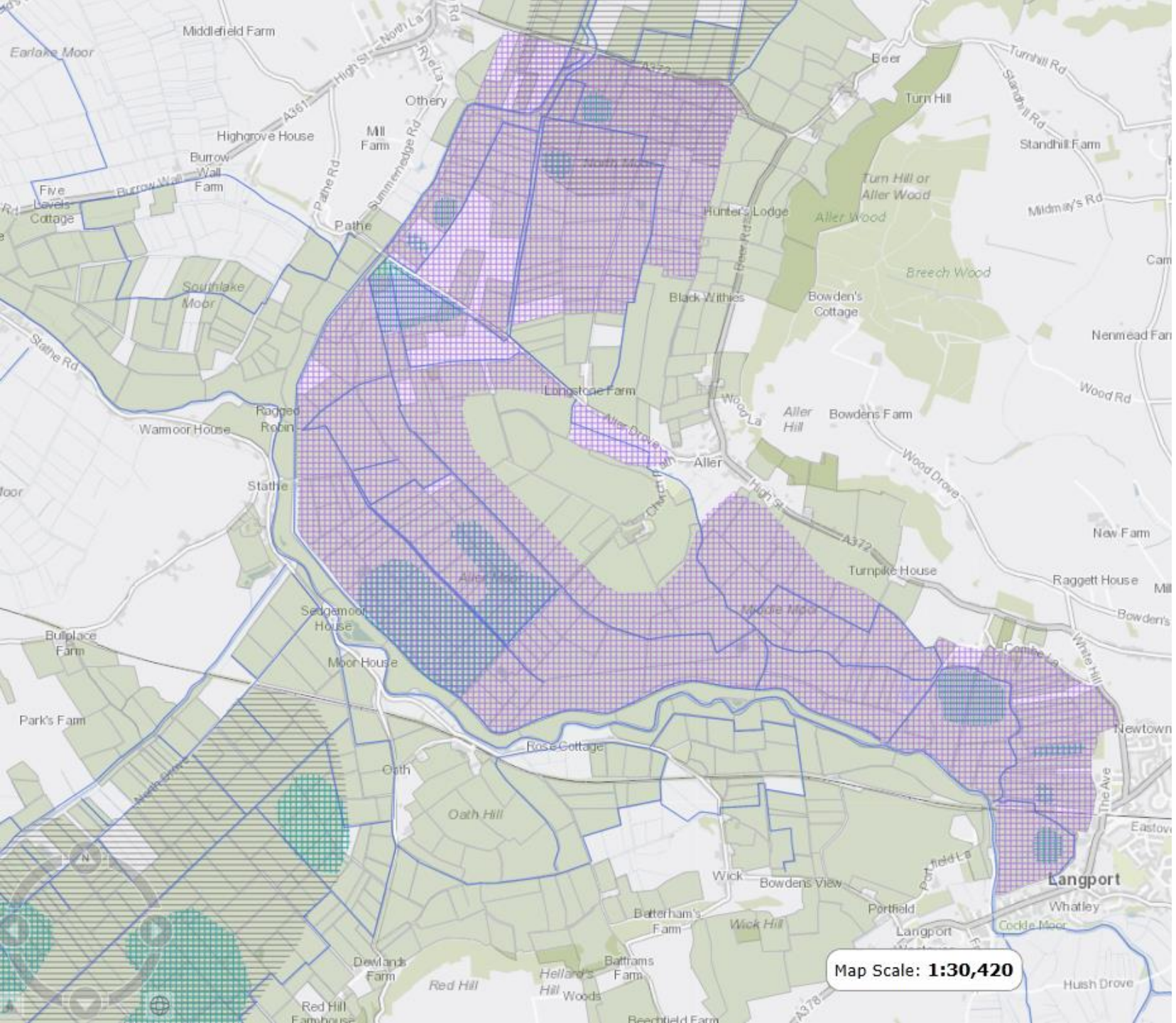
Increase amount of good quality habitat outside of SSSI boundary and ecologically enhance poor quality land within SSSI boundary.

Joining up woodland SSSIs with grassland SSSIs via high quality nature-rich habitats.

Increasing Resilience to impacts of climate change – dealing with flood

Implementing change in land use to adopt land management practices that are resilient to wetter winters, longer periods of inundation and truncated management seasons.

‘De-risking’ land use to flood impacts.



Increasing Resilience to climate change impacts - Making space for water.

An additional tool in the toolbox to deal with increase in winter flows.

Annual payments to landowners to receive and temporarily store/retain water during key periods of likely operation.

Could provide greater flexibility in the use of Monks Leaze Clyce & the Sowy system.

Benefits both on a rising flood (divert in excess of 17m3 sec) and post-flood (making space in Parrett to enable pumping from eg Northmoor/Moorland)

Building on FWAG SW Test and Trial.

Will need to establish financial benefit / impact on flood risk reduction to demonstrate ‘value for money’ to Defra.

Increasing Resilience to climate change impacts

Mitigating for impact of drought

Moving to larger hydrological units.

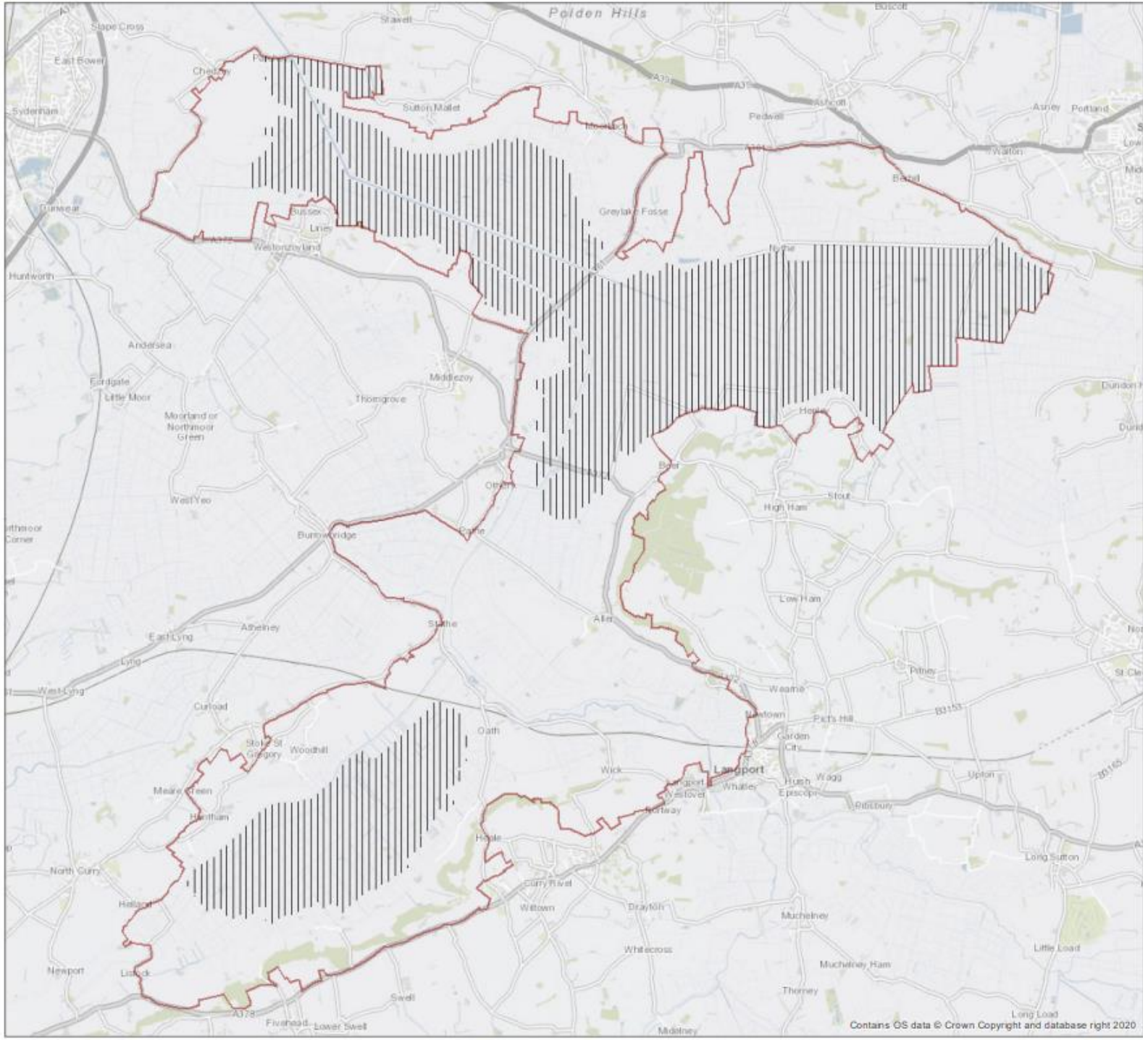
Removing obstacles and barriers to circulation – supporting movement away from 2-tier Raised Water Level Areas and areas under Winter pen/Summer pen management.

Retaining more water in the system in summer – higher summer pens, particularly through peatland areas.

Off-setting initial seasonal demand from evapotranspiration by retaining more water at the tail end of winter.

Although more water required within the ditch network, retaining more will reduce conflict with other demands for water for industry, housing, agriculture.

Funding for long-term maintenance of water courses and roles to support collaboration between LR partners across hydrological units.



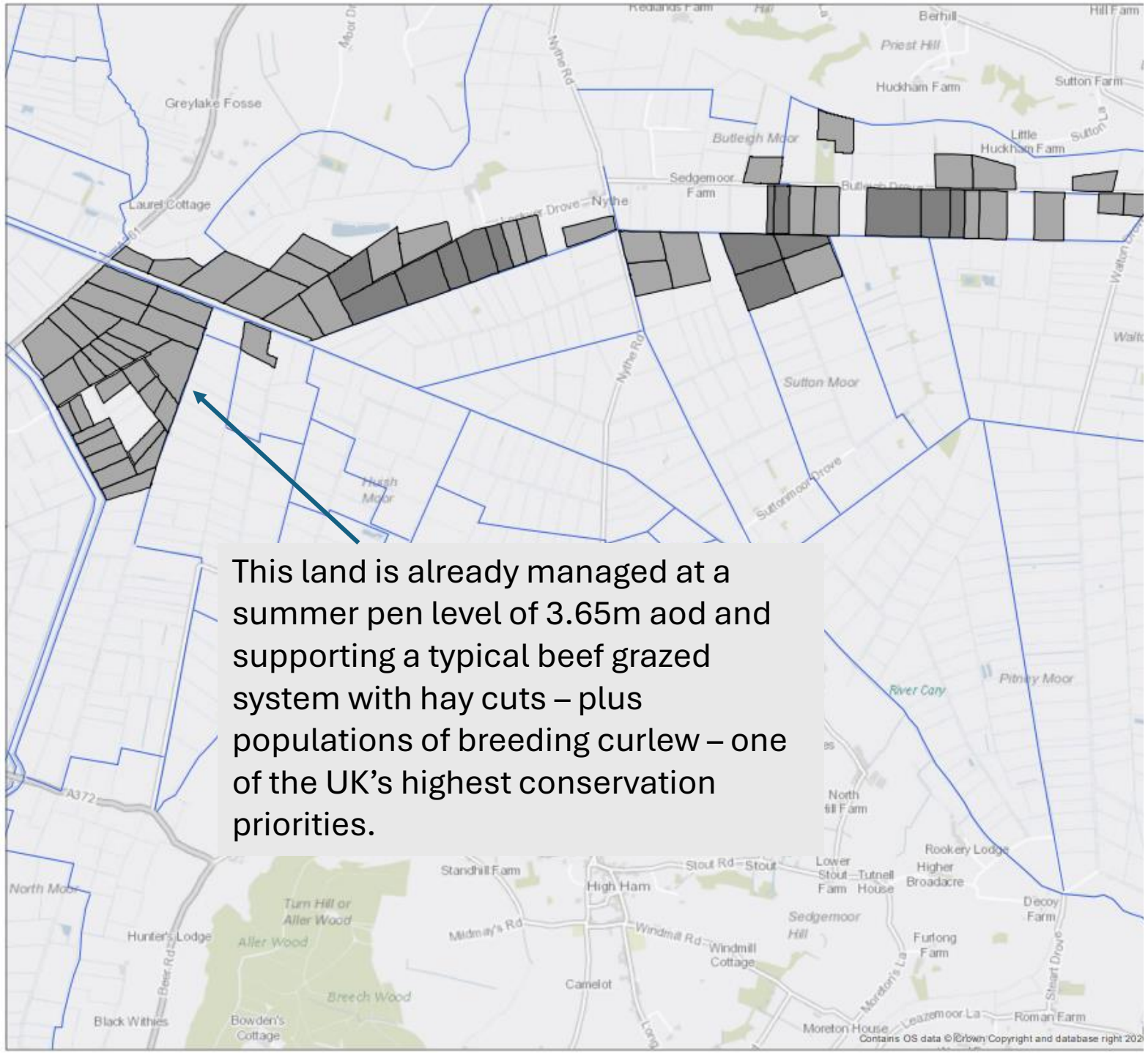
Action to prevent continued land-height loss through carbonisation of peat.

Alignment with government policy on Peat and targets for Net Zero.

Significant financial opportunity for farmers and landowners to move towards hydrological model that reduces carbon emissions from peatland and keeps the peat in a sustainable condition.

Potential for a reduction of around 15,000 tonnes CO2 emissions annually.

Will require more water to be retained within the system through the summer months.



Action to prevent continued land-height loss through carbonisation of peat.

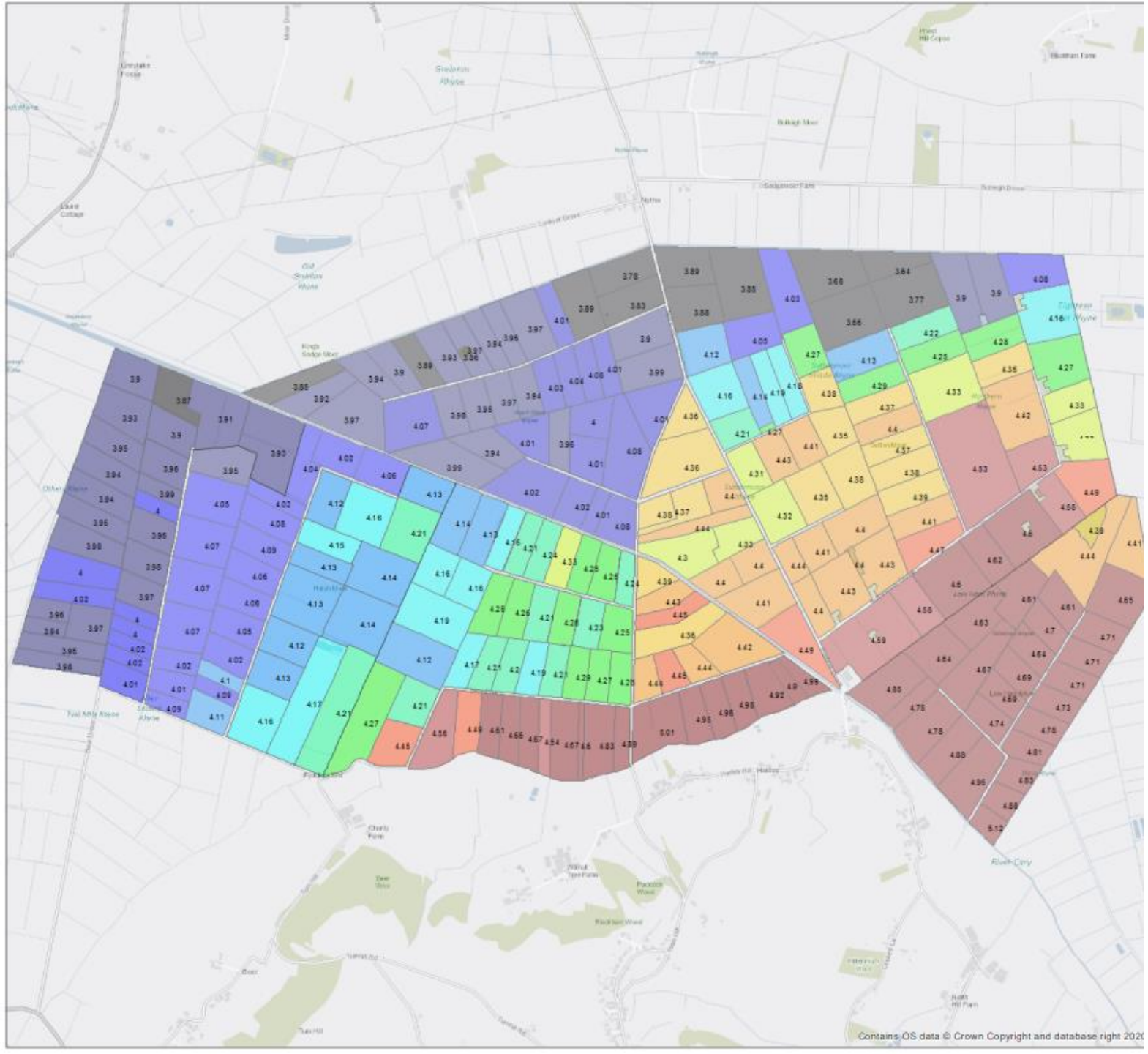
Modelled effect of increasing summer pen at Greylake Sluice by 150mm to 3.60m aod

Lowest land in dark grey lies between 3.60 and 3.75m aod average land height per field.

Would be applicable to receive highest paying tier for Peat Restoration approx **£1,500-2,000 per ha** per yr for 20yrs.

Land in light grey lies between 3.75 and 3.90m aod average land height. Potential to receive payment for carbon reductions and retaining sufficient drainage to maintain typical beef grazed pasture and summer hay cutting regime.

Potential for £1,000 – £1,500 per ha per year for 20 yrs.



Increasing Resilience to climate change impacts

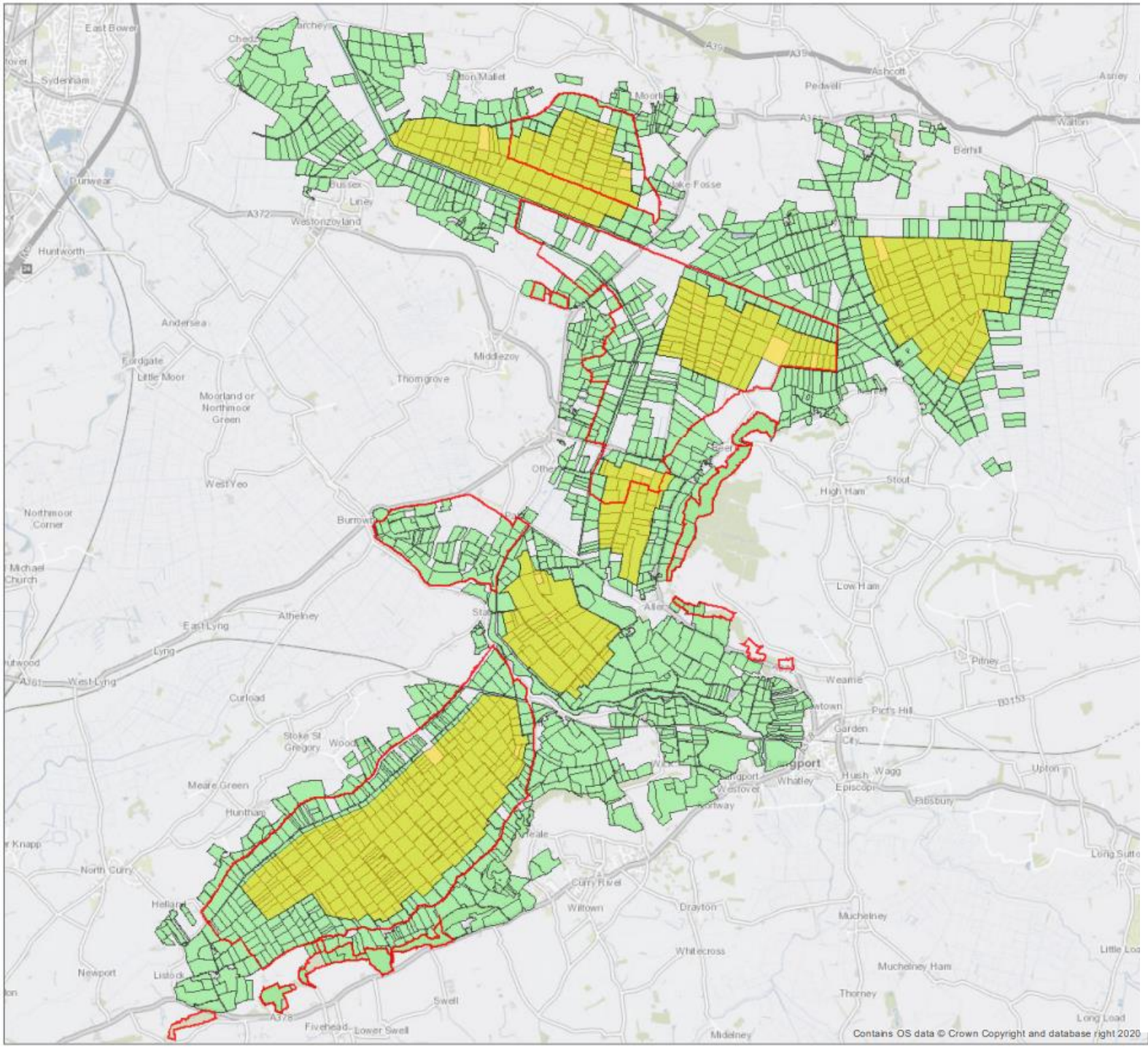
Lessening the impacts of drought

It would also open up potential to hold a lot more water within the ditches of Sutton Moor, Nythe Moor, Low ham moor.

Unlocking long-term incomes to farmers and landowners via Landscape Recovery.

Current supply / availability from the river Cary is an issue in summer.

Penning more water within the system at Greylake Sluice from the tail end of the winter and through the summer would help reduce demands from the Cary.



Communities, Access and Engagement

Creation of low-disturbance zones to protect wintering and breeding wildlife.

Enhancing access opportunities around periphery of floodplains.

Better off-road green transport links eg Aller to Langport cycle route.

Increase in long-term volunteering opportunities in monitoring and habitat management.

Forging closer connection between farming and non-farming local communities.

Next Steps and timeline

KEY ITEMS OF RELEVANCE TO SRA:

• Establish the costs and benefits of operating the MLC differently to reduce flood risk*	MAR - MAY
• Establish the viability of options that require water management change*.	MAR - MAY
• Consolidating where Landscape Recovery has high likelihood of proceeding to implementation.	JUN - JUL
• Work through pre-submission consenting process and information with relevant authorities*	JUL - NOV
• Submit development phase deliverables to Defra	end DEC
• ‘Assurance period’	JAN – MAR 2026
• Sign-in / sign-off period for 20yr implementation	APR
• Transition year: consents processed, capital works begin	APR 26 – MAR 27
• First year of full implementation	APR 2027

*Significant input/advice/support required from EA / IDB