Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway

Developing the County's Local Nature Recovery Strategy

BIG CHALK

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With thanks to Simon Smith C.Env M.C.I.E.E.M

October 2023

Kent, underpinning a bigger picture.

Denuded wildlife

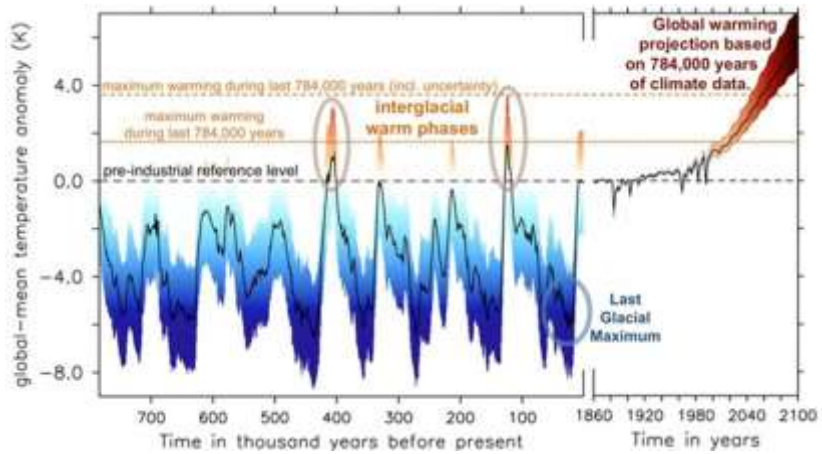
- 75% of the UK's lowland calcareous grassland lost in the last 70 years
- 68% decline in habitat specialist butterflies 1976 – 2018

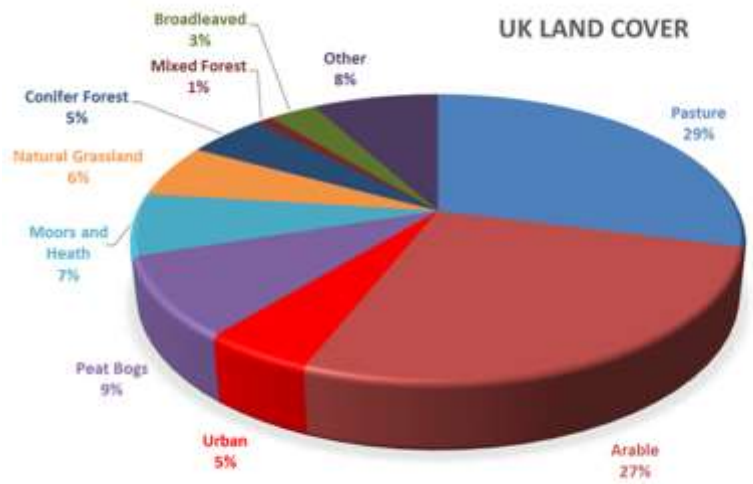
Climate change acceleration

- Not new, but different: extent, and speed
- Impacts: temperature, rainfall, extremes, phenology
- Changes in niche
- Move to new climate space

Move through a hostile landscape

- 25% "Semi-natural" including 16% mostly upland so lowland even less + condition, connectedness



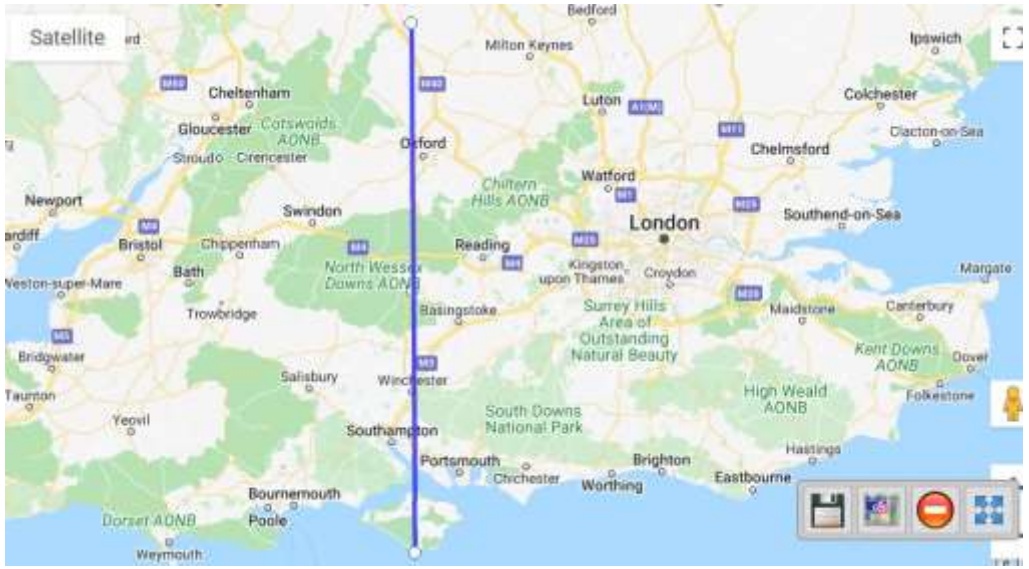


BIG CHALK … the best application of Lawton?

Most species rich habitats and landscapes: A globally rare geology…

By Rachel Hudson with thanks to Back from the Brink/Butterfly Conservation

E.g. Cotswolds: Important Plant Area for ancient woodland and dry calcareous grassland flora & a farmland bird priority area.

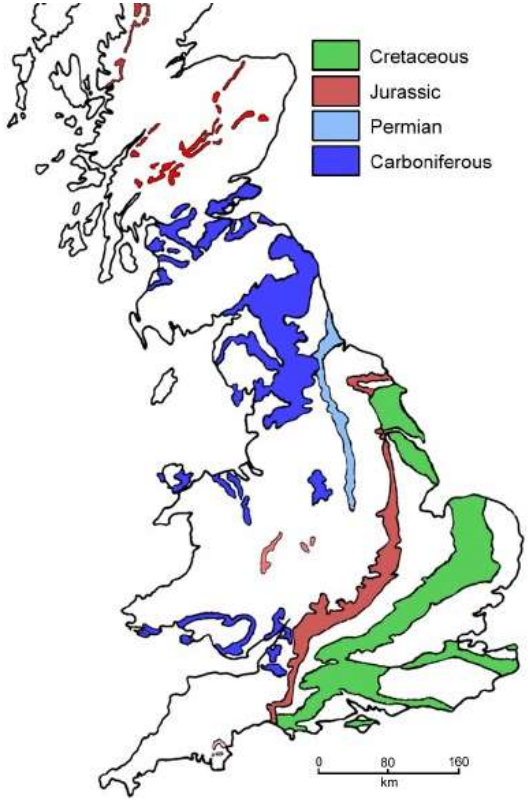


Protected Landscapes at the core but not big enough nor connected enough

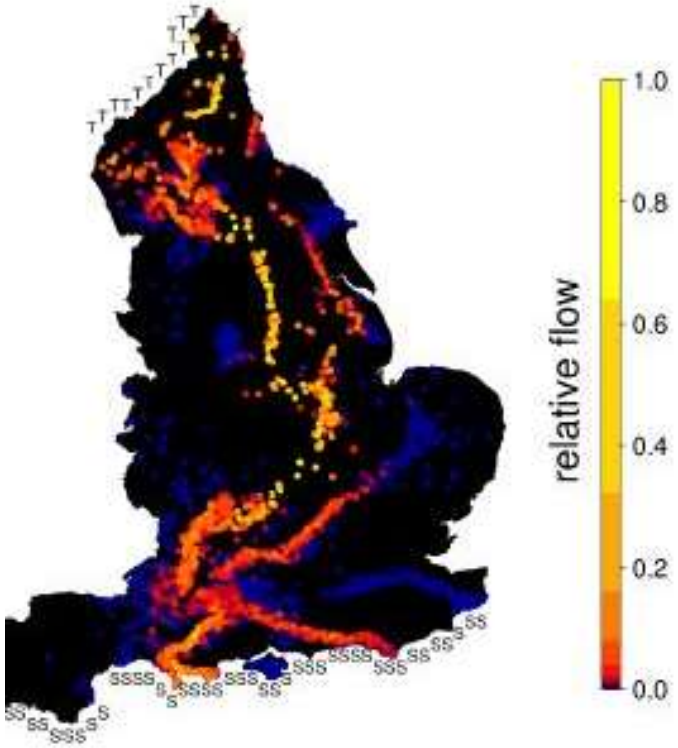
…. and an Evidence Led Approach…

Geodiversity…biodiversity's silent partner

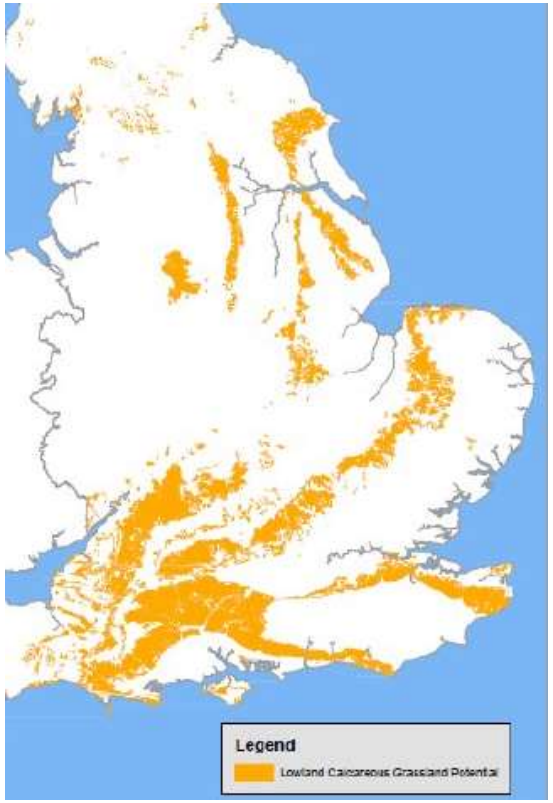
Chalk and limestone bedrocks from the UK Geological Map



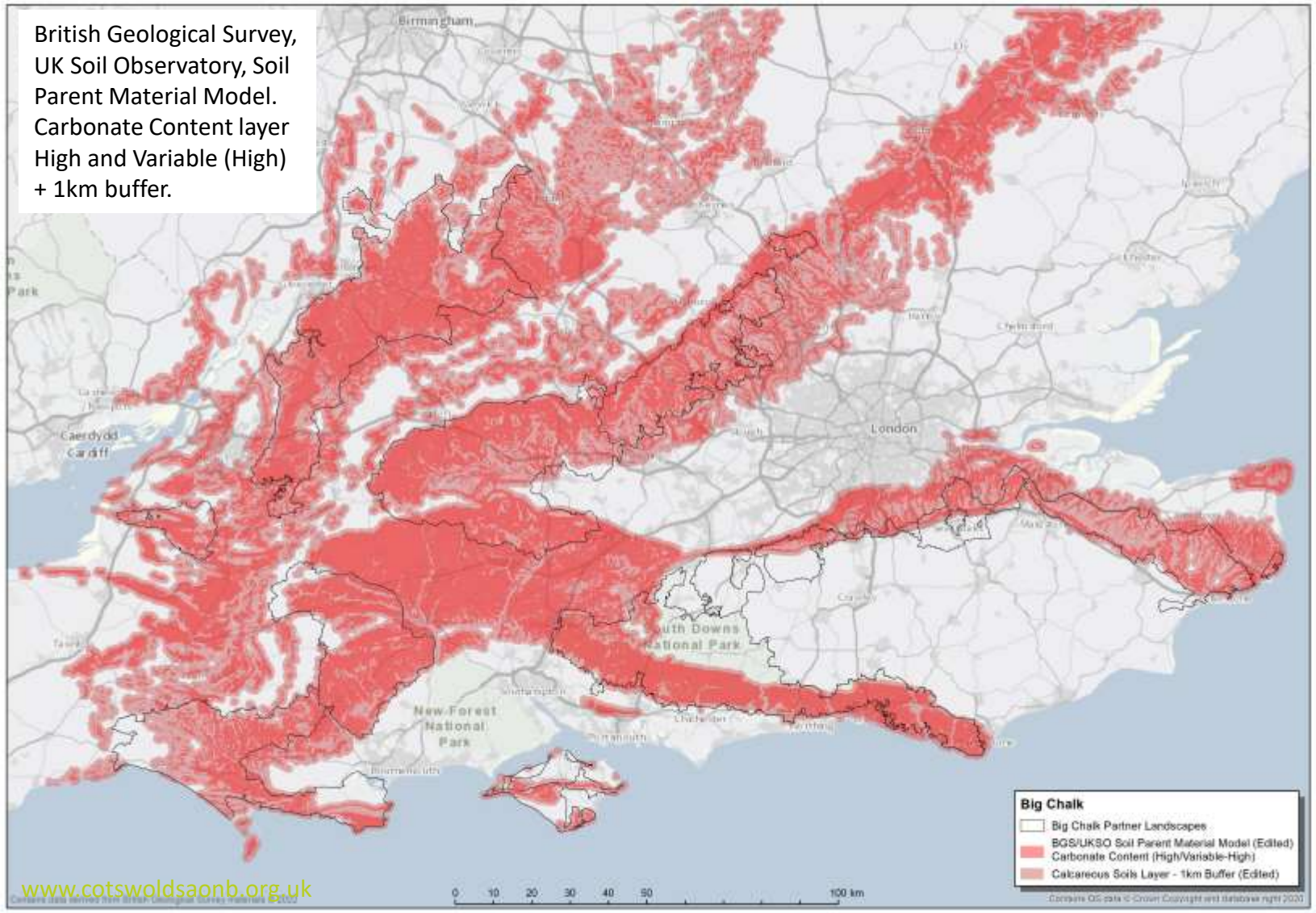
Flow output from Condatis for Calcareous Habitat. *Source Nature Networks Evidence Handbook NE*.



Habitat Potential Map for Calcareous Grassland *Source Nature Networks Evidence Handbook NE*.



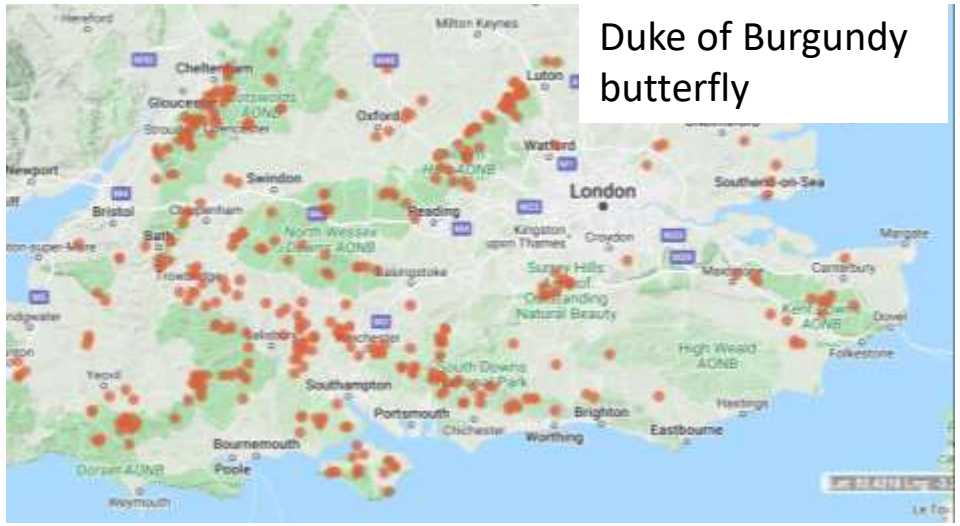
‘The answer lies in the soil’

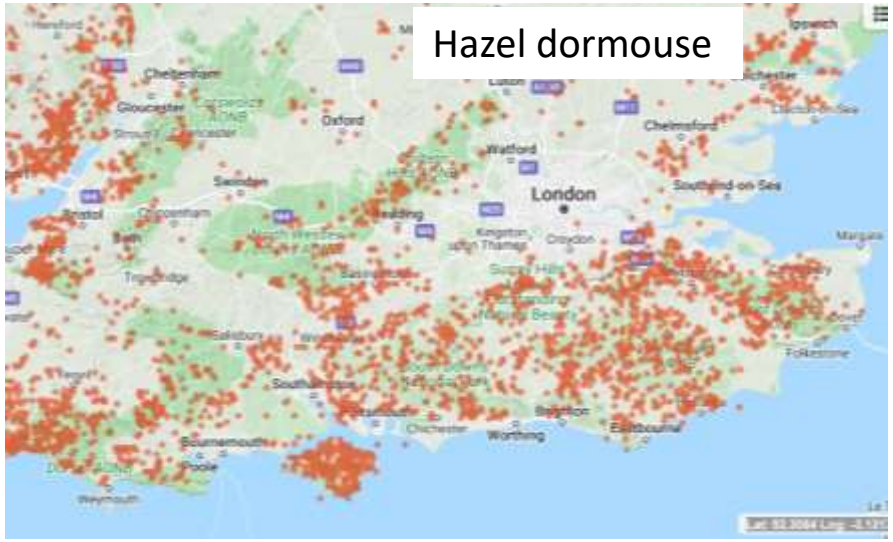


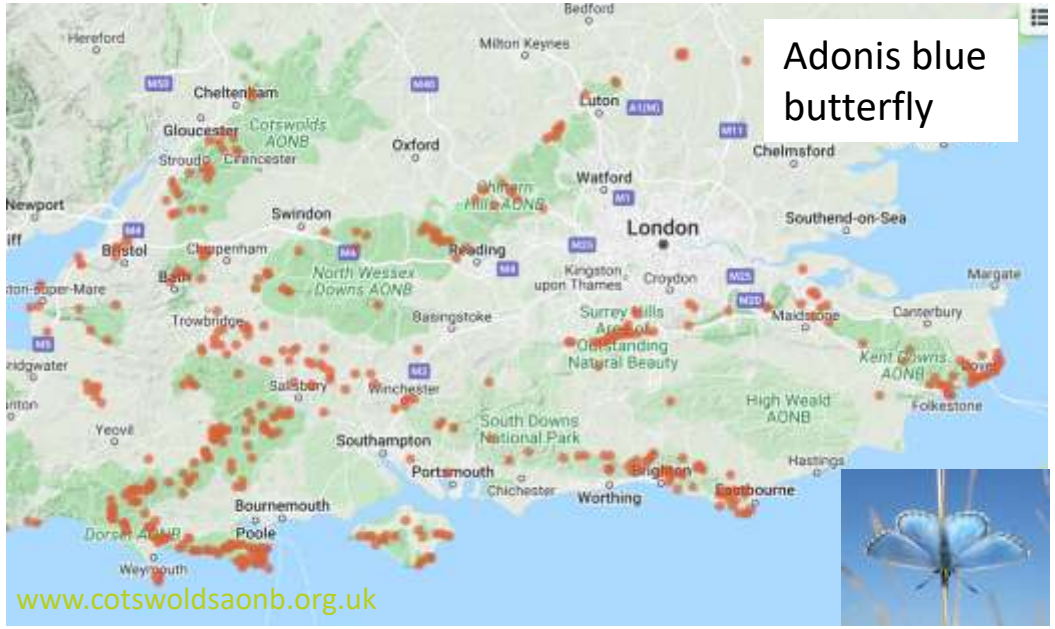
BIG CHALK mapping based on ecology and ecological potential…

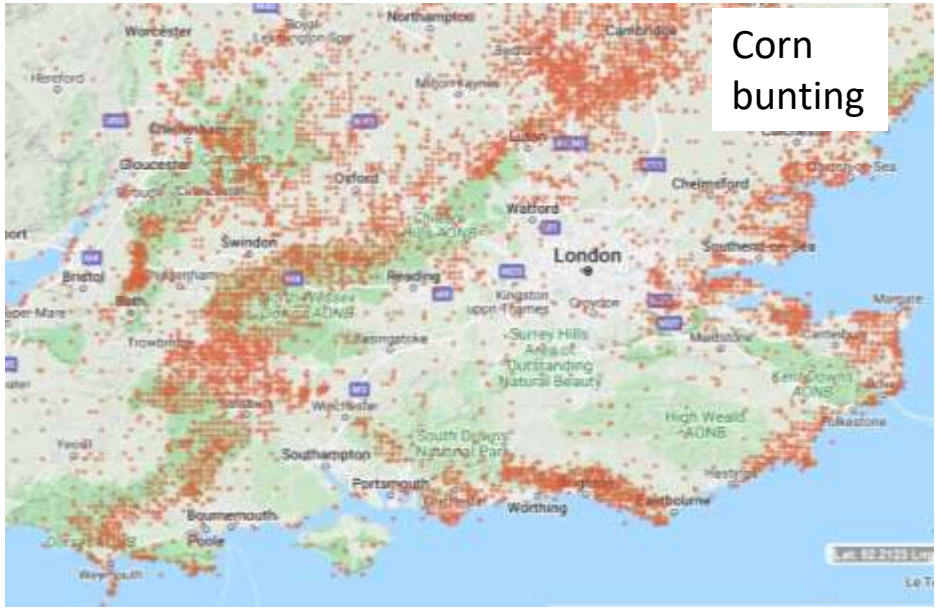
This is a nature recovery led programme, recognising historic, cultural, health and wellbeing benefits…. leading with nature.

Evidence Species









The Story So Far…

Word-cloud from the three Big Chalk geographical outreach workshops. March 2022

1. All the calcareous Protected Landscapes on Board at start

- National pilot for AONBs – Colchester Declaration
- First meeting of initial partners December 2020

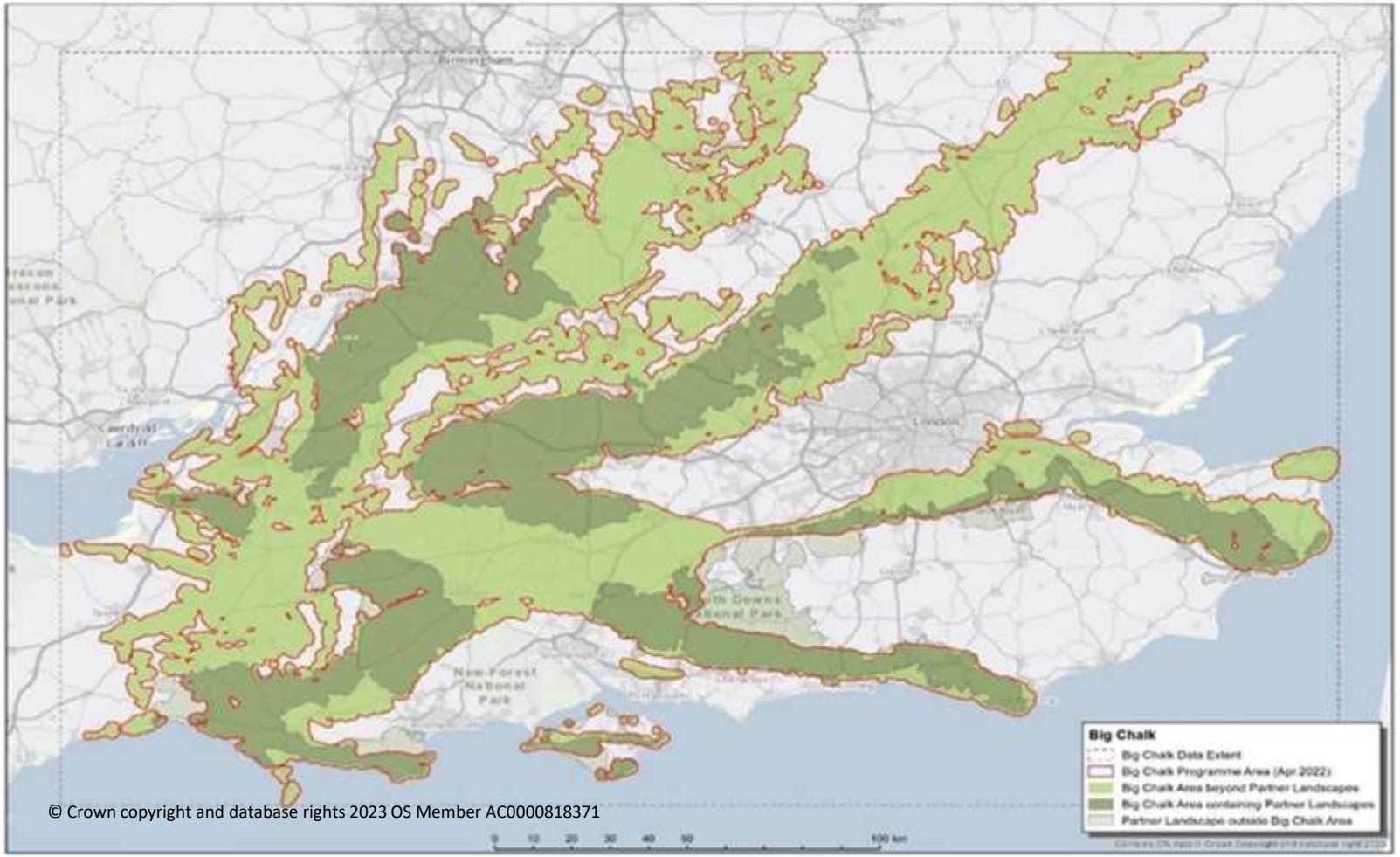
2. Natural England supported development

- Consultancy commissioned November 2021
- Report September 2022

3. Now a wide partnership and growing…

Protected Landscapes Partnership supporting next steps with Defra funding.

‘The best opportunity to promote nature recovery and help wildlife adapt to climate change offered by the English landscape’



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- 20% of England; Kent in a key underpinning role…
- Some Chalk species only found in Kent
- Closest to mainland Europe
- Key players in BIG CHALK partnership
- Amplifying not duplicating

What's in it for Us?

The Nature of BIG CHALK

- Programme not a project
- Synergy not duplication
- Walk the talk – across political and institutional borders

Stronger Together

- Defra
- ELM - Landscape Recovery
- NLHF – new strategy & programme
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategies**

Making more happen

- Championing existing projects & proposals
- Facilitating new partnerships & proposals

Greater Together

- Work in a field shown to be nationally important
- Network for sharing practice experience

…and now new funding….

- **Coordinator; Conference; model projects; Communications…**

Join in…

- **Board** ***(yes, a Big Chalk Board!)***
- **Topic Groups**
  - Conservation Practice & Land Management
  - Working With Farmers and Landowners
  - New Landscape Projects
  - Evidence Data Recording & Volunteers
  - Natural Capital
  - Health, Wellbeing & Engagement
- **Wider membership list**
- **Register your project or proposal**
- **Future collaborative bids**

Details on the Cotswolds National Landscape website under "Our work, Big Chalk".

www.cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

BIG CHALK … part of the Kent picture…

‘a greater variety of species than any other in the UK, and when combined could support the most species to adapt to climate change. Failing to protect and restore these landscapes would result in an unprecedented loss of wildlife abundance, populations and even species.

BIG CHALK, therefore, offers one of the best opportunities for the English landscape to achieve nature recovery.’

Nature recovery must be driven at every scale and every ecology…from a nectar rich flower-pot (peat free!), to a County; to a whole geology.

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Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

CROSS-CHANNEL GEOPARK TRANSMANCHE