

# Birmingham & Black Country Nature Improvement Area

*'Our vision is of an urban landscape permeated by a network of high quality greenspace which is rich in wildlife and enjoyed by the people who live and work here'*

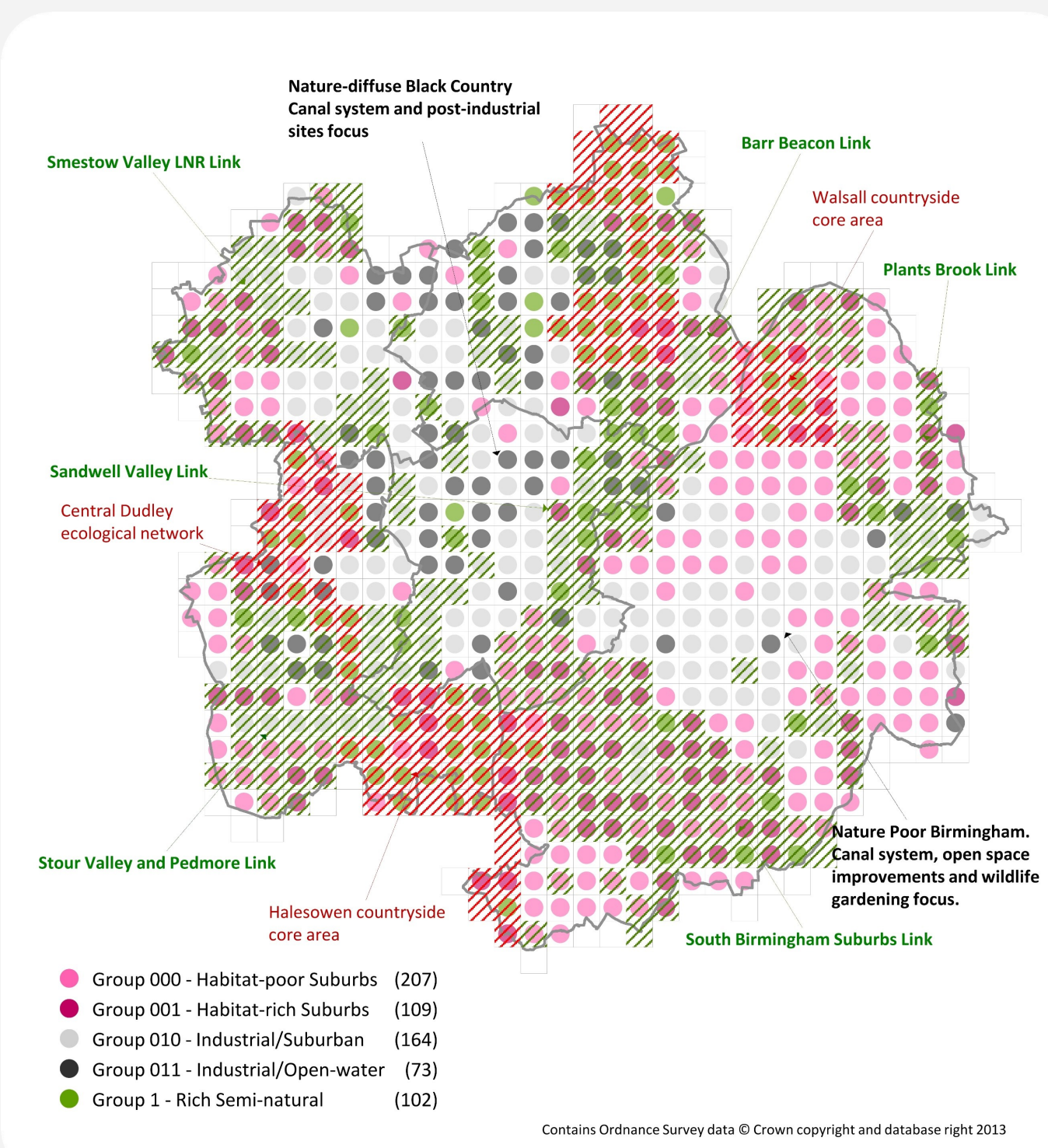
## Creating a better connected urban landscape

### A good evidence base

- The Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area has drawn on our partnership's knowledge and understanding of the landscape to design an evidence-based strategy that meaningfully addresses biodiversity decline.
- Through detailed analysis of ecological data collected over a 15 year period we identified the conurbation's 'Core Ecological Areas' and a number of 'Ecological Linking Areas'.
- Our approach has been to focus activity in the Ecological Linking Areas by creating new sites and improving existing sites that together form 'stepping-stone corridors' through the heart of Birmingham and the Black Country.

### Desired Ecological Network

'Core Ecological Areas' (in red) and 'Ecological Linking Areas' (in green) superimposed on a classification based on systematic botanical recording data.



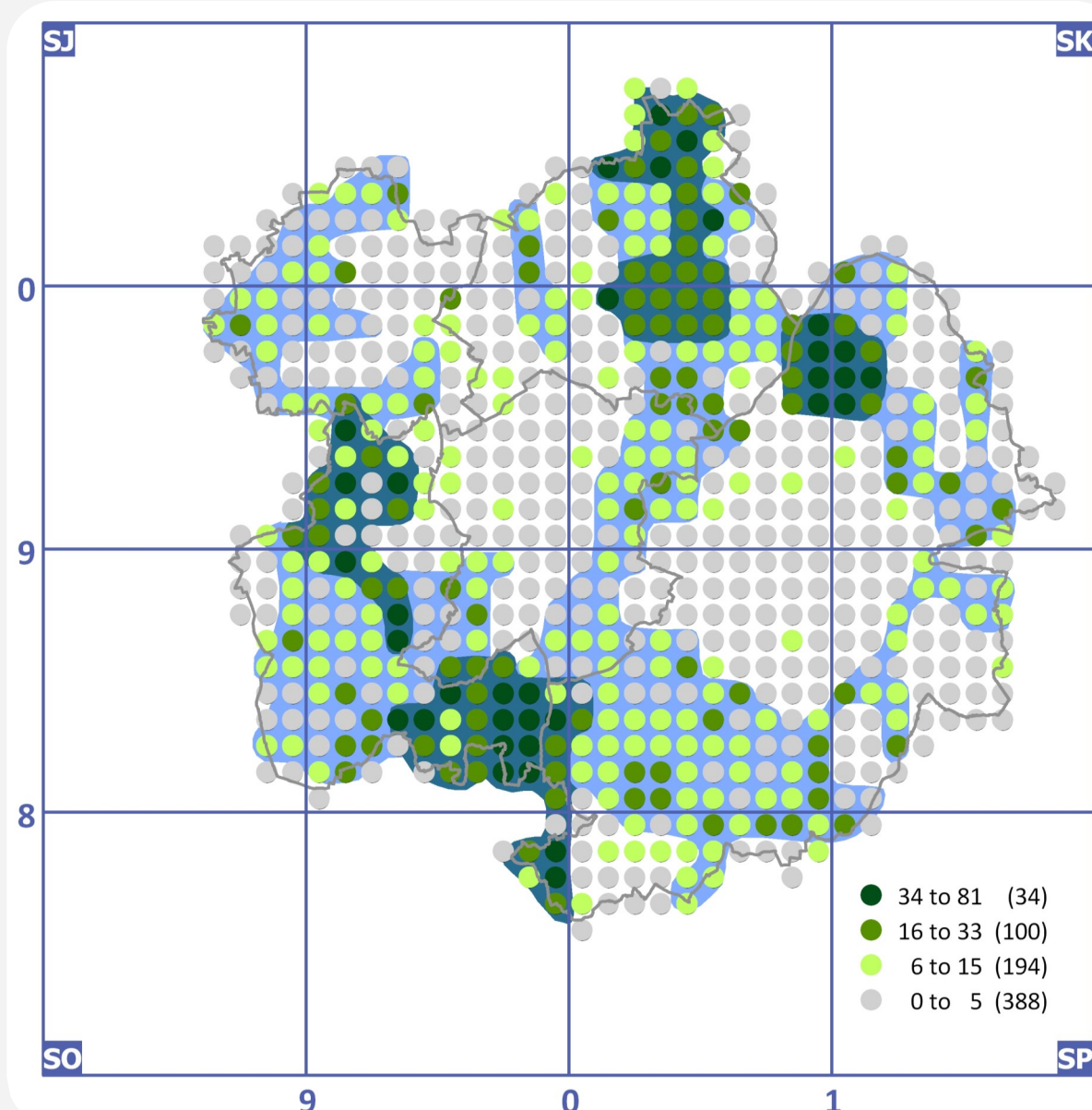
The two coincidence maps (right) depict axiophyte species (those characteristic of 'good quality' semi-natural habitats) records on a monad (1km<sup>2</sup>) scale.

The maps reflect the pre-2012 and post-2015 scenarios. The three years of NIA activity has potentially resulted in an increase in the presence of axiophyte species in a number of monads across the area, particularly focussed in the Ecological Linking Areas (shown on the maps with a light blue background).

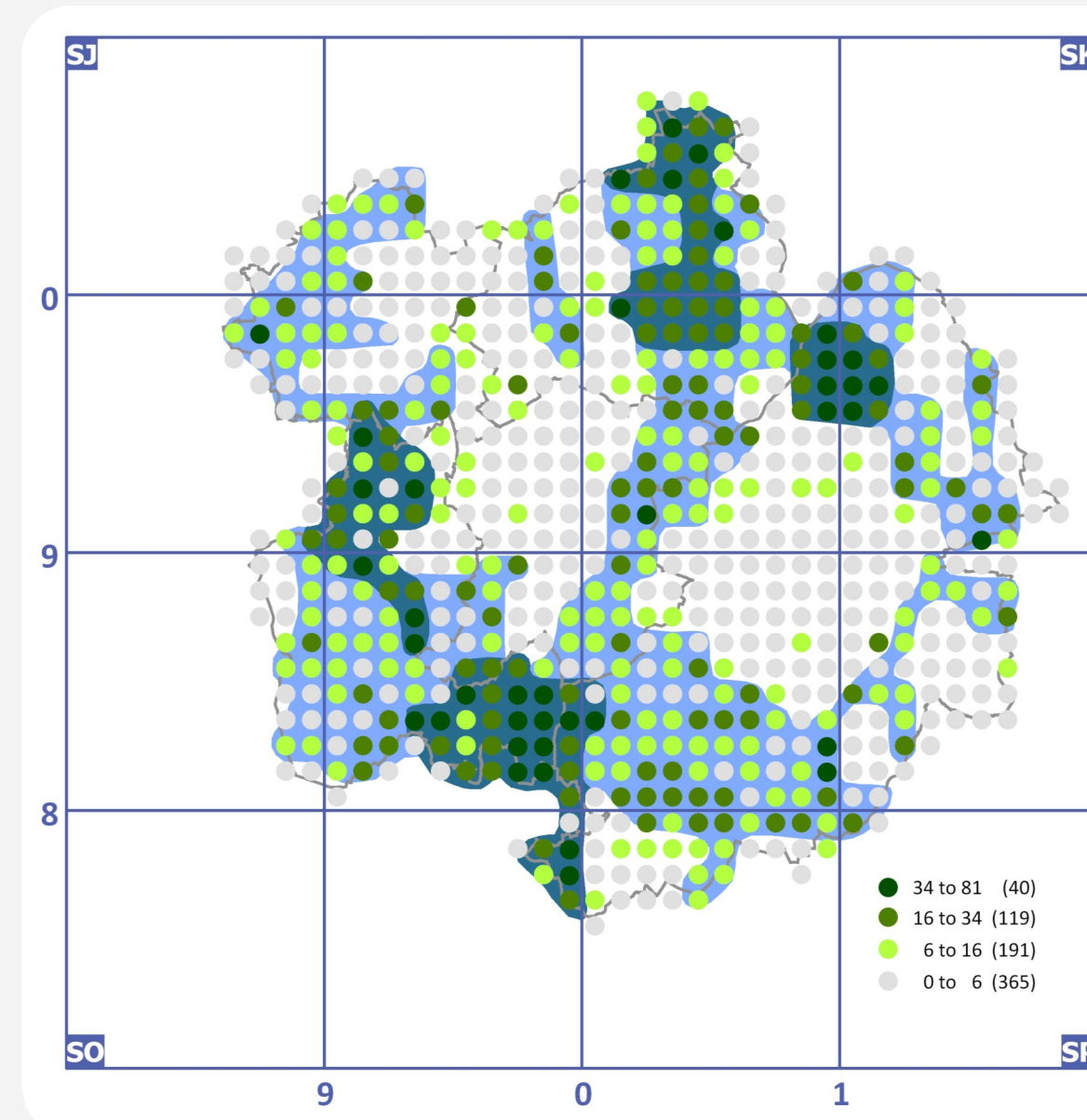
The number of squares in the bottom two categories (grey and light green) has decreased by 26, while a number of squares in the 2nd highest category (green) have improved to an extent that they are now in the highest category (dark green).

Potential positive effects on connectivity are particularly clear in the Smestow Valley and South Birmingham links and, most significantly, in the Sandwell Valley link.

Species characteristic of good quality semi-natural habitats (axiophytes): Pre-NIA (2012)



Species characteristic of good quality semi-natural habitats (axiophytes): Post-first phase of NIA activity (2015)



## 3 Years of NIA delivery - examples of our approach

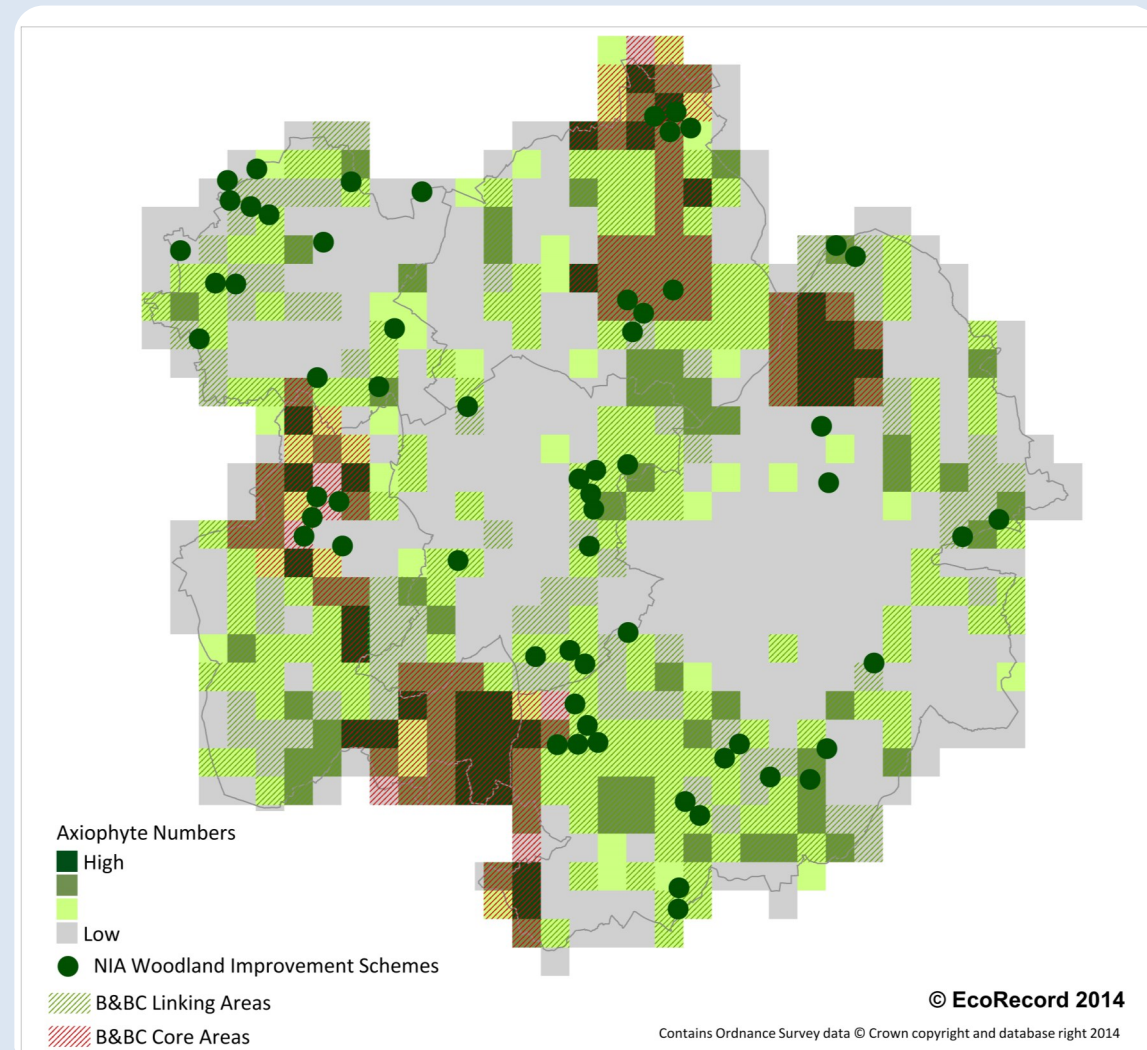
### Woodlands from plantations

We're establishing a network of high-quality woodlands through the enrichment and diversification of young plantations.

To create 'Woodlands from Plantations' Nature Improvement Area partners are undertaking large-scale thinning, underplanting and field-layer introduction projects at sites across Birmingham and the Black Country.

These once dark, dense and lifeless blocks of trees are now being filled with wildflowers and are already being enjoyed by local people.

**90 ha**  
Woodland improved/created



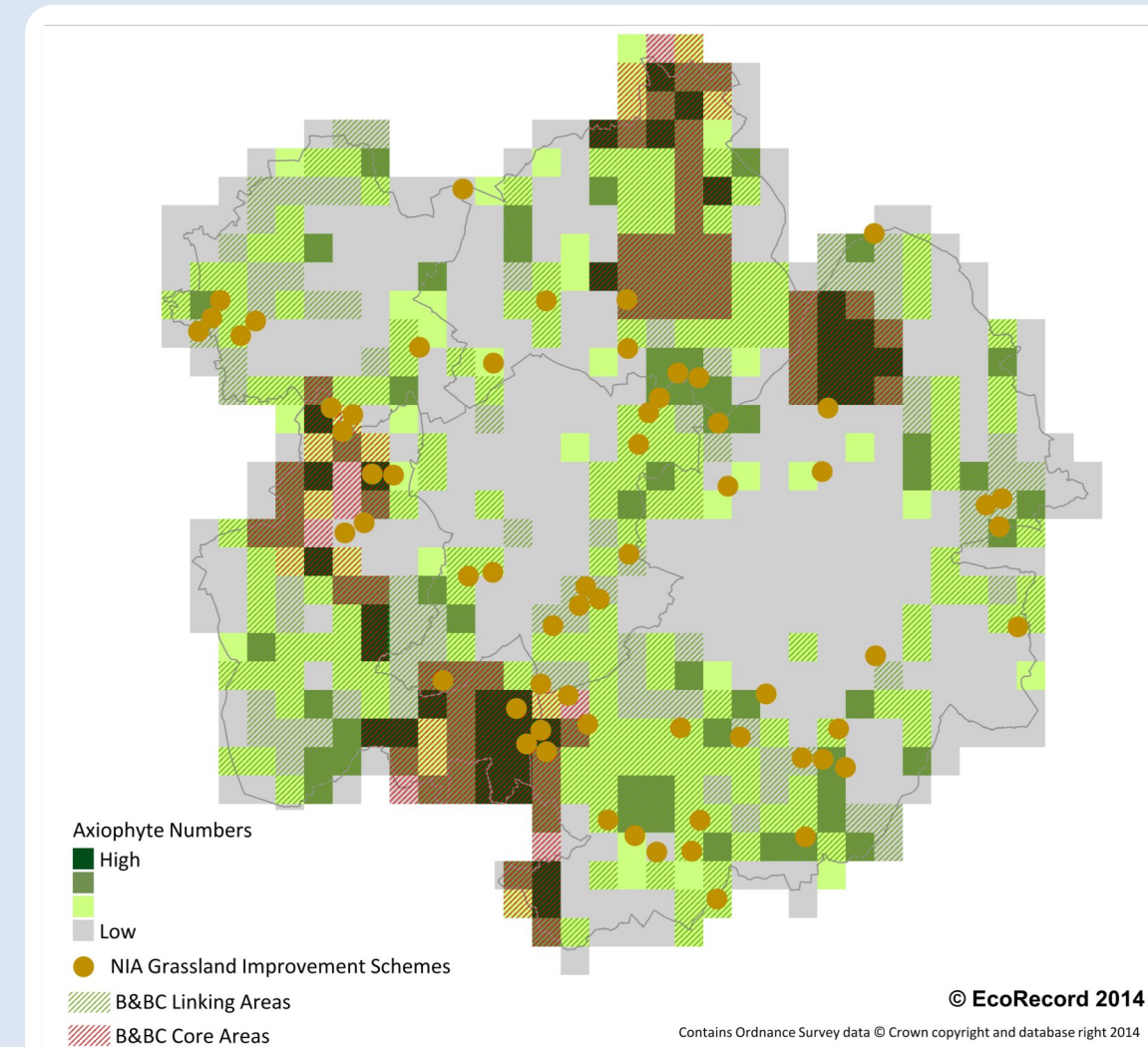
### More Meadows

We're creating a network of species-rich grasslands by establishing new meadows and restoring old grasslands.

Our new meadows have been created through the spreading of seed-rich green hay harvested from ancient meadows both within and just outside of Birmingham and the Black Country.

We've also been restoring our remnant sites through the reinstatement of traditional management and the reintroduction of some of the plant species that have been lost.

**70 ha**  
Grassland improved/created



**3 ha**  
Heathland improved/created

**10 km**  
Corridor habitat improved/created

**20**  
Geological sites improved

**200**  
Individual projects

**2,000**  
Volunteers

**25,000**  
Volunteer hours

**30**  
Schools involved

**500+**  
People involved with planning projects