



## **Biodiversity South West Nature Map: Working guidelines and change protocol**

The South West Nature Map shows the priority areas to maintain and expand (through restoration and/or re-creation) terrestrial wildlife habitats at a landscape scale across the South West. There are many different tools and mechanisms in place that contribute to conservation, and Nature Map is a significant addition to the wider strategy for biodiversity conservation in the region. It is a spatial representation of the South West's BAP habitat targets and an ambitious 50 year vision.

Nature Map was drawn together by Biodiversity South West (BioSW) (formerly South West Regional Biodiversity Partnership) with its local and regional partners. The ongoing development and refinement of Nature Map is an iterative process, with the second and most comprehensive iteration being published in 2006 to coincide with the draft Regional Spatial Strategy. Nature Map is now being widely used by the regional and local biodiversity community and features as a key part in numerous strategies and initiatives.

### **1. The need for working guidelines**

Each county LBAP with its partner organisations are beginning to implement Nature Map through landscape scale projects, making the vision a reality. This activity has inevitably led to a review by counties of their Strategic Nature Areas, driven by a need to ensure boundaries are correct/appropriately defined and opportunities within Strategic Nature Areas are identified. In some cases this has led to debate about the map itself and whether it reflects local as well as regional priorities. There is a need to address these issues, and agree who has responsibility and custodianship of the map, both at the regional and county level. It is also an opportunity to define the differences between regional and local opportunity maps and describe the process for making changes to the definitive Nature Map to accommodate local detail and changes.

### **2. Who is responsible for South West Regional Nature Map?**

Nature Map was drawn up and published by BioSW with its partners. At the regional level BioSW are the intellectual property right holders of the Nature Map for the common use of the map and ensure that Nature Map is used in accordance with the purpose intended. It is important that the elements that make Nature Map strong regionally are retained, including a consistent approach to its development, its integrity and adoption at both regional and

local levels. Therefore, ultimately BioSW will remain responsible on behalf of its partners for the definitive version of Nature Map and any changes to the current map. The Nature Map Working Group will act as the arbitrators on behalf of BioSW on issues relating to Nature Map. This paper provides clarity and working guidelines on the process for dealing with any proposed changes.

Nature Map also has a county presence and each definitive county layer is the responsibility of the respective County Local Biodiversity Action Plan Partnership (LBAP) working with their unitary and district colleagues. Although ultimately regional responsibility lies with BioSW, there are issues that are more appropriate to deal with at county level. There may be instances where SNAs need refining or re-consideration; no one organisation can make these changes in isolation. The decision must lie with the LBAP, to ensure that all partners agree and sign up to proposed changes, as they did when drawing up the original map. It is also important the LBAP partnership are at least aware of, if not involved in, any work that may be undertaken in any one SNA within their county to ensure that there is both a joined up approach to delivery and that this action can be recorded and acted on if necessary.

### **3. Who are the custodians for Nature Map?**

It is essential to ensure that a definitive copy of Nature Map is retained by an appropriate regional and local custodian. Procedures should be in place to record any changes to this definitive version for future reference.

Regionally the definitive version of Nature Map, will be held by Natural England on behalf of BioSW. NE will record and capture any changes agreed by BioSW and will redistribute updated definitive versions of Nature Map as necessary. It is important to note that only changes agreed by BioSW will be recorded and added to the definitive version. As outlined in the procedure below, the definitive map will only be updated on a yearly basis and only after the agreed process has been followed.

At the county level, the respective County Local Record Centre (or equivalent) will act as the custodian for the definitive county map working with the LBAP to record and maintain the county map. With regard to the procedure outlined below this map may differ to the regional Map in that it will record the minor boundary changes ratified by the LBAP. These changes will then be recorded on the regional definitive map once a year. Any major changes will need to be ratified by BioSW.

All definitive copies of the map will be marked with their published date to ensure version control.

#### 4. Change Process

### South West Regional Nature Map

#### Regional Process

Receipt of proposed change to map by Nature Map Working Group (NMWG) – Map and justification to be submitted.

NMWG assess change against criteria for Nature Map based on 'Rebuilding Biodiversity Methodology'

Change ratified – NMWG chair informs LBAP

Change rejected – NMWG chair informs LBAP of reasons

Definitive Regional NM updated yearly to record ratified changes. A schedule will be put in place.

Nature Map Working Guidelines

#### County Process

Individual/organisation /partnership decide they want to make a change to NM.

Proposed change is submitted to LBAP partnership with map and justification – will be assessed against set criteria.

**Minor boundary change** – of less than 5% area or boundary in a SNA (move/refine existing boundary)

LBAP partnership to ratify or reject.

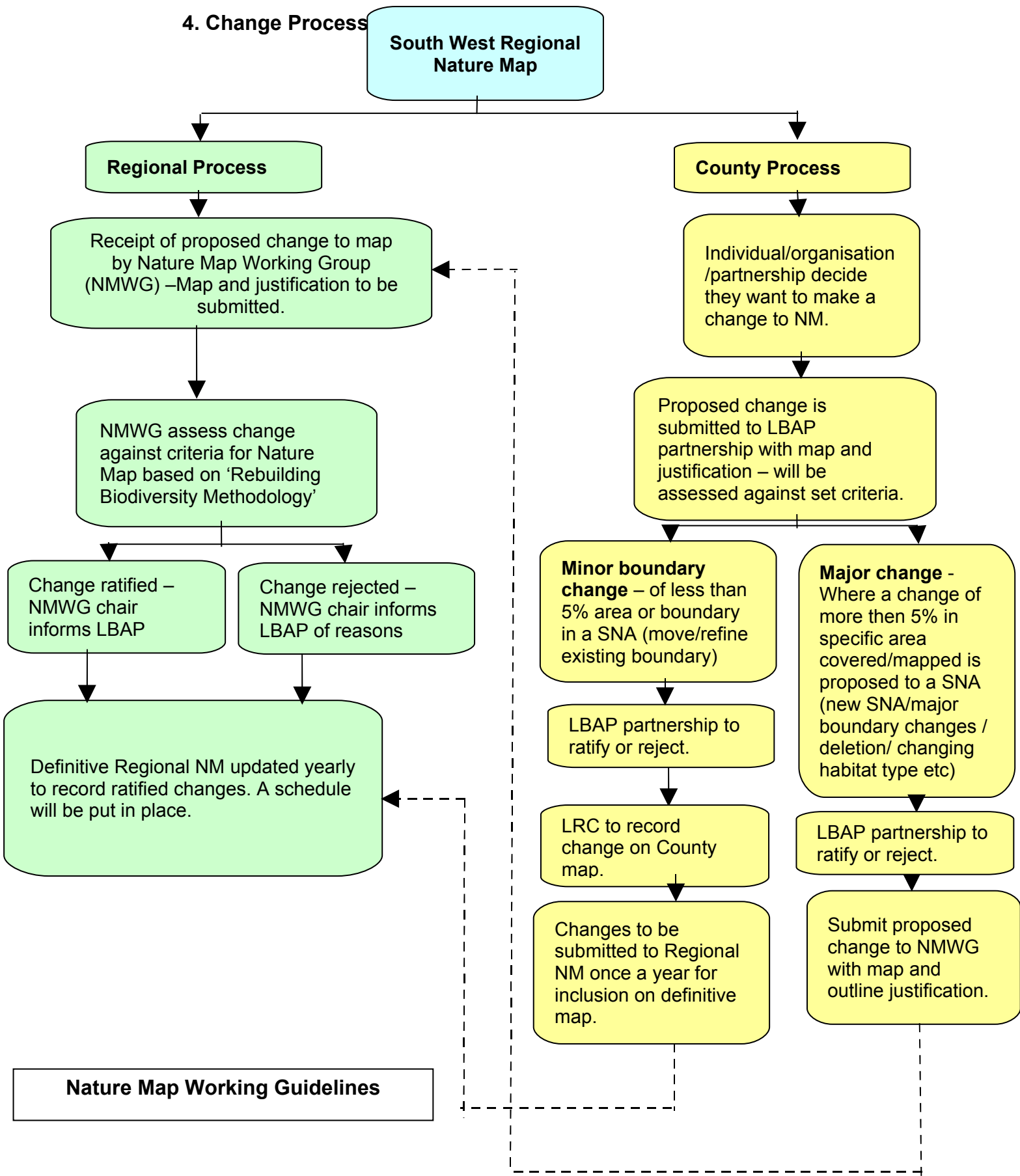
LRC to record change on County map.

Changes to be submitted to Regional NM once a year for inclusion on definitive map.

**Major change** - Where a change of more than 5% in specific area covered/mapped is proposed to a SNA (new SNA/major boundary changes / deletion/ changing habitat type etc)

LBAP partnership to ratify or reject.

Submit proposed change to NMWG with map and outline justification.



## **5. What makes a regional SNA?**

A SNA makes a contribution to regional targets and is of sufficient size and quality to meet the standards as outlined in the Rebuilding Biodiversity Methodology. It has been drawn up with both regional overview and local knowledge, with the sign up and agreement of key organisations and individuals. If new SNAs are proposed they will be subject to the guidelines set out above.

## **6. What is a local opportunity map and its relation to Nature Map?**

BioSW recognises that LBAPs may wish to produce county / district / unitary /local opportunity habitat maps, biodiversity network maps or other such maps. There are various drivers for this work, not least LDFs. It should be remembered that the Nature Map is a regional opportunity map and as such represents our collective regional vision of delivering landscape scale conservation. Nature Map therefore shows those priorities for habitat maintenance, restoration and creation opportunity at this regional level.

Nature Map is very much reliant on local delivery and as such will help guide activity at this level. However LBAPs may also wish to identify areas which are of key importance at the local scale in terms of opportunity or connectivity. As such these maps would be complementary to Nature Map, often using Nature Map as the basis and building on this, thus ensuring a robust local landscape rich in biodiversity. Some local maps may also extend the network outside of Nature Map to capture other local priorities and sites. There is room for some confusion in developing these maps and it is important to be clear about the different uses and purposes of these maps and at what level they function, particularly in relation to how they will be interpreted by partners outside of the biodiversity community (LPAs, etc).

BioSW recommend that it is key that these local maps are made distinct from Nature Map to ensure that confusion does not arise. Nature Map's strength lies in the regionally consistent approach taken in its development and subsequent adoption by the combined regional and local biodiversity community. It is important that this integrity is retained. Any local maps produced should have a clear methodology and aim that defines designation, and a statement outlining need/use. A name which is distinct from Nature Map or Strategic Nature Area should be adopted, thus avoiding any confusion. These maps lie outside the procedure outlined in this document, as they will be a locally led initiative, distinct from the SW Nature Map.

## **7. Review of Nature Map**

In 2010 there will be a full formal review of the methodology and of Nature Map. This will be a chance to reflect formally on the lessons learnt throughout

the various stages of development and adopt new thinking into the process, if appropriate. A technical working group will be set up to oversee this process.