

CHAPTER 18 - Strategy Area: City

The Community Forest intentionally draws no boundary between the countryside and the urban area, as harmonising the transition between the two is a key aim of the Forest. A major objective is to enhance links out into the countryside and to bring the countryside as far as possible into the city, both in terms of increased tree cover and enhanced habitats for wildlife as well as providing access for people without using cars. Whilst it is unrealistic to treat the urban area in the same way as other strategy areas in terms of woodland cover, there are many areas of open space and existing woodland where Community Forest benefits can be brought close to many urban communities.

Description

The large urban areas of Bristol and Kingswood have shrouded the underlying relief, but it is still possible to trace the major land-forms through the city. The River Avon remains a major focus for the city, along with the associated floating harbour. North Bristol spreads up from the river valley east along the Severn Ridge, being limited to the west by the Avon Gorge. To the east, development has spread over the old coal-mining areas and the ancient Forest of Kingswood. The growth of the city to the south has been halted by the steep slopes of Dundry Hill. Thus, the development of the city has been strongly influenced by land-form. Much of the green space that does remain is associated with steep slopes or the small river valleys and ridges. The wooded ridges, most notably around Blaise, have the greatest impact in bringing the countryside visually into the city.

Local strategy

The Community Forest will strive to enhance and regenerate the urban environment, largely focusing attention on reinforcing the existing green fingers, using tree planting to make them more prominent features in the cityscape. Particular attention will be given to establishing the river corridors and valleys as major areas of countryside penetrating into the city. Smallholdings, school grounds and local parks will also be seen as great opportunities to enhance the urban environment through woodland and tree planting. The prominent landscape features identified in the Bristol Local Plan, e.g. Purdown, and in South Gloucestershire's Draft Local Plan, e.g. valleys and commons, are areas which, because of their prominence in the cityscape, create an opportunity to enhance the feeling of a city of improved environmental quality lying within a woodland setting through small increases in tree cover.



Woodlands

There is about 160 ha of woodland within this area, most of it at Blaise Castle and owned by Bristol City Council. A high priority will be to bring all existing woodland into management and to maximise its recreational and wildlife value. The limited availability of space within the urban area will inevitably mean that new areas of woodland will be small. The scarcity of woodland in most of the city will, however, make each site all the more valuable to people and wildlife. Vandalism of new planting is perceived as a problem in urban areas. New planting at Victoria Park, Windmill Hill has proved remarkably successful, indicating that community involvement in developing proposals, along with the careful location and choice of species, can achieve very encouraging results.

Wildlife

The Greater Bristol Nature Conservation Strategy has been established as a blueprint for future progress in nature conservation in the Bristol area and is part of a move to introduce more environmental initiatives. The strategy also identifies a network of wildlife corridors throughout the city. The Community Forest will aim to help strengthen these corridors both within the city and where they enter the countryside.

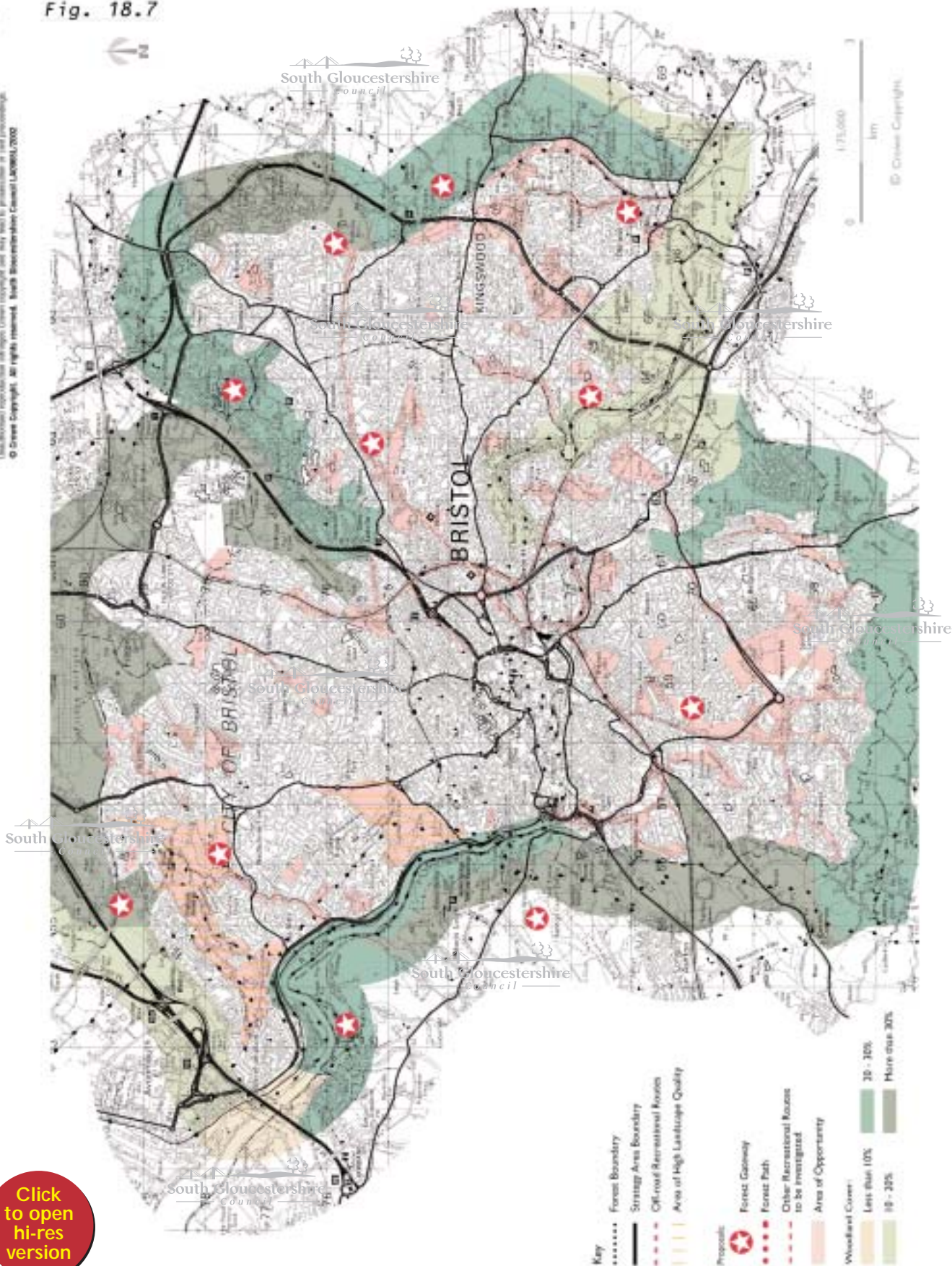
Heritage

Gateways and greenways will give an interpretation of the history of each area. There are seven properties on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. Large sections of the city, particularly close to the Avon and the Docks, are within conservation areas, and opportunities will be taken to direct recreational routes through these areas where possible and provide information on the history of each. The routes of the Rivers Avon and Frome have large conservation areas along their length.

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Fig. 18.7

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In Kingswood, the Whitfield Tabernacle, Hanham Mount and the Warmley Conservation Area form part of a rich historic heritage.

Recreation

The Bristol Local Plan identifies greenways through the city. South Gloucestershire Council's Draft Local Plan identifies the need for recreational links from the urban area to the countryside. The Community Forest will focus on linking the network of greenways to the countryside. The objectives being that, in the long term, everyone will live within 2 km of both a cycleway and footpath route to the countryside. Initially, many will be footpaths, which at a later date, as opportunities arise, may be developed into footpaths with segregated cycleways. These greenways will be carefully designed to be as attractive and safe as possible and will help to strengthen the existing wildlife corridors. Further research will be needed to identify the best routes and design standards. Ideally most of the routes will require a corridor of land of at least 10 m. It will be necessary to promote and develop the network continually, paying particular attention to linking the urban area with the Community Forest Path, often via gateways. Gateways will be a focus of facilities to ensure that all sections of the community can enjoy the countryside. The gateway shown in the centre of Bristol, possibly based within the existing facilities at the Youth Hostel or at the Tourist Information Centre, will act as an information point for the whole Community Forest and will be particularly valuable in providing information for people who are new to the area and in promoting green tourism, especially in terms of access to countryside by public transport. Other gateways proposed within the city are at Blaise Castle, on the Downs and at Grimsbury Farm. A large number of the other gateway sites are immediately on the edge of the City. Minor gateway and environmental improvement opportunities exist in the Easton, St. Agnes and St. Werburghs areas, linked to greenways and open spaces. Priority will be given to establishing good links to all the gateways by public transport and via greenways.