

CHAPTER 18 - Strategy Area: Gordano and Parkland

This strategy area comprises the southern parts of the Severn Ridge and Levels landscape zones and the northernmost part of the Avon Valley zone. The existing woodland cover is the highest in the Forest, being approximately 23%.

The Severn Ridge in this area is a clearly defined landscape feature with a high level of woodland cover.

The Gordano Valley part of the Levels is a high quality landscape with high nature conservation value. The Wildlife Trust has carried out extensive conservation initiatives within the Valley. New development at Portbury Dock is highly intrusive, though an extensive landscape plan is being implemented by the Bristol Port Company.

The Avon Valley forms a dramatic gorge where it slices through the Severn Ridge; the view of the Clifton Suspension Bridge spanning the ridge is very much a part of the local identity. The gorge creates a sharp boundary between urban and rural areas, resulting in a high quality landscape close to the urban edge.

The agricultural land in this area is predominantly grade 3 with small areas of grade 1 and 2 at the bottom of steep slopes and to the south-east of Pill. There is a higher incidence of full-time farming than in most of the Forest and farms tend to be large. Dairy farming predominates although this has shown a marked decrease in the last 10 years in favour of other livestock and to some extent arable cropping and horticulture.

This area is of significant wildlife value with two NNRs and many other sites of wildlife interest.

The Severn Ridge has a large number of historic parks along its length and many other visual links with the area's past.

Recreational use is focused close to the gorge, the coast and on local footpaths. There is great potential to increase access more widely.

The Bristol to Portishead railway line offers the possibility of improving recreational access.

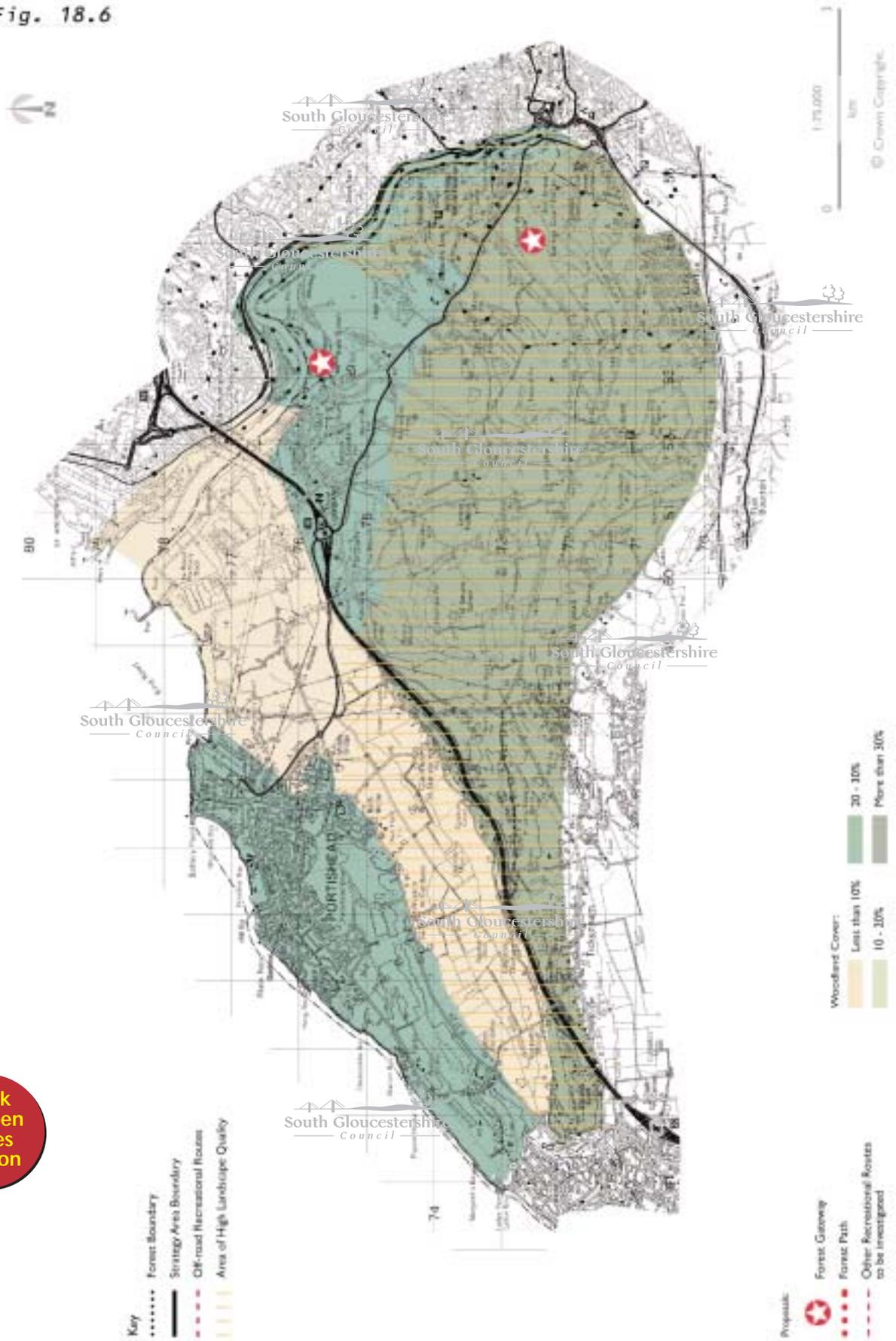
The priorities in this area will be to:

- promote the management of the existing woodland;
- improve visually the area around Pill and the M5 and new Portbury Dock development;
- enhance the Avon Valley by extending the woodland character towards Pill and improving the landscape detail on both banks;
- create new small-scale woodlands to strengthen the existing landscape value and link areas of fragmented woodland, ideally to ancient woodland where possible;
- develop a recreation strategy which increases the use of the area, whilst ensuring that the high quality of the existing landscape is maintained;
- improve the network of recreational routes through the area, particularly the coastal path and from the coast to the Tickenham Ridge;
- encourage an increase in the recreational use of the woodlands.

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Fig. 18.6

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1. Portishaed to Clevedon



2. Clevedon to Avon Gorge



3. Pill



4. Gordano Valley



5. Portbury Wharf



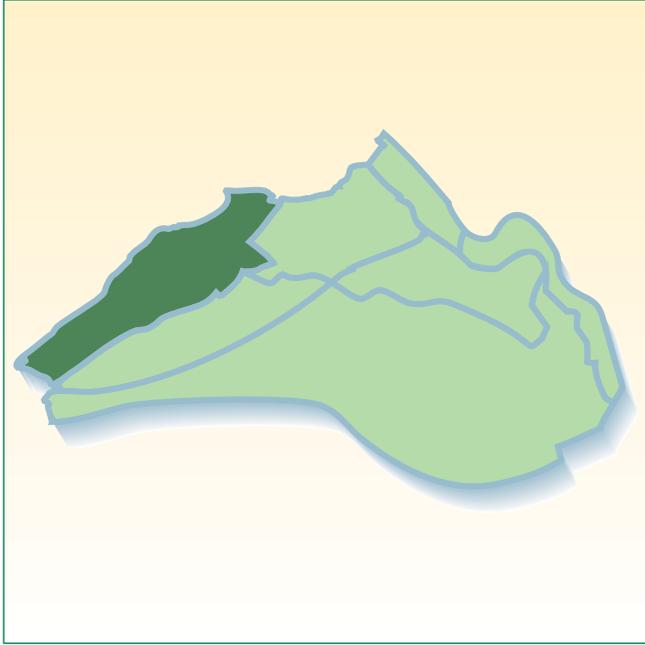
6. Avon Gorge



7. Shirehampton

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Portishead to Clevedon



Description

A clearly defined section of the well-wooded Severn Ridge creating a rocky coastline beside the Severn. The coastal side is dominated by housing, caravan sites and a golf course. On a fine day there are panoramic views across the estuary to Wales. The south-eastern side of the ridge contains small fields of pasture within woodland with good views across the Gordano Valley. There are no major roads.

Existing woodland cover: 22.7%, over half of which is ancient.

Local strategy

Landscape improvements to the coastal landscape enhancing the line of the coastal footpath. Small-scale improvements are appropriate to the top and south-eastern sides of the ridge, with more extensive planting around the edge of Portishead. Create vantage points to admire the views both across the Severn and into the Gordano Valley.

Proposed woodland cover: up to 30%.

Woodlands

- Promote management of existing woodlands and enhanced recreational use.
- Establish new small woodlands, copses and improved hedgerows on the coastal side particularly to provide shelter and protection from erosion; species choice will need to take account of marine exposure.
- Along the top of the ridge and on the south-eastern side, establish small woods linking the existing woodland, whilst retaining views.
- Promote community woodland near Clevedon and Portishead, with the involvement of local people.

Wildlife

- A large part of this area is woodland and grassland SSSI.
- Protect and enhance existing grassland and woodland habitats, ensuring that new woodland does not encroach on grassland.
- If ancient woodlands have been replanted in the past with exotics and/or conifers, owners will be encouraged to consider future management which aims eventually to re-establish native broadleaved species, where possible by natural regeneration or through the use of local stock.
- New planting will be used to establish links between fragmented woodland areas.
- There is a local nature reserve at East Wood.
- Weston Big Wood, managed by the Wildlife Trust, is an important wildlife site.

Heritage

- Ensure that any promotion of Walton Castle and Walton Common for their wildlife and recreational value also provides interpretation of the history of the sites.
- Weston-in-Gordano and Walton-in-Gordano and parts of Clevedon and Portishead are conservation areas.

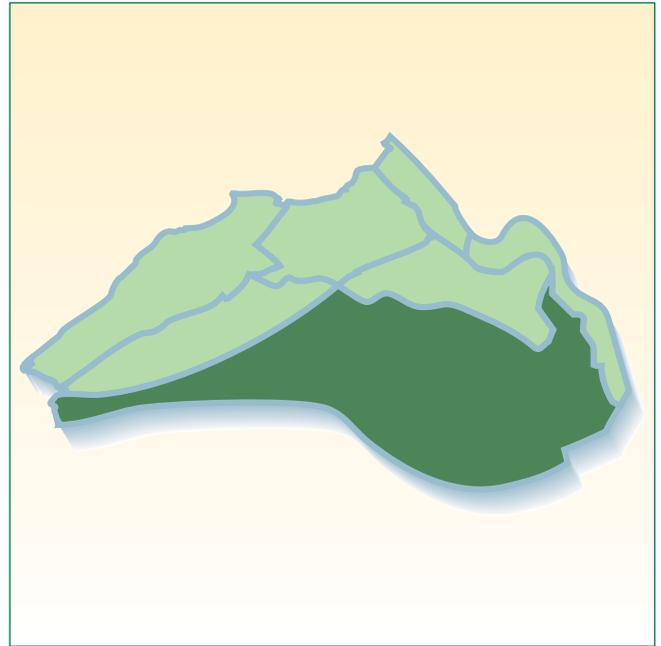
Recreation

- Improve the existing coastal path, particularly where there has been land slippage, and promote the continuation of the route through to Weston-super-Mare. Investigate opportunities to create a lay-by to enhance access to the coastal path and to create a view point.
- Create a ridge-top walk between Clevedon and Portishead linking the existing rights of way past Walton Castle and Walton Common.

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- Shorter circular walks close to Clevedon and Portishead will also be investigated.
- The Gordano Round route will be a useful focus for walks in this area.
- It will be important to ensure that all walks are promoted and signposted from urban areas.
- There is an opportunity to create a gateway at Valley Road linking through to Weston Big Wood, and at East Wood Portishead.
- East Wood and Weston Big Wood are valuable recreation resources immediately adjacent to Portishead as well as important wildlife sites.

Clevedon to Avon Gorge



Description

A broad, well-wooded section of the Severn Ridge tapering to the west, surrounded by steep slopes. The ridge contains a concentration of historic parkland characterised by large fields framed by mixed woodland plantations and high stone walls. On the eastern end of the ridge, golf courses and playing fields become a major land use. Well-wooded gullies run north off the ridge creating attractive intimate landscapes. The M5 is of high localised impact where it bisects the ridge. There are several quarries within the area.

Existing woodland cover: 27.6%; of this, about one-third is ancient woodland.

Local strategy

Conservation of existing wooded parkland character with careful new planting to complement the existing structure and reduce the intrusion of major roads and pylon lines. On the north side of the ridge, planting will be extended out of the gullies onto the steep slopes. Improve the landscape setting of golf courses and playing fields.

Proposed woodland cover: over 30%.

Woodlands

- Promote management of existing woodland and investigate opportunities for additional recreational use.
- Explore recreational potential of Forest Enterprise woodlands.

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- Investigate opportunities for community woodlands close to Long Ashton and Failand.

Wildlife

- About one-third of the woodland in this area is ancient, large areas of which have been replanted in the past with exotics and/or conifers. Owners will be encouraged to consider future management which aims eventually to re-establish native broadleaved species, where possible by natural regeneration or through the use of local stock.
- Aim to use new planting to enhance the existing wildlife corridors.
- Promote the Avon Gorge NNR for increased understanding and enjoyment of wildlife.

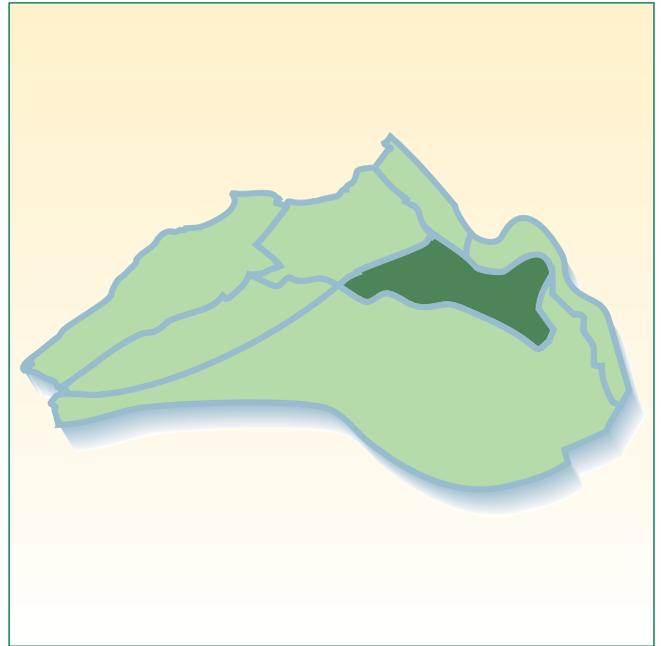
Heritage

- There are five sites on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.
- There are also extensive areas of pre-mediaeval fields and associated settlement enclosure.
- Ashton Court visitors' centre gives an interpretation of the history of the estate.
- Clevedon Court is a National Trust property; Stokeleigh and Cadbury Camp forts are visible features in the landscape, which should be interpreted in walks.
- Leighwoods and part of Long Ashton are conservation areas.

Recreation

- This attractive landscape close to Bristol is a great resource for informal recreation. Investigate opportunities to increase the recreational use of the area, and particularly the Forest Enterprise woods.
- The Community Forest Path crosses the eastern edge of the area; there is an opportunity to create circular walks from this and to establish a path along the length of the ridge from the Suspension Bridge to Clevedon.
- Ashton Court has the potential to act as a gateway.
- Clevedon Court woods could become a gateway.

Pill



Description

A lower, less defined section of the Severn Ridge, this area has a gently sloping, mixed agricultural landscape with large fields, absent or poor hedgerows and little woodland. The M5, the A369 and Pill are prominent elements. The River Avon is only visible from the edge of the area. The woodland is of limited visual impact as it is concentrated in two small incised valleys but views up to the well-wooded slopes of the top of the ridge are important.

Existing woodland cover: 2.9%.

Local strategy

Landscape improvements towards a well-wooded agricultural landscape, through the promotion of significantly increased tree cover. New woodland to be concentrated towards the M5, the A369 and the edge of Pill. Restoration of the hedgerow network is needed to restore the landscape pattern. Extend existing woodlands from the top of the ridge into the area.

Proposed woodland cover: 20-30%.

Woodlands

- Management of existing woodland will be promoted.
- New woodland will be managed towards a diverse age and species structure, within an extended network of woods, field and hedgerow trees.
- Medium and small woodland blocks will be integrated into an upgraded farming pattern.

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- The development of community woodland will be promoted on the edge of Pill.

Wildlife

- Management of existing woodlands and restoration of the hedgerow network will be promoted.
- The woodlands that remain in the deeply incised valleys will be viewed as valuable wildlife corridors with which new woodlands should connect. Much of the woodland in these valleys is ancient.

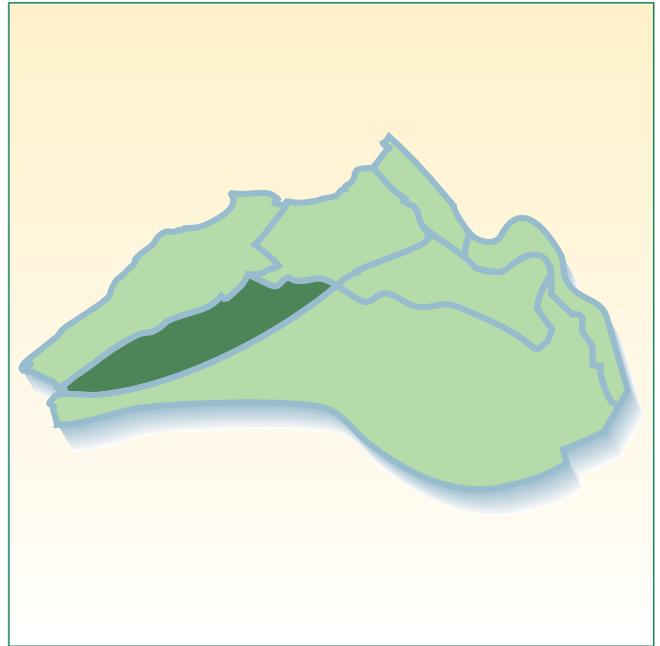
Heritage

- Leigh Court is on the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens.

Recreation

- Public access at present is centred on a network of footpaths to the south of Pill and the Avon Walkway. The access into Pill from the walkway will be enhanced and linked through to Portishead.
- A gateway will be investigated on the southern side of Pill giving access up onto the Severn Ridge as well as shorter circular walks.

Gordano Valley



Description

A Levels landscape of flat, wetland valley bottom enclosed by the Severn Ridge, characterised by small fields of unimproved pasture, surrounded by broken hedges and ditches draining into rhynes. The valley has a strong rural character with few roads and little housing. It is an area of high quality landscape with attractive views to the wooded sides of the Severn Ridge, disrupted in places by the elevated M5 and quarries.

Existing woodland cover: 4.1%.

Local strategy

Conservation of the existing Levels character, maintaining and enhancing the valuable wildlife habitats. Any new woodland should be limited to small areas adjacent to the edge of Portishead and higher ground. Particular attention will be given to the restoration of the landscape structure across the tipped ground and the restoration of hedges and ditches throughout the area.

Proposed woodland cover: below 10%.

Woodlands

- Any new tree planting in this area will reflect the nature conservation value.
- Adjacent to the edge of Portishead, small to medium-sized woodlands are appropriate. New planting at the edges of the zone could extend the wooded slopes down to the 10 m contour level.



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- The restoration of hedges and ditches should be a priority along with associated wetland hedgerow trees such as pollarded willows.

Wildlife

- The valley is of very high wildlife value with almost a quarter of the area being designated as a NNR and SSSI for its fen meadows, carr and damp grassland; much of the rest of the area is important for its unimproved or semi-improved grassland and wetland habitats. Any proposals in this area will give priority to the need to conserve and enhance the nature conservation interest.

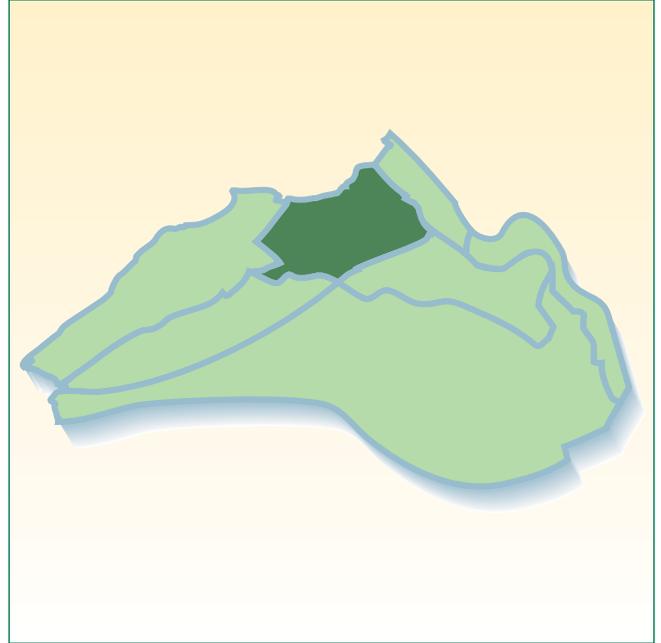
Heritage

- Interpretation of the wildlife value of the area should also interpret the history of the area, and how low intensity agricultural use has been in harmony with nature and enabled the area to become very valuable for wildlife.

Recreation

- The area is of very limited recreational use at present. There is an opportunity to provide interpretation of the wildlife habitats and circular walks within the area, particularly from Portishead. The high wildlife value of the area will require activities to remain low key.

Portbury Wharf



Description

A Levels area of contrasts, from low intensity agriculture to large-scale, visually intrusive industry, pylon lines and major roads. Sheepway remains quiet and agricultural but the majority of the area is fragmented and inhospitable. The Severn shoreline is invisible and inaccessible from most of the area.

Existing woodland cover: 0%.

Local strategy

Significant landscape change so that the large industrial development is screened by planting, enabling agriculture and wildlife sites to be set within an attractive Levels landscape, with small-scale pockets created for recreational use.

Proposed woodland cover: below 10%.

Woodlands

- Structure planting around the development area, using wet woodland carr species where appropriate. The planting will need to take into account the area's wildlife value.
- Energy crops should be considered on derelict ground and on ground scheduled for development. This would include structure planting which would be grown on to maturity.
- Emphasis will also be placed on ensuring that wildlife corridors from this area into the Gordano Valley are conserved.

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Wildlife

- The mud flats, salt marshes, re-colonised tips, pools and rhynes make this an important wildlife area. The estuary foreshore is an SSSI.
- Land where material excavated from Portbury Dock was tipped has become a valuable habitat; barn owls, short-eared and long-eared owls feed off the large vole population. There is some question as to whether these species will remain in the area, as neighbouring development opens it up and makes it more accessible.
- The land which is not designated for development needs a full management survey to be carried out to determine how it can best accommodate future landscape, wildlife and recreational demands.

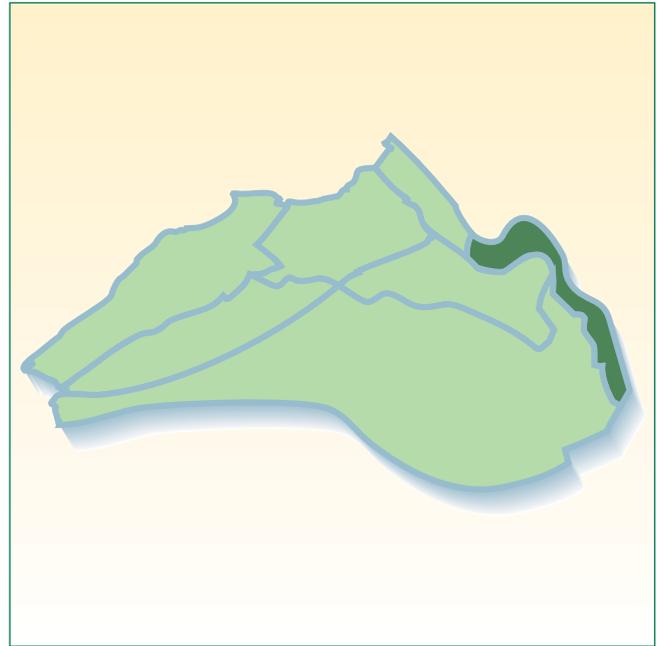
Heritage

- Maps from the eighteenth century show much of the area of what is now Royal Portbury Dock as part of the Severn Estuary.

Recreation

- This area is very inaccessible for recreational use at present.
- A route is being investigated to connect the Avon Walkway and the Coastal Path; this will provide a valuable recreational route from the centre of Bristol through to Clevedon on coastal and riverside paths.
- There is an active proposal for a Weston-super-Mare to Clevedon footpath along the coast.
- There are possibilities for the recreational use of Portishead Dock as part of the redevelopment of the area.
- There may be an opportunity to create a study centre in the south-west of the area which would increase the understanding and enjoyment of the Levels landscape.

Avon Gorge



Description

A dramatic section of the Avon Valley, where the river bisects the Severn Ridge, creating a deep gorge with sheer rock faces and well-wooded steep sides. The Clifton Suspension Bridge spanning the top of the gorge is a local landmark and visitor attraction of international appeal. At the bottom of the gorge, low tide reveals the river's large, muddy banks. The narrow strip of land on the north bank is dominated by the A4 and railway line, whilst the Avon Walkway creates an attractive route along the southern bank. An area of high landscape value.

Existing woodland cover: 24.2%.

Local strategy

Conservation of the special character and features of this area. There is an opportunity to enhance the road and rail corridor along the northern bank, along with small-scale landscape improvements to the southern bank. New woodland between Abbots Leigh and Pill would significantly improve and enhance a very open section of farmland.

Proposed woodland cover: up to 30%.

Woodlands

- Encourage continued management of existing woodland and investigate opportunities to enhance recreational use.
- Promote the enhancement of both river banks.

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Wildlife

- An area of very high wildlife interest; much of the area is an SSSI and part is within the Avon Gorge NNR.
- There is an opportunity to enhance the area between the Gorge and Pill for its value for wildlife.

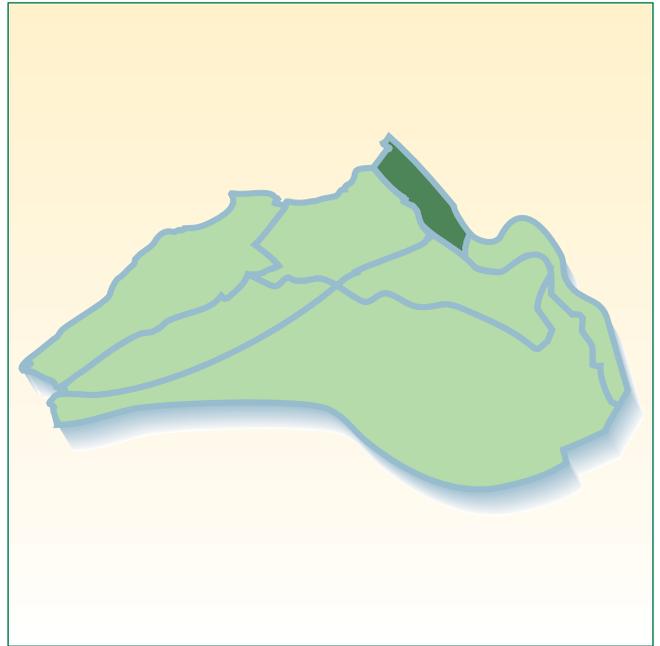
Heritage

- Any development of recreational routes through the area should provide interpretation of the historical importance of the river and the gorge in relation to the development of Bristol.

Recreation

- An important leisure and recreation area, with existing access along the Avon Walkway and through Leigh Woods. There is an opportunity to promote further the informal recreational use of the area.
- The Clifton Suspension Bridge is on the route of the Community Forest Path and will provide a recreational link from close to the city centre to a very attractive area of countryside.
- The opportunities for enhancing the recreational use of Forest Enterprise woodland will be investigated.
- Wherever possible, enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes will be created on the north side of the Avon away from the A4.

Shirehampton



Description

The mouth of the Avon Valley, which has for centuries been an important landmark for shipping, is now largely dominated by industrial development around Avonmouth, Royal Portbury Docks and the M5 bridge. The open ground that remains is visually uninteresting. There is very limited public access along the river banks.

Existing woodland cover: 0%.

Local strategy

Significant landscape change to the open spaces between development. These spaces are small but there is an opportunity to improve them to become more attractive for people.

Proposed woodland cover: below 10%.

Woodlands

- There is very little scope for anything but very small new woods, as most of the area is wetland/semi-improved grassland or industrial development. Woodland planting may be used to enhance the boundaries between these two land uses and to improve areas of public open space.

Wildlife

- Ensure that existing wetland and grassland habitats are retained and enhanced.

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- Investigate opportunities to improve the value of the Avon as a wildlife corridor.

Heritage

- Any developments of recreational routes along the Avon should include an interpretation of the importance of the river in the development of Bristol.
- Reinstating the Pill/Shirehampton ferry would enliven the area and restore the historical link.

Recreation

- This area is of low recreational use at present. Improvements to open space immediately adjacent to the river's edge could provide a valuable recreational resource for neighbouring residential areas.
- There is a need to identify the Avon Valley Walkway clearly through the area.
- The possibility of reinstating the Pill to Shirehampton ferry for recreational use should be investigated; this could help to regenerate the area.
- Use of the Severn Beach railway line could be promoted for access, particularly if the ferry was reinstated.

