



# West Midlands RSS Phase 2 – Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment

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# SA/SEA and HRA

- **Sustainability Appraisal:**

- Appraise economic, social and environmental implications
- Based on the Region's sustainable development objectives
- Identify pros and cons, winners and losers, trade-offs
- Maximise benefits
- Identify critical sustainability issues – mitigate

- **Habitats Regulations Assessment**

- Assess impacts on 'European Sites'
- Identify whether the plan has an adverse effect on any sites
- Proposals can only be adopted if no significant effect is likely

# SA – work so far

- Preferred option and draft policies emerging since 29 June
- Appraising each new policy against SA Framework
- Iterative process – fed comments back on preferred option and policies as they have evolved
- Draft SA Report issued 11 September:
  - Fed into Regional Planning Partnership 24 September
  - Recommendations being considered

# Delivering the Spatial Strategy

- ‘Urban Renaissance’: develop the MUAs so that the unsustainable outward migration of people and jobs is stopped
- Many factors to promote urban renaissance – the location of new housing is a key factor
- Will the location of new housing encourage people to stay in MUAs?
- Findings:
  - For every 10 *additional* houses (ie net) constructed in the MUAs, there will be 12 additional houses outside the MUAs
  - The proportion of housing *outside* the MUAs will have increased by 2026 (from 46.6% to 47.6%)
  - Housing is not being located to meet needs locally:
    - Undersupply of 66,744 in the MUAs
    - Oversupply of 79,287 outside the MUAs
  - Housing may exacerbate the problem of out-migration from the MUAs
- Recommendations:
  - Stronger phasing policy to ensure that there is greater provision within the MUAs during the first 10 years of the strategy

# Housing Affordability

- **Average house price for the region is seven times the average income**
- **Will construction of 362,600 additional houses help to deal with affordability problems?**
- **Findings:**
  - Government research suggests that a doubling in the rate of house building may halve the rate of house price growth
  - But a 25% increase in the rate of house building will have little impact
  - However, provision of 5,140 social housing units and 3,000 intermediate housing units would meet needs
- **Recommendations:**
  - Policy on affordable housing should require provision to meet need

# Sustainable Communities

- **RSS aims to provide ‘durable places where people want to live’, well-designed, with access to jobs, services and amenities**
- **Will the RSS policies deliver these communities?**
- **Findings:**
  - Research suggests that almost half of recent housing developments were ‘poor’
  - Badly designed, lacking in identity, dominated by road traffic, lacking good quality public space – unlikely to be desirable or durable
  - Policy on Sustainable Communities looks to drive up quality of urban design and housing
  - But could be more specific and demanding
- **Recommendations:**
  - Policy should require that all developments meet the ‘Building for Life’ standard
  - Already applied by English Partnerships, Housing Corporation, and DCLG in the Thames Gateway

# Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

- **Parts of the MUAs and many settlements of significant development have congestion and transport constraints**
- **Need to reduce the need to travel, move people onto more sustainable forms of transport**
- **Will the RSS policies address these problems?**
- **Findings:**
  - Revisions to policies in Transport and Accessibility are positive
  - Other policies also promote more sustainable local transport patterns
  - But not clear what transport patterns might emerge at regional level
  - Congestion in MUAs and settlements of significant development likely to worsen without investment in infrastructure
- **Recommendations:**
  - Strengthen Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Construction policies
  - Ensure that new developments have excellent public transport, are pedestrian-focused and 'walkable'

# Climate Change

- **New policy – reflects national target to reduce CO2 emissions by 20% by 2020, 60% by 2050; emphasises need for adaptation**
- **Will the RSS policies deliver these commitments?**
- **Findings:**
  - Not clear how emissions will change from transport or economic activity
  - Strong policies to reduce CO2 emissions from new housing stock – efficiency, renewables
  - CO2 emissions from housing stock expected to rise by 3.1% by 2026
  - Strong policies to promote adaptation
- **Recommendations:**
  - More ambitious, regionally-specific target on CO2 reductions?
  - Higher target on renewables in new development
  - Stronger on reducing CO2 from existing housing stock

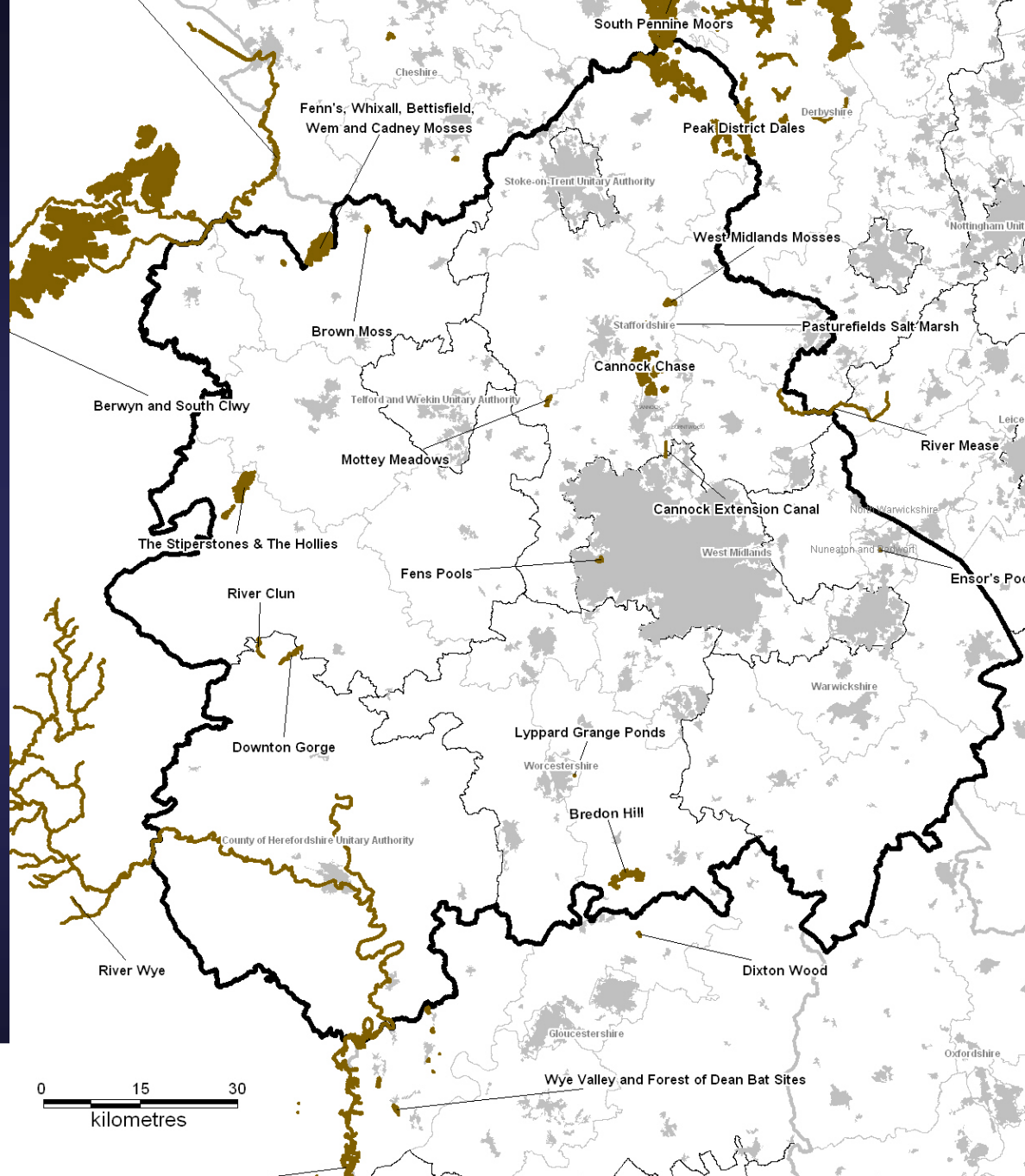
# Land Use

- **Development levels will increase pressure on land resources**
- **Will the RSS policies deliver development in a way that manages and minimises that pressure?**
- **Findings:**
  - 8,600ha of additional land required for houses
  - 2,800ha of this land would be greenfield sites or reallocations
  - Green belt may be required around Coventry, Tamworth, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Redditch
  - Over 3,000ha of employment land, plus other uses
  - Not possible to assess overall land requirements
- **Recommendations:**
  - Establish targets in policy on housing density

# Water Supply

- **Water resources already under pressure or in deficit in some parts of the region**
- **Will the RSS policies ensure that development does not result in further shortages?**
- **Findings:**
  - ‘Headroom’ deficits likely at some points between now and 2026 in:
    - Herefordshire Conjunctive Use zone (2016-2022)
    - South Staffordshire zone (after 2024)
    - Birmingham zone (2017-2020 and 2022-2023)
    - Severn zone (2011-2016 and 2019-2024)
  - Sustainable Construction policy establishes good standards for water efficiency in new houses
- **Recommendations:**
  - Policy should establish higher standards
  - Should mention the need to address water use in existing stock?

- Covers SACs, SPAs and RAMSAR sites
- 22 sites where effects may be likely



# Diffuse Air Pollution

- **Findings:**

- 13 sites would be affected by deterioration in ambient air quality, especially NO<sub>x</sub>
- Could arise from transport, energy generation, airport expansion
- Growth in Cannock Chase is a particular pressure

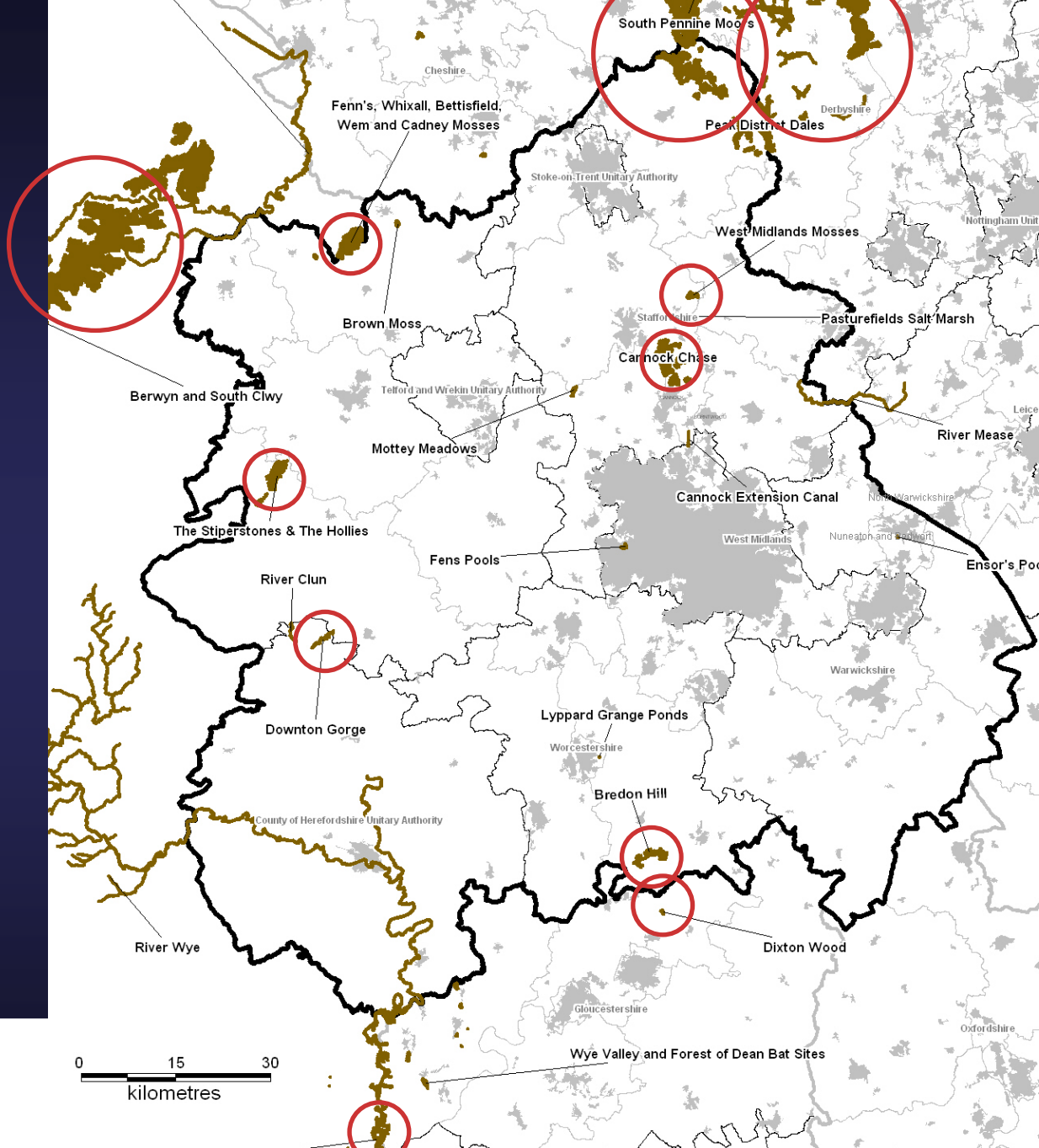
- **Requirements:**

- Must ensure that RSS does not increase diffuse air pollution

- **Recommendations:**

- New policy on air pollution
- Require the development of air quality strategies for each district
- Require a 'pollution neutral' approach to NO<sub>x</sub> emissions
- Development in Cannock Chase dependent on further studies

# Sites at risk from diffuse air pollution



# Water pollution from sewage discharges

- **Findings:**

- 4 sites at risk
- Could arise from housing growth

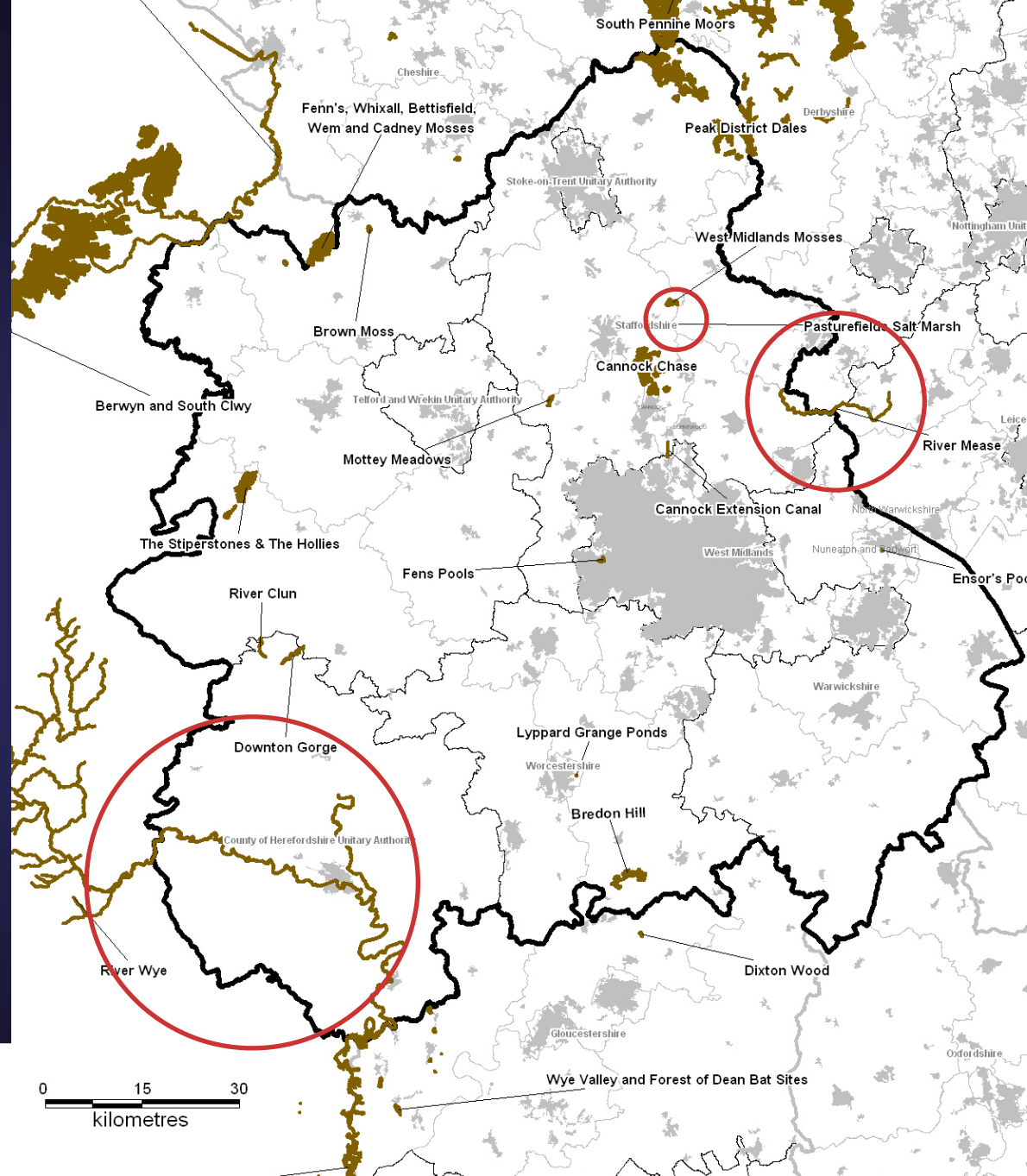
- **Requirements:**

- Must ensure that RSS does not result in any deterioration in water quality at these sites

- **Recommendations:**

- Require that local authorities consult with EA and water companies on site allocations for housing to ensure that sewage infrastructure can be provided
- Require the local authorities carry out water cycle studies

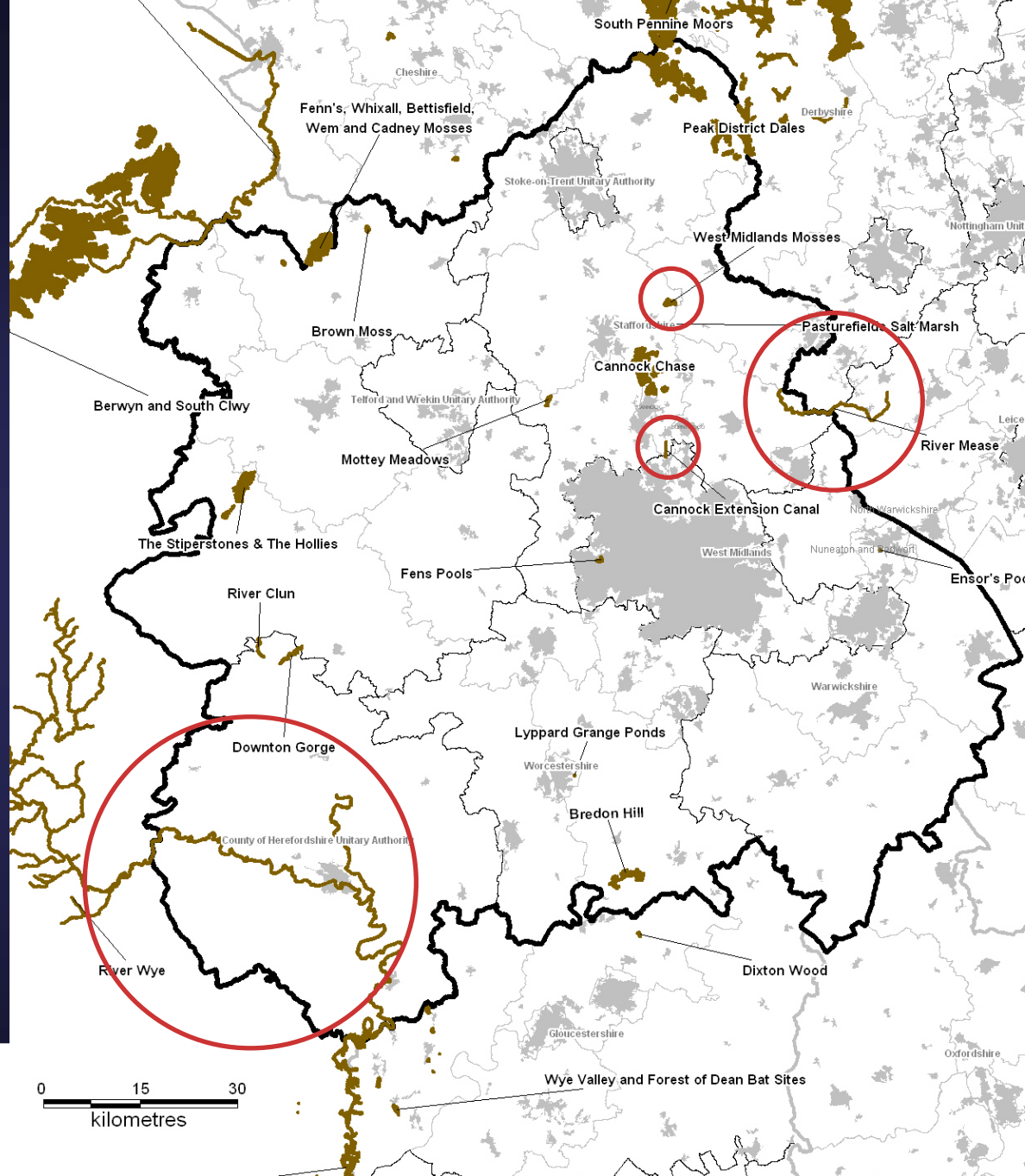
# Sites at risk from water pollution from sewage



# Water pollution from surface water runoff

- **Findings:**
  - 5 sites at risk
  - Could arise from a wide range of developments
- **Requirements:**
  - Must ensure that RSS does not result in any deterioration in water quality at these sites
- **Recommendations:**
  - ‘Sustainable Urban Drainage’ must be required, rather than encouraged
  - Policy must require SUDS to reduce effects on the water environment

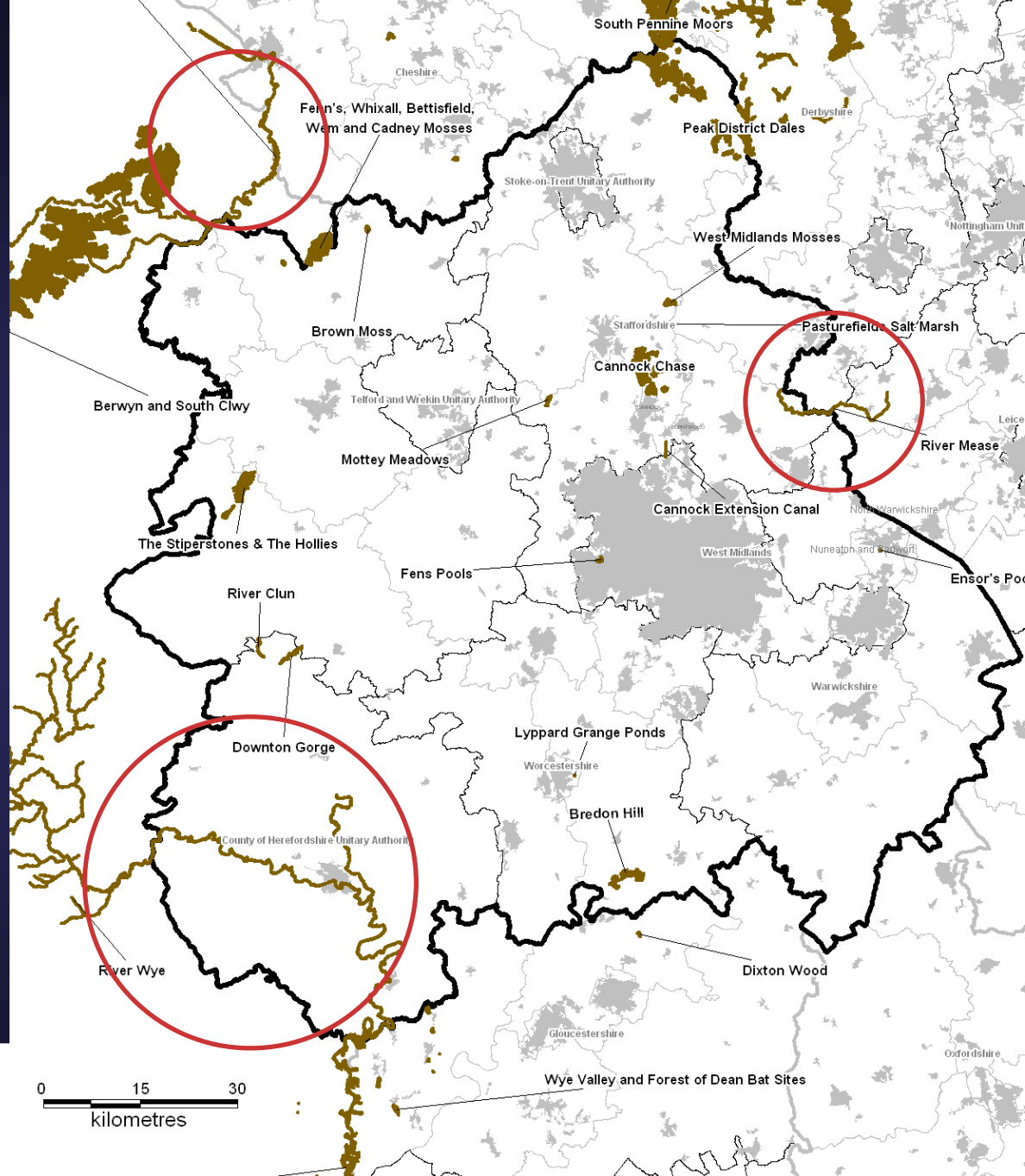
# Sites at risk from water pollution from surface water run-off



# Reduction in water supply to sites

- **Findings:**
  - 8 sites at risk
  - Could arise from housing growth
- **Requirements:**
  - Must ensure that RSS does not result in any deterioration in water quality at these sites
- **Recommendations:**
  - New policy
  - Development must be phased to ensure that water availability to sites is confirmed before housing is built
  - ‘Water neutrality’ must be required where availability cannot be guaranteed

# Sites at risk from water pollution from availability of water supply



# Other issues being examined

- **Disturbance from human activities**
- **Erosion/damage from human activities**
- **Spread of invasive plants**
- **Loss of supporting habitat**