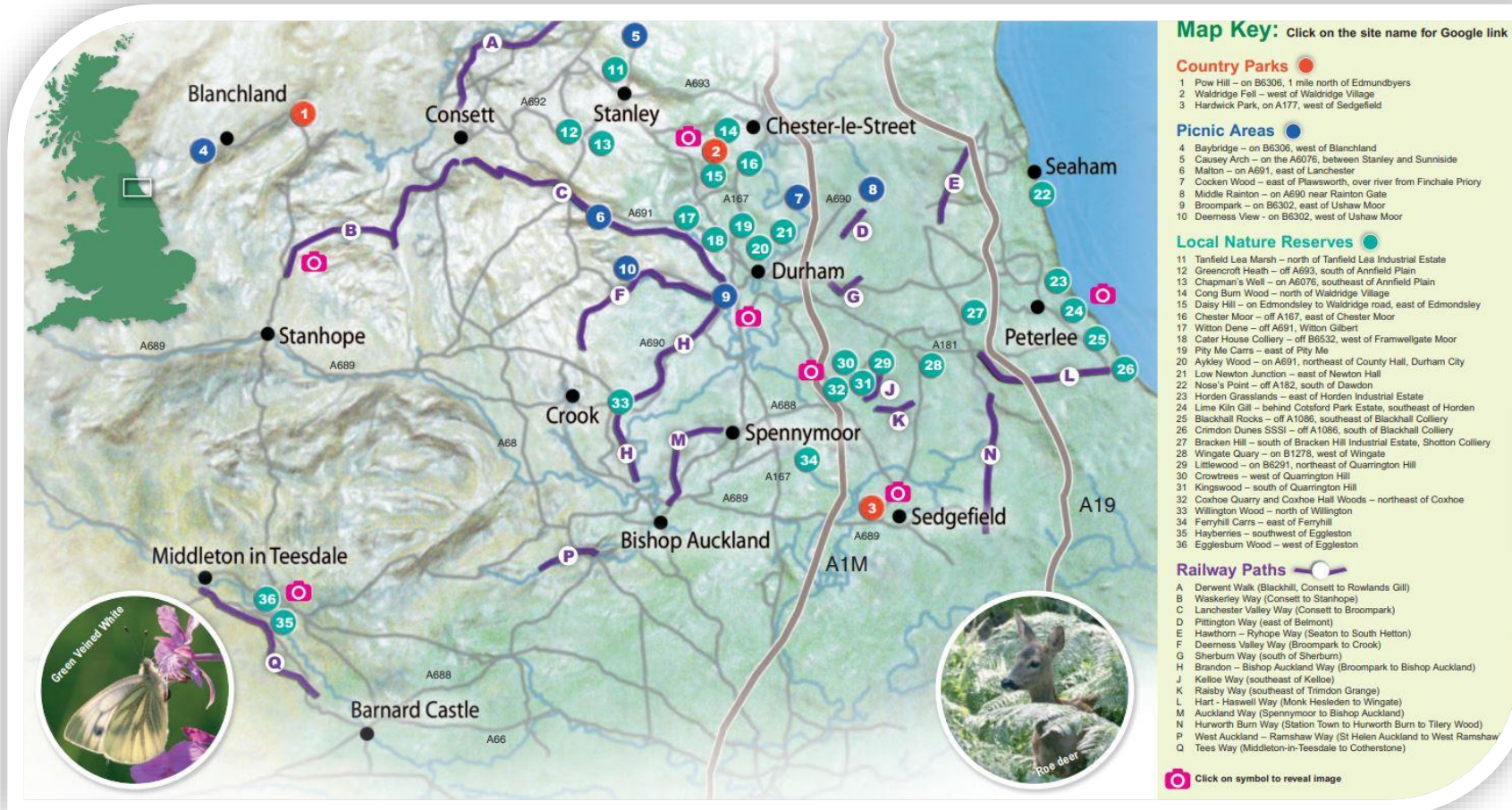




# Parks and Countryside



# Parks and Countryside Estate



➤ 63 sites (1,300Ha) SSSI, LNR, LWS, picnic areas.

➤ Two major destination parks – Hardwick Park and Wharton Park, including catering outlets. Over 600k visitors annually

➤ 75 miles (120km) of Railway Path network.

# Conservation, Biodiversity, and Access

## ➤ Managing high value nature conservation sites.

Species rich grasslands – improving

Ancient Woodlands – monitoring

Secondary Woodlands - management

Mosaics – mixtures of grassland/scrub/developing woodlands

Wetlands – ponds/swamp/fen/reservoir/streams

Heathland – improving

## ➤ Improving access to the countryside.

Developing RP network

Maintaining routes to encourage appropriate use



# Outdoor Learning, Events, and Community

- Comprehensive volunteering programmes.
- Schools engagement and specialist learning (under-5's, Forest School, John Muir Award).
- Community engagement and partnership projects.
- Guided walks programme, health and wellbeing, and informal recreation.

*'The natural environment is the great outpatient department where we can all go for healing.'* Dr William Bird



# Partnership Projects

## Highlights for Biodiversity:

- Bright Water Landscape Partnership.
- Seascapes and Heritage Coast.
- Durham Woodland Revival



# Challenges and Opportunities



## Challenges:

- Budget pressures and levels of support.
- Changing government priorities.
- Survey and monitoring.
- Covid impact, and cost of living.

## Opportunities:

- Capital investment and new staff.
- BNG.
- Climate change and nature recovery emergencies.
- Partnership development.

# Clean and Green Open Space Management for Biodiversity

- **Moving toward a biodiverse approach**
  - Increasing spaces which are allowed to 'grow wild'
  - Trialing rich grass mix meadows to promote pollinators and habitats for small mammals
  - Development of a rewilding strategy to link meadow sites to national biodiversity mapping such as Bug Life's 'Bee lines' – Draft expected in Spring
  - Mini-Wilding approach in open spaces, allowing wild species to grow in 'pockets' – tree bases, under hedges etc. – open spaces only



# Clean and Green Open Space Management for Biodiversity

- **Change in Verge Management**

- Around 50% of the UK's Wildflowers are located in Highway Verges – providing havens for pollinators and other species.
- From 2023 all verges (except sight lines) will be reduced to one cut per year, to a maximum depth of 15cm and outside of flowering seasons; Maximising the habitat for insects and mammals. (Excludes sightlines for pedestrian and vehicle safety)





# Clean and Green Open Space Management for Biodiversity

- **Use of Herbicides in public spaces**
  - Use of Glyphosate is still widespread across the county and is the current primary herbicide. Whilst Many studies show it is safe for long term use, there is a growing concern around its use.
  - C&G are trialing alternatives, including pelargonic acid and acetic acid – both commonly accruing natural acids.
  - C&G also trailing ceasing all herbicide use on green spaces – allowing natural species to grow around trees, beside hedges and other peripheral locations around green spaces (does not extend to all open spaces).



# Any Questions?

