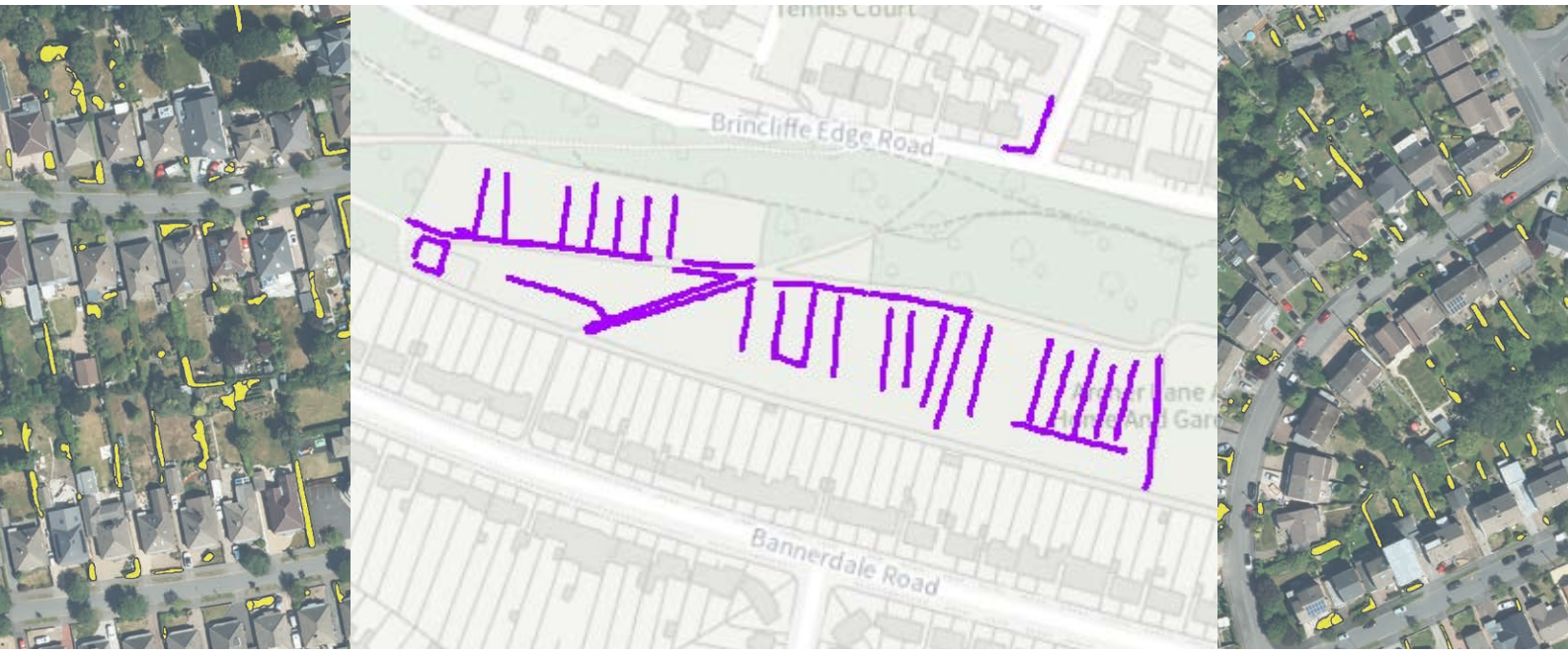
Case Study

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA)



Client:

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) is a regional governance body led by an elected mayor, overseeing transport, economic development, and strategic planning across South Yorkshire.

Industry:

Local Authority

Product:

National Hedgerow Map™

> *"SYMCA adopted Bluesky's National Hedgerow Map™ after identifying it as the most detailed and suitable dataset for their needs. The dataset's vegetation polygons, centrelines, rich volumetric information, and location accuracy, offered a level of granularity that alternative datasets and traditional surveying could not match."*
>
> Laurie Kooben, Senior Sustainability Manager, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority

Summary:

As one of 48 regions appointed by DEFRA to deliver a national Local Nature Recovery Strategy, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA) is utilising Bluesky's National Hedgerow Map™, alongside attributes from the National Tree Map™, as one of the tools to overcome the challenges of mapping biodiversity across a wide and varied landscape. The highly detailed dataset provides the accurate vegetation and hedgerow information needed to identify priority areas for habitat restoration, enhancement, and management. Working in partnership with specialists at environmental consultancy Natural Capital Solutions, SYMCA is using these insights to inform its regional strategy, support DEFRA's national framework, and engage stakeholders through both digital tools and interactive map workshops.

Challenge:

SYMCA is one of 48 regions appointed by DEFRA to deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), forming part of a nationwide initiative. The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) aims to create a collection of nature recovery plans across England. As the responsible authority for South Yorkshire, SYMCA plays a leading role in developing clear biodiversity priorities and producing a comprehensive local habitat map to guide future ecological action.

Covering such a large and diverse geographic area posed significant challenges, especially when it came to accurately mapping hedgerows, a critical habitat network for wildlife corridors and ecological connectivity. Manually collecting this information across South Yorkshire would have proved both time consuming and costly, therefore SYMCA needed a solution that was both detailed and accurate, capable of capturing precise vegetation locations and attributes. In addition to submitting the findings to DEFRA as part of the national LNRS, SYMCA also required outputs that could be presented visually and interpreted easily by stakeholders and the public.

Solution:

SYMCA adopted Bluesky's National Hedgerow Map™ after identifying it as the most detailed and suitable dataset for their needs. The dataset's vegetation polygons, centrelines, rich volumetric information, and location accuracy, offered a level of granularity that alternative datasets and traditional surveying could not match.

The GIS analysts at SYMCA work closely with mapping specialists at environmental consultancy Natural Capital Solutions, who led the in-depth technical analysis using a wide range of environmental data and including both the National Hedgerow Map™ dataset and attributes from the National Tree Map™ dataset. SYMCA then refine and circulate the outputs to DEFRA for the wider recovery strategy, and to regional stakeholders. To foster better engagement with stakeholders and the general public, SYMCA held a series of workshops, where both digital tools and printed acetate map overlays were used, enabling participants to gather around large physical maps, look at results of the analysis, identify focal areas, and collaboratively shape the LNRS as it continues to progress.

Results:

The resulting hedgerow analysis is helping SYMCA to accurately identify areas across South Yorkshire where enhancing, restoring, or better managing hedgerows would deliver the greatest biodiversity benefits. This insight forms a key component of their regional LNRS, and the national LNRS framework, to improve wildlife corridors and increase habitat connectivity across the various regions. The National Hedgerow Map™ dataset has proved essential, and contractors noted that the hedgerow mapping measure would not have been possible without the level of detail provided.

The success of the ongoing project has also sparked wider interest across the authority in how high-quality geospatial data can support future initiatives. SYMCA is now exploring ways to further utilise the National Tree Map™, having already incorporated it into the LNRS,, to enhance biodiversity work and broader organisational projects beyond the current LNRS timeline.

Specification	
Layers	1. Vegetation Polygons (Vector Polygon) - Representing the vegetation extent of each feature 2. Centrelines (Vector Line) - Length of each feature represented as a central line 3. National Tree Map™ - All 3 layers of NTM™ are included
Coverage	England, Wales & Scotland
Accuracy Z	± 1m rmse
Classification Criteria	Vegetation between 0.5 - 2.99m in height (NTM™ - Trees over 3m in height)
Formats	Include: ESRI Shape, MapInfo Tab, Geodatabase, Geopackage, DWG, KMZ
Standard Projection	British National Grid

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At the time of publication all of the information was correct but could be subject to change.

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