



NATIONAL LEAGUE SYSTEM: STEP 5/6 RESTRUCTURE UPDATE

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the February edition of the '*National League System: Step 5/6 Restructure Update*', which follows a meeting of all Step 5/6 Leagues held at Leicestershire & Rutland County FA on Sunday 2 February 2020.

As you will all be well aware, we are nearing the business-end of the season and with that a lot of speculation as to where Clubs will be placed for the 2020-21 season. At the outset it is important to understand that we cannot possibly know the final outcomes until the final ball of the season is kicked but what we are committing to you, the Clubs, is that we will provide as much information as practicably possible in order to best prepare Clubs for the 2020-21 season.

To that end, we have conducted a mapping exercise (and will do so again in April) – this mapping exercise creates a simulated version of Club allocations at Steps 5 and 6 and is calculated using the following conditions:

- The tables as they were at 31 December 2019
- The Clubs are then ranked on their points per match average – this avoids the situation of a false simulation for those Clubs that are catching up on fixtures due to cup runs or postponements
- The promotion and relegation Regulations are applied ¹
 - Note: the simulation has assumed that the winners of the seven Step 4/5 Play-Offs will be the Step 5 Clubs. This decision was taken on the basis that it would create the most movement and would be a 'worst' case scenario in terms of changes to League boundaries
- The divisions are then arranged into groups of 20 at Step 5 and 18-20 at Step 6. It is the aim of The FA's Leagues Committee to create divisions of 20 at Step 6, where possible. However, in geographical instances some divisions may operate with 18 or 19 for the first season.

As mentioned above, we will be performing the simulation again during March for circulation in April. This will no doubt provide The FA's Leagues Committee (and in turn Leagues and Clubs) with a greater understanding of where the boundaries may lie. When circulating the mapping in April, Clubs who could be at risk of lateral movement will be given a notification to that effect. But, once again, we must stress that the final outcomes will not be known until the end of the season.

Thank you for your support during this final, yet crucial, part of the National League System restructure and good luck for the remainder of the season.

Mark Frost, FA Leagues Committee Chairman – on behalf of The FA Leagues Committee

¹ See Appendix A – Promotion and Relegation Regulations: Steps 5, 6 and 7

PROJECTED ALLOCATIONS

STEP 5

As anticipated, owing to the fact that Step 5 is gaining two divisions, the projected Club allocations for Step 5 are extremely close to those predicted at the outset ².

The originally predicted boundaries are the shaded polygons, with the simulated Club allocations being highlighted with a marker in the corresponding colour to the polygon (the same principle applies to Step 6, although the polygons are transparent, not shaded).

STEP 6

At Step 6 the landscape is more challenging in so much that we do not know at this stage which Clubs will be promoted from Step 7. The grouping of Clubs has been performed on the following basis ³:

- Initially, Clubs were grouped within the previously communicated draft boundaries
- This led to an imbalance and so some movement to other Leagues has been administered
- Clubs in relegation positions at Step 6 have been kept in the Step 6 mapping, for now
- The Step 7 promotion candidates are marked with 
- This simulation has grouped divisions which vary in size from 13 to 23 Clubs, with 15 of the divisions being allocated 17 or more Clubs (before Step 7 promotion is factored in).
- With the numbers of Clubs applying for promotion from Step 7 to 6 we anticipate that all divisions will be allocated with 18+ Clubs, such is the Committee's target.

PLEASE NOTE:

In the first instance, if queries arise, please lodge these with your League Secretary who will compile any comments and forward these to The FA in one 'batch'.

The FA's Leagues Committee will endeavour to provide answers to these by return – either shortly after receiving the feedback or contained within the next update.

² See Appendix B – Step 5: projected boundaries [Feb 2020]

³ See Appendix C – Step 6: projected boundaries [Feb 2020]

TIMESCALES

The FA's Leagues Committee can confirm the following timescales:

Further mapping simulation	March 2020
Maps presented to The FA's Leagues Committee	1 April 2020
Circulation of April update to Leagues and Clubs – including more specific lateral movement warning	No later than 17 April 2020 (this may take a little time due to lateral movement warnings)

SEASON ENDS

The FA's Leagues Committee agree to draft Step 5/6 Club allocations	12 May 2020
Clubs proposed for lateral movement are informed and any Club wishing to lodge its views as to the proposed lateral movement has 7 days in which to do so	Clubs informed on 12 May 2020, have until 5pm on 19 May 2020 to lodge views
Views are considered as and when they arrive, with final views being considered on evening of 19 May deadline	12 to 19 May 2020
Step 5/6 Club allocations released	21 May 2020

** All dates subject to any required change/unforeseen circumstances*

APPENDIX A

PROMOTION & RELEGATION

REGULATIONS: STEPS 5, 6 AND 7

Step 4 and Step 5

The Clubs finishing in last place in each of the seven divisions at Step 4 at the end of the Regular Season will take part in Step 4/5 Play Off matches against a Step 5 Club. A total of 24 Clubs will be automatically promoted to Step 4. These Clubs will be:

LEAGUE	POSITION
Combined Counties League	Champion Club
Eastern Counties League	Champion Club
Essex Senior League	Champion Club
Hellenic League	Champion Club
Midland League	Champion Club
North West Counties League	Champion Club, 2nd and 3rd placed Clubs
Northern League	Champion Club, 2nd and 3rd placed Clubs
Northern Counties East League	Champion Club, 2nd and 3rd placed Clubs
Southern Counties East League	Champion Club
Spartan South Midlands League	Champion Club
Southern Combination	Champion Club
United Counties League	Champion Club
Wessex League	Champion Club
Western League	Champion Club

In addition to the above, the remaining second placed Clubs will be ranked on points per game (then goal difference, then goals scored if required) with the four highest placed Clubs also receiving automatic promotion.

The remaining seven second placed Clubs will take part in the Step 4/5 Play Off matches on a single match basis at the ground of the Step 4 Club they are drawn against. Where possible, the draw for the Play Off matches will be regionalised. The winners of these Step 4/5 Play Off matches will be allocated to Step 4.

The Clubs to be promoted from Step 5 will be allocated to the most geographically appropriate division at Step 4.

A Club promoted to Step 4 shall comply with the Licencing System provision as set out in Appendix 1 to the Standardised Rules.

Step 5 and Step 6

The Clubs in the bottom place in each of the fourteen divisions at Step 5 at the end of the Regular Season will be ranked on a points per match basis (then goal difference, then goals scored if required) - the twelve lowest will be relegated and placed in the most geographically appropriate division of Step 6. These Clubs will be replaced by the Clubs in first and second position of the two divisions operated by the South West Peninsula League and the Clubs placed in first, second, third and fourth positions in the remaining eighteen Leagues at Step 6 at the end of the Regular Season.

Step 6 and 7

At the end of the Regular Playing Season the Clubs in the bottom two positions of each of the twenty Step 6 divisions will be liable to relegation.

All Step 7 Clubs seeking promotion to Step 6 must make application using the prescribed form direct to The Association, copied to their existing League, by 31st December in the relevant year.

In order to be considered for promotion Clubs must finish in 1st position in their Step 7 league. If the Club finishing in 1st position does not wish to be promoted or fails to meet the entry criteria then the club finishing in 2nd position will be eligible for promotion. If the club in 2nd position does not seek promotion or fails to meet the entry criteria then clubs down to 5th position may be considered for promotion provided that they meet the appropriate entry criteria. Clubs finishing below 5th position may not be considered for promotion and, for this season only, more than one club may be considered from each League. Each application must be accompanied by the agreed application fee, as determined by the Committee, which is non-refundable.

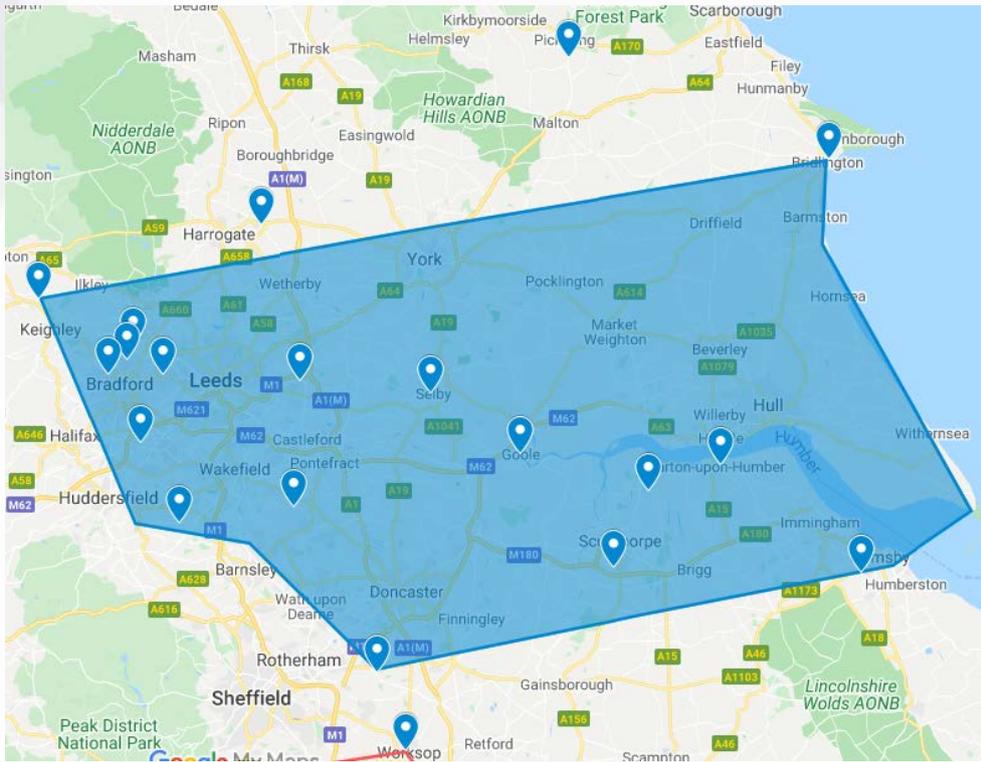
No more than 40 Clubs will be promoted from Step 7. If more than 40 Clubs are eligible for promotion they will be chosen based on a points per match basis. Where the eligible Clubs count does not reach 40 in number, reprieves of Step 6 Clubs shall come into effect on a points per match basis.

APPENDIX B

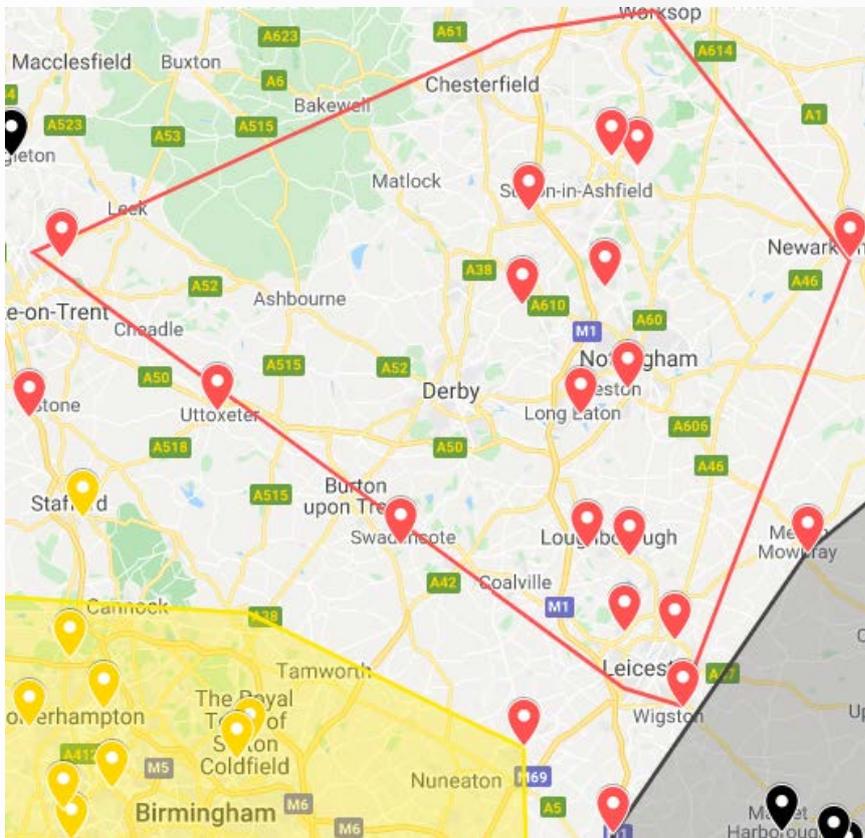
STEP 5: PROJECTED BOUNDARIES

[FEB 2020]

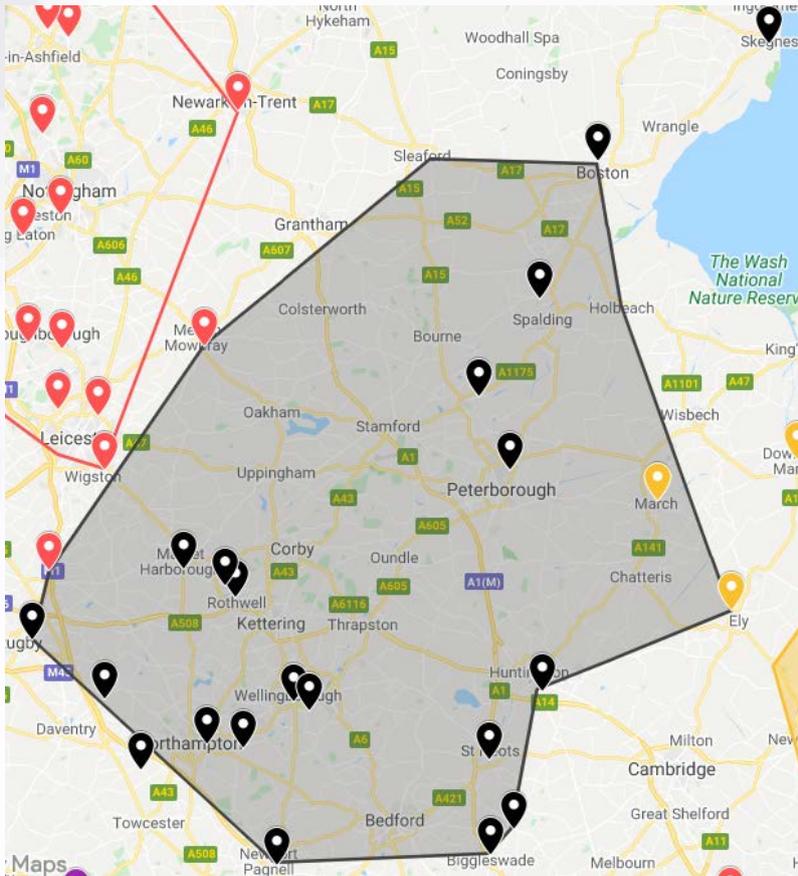
NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE – STEP 5 (BLUE)



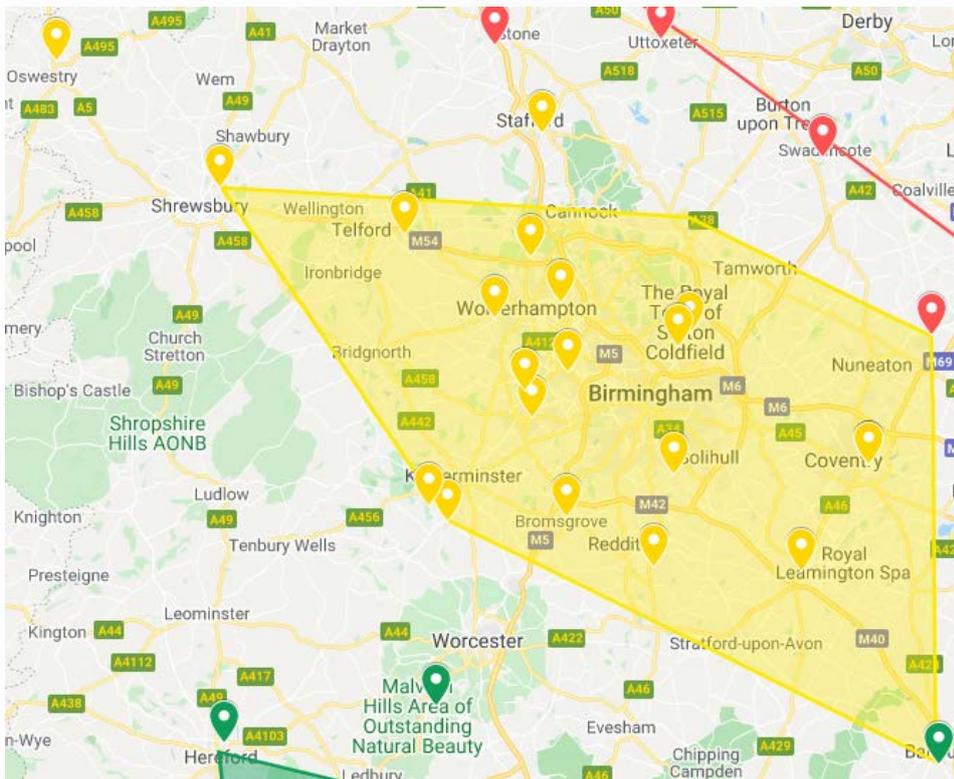
UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE (AREA 1) – STEP 5 (RED)



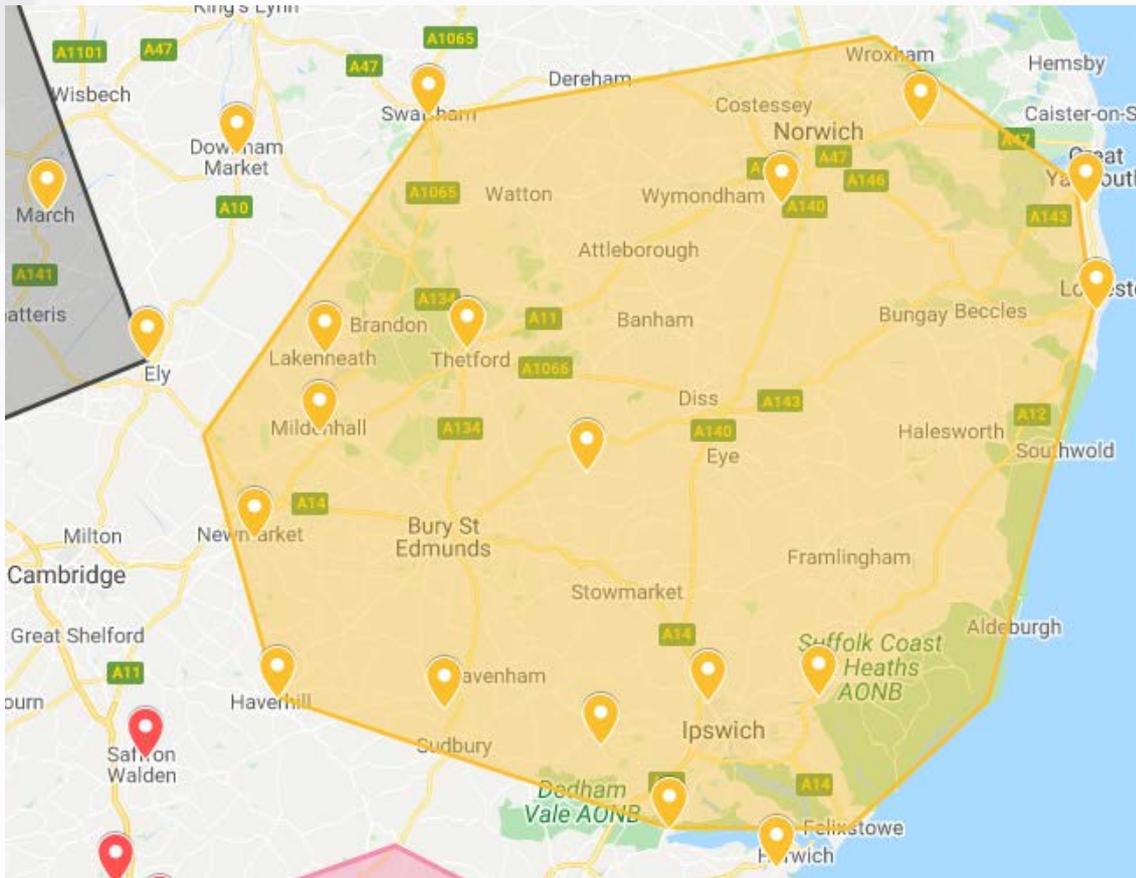
UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE (AREA 2) – STEP 5 (BLACK)



MIDLAND LEAGUE – STEP 5 (YELLOW)



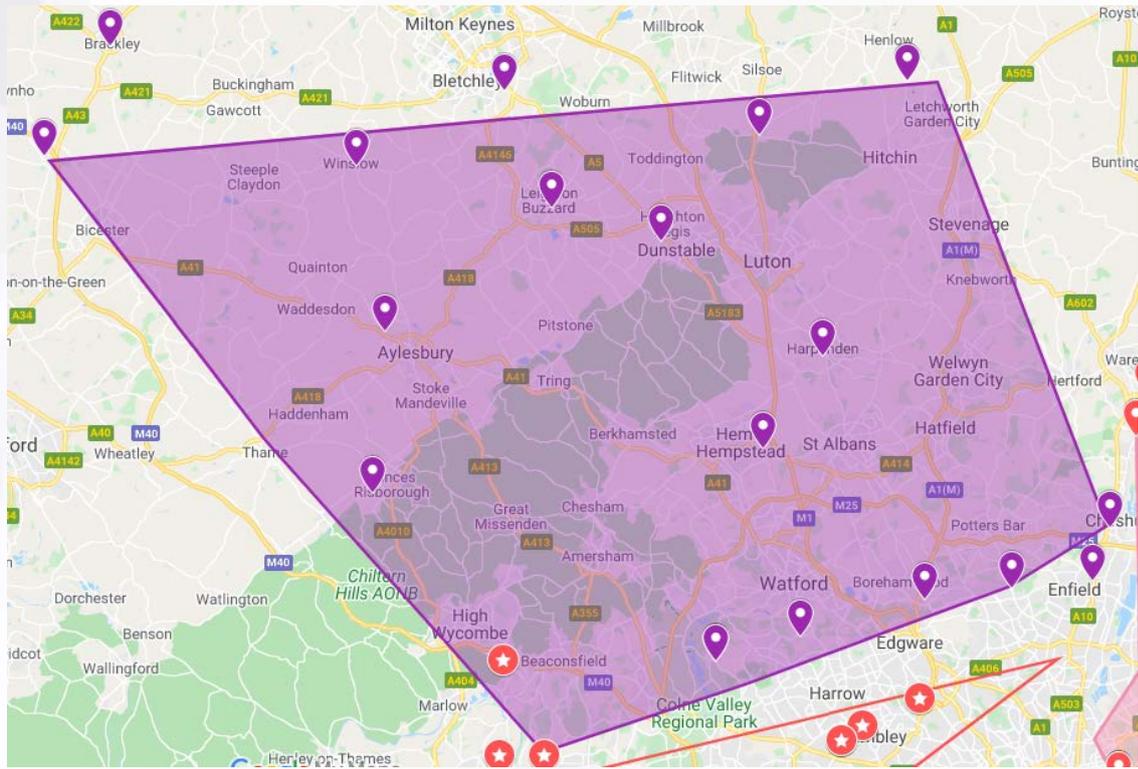
EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE – STEP 5 (AMBER)



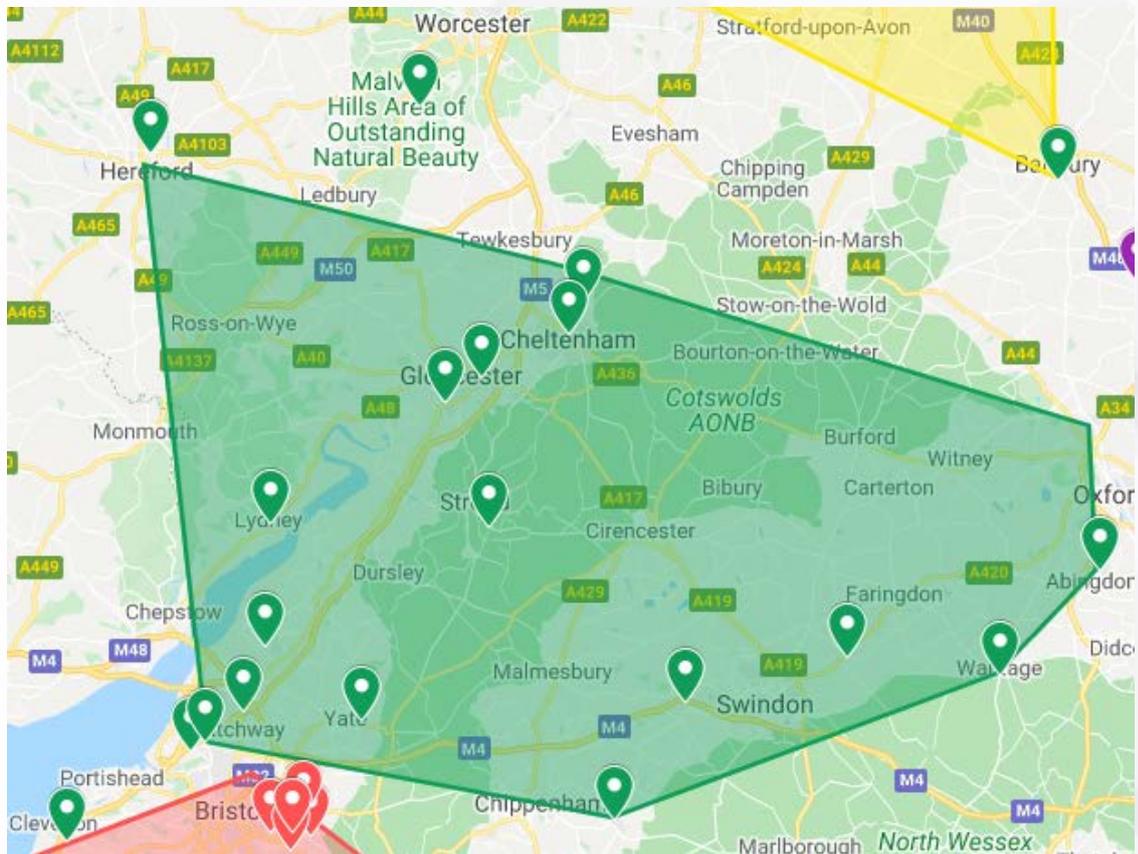
ESSEX SENIOR LEAGUE – STEP 5 (PINK)



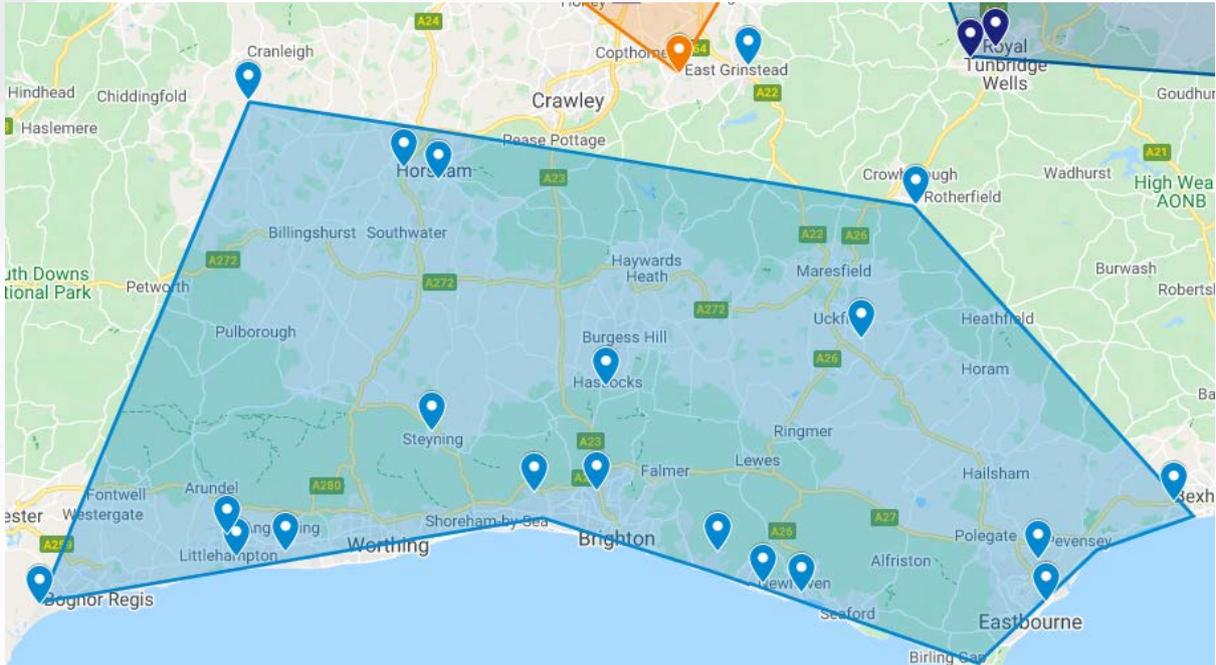
SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE – STEP 5 (PURPLE)



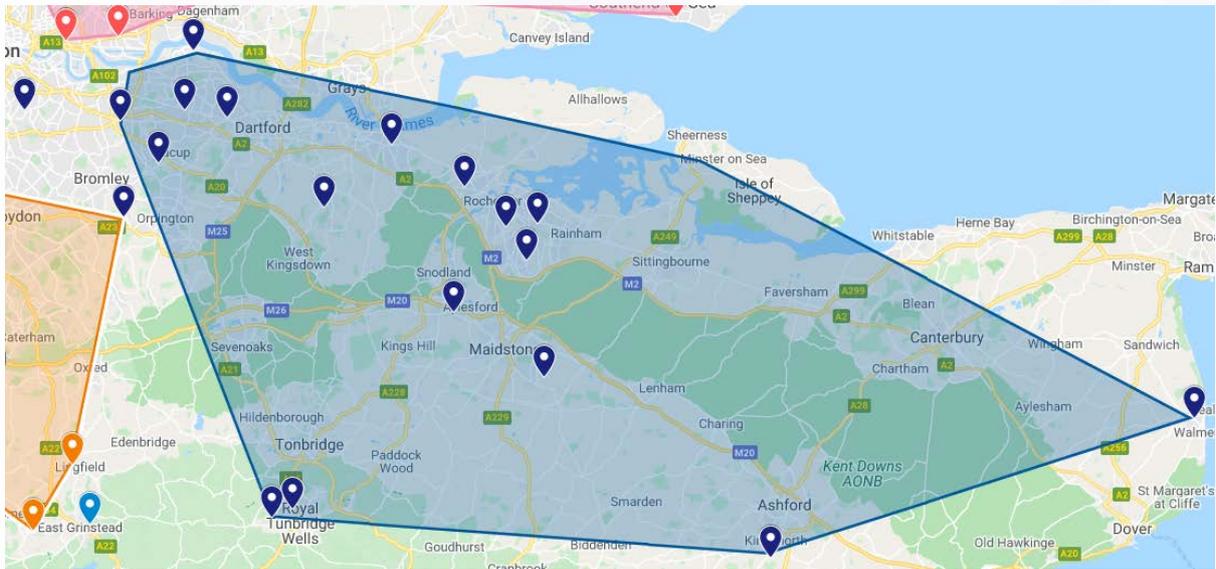
HELLENIC LEAGUE – STEP 5 (GREEN)



SOUTHERN COMBINATION – STEP 5 (ROYAL BLUE)



SOUTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE – STEP 5 (NAVY BLUE)

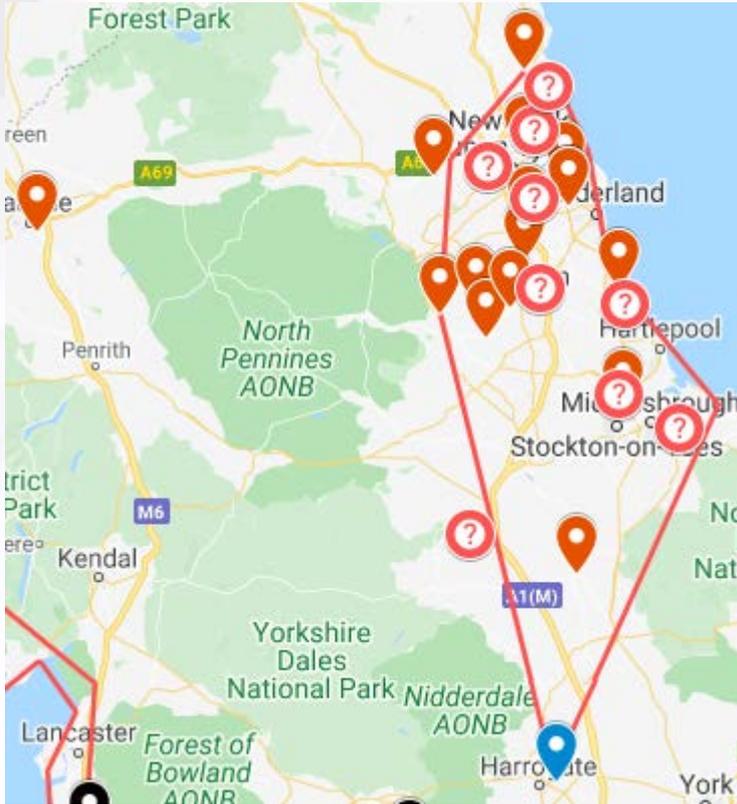


APPENDIX C

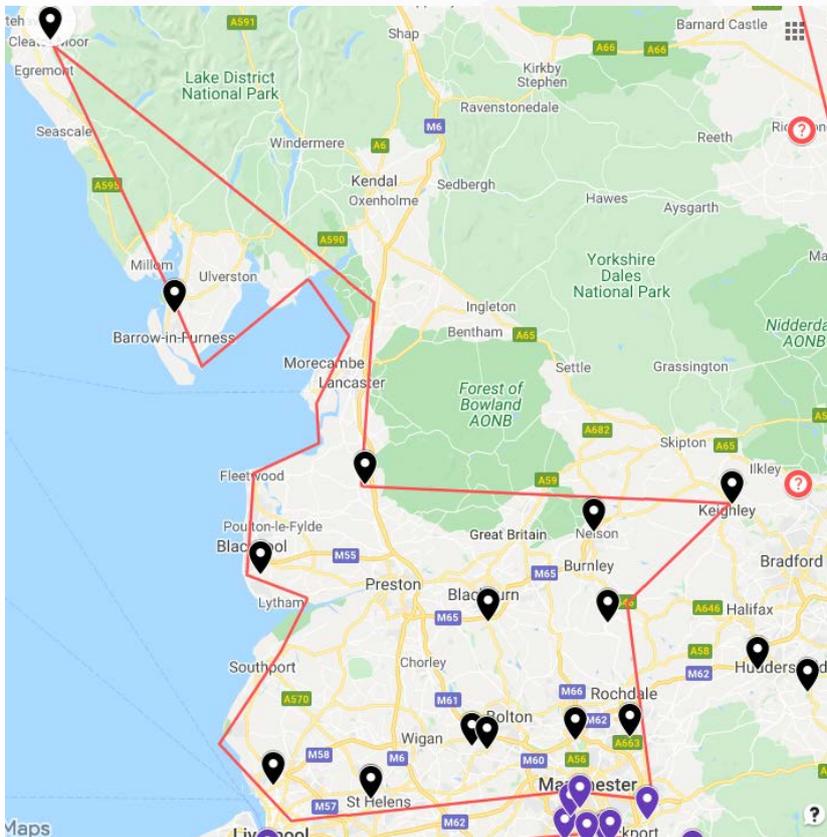
STEP 6: PROJECTED BOUNDARIES

[FEB 2020]

NORTHERN LEAGUE – STEP 6 (ORANGE)



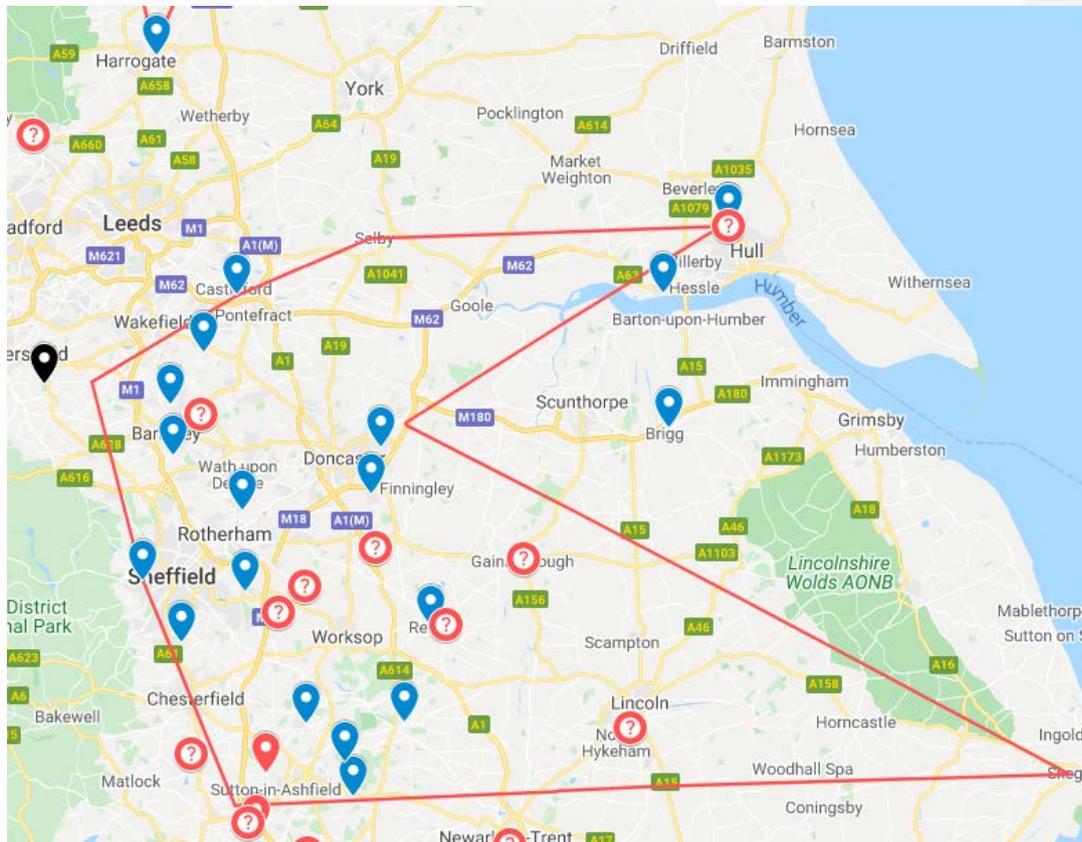
NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE NORTH – STEP 6 (BLACK)



NORTH WEST COUNTIES LEAGUE SOUTH – STEP 6 (PURPLE)



NORTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE – STEP 6 (BLUE)



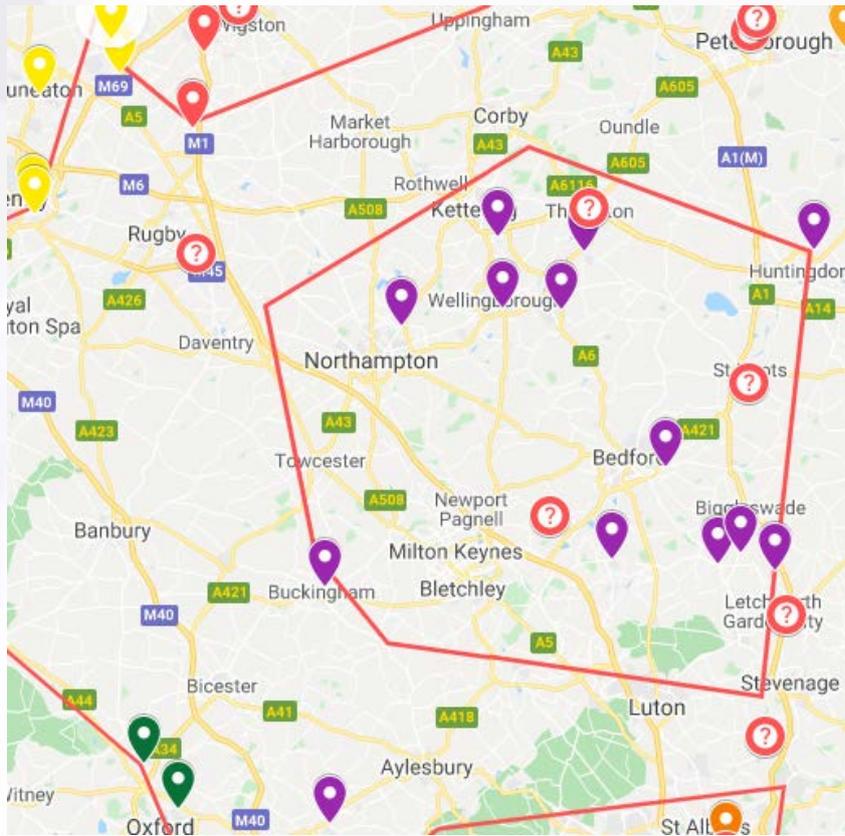
UNITED COUNTIES LEAGUE – STEP 6 (PINK)



MIDLAND LEAGUE – STEP 6 (YELLOW)



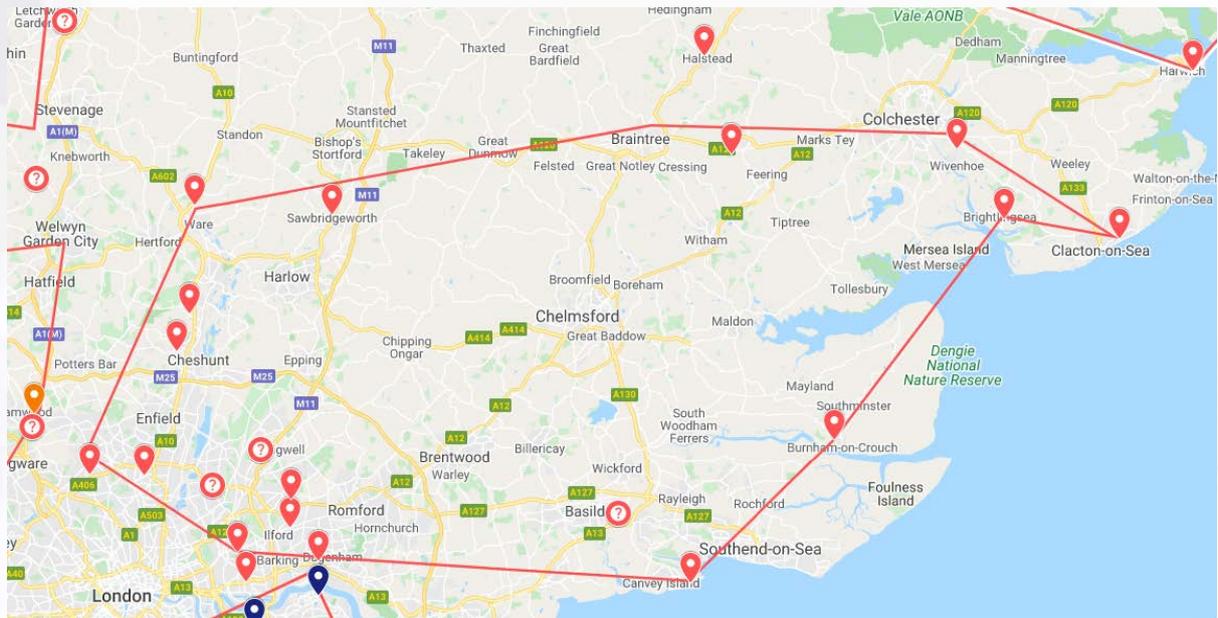
SPARTAN SOUTH MIDLANDS LEAGUE – STEP 6 (PURPLE)



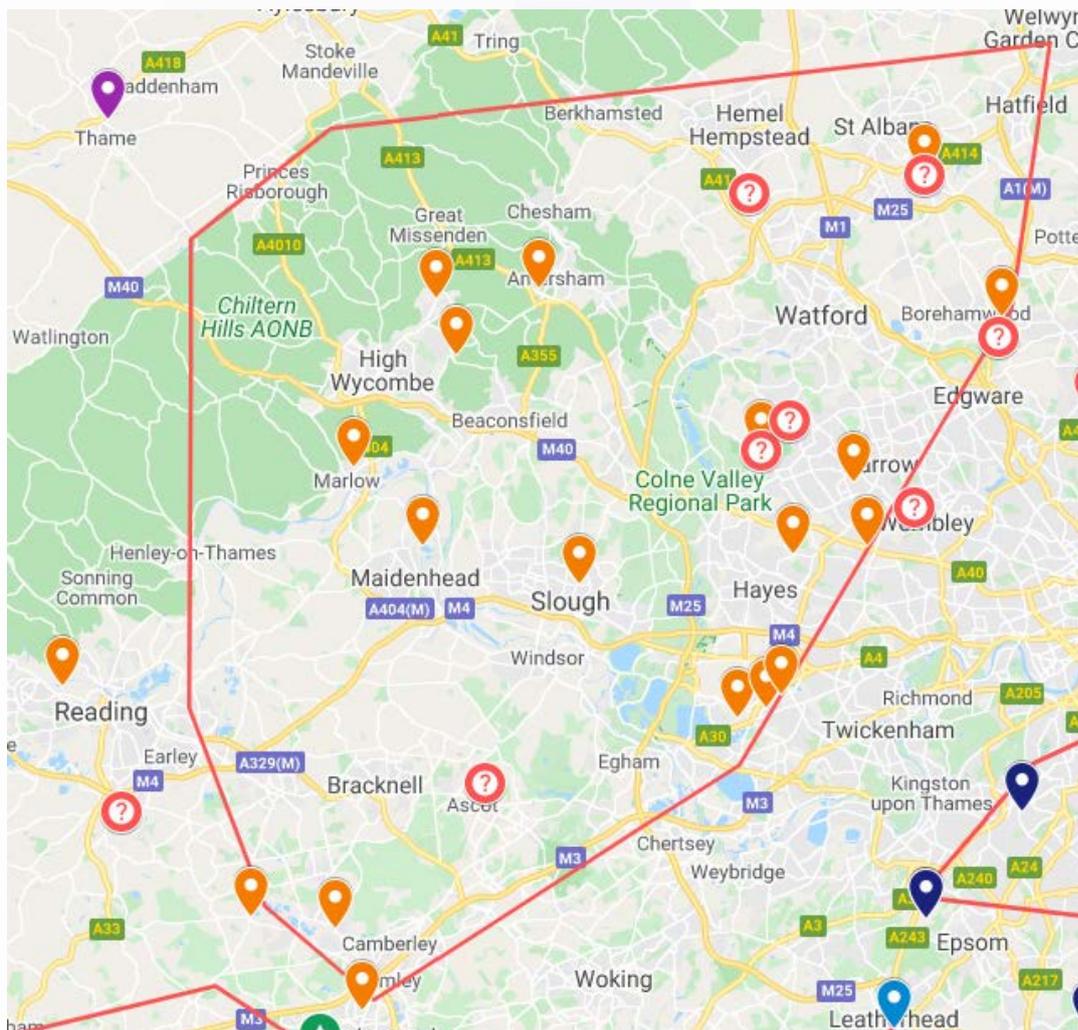
EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE NORTH – STEP 6 (ORANGE)



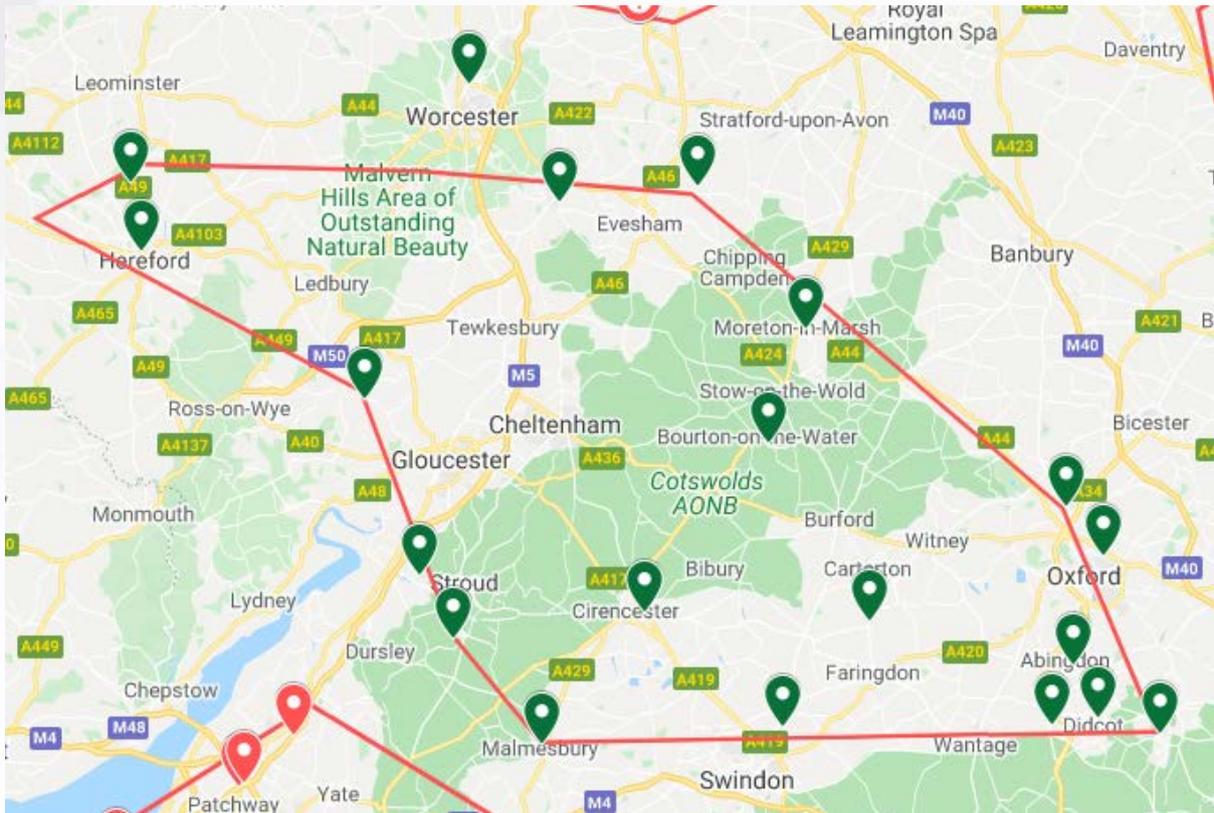
EASTERN COUNTIES LEAGUE SOUTH – STEP 6 (PINK)



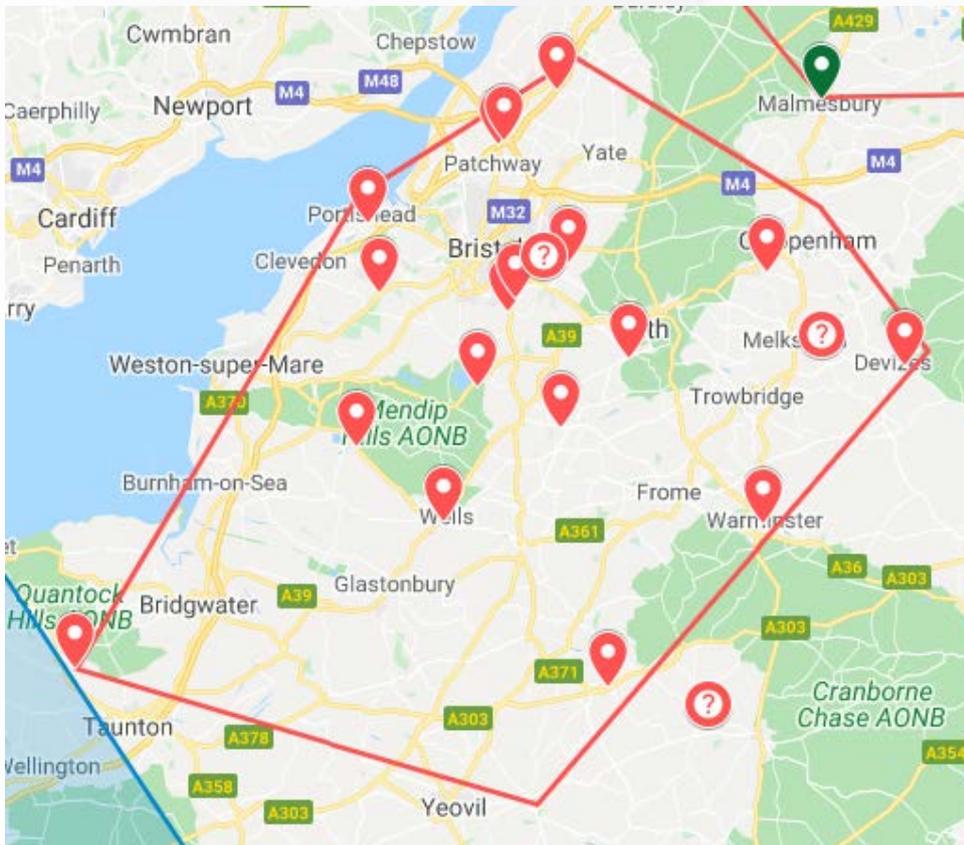
COMBINED COUNTIES LEAGUE – STEP 6 (ORANGE)



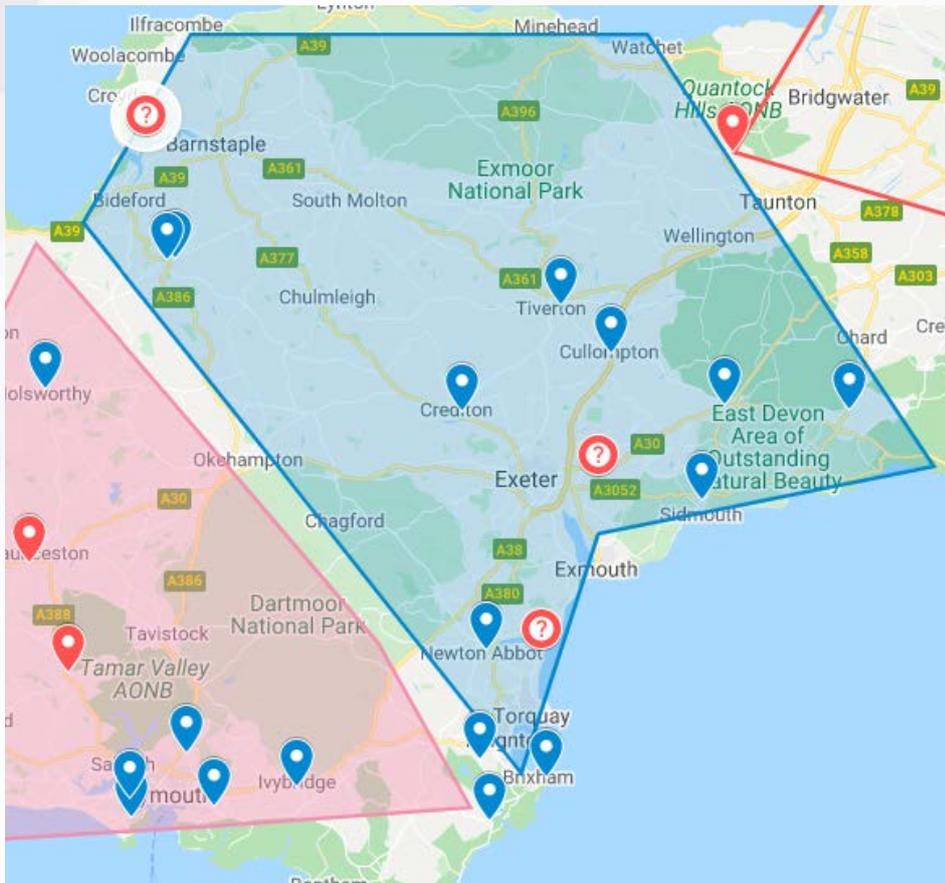
HELLENIC LEAGUE – STEP 6 (GREEN)



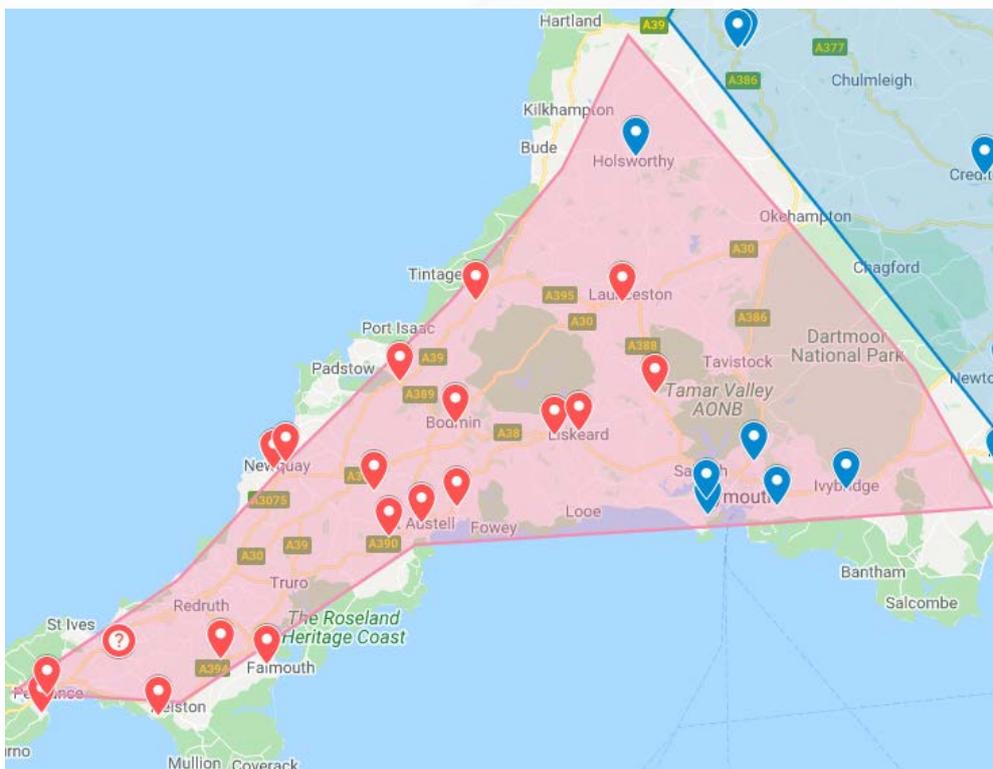
WESTERN LEAGUE – STEP 6 (PINK)



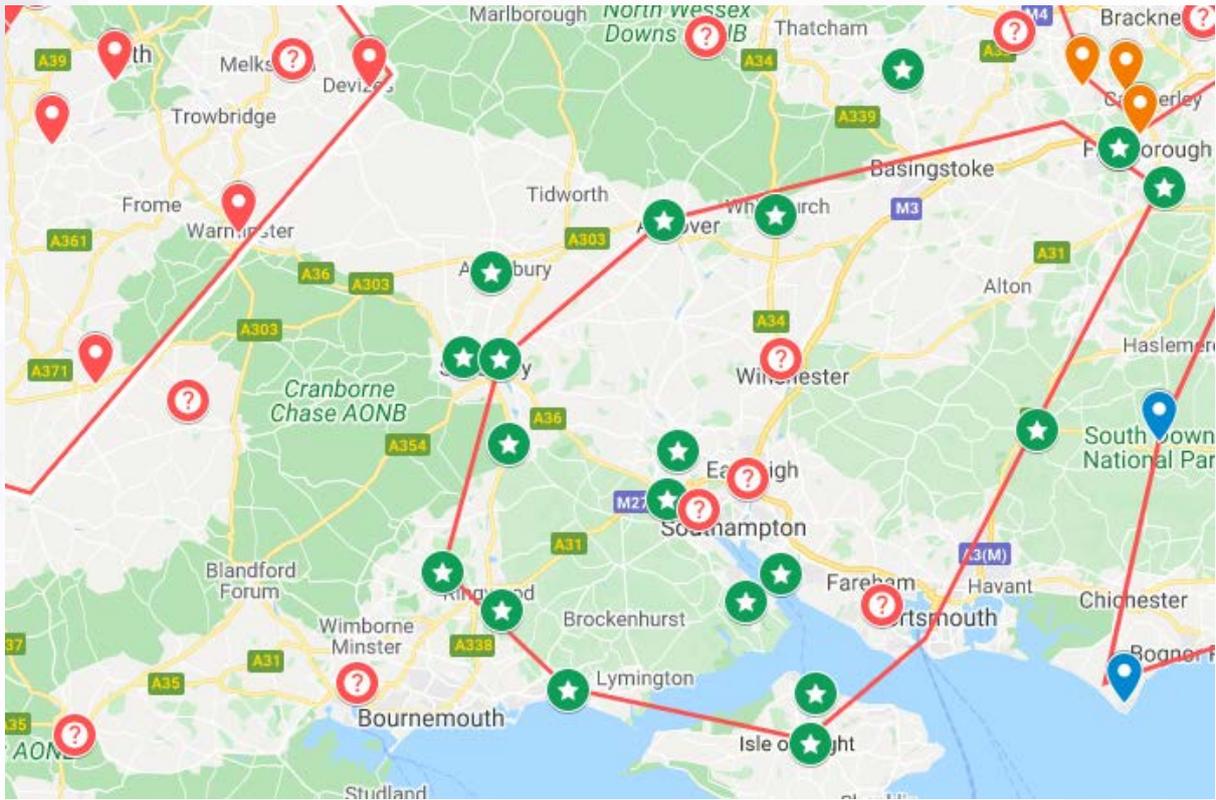
SOUTH WEST PENINSULA LEAGUE (EAST) – STEP 6 (BLUE)



SOUTH WEST PENINSULA LEAGUE (WEST) – STEP 6 (PINK)



WESSEX LEAGUE – STEP 6 (GREEN STARS)



SOUTHERN COMBINATION – STEP 6 (ROYAL BLUE)



SOUTHERN COUNTIES EAST LEAGUE – STEP 6 (NAVY BLUE)

