Shropshire Botanical Society Online Flora Draft Specification

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Overview

The Shropshire Botanical Society is seeking to renew it's Online Flora web application. This specification out lines the hoped for functionality together with the technical and development constraints of the work.



C	ontents		7.1 E	nable Filtering and Display	26
1	Background	4 8	3 Techn	ical Constraints	28
2	Objective	5			
3	Overview3.1 Users and Usage3.2 Scenarios3.3 Categories of Plants3.4 Data Storage3.5 Deliverables	5 5 7 7			
4	Deliverable 1: Search in the County 4.1 Species List for the County	8 8 10 12			
5	Deliverable 2: Search at a Site 5.1 Site List for the County	14 14 16 18			
6	Deliverable 3: Search in a Square 6.1 Select a Square	20 20 21 22 24			
7	Deliverable 4: Axiophytes	26			

1 Background

The Shropshire Botanical Society has been dedicated to promoting the enjoyment, understanding and conservation of the flora of Shropshire since the 18th century. One of the principle activities of the Society is to collect and maintain records of plant sightings within the historical boundaries of the county of Shropshire. Since 2003 the Society has made these records freely available online via a bespoke web application or Online Flora. This original Online Flora was written using PHP and the Codelgniter Web Framework backed by a MySql database. The web application is still available at captain-blue.azurewebsites.net but unfortunately the data is now many years out of date.

Maintaining and updating the database has proved to be challenging. Additionally the application was conceived prior to the introduction of the iPhone and it not suited to mobile use. Hence the Society seeks to renew the web application, to provide a more modern mobile interface and to use up to date data stored by the National Biodiversity Network Atlas. Currently all the Society's records are submitted to the National Biodiversity Network Atlas and since 2017 the Society's records have been available via a web service at the NBN Web service API. Using the NBN Web service API provides reliable data source and a supported service for maintaining and updating the Society's records.

2 Objective

To replicate the functionality of the original Online Flora in a responsive mobile design using data sourced from the NBN Web service API.

The Online Flora is to be used for searching the Society's records but not for entering new records. Maintaining and updating the data is conducted via a separate manual process. Searches of the database are conducted for three different geographical scenarios.

3 Overview

3.1 Users and Usage

Users of the Online Flora are typically members of the Society and as such are often very experienced botanists. In a typical scenario a member of the Society (intending to visit a location) would search for a list of species that have previously been sighted at a location. It is the community or suite of species at a location that is of most interest. For an experienced botanist a species list for a location can provide information about the ecology, geology and history of a location, but will also indicate what other species might be present but have not yet been observed. Ideally the member of the Society would also wish to drill down to see individual records of species sightings, with dates, attributions and further details. This background will give a

botanist some insight about how much weight or credence can be given to individual sightings.

3.2 Scenarios

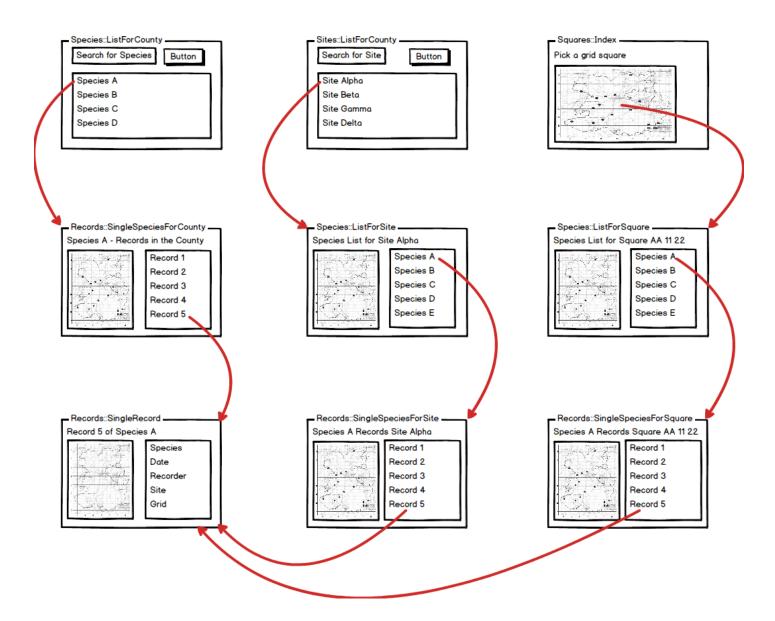
The Online Flora will serve three scenarios for searching for species lists.

Search Shropshire: searching all the records of based on the name of the plant. Allowing the user to drill down to a single sighting record or showing a map of grid squares with records for a named plant.

Search by Site: searching for a named site, then listing the names of plants for that named site. Again allowing the user to drill down to a single sighting record.

Search by Monad or Grid Square: Selecting a 1 km grid square within the county of Shropshire, then listing the names of plants for that named site. Again allowing the user to drill down to a single sighting record.

These three scenarios are shown in the diagram below.



3.3 Categories of Plants

Gaining experience identifying plants is a lifetimes work and members of the Society will often focus their attention on one category of plants. So the Society's observation records are separated into **vascular plants** and **bryophytes**, (two categories within the kingdom of all plants). A member of the Society will often wish to limit their searches to the category of plants they are most interested in.

The concept of indicator species is highlighted by a list of plants referred to as **axiophytes**. These are plants that are archetypical or axiomatic for a particular ecological environment. So a member of the Society will often wish to see only the axiophytes to gain a better understanding of the ecological environment at a particular site.

The list of axiophytes is provided as a list of scientific species names. For vascular plants this list was last updated in 2014. The list of axiophytes for the bryophytes is currently being developed.

3.4 Data Storage

The National Biodiversity Network Atlas (NBN) provides a service to maintain and distribute biological records for the United kingdom. The Shropshire Botanical Society contributes records to the NBN via the Shropshire Ecological Data Network (SEDN). So all the botanical records for Shropshire are contained within the SEDN dataset on the NBN service (dataset 782). There is a

regular(ish) process in place for passing updates to the NBN so new records are added every 6 months or so.

The NBN provides a specialized API to query these data which is based on Apache Solr. A primer for how to use the API is provided by the NBN.

☐ To improve performance queries should be cached on the server for about 30 days.
☐ No data should be cached on the client device.
Offer 'Add to Home screen' on first and fifth visit.

3.5 Deliverables

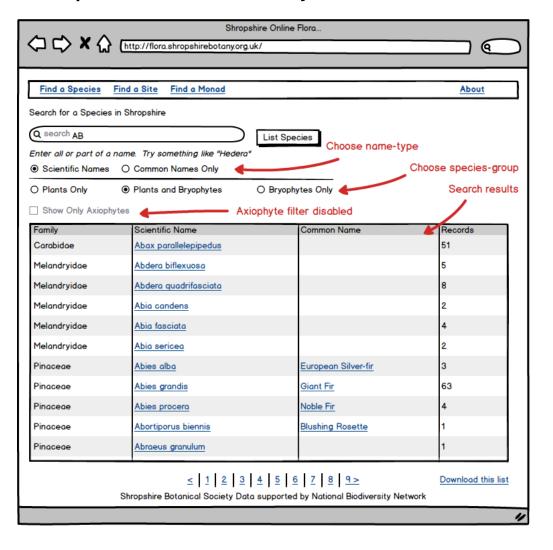
The work program is divided into four deliverables.

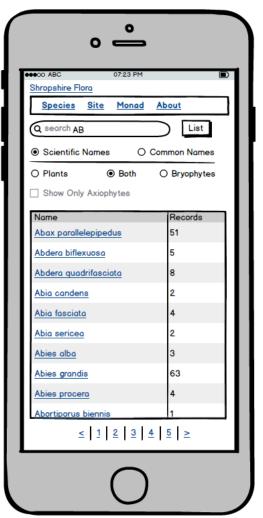
- 1. Search in the County.
- 2. Search at a Site.
- 3. Search in a Square.
- 4. Axiophyte Filtering.

The completion of the first deliverable, should provide a minimal working and viable application. The subsequent deliverables should extend and enhance the core application. The three scenarios are also the first three deliverables with filtering on axiophytes as the last deliverable. It is intended that the separate deliverables will provide convenient breakpoints for acceptance testing, payments for work completed and opportunities to pause for reflection.

4 Deliverable 1: Search in the County

4.1 Species List for the County



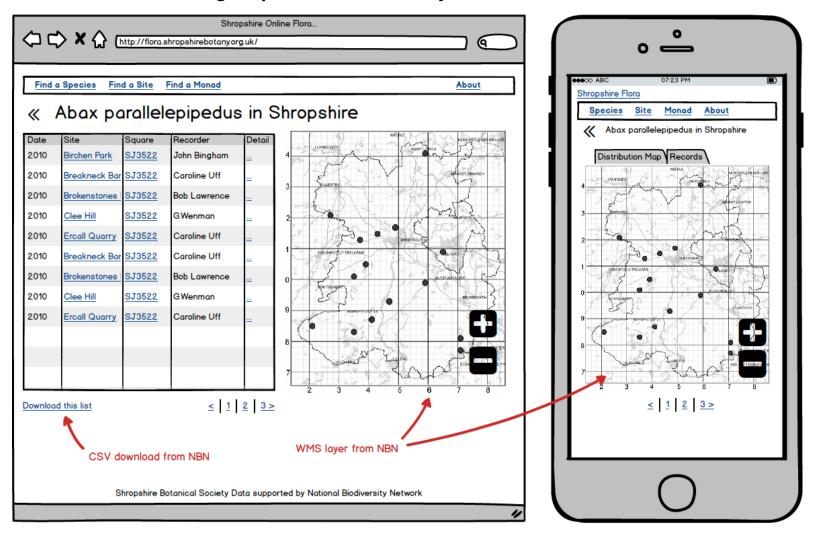


'Landing' Initially the search output should be empty.	The search results should be listed alphabetically by scientific name or common name, whichever is selected.
By default the Scientific name selected first, since botanists tend to favour identifying plant species via the scientific name.	If Common is selected, only the species with common names will be searched and shown. Any species without common names should not be included in the search results.
If Common is selected set a cookie to retain the user's choice of naming type.	Changing any radio button will renew the search using the changed set of parameters, without pressing return or
Also set a cookie for the user's choice of plant group (bryophytes or vascular plants).	clicking on the button. If the search result list is long pages links should be provided.
Species Search	☐ The download link, downloads a zipped CSV of the search
☐ The search is of the entire dataset for the county.	results directly from the NBN. ²
The characters entered in the search box are used to search for names beginning with those letters, not within the names. ¹	Clicking on the scientific or common species name, takes you to a list of records for that species in the county.
Clicking on List Species or pressing return on the desktop list executes the search. If the search box is empty species beginning with 'A' are searched for.	
Any characters entered in the search box are retained after the button is clicked.	

¹https://records-ws.nbnatlas.org/explore/group/Plants?fq=data`resource`uid:dr782+AND+taxon`name:B*

²https://records-ws.nbnatlas.org/occurrences/index/download?q=data`resource`uid:dr782&fq=taxon`name:A*&reasonTypeId=11&fileType=csv

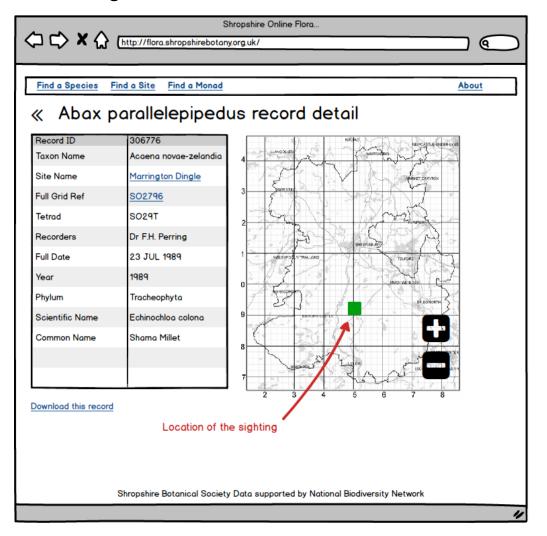
4.2 Records for a Single Species in the County

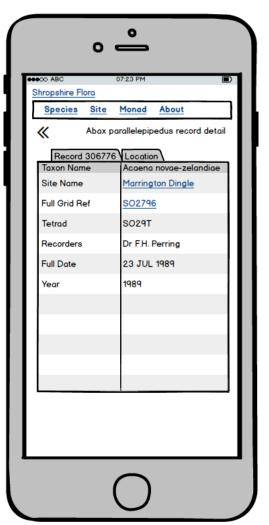


Records List	The map overlay comes from the NBN Web Mapping		
☐ Title is the scientific name or common name depending on which was clicked on in the previous page.	Service showing a distribution map of the species. Include an outline of the county.		
☐ The '<<' goes back to the search for a species name using the same search parameters.			
\square The records are sorted by date, with most recent first. 3			
\square If the records list is long pages links should be provided.			
The download link, downloads a zipped CSV of the search results directly from the NBN.			
Site link goes to a list of records for the same species at the selected site.			
Square link goes to a list of records for the same species at the selected square.			
Мар			
Zoomable but not clickable.			
☐ The records are in a hidden tab on mobile devices.			
Showing location of the site with a pin, since we don't have shape files for the sites, use the location of the first record.			

³https://records-ws.nbnatlas.org/occurrences/search?q=data`resource`uid:dr782&fq=taxon`name:Abies"%20alba&sort=taxon`name&fsort=index&pageSize=9

4.3 A Single Record



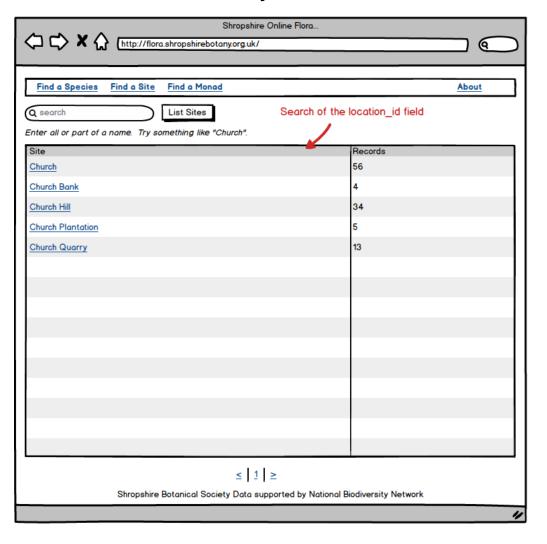


Record Detail	
Title is the scientific nare the previous page.	me or common name depending on
The '<<' goes back to to county.	the records list for that species in the
☐ Show as much detail fo	r the records as possible. 4
Site link goes to a list of selected site.	f records for the same species at the
Square link goes to a list the selected square.	st of records for the same species at
The download link, dow results directly from the	vnloads a zipped CSV of the search NBN.
Мар	
Zoomable but not clicks	able.
☐ In a hidden tab on mob	ile devices.
The location of the reco	ord is marked with a square of the grid reference.

⁴https://records-ws.nbnatlas.org/occurrence/4276e1be-b7d2-46b0-a33d-6fa82e97636a

5 Deliverable 2: Search at a Site

5.1 Site List for the County

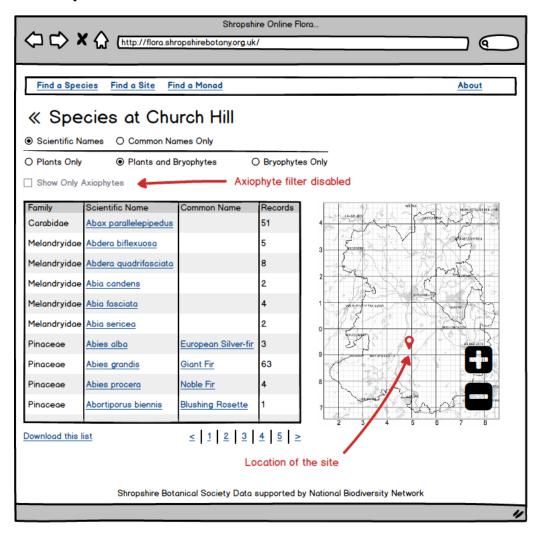


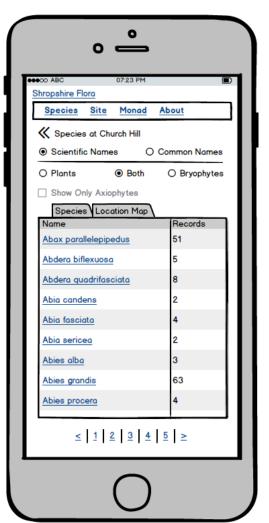


Sites Search
☐ Initially the search output should be empty.
Sites List
The characters entered in the search box are used to search for names beginning with those letters, not within the names. ⁵
Clicking on List Sites or pressing return on the desktop list executes the search. If the search box is empty species beginning with 'A' are searched for.
☐ The sites should be ordered alphabetically by the site name (i.e. the 'location_id' field from the NBN records).
Any characters entered in the search box are retained after the button is clicked.
☐ Clicking on the site name take you to a species list for that site.

⁵https://records-ws.nbnatlas.org/occurrences/search?fq=location`id:[Church"%20TO"%20*]&fq=data`resource`uid:dr782&facets=location`id&facet=on&pageSize=0

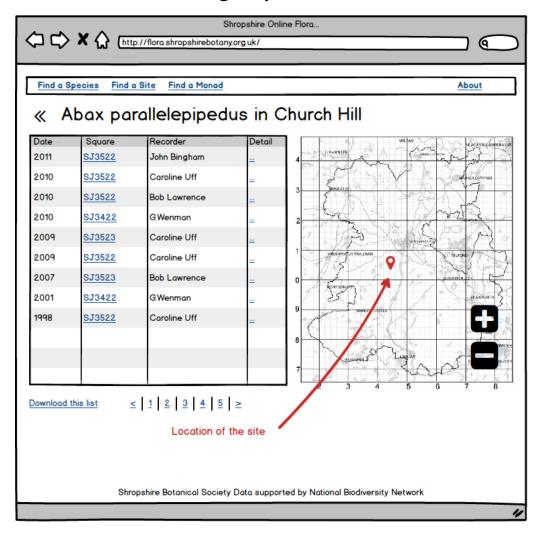
5.2 Species List at a Site





Species List
$\hfill \Box$ Title is the name of the site clicked on in the previous page.
$\hfill\Box$ The '<<' goes back to the previous search of site names.
Changing any radio button will renew the search using the changed set of parameters.
Radio button settings should be retained in a cookie. These values are the same as the ones used in the Species List for County.
Paging if the list exceeds 9 items.
Мар
☐ Initially showing the whole county.
Zoomable but not clickable.
☐ In a hidden tab on mobile devices.
Showing location of the site with a pin, since we don't have shape files for the sites, use the location of the first record of the first species.

5.3 Records for a Single Species at a Site

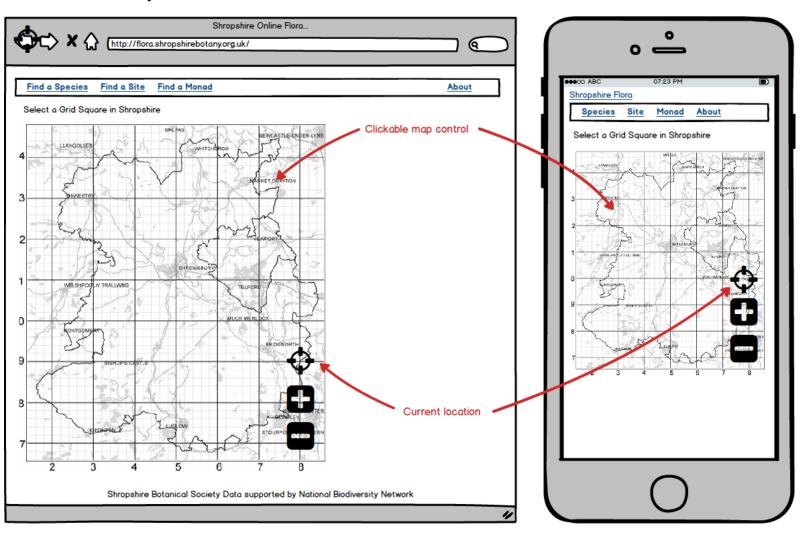




Records List	
☐ Show records for that species at the selected site.	
Square link goes to a list of records for the same species at the selected square.	
Мар	
Zoomable but not clickable.	
☐ Showing the whole county.	
☐ In a hidden tab on mobile devices.	
Showing location of the site with a pin, since we don't have shape files for the sites, use the location of the first record.	

6 Deliverable 3: Search in a Square

6.1 Select a Square

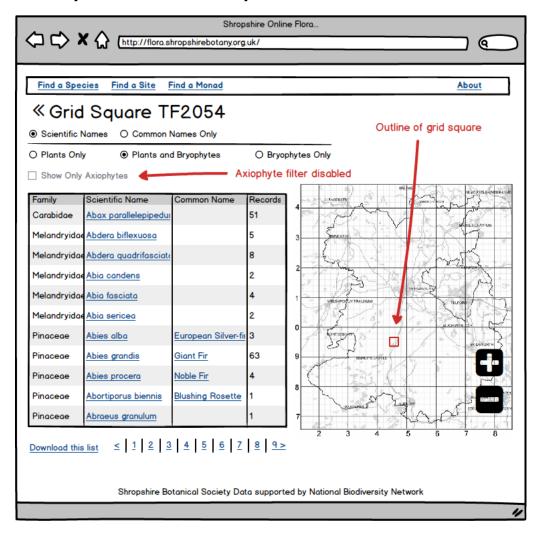


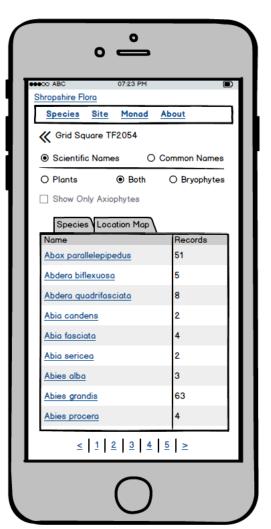
6.2 Records for a Single Species in a Square

Map Control

Initially showing the whole county.
Zoom in and select a 1 km grid square.
A 1 km graticule to appear when the squares are big enough (for selection with a finger).
Retain map zoom and centre position between visits.
The 'cross hair' icon to zoom to the current location using the browser Geolocation API.

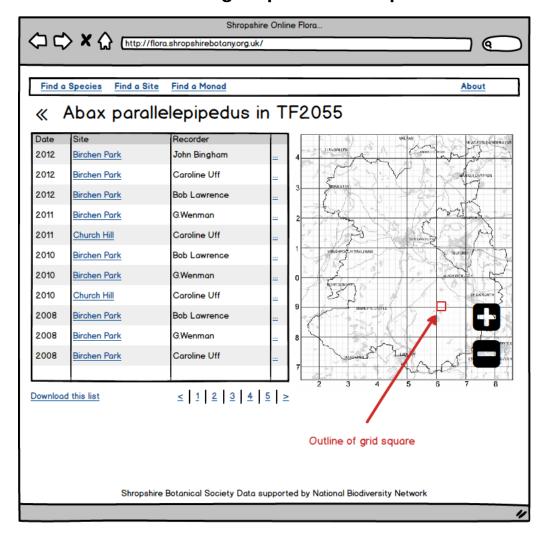
6.3 Species List for a Square





Species List		
☐ Title is the name of the square selected on in the previous page.		
$\hfill\Box$ The '<<' goes back to the map for selecting grid squares.		
Changing any radio button will renew the search using the changed set of parameters.		
Radio button settings should be retained in a cookie. These values are the same as the ones used in the Species List for County.		
Paging if the list exceeds 9 items.		
Мар		
Zoomable but not clickable.		
☐ Showing the whole county.		
☐ In a hidden tab on mobile devices.		

6.4 Records for a Single Species in a Square





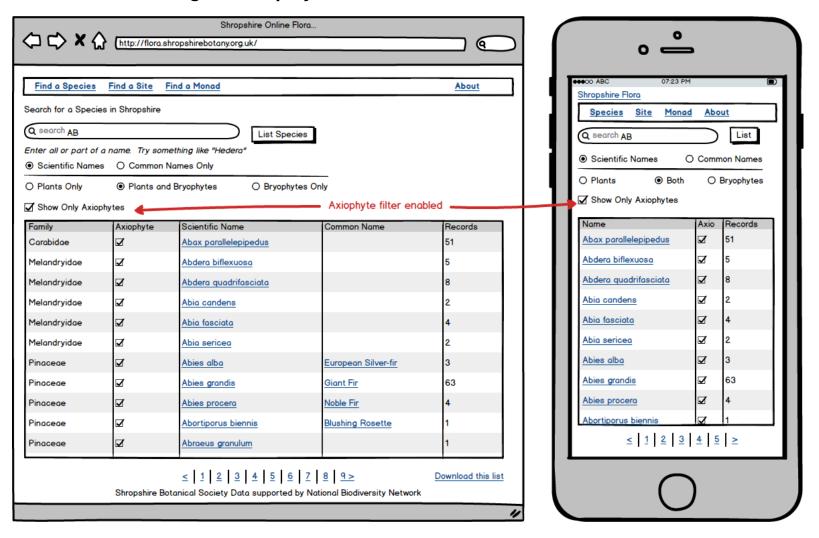
Records List

Title is the name of the square and the species selected in the previous page.	on
$\hfill\Box$ The '<<' goes back to the species list for a grid square.	
Paging if the list exceeds 9 items.	
Мар	
Zoomable but not clickable.	
☐ Showing the whole county.	

☐ In a hidden tab on mobile devices.

7 Deliverable 4: Axiophytes

7.1 Enable Filtering and Display



The diagram shows the species list for the county but axiophyte illering should be enabled for all three scenarios.
☐ Species list for the county.
☐ Species list for a site.
Species list in a square.
Axiophyte Indicator
Axiophyte indicator next to the species for desktop and mobile devices.
Filtering Checkbox
If Axiophytes is selected a limited static list of scientific names will be searched and shown.
☐ Check box settings should be retained in a cookie.
If the check box (or the radio buttons) change the search should refresh.

8 Technical Constraints

The Botanical Society has limited means and wishes to ensure that the results of any programming effort can be maintained and supported into the future, either via an open source project or via the efforts of members of the Society. To facilitate these possibilities the technical environment for the project is intended to provide a low(ish) barrier to contributions.

PHP 7.3 for deployment to Google App Engine for free hosting.

Codelgniter 4.0.4 has been used successfully in the past and provides long term file caching.

Twitter Bootstrap 4.5.2 for responsive layout.

Leaflet 1.6.0 for interactive maps.

Style Sheet is taken from https://www.shropshirebotany.org.uk/. The Online Flora is to be consistent with this website, so should where possible reuse the same CSS classes and styles.

No database should be used other than the NBN Web service API, to keep down maintenance costs. Any static data (such as the list of axiophytes) should be hard coded into the application.

Commits to Github since the Society will retain the intellectual property rights over any code produced. So all branching should be on the repository at at https://github.com/joejcollins/captain-magenta.git.

CI/CD the develop branch deploys to https://captain-magenta.azurewebsites.net/ on Azure and will be used to review progress.