



Biodiversity

Devon County Council's Action Plan

2009-2010



Biodiversity Role and Action Programme

Action Programme – 2009/10

Introduction

This action table is a key component of Devon County Council's Biodiversity Role and Action Programme (RAP), a document that sets out the Council's strategic approach to biodiversity for the period 2008/09 until 2010/11.

Building on the Council's Strategic Plan priorities and the overarching theme of 'making Devon greener', the biodiversity RAP lists six key biodiversity objectives, all with a number of outcomes that the Council wishes to be achieved. Whilst predominantly a plan to guide the delivery of Devon County Council's services and functions, the RAP does recognise the important role that partnerships play in delivering a number of these biodiversity objectives.

A range of actions have been identified to help deliver these objectives during the financial year 2009/10. These are listed in the following table, below the objective they are supporting. They are accompanied by a brief description of the routine work of the Council that helps to meet the biodiversity objectives on a day to day basis.

The actions are monitored and updated on an annual basis.

Highlights in 2008/09:

- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 places a duty on all public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. A number of key steps were taken to help with Devon County Council's fulfilment of this duty. For example, a staff raising event was held to highlight the need for all representatives to take biodiversity into account when fulfilling their duties. Under the banner of 'Wildlife@Work', this event was undertaken in partnership with the BBC's Breathing Places project and the Devon Wildlife Trust. In addition, on behalf of the Devon Biodiversity Partnership, DCC worked with Biodiversity South West to organise an event to raise awareness of the NERC duty among all of geographical Devon's district, borough and unitary authorities. A considerable element of the day to day work of the Countryside Team also contributes to the fulfilment of this duty, notably input to the Council's development management functions.
- Working with partners, progress has been made in refining the Regional Nature Map. Areas identified for landscape-scale conservation have been given profiles that identify their importance and set a framework for providing targets for habitat restoration and creation, making them much more useful tools for targeting nature conservation. In addition, a Devon Nature Map is being drafted. This map will compliment that produced at the regional level, especially by highlighting potential linkages and habitat corridors across Devon.
- Progress has been made on developing a Biodiversity Monitoring Framework for Devon which includes monitoring County Wildlife Sites and assessing loss of BAP habitats.
- Both the refinement of the Regional Nature Map and the development of the Biodiversity Monitoring Framework contribute to achieving the biodiversity outcome within the new Local Area Agreement. Other work has also contributed to the LAA, including the production of Parish Biodiversity Audits which are designed to encourage local communities to become involved with the conservation of their environment, and a programme of providing advice to the managers of County

Wildlife Sites. This last work area directly contributes to National Performance Indicator 197, 'proportion of Local Sites where positive conservation management has been or is being implemented'.

Priorities for 2009/10:

- This financial year will involve a continued emphasis on the implications of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, including promotion of this duty across the range of the Council's functions such as planning, estate management and the involvement of residential centres and schools.
- This year DCC has become a partner in the BBC Breathing Places campaign in order to encourage everyone in Devon to 'do one thing' for wildlife and discover new 'breathing places'. There will be greater promotion of DCC and partner wildlife activities and events, especially where this link with BBC projects such as Springwatch and Autumnwatch. The campaign involves libraries, children's centres and schools.
- A key focus for the year will be on the delivery of the biodiversity outcome of the Local Area Agreement:
- Elements of the Biodiversity Monitoring Framework for Devon will be tested through a pilot period of implementation. This will be a significant area of work that will involve considerable partnership working. It is crucial that this work is successful if the conservation community is to develop a picture of trends in the County's biodiversity and are therefore able to measure the effectiveness of present conservation efforts and efficiently target future resources. As well as being an LAA target in its own right, implementation of the monitoring framework will incorporate another element of the LAA, the provision of advice to the managers of County Wildlife Sites, itself a vital step in fulfilling National Performance Indicator 197 (see last year's key achievements).
- There will be ongoing work to support the involvement of local communities in the conservation of their local environments. This will include the production of Parish Biodiversity Audits to inform and encourage action.
- The refinement of the Regional Nature Map will continue, with a particular emphasis on finalising the complimentary Devon Nature Map through consultation and amendment. The philosophy behind the Regional Nature Map and the Devon refinement of this is one of landscape-scale conservation (please see Appendix 3 of the main Biodiversity Role and Action Programme).
- In addition, the development of a County Green Infrastructure strategy will be a key area of work for the Council, as will working with districts and other partners in the development of more local Green Infrastructure strategies.

Abbreviations used in the Action Programme

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
CEX	Chief Executive's Directorate
CFE	County Farm Estate
DBRC	Devon Biodiversity Records Centre
DCC	Devon County Council
DESWG	Devon Education for Sustainability Working Group

EEC	Environment, Economy & Culture Directorate
EMP	Environmental Management Projects
LAA	Local Area Agreement
NDCCS	Northern Devon Coast and Countryside Service
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)
RAP	Role and Action Programme
RIGS	Regionally Important Geological / Geomorphological Site
SNA	Strategic Nature Area

The 2009/2010 Action Programme

Objective 1: Build knowledge and understanding of Devon's wildlife and geology among all sectors.

Outcomes:

- A substantially complete, rigorous and up to date suite of County Wildlife Sites and County Geological Sites, operating consistently with Defra guidelines.
- A Biodiversity Monitoring Programme providing trends on Devon's biodiversity and related landscape features, meeting a variety of needs (including the monitoring requirements of Local Development Frameworks and AONBs) and with a broad base of support.
- Information on wildlife and geology, including opportunities for community involvement in delivering the objectives of the Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan, promoted widely.

Ongoing work delivering this objective: The Council supports the work of the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre via an annual Service Level Agreement. Recent years have seen an ongoing contribution (in partnership with others) to achieving a substantial survey of County Wildlife Sites and of roadside Japanese knotweed locations.

Action no.	Actions	Targets	Resources	Lead
1.1	Work with DBRC, Devon RIGS Group and partners to ensure County Wildlife Site and County Geological Site systems operate consistently with Defra guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued Service Level Agreement with DBRC. • Continued baseline survey of new County Wildlife Sites. 	EMP £10k EMP £8k	EEC (Countryside)
1.2	Continue to refine, promote and implement the Biodiversity Monitoring Framework for Devon [this is an LAA target, and incorporates support for another LAA target relating to the provision of advice to the managers of local wildlife sites (ref. NPI 197)].	Undertake pilot Biodiversity Monitoring Framework trial (with a focus on the monitoring of County Wildlife Sites) by end March 2010. (the baseline for NPI 197 was established in 2008/09)	EMP £35k	EEC (Countryside)

Objective 2: Promote the conservation and enhancement of Devon's wildlife and geology through the Council's strategic planning role.

Outcomes:

- Policies for conserving, enhancing and monitoring biodiversity and geodiversity in all relevant documents and strategies.
- Working with partners, the development and promotion of a visual strategy (a Devon Nature Map) to guide the conservation and re-creation of semi-natural habitats, and linkages between them, that will help wildlife adapt to climate change.

Ongoing work delivering this objective: The Council provides advice for the inclusion of biodiversity considerations and policies in documents such as the Sustainable Community Strategy (and Local Area Agreement), Local Development Frameworks, Minerals Core strategies, and so on. This advice is aimed not only at the conservation of biodiversity but also its enhancement.

Action no.	Actions	Targets	Resources	Lead
2.1	Work with districts and other partners to develop Green Infrastructure strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a County Green Infrastructure strategy – by end March 2010. • With partners, especially Teignbridge District Council, develop a Green Infrastructure strategy for the Bovey Basin area – by end March 2010. 	£25K	EEC (Strategic Planning and Countryside)
2.2	With partners, finalise and promote the refinement of the Regional Nature Map in Devon (a LAA target).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and consult on completed SNA profiles, with a particular emphasis on those parts of the County targeted for landscape-scale conservation – end September 2009. • Consult upon the initial Devon Nature Map in order to develop this into a useful means of targeting nature conservation delivery (in association with the Regional Nature Map) – finalised Devon Nature Map by end March 2010. 	EMP £10k	EEC (Countryside)

Objective 3: Conserve and enhance Devon's wildlife and earth heritage through the Authority's development management and other regulatory functions.

Outcome:

- At the least, no net loss in Devon's ecological and geological resource.

Ongoing work delivering this objective: Countryside Team staff are regularly and routinely involved in providing ecological and geological advice in relation to both DCC developments (e.g. school and highway development), strategic developments and minerals and waste applications.

Action no.	Actions	Targets	Resources	Lead
3.1	Up to date biodiversity information available to planners and other DCC staff (in the context of the NERC biodiversity duty).	Update web the wildlife guidance available to planners (especially protected species notes) and ensure that the 1App process works smoothly with respect to wildlife – by end March 2010.	Core Staffing	EEC (Countryside)
3.2	Kingskwerswell Bypass – undertake offsite compensation works in line with the planning permission conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management agreement established with the RSPB at Labrador Bay. • At least 2 agreements in place with private landowners. • Secure agreement with Natural England and RSPB that mitigation / compensation requirements have been met in full. 	£130K (Highways capital budget)	

Objective 4: Manage the Council's Estate in an environmentally responsible manner, and ensure all relevant DCC staff regard biodiversity as an integral part of their work.

Outcomes:

- Enhanced understanding of the existing natural assets of the County Estate, together with opportunities for their enhancement.
- All development projects minimise impacts on the natural environment, with gains where practical.
- Reduced impact on wider environmental systems (e.g. reduced carbon footprint).

Ongoing work delivering this objective: significant development projects on the Council's estate are subject to environmental audit procedures. Tenants of the County Farm Estate are encouraged to enter their land in agri-environment schemes (e.g. Environmental Stewardship), and clauses aimed at the protection of biodiversity are routinely included in new and renewed tenancy agreements. There is ongoing management, interpretation and education at the Council's two Country Parks (Stover and the Grand Western Canal), and along the Tarka Trail, via the Northern Devon Coast & Countryside Service. The NDCCS also offer an advisory service within North Devon's Biosphere Reserve and undertake a number of other projects, for example in relation to interpretation. There is also ongoing management to maintain and enhance the condition of the County's Special Verges.

Action no.	Actions	Targets	Resources	Lead
4.1	Develop the education potential of the County Farm Estate.	Explore the option of using part of the County Farm Estate to help with the Environment and Land-based Studies Diploma at St Lukes College.	Core staffing	CEx (NPS South West Ltd.)
4.2	Continue to promote to all staff, incl. Members, DCC's corporate responsibility to biodiversity (ref. NERC Act 2006, S. 40), and the benefits that this can bring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue Wildlife@Work campaign as part of Doing it for Devon at Work. • Launch and implement BBC/DCC Breathing Places campaign (including a stand at the County Show) 	EMP £2.5k	EEC (Countryside)
4.3	Management to enhance the condition of selected Special Verges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing appropriate management of all special verges plus site-specific management at not less than four Special Verges. • Promote Special verges, Japanese 	Highways £8K	EEC (Highways & Countryside)

		Knotweed control and general wildlife issues to Area highways teams – by end March 2010.		
4.4	Ensure the management of the Council's two Country Parks meets nationally recognised standards.	Maintain Green Flag status at Stover Country Park and seek to achieve this status at the Grand Western Canal Country Park.	Core Staffing	EEC (East & South Area Offices / Countryside)
4.5	Investigate the potential for wildlife enhancement across the DCC estate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake audits and provide management recommendations for 15 residential and day centres – by end March 2010. • Work with all Directorates to establish a targeted list of properties for wildlife enhancement – by end March 2010. 	EMP £7.5K	EEC (Countryside)

Objective 5: Promote community awareness, understanding and involvement in nature conservation.

Outcomes:

- Enhanced awareness of Devon's environment.
- The Council's web site (including the Devon BAP) recognised as a key source of nature conservation information for community groups.
- Active involvement of Devon schools in environmental education through Education for Sustainability programmes that support the development of Sustainable Schools in line with the Council's strategy document 'Changing our Futures'. Support is available through the Devon Education for Sustainability Working Group (DESWG).
- Specific advice to assist others (e.g. landowners) to carry out nature conservation work, particularly through the Council's involvement in AONBs, the Northern Devon Coast and Countryside Service and World Heritage Sites.

Ongoing work delivering this objective: The Council encourages community involvement in nature conservation through a number of means, for example by hosting the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan, Devon Hedge Group and Devon Knotweed Forum on its web pages. In addition, the Council has produced a number of Parish Biodiversity Audits in recent years which provide local communities with parish level nature conservation information and ideas for action. The Council has also developed a Community Wildlife Toolkit and produced publications on Devon's wildlife and geology.

Action no.	Actions	Targets	Resources	Lead
5.1	Launch and implement BBC / DCC Breathing Places campaign	Will contribute to a variety of targets throughout this action programme, including 5.2, below, and 4.2 (contribution to NERC duty).		EEC (Countryside)
5.2	Encourage and enable local communities to engage in nature conservation. (Supports a LAA target).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a further 12 Parish Biodiversity Audits - by March 2010. • Action for wildlife undertaken by not less than 8 parishes, assisted by a small grants fund – by end March 2010. • Explore other sources of funding for Parish Biodiversity Audits, including Heritage Lottery Funding – by end September 2009 	EMP £15k	EEC (Countryside)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wildlife guidelines incorporated into parish Plan process in Devon, and promoted by the Community Council for Devon – by end march 2010.		
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Objective 6: Work in partnership with the professional community to achieve nature conservation in Devon.

Outcomes:

- Continued hosting of the co-ordinator of the Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan, promoting this document as the agreed framework of conservation priorities within the County (including, for this purpose, Torbay and Plymouth).
- Continued co-operation with industry, particularly the minerals sector, in securing nature conservation action.
- Active engagement with the Devon Strategic Partnership to ensure a high profile for nature conservation within the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Area Agreement.

Ongoing work delivering this objective: The Council routinely works with a wide range of bodies to promote nature conservation, including the Devon Biodiversity Partnership, local BAP Partnerships (e.g. Dartmoor, Torbay), the Devon Knotweed Forum, the Devon Hedge Group and the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre. In addition, the Council works closely with a range of professional organisations and agencies, such as the Natural England and the Environment Agency.

Action no.	Actions	Targets	Resources	Lead
6.1	Develop and promote to the Devon Biodiversity Partnership a revised strategy for using the Devon BAP to achieve nature conservation (relating to the new England Biodiversity Strategy framework).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised strategy for the Devon BAP taken forward – by end October 2009. • Promotion of the enhanced Devon Nature Map as a means of implementing the Devon BAP. • Full partnership meeting by end October 2009 (possibly extended to a wider audience). 	Core Staffing	EEC (Countryside)
6.2	Secure the implementation and promotion of North Devon's Biosphere Reserve work programme (BAP).	Establish a monitoring group to assess progress.	Core Staffing	EEC (NDCCS)
6.3	Support for the Devon Hedge Group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devon Hedge Week 2009. • Conversion of Devon Hedges pack to digital, web-based format by end August 2009. 	EMP £2.5k	EEC (Countryside)
6.4	Continued support for the Devon Knotweed Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce guidance leaflet for planners – by end March 2010. 	EMP £2.5k	EEC (Countryside)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organise two Devon Knotweed Forum meetings – by end march 2010.		
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