



# Biodiversity

**Devon County Council's  
Role and Action Programme**

**2008-2011**



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## Foreword

Biodiversity, or our natural resource of wildlife and geology, is of fundamental importance to us all. In Devon, we still retain a varied and diverse environment that is home to much wildlife, both common and rare, and it is this natural resource that contributes so much to what we value about this County. Our environment draws in businesses and tourists alike and is a key factor in the economic well being of Devon. This should not be underestimated, but neither should our more elementary dependence upon and responsibility towards our natural environment, and the role it plays in underpinning the quality of our lives.



All the same, a great deal has been lost and that which remains is still under threat from human activities and demands our protection. Indeed, we should be looking to rebuild our landscape, linking together our remaining habitats and recreating a healthy and functioning environment. This may seem a daunting prospect. In view of some of the wider threats facing our environment, such as climate change, can we really make a difference?

This Role and Action Programme is a clear statement that we can. It represents Devon County Council's commitment to the conservation and enhancement of our wildlife and geology, both in its own work and when working in partnership. As such, it provides the Council with key guidance on its fulfilment of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) biodiversity duty, which requires all public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out all of their functions.

This document is a positive response to the pressures facing our environment and an acknowledgement that this vital task is the responsibility of us all.

Cllr. Margaret Rogers

*Executive Member for Environment*

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# 1 Foreword and Introduction

## Introduction to Role and Action Programmes

Devon County Council, through its Strategic Plan, has set out its priorities for action to meet the challenges that face us. To help meet its objectives, the County Council has a series of "Role and Action Programmes" for some key areas of its work that are not covered by formal statutory plans. These areas of work include the economy and regeneration, landscape, biodiversity, the historic environment, the maritime environment, the arts and tourism.

The Role and Action Programmes give the strategic context, for the next three years, for each of these areas of work and then set out Devon County Council's role and functions in relation to them. To give a clear purpose, the Role and Action Programmes establish a series of objectives and say which policies the County Council will need to have to achieve these. A clear outcome is stated to enable us to judge when an objective has been reached.

As some objectives may be long-term and outcomes may be delivered over the three year life of the Role and Action Programme, an Annual Action Plan will be published to state clearly the work the County Council intends doing in its fiscal year. The delivery of the Annual Action Plan and the Role and Action Programme overall will be monitored to make sure we are using our resources effectively.

This document establishes how this Authority will cherish and safeguard Devon's biodiversity, recognising the crucial role it plays in defining our landscape, improving the quality of life of residents and visitors alike and bolstering the County's economy.

## Introduction to biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life. Short for 'biological diversity', it encompasses all levels of natural variation, from molecules through to ecosystems. More than this, however, it has become the buzzword for the modern day approach to nature conservation. As such it covers the protection of species, the safeguarding, maintenance or creation of wildlife habitats and respect for the functioning of ecological systems. The term is sometimes also used in an informal manner to encompass the other key element of our natural assets, namely our geology and other earth heritage features.



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## Devon's biodiversity

### Wildlife galore!

From its coastal waters through to its moorland peaks, Devon supports an outstandingly rich and varied natural environment. Approximately one fifth of the total land surface area is covered by wildlife-rich habitats of one sort or another. However, their distribution and character vary hugely across the County. A few elements of Devon's biodiversity and geology worth a particular mention are:

- The uplands of the two National Parks, with large areas of heath, bog and mire, acidic grassland and steep river valley slopes blanketed in oak woodland.
- Two separate coastlines, supporting areas of rich maritime grassland and scrub, extensive areas of species-rich sand dune (most notably at Braunton) and no fewer than 12 estuaries of which several, including the Exe and the Taw-Torridge, are of considerable importance for wintering and passage wildfowl and waders.
- Areas of species-rich grassland, including hay meadows, pockets of chalk and limestone grassland and the wet, acidic, rough grasslands of the Culm in northern Devon.
- Lowland heathland, the most notable example of which is the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths complex to the east of the Exe Estuary.



- A network of hedges, watercourses and roadside verges that form a wildlife web linking isolated pockets of woodland, flower-rich grassland and wetland.
- An impressive marine life, including offshore reefs, kelp forests, eelgrass beds and rocky shores.

All these habitats provide a home to a wealth of species, including strong populations of dormice and otters, and many rarities such as the marsh fritillary butterfly, southern damselfly, cirl bunting and basking shark.

Devon's earth heritage resource (its rocks, fossils, landforms and the natural processes that create these) should not be forgotten. It is one of the most varied in the British Isles. The geological history witnessed through its rocks spans more than 395 million years, from the Devonian period through to the present day.

Geological and geomorphological features are well displayed around Devon, particularly through coastal exposures and the County's long history of quarrying and mining. Nationally important landforms include landslips, pebble structures, raised beaches, drowned valleys and the exceptional range of granite features on Dartmoor.

### Trends in Devon's biodiversity

#### Key trends in Devon's biodiversity:

- Huge declines post World War II due to changing agricultural practices.
- Declines are now slowing (and in some cases have been reversed) for certain habitats and species due to heightened awareness and availability of agri-environment schemes.
- Neglect of certain economically marginal but wildlife-rich habitats.
- Climate change is very likely to result in changes in the distribution and abundance of a range of plants and animals.

Most of our semi-natural habitats, such as the wet, species-rich Culm Grasslands found in the north of the County, are the product of

traditional management for farming or forestry, such as stock grazing. Post-war improvements in technology, changes in the agricultural economy and strategic demands for self-sufficiency in food production all led to significant pressures on farmers to alter the way they managed the land. Agriculture became more intensive, with, for example, the use of artificial fertilisers, draining of wetlands and re-seeding of grasslands with fewer but more productive species. Wildlife was gradually edged out.

Housing and enhanced infrastructure have also taken their toll, as have factors such as commercial forestry that has resulted in many of our lowland heathlands disappearing under conifer plantations.

However, the tide is changing. Everyone is now more aware of the need to conserve our remaining natural history and, where opportunities allow, to enhance and recreate areas of wildlife habitat. Agri-environment schemes provide economic support to help farmers protect the countryside and there are enhanced legislative and policy frameworks that encourage decision makers to view nature conservation as a central consideration across the board.

Not that everything in the garden is rosy. Much wildlife is still being lost, both through direct destruction and through neglect. The spectre of climate change looms over us all. Its effects could be severe, and learning how to adapt to it and mitigate its consequences will remain a major objective for the foreseeable future.

## Challenges

### Key nature conservation challenges for the next three years:

- Adaptation to climate change, including rebuilding wildlife links within the landscape.
- Implementing a monitoring programme to establish trends in the County's biodiversity.
- Establishing effective partnerships, including with the landowning community.



Looking ahead over the next three years, a number of challenges can be identified that the nature conservation community in Devon must address. A few of these are outlined below.

The issue of climate change has already been highlighted. To help wildlife adapt to a changing environment mechanisms need to be found to enable conservation at the landscape scale, with the maintenance and recreation of significant areas of habitat and the development of links between them. In this way sustainable and robust populations can be established and plants and animals will be better able to move throughout the countryside in response to shifting conditions.

One mechanism of enabling this is by identifying suitable areas for enhancement in Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), the new style of local planning documents. The conservation community needs to rise to the challenge of ensuring that all of Devon's strategic planning documents contain strong policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment.

The success of such policies will need to be monitored and this represents another challenge. It is presently very difficult to monitor trends in key habitats and species in Devon. The mechanisms and resources are not in place, making it difficult to prioritise some future work areas. To address this problem Devon County Council commissioned a proposed Biodiversity Monitoring Framework. It now remains to encourage all those with a need for monitoring data to support the refinement and coordinated implementation of this framework, and to actively support the body central to the collation and dissemination of this data, namely the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC), operated by the Devon Wildlife Trust.

Perhaps the one sector with the single biggest influence on our natural environment is the landowning community, and farmers, in particular. Yet the present farming economy is



in a precarious condition. This is especially true for the livestock farmers so vital for the maintenance of many key wildlife habitats. Finding effective mechanisms to help farmers conserve the countryside (e.g. adequately funded and targeted agri-environment schemes) is a major challenge, as is adapting to the increasing presence within the County of a new style of small-scale farm holdings, where there may not be a long tradition of land management.

Local communities also have a key role to play in providing practical support and advocacy for nature conservation. The present challenge is to increase awareness of the subject and provide opportunities for the active engagement of communities in conservation.

Finally, if we are to successfully respond to these and other challenges, then all interested parties need to work in partnership. Only through the efficiencies that come with genuine partnership working can the tests ahead be overcome. Of course, this is itself a challenge.

# 3 Strategic context

There is much legislation and policy setting a strategic context for nature conservation in Devon. Key examples include:

## Protection of Statutory Sites

Legislation provides the backbone to the conservation of our existing wildlife gems. Sites of Special Scientific Interest receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. This has been strengthened by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, particularly with regard to securing the favourable condition of these sites.

Sites of recognised international importance, such as Special Areas of Conservation, have additional protection via the Habitat Regulations. Rigorous tests are in place to protect such sites from damage.

Under the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the UK has a duty to protect Devon's two World Heritage Sites.

## The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006: the biodiversity duty

This duty requires all public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out all of their functions. The duty has

the specific purpose of making biodiversity a 'natural and integral' part of policy and decision making.

## National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005) sets out the principles of national conservation policy, such as the role of Local Development Frameworks and local sites. There is also a related Circular and a more detailed Guide to Good Practice.

## Biodiversity Action Planning

The Convention on Biological Diversity signed at the United Nations Earth Summit in 1992 requires each signatory nation to produce action plans for the conservation of biodiversity. The UK responded by producing plans for many important habitats and species, with these built upon and turned into local action by such plans as the Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan (1998) and certain district and national park strategies. This process is now the major mechanism for delivering proactive nature conservation.

## Draft SW Regional Spatial Strategy

The Regional Spatial Strategy, scheduled to be adopted in 2008, will provide a significant statutory context for future development in the



South West. Hopefully, it will contain a number of influential policies for the protection and enhancement of the environment.

## Devon Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement

Devon's Sustainable Community Strategy provides a vision for Devon, establishes the key issues that can influence this and identifies priorities for future action (including 'Safeguard and improve the natural environment and biodiversity - land management to protect habitats and landscapes'). The new Devon Local Area Agreement (2008) is delivering these priorities.

The LAA has specific outcomes relating to both biodiversity and green infrastructure.

Further, the Performance Framework for Local Authorities identifies a specific biodiversity indicator and is a driver for action.

## Local Development Frameworks

Setting the framework for local planning decisions, these documents are of strategic importance for nature conservation. Also, they should identify sites for the restoration or

creation of habitats and support this through policies. They require the development of a sound evidence base and effective monitoring programmes which should embrace biodiversity.

## SW Regional Nature Map (2006)

The Regional Nature Map, developed by Biodiversity South West and local experts, highlights areas for the conservation and expansion of important habitats. These 'Strategic Nature Areas' are an opportunity for landscape-scale conservation, enabling the connectivity within the landscape needed to allow species to migrate and establish sustainable populations.

They will be joined by a Devon map establishing local priorities and seeking to rebuild connectivity throughout the County.

## Natural Areas

Though complex, distinct combinations of geology, wildlife and land-use can be identified within Devon's landscape. There are nine such 'Natural Areas', identified by Natural England, each offering a framework for conservation action unconstrained by administrative boundaries.



# 4 Devon County Council's strategic role and functions

## Devon County Council Strategic Plan (2006)

Our Devon: A focus on the future is the County Council's Strategic Plan 2006 – 2011. Five priorities are identified as the focus for special attention and effort over this five year period. These are:

- Giving the best possible start in life to Devon's children and young people
- Strengthening Devon's economy
- Celebrating Devon's culture
- Improving Devon's environment
- Promoting independence and choice for Devon's adults.

A focus on these priorities will help to tackle many of the key challenges facing Devon and are issues which the County Council believes it should take the lead in addressing. The priorities also reflect the views expressed by the people of Devon when asked what they thought the County Council's priorities should be.

### Making Devon Greener

The County Council is also committed in making Devon 'England's greenest county'. Making Devon Greener is a cross cutting theme that spans the breadth of the Strategic Plan. Each priority within the plan is assessed to see how it contributes towards this agenda.

Nature conservation can contribute to the priorities set out in the Council's Strategic Plan in a number of ways:

### Giving the best possible start in life to Devon's children and young people

Devon's countryside provides a key opportunity for young people to develop an appreciation of nature. It provides a source of inspiration and a chance to develop a different set of values than those likely to be formed within an exclusively urban setting.



The natural world is also a potential outdoor classroom, providing direct opportunities to learn about wildlife and geology, complex systems of interaction and interdependence, and about the relationship – both physical and economic - between humans and the natural world. The diverse nature of Devon makes it an ideal educational resource, drawing in pupils and students from across England.

There are also opportunities to bring wildlife to young people, by developing the potential of school grounds as wildlife reserves, not only enhancing these grounds as an educational resource but also improving the learning environment.

Growth and diversification of the tourism and leisure industry mean that the countryside increasingly provides employment opportunities other than farming. Implementing environmental education can help to ensure that sustainable management practices are integral within these.

### Strengthening Devon's economy

The natural environment is a key economic driver within the County. Small businesses are drawn here by the quality of life offered by the landscape and wildlife, confident in their ability to recruit qualified staff. More important, however, is the tourist market, generating for Devon an annual mean income of over £400 million.

Concern for the environment may also be resulting in a demand for more local and seasonal produce, with a resulting boost to Devon's economy.

## Celebrating Devon's culture

The environment is a key element of Devon's culture, helping to define the County, structure the experience of living in and visiting Devon and generally shaping quality of life. Devon's wildlife and landscape has long been an inspiration for artists.

## Improving Devon's environment

The word 'environment' can be defined widely but in a county like Devon it is obvious that wildlife and geology are the central components. That nature conservation significantly contributes to this strategic priority is self-evident.

## Promoting independence and choice for Devon's adults

By creating an attractive and diverse environment healthy and active lifestyles are naturally encouraged, helping to maintain body and soul into old age. Some people will inevitably find it difficult to visit the countryside but there are many opportunities to provide easy access paths and, indeed, to bring wildlife back into our towns and villages.



## Devon County Council's role in conserving and enhancing Devon's wildlife and geology

The role of local authorities in supporting the natural environment is well established. For example, the Local Government Act 2000 provides local authorities with the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the 'promotion or improvement of the environmental well-being of their area'. Devon County Council, in recognition of the central role played by the natural environment in bolstering both quality of life and the local economy, has played an active part in nature conservation for many years.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 now places an actual duty upon local authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity when exercising their functions.

The Council is committed to fulfilling its obligations and responsibilities towards the natural environment through the following main topic areas (some of which are elaborated in Section 5):

- Support for gathering and disseminating information, usually through the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC), operated by the Devon Wildlife Trust.
- Positive management of its own estate.
- Minimising damage and seeking opportunities for enhancement through development management and the County Council's own development schemes.
- Promoting nature conservation within strategic planning.
- Promoting community awareness and involvement in nature conservation.
- Working in partnership with others to achieve shared environmental objectives.

# 5 Strategic objectives

The following objectives and policies will guide the County Council's contribution to the conservation of Devon's wildlife and geology through the delivery of its services and functions.

## Theme 1: Knowledge and information

### Objective 1

***Build knowledge and understanding of Devon's wildlife and geology among all sectors.***

#### Devon County Council will:

- Promote and support the survey and monitoring of Devon's ecological and geological heritage and encourage the collation, storage, updating, use and dissemination of this information.
- Promote the roles of a range of organisations in achieving a sound knowledge of the resource, including the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre and other local authorities.

#### 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.

## Theme 2: Strategic planning

### Objective 2

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

#### Devon County Council will:

- Use its key role in strategic planning within the County to promote in all relevant documents policies and guidance for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment (example documents include Mineral and Waste Local Development Documents, Devon's Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement, Devon Local Transport Plan, World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve strategies and AONB Management Plans).
- Work in partnership with others to help wildlife adapt to the shifting circumstances of climate change.

#### Outcomes:

- Policies for conserving, enhancing and monitoring biodiversity and geodiversity in all relevant documents and strategies.
- Working with partners, the development of a visual strategy (a Devon Biodiversity Network map) to guide the conservation and re-creation of semi-natural habitats, and linkages between them, that will help wildlife adapt to climate change. There are clear links between the development of this work and Green Infrastructure strategies.



## Theme 3: Development management and regulation

### Objective 3

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

#### Devon County Council will:

- Use its development management and other regulatory functions to seek to minimise any adverse impact on biodiversity and geodiversity.
- Utilise all appropriate opportunities to promote and enhance nature conservation.

#### Outcomes:

- At the least, no net loss in Devon's ecological and geological resource.
- Devon's natural environment enhanced through the development management process.

## Theme 4: Estate management

### Objective 4

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

#### Devon County Council will:

- Minimise adverse impacts on wildlife and geology in the acquisition, disposal and management of its Estate.
- Utilise opportunities to create, manage or enhance features of nature conservation interest.
- Apply environmental audit procedures to ensure that biodiversity concerns are fully addressed during the development of the Estate or when taking forward new infrastructure projects, such as the development of the highway network.
- Have regard to biodiversity and the wider environment in the procurement of goods and services and in the management of resources.

- Highlight the environmental and social benefits of local produce schemes.

#### Outcomes:

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

## Theme 5: Community involvement

### Objective 5

***Promote community awareness, understanding and involvement in nature conservation.***

#### Devon County Council will:

- Promote awareness of Devon's wildlife and geology to the wider community, including educational establishments, with the aim of encouraging understanding and sympathetic values towards nature conservation and active local participation.

#### Outcomes:

- Enhanced awareness of Devon's environment and the role local communities can play in its protection and enhancement.
- The Council's web site (including the Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan) 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 (including the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve) and World Heritage Sites.

and East Devon Coast World Heritage Site (the 'Jurassic Coast'; England's only World Heritage Site designated for its coastal features) and North Devon's Biosphere Reserve.

## Theme 6: Partnership working

### Objective 6

***Work in partnership with the professional community to achieve nature conservation in Devon.***

### Devon County Council will:

- Foster increased co-operation and partnership between all organisations and agencies involved in nature conservation in Devon, including the business sector, in order to achieve the co-ordinated implementation of the Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan, with appropriate links to more local, and also regional, biodiversity planning.

### 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 and tourism sectors, 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.
- Facilitate and support partnership working within the Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site, the Dorset

# 6 Implementation and review

## Implementing the Action Programme

This document sets out how Devon County Council can make a positive contribution to the conservation and enhancement of local and global biodiversity. It forms a major part of this Authority's response to national, regional and local biodiversity initiatives, and in particular to the Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan.

The policy statements set out in this document are intended to influence corporate thinking to ensure that biodiversity is recognised as a cross-cutting theme relevant to all Directorates. Future decision making and the ongoing operation of the County Council's services should reflect these commitments as far as resources and other practical constraints allow.

To this end, a series of actions and projects are proposed through an annual Action Programme. Where relevant, these actions include initiatives that can be taken forward by a range of the Council's six Directorates. The list of actions is not exhaustive but focuses on new initiatives or significant ongoing activities and is intended to cover a wide range of the County Council's services and functions.

It is important that this document is used to inspire staff throughout the County Council to become involved to a greater extent in actions which support biodiversity.

## Required resources

The resources needed to achieve this work – both in terms of direct expenditure and human resources – will be derived from internal budgets and supplemented, as far as possible, through external funding opportunities.

Current level of DCC resources for biodiversity: the Countryside Team has 2 specialist FTEs. There is also support for biodiversity delivery from staff within the Northern Devon Coast and Countryside Service and the Council's two Country Parks, and the North Devon and Blackdown Hills AONBs.

- Annual ongoing expenditure from revenue budgets for project delivery: £45K approx.
- Capital projects: significant expenditure in relation to school and highways development mitigation and enhancement.

In addition, from 2008/09 additional financial resources of £50K will be allocated annually to biodiversity in response to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 biodiversity duty.



## Implementation through Partnership

This Role and Action Programme defines a specific role for Devon County Council in pursuing biodiversity objectives. However, it is recognised that considerable added value can sometimes be achieved through partnership working, involving a sharing of resources, expertise and responsibilities. Indeed, partnership working is seen as a major benefit of the biodiversity action planning process.

Devon County Council hosts the co-ordinator of the Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan and its associated partnership and by so doing seeks to:

- Encourage wider understanding of and involvement in the biodiversity process in Devon,
- Facilitate improved communication and co-ordination of effort to achieve agreed priorities, and
- Assist in the updating and reporting of the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan.

The Devon Biodiversity Partnership consists of a broad range of organisations, including statutory agencies, national and local charities, universities, industry and local authorities.

## Monitoring and review

Achievement against action needs to be monitored to justify the expenditure of resources and enable new actions to be taken forward. This document's Action Programme will be reviewed annually, with this review informing the development of the following year's programme. Each new Annual Action Plan will include a summary of the previous year's achievements (as far as possible, given that the Action Programme will need to be developed before the end of each financial year) and both of these elements will be approved by the lead Executive Member. The Environment, Economy and Culture Directorate's Overview and Scrutiny Committee will maintain an ongoing interest in the Role and Action Programme.

## Appendix 1 – The Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan

### Devon Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan

Originally published in 1998, The Nature of Devon – A Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plan (BAP) is a direct descendent of a process started at the famous 'Earth Summit' held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At this summit, world leaders pledged to halt and reverse the loss of the planet's biodiversity. For its part, the UK government produced a series of Action Plans for a great many threatened habitats and species. These national plans have been joined by a series of regional Action Plans aimed at providing a more local perspective.

The Devon BAP builds on this endeavour, identifying local priorities and providing targets and plans of action for the County (including Plymouth and Torbay unitary authorities). For a range of Devon's most important habitats and species, the BAP outlines the key issues and opportunities affecting them and describes objectives, targets and actions aimed at securing their future and generally raising the profile of nature conservation within the County. There are also five action plans covering Common Themes such as 'public awareness and involvement' and 'land management and advice'.

The BAP also provides an overview and evaluation of Devon's wildlife and geology (including the identification of key features), background to the biodiversity action planning process and much other useful related information.

It is important to note that the Devon BAP covers the conservation of both wildlife and geology and contains a number of action plans specifically aimed at the conservation of earth heritage features. This is in recognition of the fundamental relationship between the two, and is the preferred route for targeted nature conservation in Devon.



The Devon BAP does not stand alone, but is part of a much wider process aimed at conserving our natural heritage. Indeed, it was always intended

that action plans for more geographically restricted features should be compiled at a local level (for example, the Dartmoor Biodiversity Action Plan has action plans for many upland features).

The Devon BAP can be viewed at the following web site (which also contains links to other key external sites): [www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity)

## Appendix 2 – Key biodiversity statistics for Devon and some useful websites

### Key biodiversity statistics for Devon (incl. Plymouth and Torbay)

#### *Statutory sites of international importance*

**Special Areas of Conservation: 17**

**Special Protection Areas: 3**

**Ramsar site: Exe Estuary**

**UNESCO biosphere reserve: Braunton Burrows**

**England's only World Heritage Site designated for its natural features: the Dorset and East Devon Coast WHS (a.k.a. 'the Jurassic Coast').**

#### *Statutory sites of national importance*

**Sites of Special Scientific Interest: 210 (covering 7.6% of Devon)**

**National Nature Reserves: 10**

**Marine Nature Reserve: Lundy (England's only example)**

**National Parks: Dartmoor NP and Exmoor NP**

**Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: 5**

#### *Statutory sites of local importance*

**Local Nature Reserves: 41**

#### *Non-statutory sites of local importance*

**Voluntary Marine Conservation Areas: 2 (Wembury & North Devon)**

**County Wildlife Sites: approx. 2000**

**County Geological Sites: over 150**

Further information on many of these sites can be found through the following web addresses.

### Key Websites

**Blackdown Hills AONB** [www.blackdown-hills.net](http://www.blackdown-hills.net)

**Dartmoor National Park**  
[www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk](http://www.dartmoor-npa.gov.uk)

**Devon County Council**  
[www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity) &  
[www.devon.gov.uk/geology](http://www.devon.gov.uk/geology)

**Devon Wildlife Trust** [www.devon-wildlifetrust.org](http://www.devon-wildlifetrust.org)

**East Devon AONB**  
[www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk](http://www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk)

**Exmoor National Park**  
[www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

**Joint Nature Conservation Committee**  
[www.jncc.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.gov.uk)

**Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site**  
[www.jurassiccoast.com](http://www.jurassiccoast.com)

**Natural England** [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

**North Devon AONB**  
[www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk](http://www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk)

**North Devon's Biosphere Reserve**  
[www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk](http://www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk)

**Northern Devon Coast and Countryside Service** [www.devon.gov.uk/ndccs](http://www.devon.gov.uk/ndccs)

**South Devon AONB**  
[www.southdevonaonb.org.uk](http://www.southdevonaonb.org.uk)

**Tamar Valley AONB** [www.tamarvalley.org.uk](http://www.tamarvalley.org.uk)

## Appendix 3 – Landscape-scale Conservation in Devon

### What is landscape-scale conservation?

A key concept in modern nature conservation is that of landscape-scale action. This approach seeks to go beyond the conservation of protected areas, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, or highly targeted species conservation. Both of these strategies remain very important but there is now an increasing realisation that the conservation of our wildlife requires a wider ambitious approach.

'Landscape-scale conservation' seeks to not only conserve existing key habitats and species but to also restore and recreate significant areas of habitat within the wider landscape. A crucial element of this work is the creation of enhanced links and connectivity between habitats, creating a landscape with increased 'permeability' for wildlife.

Enabling plants and animals to move may be a vital means of helping the countryside adapt to climate change. It is, in any case, important for helping many species to establish sustainable populations and communities.

Landscape-scale conservation also fits well with the concept of ecosystem services, an approach that seeks to recognise the full range of benefits

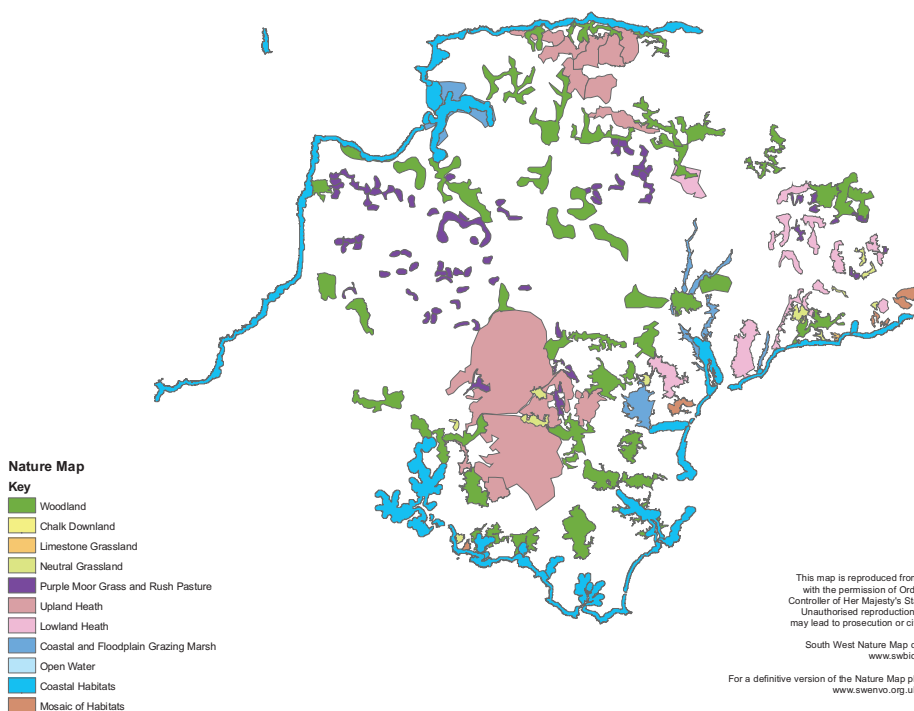
provided by biodiversity (including an appreciation of the economic value of the natural environment). For example, in addition to the intrinsic value of wildlife, a healthy, functioning landscape provides a range of products such as crop pollination, water storage, food, genetic resources, educational resources and so on.

### Targeting landscape-scale conservation in the South West

To help with the targeting of landscape-scale conservation, the South West Nature Map has been developed by Biodiversity South West in liaison with many regional and local experts. This map highlights blocks of land, known as Strategic Nature Areas (SNAs), which are important for both the conservation and expansion of important habitat types and which can be used to target large-scale projects within the wider countryside.

Information about the South West Nature Map can be downloaded from the web site of Biodiversity South West, including the methodology that was used in its production, a map of what it looks like in Devon and detailed GIS layers: [www.biodiversitysouthwest.org.uk](http://www.biodiversitysouthwest.org.uk)

The South West Nature Map  
in Devon





Alternatively, simple maps showing SNAs for Devon BAP habitats have been produced for all of Devon's district, borough and unitary authorities, along with the County's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. These can be viewed on Devon County Council's web site: [www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity)

## Targeting landscape-scale conservation in Devon

The South West Nature Map is an excellent tool for targeting landscape-scale conservation and is already being used as such. It was, however, produced for the entire region and used a methodology appropriate to that aim.

Work is now underway by the Devon Biodiversity Partnership to build on and compliment the work of the Regional Nature Map by examining what additional important areas for landscape-scale conservation should be identified at the County-level. In particular, opportunities for creating corridors of habitat that can link between SNAs and other important areas will be highlighted, with the aim of helping the targeting of nature conservation in a way that facilitates the movement of plants and animals and helps to create a robust and functioning landscape.

In addition, brief profiles will be produced for the Strategic Nature Areas identified by the South West Nature Map. Their purpose will be to provide a basic level of information to improve understanding of the purpose and value of individual SNAs among a broad audience. The profiles will, simply and straightforwardly, describe the nature conservation interest of the SNA (including key habitats and species and a summary of nature conservation designations) and set targets for the maintenance and expansion of key habitats. They can also be used to outline the practical opportunities and constraints to habitat restoration and creation within the SNAs.

## The Working Wetlands Project: an example of landscape-scale conservation in Devon

'Working Wetlands' is a project being taken forward in three large areas of northern Devon, around the headwaters of the Torridge, Tamar and Taw. The project involves the Devon Wildlife Trust working closely with a range of partner organisations and land managers to ensure the strategic, co-ordinated and proactive delivery of conservation and land management advice. The aim is to rebuild biodiversity throughout the three target areas, restoring and creating habitats and the connectivity between them.

The main focus of the work is Culm grassland, one of Devon's key habitats. This wet, rough mixture of heath, mire and grassland is of considerable wildlife and landscape importance but has declined markedly in extent in recent decades. The project will also conserve and enhance other important habitats, such as woodland, hedgerows and water courses.

As well as benefiting specific habitats and species, the project will help to restore a functioning natural environment. For example, wet grassland and mire help to store water in times of heavy rainfall, releasing it slowly and thereby reducing peaks and troughs of river levels.



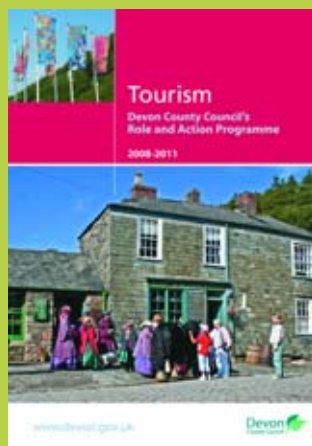
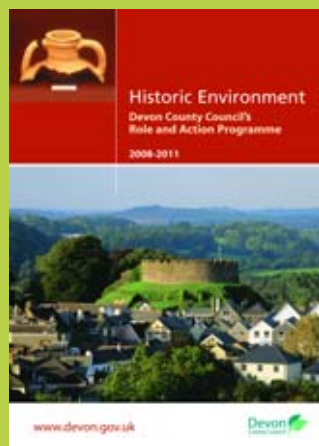


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Further information about the work undertaken by the Culture Group can be found in the following publications:



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