

# **THE NORTH DEVON BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLAN**

## **AN ACTION PLAN FOR THE SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NORTH DEVON'S KEY WILDLIFE HABITATS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In 2001 North Devon District Council was one of the first Councils in Devon to adopt a Local Biodiversity Action Plan for the distinctive, important and rare wildlife of the North Devon area. The aim is to identify important habitats and species and develop plans to conserve and enhance this wildlife, so valuable to the North Devon area.

In 2004 the North Devon Biodiversity Group conducted a review in order to revitalise the BAP. This ensured that the actions were both appropriate and SMART, relevant at a local level and that the lead deliverers and partner organisations identified within the Habitat Action Plans were committed to the process.

### **WHAT IS BIODIVERSITY?**

A woodland walk through a carpet of bluebells heralding the start of summer. The warm scent of gorse brought on gentle sea breezes on a spring day. The far off cry of a buzzard soaring overhead.

These experiences arise from contact with North Devon's rich biodiversity. The term biodiversity encompasses all living things on earth and the habitats and ecosystems that they form. This variety of wildlife makes up the very fabric of our environment, forming the distinctive character of the countryside in North Devon.

### **WHY BOTHER WITH BIODIVERSITY?**

- Biodiversity is part of a natural life support system that helps, both locally and globally, to control the climate, pollinate crops, prevent soil erosion and to provide food and medicines for our everyday life.
- Wildlife is closely linked to our cultural heritage and can form the distinctive area in which we live.

- Can we afford to lose our wildlife, which has developed alongside man for thousands of years, or, species that have evolved over millions of years, in the space of a few short decades?
- A healthy and diverse environment which North Devon is lucky enough to possess, forms a vital part of our economic prosperity attracting both tourists and industry to the area.

### WILDLIFE UNDER THREAT

Wildlife is under threat all over the world and not just in the rain forests and the oceans. In the UK and in Devon, many habitats and species are in severe decline, lost to development and changes in land management practice. Those that remain are often small in number and fragmented in distribution, they frequently require management to ensure that they survive.

By conserving and enhancing the biological diversity in North Devon we not only help our own area, but can contribute to the health of the regional, national and even global environment.

### BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANNING IN NORTH DEVON

In 1992 at the Earth Summit Conference in Rio de Janeiro, 150 national governments signed the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Article 6A of this Convention, to which the UK was a signatory, required the production of a National Biological Action Plan.

This in turn has led to the development of Regional and Local Biodiversity Action Plans through various partnerships. The Devon BAP was published in 1998, and focussed on important habitats and species within Devon.

Here in North Devon, the next step has been to translate this work on Biodiversity and apply it through the production of Local Biodiversity Action Plans. For two years this work has been undertaken on behalf of North Devon District Council by a number of partners including Devon Wildlife Trust, Devon County Council and the Northern Devon Coast & Countryside Service.

As a result 9 specially selected Habitat Action Plans have been produced and the table below explains their relevance to the UK, South West and Devon Plans.

KEY HABITATS WITHIN NORTH DEVON AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO THE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL BIODIVERSITY PLANNING PROCESS

**SPECIES RICH HEDGEROW**

**ESTUARY**

**COASTAL HEATHLAND**

**TOWNS AND VILLAGES**

**OAK WOODLAND**

**PARKLAND AND WOOD PASTURE**

**FARMLAND**

**ROCKY FORESHORE AND ROCKY SEABED**

**SAND DUNES**

Each plan identifies the following:

- the habitat
- the level of representation nationally and within Devon
- the distribution of the habitat within North Devon
- potential threats to the habitat
- the characteristic wildlife of the habitat
- current site protection and action
- the links to other Biodiversity Action Plans

It further identifies:

- the objectives for conservation
- the targets to be supported
- Individual actions to achieve the objectives identified
- The lead deliverer and potential partners for each actions

## WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP FOR WILDLIFE

Biodiversity conservation is important and will not be successful without the efforts of everyone who has an impact on it. These Habitat Action Plans will assist in highlighting the importance of key habitats and offering protection to individual sites.

In addition, by guiding working partnerships, a broad spectrum of landowners, local authorities, conservation groups, industrial concerns, researchers and individuals we can seek to ensure that we can conserve and enhance the important wildlife habitats within the natural environment of North Devon.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

To really make a difference there is a need for us all to work together to assist in this process. Taking part in conservation work, contributing to local surveys or forming community wildlife groups are all ways in which you can become a part of the local and international drive to save our wildlife species and habitats.

If you would like to learn more about the North Devon Biodiversity Action Plan or how you might help, please contact:

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You can view the North Devon Habitat Action Plans through most libraries or at the following website address:

<http://www.northdevon.gov.uk/environment/thrive/contents.shtml>