

Parish Biodiversity Audit

for

Great Torrington

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	5
DESIGNATED SITES	8
SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST	8
SPECIAL AREAS OF CONSERVATION.....	8
REGIONALLY IMPORTANT GEOLOGICAL AND GEOMORPHOLOGICAL SITES	9
COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES	9
<i>Great Torrington Commons CWS: Great Torrington (N)</i>	10
<i>Great Torrington Commons CWS: Castle Hill Common</i>	11
<i>Great Torrington Commons CWS: Limer's Hill</i>	12
<i>Great Torrington Commons CWS: Norwood Moor</i>	13
<i>Great Torrington Commons CWS: Furzebeam Wood</i>	14
OTHER DESIGNATIONS AND REGIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS	14
Natural Areas	14
North Devon's Biosphere Reserve	15
OTHER HABITATS (IDENTIFIED FROM FIELD SURVEY):	15
SPECIES-RICH HEDGES	15
CHURCHYARDS.....	18
STONE WALLS.....	19
RECREATION AREAS AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE	19
ALLOTMENTS AND GARDENS	20
REDUNDANT AND TRADITIONAL BUILDINGS.....	21
RIVERS AND PONDS.....	21
ROADSIDE VERGES.....	22
UNIMPROVED GRASSLAND	23
CULM GRASSLAND.....	23
WOODLANDS	24
VETERAN TREES.....	26
GREEN LANES.....	28
OTHER POSSIBLE HABITATS	28
UNCONFIRMED COUNTY WILDLIFE SITES.....	30
Species	30
IMPORTANT SPECIES	30
BIRDS.....	30
PLANTS	31
MAMMALS	31
INVERTEBRATES	33
REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS.....	33
The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (Devon BAP).....	35
BIODIVERSITY LINKS:	35
LINKS BETWEEN THE MAIN WILDLIFE HABITATS OF GREAT TORRINGTON	36
AND THE DEVON AND UK BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS (BAP)	36
Some Ideas for Local Action.....	37
1 FURTHER SURVEYS:.....	37
2 INFLUENCE THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE:.....	38
3 BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL LANDOWNERS:.....	38
4 ADOPT A ROAD VERGE:	38
5 WILDLIFE GARDENING:	39
6 JOIN LOCAL CONSERVATION ORGANISATIONS:	39
7 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE NORTH DEVON BIOSPHERE RESERVE.....	39
8 LINK BIODIVERSITY TO GREAT TORRINGTON PARISH PLAN AND COMMUNITY PROJECTS:	40
9 JAPANESE KNOTWEED:.....	40
Useful sources of further information:.....	42
POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING:	43

Bibliography..... 45

Acknowledgements..... 45

Appendix 1 – Notable sites and species within and near Great Torrington Parish..... 47
LEGALLY PROTECTED & NOTABLE SPECIES WITHIN GREAT TORRINGTON PARISH (2008).....52

Appendix 2 - Species list recorded within Great Torrington parish during field visit.... 63

Appendix 3: Biodiversity Features of Great Torrington Parish 65

Great Torrington - Parish Plan Biodiversity Project

This document has been produced as a starting point to help community action for wildlife. By starting to bring together knowledge of the natural assets of the parish, it may go some way to achieving its aim of contributing to - and stimulating ideas for - local action.

It should be emphasised that it is just a beginning. It does not represent a comprehensive account of the parish and is based largely on existing records held by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC). There will be a wealth of local knowledge that can be used to build upon and improve this report. Indeed, it is important that it is seen as a 'living document' and one that belongs to the parish. It is hoped that it will be added to and refined by the people of Great Torrington parish in future years.

Did you know...?

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006

Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 places the following biodiversity duty on all public bodies:

'Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'

The duty applies to all local authorities, including parish and town councils. Its purpose is to raise the profile of biodiversity and make it a 'natural and integral' part of policy and decision making.

The Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has issued guidance for local authorities on implementing this biodiversity duty. It can be downloaded from Defra's website: www.defra.gov.uk/wildlife-countryside/pdf/biodiversity/la-guid-english.pdf

Introduction

Biodiversity is a term that describes all of life on earth, from the smallest micro-organism to the largest mammal, the Blue whale. Life is found almost everywhere on the planet and in huge variety. Even a humble back garden may be home to thousands of species and is therefore an important part of the planet's biodiversity. The Great Torrington Parish Biodiversity Audit begins to describe the area's local wildlife and shows how it fits into the wider picture of biodiversity in Devon and the UK.

Great Torrington lies in an idyllic position in rural North Devon set on an inland cliff top above the River Torridge. Great Torrington lies 12 km south-east of Bideford, 25 km north-east of Holsworthy and 25 km west of South Molton. The town is on the main A386 Okehampton to Bideford road. Great Torrington is on the route of the Tarka Trail long distance footpath and cycle trail and close to nearby RHS Rosemoor just south of the parish boundary.

Great Torrington is the main settlement in the south of the parish. The old town is centred around the market square and has developed along the main Bideford-Okehampton road. Outside of the old centre with its traditional terraces of town cottages, shops and services there are small industrial units and 1950s former local authority housing.

The parish's economy was traditionally based around agriculture and manufacturing based around the wool and dairy trade. Today the town is home to the Dartington Crystal factory and the wider parish economy is based on a mix of arable and livestock farming. The population of the parish is approximately just over 5,300 having seen a sharp increase over the last two decades coupled with new housing developments on the north side of the town. Outside of the main town, the parish is rural and sparsely populated.



Great Torrington Town Centre

The parish rises sharply from the main River Torridge valley to over 150 metres above sea level in the north where the landscape is dominated by agricultural areas consisting mainly of arable land and pastures grazed by sheep and cattle. The patchwork of fields is surrounded by hedges, with Beech *Fagus sylvaticum* hedges dominating the higher ground. The fields include unimproved grassland and semi-improved grassland on the steeper sloping fields and improved grassland or arable land generally on the more gently undulating areas.

The most important landscape feature in terms of biodiversity is Great Torrington Common which surrounds the town on all sides except the east. The Common comprises 365 acres of woodland, scrub, grassland, heathland and stream valley and is freely accessible. The site is managed by the Great Torrington Commoners formed by Act of Parliament in 1889. The Common was traditionally grazed until 1980 and is thought to be one of the best butterfly sites in Devon. There are 15 Conservators elected on a 3 yearly basis. The conservators' work includes enforcing the bye-laws, maintaining public rights of way and conservation management.



Great Torrington Common North

Great Torrington Common has been identified as a County Wildlife Site (CWS). Other important sites include Barley Grove RIGS (Regionally Important Geological or Geomorphological Site) and Week Bottom Wood, Beam Wood, Van's Wood, Cleave Wood and Huntshaw Wood which have been identified on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). There are also some interesting areas of grassland, which have been identified but not surveyed and have been designated as Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWS). These include School Lane Field, Peagham Wood and Norwood Bridge.

There are a number of pleasant footpaths and other Rights of Way within the parish, mainly concentrated around the Common. Great Torrington is also on the Tarka Trail long distance footpath and cycle trail.

Notable sites and species recorded with Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC) within and close to Great Torrington parish are given in Appendix 1. The species include those listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP), such as the Small pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria selene*, Wall brown *Lasioommata megera*, Common toad *Bufo bufo* and Grass snake *Natrix natrix* and also in the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (Devon BAP) including Great green bush cricket *Tettigonia viridissima*. Otters, listed in both the UK and Devon BAP, have been recorded in the River Torridge north of the town. An explanation of the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan is presented on page 34.

The parish audit visit for this report was carried out in February 2009. It should be borne in mind that this is not the ideal season to carry out biodiversity surveys as many species will not be visible at this time of the year. A full species list recorded during the February audit visit is given in Appendix 2.

Designated Sites

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are notified by Natural England (formerly English Nature) because of their plants, animals or geological features (the latter are geological SSSIs or gSSSI). Natural England needs to be consulted before any operations likely to damage the special interest are undertaken. SSSI is a statutory designation with legal implications. Although there are no SSSI designations within the parish this does not necessarily mean that there are no sites of as equal biodiversity importance where sensitive and appropriate management is essential to preserve wildlife value.

Special Areas of Conservation

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC): these are notified by Natural England because they contain species and/or habitats of European importance (listed in the Habitats Directive 1994), and are part of a network of conservation sites set up through Europe known as the Natura 2000 series. On land, all candidate SACs are, or will be notified as SSSIs. Natural England needs to be consulted before any operations likely to damage the special interest are undertaken. SAC is a statutory designation with legal implications.

Great Torrington parish lies within the Culm Grasslands SAC. The Culm Grasslands SAC covers large parts of northern and western Devon and takes its name from a type of heathland/wet grassland/scrub habitat associated with Purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*. Devon and Cornwall have a stronghold for this internationally important habitat, which also occurs in Wales and Ireland. The site contains extremely diverse examples of heath type fen-meadow, ranging from short, grazed swards through to stands that are transitional to scrub. The Culm grasslands SAC supports a number of rare plants such as Whorled caraway *Carum verticillatum* and is of importance to many threatened species such as the Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, Curlew *Numenius arquata* and Marsh fritillary butterfly *Euphydryas aurinia*. A full listing of Special Areas of Conservation can be found on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website: www.jncc.gov.uk

Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites

Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS) are earth science sites that are of regional or local importance. Like County Wildlife Sites, they are included in Local Plans and referred to under PPG9 (see below). These may represent good examples of local rock formations or landform features or they may contain interesting fossils.

There is one RIGS within the parish of Great Torrington at Barley Grove above Castle Hill Common to the south of the town.

Barley Grove RIGS

The underlying rock at Barley Grove is Upper Carboniferous Sandstone belonging to the Bude formation. Laid down around 350 million years ago, it is part of the sedimentary rocks of north Devon known as the Culm Measures. Rocks interbedded with shale can be seen along 'Sliding Rock Path' on Castle Hill Common. The bedding dips south and some quartz veining occurs. There are various small quarries on the site which can be explored. The site also offers views of the terraces to the south cut by the River Torridge. The river flows in the bottom of the valley just 15 metres above sea level 80 metres below the view-point. On a clear day the northern granite tors of Dartmoor can be seen to the south east.

[Source: Michael Collingham (2002) *Torrington Common – A guide to life on the Common*]

County Wildlife Sites

County Wildlife Sites are sites of county importance for wildlife, designated on the basis of the habitat or the known presence of particular species. This is not a statutory designation like Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and does not have any legal status. County Wildlife Sites are usually included in Local Plans as sites of regional or local biodiversity interest and are covered by Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9). CWS recognition does not demand any particular actions on the part of the landowner and does not give the public rights of access. However, it may increase eligibility for land management grants.

Note: 'Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation' was published by the Department of the Environment in August 2005. Planning Policy Statements (PPS) set out the Government's national policies on different aspects of planning in England. PPS9 sets out planning policies on protection of biodiversity and geological conservation through the planning system. This PPS replaces Planning Policy Guidance Note 9 (PPG9) on nature conservation published in October 1994.

Records of previous habitat and species surveys for these CWSs are kept with the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC), from which the descriptions here are largely derived; conditions may have changed since

these surveys. Many CWS sites across Devon are privately owned, some with little or no public access on to them. Some sites however can be seen from public roads and footpaths.

Great Torrington is fortunate to have one very large CWS (Great Torrington Commons) which is fully accessible to the public.

An 'area of waste called the Common' was given to the people of Torrington in 1194. This was formalised in 1889, when the Commons Act was presented to Parliament. 'An Act for vesting Great Torrington Common, Castle Hill Common and other lands in the borough of Great Torrington in a body of Conservators.' Since October 2nd 1889 the Conservators have met regularly to discharge this duty providing a valuable open space freely accessible to all. The Commons were traditionally managed by grazing until 1980. Since then various management methods have been employed to prevent the Commons from reverting back to scrub and woodland. [Source: Michael Collingham (2002) *Torrington Common: A Guide to Life on the Common.*]

Great Torrington Commons (CWS) is described by DBRC as 128.3 ha mosaic of unimproved acid grassland, semi-improved neutral and acid grassland, scrub, bracken, broadleaved woodland and wet woodland. The site is particularly important for butterflies with approximately 30 species recorded. The site was surveyed by DBRC in 2005 and records have been divided into a number of sub-sites described below.

Great Torrington Commons CWS: Great Torrington (N)

Great Torrington Common (N) lies to the north of Great Torrington town and is an extensive area of Common land with an interesting mosaic of habitats present. These include unimproved acid grassland, semi-improved neutral grassland, species-rich scrub, acidic broadleaved woodland and bracken stands. Part of the site is also a golf course. A complex network of footpaths cross the site linking it to other parts of the Common. The site slopes north gently down to the stream known as 'Common Lake'. The steep south facing slopes are extremely sunny and sheltered, providing valuable habitat for birds, butterflies and small mammals.

The golf course was not visited during the audit but could be seen from the main north Common car park on the opposite side of the stream valley. DBRC records the golf course as containing areas of tightly mown semi-improved grassland on the greens and fairways, with areas of good acidic grassland in the areas kept as rough.

The areas of most ecological importance within Great Torrington Common (N) are probably the areas of unimproved acid grassland. The largest area of unimproved acid grassland slopes gently down to the north-west adjoining a semi-improved amenity grassland area next to the car park and picnic area. The acid grassland here is quite species-rich with Common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Sheep fescue *Festuca ovina* agg. Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and

Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*. Flowering plants include Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Common dog violet *Viola riviniana* and Common bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*. The most species-rich area is located next to Common Lake stream and is slightly damp. This area is very colourful and attractive in late-spring and early-summer. Here species include frequent Betony *Stachys officinalis*, Orange hawkweed *Hieracium aurantiacum*, Yellow rattle *Rhinanthus minor* and Ivy-leaved bellflower *Wahlenbergia hederacea* - a Devon Notable plant species. On the opposite side of the valley to the car park there is an area of acid grassland which slopes steeply to the south. It is very sunny and there are abundant butterflies and grasshoppers. Here the sward is closely cropped by grazing rabbits and is quite flower-rich with occasional Heath milkwort *Polygala serpyllifolia*, Betony *Alliaria petiolata*, Devil's-bit scabious *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, Common dog violet and bird's-foot trefoil.

Links to Devon, North Devon and UK BAP

Key habitats:

- Flower-rich meadows & pastures (Devon BAP)
- Lowland dry acid grassland (UK BAP)
- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)

Key species:

- Yellowhammer (UK BAP)
- Adder (UK BAP)
- Pearl-bordered Fritillary (UK BAP)
- Small pearl-bordered Fritillary (UK BAP)
- Wall brown (UK BAP)
- Marsh fritillary (UK BAP, Devon BAP)
- Brown hairstreak (UK BAP)
- Barn Owl (UK BAP, Devon BAP)

Great Torrington Commons CWS: Castle Hill Common

This site is located to the south of Great Torrington and is still part of the larger Great Torrington Common. The site has very good public access with footpaths crossing the whole site and two car parks close by. The whole site is predominantly dense scrub and bracken on a very steep, south facing slope leading down to the River Torridge. There are pockets of species-rich grassland as well as scattered trees. The eastern edge of the site either side of New Road is semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Other habitat areas include areas of scrub and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* with tall herbs, and more species rich areas with rocky outcrops where a more heathland - type flora exists.

The scrub habitat areas are of high wildlife value with species-rich areas dominated by Common gorse *Ulex europaeus* with False oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Wood sage *Teucrium scorodonia* with occasional

Great mullein *Verbascum thapsus*, Sheep's bit *Jasione montana* and localised areas of Bell heather *Erica cinerea*, English stonecrop *Sedum anglicum* and Sheep's sorrel *Rumex acetosella*. This area has a number of young scrubby English oaks *Quercus robur* and a number of acidic rock outcrops.

There is also a small pocket of moderately species-rich unimproved acid to neutral grassland (approximately 0.3 ha). The more neutral areas are quite tall with frequent Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Common bent with Common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Yarrow and Smooth hawk's-beard *Crepis capillaris*. The more acidic flora includes frequent Wood sage and Sheep's sorrel.

Castle Hill Common has abundant butterflies, grasshoppers, bees and other invertebrates.

Links to Devon, North Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Flower rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Lowland dry acid grassland (UK BAP)
- Lowland meadows (UK BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)

Key species:

- Small pearl-bordered fritillary (UK BAP)

Great Torrington Commons CWS: Limer's Hill

Limer's Hill is an interesting mosaic of habitats including semi-improved acid grassland, semi-improved neutral grassland, species-rich scrub, broadleaved woodland and bracken stands. A complex network of footpaths cross the site linking it to other parts of the common. The site slopes steeply to the south-west towards the River Torridge. As much of the site is south facing the scrub patches are extremely sunny and sheltered providing valuable habitat for birds, butterflies and small mammals.

Typical acid grassland in this area has abundant Sheep's sorrel *Rosa arvensis* with frequent Common bent and Red fescue *Festuca rubra agg.* with Wood sage *Viburnum lantata*, Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and Common bird's-foot trefoil. The scrub is relatively species-rich particularly where there are rocky outcrops and includes abundant Gorse, Bracken, Oak, Wood sage and localised Bell heather *Erica cinerea*.

The scrub grades into young woodland dominated by Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and English oak with Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Hazel *Corylus avellana* in the understorey. The ground flora includes Traveller's joy *Clematis vitalba*, Common dog violet, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Wood avens *Geum urbanum*, Remote sedge

Carex remota and Pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*. There is much Sycamore regeneration within the woodland.

[Links to Devon, North Devon and UK BAP](#)

Key habitat:

- Flower-rich meadows & pastures (Devon BAP)
- Lowland dry acid grassland (UK BAP)
- Lowland meadows (UK BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous wood (UK BAP)
- Wet Woodland (UK BAP)

[Great Torrington Commons CWS: Norwood Moor](#)

Norwood Moor is recorded as an extensive area of broadleaved woodland (wet in places), scrub and semi-improved neutral grassland. It forms the northern finger of Great Torrington Common and compared with other parts of the common is fairly inaccessible with few footpaths. The woodland is wet in places with abundant Grey willow *Salix cinerea* ssp. *Oleifolia*, as well as frequent Blackthorn and Hazel. Ground flora in these wetter areas includes Hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and some Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*.

Part of the site is included on the Culm grassland inventory but at the time of the 2005 survey appeared no longer to be Culm grassland having been invaded by Bracken with few wetland areas present. Rank grasses have become dominant in this area reducing the species diversity which would have been present when the area was recorded as Culm grassland 15 years ago. Here the sward is dominated by False oat-grass, Cock's-foot and Bracken but wetland species such as Marsh violet *Viola palustris* and Common valerian *Valeriana officinalis* are still frequent.

Brent Bridge Field is an extensive (4 ha) area of tall, moderately species-rich semi-improved neutral grassland. The hedge bordering the road along the southern edge of the site is fairly species-rich with 5 woody species recorded in a 30m length. These include Sycamore, Hazel, Blackthorn, Oak and Hawthorn. This area slopes gently down to the north and is buffered by a mosaic of scrub and tall herbs (including Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* with localised areas of Common knapweed, Red bartsia *Odontites vernus*, Cut-leaved crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum* and Lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*.

[Links to Devon, North Devon and UK BAP](#)

Key habitat:

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Wet woodland (UK BAP); Alder/willow wet woodland (Devon BAP)

- Species-rich hedges (Devon BAP, North Devon BAP); Hedgerows (UK BAP)

Great Torrington Commons CWS: Furzebeam Wood

Furzebeam Wood is located in the north-western corner of Great Torrington Common and is a moderately sized (3 ha) area of semi-natural broadleaved woodland. DBRC records that the wood appears to be a good example of acidic oak woodland. The canopy is dominated by Sessile oak *Quercus petraea* with Hazel frequent in the understorey with occasional Holly and Sycamore. The ground flora appears to be quite species-rich in places though with abundant Bracken and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.* Species recorded by DBRC include frequent Wood sage, Common dog violet and False oak-grass with occasional flowering plant species including Red campion, Greater stitchwort and Devil's-bit scabious. 10 ancient woodland indicator species are recorded including Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Hard fern *Blechnum spicant*, Great wood-rush *Luzula sylvatica* and Scaly male-fern *Dryopteris affinis*.

Links to Devon, North Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Oak Woodland (Devon BAP, North Devon BAP)

Key species:

- Small heath (UK BAP)
- Small pearl-bordered fritillary (UK BAP)

Other designations and regional classifications

Natural Areas

Natural England's Natural Areas divides the country into areas containing common or associated ecological and landscape features. The parish of Great Torrington sits within the Culm Natural Area. The Culm Measures of North Devon and north-east Cornwall are named after the Carboniferous slates, shales and sandstones which underlie the area. These rocks give rise to heavy acidic soils, making farming difficult. Reflecting this and the oceanic climate, the predominant land use is grass production for livestock. Most of this is now intensive, but nevertheless the Natural Area still contains one the greatest concentrations of species-rich grasslands remaining in the UK of Rhôs pastures, known locally as Culm Grassland. These grasslands are especially important for uncommon plant communities and for invertebrates including the Marsh fritillary butterfly.

The fields within the Natural Area are separated by a rich network of species-rich hedges and copses, including fine willow and Alder carrs which support

much biodiversity including special species such as the Dormouse, Brown hairstreak *Thecla betulae* and Barn owl *Tyto alba*. Three major rivers cross the Culm Measures, the Taw, Torridge and Tamar, and together these support the greatest density of Otters *Lutra lutra* in England. The northern edge of the Natural Area is characterised by sea cliffs and slopes descending to the Atlantic. These support some outstanding Oak woods rich in lichens, bryophytes and ferns, including some species not recorded elsewhere in the UK. Further information about the Culm Natural Area can be found on Natural England's website: www.naturalengland.org.uk

North Devon's Biosphere Reserve

The very special nature of the environment of northern Devon has been recognised at an international level through UNESCO's designation of a Biosphere Reserve centred on the dune system of Braunton Burrows. This designation recognises that the iconic dune ecosystem does not sit in isolation from its surrounding landscapes and so defines wider zones (buffer and transition zones) where management is sympathetic to the needs of the core site and where sustainable development enhances the overall environmental quality of the area. Local communities are a critical part of the development and enhancement of the Biosphere Reserve and can fully participate in the management of the area through the Biosphere Reserve Partnership.

Great Torrington parish sits within the 'transition zone' for North Devon's Biosphere Reserve, recognising the part that it and its people have to play in the maintenance and enhancement of the area's natural resources.

The Vision for North Devon's Biosphere Reserve is that:

'North Devon will be a great place to live, work and visit where a superb natural environment underpins jobs, recreation and healthy living. The area will be a world class exemplar for sustainable development.'

A Management Strategy and Action Plan is currently being developed to set out how that vision can be achieved.

Other habitats (identified from field survey):

Species-rich hedges

Various definitions of species-rich hedges have been used in different parts of the country but it would not be unreasonable to treat a hedge that has five or more woody species in a 30-metre length as a 'species-rich' one.

Many of the hedges surrounding the fields and lanes across the parish, like many of the area's hedges are probably of medieval origin. These form an important landscape feature as well as providing an important wildlife habitat for birds, butterflies, invertebrates and mammals such as Dormice and bats. These hedges also provide sheltered wildlife corridors through areas of farmland allowing wildlife to move between areas of habitat.

There are some very different types of hedges with different characters across the parish. Away from Great Torrington Common where species-rich hedges have been recorded, the best examples of hedges can be found on lower ground around the edges of the parish. Here species include Hazel, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Sycamore, Holly, Beech and Oak. Many of these hedges are on traditional Devon hedgebanks with a diverse bank flora providing an impressive spring flower display. Single species Beech hedges are more prevalent on higher ground towards the north of the parish in particular in arable areas.

Many of the field hedges on the higher ground where land use is dominated by arable and livestock agriculture are closely trimmed and relatively low in height. Such hedges would benefit from being allowed to regrow to provide habitat for species such as Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* and Brown hairstreak *Thecla betulae* butterfly which rely on hedgerows that have had at least two years growth as they lay their eggs on two year old Blackthorn twigs. The management of hedgerows does allow light to penetrate down to the hedgebank resulting in a species-rich bank flora in places.

Conversely some hedges within the parish, particularly on more sloping ground are under-managed. It is difficult for light to penetrate to the herb layer and consequently hedgebanks are less floristically diverse. There are gaps in many of these undermanaged hedges which would benefit from some laying. This itself will allow more light to reach the hedgebanks encouraging greater plant diversity.

Due to the time of year and time constraints it was not possible to survey the hedges in any detail and further surveys are recommended.

Hedgerows tend to be taken for granted as they always seem to be there, providing such a constant in a familiar landscape. However, they do require regular attention to keep them in good condition. That so many are still in good condition is a testament to the skill and hard work of generations of farmers. But there are changes even in the oldest hedgelines as the way the majority are managed has altered. There is now less farm labour available and more reliance on mechanical cutting rather than traditional hedgelaying (or, as it is known in Devon, 'steeping').

Even the mechanical cutting has changed as reciprocating cutters that could cut shrub stems cleanly have given way to tractor-mounted flails which can tackle slightly older growth but at the expense of every stem being shattered. Flailing can actually promote bud development (on Hawthorn, for example, research indicates that severe damage to the end of a branch encourages

shoot development further down in the base of the plant which can help to thicken it up). However, flailing can also leave shrubs susceptible to infection. As individual hedge plants die, they leave gaps which render the hedge less effective and which would in the past have been filled when the hedge was next steeped.

With the advent of mechanical hedge-trimming has come another change - it is now possible to trim all the hedges on a farm in one year. It is this that perhaps has had the most impact on the vertebrate wildlife. Fruiting and seeding species are very much less productive and there is a different and less varied structure. Also, shrubs that do produce a good berry crop are sometimes cut in the early autumn before the birds, particularly the migrants, can gain any advantage from this food source. A couple of generations ago, many hedges on a farm might have been cut less frequently, allowing them to be much more productive in the meantime.

Recognising these changes does allow choices in the way hedges are managed in the future. Hedges can be cut on a two or even three year rotation. Alternatively, perhaps only one or two of the three 'faces' (the top and the two sides) could be cut in any one year. This wouldn't stop road or drive side hedges being cut from both the safety and visual aspects but for the majority of hedges it would have two major benefits: it would take less time (and hence cost) and it would benefit wildlife! However, whatever pattern of cutting is adopted, "all hedges, except perhaps Holly, will need laying or coppicing sooner or later because they will become thin at the base. This is the best form of long-term management" (*Devon's hedges: Conservation and management*, Devon County Council / Devon Hedge Group).

Once it was realised nationally that many thousands of kilometres of hedgerow were being lost annually and that something ought to be done about it, the Hedgerow Regulations (made under Section 97 of the Environment Act 1995) were introduced in England and Wales in 1997 to protect them. The Regulations are intended to prevent the removal of most countryside hedgerows without first submitting a hedgerow removal notice to the local planning authority. The local planning authorities are only able to require the retention of 'important' hedgerows. The Regulations then set out criteria to be used by the local authority in determining which hedgerows are important (Bickmore, 2002).

In such a clearly agricultural landscape, the hedgerows and hedgebanks represent continuity as features in the landscape and provide a significant wildlife resource at a time when the fields themselves are being more intensively used. The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK Steering Group, 1995) lists ancient and or species-rich hedgerows as one of its priority habitats.



Hedgerows along the Weare Gifford Road

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Species-rich hedges (Devon BAP, North Devon BAP); Hedgerows (UK BAP)

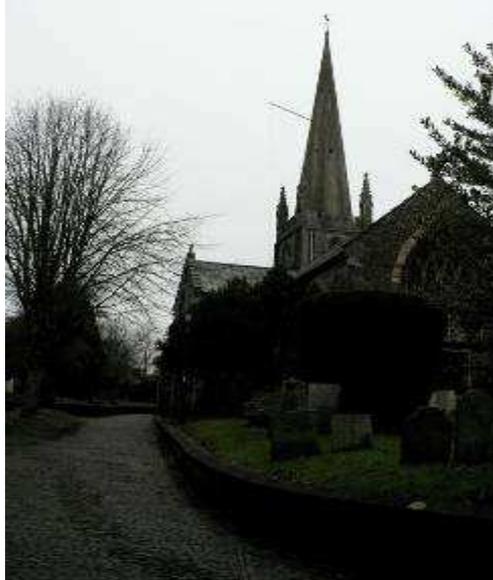
Churchyards

The skyline of Great Torrington town is dominated by the spire of St Michael's church. The church has been in existence for over 700 years. There is a small raised churchyard split by a central stone-cobble path. The churchyard is shaded by mature trees and the grass sward has suffered trampling pressure in places. Ground flora species include Ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans* with Lesser celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* in more shaded areas. The stone walls and gravestones provide habitat for mosses and lichens. There are a number of large Yews within the grounds which have been tightly trimmed. Standard trees within the grounds include Lime *Tilia sp* with some non-indigenous ornamental species. It would be difficult to increase ground flora species diversity given potential trampling pressure. However there are areas of the churchyard which appear to be relatively undisturbed which may benefit from less frequent mowing to encourage flowering plants, increasing the churchyard's habitat value for nectar feeding invertebrates.

There is a large cemetery next to the North Common car park to the west of the town. This was not surveyed during the audit visit.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Cities, towns and villages (Devon BAP); Towns and villages (North Devon BAP)
- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)



St Michael's Churchyard

Stone walls

Stone walls surround the churchyard and many gardens of Great Torrington town and the wider parish. Walls are important for lichens, mosses and flowering plants and with crevices can also provide value for invertebrates and reptiles.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Cities, towns and villages (Devon BAP); Towns and villages (North Devon BAP)

Recreation areas and public open space

The parish of Great Torrington is well off in terms of public open space in that Great Torrington Common is managed as freely accessible open space by Act of Parliament. Part of the north Common near to the main car park is managed as a picnic area and amenity grassland. A large part of the work of the Conservators is managing and maintaining the Common's network of trails, footpaths and other visitor facilities including car parking and information boards. Work is currently underway to set up a tree trail.

Outside of the Commons there is a public open space near to the Dartington Glass Factory managed as amenity grassland with a small picnic area. Although this was not surveyed in detail this area was found to be species poor. The surrounding hedgerows do however add to the biodiversity of the parish providing transport routes for wildlife species including birds, mammals and invertebrates.

Also close to the glass factory is a new housing development with small play parks and amenity tree planting areas on the edge of the developments. These areas were not surveyed.



Recreation area linked to new housing development

Great Torrington parish is well served with a network of public rights of way, in particular across Great Torrington Commons. Great Torrington is on the Tarka Trail, a 180 mile long-distance footpath and cycle trail. The section of the Tarka trail which passes through the parish is one of the most picturesque sections running along the River Torridge.

There are a number of farms in agri-environmental schemes including Countryside Stewardship (which will come to an end in 2014) and Environmental Stewardship. As part of the Stewardship scheme some farms offer permissive access for 'conservation walks'. Details of such access can be found on the Natural England website: www.naturalengland.org.uk

Allotments and gardens

Gardens are a haven for wildlife and can provide links to other areas of wildlife habitat. There is a network of gardens in Great Torrington providing a habitat link with the Commons, hedgerows and the surrounding countryside. There is an allotment site above the north Common.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Cities, towns and villages (Devon BAP); Towns and villages (North Devon BAP)



Allotment site above Great Torrington Common (N)

Redundant and traditional buildings

Traditional buildings are present in the parish and can be important for a number of species including the Barn owl and various bat species.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Cities, towns and villages (Devon BAP); Towns and villages (North Devon BAP)

Rivers and Ponds

The River Torridge forms the western boundary of the parish with two of the Torridge's tributary streams forming the northern and southern boundaries. The River Torridge is 48 miles long rising from Baxworthy Cross several kilometres south of Great Torrington before winding northwards towards the parish passing through the valley 80 metres below the town. The river then continues north westwards towards Bideford before joining the Taw in the Taw Torridge Estuary. The Torridge is well known for Otters, Trout *Salmo trutta* and Salmon *Salmo salar* and is also one of the few remaining known sites for the Freshwater pearl mussel *Margaritifera margaritifera*, a Devon BAP and UK BAP priority species. Parts of the River Torridge have declined in water quality in recent decades largely due to agricultural land run-off leading to sedimentation affecting the spawning ground of Salmon. The Upper Torridge Project (run jointly by the Westcountry Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group has worked with farmers across the area to improve land management practices. There may also be sewage overflow problems that require investigating.

There are pond areas next to Great Torrington Common stream (Common lake) one of which has been recently excavated and already well colonised with aquatic fauna and flora. These ponds were visited but not surveyed

during the audit visit. There is a swale (balancing pond) planted with reeds to manage road run off on Great Torrington Common (N) near Lyme's Hill. No other ponds were recorded in the wider parish though these may exist within farms and residential properties. There is a small reservoir near the north-east parish boundary. This was not visited during the audit. Ponds are an important biodiversity feature and a very important habitat for aquatic plants, invertebrates (including Dragonflies and Damselflies) and amphibians.



'Common Lake' stream near Limer's Hill, Great Torrington Commons (CWS)

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP)
- Ponds (UK BAP)

Roadside verges

Roadside verges often support flower-rich grassland, as well as a variety of other semi-natural habitats. They may also support populations of scarce or declining species of flora and/or fauna, some of which enjoy statutory protection. Linear grassland habitats provide a valuable wildlife resource. Verges provide shelter and food for a variety of species from small mammals, to birds of prey and insects.

Devon has a very substantial resource of roadside verges, with approximately 14 000 km of roads, corresponding to about 2 000 ha of roadside verge. However, of this very large resource, the area that is species-rich is relatively small and localised in distribution.

Devon County Council and Highways Agency manage roadside verges to incorporate prescriptions to maintain or enhance wildlife interests. Devon County Council operate a Special Verge Scheme to manage areas of particular wildlife or amenity value. These verges are protected from damaging activities, and grass cutting is limited to specific periods to avoid the destruction of attractive stands of wildflowers.

One major road runs through Great Torrington Parish - the A386 Bideford to Okehampton road. In addition, some of the minor roads close to the town, have verges which can be important wildlife corridors associated with hedges.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)

Unimproved grassland

Flower-rich meadows and pastures are a habitat of conservation concern in Devon and are listed on the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan as well as the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Unimproved neutral grassland habitat has undergone a huge decline in the 20th century, almost entirely due to changing agricultural practice. It is estimated that by 1984 in lowland England and Wales, semi-natural grassland had declined by 97% over the previous 50 years to approximately 0.2 million ha.

Unimproved grassland is often very flower-rich and as a result of this attracts an abundance of butterflies and other invertebrates. The rich insect life in turn attracts bats such as the Greater Horseshoe bat and birds such as the Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*.

There are significant areas of unimproved acid grassland and semi-improved neutral grasslands across Great Torrington Commons County Wildlife Site in particular on the north Common.

There are other potential areas of unimproved and semi-improved grassland within the parish which have been identified as Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWS). Examples include Common Lake and Norwood Bridge. There were some interesting areas of damp grassland managed as grazing pasture on higher ground towards the north of the parish. These were not surveyed during the audit.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Lowland dry acid grassland (UK BAP)

Culm grassland

Culm grassland is the local name given to species-rich marshy habitats found on the Culm measures of north-western and central Devon and north-east Cornwall, also known as Rhôs pasture, and referred to in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures (*Molinia-Juncus*). Culm grassland is a variable habitat whose main plant communities are classified by the National Vegetation Classification (NVC) as follows:

- M16 *Erica tetralix-Sphagnum compactum* wet heath
 M23 *Juncus effusus/acutiflorus-Galium palustre* rush pasture
 M24 *Molinia caerulea-Cirsium dissectum* fen meadow
 M25 *Molinia caerulea-Potentilla erecta* mire
 M27 *Filipendula ulmaria-Angelica sylvestris* mire

Culm grassland is one of Devon's most important habitats and is listed in the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan as a priority habitat. It is also listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Devon contains approximately 80% of the extent of the habitat in England, and approximately 8% of that in the UK as a whole.

Culm grassland is characterised by Purple moor-grass *Molinia caerulea*, as well as Sharp-flowered rush *Juncus acutiflorus*, and various flowering species such as Devil's-bit scabious, Meadow thistle *Cirsium palustre*, Heath spotted orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata*, Water mint *Mentha aquatica* and Round-leaved sundew *Drosera rotundifolium*. Culm grassland may support the rare Marsh fritillary butterfly and Narrow-bordered bee Hawkmoth *Hemaris tityus*, as well as the Barn owl and Curlew.

Culm grassland, also known as Rhôs pasture, is a priority for nature conservation because it is highly susceptible to agricultural modification and reclamation throughout their range.

There are two other concentrations of Culm grassland in Devon, on the edges of Dartmoor and on the Blackdown Hills around the springlines.

According to DBRC there is an area of grassland within the Norwood Moor section of Great Torrington Common which was identified on the Culm grassland register in 1990. At the time of the DBRC survey in 2005 this grassland no longer appeared to be Culm having been invaded with bracken and coarse grasses with no wet areas. Mowing and removing cuttings to reduce dominance of rank grasses and bracken control should increase species diversity in this area.

There are other grassland areas on farmland within the parish further north, some of which have been identified as Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWS). These together with other marsh grassland areas within the parish would merit further survey work as there is the potential that more Culm grassland may exist within the parish.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon, Exmoor and UK BAPs

- Rhôs pasture (Devon BAP); Purple moor-grass and rush pastures (UK BAP)

Woodlands

Great Torrington is not a heavily wooded parish, but there are several areas of important woodland, mainly in the sheltered river and stream valleys of the parish concentrated largely along the parish boundary.

The woodlands on Great Torrington Common are semi-natural broadleaved woodland. Furzebeam Wood on the northern most edge of the Common is dominated by Sessile oak and has the appearance of Oak acid woodland and includes 10 ancient woodland indicator species (including Scaly male fern *Dryopteris affinis* and Bluebell). Oak dominated (English oak, sessile oak or hybrids between the two) woodlands predominately occur in the steeper river valleys, particularly in southern Dartmoor, and less so across Devon's lowland areas, here usually in small blocks. The ground flora of Oak woodland is generally rich, with mosses ferns and woodland species such as Bluebell and Wood-sorrel.

Oak woodlands are also a good habitat for a variety of birds and invertebrates. They are associated with a number species of conservation concern: mammals such as the Dormouse and a number of bat species, birds (including the Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, Pied flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* and Wood warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*); butterflies (including the Silver washed fritillary *Argynnis paphia* and Pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne*, Purple emperor *Apatura iris* and Wood white *Leptidea sinapis*) and moths (such as the Orange upperwing *Jodia croceago* and Double line *Mythimna turca*) together with plants such as the Bluebell, Wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* and endemic Whitebeams *Sorbus sp.* These oak woodlands are threatened by such factors as neglect and lack of management, inappropriate grazing pressure, invasive species (for example rhododendron) and softwood forestry.

The Common also has woodland areas at Norwood Moor to the north of the town which has the appearance of wet woodland with abundant Grey willow *Salix cinerea*, Blackthorn and Hazel. Limer's Hill to the south west of the town near to the River Torridge has a younger area of woodland dominated by young Sycamore.

Away from the Common there are a number of woods identified by DBRC as being on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI). These include Week Bottom Wood (AWI), Bream Wood (AWI), Van's Wood (AWI), Cleave Wood (AWI) and Huntshaw Wood (AWI). Ancient Woodland is a term applied to woodlands which have existed from at least medieval times to the present day without ever having been cleared for uses other than wood or timber production. A convenient date used to separate ancient and secondary woodland is about the year 1600. In special circumstances semi-natural woods of post-1600 but pre-1900 origin are also included. The Devon Ancient Woodland Inventory was prepared in 1986 by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Week Bottom Wood and Van's Wood are identified as semi-natural ancient woodland replanted with conifer in parts. Beam Wood, Cleave Wood and

Huntshaw Wood are all replanted with conifer. DBRC has a record of Small pearl-bordered fritillary at Huntshaw Wood. All of these woodlands are on private land and were not surveyed during the audit visit. Many are however visible from the public road and from many parts of the parish.



Beam Wood - replanted ancient woodland

Oak woodland is a Devon and North Devon BAP priority habitat. Lowland mixed deciduous woodlands are in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats list.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Oak woodland (Devon BAP, North Devon BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)

Veteran trees

English Nature (now Natural England) has defined veteran trees as: "trees that are of interest biologically, culturally or aesthetically because of their age, size or condition". In relation to oak it has been taken that trees with a diameter at breast height of more than:

- 1.0m are potentially interesting
- 1.5m are valuable in terms of conservation
- 2.0m are truly ancient.

Veteran trees will be at least as big as these measurements (these figures refer to girth at breast height and not to diameter):

- 1 metre - Hawthorn, Blackthorn
- 2.5 metres - Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Rowan *Sorbus acuparia*, Yew, Birch *Betula sp.*, Holly
- 3 metres - Oak, Ash, Scot's Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*

- 4.5 metres - Sycamore, limes *Tilia sp.*, chestnuts, elms *Ulmus sp.*, poplars *Populus sp.*, Beech *Fagus sp.*, willows *Salix sp.*, pines *Pinus sp.*, non-native trees.

It has been estimated that Britain may be home to around 80% of Europe's ancient trees. Veteran trees are large old trees found in wood-pasture and parkland, but also in a number of other locations: ancient yews in churchyards; mature oaks in hedgerows; Black Poplars *Populus nigra* along stream-sides; and many noble trees in ancient woodlands.

Ancient trees support particularly rich assemblages of invertebrates, fungi, mosses and lichens. Several species of bat may use hollow trees as roosting sites and birds such as Tree Creepers *Certhia familiaris* and woodpeckers feed on the insects living in the bark. Insects such as stag beetles and hornets are associated with old trees.

There is an avenue of large Lime *Tilia x europaea* sloping up from the stream valley bottom along the Weare Gifford road on the north side of the Common. Although these would not be classed as ancient they are an interesting feature. Most of the trees on the Common are less than 100 years old. However there are some occasional interesting old feature trees. These trees together with some interesting introduced specimen trees (for example Hybrid black poplar *Populus x canadensis*) are currently being incorporated into a 'tree trail'.

There are some significantly aged Yews *Taxus baccata* within St. Michael's churchyard in the centre of the town.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Parkland and wood pasture (Devon BAP, North Devon BAP, UK BAP)



Avenue of Lime near Lymer's Hill

Green lanes

A green lane can be defined as an unmetalled track with field boundaries either side. These boundaries may be banks, hedges, woodland edge, stone walls or fences and often features such as ditches or streams are incorporated within the lanes.

The combination of the track, its boundaries and associated features create a landscape unit with its own microclimate and ecology. These sheltered conditions within lanes are of great importance to butterfly populations and may be more botanically species-rich than single hedge boundaries.

One example of a green lane is the track between the old railway line north east of the town and the old Creamery to the south of the town near Taddipport. This provides an important link between the River Torridge and other parts of Great Torrington Common. There are other private hedge-lined unmetalled tracks across the parish mainly linked to farms.

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Species-rich hedges (Devon BAP, North Devon BAP); Hedgerows (UK BAP)

Other possible habitats

Arable fields can support a number of rare arable weeds but this is usually in association with spring cereals and winter stubble; and associated field margins can be particularly important.

No parklands or orchards were seen during the visit though these may exist on private land. Traditional orchards have great cultural and landscape importance and can be really valuable habitats for a wide range of species from fungi and lichens, through insects and other invertebrates, to birds and mammals.



Field of winter stubble on Weare Gifford road

Links to key habitats in Devon, North Devon and UK BAPs

- Farmland (North Devon BAP); Arable field margins (UK BAP)
- Parkland and wood pasture (Devon BAP, North Devon BAP, UK BAP)

Unconfirmed County Wildlife Sites

The Devon Biodiversity Records Centre has identified 6 potential Unconfirmed County Wildlife Sites (UWS) in or bordering Great Torrington parish. Caddywell, Common Lake, Norwood Bridge, School Lane Field and Peagham Wood (N) have been identified as rough or dry grassland with scrub. Peagham Wood (S) on the eastern boundary of the parish is identified as rough/dry grassland with scrub and semi-natural broadleaved woodland. These are sites identified as having possible interest but which have not been fully surveyed.

Some of these sites may contain areas of significant wildlife interest and further surveys will have to be done to determine whether they are of sufficient quality to be designated. These sites were not visited during the audit however some are visible from public roads (for example Norwood Bridge). Part of the School Lane Field on the north side of the town appears to have been developed with new housing since the site was identified. The Unconfirmed County Wildlife Sites identified by DBRC, along with an associated map showing their locations, are also listed in Appendix 1.

Species

Important species

A report from the DBRC database showing which legally protected, locally notable (e.g. Otter) or noteworthy (e.g. Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*) species are known to have been present in and around Great Torrington is presented separately (Appendix 1). Appendix 2 gives the species noted during this survey. It should be borne in mind that February is not the ideal season to carry out biodiversity surveys as some species will not be visible at this time of the year and a further survey at a more appropriate time of the year is recommended.

The Great Torrington Common Conservators have compiled a comprehensive wildlife guide (2002) listing species found on the Common. This guide includes trees, flowering plants, grasses, rushes, sedges, ferns, mammals, birds, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians which have been recorded in recent years. There are a number of conservation organisations (for example the Butterfly Conservation Trust) monitoring various locations across the Commons. The Conservators themselves have spent several years compiling species records.

Birds

Several species of birds were recorded during the survey including Blackbird *Turdus merula*, Blue Tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Rook *Corvus frugilegus* and Robin *Erithacus rebecula*.

Barn owl is included in the records held by DBRC and is a Devon and UK BAP Priority Species. Bird species included within the Torrington Common wildlife guide include Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, Song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and Spotted flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* which are all UK BAP priority species.

The Barn owl has undergone a major decline in the last century due to changes in agricultural practice, as well as loss of nesting sites such as old barns and hollow trees. It is estimated that there are now about 350-470 pairs in the county. The Barn owl is listed on the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan as species of conservation concern and is also on the Amber List.

Plants

Despite the time of year a number of plant species were noted on the audit visit to the parish in February 2009, these are listed in Appendix 2.

DBRC records Ivy-leaved bellflower on the Common which is a Devon notable species. Upright chickweed *Meonchia erecta* and Cornish Moneywort *Sibthorpia europaea*, Tall ramping-fumitory *Fumaria bastardii*, Marsh cinquefoil *Potentilla palustris*, Bird's-foot clover *Trifolium ornithopioides*, all Devon Notable species are also recorded with Cornish Moneywort also being nationally scarce. Musk stork's-bill *Erodium moschatum* is rare both nationally and in Devon. (For a definition of Devon Notable species refer to Appendix 1).

The Bluebell, recorded in various locations, is protected against sale under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Schedule 8 (S).

Devon whitebeam *Sorbus devoniensis*, also known as French hales, has been recorded near the coast towards Exmoor and although not recorded within the parish may be present. The Devon whitebeam is a nationally scarce and notable species in Devon and is listed in the Devon, Exmoor and UK Biodiversity Action Plans. The best known of the Sorbus family is the Rowan or Mountain ash *Sorbus aucuparia*, but Devon is also home to other rarer whitebeams, some of which are found nowhere else. The Devon whitebeam is largely a hedgerow species and occurs mainly across the North and west of Devon, though rarer hybrids are normally found in clifftop locations. The loss of hedges and too frequent and too close cutting of hedges threaten this species.

Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* is an invasive alien plant and has been recorded on Norwood Moor.

Mammals

Mammal species recorded within Great Torrington parish by DBRC include Otter *Lutra lutra*, Badger *Meles meles*, Water shrew *Neomys fodiens*, Roe

deer *Capreolus capreolus*, Pygmy shrew *Sorex minutus* and Weasel *Mustela nivalis*. Other species which have been recorded on the Commons include Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*, Field Vole *Microtus agrestis* and Bank Vole *Microtus agrestis*.

The Hedgehog is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species.

Badger is protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 6 as well as under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992) against deliberate killing, persecution or trapping except under licence, though it is not a conservation priority. Badger setts may not be damaged, destroyed or obstructed.

The Otter is listed on the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan as a species of conservation concern and is a UK BAP priority species. Formerly widespread throughout the UK, the Otter underwent a rapid decline in numbers from the 1950s to 1970s and was effectively lost from midland and south-eastern counties of England by the 1980s. Populations remain in Wales, south-west England and much of Scotland, where sea loch and coastal colonies comprise one of the largest populations in Europe. There is also a significant population of Otters in Northern Ireland. The decline now appears to have halted and sightings are being reported in former habitats. Devon has an internationally important Otter population and Otters are now found on most watercourses and wetlands throughout the County. Otters are even now recolonising areas where they were thought to have been lost during the 60's and 70's.

Several species of bat have been recorded including two species of Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and *P. pigmaes*, Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, Lesser horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and Serotine *Eptescius serotinus*. All species of British bat are protected under UK law and international law. This makes it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take a bat, or to damage, obstruct or destroy any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection. Most species of bat are also UK BAP species.

Buildings are the most favoured roost sites and more than half of known roosts are in buildings less than 30 years old. Pipistrelles prefer to roost in very confined spaces around the outside of the building, typical sites being behind hanging tiles, weather boarding, soffit and barge or eaves boarding, between roofing felt and roof tiles or in cavity walls. Pipistrelles rarely enter roof spaces except in the more stable, well-established large colonies found particularly in older buildings.

The Dormouse is listed on the Devon Biodiversity Action Plans as a species of conservation concern in Devon and is a priority species in the UK BAP. Nationally, the Dormouse has experienced a marked contraction in range in recent decades, and has become extinct in up to seven counties where it occurred in the last century, representing about half of its former range.

In Devon, the Dormouse appears to be holding its own, and the county is now a major stronghold of the species. However, no detailed quantification of population change has been possible, due to lack of comparable data over time. Having said this, indirect evidence, from the losses of hedgerow length and declines in quality of hedgerows and woodlands that have occurred in the county over the past few decades, suggests that Dormice may have declined in a similar fashion. Although there are no records of Dormice within the parish they may be present as there is suitable habitat.

Invertebrates

Due to the time of year of the audit visit there were no invertebrates recorded on the parish site visit. However some of the invertebrates of Great Torrington Commons are well recorded. The Common is particularly important for butterfly species with 30 of Devon's 45 species being recorded.

A number of butterfly species have been identified as species of conservation concern. Purple hairstreak *Quercusia quercus*, Green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi*, Dark green fritillary *Argynnis aglaja*, and Brown argus *Arcia agestis* are all species present which are in decline nationally. Small heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*, Pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria euphrosyne*, Small pearl-bordered fritillary *Boloria selene*, Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*, Dingy skipper *Erynnis tages*, High brown fritillary *Argynnis adippe*, and Marsh fritillary *Eurodryas aruinia* are all UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. Marsh fritillary and Pearl-bordered fritillary are Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species.

Great green bush cricket *Tettigonia viridissima* which has been recorded within the parish, is a Devon BAP species.

Other invertebrates recorded in the Common Conservators' records include caddis fly species, Alder fly *Sialis sp.*, several mayfly species, stoneflies, Common pond skater *Gerris lacustris*, Riffle beetle *Elmis aenea*, water mites, and Freshwater shrimp *Gammarus sp.*

Dragonflies including Golden-ringed dragonfly *Cordulegaster boltoni*, Beautiful demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo*, Large red damselfly *Pyrrhosoma nymphula*, Common blue damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum*, Southern hawker *Aeshna cyanea*, Broad-bodied chaser *Libellula depressa* and Common darter *Sympetrum striolatum* have been spotted flying in the area.

[Source: (Michael Collingham (2002) *Torrington Common: a guide to life on the Common*)]

Reptiles and amphibians

DBRC records for Great Torrington include Adder *Vipera berus*, Common frog *Rana temporaria*, Grass snake *Natrix natrix*, Common toad *Bufo bufo* and Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*. The Adder, Grass snake and Common frog are

protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (Section 5). No reptiles or amphibians were recorded during the audit visit due to the time of year. All British reptiles are UK BAP priority species.

The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (Devon BAP).

The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan describes the key actions needed to look after 37 of Devon's most important habitats and species. It does not stand alone, but is part of a much wider process aimed at conserving our biodiversity.

The Devon 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.

All of this work has one aim: to encourage practical action on the ground. Its success depends upon us all.

Biodiversity links:

- The Devon BAP can be viewed at www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity. This site also contains links to other nature conservation issues relevant to Devon, such as information on hedges. If you do not have access to the internet and require paper copies of relevant sections of the Devon BAP please contact Devon County Council's Biodiversity Officer on 01392 382804.
- The North Devon BAP can be viewed at : www.northdevon.gov.uk/webbiodiversityactionplan.pdf
- Details of biodiversity planning in the south-west region can be viewed at www.swbiodiversity.org.uk.
- National Action Plans can be viewed at www.ukbap.org.uk. This site also contains useful background information on UK biodiversity action planning.

Links between the main wildlife habitats of Great Torrington and the Devon and UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP)

Great Torrington wildlife feature	Brief description of feature	Link with the Devon BAP	Link with the UK BAP	Link with North Devon BAP
Unimproved grassland with scrub	<p>Large areas of species-rich unimproved grassland with areas of species rich scrub, good quality lowland acid grassland and high butterfly interest. Protected under Commons Act.</p> <p>Areas of farmland protected from agricultural improvement.</p> <p>Species-rich grass verges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flower-rich Meadows and Pastures Habitat Action Plan • Marsh fritillary species action plan • Pearl-bordered fritillary species action plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arable field margins Habitat Action Plan • Lowland dry acid grassland Habitat Action Plan • Lowland meadows Habitat Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmland Habitat Action Plan
Traditional hedges	Extensive network of traditional hedges throughout the parish.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species-rich Hedges Habitat Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows Habitat Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species-rich hedgerows Habitat Action Plan
Rivers, streams and ponds	River Torridge and tributaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes Habitat Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers Habitat Action Plan 	
Broadleaved and Ancient Woodland	<p>Secondary broadleaved woodland</p> <p>Ancient semi-natural woodland</p> <p>Acid oak woodland</p> <p>Replanted ancient woodland</p> <p>Wet woodland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak woodland Habitat Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowland mixed deciduous woodland Habitat Action Plan • Wet Woodland Habitat Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak woodland Habitat Action Plan

View the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan at www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity

View the North Devon Biodiversity Action Plan at www.northdevon.gov.uk/webbiodiversityactionplan.pdf

View the UK Biodiversity Action Plan at www.ukbap.org.uk

Some Ideas for Local Action...

This section of the report is provided by Devon County Council (contact: nature@devon.gov.uk).

A major step towards knowing what you can do for your local wildlife and geology is to know what you have already got. This report will help you in this, but it is just a start. Ultimately, the protection and enhancement of the local natural environment requires the interest and enthusiasm of the local community.

There follow some initial ideas for local nature conservation action. Many of them will directly help to achieve the objectives of the habitat and species action plans contained in the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan.

It is by no means an exhaustive list. As a community, you may have many more ideas for action that you would like to take forward in the coming years.

1 Further surveys:

This report is just a beginning. Carrying out further survey within your area will help build a better picture of the wildlife present, and of the opportunities for enhancement. Gaining a better understanding of the resource is usually a key objective of the Devon BAP's habitat and species action plans.

Specific features to survey in Great Torrington might include hedges and for Otter signs (Otters have been recorded in the River Torridge within the parish boundaries). These actions would directly contribute to the species-rich hedges habitat action plan and the Otter species action plan.

Operation Otter is an initiative organised by the Devon Wildlife Trust (www.devonwildlifetrust.org), which aims to monitor and protect Devon's Otter population with the help of volunteers.

It might be useful, for example, to undertake a hedgerow survey and produce a hedgerow appraisal for your local area. Comparing the current distribution of hedges against boundary lines shown on old maps will give a clue as to how this important resource has changed over recent years. It may also highlight opportunities for restoring hedges in your area. It might also be possible to assess the condition of hedges and this may, in turn, give some ideas about improving their future management to benefit wildlife.

Survey work could be undertaken as a community group or in liaison with conservation groups active in the area.

The Ancient Tree Hunt is co-ordinated by the Woodland Trust and encourages people to report occurrences of individual or clusters of ancient trees. More information about The Ancient Tree Hunt can be found at:

www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/project/getinvolved/takepart.htm

You can help to build up a picture of the state of Devon's environment by sending your records to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre where they can be properly collated. Although Great Torrington Commons are well recorded there are few records for the wider parish. Any new records for the Commons and the wider parish (including 'who', 'where', 'what' and 'when') of any species recognised are useful.

Follow the links to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre:

www.devonwildlifetrust.org

e-mail: dbrc@devonwildlifetrust.org

Devon Biodiversity Records Centre
c/o Exeter Central Library
Castle Street
Exeter
EX4 3PQ

Tel. (01392) 274128

2 Influence the management of public open space:

Great Torrington Commons are already well managed by the Conservators and other volunteers. There is potential for further enhancement for wildlife in other areas of public open space away from the common (for example churchyards, cemeteries and small areas of open space linked to new housing developments. Some areas, for example in the corners or around the perimeters of sites could be identified, where the grass was cut once in late summer, leaving the flowering plants to seed like in a hay meadow. This would enhance the value for wildlife, in particular for flowering plants and nectar feeding invertebrates.

3 Build relationships with local landowners:

Encourage the adoption of more wildlife-friendly land management. For example, hedges that are cut only every other year will provide an autumn and winter source of nuts and berries for birds and small mammals (and can save the landowner money in management costs). The improved management of hedgerows is a key objective of the Species-rich Hedgerow Habitat Action Plan. If the owner is willing, why not get involved with practical management, such as traditional hedge laying or pond restoration?

4 Adopt a road verge:

Many verges can have a significant value for wildlife because they have escaped the intensive management of the surrounding farmland. Ensuring such verges are managed for their wildlife is a very positive step, again contributing to the Flower-rich Meadows and Pastures Habitat Action Plan.

There are, of course, obvious health and safety implications to roadside management. It is an action that would need to be undertaken in close liaison with the relevant highways authority (generally, this is the Highways Agency for motorways and trunk roads, and Devon County Council for all other roads).

5 Wildlife gardening:

You could 'green up' your garden! Collectively the gardens of Great Torrington represent a significant area that could be used to benefit wildlife. The proximity of the stream to many of the gardens is an added bonus. Large or small, you can turn your garden (or a part of it) into a haven for wildlife. There are some very good sources of information on wildlife gardening:

- The Natural England/English Nature web site:
[www.english-nature.org.uk/Nature In The Garden](http://www.english-nature.org.uk/Nature_In_The_Garden)
(or call 01733 455101 for free leaflets on wildlife gardening).
Natural England (formerly English Nature) is the Government's adviser on nature conservation. Its web site also contains links to a number of other very useful sources of information.
- The Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT) web site:
<http://www.devonwildlifetrust.org/index.php?section=people:garden>

Which also has links to DWT approved garden centres.

6 Join local conservation organisations:

The Devon Wildlife Trust is a prominent local conservation organisation. There are also a number of local membership groups specialising in specific interests (for example Devon Fungus Group and Devon Mammal Group) which frequently carry out surveys and studies, hold talks and training sessions for volunteers and members.

7 Community involvement in the North Devon Biosphere Reserve

Further information about the North Devon Biosphere Reserve, the Management Strategy and Action Plan and details of how your local community can become involved can be found at:

www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk

or the Biosphere Reserve Service can be contacted on 01237 423655

8 Link biodiversity to Great Torrington Parish Plan and Community projects:

You could encourage any future parish plans to consider further the impact on the biodiversity and wildlife of the parish.

9 Japanese Knotweed:

Not something to cherish, but it can't be ignored! Unfortunately Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica* is present within Great Torrington parish according to records held by DBRC. Introduced into Britain by the Victorians, Japanese Knotweed is a native of Japan, north China, Korea and Taiwan. It flourishes in Britain's mild and fertile environment and has no natural biological enemies here. Consequently, it is very invasive and can overrun large areas, replacing our native flora. It is a serious pest which can be so vigorous as to cause significant damage to buildings and roads. It is also a difficult plant to eradicate.

For these reasons Japanese Knotweed is listed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as a plant that is not to be planted or otherwise introduced into the wild. In addition, all parts of the plant are considered as controlled waste under the Waste Regulations.

What can you do?

- Firstly, it is important to build up a picture of where Japanese Knotweed is present. This will give an idea of the scale of the problem and will help to prevent it being accidentally spread during any ditch clearance, highway work and so on. To help develop an understanding of the problem in Devon, records should also be sent to the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre¹. Ideally, records should include when you first saw it and confirmation of when it was seen most recently; its precise location (notes or a sketch map are helpful, as is a grid reference if you have one); the kind of habitat it is in (e.g. next to running water, on a road verge), and a rough indication of how abundant it is.
- Secondly, be careful not to spread the plant further. This is all too easily done as it can regenerate from even the smallest fragment and is easy to spread unknowingly. It is important not to flail it or to try and dig it up. Often, it is best not to cut Japanese Knotweed at all, but if it is it should be very carefully disposed of on site when dead or removed as Controlled Waste. Any tools used should be properly cleaned.
- Finally, if Japanese Knotweed is on your land, the best way to prevent its spread is to control or eradicate it as soon as possible. Regular cutting can weaken and eventually kill the plant but it is a time-consuming job and proper disposal of the cut material can be a problem. Usually, the most effective method of control is to treat the plant with herbicide. This can take

¹ DBRC, E-mail: dbrc@devonwildlifetrust.org

a number of years to be successful but if the plant is left untreated it will inevitably spread. A number of issues should be taken into account in deciding which herbicide to use, particularly the presence of water (where special care needs to be taken and the advice of the Environment Agency must be sought).

Fortunately, a great deal of advice (including an Environment Agency Code of Practice) is available on the Devon Knotweed Forum's web pages. You are recommended to view these at:

www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity/japanese_knotweed

Useful sources of further information:

The following organisations can offer advice and information on various wildlife topics as well as organising events and carrying out projects.

British Trust for Conservation Volunteers: www.btcv.org.uk

British Dragonfly Society: www.dragonflysoc.org.uk

Butterfly Conservation: www.butterfly-conservation.org (Tel: 0870 7744309)

Devon Bat Group: www.dbg.me.uk

Devon Birdwatching and Preservation Society: www.devonbirds.org

Devon Mammal Group: www.devonmammalgroup.org

Devon Wildlife Trust: www.devonwildlifetrust.org (Tel: 01392 279244)

Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk/
(Tel: 01392 889770)

Natural England: www.naturalengland.org.uk (Tel: 0845 600 3078)

Plantlife: www.plantlife.org.uk (Tel: 01722 342730)

RSPB: www.rspb.org.uk

The Woodland Trust: www.woodland-trust.org.uk (Tel: 01476 581111)

The Living Churchyards & Cemeteries Project, Arthur Rank Centre, National Agricultural Society, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LZ Tel: 01203 696969 ext.364/339.

In addition, Devon County Council has produced a Community Wildlife Toolkit which is available via the DCC web site (www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity). This toolkit aims to provide practical advice on management to encourage wildlife and, in particular, provides a central point from which to access the large amount of advice that is already available from a huge range of other organisations.

In addition to management advice, the toolkit provides guidance on seeking funding for project work.

Possible sources of funding:

Heritage Link – a funding directory supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. A good source of information.

<http://www.heritagelink.org.uk/fundingdirectory/main/fundinghome.php>

Major sources of funding

Environmental Stewardship – whole farm agri-environment scheme funding.

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/farming/funding/es/default.aspx

SITA Trust - Enriching Nature: for biodiversity conservation projects within ten miles of any landfill site in England.

www.sitatrust.org.uk

GrantScape – significant sums of money often available for biodiversity action, including landscape-scale projects.

www.grantscape.org.uk/home

The Tubney Charitable Trust – large funds available but on an invitation-to-bid only basis.

www.tubney.org.uk

Esmee Fairbairn Foundation – no maximum size of grant. “Priority will be given to high quality projects that are exemplars of good practice or imaginative approaches to old problems, that have wider impact, leading to changes in the law, policy or practice or that may be viewed as difficult to support or too 'high risk' by other funders.”

www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

Big Lottery Fund – “Every year BIG gives out millions of pounds from the National Lottery to good causes. Our money goes to community groups and to projects that improve health, education and the environment.” Often has large programmes relating to the environment, for example:

- *Changing Spaces: Access to Nature* - grants: £50,000 - £715,000. This programme aims to encourage more people to enjoy the outdoors, particularly those who face social exclusion.
http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_cs_access_nature?regioncode=-uk
- *Changing Spaces: Community Places* - grants: £10,000 - £450,000. This programme will fund community groups who want to improve local green spaces such as play areas, community gardens and parks.
http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_cs_comm_spaces?regioncode=-uk

Possible funding for smaller projects

It should be noted that many of these grants only have a finite pot of money and this could run out at any time. It is also important to check that your project meets any relevant funding criteria. Please check with the different organisations before applying.

Big Lottery Fund (see above) – BIG also gives smaller grants, for example:

- *Awards for All England* - Grants: £300 - £10,000. 'Awards for All gives money to projects that encourage people to take part in arts, sport, heritage and also community projects'.
http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_a4a_eng?regioncode=-uk

AONB Sustainable Development Funds -

- Blackdown Hills
- East Devon
- North Devon
- South Devon
- Tamar Valley

Biffawards - grants for biodiversity projects within 10 miles of a Biffa operation (landfill)

www.biffaward.org/projects/smallgrants.php

BBC Breathing Places – currently only available for projects that have received Breathing Places funding already. Grants of £1000 to £5000 available.

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/prog_breathingplaces

SITA Trust - Enriching Nature: for biodiversity conservation projects within ten miles of any landfill site in England.

www.sitatrust.org.uk

Forestry Commission - grants and sources of funding available for improving biodiversity (for example, the Woodland Improvement Grant).

www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/hcou-4u4j28

Tree Council - small grants for schools and communities for tree planting schemes.

www.treecouncil.org.uk/?q=grants

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www.woodland-trust.org.uk
www.devonwildlifetrust.org
www.natureonthemap.org.uk
www.magic.gov.uk
www.jncc.gov.uk
www.naturalengland.org.uk
www.swenvo.org.uk
www.swbiodiversity.org.uk
www.ukbap.org.uk
www.devon.gov.uk
www.pondconservation.org.uk
www.northdevonbiosphere.org.uk
www.northdevon.gov.uk
www.torringtoncommon.co.uk
www.great-torrington.com

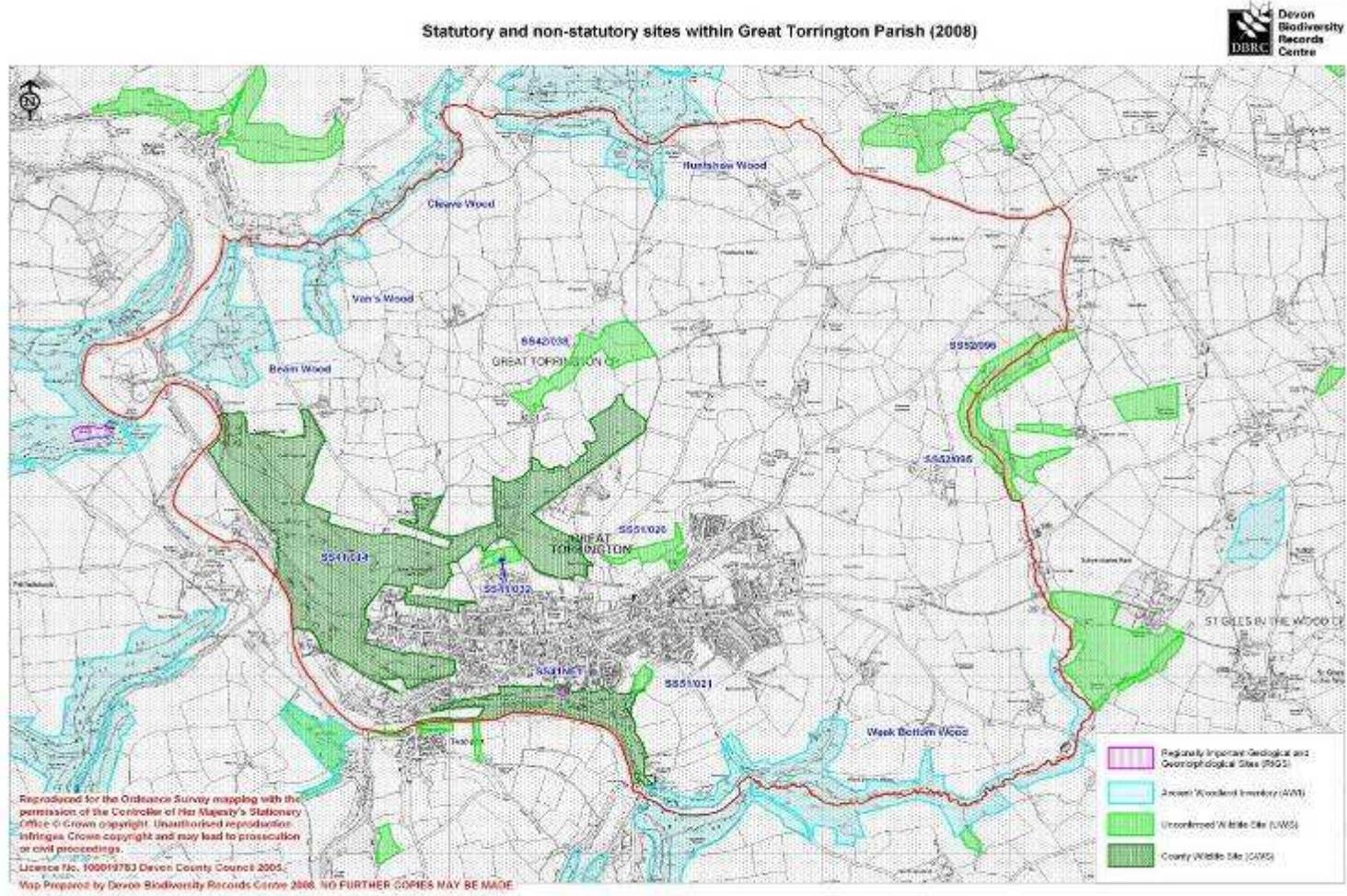
Acknowledgements

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Michael Collingham (Chair of Great Torrington Commons Conservators)

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Appendix 1 – Notable sites and species within and near Great Torrington Parish.



Statutory & non-statutory sites within Great Torrington Parish (2008)

File Code	Site Name	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Description	Status
SS41/014	Great Torrington Commons	SS489120	128.3	Mosaic of unimproved acid grassland, semi-improved neutral and acid grassland, scrub, bracken, broadleaved woodland and wet woodland	CWS
SS41NE1	Barley Grove, Torrington	SS497188	0.2	View of terrace features of the River Torridge & outcrops of Carboniferous Bude Formation sandstone & shale	RIGS
	Week Bottom Wood	SS510183	60.4	Semi-natural ancient woodland and ancient replanted woodland	AWI
	Beam Wood	SS477210	19.7	Ancient replanted woodland	AWI
	Van's Wood	SS483212	10.8	Semi-natural ancient woodland and ancient replanted woodland	AWI

	Cleave Wood	SS489219	16	Ancient replanted woodland	AWI
	Huntshaw Wood	SS498225	82.4	Ancient replanted woodland	AWI
SS51/021	Caddywell	SS500190	0.9	Rough grass & scrub	UWS
SS51/026	Common Lake	SS500197	3.4	Dry grassland/scrub	UWS
SS41/032	School Lane Field	SS493197	1.4	Rough grassland/scrub & poss bracken	UWS
SS52/095	Peagham Wood (S)	SS519203	9.7	Rough grassland/dry grassland/scrub/semi-natural b	UWS
SS52/096	Peagham Wood (N)	SS521207	8.3	Dry grassland/scrub	UWS
SS42/038	Norwood Bridge	SS497207	9.8	Dry grassland	UWS

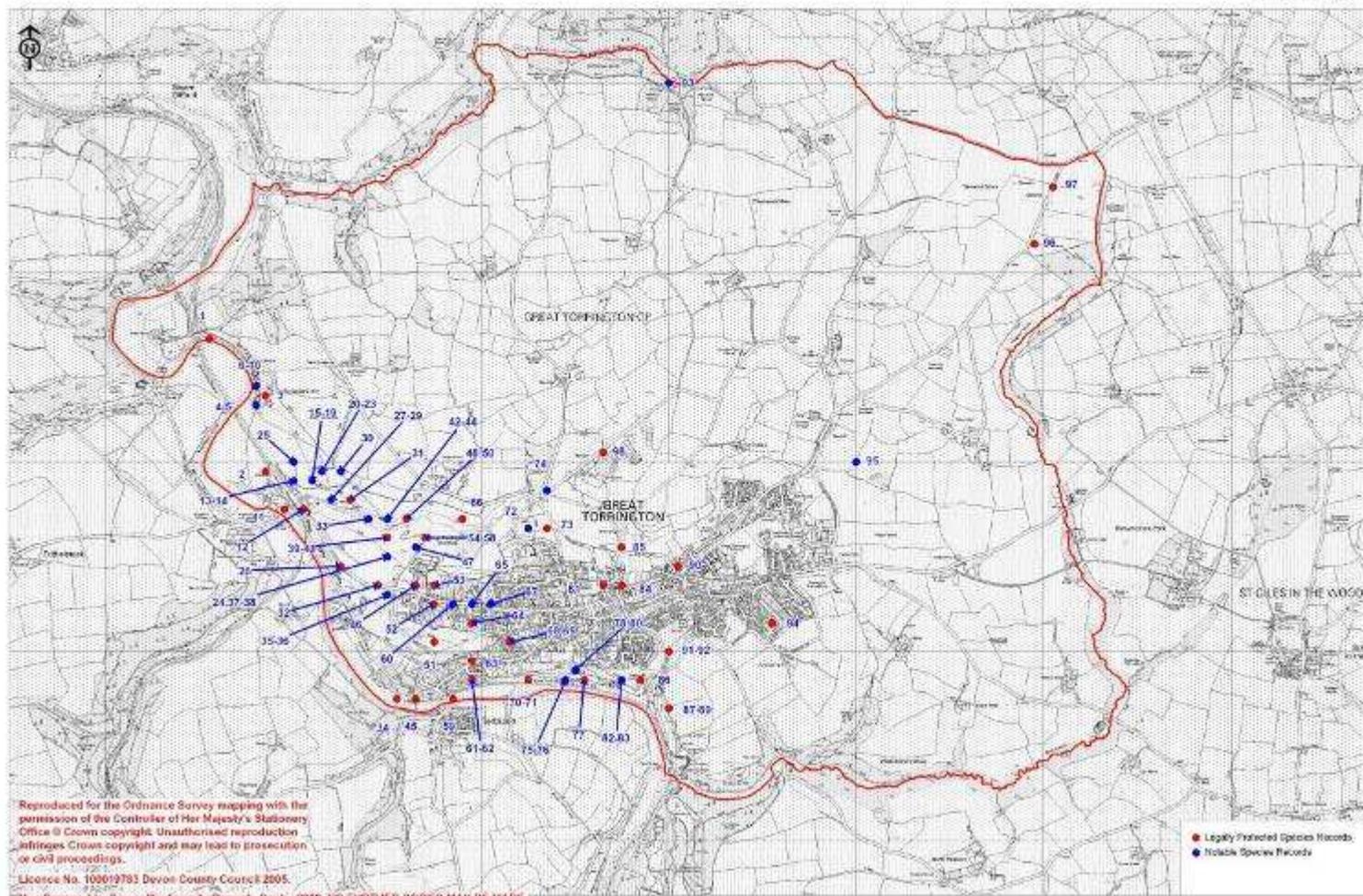
County Wildlife Sites (CWS): these are sites of county importance for wildlife, designated on the basis of the habitat or the known presence of particular species. This is not a statutory designation like SSSIs, and does not have any legal status. County Wildlife Sites are usually included in Local Plans as sites of substantive nature conservation interest and are covered by Planning Policy Statement note nine (PPS9). CWS recognition does not demand any particular actions on the part of the Landowner and does not give the public rights of access. However, it may increase eligibility for land management grants.

Unconfirmed Wildlife Sites (UWS): these are sites identified as having possible interest but not fully surveyed. Some of these sites will be areas of significant wildlife interest.

Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGS): these are earth science sites that are of regional or local importance. Like CWS, they are included in Local Plans and referred to under PPG9.

Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI): Ancient Woodland is a term applied to woodlands which have existed from at least Medieval times to the present day without ever having been cleared for uses other than wood or timber production. A convenient date used to separate ancient and secondary woodland is about the year 1600. In special circumstances semi-natural woods of post-1600 but pre-1900 origin are also included. The Devon Ancient Woodland Inventory was prepared in 1986 by the Nature Conservancy Council.

Legally protected & notable species records within Great Torrington Parish (2008)



Legally protected & notable Species within Great Torrington Parish (2008)

No	Common Name	Scientific Name	Location	Date	Grid Reference	UK protection	International protection	Status
1	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Near Beam House, north of Great Torrington. Seen from the Tarka Trail, from the bridge by the weir.	2001	SS475206	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP (P); DBAP
2	A bat	Chiroptera	Staple Vale, Great Torrington.	2006	SS478199	WCA 5, 6	EC IVa; Bonn II	
3	Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Furzebeam Wood	2005	SS478203	WCA 8 (S)		
4	Purple Hairstreak	<i>Quercusia quercus</i>	FURZEBEAM HILL	1995	SS478203			Decline
5	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	FURZEBEAM HILL	1991	SS478203			Decline
6	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Furzebeam Wood, Torrington Common	1998	SS478204			UKBAP (P)
7	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Furzebeam Wood, Torrington Common	1998	SS478204			UKBAP (P)
8	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	Furzebeam Wood, Torrington Common	1998	SS478204			UKBAP (P); Decline
9	Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>	Furzebeam Wood, Torrington Common	1998	SS478204			Decline

10	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	Furzebeam Wood, Torrington Common	1998	SS478204			Decline
11	Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	A386 about 100m west of the old Torrington Station, where the main road crosses the River Torridge.	2003	SS479197	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
12	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Rolle Bridge, River Torridge near the Puffing Billy pub.	2002	SS480197	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP (P); DBAP
13	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		1997	SS480199			UKBAP (P)
14	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	TORRINGTON COMMONS	1991	SS480199			UKBAP (P); Decline
15	Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>	FURZEBEAM HILL, GT.TORRTN	1992	SS481199			Decline
16	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	FURZEBEAM HILL, GT.TORRTN	1992	SS481199			Decline
17	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		1992	SS481199			UKBAP (P)
18	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>		1992	SS481199			UKBAP (P)
19	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	FURZEBEAM HILL, GT.TORRTN	1992	SS481199			UKBAP (P); Decline

20	Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	Great Torrington Common (N)	2005	SS481199			UKBAP (P); Red
21	Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>	Great Torrington Common (N)	2005	SS481199	WCA 5(KIS)	Bern III	UKBAP (P)
22	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Areas of semi-improved acid to neutral grassland	2005	SS481199	WCA 9		
23	Ivy-Leaved Bellflower	<i>Wahlenbergia hederacea</i>	Areas of unimproved acid grassland	2005	SS481199			DN3
24	Great Green Bush Cricket	<i>Tettigonia viridissima</i>	Windy Ridge, Furzeham Row, Torrington	1998	SS4819			DBAP
25	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		1991	SS4820			UKBAP (P)
26	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	River Torridge. Abstraction upstream at Great Torrington. Waste water treatment works.	2001	SS482194	WCA 9		
27	Purple Hairstreak	<i>Quercusia quercus</i>	TORRINGTON COMMON	1997	SS482198			Decline
28	Dark Green Fritillary	<i>Argynnis aglaja</i>	TORRINGTON COMMON	1992-1998	SS482198			Decline
29	Dingy Skipper	<i>Erynnis tages</i>	TORRINGTON COMMON	1991	SS482198			UKBAP (P); Decline
30	Upright Chickweed	<i>Moenchia erecta</i>	Torrington Commons	1985	SS482199			DN2

31	High Brown Fritillary	<i>Argynnis adippe</i>	TORRINGTON COMMON	1993-1998	SS483198	WCA 5		UKBAP (P); RDB2
32	Roe Deer	<i>Capreolus capreolus</i>	Torrington Commons.	2003	SS484193	DA	Bern III	
33	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	Torrington Common	1991-2000	SS484197			Decline
34	Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	B3227 Taddiport, Torrington	2000	SS485187	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
35	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	TORRINGTON COMMONS	2000-2003	SS485193			UKBAP (P); Decline
36	Purple Hairstreak	<i>Quercusia quercus</i>	TORRINGTON COMMONS	1992-2003	SS485193			Decline
37	Small Heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	Torrington Commons	1992-2000	SS485195			UKBAP (P)
38	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	Torrington Commons	2000	SS485195	WCA 5 (S)		UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
39	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	Great Torrington Common	1992-2003	SS485196			UKBAP (P); Decline
40	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	Torrington Common	1992-1999	SS485196			UKBAP (P)
41	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	Torrington Common	1992-1999	SS485196	WCA 5 (S)		UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
42	Marsh Fritillary	<i>Eurodryas aurinia</i>	GREAT TORRINGTON COMMONS	1992	SS485197	WCA 5	EC IIa; Bern II (GB reservation)	UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb

43	Brown Hairstreak	<i>Thecla betulae</i>	GREAT TORRINGTON COMMONS	1992	SS485197	WCA 5 (S)		UKBAP (P); Nb
44	Brown Argus	<i>Aricia agestis</i>	GT.TORRINGTON COMMON	1992	SS485197			Decline
45	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Taddipport Weir	1999	SS486187	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP (P); DBAP
46	Lesser Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Cemetery Lodge, New Street, Great Torrington.	2004	SS486193	WCA 5, 6	EC IIa, IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	UKBAP (P)
47	Cornish Moneywort	<i>Sibthorpia europaea</i>	Torrington Common	1985-1992	SS486195			NS; DN3
48	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	GT.TORRINGTON COMMON	1992	SS486197			UKBAP (P); Decline
49	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	GT.TORRINGTON COMMON	1992	SS486197	WCA 5 (S)		UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
50	Marsh Fritillary	<i>Eurodryas aurinia</i>	GT.TORRINGTON COMMON	1992	SS486197	WCA 5	EC IIa; Bern II (GB reservation)	UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
51	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Great Torrington Common	2004	SS487190	WCA 1, 9		DBAP; Amber
52	a bat	Chiroptera	Living in roof at Cemetery Lodge, New Street, Great Torrington, Devon	2000	SS487192	WCA 5, 6	EC IVa; Bonn II	
53	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Near Great Torrington Cemetery	2002	SS487193	WCA 9		

			(east side).					
54	Wall Brown	Lasiommata megera		1992	SS487196			UKBAP (P)
55	Small Heath	Coenonympha pamphilus		1992	SS487196			UKBAP (P)
56	Purple Hairstreak	Quercusia quercus	TORRINGTON COMMONS	1992	SS487196			Decline
57	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Boloria selene	TORRINGTON COMMONS	1992-1994	SS487196			UKBAP (P); Decline
58	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Boloria euphrosyne	TORRINGTON COMMONS	1992-2003	SS487196	WCA 5 (S)		UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
59	Otter	Lutra lutra	River Torridge, near Taddipport.	2003	SS488187	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP (P); DBAP
60	Spotted Flycatcher	Muscicapa striata	Cemetery Lodge, New Street, Great Torrington	1998-2000	SS488192			UKBAP (P); Red
61	Japanese Knotweed	Fallopia japonica	Garden at Sandford Gardens, Mill Street, Torrington	2003	SS489188	WCA 9		
62	Common Frog	Rana temporaria	Sandford Gardens, Torrington.	2003	SS489188	WCA 5(S)	EC Va; Bern III	
63	Grass Snake	Natrix natrix	Pope's Lane, off Sandford Gardens, Torrington.	2003	SS489189	WCA 5(KIS)	Bern III	UKBAP (P)
64	Pygmy Shrew	Sorex minutus	Torrington Commons.	2003	SS489191	WCA 6	Bern III	

65	Upright Chickweed	<i>Moenchia erecta</i>	Torrington Commons	1985	SS489192			DN2
66	Marsh Fritillary	<i>Eurodryas aurinia</i>	TORRINGTON COMMON	1991-1994	SS489197	WCA 5	EC IIa; Bern II (GB reservation)	UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
67	Bird's-foot clover	<i>Trifolium ornithopodioides</i>	Torrington, nr Warren Lane	1991	SS490192			DN1
68	Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	Rack Park Close, Torrington, Devon	2001-2002	SS491190	WCA 5(S)	EC Va; Bern III	
69	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	Rack Park Close, Torrington	2002	SS491190	WCA 5(S)	Bern III	UKBAP (P)
70	Weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>	Ladies Island, Torrington.	1988	SS492188		Bern III	
71	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Torrington Common, near Mill Street.	2002	SS492188	WCA 9		
72	Tall Ramping-fumitory	<i>Fumaria bastardii</i>	Waste ground, Great Torrington.	1996	SS492196			DN1
73	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	On common land at the foot of School Lane, Torrington.	2003	SS493196	WCA 9		
74	Marsh Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla palustris</i>	Great Torrington Commons; Common Lake	1978	SS493198			DN3
75	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	River Torridge, near Taddipport Bridge, Great Torrington.	2002	SS494188	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP (P); DBAP
76	Musk Stork's-bill	<i>Erodium moschatum</i>	Great Torrington Common	1991	SS494188			NS; DR

77	Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	Bank of River Torrige, Great Torrington.	2004	SS495188	WCA 5	EC IIa, IIIa; Bern II	UKBAP (P); DBAP
78	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megea</i>		1992	SS495189			UKBAP (P)
79	Small Pearl- bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	CASTLE HILL COMMON	1992	SS495189			UKBAP (P); Decline
80	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	CASTLE HILL COMMON	1992	SS495189			Decline
81	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Football Ground, Torrington.	2002	SS496193	WCA 9		
82	Upright Chickweed	<i>Moenchia erecta</i>	Torrington, Castle Hill	1991	SS497188			DN2
83	Bird's-foot clover	<i>Trifolium ornithopodioides</i>	Torrington, Castle Hill	1991	SS497188			DN1
84	Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	Garden at Calf Street, Torrington.	2004	SS497193	WCA 5(KIS)	Bern III	UKBAP (P)
85	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Belle Vue, Gas Lane and along Bastards Lane, Torrington.	2004	SS497195	WCA 9		
86	Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>	Millennium Path, Torrington Commons.	2003	SS498188	WCA 5(KIS)	Bern III	UKBAP (P)
87	Small Pearl- bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	MARSH WOOD HILL, GT. TOTN	1992	SS500187			UKBAP (P); Decline
88	Green Hairstreak	<i>Callophrys rubi</i>	MARSH WOOD HILL, GT. TOTN	1992	SS500187			Decline

89	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	MARSH WOOD HILL, GT. TOTN	1992	SS500187	WCA 5 (S)		UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
90	Common Frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	Hatchmoor Rd, Torrington	2002	SS500194	WCA 5(S)	EC Va; Bern III	
91	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		1998	SS5019			UKBAP (P)
92	Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria euphrosyne</i>	GT TORRINGTON COMMON	1998	SS5019	WCA 5 (S)		UKBAP (P); DBAP; Nb
93	Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	<i>Boloria selene</i>	HUNTSHAW WOODS	1990	SS5022			UKBAP (P); Decline
94	Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	Garden at Burwood Road, Torrington.	2004	SS505191	WCA 5(S)	Bern III	UKBAP (P)
95	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		1990	SS5120			UKBAP (P)
96	Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	B3232 1.5km SW of Huntsham X TV mast, Nr Torrington	2000	SS519211	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
97	Badger	<i>Meles meles</i>	B3232, 2 miles NE of Great Torrington	1999	SS520214	WCA 6, BA	Bern III	
98	Japanese Knotweed	<i>Fallopia japonica</i>	Great Torrington Common - Norwood Moor	2005	SS496200	WCA 9		

WCA 1 Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 1: birds which are protected by special penalties at all times.

WCA 5	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 5: species protected against killing, injury, disturbance and handling.
WCA 6	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 6: animals (other than birds) which may not be killed or taken by certain methods
WCA 8 (S)	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 8: (sale): plants protected against sale only.
WCA 9	Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 9: animals and plants for which release into the wild is prohibited.
BA	Protection of Badgers Act 1992: badgers may not be deliberately killed, persecuted or trapped except under licence. Badger setts may not be damaged, destroyed or obstructed.
DA	Deer Act 1991: deer protected under the Deer Act.
Bern II	Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) Appendix II: Special protection for listed animal species and their habitats.
Bern III	Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) Appendix III: Exploitation of listed animal species to be subject to regulation
ECIIa, IIb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex IIa and IIb: Designation of protected areas for animal and plant species listed.
ECIIIa, IIIb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex IIIa and IIb: Species used as criteria for designating Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
ECIVa, IVb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex IVa: Exploitation of listed animals and plants to be subject to management if necessary.

- Bonn II** **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention) Appendix II:**
Range states encouraged to conclude international agreements to benefit species listed.
- UKBAP(P)** **UK Priority Species (Short and Middle Lists - UK Biodiversity steering Group Report 1995)** i.e. species that
are globally threatened and rapidly declining in the UK (by more than 50% in the last 25 years). Has a Species
Action Plan.
- DBAP** **Devon Biodiversity Action Plan species:** these have been identified as species of key conservation concern in
Devon.
- NS** **Nationally Scarce:** 15-100 10km squares in Atlas of British Flora 1962.
- Devon Notable Species:** Selected species recorded from over 50 2km squares in the Atlas of Devon Flora 1984 (R.B. Ivimey-
Cook, Department of Biological Sciences, The University of Exeter).
- DN1** **Devon Notable¹:** 1-25 2 km squares in Atlas of Devon Flora 1984.
- Red List** Bird species of high conservation concern, such as those whose population or range is rapidly declining, recently or
historically, and those of global conservation concern.
- Amber List** Bird species of medium conservation concern, such as those whose population is in moderate decline, rare
breeders, internationally important and localised species and those of unfavourable conservation status in Europe.

Appendix 2 - Species list recorded within Great Torrington parish during field visit.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>
Cleavers	<i>Galium aparine</i>
Common Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum aggregate</i>
Common Mouse-ear	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>
Common Nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping Cinquefoil	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>
Creeping Thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>
Elder	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Germander Speedwell	<i>Veronica chamaedrys's</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Greater Stitchwort	<i>Stellaria holostea</i>
Greater Tussock Sedge	<i>Carex paniculata</i>
Ground-ivy	<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>
Groundsel	<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>
Hart's-tongue	<i>Phyllitis scolopendrium</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Herb-Robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Hybrid Black Poplar	<i>Populus canadensis</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Lesser Celandine	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>
Lime	<i>Tilia x europaea</i>
Lords-and-Ladies	<i>Arum maculatum</i>
Maidenhair Spleenwort	<i>Asplenium trichomanes</i>
Male-fern	<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>
Mouse-ear Hawkweed	<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>
Navelwort	<i>Umbilicus rupestris</i>
Norway Spruce	<i>Picea Abies</i>
Oak	<i>Quercus sp</i>
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Polypody	<i>Polypodium agg.</i>
Red Campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra agg.</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus sp.</i>
Snowdrop	<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>

Sycamore
White Clover
Yew
Yorkshire Fog

Acer pseudoplatanus
Trifolium repens
Taxus baccata
Holcus lanatus

Birds

Blackbird
Black-headed Gull
Blue Tit
Buzzard
Chaffinch
Great Tit
Herring Gull
House Sparrow
Robin
Rook

Turdus merula
Chroicocephalus ridibundus
Parus caeruleus
Buteo butes
Fringilla coelebs
Parus major
Larus argentatus
Passer domesticus
Erithacus rubecula
Corvus frugilegus

Mammals

Roe deer

Capreolus capreolus

Appendix 3: Biodiversity Features of Great Torrington Parish

