

Parish Biodiversity Audit

for

Strete

Consultation draft – August 2009

Green Ecology

Report commissioned by Devon County Council.

Data supplied by the Devon Biodiversity Records Centre.

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Strete - 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 very 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 Strete 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 Strete 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.

Strete parish lies in an idyllic position on the South Devon coast, 7 kilometres west of Dartmouth and 16 kilometres east of Kingsbridge in the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The village of Strete is the main settlement about 300m inland from Start Bay approximately 100 to 150 metres above sea level. The parish shares common boundaries with Slapton parish to the west, Blackawton parish to the north and Stoke Fleming to the east.

The parish's economy was traditionally based around agriculture and fishing and more recently tourism. Many of the houses in Strete prior to the 1930s were built from slate or stone from Goldswell Quarry on the Slapton parish side of the River Gara. This local stone known as 'Dartmouth Slate' was also used to build the Turnpike in the 19th century between Strete Gate and Torcross known locally as 'The Line'. The population of the parish is approximately 540 and local services include the parish church, parish hall, village shop and post office, a methodist chapel, public house and restaurant. There is also a holiday park and caravan site on the north side of the village.

Beyond the boundaries of Strete village, the parish is rural and sparsely populated, with the only other dwellings being scattered farms and houses.

About half of the parish's coastline is publicly accessible from Slapton Sands shingle ridge at Strete Gate on the west side of the parish up towards Pilchard Cove and 'The Slide' cliffs which are privately owned. The cliffs between 'The Slide' heading north eastwards to Mathew's Point are not accessible. The South West Coast Path does however cross the fields above affording glimpses of the rocky shore below. The beach at Blackpool Sands is privately owned and is managed as an attraction with picnic areas and a beachside café. The beach is open to the public with an entrance fee.

Inland the parish rises northwards to a plateau dominated by agricultural areas consisting mainly of arable land and pastures grazed by sheep and cattle, surrounded by hedges. The fields include unimproved grassland; semi-improved grassland on the steeper sloping fields and improved grassland or arable land generally on the more gently undulating areas. The steep valley sides of the River Gara known locally as the 'Gull Valley' are predominantly wooded.

Of the ten County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within the parish, three have been designated largely or in part for their mixed coastal grassland and scrub interest (Forest Cove, Landcombe Cove and Blackpool Sands). Four sites have been designated for their mix of broadleaved woodland and unimproved or semi-improved neutral grassland (Merricombe, Quack Meadow & Orestone Woods, Coleridge Place and Shiphill Valley). Burlestone & Leader Woods is designated for its status as Ancient semi-natural woodland; Strete Marsh for its mix of marshy grassland, reedbed, scrub and Strete Gate to Pilchard Cove CWS for its mix of coastal habitats and semi-improved neutral grassland with bird interest.

A small section of rocky shore can be accessed at low tide on the edge of Pilchard Cove. Here the rocks and rockpools provide potential habitats for a range of intertidal species, including seaweeds and various invertebrates.

There are stunning scenic views from many locations within the parish, particularly along the A379 coast road which runs through the village. The South West Coast Footpath offers unrivalled panoramic views across Start Bay and along the coast across Slapton Sands, Slapton Ley and Torcross to the west and Blackpool Sands to the east. There are a number of other pleasant footpaths within the parish.

Notable sites and species recorded with Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC) within and close to Strete parish are given in Appendix 1. The species include those listed in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP), such as the Lesser Horseshoe Bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera* butterfly and also those in the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (Devon BAP) for example Primrose *Primula vulgaris*. Otters *Lutra lutra*, listed in both the UK and Devon BAP, have been recorded near the south west parish boundary in the Higher Ley. An explanation of the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan is outlined on page 33.

The parish site visit for this report was carried out in January 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 January site visit is given in Appendix 2.

Designated Sites

Many designated sites are on private land. The listing of a site does not imply any right of public access.

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.

Slapton Ley Site of Special Scientific Interest

Covering over 219 ha, Slapton Ley SSSI runs along the southern edge of Slapton parish with a small part of the site within Strete parish near Strete Gate.

Slapton Ley SSSI was designated in 1954 and is the site of the largest natural freshwater lake in South West England. In 1993 Slapton Ley was designated a National Nature Reserve (NNR). It was formed in post-glacial times by the damming of a former estuary by a shingle bar. The site supports a wide variety of habitats and possesses a rich and diverse flora and fauna. It is of

particular importance for lichens, fungi and invertebrates. Over 490 species of vascular plant have been recorded, including one national rarity (Strapwort *Corrigiola litoralis*).

A causeway separates the site into Higher and Lower Leys. The Lower Ley is a large eutrophic freshwater lagoon possessing a representative aquatic flora while the Higher Ley consists mainly of rich fen and carr vegetation. The margins of the Lower Ley and almost all the Higher Ley is dominated by Common Reed *Phragmites australis* and locally by Lesser Reedmace *Typha angustifolia*, Hemlock *Conium maculatum*, Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and Yellow Flag Iris *Iris pseudacorus*. This reedswamp is important as an autumn feeding area for Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and Sedge Warblers *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. The site as a whole is noted for its diversity of passage and wintering birds.

Slapton Ley is also important for the abundance and diversity of its aquatic invertebrate fauna. Gastropods include the rare *Segmentina nitida* and the uncommon *Planorbis laevis*, while Dragonflies include the regionally uncommon Migrant Hawker *Aeshna mixta* and the Hairy Dragonfly *Brachytron pratense*.

The Higher Ley is notable for its population of European Otter *Lutra lutra*. The western shore of the Lower Ley supports a colony of Strapwort *Corrigiola litoralis*, a nationally-rare plant and the UK's last known remaining site.

The shingle bar has been colonised by a characteristic plant community dominated by Sea Radish *Raphanus maritima* and which includes Ray's Knotgrass *Polygonum oxyspermum*, Yellow Horned-poppay *Glaucium flavum* and Viper's Bugloss *Echium vulgare*.

Along the higher margins of the Leys occur belts of mixed scrub, mainly dominated by Sallows *Salix sp.* which support a variety of breeding birds including the uncommon Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*. Of additional interest are areas of secondary woodland, dominated in parts by Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and elsewhere by a variety of other species. These woods are known to contain rare craneflies. The lichen flora of the site is outstanding with over 250 species recorded, including many rare in Britain. The mild sunny climate is reflected in lichen communities characteristic of Lusitanian and Mediterranean regions. Over 2,000 species of fungi have also been recorded, including 30 species either new to science or to Britain.

The SSSI is extensively used for courses run by Slapton Ley Field Studies Centre (FSC) and is probably one of the best documented sites in Great Britain. (Source: Natural England's SSSI Citation)

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Eutrophic standing water (UK BAP, Devon BAP)
- Swamp/fen reed bed (UK BAP, Devon BAP)

- Floodplain grazing marsh (UK BAP, Devon BAP)
- Wet carr woodland (UK BAP, Devon BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Coastal vegetated shingle (UK BAP)

Key species:

- Strapwort *Corrigiola litoralis* (UK BAP)
- Pennyroyal *Mentha pulegium* (UK BAP)
- Three Lobed Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus tripartitus* (UK BAP)
- Shore Dock *Rumex rupestris* (UK BAP)
- Golden-hair Lichen *Teloschistes flavicans* (Devon BAP, UK BAP)
- Reed Bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus* (UK BAP)
- Marsh Tit *Poecile palustris* (UK BAP)
- Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus* (Devon BAP, UK BAP)
- Skylark *Alauda arvensis* (UK BAP)
- Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* (UK BAP)
- Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* (UK BAP)
- House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* (UK BAP)
- Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* (UK BAP)
- Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* (UK BAP)
- Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* (UK BAP)
- Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* (Devon BAP; UK BAP)
- Otter *Lutra lutra* (Devon BAP; UK BAP)
- *Segmentina nitida* (Mollusc) (UK BAP) – record unsubstantiated

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.

Although Strete parish does not lie within a designated SAC the parish's coastline from a biodiversity perspective may be just as valuable. Similar coastal areas close to Strete which have been designated include South Devon Shore Dock SAC (10km to the west between Salcombe and Beesands) and South Hams SAC (approximately 12km to the east close to Brixham). 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. 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 Strete.

Strete Gate RIGS is an area of 17 ha containing slates and sandstones of the Lower Devonian Dartmouth Group. A full geological description of the Strete Gate RIGS can be found at www.devon.gov.uk/geo-STG.pdf

County Wildlife Sites

There are ten County Wildlife Sites (CWS) within Strete parish:

- Merricombe County Wildlife Site
- Burlestone & Leader Woods County Wildlife Site
- Quack Meadow & Orestone Wood County Wildlife Site
- Strete Marsh County Wildlife Site
- Coleridge Place County Wildlife Site
- Strete Gate to Pilchard Cove County Wildlife Site
- Shiphill Valley County Wildlife Site
- Forest Cove County Wildlife Site
- Landcombe Cove County Wildlife Site
- Blackpool Sands County Wildlife Site

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 which were carried out in 1992. All of the sites are privately owned with little or no public access on to them. Some of the sites however can be seen from public roads and footpaths. Quack Meadow and Orestone Wood can be seen from the County Council maintained lane between Oreston Cottage and Hansel. Shiphill Valley, Forest Cove and Landcombe Cove are crossed by the recently realigned South West Coast Path using permissive footpaths recently negotiated by South Hams AONB unit.

Merricombe County Wildlife Site

A survey has identified this 11.7 ha area along the northern reaches of the The Gara River as secondary broadleaved woodland, unimproved and semi-improved neutral grassland and scrub. The site is not publicly accessible but its most northerly end is visible from the road bridge south of Forder and from the public footpath from a nearby house called Clovelly. The woodland is mainly Oak *Quercus robur* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* with an understorey of Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Holly *Ilex sp.* The northern tip of the wood has been invaded by Laurel, probably originating from the original dwelling at Clovelly, the ruins of which are visible within the woods. The grassland areas were being grazed at the time of the visit and were not surveyed in detail. DBRC records note Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and Violet species *Viola sp.* in the sward with Gorse *Ulex sp.* and Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* on the steeper valley sides.



Merricombe County Wildlife Site

Links to Devon and UK BAPs

Key habitats:

- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Neutral grassland (UK BAP)

Key Species:

- Primrose (Devon BAP)

Burlestone & Leader Woods County Wildlife Site

The Burlestone & Leader Woods CWS covers an area of 23.1 ha. Leader & Burlestone Wood are on the steep valley sides of the Gara valley along the western fringes of the Parish. Neither wood is publicly accessible but they are both striking landscape features providing a spectacular backdrop to the hamlet of Hansel. Parts of both woods are included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory (see page 27 for a definition of Ancient Woodland) and are predominantly replanted with broadleaved species. The canopy is dominated by Beech *Fagus sylvaticus* with Oak and Sycamore *Acer psuedoplatanus*. Holly *Ilex sp.* and Honeysuckle *Lonicera sp.* dominate the understorey. Parts of the site which have been replanted are dominated by Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa*. The southern part of the site is herb rich with species recorded including Violet *Viola sp.* and Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*. Deadwood is plentiful adding high invertebrate value. As there are no public rights of way along the valley bottom this like the other sites along the valley are undisturbed. The site was not surveyed during the audit visit however a local resident who regularly visits the woods has confirmed that they are in good condition.

Links to Devon and UK BAP**Key habitat:**

- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)

Key species:

- Primrose



Burlestone & Leader Woods CWS in distance

Quack Meadow & Orestone Wood County Wildlife Site

Quack Meadow and Orestone Wood fringe the eastern borders of the parish with Slapton parish on the east slope of the Gara river valley. The CWS survey recorded the site as 3.1 ha of unimproved neutral grassland and secondary broadleaved woodland. Although there is no public access there is a County Council maintained road along the edge of the site leading down to the valley bottom towards Hansel hamlet. The copse is visible from Hansel. The site displays some potentially interesting habitat with mixed areas of grassland, scrub and broadleaved woodland plantation on a steep valley slope.

The woodland area is dominated by Sweet Chestnut, Ash and Sycamore with Oak constant throughout. Wetter parts of the wood along the stream include Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Willow *Salix cinerea*. The shrub layer has been invaded by Laurel in some parts. The ground flora contains a number of ancient woodland indicator species including Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*. Wildlife species have been extensively monitored by the site's owner over the past three decades. Species reported by the owner include Roe Deer *Capreolus capreolus*, Muntjac *Muntiacus muntjak*, Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus*, Dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, several species of bat including Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*, Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*, Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii* and Pipistrelles *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*.

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP)
- Rivers (UK BAP)

Key species:

- Dormouse (Devon BAP, UK BAP)
- Brown Hare (Devon BAP)
- Greater Horseshoe (Devon BAP, UK BAP)
- Barbastelle (UK BAP)

Strete Marsh County Wildlife Site



View southwards looking towards Strete Marsh

Strete Marsh CWS is located predominantly on the Gara River Valley basin along the boundary with Slapton Parish marked by the Gara River itself. The site is recorded as 19.8 ha of marshy grassland, reedbed, scrub and secondary broadleaved woodland. Strete Marsh was not surveyed during the audit visit. A nearby resident has monitored the site extensively with species recorded including Water Mint *Mentha aquatica*, Rushes *Juncus sp.* and Sedges *Carex sp.*

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Reedbed (Devon BAP, UK BAP);
- Grazing marsh (Devon BAP)
- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP)
- Neutral grassland (UK BAP)

Coleridge Place County Wildlife Site

Coleridge Place County Wildlife Site consists of 17.2 ha of secondary broadleaved woodland, scrub and semi-improved neutral grassland. The site borders the Slapton parish boundary. The site acts as an important buffer habitat bordering the Higher Ley, part of the Slapton Ley SSSI and NNR. Records held by DBRC describe the scrub and woodland areas as being in small distinct blocks. The canopy is predominantly Ash with Hazel dominating the understory. The ground flora is rich in fern species. In parts the woods have been replanted with conifer and Sweet Chestnut. Scrub

areas are dominated by Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Hazel and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*.

The valley bottom is mainly marshy grassland and swamp with willow carr. Alder *Alnus glutinosus* and Willow *Salix alba* spp. dominate the northern part of the site with more open tall herb vegetation dominated by Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata* in southern parts of the site. Hobby *Falco subbuteo* and several species of Dragonfly have been recorded at the site.

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Neutral grassland (UK BAP)
- Floodplain grazing marsh (Devon BAP, UK BAP)

Key species:

- Primrose (Devon BAP)
- Hobby (UK BAP)

Strete Gate to Pilchard Cove County Wildlife Site

Strete Gate to Pilchard Cove CWS consists of a 33.5 ha mix of coastal habitats (including shingle beach and rocky shore) and semi-improved neutral grassland with bird interest. The entire stretch of beach within the CWS is publicly accessible. The coastal habitats were not surveyed during the visit due to time constraints and further survey work is recommended. Inland, the site is in private ownership with a mix of residential grounds and grazed pasture. Much of the southern end of the site has succeeded in recent decades to a mix of scrub and Evergreen Oak *Quercus ilex*. Although the inland sections of the CWS are not publicly accessible the site is skirted by the South West Coast Path and the northern most section is crossed by the A379 coast road.

The recorder describes the fields above Pilchard Cove as semi-improved neutral grassland in a small steep sided stream valley. The CWS records also indicate that the area is a breeding site for Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* on the cliff top fields and for Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* on the cliffs. Glanville Fritillary *Melitaea cinxia* has been recorded on the undercliff but this record is unsubstantiated with this species being restricted to the south coast of the Isle of Wight, the Channel Islands and an introduced colony in Somerset.

Dormice have been found close to woody shrubs near the South West Coast Path near Strete Gate and are currently being monitored by licensed volunteers.

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Sea cliff and slope (Devon BAP)
- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP)
- Maritime cliff and slopes (UK BAP)

Key species:

- Cirl Bunting (Devon BAP, UK BAP)
- Dormouse (Devon BAP, UK BAP)

Shiphill Valley County Wildlife Site

Shiphill Valley CWS consists of 7 ha of broadleaved woodland, scrub and unimproved neutral grassland centred around a small stream valley to the south east of Strete village. The site was originally surveyed in 1992 and revisited in 2007. The northerly part of the site is a mosaic of tall herb and scrub habitat alongside the small stream. Further south there is a semi-improved field dominated by grass species and relatively herb poor possibly due to grazing pressure. The wooded area is dominated by Sycamore with Ash, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hawthorn. The recorder has noted a small pond on the site where the stream has been dammed.

At the end of the valley along the cliff edges and spreading inwards, an unimproved herb rich maritime grassland has been recorded where Thrift *Armeria maritima* is abundant. The steeper valley sides are dominated by Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Blackthorn. At the highest part of the cliff edge bare rock dominates with occasional Gorse *Ulex europaeas*. Lichens are abundant here with other associated rock colonising plants including Stonecrops *Sedum sp.* There are no fauna records for the site and further survey work is recommended.

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Sea cliff and slope (Devon BAP); Maritime cliff and slopes (UK BAP)
- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP); Ponds (UK BAP)

Forest Cove County Wildlife Site

Forest Cove CWS consists of 10.6 ha of coastal grassland, scrub and gorse bordering the north east edge of the adjacent Shiphill Valley CWS. The South West Coast Path skirts the northern edge of the site through the cliff top fields.

The landward side of the site is semi-improved grassland with common herbs and Hairy Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus* (a Devon Notable 1 Species – refer to Appendix 1 for a definition) either side of the footpath. The grassland area is closely grazed and is dominated by finer grass species such as Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*. The seaward side of the site is dominated by scrub and includes Sycamore, Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Elder with Bramble, Gorse and Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* further downslope. Evidence of some scrub management has been recorded. The site has invertebrate interest with Crickets and Meadow Brown *Maniola jurtina* butterfly recorded. There may also be potential bird interest given its proximity to other Cirl Bunting and Cetti's Warbler breeding sites.

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)
- Sea cliff and slope (Devon BAP); Maritime Cliff and Slopes (UK BAP)
- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP); Ponds (UK BAP)

Landcombe Cove County Wildlife Site

Landcombe Cove CWS consists of 7.4 ha of coastal grassland, scrub, bracken and shingle bordering the south-eastern side of the Forest Cove CWS below and bordering the southern tip of Mathew's Point and Blackpool Sands to the north east. The South West Coast path crosses part of the site and its main use is rough grazing. Landcombe Cove incorporates several habitats including areas of dense scrub, unimproved neutral grassland, Bracken, cliff grassland and coastal shingle with hedgerow. Grazing by cattle and sheep is described as moderate. The grassland which forms the largest part of the site comprises a steeply sloping valley with a small water course running through it. The sward is species rich in places and the herb content on the whole is high. Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and Restharrow *Ononis repens* are abundant in places. On the seaward side of the site Thrift is abundant. The site as a whole is recorded as having a good invertebrate population.

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Sea cliff and slope (Devon BAP); Maritime cliff and slopes (UK BAP)
- Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes (Devon BAP); Rivers (UK BAP); Ponds (UK BAP)

Blackpool Sands County Wildlife Site

Blackpool Sands CWS is designated as 9.2 ha of coastal grassland and scrub with plant interest. The southern end of the site is within the parish with a large proportion of the site in neighbouring Stoke Fleming parish to the north east. Blackpool Sands is a shingle beach managed as a visitor attraction and heavily used in the summer months. The shingle itself has little vegetation possibly due to heavy use and the shoreline itself is harrowed regularly to remove litter and flotsam. At each end the beach is backed by cliffs with scrub and grassland communities. Species recorded include: Gorse, Blackthorn, Oak, Ivy, Sycamore, Umbellifers, Stonecrops, Wild Carrot *Daucus Carota* and Yellow-horned Poppy. There is an area of semi-improved grassland behind the beach used as an overflow car park in summer months which is of potential botanical interest but has not been studied in detail. Four-leaved Allseed *Polycarpon tetraphyllum* has been recorded on the northern edge of the site. Cirl Bunting has been recorded within the vicinity.

Links to Devon and UK BAP

Key habitat:

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Sea cliff and slope (Devon BAP); Maritime cliff and slopes (UK BAP)
- Coastal shingle (UK BAP)

Key species:

- Cirl Bunting (Devon BAP, UK BAP)

Other designations and regional classifications

South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

South Devon AONB was designated under the 1949 National Parks and Countryside Access Act on 2nd August 1960. The purpose of AONB designation is to **conserve and enhance natural beauty**.

In pursuing the primary purpose of designation, account should be taken of the needs of agriculture, forestry and other rural industries and of the economic and social needs of local communities. Particular regard should be paid to **promoting sustainable forms of social and economic**

development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

Recreation is not an objective of designation, but the **demand for recreation should be met insofar as this is consistent with the conservation of natural beauty and the needs of agriculture, forestry and other uses.**

Source: www.southdevonaonb.org.uk

Heritage Coast

The entire coast of Strete sits within the South Devon Heritage Coast designated in 1984 in view of the coast's notable beauty and scientific interest. Although the designation of Heritage Coast is non-statutory unlike an AONB, it is designed to preserve the coast from undesirable development. Heritage Coasts are designated by the Countryside Agency in agreement with local authorities and landowners. The aim of designation is to conserve natural beauty and improve access to visitors.

Natural Areas

Natural England has divided the country into areas containing common or associated ecological and landscape features.

South Devon Natural Area.

The South Devon Natural Area is characterised by an undulating landscape of rolling hills dissected by numerous river valleys. The geology of the area is of considerable significance, particularly in quarry, mine and coastal exposures, where key geological and landform features are dramatically seen.

The Natural Area supports an outstanding diversity of habitats and wildlife. Lowland heathland, species-rich neutral and calcareous grasslands, freshwater marsh and lagoons are recognised of national importance. Other notable habitats in the Natural Area include ancient woodlands, lowland farmland and hedgerows, ponds, rivers and streams and urban habitats, particularly in Plymouth and Torbay. Numerous rarities occur, particularly plants and birds. Five species that are endemic to Britain have important populations in the Natural Area, namely two species of Whitebeam, Early Gentian, a millipede and a freshwater cave shrimp. Many nationally protected species and Red Data Book species are also recorded. Further information about the South Devon Natural Area can be found on Natural England's website: www.english-nature.org.uk

Other habitats (identified from field survey):

Sea cliff and slope

Devon's sea cliffs and slopes are some of the most dramatic and widely appreciated landscape features of the county. With a huge variety of forms and conditions, from exposed granite cliffs to sheltered rolling slopes they support a wide range of plant communities and any particular site is likely to contain a mosaic of habitats. The nature of the plant communities will depend on a range of factors, including the underlying geology, degree and direction of slope, exposure to prevailing weather conditions, and exposure to salt spray. The wide range of plant communities is reflected in the huge diversity of animals that can be found on Devon's sea cliffs and slopes, many of which are only found in these habitats.

It was not possible to view these areas at close quarters, but typical maritime plant species, such as Thrift, Wild Carrot and Yellow-horned Poppy have all been recorded along the coastline of Strete Parish. Cirl Bunting has also been recorded in various locations.

Links to Key Habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Sea cliff and slope (Devon BAP); Maritime cliff and slopes (UK BAP)

Rocky Foreshore

The term 'rocky foreshore' covers areas of bedrock found between the mean high water and mean low water marks. The rocky foreshore habitats of Devon are amongst the richest in Britain and are home to a diverse and fascinating range of animals and plants. The warm waters that bathe Devon's coast enable animals and plants that are more usually found further south to survive, so many are found in few other parts of Britain. Devon's coast is subject to a range of different physical influences, which in turn influence the communities of plants and animals found on the rocky foreshore. Much of the south coast of Devon is sheltered from prevailing winds allowing a diverse range of animals and plants to develop.

The only readily accessible areas of rocky foreshore within the parish is near Pilchard Cove. The foreshore was not surveyed during the audit visit.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Rocky foreshore (Devon BAP)

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 South Hams 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. The lanes which rise up towards higher ground above Strete village are lined with hedges on top of traditional Devon hedgebanks which during late spring offer a stunning 'spring bank' display of flowering plants with species such as Red Campion, Hedge Bedstraw *Galium mollugo*, Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea* and Primrose *Primula vulgaris*. Ferns include Hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and Polypody *Polypodium vulgare*.

Many of the field hedges on the higher plateau areas of the parish 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 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 however and on higher ground the hedgebanks surveyed were predominantly species rich. The hedgerows themselves would largely be classed as species poor being dominated by Hazel and Blackthorn with occasional Dogrose *Rosa canina* and Holly.

Many of the hedges on the steeper slopes of the river and stream valleys sloping away from the higher ground are conversely 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 under-managed 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 hedge laying (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.

Links to key habitats in Devon UK BAPs

- Species-rich hedges (Devon BAP) Hedgerows (UK BAP)



Hedgerows along green lane near Orestone

Churchyards

St. Michael's parish church is located on the north side of the village. There is a reasonably sized graveyard here surrounded in part by some stone walls on which grows Navelwort *Umbilicus rupestris*, Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes* and several species of mosses and lichens. The majority of the grassland within the graveyard is managed by frequent cutting and is dominated by grasses such as Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Cock's-foot *Dactylus glomerata*. Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Common Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Creeping Cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Hieracium pilosella* and Groundsel *Senecio vulgaris* were recorded growing here during the visit.

The gravestones and stone walls provide an important habitat for mosses and lichens.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

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



St. Michael's churchyard

Stone walls

Stone walls surround the churchyard and many gardens in the village. Strete Gate picnic site is located within the old walled gardens of a hotel destroyed by bombing in the Second World War. There are some stone wall based hedges near the coast, which have impressive growths of lichens, together with English Stonecrop *Sedum anglicum* and Navelwort *Umblicus rupestris* growing on them. Stone walls can be 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);

Recreation areas and public open space

There are a number of public areas in and around Strete, including community open spaces and picnic areas.

Tannen Land Community Area is an area of grassland on a south east facing slope above the A379 which overlooks farmland and the sea beyond. The site is owned by Devon County Council and managed by Strete Parish Council under a Management Agreement which is due for renewal in 2010. It is in a good position, and has easy access from the north of the site.

The site was enhanced in the late 1980's in partnership with South Hams Coast & Countryside Service, which included hedge-planting, shrub and tree planting, fencing, the creating of a circular path, installation of gates, an

interpretation board and benches. Many of the shrubs planted however failed to establish. Currently the site is managed as rough grassland, mowed once a year by the parish council at the end of the summer. The circular path mown around the edge of the site is used almost entirely by dog walkers. Dog fouling is a management issue and may deter other uses such as picnicking and quiet enjoyment. The site was surveyed during the parish audit visit in January 2009. It was not possible to produce a full species list due to the time of year.

The grassland is species-poor and is dominated by Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne* with White Clover *Trifolium repens* and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*. The edges of the site are however relatively herb rich with Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Alexanders *Smyrniololus atriplicifolius*, Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea* and Hart's Tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium*. There are also pockets of tall herb and woody species including Bramble *Rubus sp.* and Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* on the eastern edge of the site. Little remains of shrub species planted 20 years ago other than a *Hebes* in the centre of the site. The hedge on the south side of the site, mainly Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, is well established and tightly trimmed in accordance with the management agreement. The hedge would benefit from less frequent trimming to increase its potential habitat value for Dormice and invertebrates. The site may also be a potential Slow-worm habitat.

The site has good long-term biodiversity and amenity potential via a long-term partnership project involving the community, Strete Parish Council, Devon County Council and South Hams District Council. A summary of management recommendations based on the 2008 report (produced by the Cllr Simon Buckler) and the audit visit in January 2009 is included in Appendix 4. The formation of a working group with representatives of the key partners to agree and put into action a new management agreement is recommended.

Other areas of Public Open Space include a community tree planting area on the south west edge of the village known locally as Blackbird Wood, not visited during the audit visit.

Strete Gate picnic site on the south west parish boundary is owned by Devon County Council and managed by South Hams District Council. The site is situated in the former walled gardens of a hotel bombed by allied troops during a Second World War exercise. The site has a number of tree and shrub species including Oak, Ash, Hawthorn and Blackthorn with areas of grassland and scrub with bird and invertebrate interest (Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera* a UK BAP priority butterfly species has been recorded on the site). There is a large car park on the eastern side of the site with a smaller parking area on the southern edge of the site opposite the beach. The site has a number of picnic tables, waymarked trails and an interpretation panel highlighting the biodiversity interest of the site. The site is managed mainly by mowing and brushcutting paths, rides and glade areas in amongst

the scrub. The high stone wall which surrounds the site provides invertebrate and lichen interest. Strete Gate is on the north east edge of Slapton Ley NNR and is adjacent to the South West Coast Path, the main A379 coast road and is well served by public transport.

The long distance South West Coast Footpath runs along the coast here and offers unrivalled panoramic views across Start Bay. There are a number of other footpaths within the parish, some of which link up with the coast path. Various circular walks can be made from Strete using the SWCP and the parish's network of footpaths, bridleways and green lanes.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

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



Tannen Land (Strete Community Area)



Strete Gate Picnic Sit

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 Strete providing a habitat link with the churchyard, parks, hedgerows, coastal habitats and the surrounding countryside.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Cities, towns and villages (Devon BAP)
-

Redundant and traditional buildings

Traditional buildings are present in the parish and can be important for a number of species including the Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and various bat species

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Cities, towns and villages (Devon BAP)

Rivers and Ponds

The River Gara forms the western boundary of Strete parish. The River Gara has a wide catchment rising from Halwell several kilometres north of the parish. From here it flows south eastwards and then turns southwards before flowing to meet the Higher Ley below Strete Gate. The Gara has several tributaries many of which rise from springs on the upper ridges of Strete parish. There are three small streams within the parish. Two rise just south of the A379 down to the coast, one south of Strete village to Shiphill Rock waterfall and one from land below Landcombe House to Landcombe Cove. A third stream enters the north east tip of the parish at Blackpool Sands from the Blackpool valley above in the neighbouring Stoke Fleming Parish. These water courses provide an important feature and habitat for wildlife for the parish. The River Gara feeds freshwater into the Ley, South West England's largest natural freshwater lake. Otters have been recorded in the Ley. Sedimentation and eutrophication of the Ley have been major concerns linked to intensification of farming and increased soil erosion in recent years. Since 1988 many farms in the area have signed up to agri-environment schemes including Countryside Stewardship and the Slapton catchment is one of 11 catchments included in the European Interreg Cycleau project (2004-2006) which aimed to improve water quality of the catchment area.

No ponds were recorded during the audit visit. Ponds do exist within the parish in private grounds offering an important habitat for associated plant and animal species such as Common Toads *Bufo bufo*, Common Frogs *Rana temporaria*, invertebrates and aquatic plants.. A large open pond has been recorded at Merricombe CWS which has several islands with associated vegetation including willows, sedges and rushes, Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre*, Brooklime *Veronic beccaguna* and Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus*. There is the potential to create a pond area and/or wetland habitat within the Tannen Land community site subject to the aspirations of the community, funding and long-term management considerations.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

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



The River Gara on the parish boundary near Forder

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 Strete Parish - the A379 passes through the village before linking up with Dartmouth in the east. In addition, some of the minor roads have verges which can be important corridors associated with hedges.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Neutral grassland (UK 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 and semi-improved neutral grasslands within the parish. Some of these have been identified and classified as County Wildlife Sites.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Flower-rich meadows and pastures (Devon BAP)
- Neutral grassland (UK BAP)

Woodlands

Strete is not a heavily wooded parish, but there are several areas of important woodland, mainly in the river and stream valleys of the parish concentrated largely along the west parish boundaries and also along the coast. These are mainly semi-natural mixed broadleaved woodlands and include Burlestone Wood CWS, Orestone Wood CWS, Strete Marsh CWS, Coleridge Place CWS, Merricombe CWS and Shiphill Valley CWS.

Burlestone Wood is identified in the Ancient Woodland Inventory. 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.

Lowland mixed deciduous woodlands are in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan habitats list.

Associated woodland species include Oak, Ash, Sycamore, Sweet Chestnut, Hazel, Holly and Elder. The ground flora of some of the woods, for example Orestone Wood contain ancient woodland indicator species such as Dog's

Mercury and Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage. Woodland are also very important habitats for birds (for example Greater Spotted Woodpecker *Dendrocopos major*) invertebrates (including moths, butterflies and stag beetles) and mammals (including Barbastelle and Lesser Horseshoe bats Badgers and Dormouse).

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- 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, Rowan, Yew, Birch, Holly
- 3 metres - Oak, Ash, Scot's Pine, Alder
- 4.5 metres - Sycamore, limes, chestnuts, elms, poplars, Beech, willows, pines, 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.

No roadside ancient trees were recorded during the visit. However there are a number of potential sites not accessible to the public (for example Coleridge Place).

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Parkland, wood pasture (Devon BAP)

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.

There are a number of footpaths with hedges either side, some of which run along the routes of possible sunken old lanes. These together with some green lanes, such as the one running to Hansel passed Quack Copse and Orestone Woods support a range of plant species, such as Primrose, Hart's-tongue, Lords-and-Ladies, Red Campion and Dog's Mercury.

Links to key habitats in Devon and UK BAPs

- Species-rich hedges (Devon BAP); 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. 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. There are however a number of private estates within the parish which may contain parkland habitat (for example at Coleridge Place).

Species

Important species

A report from the DBRC database showing which legally protected, locally notable (e.g. Cirl Bunting) or noteworthy (e.g. Japanese Knotweed *Polygonum cuspidatum*) species are known to have been present in and around Strete is presented separately (Appendix 1). Appendix 2 gives the species noted during this survey. It should be borne in mind that late January 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.

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*, Black Headed Gull *Chroicocephalus ridibundus*, Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, Raven *Corvus corax*, Rook *Corvus frugilegus*, and Robin *Erithacus rebecca*.

Other birds of note recorded within Strete on the DBRC database include Cirl Bunting and Cetti's Warbler. The Cirl Bunting is a bird species of high conservation concern and is a UK and Devon BAP priority species as well as a Red List species. Hobby has been recorded at Coleridge Place and is protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Schedule 1. (Definitions of the various legislative protections can be seen in Appendix 1).

There are no records of Barn Owl within the parish held with DBRC, but they could be present as there are suitable habitats. The Barn Owl requires areas of open, rough grassland where its preferred food of mice and voles are found. It is largely nocturnal and feeds almost exclusively on small mammals, particularly voles, but also takes shrews, mice, rats and very occasionally, birds.

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 large number of plant species were noted on the site visits to the parish in January 2009, these are listed in Appendix 2.

DBRC records Hairy Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus subbiflorus* growing near the coast at the Forest Cove CWS, this is nationally scarce and a Devon notable species. Butcher's Broom *Ruscus aculeatus* has been recorded at Coleridge Place CWS and is an EC Directive species (see Appendix 1).

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

The Primrose can be seen in many places in the parish. It is listed on the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan as it is intended to help to raise public awareness of the need to conserve commonplace and characteristic elements of Devon's countryside. The Primrose is not rare in Devon, but it may act as an indicator species to the health of Devon's environment, and by conserving the Primrose, we may help to conserve some of the habitats in which it is found. These include woodlands, hedges, road verges and churchyards.

Japanese Knotweed is an invasive alien plant and has been recorded in Strete village.

Mammals

Mammal species recorded within Strete parish with DBRC include Lesser Horseshoe Bat and Common Dormouse. Otters have been recorded in the Higher Ley near to the boundary of the parish.

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.

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.

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.

Marine animals:

There is a huge variety of large marine animals that live in the seas off Devon and Cornwall, including a resident population of Bottlenose Dolphins *Tursiops truncatus*, but also Common Dolphins *Delphinus delphis*, whales and basking Sharks *Cetorhinus maximus*, and these are occasionally spotted off the south Devon coast. The species most likely to be seen are Harbour Porpoise *Phocoena phocoena* and Bottlenose Dolphins.

Unfortunately, this part of the coast can see dead marine mammals, particularly Harbour Porpoise, washed up (stranded) on the shore as a result of being accidentally caught in fishing nets – known as bycatch. Most bycatch strandings in the south-west occur in Cornwall or south Devon. Should you find one please let Devon Wildlife Trust (01392 279244) know about it, as valuable information may be gleaned from stranded animals.

Invertebrates

Due to the time of year of the site visit there were no invertebrates recorded on the parish site visit. Generally there is considerable under-recording of invertebrates with few records for the parish on the DBRC database.

DBRC have records in Strete Parish of the UK BAP priority butterfly species Wall Brown *Lasiommata megera*, which is declining in Devon. Small White *Pieris rapae* and Speckled Wood *Pararge aegeria* have been recorded at Burlestone Woods and moths and crickets have been noted at Forest Cove.

As invertebrate species are considerably under-recorded for the parish (for example no records exist for dragonflies or damselflies) further survey work is recommended.

Reptiles and amphibians

There are no records for reptiles held with DBRC. It is probable that Common Frog, Common Toad and Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* are located in gardens in or around Strete. The Common Toad and Slow-worm are UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. No reptiles or amphibians were recorded during the site visit due to the time of year. Tannen Land Community area could be a potential site for Slow-worm and further survey work is recommended.

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.
- 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 Strete
and the Devon and UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP)**

Strete wildlife feature	Brief description of feature	Link with the Devon BAP	Link with the UK BAP
<p>Sea Cliff and Coastal Slope</p> <p>Vegetated Coastal shingle and rocky shore</p>	<p>Extensive areas of coastal grassland sloping down to cliff edge. Examples include Shiphill Valley.</p> <p>Shingle beach near Strete Gate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea Cliff and Slope Habitat Action Plan • Rocky Foreshore Habitat Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal vegetated shingle
<p>Broadleaved Woodland</p>	<p>Secondary broadleaved woodland Ancient Semi-Natural woodland Ancient oak woodland Wet woodland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oak Woodland Habitat Action Plan • Greater Horseshoe bat species Action Plan • Dormouse Species Action Plan • Primrose Species Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
<p>Traditional hedges</p>	<p>Extensive network of traditional hedges throughout the parish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species-rich Hedges Habitat Action Plan • Primrose Species Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan for Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows
<p>Grassland: unimproved grassland and grass verges</p>	<p>Areas of semi-improved and unimproved grassland, which have been protected from agricultural improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flower-rich Meadows and Pastures Habitat Action Plan • Primrose Species Action Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmland Habitat Action Plan

Rivers, streams and ponds	River Gara and small coastal streams	• Rivers, streams, floodplains and fluvial processes Habitat Action Plan	• Rivers Habitat Action Plan
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View the Devon Biodiversity Action Plan at www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity

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 Strete might include hedges and for otter signs (Otters have been recorded in the Higher Ley close to the parish boundary). These actions would directly contribute to the species-rich hedges habitat and the otter species action plans.

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. For example, Seaquest South-West is a joint project bringing together several independent researchers within the Cornwall and Devon Wildlife Trusts to find out more about marine life. To find out more about volunteering or submitting records of marine animal sightings contact the above address or view:

www.devonwildlifetrust.org/index.php?section=people:seaquest

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.

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. There is surprisingly few records for the parish, so any records (including 'who', 'where', 'what' and 'when') of any species recognised is 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:

Strete parish is fortunate to have public spaces within and around the village. Some of these already have considerable value for wildlife.

Tannen Land community space has huge potential in terms of its biodiversity value and as an amenity area for quite enjoyment. A detailed report on Tannen Land's history and proposals for improvement has been drawn up by a member of the community. The parish council has organised volunteer work parties which have been well attended. Further wildlife and amenity enhancement of the site is highly recommended including the provision of a dog free area and planting of wild flower species such as Primrose. Greater habitat diversity could be achieved through the addition of a pond or wetland area, addition of shrubs and changes to the mowing regime. Further enhancement and long-term management of the site could be a joint project involving Strete Parish Council, Devon County Council, South Hams District Council and local residents. A list of management recommendations for Tannen Land based on observations made during the audit visit is included in Appendix 4.

Strete Gate picnic site is already managed and well maintained by South Hams District Council. The site is a valuable mixture of grassland, scrub and woodland attracting bird and invertebrate interest. Bat boxes, bird boxes and invertebrate log piles would all attract these important species.

There is potential for further enhancement for wildlife here in the churchyard. Some areas, for example in the corners or around the perimeters, 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.

Information boards about the wildlife of the area already exist (for example at Strete Gate and at Tannen Land). The Tannen Land information board could be updated or replaced as part of an overall programme of improvements to the site. This could include the wildlife of the wider parish.

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 Hedges 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 Strete represent a significant area that could be used to benefit wildlife. The proximity of the river 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
(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 South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Further information about the South Devon AONB, the Management Strategy and Action Plan and details of how your local community can become involved can be found at: www.southdevonaonb.org.uk or telephone the South Devon AONB Unit on (01803) 861384.

8 Link biodiversity to Strete Parish Plan:

Although Strete does not have a Parish Plan at present you could encourage any future 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 Strete 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 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

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

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; 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 developed a Community Biodiversity Toolkit 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, will provide 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 will also provide guidance on seeking funding for project work. You may also find the following sources of funding useful.

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.magic.gov.uk

www.jncc.gov.uk

www.naturalengland.org.uk

www.swenvo.org.uk

www.slnnr.org.uk

www.swbiodiversity.org.uk

www.ukbap.org.uk

www.devon.gov.uk

www.field-studies-council.org

www.southdevonaonb.org.uk

www.strete.org.uk

www.pondconservaton.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the following people for their assistance:

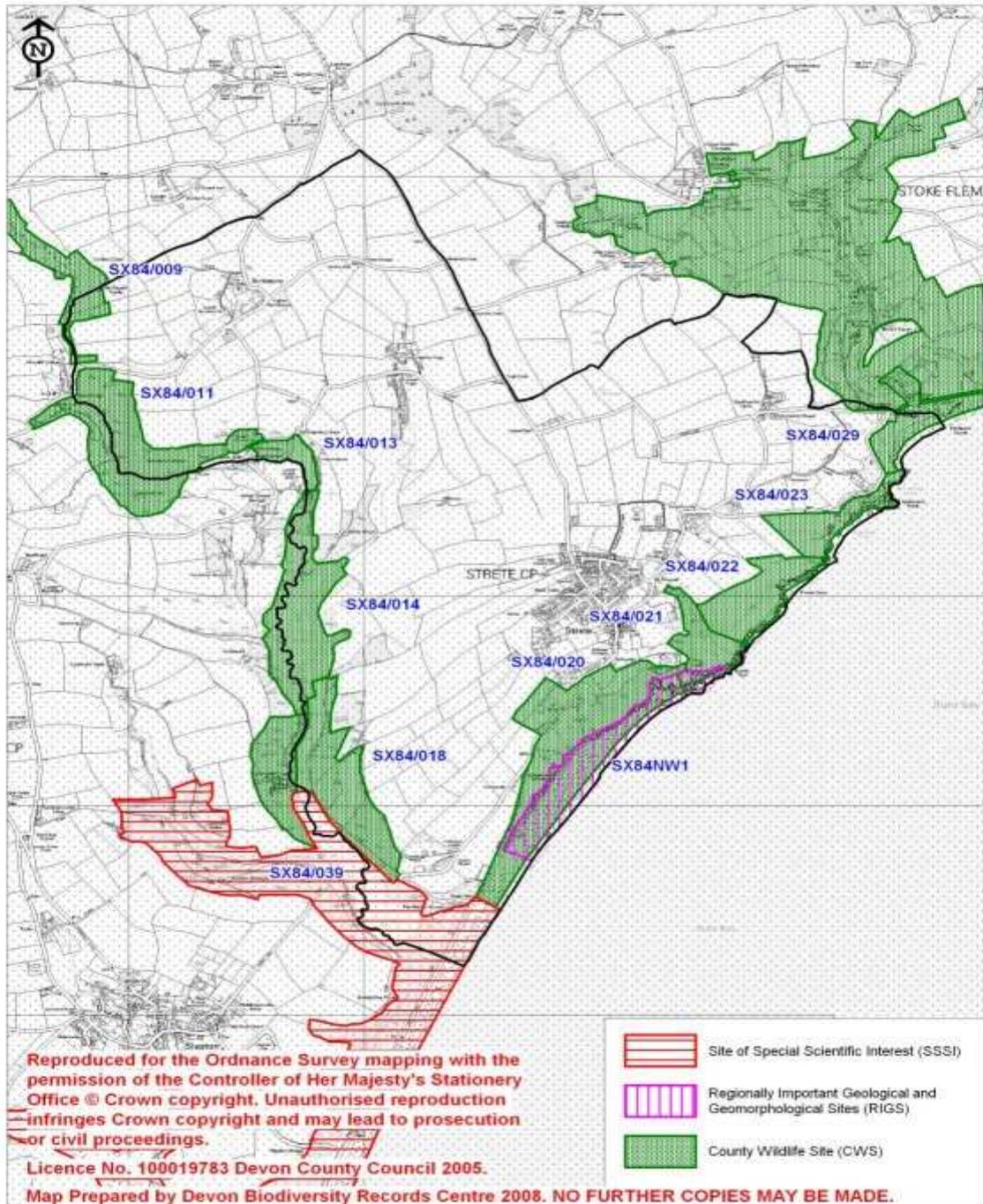
Wendy Board

Simon Buckler

Devon Biodiversity Records Centre

Appendix 1 – Notable sites within and near Strete parish.

Statutory and non-statutory sites within Strete Parish (2008)



Statutory & non-statutory sites within Strete Parish (2008)

File Code	Site Name	Grid Reference	Area (ha)	Description	Status
SX84/039	Slapton Ley	SX 824441	221.8	Freshwater lake, swamp, carr woodland and coastland habitats	SSSI
SX84/009	Merricombe	SX815487	11.7	Secondary broadleaved woodland, marshy & semi-improved neutral grassland	CWS
SX84/011	Burlestone & Leader Woods	SX820477	23.1	Ancient semi-natural woodland partly replanted with broadleaves	CWS
SX84/013	Quack Meadow & Orestone Wood	SX827477	3.1	Unimproved neutral grassland & secondary broadleaved woodland	CWS
SX84/014	Strete Marsh	SX827470	19.8	Marshy grassland, reedbed, scrub & secondary broadleaved woodland	CWS
SX84/018	Coleridge Place	SX829461	17.2	Secondary broadleaved woodland, scrub & semi-improved neutral grassland	CWS

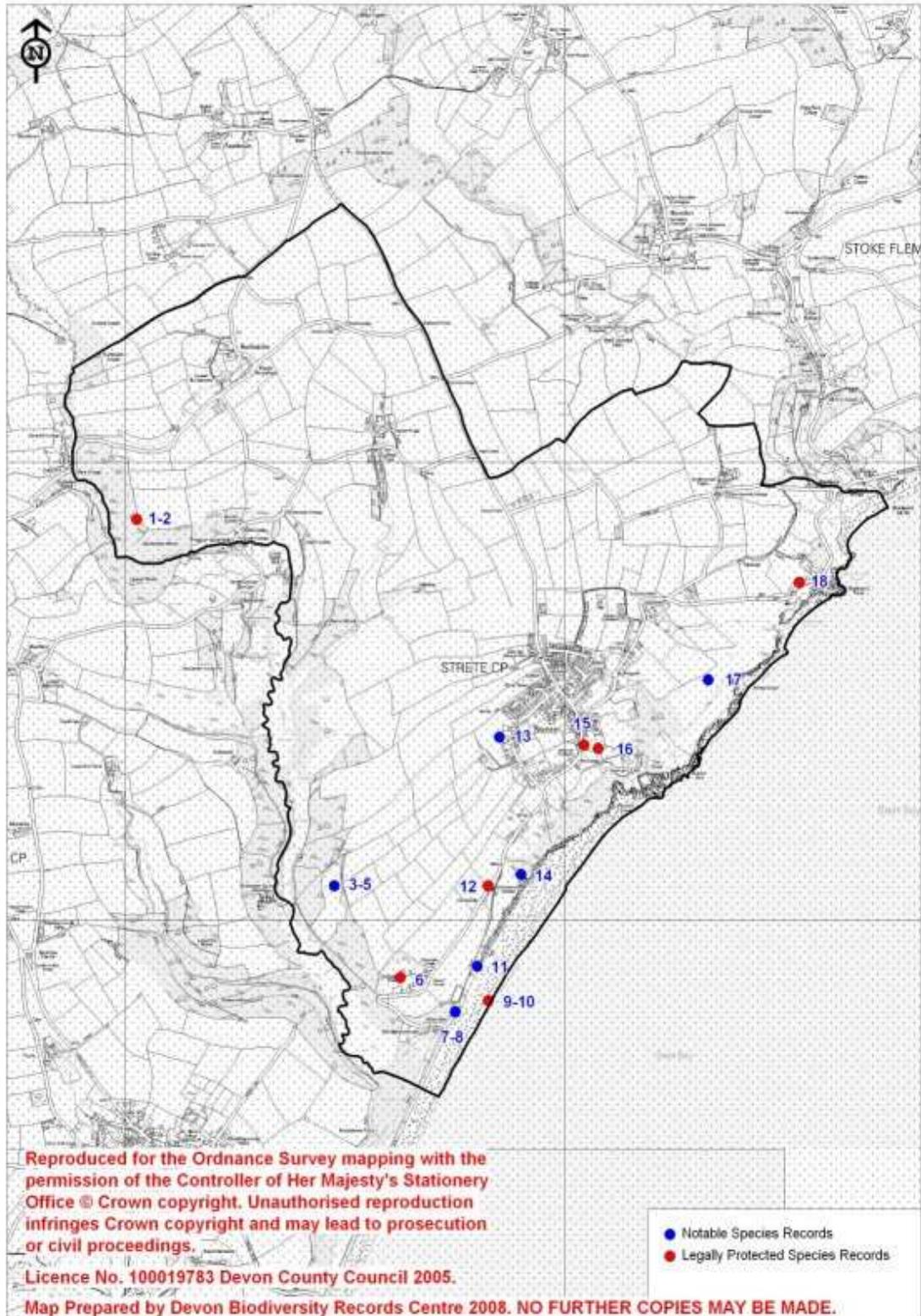
SX84/020	Strete Gate to Pilchard Cove	SX836456 to SX843465	33.5	Coastal habitats & semi-improved neutral grassland with bird interest	CWS
SX84/021	Shiphill Valley	SX844467	7	Broadleaved woodland, scrub & unimproved neutral grassland	CWS
SX84/022	Forest Cove	SX846470	10.6	Coastal grassland, scrub & gorse	CWS
SX84/023	Landcombe Cove	SX849473	7.4	Coastal grassland, scrub, bracken & shingle	CWS
SX84/029	Blackpool Sands	SX854478	9.2	Coastal grassland & scrub with plant interest	CWS
SX84NW1	Strete Gate	SX840463	17	A good section in the slates & sandstones of the Dartmouth group	RIGS

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI): these are notified by Natural England 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.

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.

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.

Legally protected & notable species records within Strete Parish (2008)



Legally protected & notable Species within Strete Parish (2008)

No	Common Name	Scientific Name	Location	Date	Grid Reference	UK protection	International protection	Status
1	Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Burlestone & Leader Woods	1992	SX820477			DBAP
2	Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Burlestone & Leader Woods	1992	SX820477	WCA 8 (S)		
3	Butcher's-Broom	<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i>	Coleridge Place	1992	SX829461		EC Vb	
4	Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Coleridge Place	1992	SX829461	WCA 1		
5	Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Coleridge Place	1992	SX829461			DBAP
6	Lesser Horseshoe Bat	<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>	Coleridge Place, Strete, Dartmouth.	2006	SX832457	WCA 5, 6	EC IIa, IVa; Bern II; Bonn II	UKBAP (P)
7	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		1997	SX835456			UKBAP (P)
8	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	STETE GATE	1999	SX835456			UKBAP (P)
9	Cirl Bunting	<i>Emberiza cirrus</i>	Strete Gate to Pilchard Cove	1992	SX836456	WCA 1		UKBAP (P); DBAP; Red
10	Cetti's Warbler	<i>Cettia cetti</i>	Strete Gate to Pilchard Cove	1992	SX836456	WCA 1		
11	Wall Brown	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>		1990	SX836458			UKBAP (P)

12	Common Dormouse	Muscardinus avellanarius	Old Hill, Strete, Dartmouth.	2007	SX836461	WCA 5, 6	EC IVa; Bern III	UKBAP (P); DBAP
13	Wall Brown	Lasiommata megera		1990-1991	SX837468			UKBAP (P)
14	Wall Brown	Lasiommata megera		1990	SX838462			UKBAP (P)
15	Japanese Knotweed	Fallopia japonica	Strete village. Next to bus shelter on east side of A379.	2004	SX84084676	WCA 9		
16	Japanese Knotweed	Fallopia japonica	Behind the bus shelter and opposite the pub at Strete, near Dartmouth. Next to a car park.	2001	SX841467	WCA 9		
17	Hairy Bird's-Foot-Trefoil	Lotus subbiflorus	Forest Cove	1992	SX846470			NS; DN1
18	Japanese Knotweed	Fallopia japonica	On A379 near Blackpool Sands between Strete and Stoke Fleming. (To the back of layby.)	2005	SX85064747	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.
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.
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.
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.
ECVa, Vb	EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats & Species Directive) Annex Va and Vb: 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.

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

Common Name	Scientific Name
Alder	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Alexanders	<i>Smyrniololus atratum</i>
Annual Meadow-grass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Ash	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Bittercress	<i>Cardamine sp</i>
Black Spleenwort	<i>Asplenium adiantum-nigrum</i>
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>
Bristle Bent	<i>Agrostis curtisii</i>
Broad Buckler-fern	<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>
Broad-leaved Dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</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>
Cow Parsley	<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</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>
English Stonecrop	<i>Sedum anglicum</i>
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Gorse	<i>Ulex europaeus</i>
Greater Stitchwort	<i>Stellaria holostea</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>
Holm Oak	<i>Quercus Ilex</i>
Honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Ivy-leaved Toadflax	<i>Cymbalaria muralis</i>
Lesser Celandine	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>
Lesser Periwinkle	<i>Vinca minor</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>
Oak	<i>Quercus sp</i>
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Pine	<i>Pinus sp.</i>
Polypody	<i>Polypodium agg.</i>

Primrose	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
Red Campion	<i>Silene dioica</i>
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra agg.</i>
Red Valerian	<i>Centranthus ruber</i>
Ribwort Plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Sheep's Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>
Sow-thistle	<i>Sonchus sp.</i>
Snowdrop	<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>
Spear Thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Traveller's-joy	<i>Clematis vitalba</i>
Vetch	<i>Vicia sp</i>
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>
Wild Strawberry	<i>Fragaria vesca</i>
Willow	<i>Salix sp</i>
Wood Avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Wood-sorrel	<i>Oxalis acetosella</i>
Yorkshire Fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>

Birds

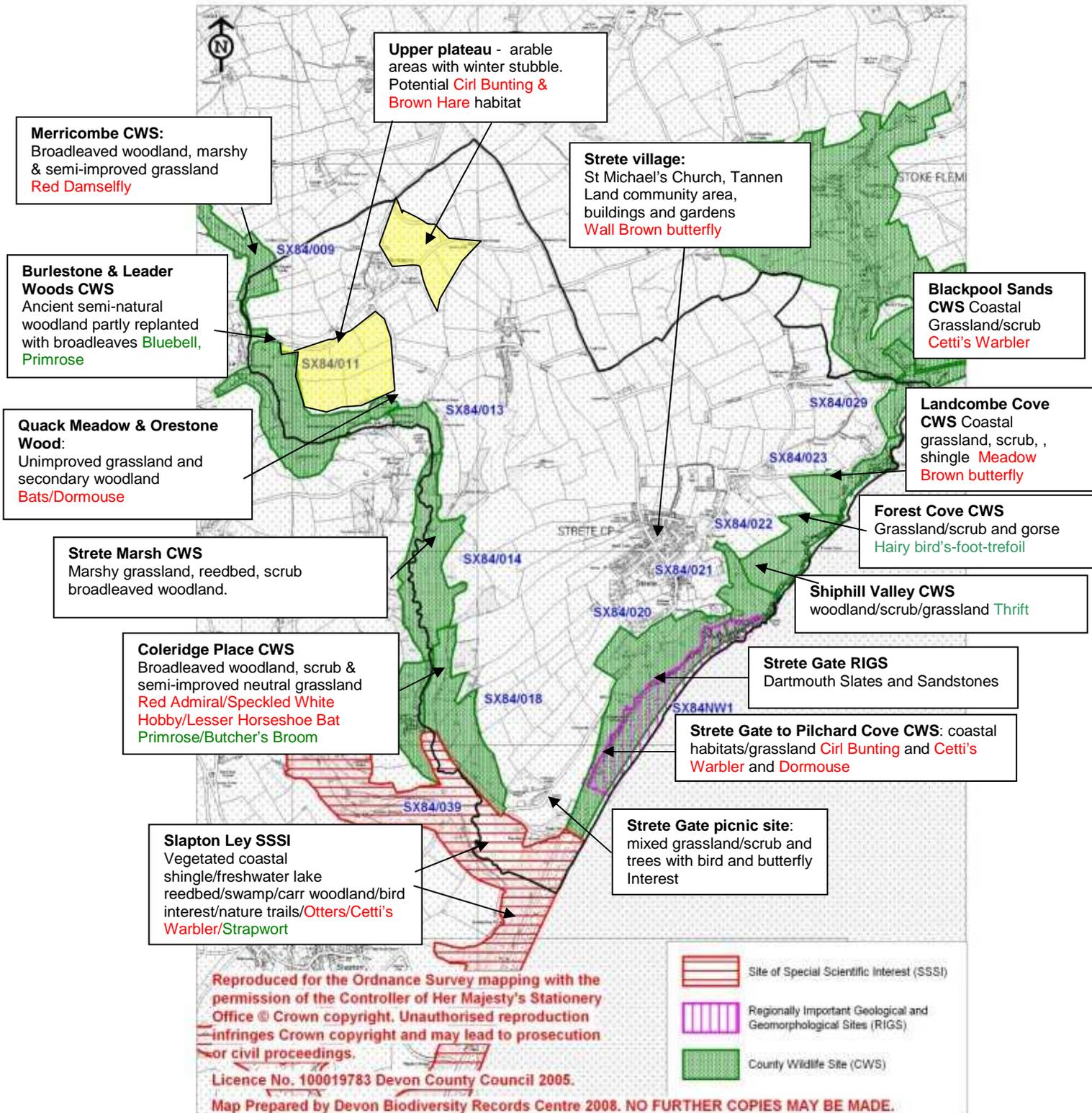
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Black-headed Gull	<i>Chroicocephalus ridibundus</i>
Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i>
Chaffinch	<i>Fringilla coelebs</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Pheasant	<i>Phasianus colchicus</i>
Robin	<i>Erithacus rubecula</i>
Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i>
Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>

Mammals

Rabbit	<i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>
Mole (hills)	<i>Talpa europaea</i>

Appendix 3: Key Biodiversity Features of Strete Parish

Statutory and non-statutory sites within Strete Parish (2008)



Appendix 4: Tannen Land Community Area, Strete Village Management Recommendations

Background

Tannen Land Community Area is a south east facing sloping area of grassland on the edge of Strete village above the A379 overlooking farmland and the sea beyond.

Previously owned by the developers of the Start Bay Park housing estate on the north side of the village, The site was gifted to Devon County Council and is managed by Strete Parish Council under a Management Agreement, due for renewal in 2010. It is in a good position, and has good pedestrian and management access from the north of the site.

The site was enhanced in the late 1980's in partnership with South Devon Coast & Countryside Service which included hedge-planting, shrub and tree planting, fencing, the creation of a circular path, installation of gates, an interpretation board and benches. Many of the shrubs planted however failed to establish and currently the site is managed as rough grassland, mowed once a year by the parish council at the end of the summer. The circular path mown around the edge of the site is used predominantly for exercising dogs.

The site has been assessed at some point by Devon Biodiversity Record Centre but was not deemed to be of sufficient habitat or wildlife species value to warrant designation as a County Wildlife Site.

In 2008 a comprehensive report detailing a description of the site, land tenure, physical features, boundaries, access, topography, facilities, current condition and proposals for improvement together with work in progress was compiled by Simon Buckler, the then Chair of the Parish Council. This was drawn up in consultation with other members of the local community.

In January 2009 the site was visited as part of the biodiversity audit visit for Strete. Although an unsuitable time of year for botanical recording, an initial assessment was made of the site. The grassland is species-poor and is dominated by Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Perennial Rye Grass *Lolium perenne*, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius* with White clover *Trifolium repens* and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*. The edges of the site are however relatively herb rich with Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Alexanders *Smyrnium olusatrum*, Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederecea* and Hart's Tongue fern *Phyllitis scolopendrium* recorded during the audit visit. There are also pockets of tall herb and woody species including Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Bramble *Rubus sp.* on the eastern edge of the site. Little remains of shrub species planted 20 years ago other than a *Hebes* in the centre of the site. The hedge on the south side of the site, mainly Blackthorn and Hawthorn, is well established and trimmed in accordance with the management agreement.

Site Assessment

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of few publicly accessible open spaces within the village • Good position with south east facing views across farmland and Start Bay below • Community engagement in site – managed by Parish Council for benefit of local residents. • High level of community interest and volunteer effort 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Species-poor sward, dominated by rank grasses • Nutrient enrichment from grass cuttings; potential threat to species diversity • Relatively low habitat diversity – site dominated by rough grassland • Depth and soil type not established (areas of rubble under top soil) • Public health issues and reduced amenity value from dog faeces
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential habitat diversity (grassland, scrub, wetland) and associated species diversity • Potential increase in range and mix of uses (for example walking, quiet enjoyment, play, nature study, community wildlife gardening, community events) • Changes in on-going management regime in favour of increasing biodiversity and amenity value of site. • Access to community grant schemes 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future disposal of land by DCC (i.e. low risk due to 80 year £1 buy back clause in favour of original developer) • Financial limitations to intensive management regimes in light of small parish precept • Potential withdrawal of support from partner authorities • Possible lack of resources/interest in greater management input

Recommendations

Set out below are a series of suggestions on possible approaches to the future management and enhancement of the site; these build on the strengths and opportunities identified through the 'Site Assessment' table above. These are offered for consideration by the Parish Council and Devon County Council. The implementation of any of these proposals will be subject to any site constraints (including those stemming from the transfer of the land to DCC by the previous owner and those contained with the Management Agreement) and the availability of the necessary resources.

Create a pond/wetland area

This would require a fair degree of advance planning in terms of positioning in an area where soil depth and topography allow. The advantages of creating a pond and or wetland area are many and include increase in habitat diversity, increase in species diversity both in flora and fauna and increase in amenity value of the site. The wetland area could be fenced and gated to minimise disturbance and to allay health and safety concerns for users with small children. A pond dipping platform and viewing area/bench could be added for educational value and quiet enjoyment. Once excavated and landscaped, the pond should colonise naturally and will require a low level of management. The 'Million Ponds' project has recently been launched by the Pond Conservation Trust and is offering grants and advice to communities for the creation of new ponds. More details can be found at www.pondconservaton.org.uk

Create Wild Flower Meadows

The creation of wildflower meadow areas would require a better understanding of soil types and a change in long-term management regime but could considerably enhance the floral diversity and invertebrate interest of the site. At present the grassland is species poor.

Sowing a wildflower seed mixture on to the grassland would probably have limited success as the current sward is mainly dominated by competitive rank grass species and is nutrient enriched so that finer sward species are unable to compete. Plug planting with suitable flower species may enhance the diversity of the sward (for example Bird's-foot Trefoil). A wild flower meadow would require regular mowing (frequent cuts during the first year then a twice yearly cut thereafter) with the removal of grass cuttings after each cut.

A spring flowering meadow could be created, for example, on shady banks and include species such as Primrose. Intensity of management would depend on how weedy the area is beforehand. This would require two cuts per year and removal of grass cuttings.

Areas of the grassland could be cultivated and seeded with cornfield annual plants. This would require frequent weeding of undesirable competitive species and cultivation each spring.

It may be possible to reduce enrichment and competitive plant species by 'scraping' (removing the topsoil to reveal the sub-soil below) and creating banks with the topsoil removed. These works could be combined with the construction of a pond/wetland area. However as soil depth is unknown due to the presence of rubble the effectiveness of scraping could again be limited.

Further advice on wild flower meadow creation can be found at <http://www.landlife.org.uk/>.

Tree and shrub planting

The edges of the site and areas adjacent to hedges could, potentially, be planted with native trees and shrubs such as Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Holly, Hazel, Field maple, Spindle and Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. Little management would be needed other than during the establishment phase to guard against rabbit damage and to suppress competitive grass and weed species. Trees should be planted between October and March when the soil is moist and tree guards should be fitted around each plant. Mulch sheets fitted around the base of each tree will suppress weeds and will keep the ground surface moist and fairly stable in temperature. Any planting scheme would need the approval of Mardan Developments and there may be a restriction on the maximum height of trees once established.

Hedge Management

The current Management Agreement stipulates that the hedges should be properly cut and trimmed. At the time of the audit visit the hedge along the southern boundary had been recently tightly trimmed both top and sides. Less frequent trimming would increase biodiversity interest for species such as Dormouse and Brown Hairstreak butterfly (see section on Species-rich hedges). Ideally, the hedge should be allowed to grow to a height of about 3 metres and then laid. Once laid the hedge its value for wildlife will be far higher, particularly for birds and invertebrates, as it can be either left undisturbed for several years the laid again or managed by trimming every 2/3 years in late winter..

As well as managing existing hedges for wildlife there may also be opportunities to create new hedges on the site (for example to demarcate a dog-free area or a pond area). Appropriate hedgerow species include Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Hazel, Holly, Field Maple *Acer campestre* and Dog Rose *Rosa canina* (or other native and locally appropriate species, particularly those which are prevalent in nearby hedges).

Grazing

There are examples of public open spaces being successfully grazed throughout the UK using flexible fencing and local grazers. This would need to be arranged in liaison with DCC. However, this may create complications for the public use and enjoyment of the site.

Create a forest garden

This is a permaculture feature where a woodland is created but all the plants

within it are edible (for example fruit trees and herbs) and include nitrogen fixers to improve soil quality (for example Alder, Gorse and Lupin). Work to set up a forest garden would be potentially intensive for the first year or two and involves detailed planning. However, once established maintenance requires little management and the benefits in terms of biodiversity, amenity and community ownership can be very rewarding. Further details can be found at www.agroforestry.co.uk

Keep bees

Local bee keepers may be interested in keeping some hives in an undisturbed position.

Facilities

Past suggestions from the community for additional facilities include:

- Creation of community allotments (this could also help raise revenue to manage other parts of the site)
- Erection of a day shelter
- Creation of a fenced area for picnicking and children's play
- Installation of a barbeque area
- Improved dog waste facilities and advice for dog owners
- Improved information panels and signage
- Provision of picnic tables and benches

Possible Next Steps

Form a project group to agree future improvements and long-term management requirements of the site in consultation with residents.

DCC could include more specific management regimes within the Management Agreement. The current management agreement was signed in 1989 and is due for renewal in 2010. It may take some time to source funding and complete capital projects such as pond excavation. This would need to be factored in to determine the terms of the new agreement. Rather than reducing the term of the new agreement, it may be possible to set a review date to allow the addition of more detailed management guidance once improvements have been put in place.

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. This could usefully form of the key resources used by the Parish Council (and others, as relevant) to help guide the future management of the land.