

## Section B: A vision for variety

### A possible future for Devon's natural environment

Most of us cherish a childhood memory or a favourite place of relaxation that is defined by the natural world. The sight of banks of primroses heralding spring. The bright flash of a kingfisher hurtling upstream over the sound of rushing water. The heady warm scent of a meadow, and skylarks overhead. The smell of the ocean on seaweed or the magical discovery of some trace of ancient life in a pebble on a beach.

**...In a possible future, all these experiences will be plentiful and accessible to all, to become in turn the cherished memories for our children, too.**

Wildlife, wild places and the landscape sculptured from its bedrock geology define Devon, in harmony with its culture and its architecture. Tall hedges alongside deep country lanes. Patchwork landscapes of small fields, copses and river meanders. Wide views over purple heath and marshy moor with rocky towers capping boulder-strewn hill sides. Craggy sea cliffs frame secluded coves and expansive seas.

**...In a possible future, Devon's natural environment will, by its distinctive richness, say 'Devon!' to all those who live amongst it or come to visit it. All of Devon's inhabitants, from Plymouth city centre to the remote villages on the fringes of Exmoor, will gain a sense of belonging from the wildlife and landscape they experience every day. The natural world will help pull together and unite communities.**

Wildlife and wild places in Devon hide a cornucopia of species, niches and landforms - a unique library of biological and geological information. The teeming life within the mudflats of an estuary. The thousands of birds contributing to a dawn chorus. The twisted

layers of sediment visible in a rock face and the coral reef preserved in the limestone beds of a long disused quarry. The complex, unseen territories of otter families, decipherable from their tracks along a river bank. The rare plant which hangs from a Devon cliff face, and occurs nowhere else on earth. This wildlife and geology is a resource for science and for education, the basis of many cherished natural history hobbies, and has an intrinsic, immeasurable value in its own right.

**...In a possible future, there will be space for this variety to thrive, and its rarities will be secure. The management of the land, coast and sea will safeguard the rich bio- and geodiversity that we have and ensure that it survives or even thrives so that future generations can enjoy and learn from it.**

Wildlife, wild places and the geological heritage of Devon represent a fundamental source of economic prosperity in Devon. They are the basis of the County's tourist industry, visitors being inspired by two World Heritage Sites, a Biosphere Reserve, two National Parks and many other protected landscapes and coasts. They are a key reason for many small businesses choosing to locate to Devon and can be an important source of income in the countryside.

**...In a possible future, bio- and geodiversity will be a cherished resource to nurture, for economic as well as cultural reasons. Nature conservation will be an accepted and natural part of the activity of all sectors of the economy. It will be recognised as a key foundation for collective prosperity.**

Wildlife and wild places touch all our lives in some way. The nature of Devon is in *our* nature. Everyone should have the chance to hear the strange churring of a nightjar on a summer evening, watch a barn owl quarter over the meadows in the first light of morning or discover for themselves the ancient spiral shells of giant ammonites on a Devon beach. These are the *possible* futures for Devon's bio- and geodiversity, as an integral part of Devon's society. But they will not *be* the future without commitment, partnership, and concerted action. This Plan provides a framework for that future.