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## Biodiversity & Geodiversity Issues Paper - February 2011

# 1 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

## 1.1 Summary

Biodiversity and geodiversity are fundamental for a healthy environment; they are indicators of the health of our ecosystem and quality of life. Cornwall has a rich biodiversity and geodiversity and the planning process has an important role in safeguarding and enhancing this essential resource.

Taking into account key messages from the evidence available, the following spatial planning issue has been identified:

**Issue B1** – The Core Strategy should consider how Cornwall's biodiversity might best be protected, enhanced and prepared for adaptation to climate change and how Cornwall's geodiversity should best be protected.

## 1.2 Purpose

This is one in a series of papers dealing with a specific theme. Each can be read in isolation or together with other papers to gain a wider understanding of issues facing Cornwall. This paper sets out the evidence base and the policy context for biodiversity & geodiversity and describes how the issues that need to be addressed in relation to biodiversity & geodiversity could be taken forward in the Core Strategy. These papers will form the first stage of the development of options for Core Strategy policy. Other issues papers available in this series include:

- *Housing*
- *Economy*
- *Tourism*
- *Retail & town centres*
- *Education & skills*
- *Social inclusion*
- *Crime & anti-social behaviour*
- *Sport recreation & open space*
- *Health*
- *Transport & accessibility*
- *Energy*
- *Climate change*
- *Soil, air & water quality*
- *Flooding, drought & water consumption*
- *Landscape & seascape*
- *Historic environment*
- *Design & efficient use of resources*
- *Coast & maritime*

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- *Agriculture & food*
- *Minerals*
- *Waste*

This series of papers is closely linked to the topics of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) scoping report. The SA scoping report identifies the sustainability objectives, decision making criteria and indicators against which the LDF and other plans in Cornwall should be tested, to examine whether plans are sustainable. The SA scoping report also identifies key messages from national, regional and local plans for the Cornwall LDF, a baseline and sustainability issues for each topic. These Core Strategy issue papers largely build on the SA scoping report and start to examine in greater detail the messages from evidence and research, the opportunities and threats and planning issues that need to be considered in the Core Strategy (the SA scoping report can be found at <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=17394>).

### 1.3 What are biodiversity and geodiversity?

Biodiversity is the variety of life in all its forms. It includes all species of plants and animals, the genetic variety amongst them and the complex ecosystems of which they are part. Biodiversity includes people as a species and our need for food security, medicines, shelter and a clean and healthy environment (UN 1992 Convention for Biological Diversity).

Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, minerals, fossils and structures together with the processes that result in their formation.

Whilst all topics are interlinked, this Biodiversity and Geodiversity paper has particularly strong links to the papers dealing with Landscape, Coast, Open Space and Water Quality.

### 1.4 Biodiversity and Geodiversity 'portrait' of Cornwall

Cornwall has a rich biodiversity with a wealth of flora and fauna, which is recognised for its importance internationally, nationally and locally. 23% of Cornwall is covered by semi-natural habitat, which ranks Cornwall in this respect as second only to Cumbria. A significant characteristic of biodiversity in Cornwall is its intimate dispersal throughout the wider countryside, unlike elsewhere - even in the south west region - where biodiversity is generally concentrated in particular areas.

Cornwall's rich biodiversity can be illustrated by the heath-land dominated north cliff coasts, the large expanse of wetland at Goss Moor, the heath-land and acid grasslands of Kit Hill and Bodmin and the wooded estuaries of the rivers Fal and Helford. An important aspect of Cornwall is its long coastline and surrounding sea which harbour a wealth of habitats such as rocky shores and reefs, mudflats, dunes, sub-tidal sand banks, maerl beds, eel grass beds and kelp forest.

Cornwall is the second most 'heath-rich' county within the UK, with some 6,750 hectares of lowland heath, which amounts to 11% of the UK resource and just over 2% of the world's resource.

Although Cornish hedges do not neatly align with national definitions, with in excess of 25,000 kms of hedges in anciently enclosed land, Cornwall's hedges constitute a resource of national significance (about 154,000 km of UK hedges are ancient and/or species-rich).

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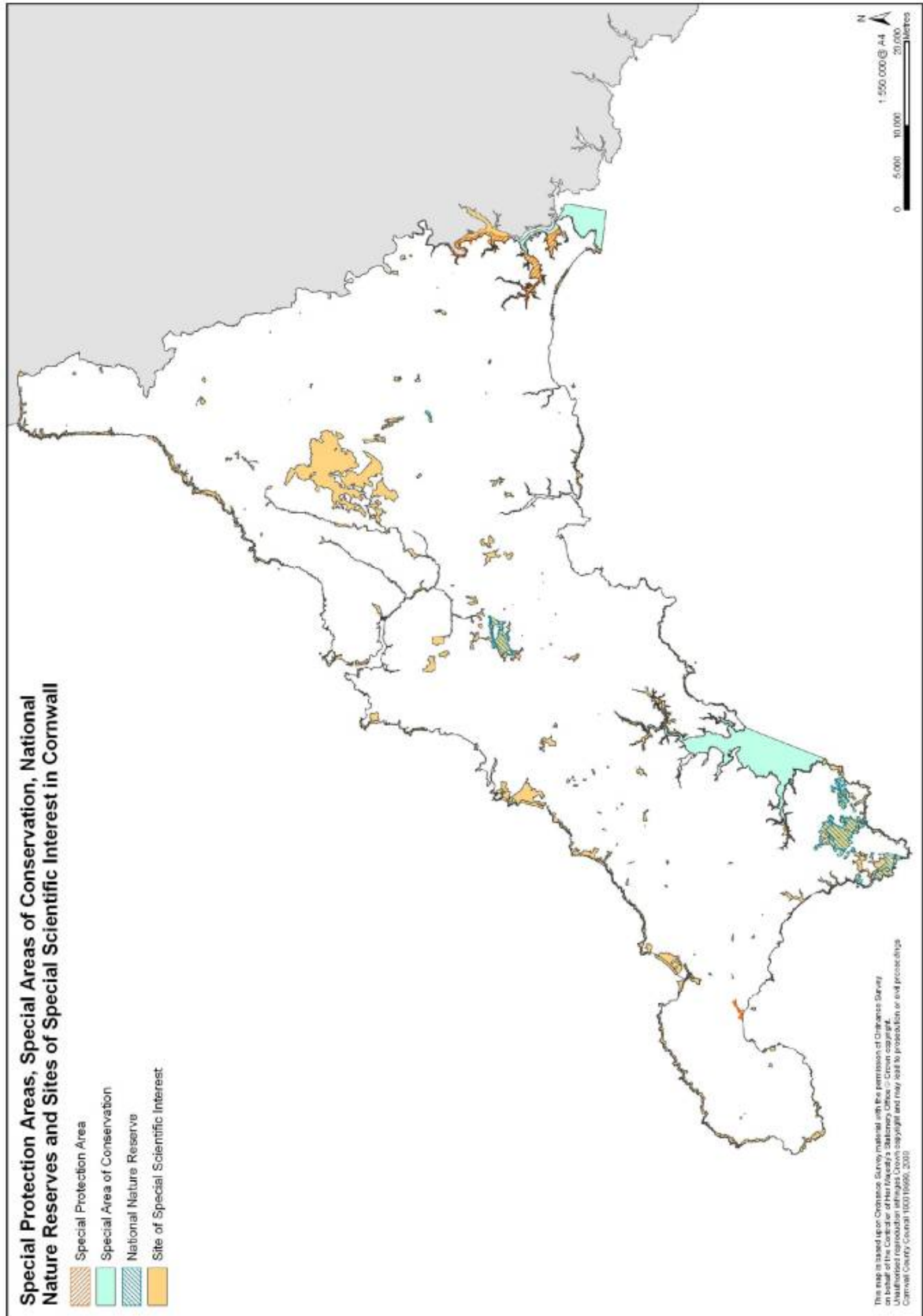
Although Cornwall has about half the national average of tree cover, it holds nationally important concentrations of ancient oak and wet woodlands.

Cornwall also has some of the most varied geology in the British Isles and contains a higher number of geologically significant sites than any other county in England. Cornwall's rich and varied geology has created much wealth for the county, with its rich mining history, and has helped shape Cornwall's culture and history (see also the minerals and historic environment papers). Cornwall has a considerable number of former mining sites that contain rare, specialised habitats and species: for instance heath-land and metal-tolerant algae. Cornwall's biodiversity and geodiversity help define the county's local distinctiveness and form an important part of our national heritage.

Whilst Cornwall has a significant amount of land and sea designated for its biodiversity importance, designations only paint a partial picture of biodiversity importance in the county. For instance, almost three quarters of Cornwall's semi-natural habitat is not covered by statutory designation. Biodiversity designations in Cornwall include 16 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and 2 Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are recognised for their international importance. Designated for their national importance are 3 National Nature Reserves and 140 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Approximately 50% of these SSSIs are in part or wholly notified for their geodiversity interest. Their distribution is shown on the following map.

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Map of Cornwall showing international and national biodiversity and geodiversity designations



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To safeguard Cornwall's biodiversity and geodiversity, the statutory sites are underpinned and complemented by a network of local sites which represent local character and distinctiveness. They comprise 496 County Wildlife Sites, 109 County Geological Sites and 13 Local Nature Reserves, all designated for their local importance.

### 1.5 What is the role of the Core Strategy?

The Core Strategy can provide planning policies that help deliver enhancement and protect Cornwall's biodiversity and geodiversity for the benefit of local communities. In developing these policies, the Core Strategy needs to take into account all other relevant plans, strategies, policies and programmes as well as involve key stakeholders and the community.

The Cornwall Core Strategy's role in respect of biodiversity and geodiversity can be that it provides:

- a framework for the identification of sites for the restoration and/or creation of new habitats;
- planning policies to protect, enhance and restore the biodiversity and geodiversity in Cornwall;
- a joined-up policy approach to the protection and enhancement of marine and terrestrial biodiversity.

### 1.6 Relevant policy context

When preparing the Core Strategy, the Council does not start with a blank sheet of paper. There is a whole series of policies at national and regional level which have to be followed and the Core Strategy needs to be prepared within the framework set by national and European legislation and national & regional guidance. This section focuses on the most relevant published legislation, plans & strategies and draws out their key messages for the Core Strategy. The key directives, acts, plans and strategies identified and used are:

#### International / European

- Rio Earth Summit Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)
- Habitats and Species Directive 92/43/EEC, as amended by 97/62/EC
- European Biodiversity Strategy (1998)

#### National

- Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) Delivering Sustainable Development
- Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
- Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (1995)
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (which amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981)
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc) Regulations 1994
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)

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### Regional

- South West Biodiversity Implementation Plan (2004)
- South West Nature Map (2006)

### Local

- Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan (2004)
- Cornwall Geodiversity Action Plan (2005)
- Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Planning Good Practice Guidance for Cornwall (2008)
- County Wildlife Site criteria for Cornwall (2010)
- County Geology Site criteria for Cornwall (2010)
- 'Future Cornwall' Cornwall Sustainable Community Strategy (2010)
- Living Landscapes Project ~ Wild Penwith<sup>(1)</sup>
- Imerys China Clay Project<sup>(2)</sup>
- Woodlands Project<sup>(3)</sup>
- HEATH Project<sup>(4)</sup>

## 1.7 Relevant evidence and research

### Habitat Loss

Cornwall's wildlife and habitats are important assets and monitoring the changes in habitat and species populations can give an indication of the state of the wider environment. The Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly collects, manages and holds a central database on the biological and geological state of the county. Over 1500 hectares of wildlife habitats were lost in Cornwall (approximately 3%) between 1988 and 1995 (see 'Emerging Evidence' below for plans to update these data). This was through gradual degradation and conversion to other land uses including agriculture, marginal grassland, built development and mineral extraction. Greatest real losses seem to be in neutral grassland and fen, marsh and swamp - probably due to drainage of land and the increase in intense agriculture.

(Source: Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative, 1997 and ERCCIS, 2002)

**Table 1.1 Net loss/Gain of habitat types (hectares)**

	<b>Gain (between 1988 to 1995)</b>	<b>Loss (between 1988 and 1995)</b>	<b>Net Loss/Gain (between 1988 and 1995)</b>	<b>Total area in 1988</b>	<b>Total area in 1995</b>
<b>Acid Grassland</b>	1.8	10.4	-8.6	5266.6	5258.0

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<b>Bracken</b>	11.7	24.9	-13.2	2028.4	2015.3
<b>Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland</b>	392.6	423.3	-30.7	32692.6	32661.9
<b>Coniferous woodland</b>	797.7	665.6	132.1	6012.8	6145.0
<b>Dwarf shrub heath</b>	1.4	60.8	-59.4	5546.4	5486.9
<b>Fen, marsh and swamp</b>	8.1	70.5	-62.4	4385.3	4322.9
<b>Improved Grassland</b>	780.6	1100.1	-319.5	195556.7	195237.2
<b>Littoral sediment</b>	1.3	0.3	1	331.7	332.7
<b>Neutral Grassland</b>	318.5	839.5	-521	12679.7	12158.6
<b>Supralittoral sediment</b>	0.0	5.5	-5.5	890.4	884.9
<b>Source: Environmental Record Centre for Cornwall &amp; Isles of Scilly</b>					

**Designated sites in Cornwall**

The following table shows the number and extent of sites designated for their nature conservation value in 2009.

Table 1.2 Designated Sites

<b>Landscape/Nature Designations</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>	<b>% of total area of Cornwall #</b>
<b>National Nature Reserves</b>	3	2,459.06	0.68%
<b>Local Nature Reserves</b>	12	385.76	0.11%
<b>CWT Nature Reserves</b>	55	1,468.56	0.41%
<b>County Wildlife Sites</b>	498	32,983.81	9.13%
<b>County Geology Sites (formerly known as RIGs)</b>	123	1,853.38	0.51%
<b>SSSIs (Special Sites of Scientific Interest)</b>	144	21,459.85	5.94%
<b>RAMSAR sites (Wetlands of International Importance)</b>	0	0	0%



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<b>SPAs (Special Protection Areas)</b>	2	1,999.47	_*
<b>SACs</b>	16	18,155.32	_*
<b>Source: Environmental Record Centre for Cornwall &amp; Isles of Scilly</b>			
<b>#Total area: 361,072.81 ha at Mean High Water</b>			
<b>*Cannot assign percentage from terrestrial area</b>			

Cornwall has four areas designated by the RSPB as Important Bird Areas (IBAs)<sup>(5)</sup>: Tamar Valley, Bodmin Moor, South Cornwall Coast and West Penwith Heaths. The National Trust manages 9686 hectares of land in Cornwall for its nature conservation value.

### Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is a designation which is aimed at protecting nationally important sites for wildlife and geology. SSSIs are the country's very best wildlife and geological sites.

In 2002 there were 144 SSSI sites within Cornwall totalling an area of 21,610 hectares. This accounts for 6.09% of the land area of Cornwall.

**Table 1.3 SSSI condition assessment shows the following outcome for Cornwall (March 2009)**

<b>% Area favourable</b>	<b>% Area unfavourable recovering</b>	<b>% Area unfavourable no change</b>	<b>% Area unfavourable declining</b>	<b>% Area destroyed / part destroyed</b>
56.54%	33.66%	5.77%	3.89%	0.14%



### Local Sites

Local Sites (County Wildlife and County Geological Sites) are sites of significant nature conservation value, frequently of equal biodiversity importance as SSSI but with less robust protective policies. In 2007 national Government introduced a National Indicator (NI 197) to measure Local Authorities'

<sup>5</sup> Important Bird Areas regularly hold significant populations of one or more globally or regionally threatened, endemic or congregatory bird species or highly representative bird assemblages.

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performance in respect of the management of Local Sites. In March 2009, 64% of Cornwall's Local sites were known to be in positive management and Cornwall Council is working with conservation partners to increase this percentage.

### **South West Nature Map**

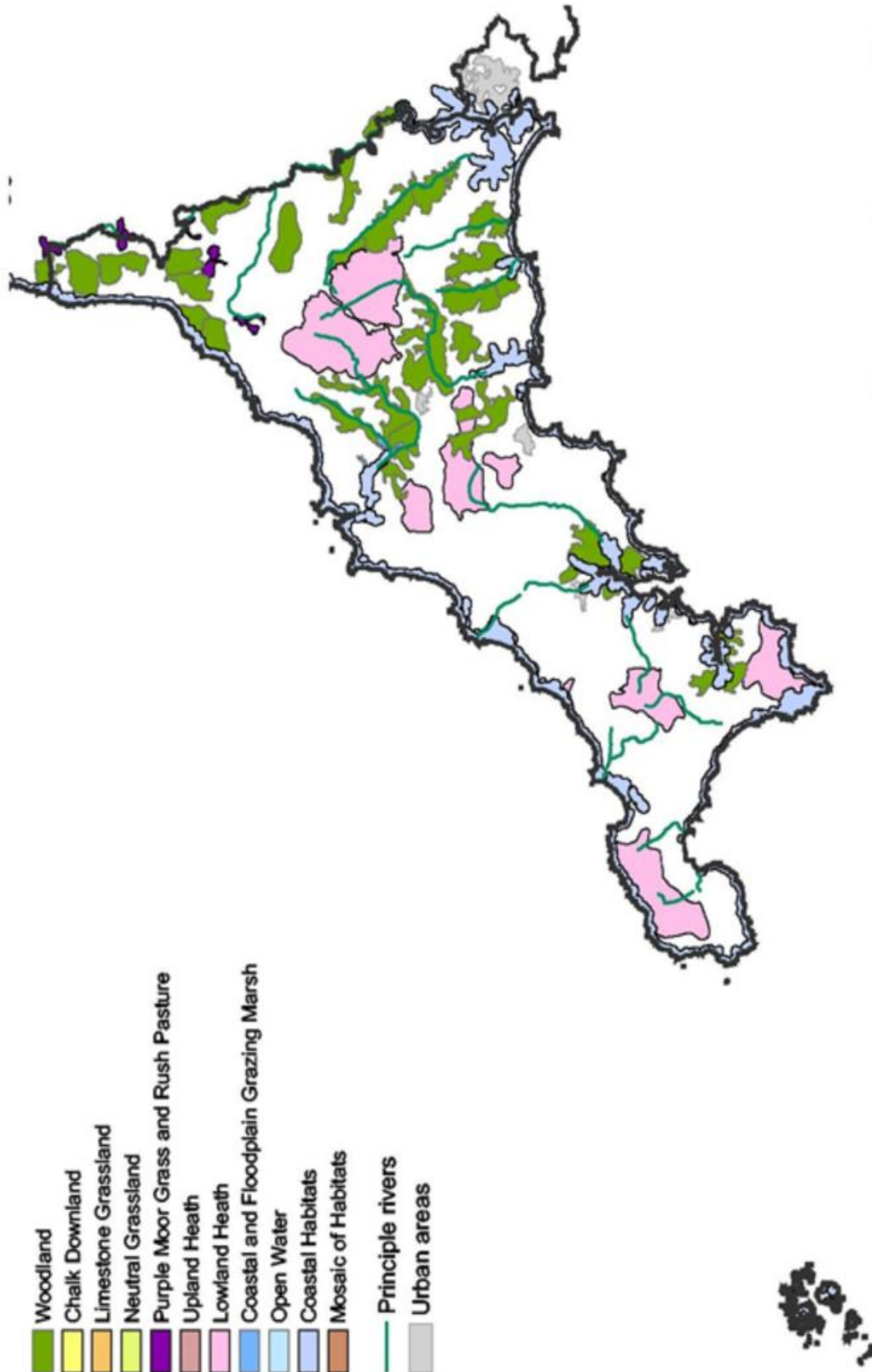
The South West Nature Map identifies Strategic Nature Areas which represent a focus for the restoration and recreation of habitats in the county.

The Cornwall part of the South West Nature map is shown on the next page.

The subsequent map shows the Cornwall Nature Map, together with the Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority sites, demonstrating how the two strategies are aimed to strengthen each other.

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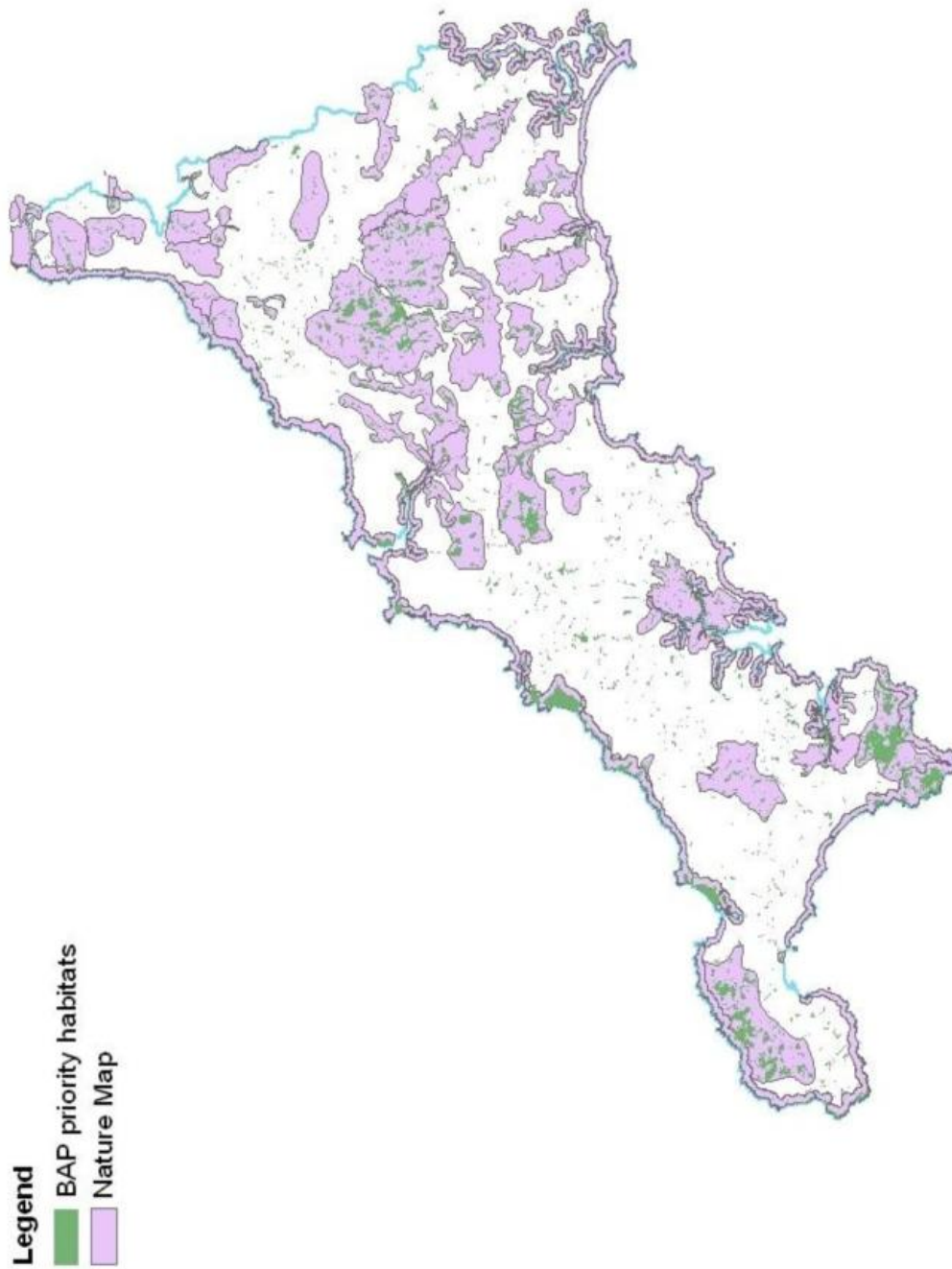
Southwest Nature Map - Cornwall



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Cornwall Nature Map, together with the Cornwall Biodiversity action plan (BAP) priority sites

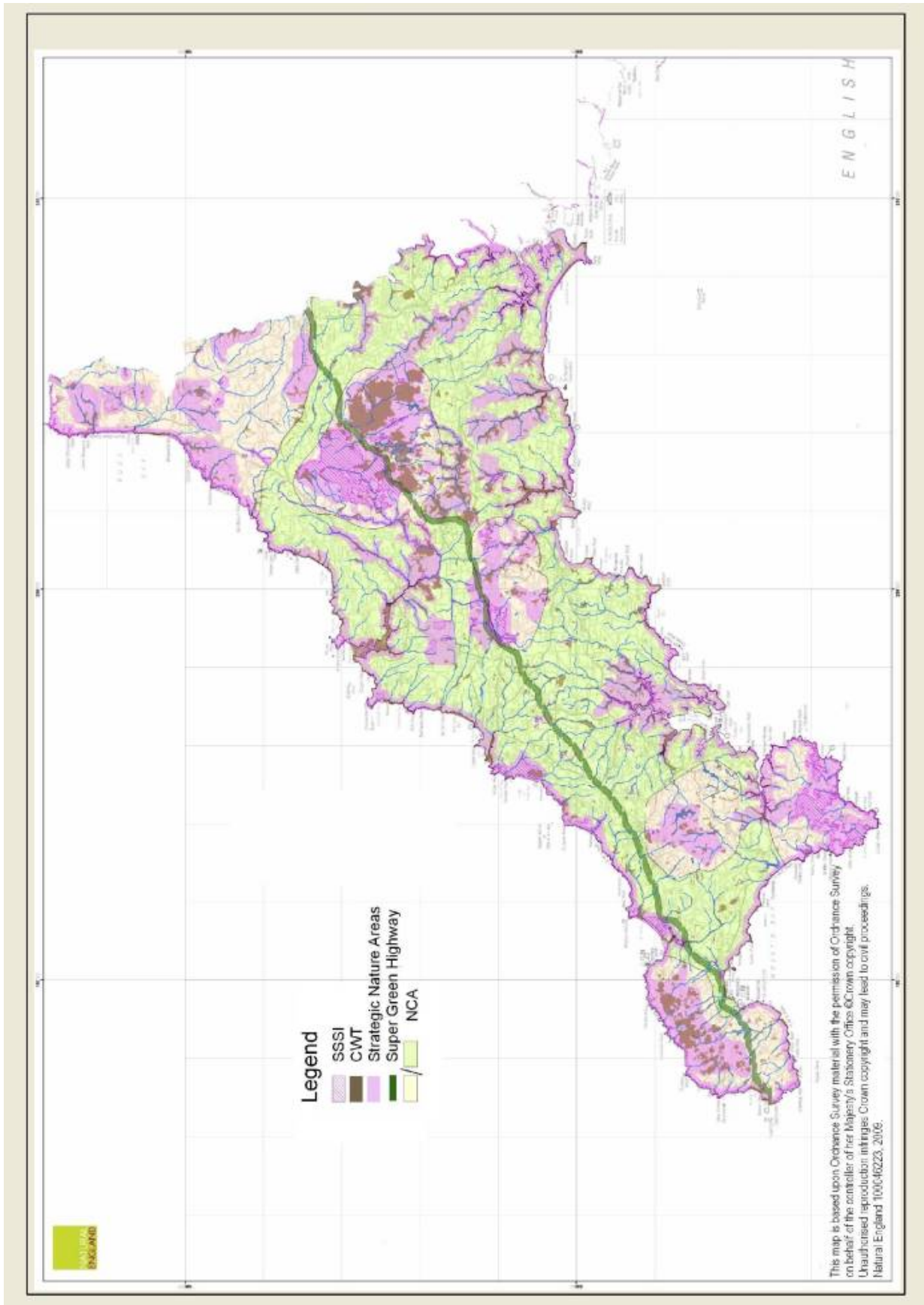


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### **Habitat connectivity across Cornwall**

Habitats that are well connected to each other stand a better chance of adapting to climate change and other pressures; fragmentation and isolation make them more vulnerable. Biodiversity within well connected habitats will be more resilient to change. The following map provides an initial assessment of opportunities for providing improved connectivity of habitats across Cornwall, including key areas of geodiversity. It shows that river valleys could be managed to provide corridors that link and buffer existing quality habitats (this would also provide benefits in terms of flood management).

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### 1.8 Emerging Evidence and Policy

The gathering of evidence is an iterative process and must be continued throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy. Additional evidence should be considered right up to the 'submission' stage in the process. Listed below are the known emerging relevant guidance and studies, which will be taken into account if available before the submission of the Core Strategy:

- Draft Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment (2010)
- An invitation to shape the Nature of England Discussion Document 2010
- The Cornwall Biodiversity Action Plan is currently being revised: its targets will be made more specific and measurable. Where possible BAP species will be linked to BAP habitats and BAP targets linked to specific projects.
- The 'China Clay Biodiversity' Visioning is a project aimed at producing a detailed vision for biodiversity in the China Clay Strategic Nature Area (co-ordinated by the Cornwall Biodiversity Initiative). Similar visioning projects are underway for Bodmin Moor and Penwith.
- Some ongoing monitoring of biodiversity is carried out and evidence on species and habitats is held by the Environmental Records Centre.
- The Cornwall Landcover Change project will highlight changes in dominant landcover, their impact on the landscape and their (ir)reversibility, between 1995 and 2005.
- The newly published UK List of Priority Species and Habitats contains new terrestrial and marine habitats and species, the conservation approach to which is currently being developed.
- Natural England have submitted a proposal to the European Commission for the designation of inshore and offshore SACs at Lands End & Cape Bank and Lizard Point.
- The Cornwall AONB Unit has commissioned a Cornwall AONB Atlas which will combine biodiversity and other information and may assist in future biodiversity monitoring.

### 1.9 Gaps in evidence

- A robust data set on the distribution and numbers of a chosen list of key indicator species, to be monitored on an ongoing basis. Such data could be of great benefit to monitoring the effects of LDF policies.
- A full audit of the geodiversity of Cornwall is yet to be achieved.

### 1.10 Key Messages from the context and evidence review

A number of key messages and issues were drawn out from the evidence review. The table below identifies the messages deemed most relevant and the source documents.

Table 1.4

Message	Relevant Document(s)
Need to ensure that biological and geological diversity is conserved, enhanced & restored.	<p><b>PPS9</b></p> <p><b>SW Nature Map</b></p> <p><b>Cornwall BAP</b></p>

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Connectivity between habitats & space is needed to allow species to adapt to climate change	<b>Living Landscapes Project</b>
Decisions on development and use of land must integrate biodiversity and geodiversity with other considerations.	<b>PPS9</b>
Policies in Local Development Documents should reflect and be consistent with national, regional and local biodiversity and geodiversity priorities and objectives (including those agreed by local biodiversity partnerships).	<b>PPS9</b>
Plan policies should take a strategic approach to the conservation, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geology.	<b>PPS9</b>
LDFs should identify areas or sites for the restoration or creation of new priority habitats which contribute to regional targets, and support this restoration or creation through appropriate policies	<b>PPS9</b>
Plan policies should promote opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geodiversity features within the design of development	<b>PPS9</b>
Conserve existing biodiversity, develop a ecologically resilient and varied landscape, establish ecological networks through habitats protection, restoration and creation	<b>Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing Climate (DEFRA)</b>
Every public authority has a statutory duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity	<b>NERC Act 2006</b>
Biodiversity provides substantial goods and services to our ecosystem, and is an indicator of the health of our ecosystem and quality of life	<b>Guidance for local authorities on implementing biodiversity duty (Defra)</b>
A dramatic loss in biodiversity has occurred since the 1940s, partially owing to development pressures	<b>PPS9</b> <b>A Biodiversity Strategy for England (2002)</b>
Achieve a healthy functioning ecosystem, including towns and cities, of which wild species and habitats form a part; where we nurture, treasure and enhance biodiversity, and where biodiversity is a natural consideration of policies and decisions, and in society as a whole	<b>Biodiversity South West Vision</b>



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### 1.11 SWOT analysis

Table 1.5

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High proportion of biodiversity habitat and geodiversity, compared with England average, which is well dispersed throughout Cornwall</li> <li>• High quality marine habitats</li> <li>• Landscape scale (e.g. larger) concentrations of habitat, such as Penwith, Lizard, Bodmin Moor, the coast</li> <li>• Natural environment of high value for tourism, health and outdoor education</li> <li>• Biodiversity value of former mining sites and brownfield sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented biodiversity</li> <li>• Lack of resources to advise the planning system</li> <li>• Lack of resources to monitor biodiversity and geodiversity</li> <li>• Incomplete understanding of climate change impacts on habitats and species</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development can achieve benefits for biodiversity and geodiversity</li> <li>• Link and expand features such as hedgerows, rough grass verges, woodlands and wetlands which can deliver recreation, biodiversity and cultural benefits as well as enhance surface water drainage and provide cooling</li> <li>• Create new wetlands, for instance through flood storage schemes</li> <li>• Retain and incorporate new biodiversity within new development</li> <li>• Improve management of land for biodiversity</li> <li>• Restore, enhance and create new areas of habitats (as guided by South West Nature Map and Cornwall habitat connectivity mapping)</li> <li>• Developer contributions</li> <li>• Improve our knowledge and understanding of biodiversity changes and requirements through monitoring and surveying</li> <li>• Raise the awareness of the importance of biodiversity and geodiversity and its management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmentation, isolation and lack of opportunities for biodiversity to adapt to climate change</li> <li>• Competition for land – for food, for built development, for energy (e.g. biocrops) etc</li> <li>• Direct development pressures and indirect pressures (e.g. recreational) associated with development</li> <li>• The effects of climate change, including loss of habitat through sea level rise, coastal change and the loss of species as a result of changing local temperature ranges</li> <li>• Increasing pressure on 'natural' areas and geodiversity from tourism (including 'out of season'), recreation and for health benefits ('green gym')</li> <li>• Changing land management practices, in particular changing farming practices, loss of set-aside</li> <li>• Inadequate protection for Cornish hedges</li> <li>• Loss of biodiversity through development of brownfield/former mining sites and infill of urban sites</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agri-environment schemes</li> <li>• Promote sustainable tourism and amenity use</li> <li>• Improve links between geodiversity, minerals and historic environment sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pollution to soil, air and water, and pollution through noise and light</li> <li>• Insufficient resources to provide advice to landowners and to manage and maintain habitats and geodiversity</li> </ul>
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### 1.12 Climate Change Considerations

The main pressures on biodiversity and geodiversity from climate change arise from:

- Mismatches in timing of seasonal events such as breeding, arrival of natural food sources and pollination;
- Changes in species abundance –creating more or less competition
- Range changes/migration – need for species to move in response to climate changes, e.g. decreased rainfall/increased heat
- Ecosystem function –as a result of changes in species composition
- Loss of habitat
- Flooding of habitats
- Human responses to climate change, e.g. coastal defences, flood alleviation works
- Trees /flora under stress
- Different pests & diseases
- Drought / fire
- Lowering of groundwater levels
- Changing farming patterns

Climate change is further explored in a separate issues paper in this series, as well as in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (visit [www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)). The scoping report sets out a series of sustainability objectives against which the Core Strategy and other parts of the LDF will be assessed, to gauge how far they will promote sustainable development. The relevant objectives for biodiversity and geodiversity state:

*“Conserve, enhance and restore the condition and extent of biodiversity in the county and allow its adaptation to climate change”.*

*“To conserve, enhance and restore the condition of geodiversity in the county”.*

### 1.13 Main Spatial Planning Issues

Taking into account the key messages from the current evidence available, the identified spatial planning issue is set out below.

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### Issue B 1

Issue B1 – The Core Strategy should consider how Cornwall's biodiversity might best be protected, enhanced and prepared for adaptation to climate change and how Cornwall's geodiversity should best be protected.

This issue will work towards achieving the following long term objectives for Cornwall as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy - 'Future Cornwall':

- To make the most of our environment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and invest in and promote sustainable use of natural resources.

This paper summarises the evidence on biodiversity and geodiversity brought together to inform the Cornwall Core Strategy. However, it will be added to and kept up-to-date as other relevant evidence becomes available. In updating these papers all previous versions will be archived to ensure it is clear what evidence was available at each stage.

### 1.14 Appendix A

#### Consultation to date:

The Issues papers were first published for stakeholder consultation in September 2009. The papers were amended to take into account consultee responses and were then circulated to Planning Policy Advisory Panel members in November 2009. They were also given to all Members at a series of three area based consultation events in March 2010.

#### Revisions to Issues Papers:

In writing the draft Issues and Options report in March 2010 it was clear that it was necessary to revise the issues identified in some of the topic based issues papers. Some issues were requirements under other legislation or procedural matters, and therefore options could not be set against them (*e.g. The Core Strategy should work with other plans and programmes...*) Others were in fact options and needed to be set as options under an overarching issue (*e.g. The Core Strategy has a role in supporting the growth and sustainability of the micro and small business economy*). There was also some repetition between different topics and these issues could be amalgamated.

#### Criteria for Changes:

The issues have been rationalised against the following criteria:

- Is this a Spatial Planning Issue?
- Is the issue covered by other legislation?
- Can options be generated against each issue?
- Is this an issue and not an option?

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- Is the issue rooted in evidence?
- Is there potential to amalgamate issues?

### Issues in Consultation Version:

**Issue B1** – The Core Strategy should consider how Cornwall’s biodiversity might best be protected and enhanced, through the protection of species, the protection, restoration and enhancement of their habitats and the creation of new habitats, including utilising opportunities arising from new development wherever appropriate. The Core Strategy should consider how Cornwall’s geodiversity should best be protected.

**Issue B2**– The Core Strategy should consider how to provide for the adaptation and survival of the county’s biodiversity in a changing climate, through encouraging opportunities to create new and connect existing habitats through wildlife corridors, both on a small scale and on the larger landscape scale.

**Issue B3** – Consider how biodiversity can be effectively monitored

### Revised Issues:

**Issue B1** –The Core Strategy should consider how Cornwall’s biodiversity might best be protected, enhanced and prepared for adaptation to climate change and how Cornwall’s geodiversity should best be protected.