

Contract brief for:

## Devon Inventory of Parkland Sites

### **Background.**

The Devon Biodiversity Action Plan, *The Nature of Devon*, contains action plans for 37 species and habitats that are of key importance to Devon. Among these is an action plan for Parkland & Wood Pasture.

These often ancient landscapes are of great historical significance and can be of tremendous value for biodiversity. They can support a range of wildlife including mammals and birds but this habitat is particularly noted for its important lichen, fungi and saproxylic invertebrate communities.

The Devon BAP lists 33 major examples of parkland and wood pasture in the County (appended to this contract brief). However, the reality is that the resource is poorly quantified, both in extent and quality.

In order to ensure that this important habitat is maintained and where appropriate enhanced, there is a need to improve the knowledge of the extent of the resource, the communities and species supported (especially lichens, fungi and invertebrates) and its management conditions and needs.

It is hoped that the results of this project will enable specific action on the ground (for example, through Environmental Stewardship) for this important habitat. Where existing information allows, this project should allow the conservation significance and status of individual sites to be evaluated. It may also identify a need for further survey and research. It is also hoped that the findings will contribute to the Wood Pasture and Parkland Information System (WAPIS), a Natural England initiative.

The Devon BAP can be viewed at [www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.devon.gov.uk/biodiversity).

## **Project goals.**

This project has five goals:

- To establish a provisional list of long-established parkland and wood pasture sites in Devon, also identifying those which are currently considered to be of wildlife importance (or are likely to be of importance).
- To collate readily available information and survey data on those sites known or suspected to be of wildlife significance, together with references to landscape and the historic environment.
- For a selection of sites, to liaise with landowners / managers and undertake an initial field visit to establish the current condition of the sites, attempt to map the areas which appear to be of wildlife significance, and collate information on their current management condition and conservation needs.
- To establish appropriate criteria for the selection of relevant parkland and wood pasture locations as County Wildlife Sites, as part of the current revision of the Guidelines for the Selection of County Wildlife Sites in Devon.
- Link with the Natural England initiative, *Wood Pasture and Parkland Information System (WAPIS)*.

## **Project methodology.**

The following approach should be adopted:

1. Using available literature produce a list of long-established parkland and wood pasture sites in Devon highlighting those known or thought to be of ecological importance (where the information is available, provide a record of the size of the site and an indication of the presence or absence of veteran and ancient trees including, if possible, numbers/density). Sources to be used to establish the list should include:
  - (a)
    - The Devon BAP
    - Other local BAPs (e.g. the North Devon BAP)
    - WAPIS
    - Register of Parks and Gardens
    - DCC's Historic Landscape Characterisation, and

(b) Ordnance Survey mapping – scanning OS maps has proven to be an effective method for identifying potential parkland and, to a lesser extent, wood pasture sites.

2. Collate readily available survey data on these sites, with a particular emphasis on those sites of known or probable wildlife importance for the three special interest groups of lichens, fungi and saproxylic invertebrates. Sites with a particular lack of survey information should be highlighted. Data sources to be searched should include:

- Devon Biodiversity Records Centre
- English Nature's Invertebrate Site Register
- National Trust
- Local botanical and invertebrate recorders.

*Please note:* unless otherwise agreed any data searches through DBRC should be undertaken using the existing DCC Service Level Agreement, so avoiding any additional charges. If charges are to be made by any other organisations / recorders for the supply of data, these must be agreed in advance with the Project Manager.

3. Collate readily available information on landscape (e.g. Landscape Character Zones, Areas of Great landscape Value, Landscape Description Units) and the historic environment for these sites (e.g. DCC's Historic Landscape Characterisation, English Heritage's Register of Parks and Gardens).

In particular, research suggests that the ecological interest of parklands and wood pastures is in part dependent upon the ability of the wider landscape to also offer suitable habitat, presumably enabling the movement and re-colonisation of individual species. Consequently, a brief assessment as to whether the site is isolated or part of a wider, more complex woodland landscape is required.

4. Following consultation with the Project Manager, liaise with the owners and managers of parkland sites to arrange field visits (a minimum of 15 sites to be visited). By means of a brief walk about survey, establish and document the condition and management of the sites [e.g. species and age structure of trees (including an estimate of numbers), land use, etc.] and the areas thought to be of most wildlife importance (e.g. 'core' areas with a high density of ancient trees). On the basis of this, identify the apparent conservation needs and issues of the sites, including existing conservation agreements or arrangements.

5. With reference to national guidelines on the evaluation of the wildlife significance of parkland and wood pasture sites, consider how these might be adapted so that they might be used to justify the selection of sites of county importance. In doing this, it would be helpful to draw on examples of such guidance / criteria used by other counties / unitary authorities. Where sufficient information is available, each of the

identified parkland / wood pasture sites should be evaluated against the draft criteria / guidelines.

6. Report production, incorporating the outputs below.

### **Project outputs.**

The outputs of this contract should include:

- a) A list of parkland and wood pasture sites in Devon, with their location and an indication of their likely wildlife value where known (including any existing site designation and their potential status as County Wildlife Sites). Sites should be mapped as polygons which can be viewed on DCC's GIS (ArcView 9). If a site boundary is unclear, a site can be represented as point information. The GIS layer should be accompanied by an attribute table with the following basic information:
  - Site name
  - National Grid Reference
  - Designation (e.g. AONB, SSSI, County Wildlife Site, potential CWS)
  - Agri-environment scheme status (e.g. Countryside Stewardship, ELS or HLS). This information can be found at the MAGIC web site: [www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)
  - Brief one liner on the principle wildlife interest, if known.
  
- b) For each site, list the known sources of information on its wildlife value and provide:
  - A summary of the site's biodiversity importance (including size of site).
  - A list of key features and species at the site (including, where available, an indication of the number of veteran and ancient trees).
  - Where readily available, provide survey detail in the form of appendices.
  - Briefly summarise known sources of information on the site's landscape and historic value, including any relevant designations, etc., together with an indication of the value of the wider landscape in supporting the site.
  
- c) For those sites which are visited following the methodology of part 3, above, provide a brief description of:
  - The condition of the parkland, and any particular issues affecting condition.

- Those areas likely to be of most nature conservation significance (e.g. core areas with a high density of veteran or ancient trees).
- A brief list of recommendations for conservation action.

Part (c) should be accompanied by annotated maps and digital photographs where appropriate.

- d) A brief overall report on the project including an introduction, a description of the methodology used, a summary of the findings and so on. To include reference to WAPIS and suggested County Wildlife Site criteria.
- e) The final document should be provided as a printed report (2 copies) and electronically (Microsoft Word). The documents should be produced in Arial font. The overall site location map should be produced as a layer for use in ArcView 9 with an accompanying attribute table.

### **Contract timescale.**

It is estimated that this work including research, site visits and report writing can be completed in approximately 30 days. No detailed species survey work is required, so it is considered feasible that the project, including field visits can be undertaken during the winter months.

The project, including the production of a final report, should be complete by Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

Payment will be on satisfactory completion of the report. Arrangements can be made for an interim payment on completion of Parts 1, 2 and 3 (referring to the methodology above).

### **Technical matters, including Health & Safety.**

The person(s) appointed to undertake this work will be required to produce and agree with the Project Manager a generic risk assessment for the project. When undertaking the site visits, the contractor must comply with the procedures set out in the risk assessment and they will be responsible for the provision of any relevant Personal Protective Equipment. It will also be necessary for a risk assessment process to be undertaken by the contractor for each site that is visited, to address any issues not covered by the generic risk assessment.

Contractors working for Devon County Council are normally required to have public liability cover up to £5 million. Unless otherwise agreed, evidence of such cover must be supplied prior to the contract being awarded.

## **Project Management.**

Your points of contact regarding this project should be:

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