

# GREATER HORSESHOE BATS PLANNING AND THE LAW

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**The greater horseshoe bat is one of the UK's rarest bat species with an estimated population in the UK of between 9,000 and 18,000 individuals. Greater horseshoe bats are largely restricted to South West England and Wales with Devon being the Northern European stronghold for this species.**

The greater horseshoe bat is listed under several European directives including Appendix II of the Bonn Convention and Appendix II of the Bern Convention. It is afforded protection under Annex II and IV of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Core areas of habitat for Annex II species must be protected and the sites managed in accordance with the ecological requirements of the species. As of January 2021 it is expected that protection for greater horseshoe bats will be retained through enactment of the Environment Bill.

Greater horseshoe bats can live up to 30 years, only becoming sexually mature at 6 years old and then only producing up to one pup a year. Over their lifetime they build up an intimate knowledge of their surrounding foraging, commuting and roosting habitats. This makes them particularly susceptible to loss of roosting sites and foraging grounds and their population size can take a long time to recover. Light spill has a serious adverse affect on the ability of the greater horseshoe bat to move through the landscape as they are a particularly light sensitive species.



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## THE THREATS TO GREATER HORSESHOE BATS INCLUDE

- Loss, damage and disturbance of roosting and hibernation sites
- Increased lighting within the landscape
- Loss of feeding habitats and reduced prey abundance; Insect-rich feeding habitats have been lost due to the reduction in wetland and permanent pasture and intensification of agricultural practices
- Isolation and lack of connectivity between roost sites and foraging habitats
- The use of livestock wormers has resulted in a reduction of key prey species including dung beetles.



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## LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITIES AND GREATER HORSESHOE BATS

Local Planning Authorities must give due consideration to all protected bat species, including greater horseshoe bats and their habitat requirements when assessing planning applications, listed building consents, and other permits. Applications should not be considered in isolation but rather assessed in combination with existing and proposed developments to prevent unforeseen cumulative effects on bats and the creation of pinch points within the landscape.

### KEY ISSUES WHICH MUST BE CONSIDERED BY LPA STAFF INCLUDE

- The demolition or renovation of buildings
- Any building works which affect a roof, loft space or cavity walls
- Timber treatment works where bats are present
- The loss of roosting sites: even transitional roosts and feeding perches are essential for greater horseshoe bat populations
- Effective and proportionate mitigation when a roost will be disturbed, damaged or destroyed
- The likelihood of Natural England granting a European Protected Species Licence for the works
- Does the site fall within an SAC Sustainance Zone or Landscape Connectivity Zone for greater horseshoe bats?\*
- Ensuring the suitably qualified ecologist has submitted a thorough Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) or equivalent report
- The loss of foraging habitat especially within 2km of roost sites, including but not limited to; broad-leaved woodland, parkland, orchards, scrub and permanent pasture
- The loss of hedgerows and other linear features. Will the loss of these features cause roosts to become isolated in the landscape?
- The requirement for a robust lighting assessment for any proposal which affects greater horseshoe bats or other bat species
- Clear conditioning of these requirements when processing applications.

\* Detailed assessment and mitigation is required to enable the LPA to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment for a site within an SAC zone.



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Local Planning Authorities must undertake the following to discharge their statutory responsibilities towards greater horseshoe bats and other protected bat species;

- Careful scrutiny of applications
- Consideration of cumulative effects
- Clear conditioning of ecological requirements (including monitoring)
- Appropriate enforcement action where required mitigation and monitoring have not been completed

Through this process you can help secure the future of the greater horseshoe bat



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# GREATER HORSESHOE BAT PLANNING FLOWCHART

