

Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 Sites (IPENS)

Planning for the Future

## Site Improvement Plan

# Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Dena

Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) have been developed for each Natura 2000 site in England and for most sites which straddle the border between England and Wales. This plan has been drawn up as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS) in conjunction with the LIFE Natura 2000 Programme for Wales. Natura 2000 sites is the combined term for sites designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protected Areas (SPA). This work has been financially supported by LIFE, a financial instrument of the European Community.

The plan provides a high level overview of the issues (both current and predicted) affecting the condition of the Natura 2000 features on the whole site (in both England and Wales), and outlines the priority measures required to improve the condition of the features. It does not cover issues where remedial actions are already in place or ongoing management activities which are required for maintenance.

The SIP consists of three parts: a Summary table, which sets out the priority Issues and Measures; a detailed Actions table, which sets out who needs to do what, when and how much it is estimated to cost; and a set of tables containing contextual information and links. Once this current programme ends, it is anticipated that Natural England and others, working with landowners and managers, will all play a role in delivering the priority measures to improve the condition of the features on these sites.

The SIP for this cross-border site between England and Wales is based on Natural England and Natural Resources Wales's current evidence and knowledge, and are live, and not legal documents; they will be updated to reflect changes in our evidence/knowledge and as Actions get underway. The information in the SIP will be used to update both England and Wales's contributions to the UK's Prioritised Action Framework (PAF).

The SIPs are not formal consultation documents, but if you have any comments (relating to areas within England and/or Wales) about the SIP or would like more information please email us at [IPENSLIFEProject@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:IPENSLIFEProject@naturalengland.org.uk), or contact Natural England's Responsible Officer for the site via our enquiry service 0300 060 3900, or [enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk)

To contact Natural Resources Wales telephone 0300 065 3000, or email [enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@naturalresourceswales.gov.uk)

**This Site Improvement Plan covers the following Natura 2000 site(s)**

**UK0014794 Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Ddena SAC**

## Site description

This complex of sites on the border between England and Wales contains, at the time of listing, by far the greatest concentration of Lesser horseshoe bat in the UK, totalling about 26% of the national population. It features an exceptional breeding population. In addition, it supports a significant population of Greater horseshoe bat in the northern part of its range. The site contains the main maternity roost and hibernacula for this species in this area.

## Plan Summary

*This table shows the prioritised issues for the site(s), the features they affect, the proposed measures to address the issues and the delivery bodies whose involvement is required to deliver the measures. The list of delivery bodies will include those who have agreed to the actions as well as those where discussions over their role in delivering the actions is on-going.*

Priority & Issue	Pressure or Threat	Feature(s) affected	Measure	Delivery Bodies
1 Physical modification	Pressure/Threat	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Prevent buildings with roosts from deteriorating and avoid disturbance (both physical and lighting) by advising landowners	Forest of Dean District Council, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, English Heritage, Vincent Wildlife Trust, Monmouthshire Sir Fynwy, Cadw
2 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Prevent disturbance to roosts by advising owners of private residences and preventing access to sensitive caves/mines by repairing and replacing damaged grills and working positively to educate cavers	Forestry Commission, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Caving club(s)
3 Habitat connectivity	Threat	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat, S1304 Greater horseshoe bat	Maintain and improve a healthy food supply and flight pathways used by bats by supporting sensitive agricultural and forestry management of the wider landscape	Forest of Dean District Council, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Monmouthshire Sir Fynwy

## Issues and Actions

*This table outlines the prioritised issues that are currently impacting or threatening the condition of the features, and the outstanding actions required to address them. It also shows, where possible, the estimated cost of the action and the delivery bodies whose involvement will be required to implement the action. Lead delivery bodies will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the action, but not necessarily funding it. Delivery partners will need to support the lead delivery body in implementing the action. In the process of developing the SIPs Natural England has approached the delivery bodies to seek agreement on the actions and their roles in delivering them, although in some cases these discussions have not yet been concluded. Other interested parties, including landowners and managers, will be involved as the detailed actions are agreed and delivered. Funding options are indicated as potential (but not necessarily agreed or secured) sources to fund the actions.*

### 1 Physical modification

The SAC comprises of a series of 13 hibernation and maternity roost sites ranging from caves, buildings, churches, a disused railway tunnel, and mines. Roosting bats have precise microclimate requirements and are sensitive to small changes in conditions such as temperature and humidity. The microclimate of roosts in buildings, bridges and caves can be adversely affected by structural deterioration, repair and renovation or other factors. As many of the maternity roost sites are in inhabited privately owned buildings they are vulnerable to disturbance. It is important that there is appropriate advice, support and monitoring provided at roost sites.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
<b>1A</b>	Monitor the condition of buildings including microclimate changes at key roost sites to detect changes in conditions.	£10,000	2015-2020	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural Resources Wales	Natural Resources Wales	Natural England
<b>1B</b>	Advise/liase with site owners about type and timing of activities to minimise disturbance to roosts.	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Advice: Negotiation	Not yet determined	Natural Resources Wales	Natural England
<b>1C</b>	Implement required actions to maintain roost condition in Wales.	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Direct management: NRW	Natural Resources Wales	Natural Resources Wales	Vincent Wildlife Trust, Monmouthshire Sir Fynwy, Cadw

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>1D</b>	Implement required actions to maintain roost condition in England.	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES)	Natural England	Natural England	Forest of Dean District Council, English Heritage
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>1E</b>	Seek to establish 5 new purpose built bat roosts on land managed by conservation bodies.	£200,000	2015-2020	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Creation of new habitat	Natural England, Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), Charity, Landfill tax	Natural England	Forest of Dean District Council

## 2 Public Access/Disturbance

Greater horseshoe bats and lesser horseshoe bats are vulnerable to disturbance during hibernation, as frequent disturbance from torpor leads to a reduced chance of surviving the winter. They are also vulnerable to disturbance whilst breeding; they have only a single young every year, and so disturbing a maternity colony can have a significant adverse impact on the area's bat population. Most of the entrances to underground hibernacula and maternity roosts have grills to deter access. If these become damaged, unauthorised access by cavers and others can occur.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>2A</b>	Repair and replace grills to caves/mines when necessary to prevent unauthorised access.	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Other	Natural England, Forestry Commission, Natural Resources Wales	Natural England/ Natural Resources Wales	Forestry Commission

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>2B</b>	Educate and improve awareness of bats amongst cavers and site owners.	Staff time only	2015-2020	Advice: Education & awareness raising	n/a	Natural England/ Natural Resources Wales	Caving club(s)

### 3 Habitat connectivity

Feeding areas around the SAC's maternity roosts are especially important for the bats, as they provide food during the spring and summer months for pregnant and lactating females as well as for the young on their early foraging flights. Neither breeding females nor young can fly as far as non-breeding adults, which range over a wide area, so a good feeding area within a radius of about 4km around the maternity roosts is critical for the long-term survival of the site's population. Juvenile Greater horseshoe bats forage on dung beetles extensively, so factors affecting quality of dung such as cattle numbers and use of pesticides can also impact on populations. Unimproved pasture and woodland are important habitats for sustaining dung beetle, chafer and large moth populations. Linear landscape features such as hedgerows are also important. A landscape of permanent pasture and ancient woodland, linked with an abundance of tall bushy hedges, is the ideal habitat as it provides both their insect food and the linear features used as flight paths. The effective conservation of the Greater horseshoe bat depends on the sensitive management of the farmed and forested landscape around maternity roosts and other sites used by the bats. Cumulatively, changes in agricultural management including: abandonment of grazing land; use of particular pesticides; hedgerow removal; conversion of pasture to arable; and inappropriate forest management can impact both bat species.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3A</b>	Promote the uptake of agri-environment schemes to maintain grazed permanent pasture, hedgerows, woodlands and other important landscape features.	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Forestry Commission

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3B</b>	Promote the uptake of agri-environment schemes to maintain grazed permanent pasture, hedgrows, woodlands and other important landscape features.	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Rural Development Programme for Wales: Glastir	Rural Development Plan for Wales (RDPW)	Natural Resources Wales	Welsh Government
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3C</b>	Investigation to improve the understanding of key features and spatial areas e.g. important feeding grounds utilised by bats.	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural Resources Wales, Natural England (Evidence and Monitoring)	Natural England	Natural Resources Wales
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3D</b>	Develop holistic Wye Valley and Forest of Dean bat strategy to identify, safeguard and strengthen the full range of the horseshoe bat species' ecological requirements (breeding, hibernating, feeding, flight lines, swarming sites and night roosts).	Not yet determined	2015-2020	Habitat creation / restoration strategy: Improvements to habitat connectivity	Natural England, Natural Resources Wales	Natural England/ Natural Resources Wales	Forest of Dean District Council, Forestry Commission, Monmouthshire Sir Fynwy

<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3E</b>	In geographical areas of importance integrate bat management considerations into Forest Design Plan/ Management Plans.	Staff time only	2015-2020	Advice	n/a	Natural England/ Natural Resources Wales	Forest Enterprise: Forest of Dean
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3F</b>	Disseminate and raise awareness of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean bat strategy to relevant landowners and other stakeholders.	Staff time only	2015-2020	Advice: Education & awareness raising	n/a	Natural England/ Natural Resources Wales	
<i>Action</i>	<i>Action description</i>	<i>Cost estimate</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Mechanism</i>	<i>Funding option</i>	<i>Delivery lead body</i>	<i>Delivery partner(s)</i>
<b>3G</b>	Explore undertaking a review of the SSSI designation to consider amendment to incorporate additional roost locations and other habitat areas such as feeding grounds and flight lines key to maintaining the bat populations.	Staff time only	2015-2020	Designation strategy: Notification Amendment	n/a	Natural England	Natural Resources Wales

## Site details

The tables in this section contain site-relevant contextual information and links

### Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

<b>Wye Valley &amp; Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Ddena SAC</b>	S1303 <i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i> : Lesser horseshoe bat
	S1304 <i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinum</i> : Greater horseshoe bat

### Site location and links

#### Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Ddena SAC

Area (ha) **142.7**      Grid reference **SO605044**      [Map link](#)

Local Authorities      Fynwy/ Monmouthshire; Gloucestershire

#### Site Conservation Objectives

Site Conservation Objectives (covers area in England)      [European Site Conservation Objectives for Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites SAC](#)

Site Conservation Objectives (covers area in Wales)      <http://www.ccg.gov.uk/landscape--wildlife/protecting-our-landscape/special-sites-project/wye-to-yerbeston-sac-list/wye-valley-bats-sac.aspx>

European Marine Site conservation advice      [n/a](#)

Regulation 33/35 Package      [n/a](#)

Marine Management Organisation site plan      [n/a](#)



## Water Framework Directive (WFD)

*The Water Framework Directive (WFD) provides the main framework for managing the water environment throughout Europe. Under the WFD a management plan must be developed for each river basin district. The River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) include a summary of the measures needed for water dependent Natura 2000 sites to meet their conservation objectives. For the second round of RBMPs, SIPs are being used to capture the priorities and new measures required for water dependent habitats on Natura 2000 sites. SIP actions for non-water dependent sites/habitats do not form part of the RBMPs and associated consultation.*

### **Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Ddena SAC**

<i>River basin</i>	<a href="#">Severn RBMP</a>
<i>WFD Management catchment</i>	Severn Vale
<i>WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)</i>	n/a

## Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
<b>Wye Valley &amp; Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Ddena SAC</b>	Wye Valley Lesser Horseshoe Bats SSSI
	Newton Court Stable Block SSSI
	Mwyngloddfa Mynydd Bach SSSI
	Llangovan Church SSSI
	Buckshraft Mine & Bradley Hill Railway Tunnel SSSI
	Wigpool Ironstone Mine SSSI
	Devil's Chapel Scowles SSSI
	Westbury Brook Ironstone Mine SSSI
	Old Bow & Old Ham Mines SSSI
	Sylvan House Barn SSSI
	Blaisdon Hall SSSI
	Caerwood & Ashberry Goose House SSSI
Dean Hall Coach House & Cellar SSSI	
National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
<b>Wye Valley &amp; Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Ddena SAC</b>	n/a
Ramsar	
<b>Wye Valley &amp; Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd Ystlumod Dyffryn Gwy A Fforest Y Ddena SAC</b>	n/a
Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
<b>Wye Valley &amp; Forest of Dean Bat Sites/ Safleoedd</b>	n/a



<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	11/03/2015	



[www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000)