

M-B1 Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*
SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. Current status

- 1.1 The lesser horseshoe bat was originally a cave-roosting bat, although most summer maternity colonies now use buildings, particularly old large houses and farm buildings. Most still hibernate in underground sites such as caves. Females forage within 2-3 km of the maternity roost, feeding on insects taken in flight in mixed woodland, hedgerows and tree lines.
- 1.2 In Britain, the lesser horseshoe bat is now found only in South West England and Wales. It was formerly present in South East England and the Midlands. JNCC UK Mammals, species status and population trends 2005 gives UK population of 18000 and Wales 9000. This relies only on written evidence and is considered to be out of date. The lesser horseshoe bat is widespread throughout Central and Southern Europe, but has undergone severe decline in the northern part of its range.
- 1.3 In Monmouthshire (excluding the Brecon Beacons National Park area) the population is regarded to be of European Importance, therefore it is National and UK importance also.

The last comprehensive survey of summer sites was in 2000 (Ian Rabjohns for CCW) this assessed 24 maternity roosts and about 20 other sites. 16 of the maternity sites are subject to annual monitoring under the CCW all Wales scheme. This showed a maternity population of about 2000 individuals. Given that most of these are females the total population was assessed at approximately 4000. Since then further sites have been found and monitoring shows increases at known roosts. Estimated population for Monmouthshire now would be at least 6000.

Of the 16 sites only 6 are given designated protection beyond the normal legal provision. 5 maternity sites which form part of the Wye Valley Bat Sites SAC, and 1 hibernation site also part of the SAC. A number of the other sites are threatened by development (5 notable roosts supporting a population of over 450 animals) but there are more.

Hibernation sites in Monmouthshire only show a minute fraction of the population so it is in this aspect that protection is weakest.

- 1.3 This species is included in Appendix II of the Bonn Convention (and its Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe) and Appendix II of the

Bern Convention (and Recommendation 36 on the Conservation of Underground Habitats). It is also listed on Annexes II and IV of the EC Habitats and Species Directive. It is protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 38) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The 1996 IUCN Red list of Threatened Animals classifies this species as *Vulnerable* (VU A2c). The bat is also recognised on the NERC Section 42 list which identifies species of principal importance in Wales.

2. Current factors affecting the species (In rank order of importance)

- 2.1 Habitat losses or degradation due to restoration works on old buildings and walls.
- 2.2 Habitat loss or degradation due to intensive crop regimes.
- 2.3 Habitat loss or degradation due to conversion from pastoral to arable farming.

3. Current action

- 3.1 Annual monitoring of 16 sites by CCW and volunteers.
- 3.2 Annual monitoring of some hibernation sites by volunteers.
- 3.3 Foraging survey (all bats), which will extend knowledge of this species by the Gwent Bat Survey Project.

4. Proposed targets (Including target goals where appropriate)

- 4.1 Maintain summer monitored population at maternity sites (3000 animals)
- 4.2 Ensure summer roosts maintained over existing range (30 tetrads)
- 4.3 Support the expanding population as discovered.
- 4.4 Give greater protection to hibernation sites (10 sites)
- 4.5 Achieve positive dialogue with roost owners and raise awareness in general.

5. Proposed actions and key partners for lesser horseshoe bat

Action	Key Partners		Timescale
	Lead	Support	
1. Policy and Legislation			
1.1 Ensure policies and strategies do not adversely affect populations of lesser horseshoe bat.	MCC	CCW, WAG	Ongoing
1.2 Ensure lesser horseshoe bat is fully considered when assessing any development, which may impact upon the species.	MCC	CCW, Local Bat experts	Ongoing
1.3 When there is no alternative ensure that appropriate mitigation or	MCC	CCW	Ongoing

compensation measures for lesser horseshoe bat are used during development.			
1.4 Ensure opportunities for enhancing habitat for lesser horseshoe bat are used during the planning process	MCC		Ongoing
1.5 Ensure appropriate procedures for consideration of lesser horseshoe bats are included in the Supplementary Planning Guidance for Conversion of Agricultural Buildings.	MCC		When available
2. Funding / Resources			
2.1 Support volunteer survey work through existing grant aid schemes	MCC	BCT, Monmouthshire Bat Group	Ongoing
2.2 Consider small grant aid where this would protect or enhance habitat through existing schemes.	CCW	MCC	Ongoing
3. Site Protection and Designation			
3.1 Notify 4 most vulnerable 'significant' maternity sites as SSSIs.	CCW		
3.2 Be prepared to notify any new 'significant' hibernation sites as discovered.	CCW		
3.3 Notify hibernation sites as SINCS.	MCC	SINC panel, GWT, Monmouthshire Bat Group	2007
4. Habitat and Site Management			
4.1 Where possible, ensure that occupied habitat is appropriately managed e.g. through site management agreements and funding incentives.	CCW		2010
4.2 Ensure that lesser horseshoe bat is included on site management documents for all relevant SSSIs.	CCW		2007
5. Habitat Creation / Restoration			
5.1 Seek to increase the available foraging habitat at known sites and attempt to link up fragmented habitat.	CCW	MCC, FCW	2008
6. Survey and monitoring			

6.1 Expand voluntary sector through training and funding to increase IT and bat skills.	BCT	CCW, MCC, Monmouthshire Bat Group	4 volunteers 2006, 2007, 2008
7. Information and Databases			
7.1 Undertake annual review of new data and information in the species.	CCW	MCC, Local bat expert	Annual
7.2 Map known core 3km radius areas	CCW	MCC, Monmouthshire Bat Group	2007
8. Communication -Advisory			
8.1 Prepare detailed advisory notes for Planning committee, Development Control, Building Inspectors and Highways listing adverse actions that may take place (relate to 8.2).	CCW	MCC, Local bat expert	2007
8.2 Encourage bat friendly activity in the case of all County owned land and building stock.	MCC	CCW	2006
8.3 Develop a simple leaflet for distribution to any builder/ developer contacting the authority with guidelines for good practice	MCC	Monmouthshire Bat Group	2006
9. Communication - Publicity			
9.1 Newsletter for roost owners, managers etc. to encourage involvement.	MCC	CCW, Monmouthshire Bat Group	Annual
10. Action Plan Process / Links to other Plans			
10.1 Produce Habitat Action Plans for woodland, linear features and the built environment.	MCC	Biodiversity Partnership	2/3 complete by March 2007
10.2 Link with WAG Trunk Road Estate BAP where any actions may affect species including lighting, widening, hedgerow removal and renovation.	WAG	MCC, CCW, GWT, Local bat expert	Ongoing

6. Abbreviations

BCT	Bat Conservation Trust
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
FCW	Forestry Commission Wales
MCC	Monmouthshire County Council
MCS	Monmouthshire Countryside Service
MDC	Monmouthshire Development Control
MDP	Monmouthshire Development Plans

WAG Welsh Assembly Government

References

UK Biodiversity Group Tranche 2 Action Plans - Volume I: Vertebrates and vascular plants (June 1998, Tranche 2, Vol I, p43)