

Site Improvement Plan

Hestercombe House

Site Improvement Plans (SIPs) have been developed for each Natura 2000 site in England as part of the Improvement Programme for England's Natura 2000 sites (IPENS). 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 site(s) 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 SIPs are based on Natural England's current evidence and knowledge. The SIPs are not legal documents, they are live documents that will be updated to reflect changes in our evidence/knowledge and as actions get underway. The information in the SIPs will be used to update England's contribution to the UK's Prioritised Action Framework (PAF).

The SIPs are not formal consultation documents, but if you have any comments about the SIP or would like more information please email us at 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

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

UK0030168 Hestercombe House SAC

Site description

Hestercombe House SAC is a Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros* summer maternity roost and winter hibernacula of national importance in the vale of Taunton Deane. It consists of two roof voids within the former stable block and main house of Hestercombe House - a former country house and estate consisting of mixed woodland, pasture, lakes and landscaped garden. This site holds a significant number of bats, and has been included as representative of the species in south-west England. The UK holds one of the largest populations of this species in western Europe.

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 Changes in species distributions	Pressure	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat	Investigate bat movements to establish the certainty of the apparent fall	Natural England, Consultant, Somerset Bat Group
2 Inappropriate scrub control	Pressure	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat	Replant as required by management plan	Natural England, Consultant, Somerset Bat Group, Hestercombe Trust
3 Public Access/Disturbance	Pressure	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat	Modify as required by management plan	Natural England, Consultant, Somerset Bat Group, Hestercombe Trust
4 Physical modification	Pressure	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat	Modify as required by management plan	Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset Bat Group, Hestercombe Trust
5 Planning Permission: general	Threat	S1303 Lesser horseshoe bat	Inform any planning application	Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset Bat Group

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 Changes in species distributions

The bat population appears to have declined since notification in 2000, as suggested by long term survey data. The definite cause is unknown but likely to involve habitat change (to forage areas & flight lines), and may include human disturbance to, and the physical condition of, the roost sites. The possibility of movement to a roost site at West Monkton also needs investigating.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
1A	Investigate bats at West Monkton to establish whether the apparent decline in the overall Lesser Horseshoe bat population at Hestercombe since notification is due wholly or in part to relocation to West Monkton.	£20,000	2016	Investigation / Research / Monitoring	Natural England, Grant in aid	Consultant	Natural England, Somerset Bat Group

2 Inappropriate scrub control

Trees and shrubs, including close to roost exit points, have been removed over recent years. Lesser horseshoe bat numbers may be negatively affected by these changes and/or flight patterns may have changed.

Action	Action description	Cost estimate	Timescale	Mechanism	Funding option	Delivery lead body	Delivery partner(s)
2A	Produce a management plan to inform planting appropriate tree/scrub cover to connect main house roost emergence point to forage areas and enhance the forage areas.	£2,000	2016	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Consultant, Somerset Bat Group, Hestercombe Trust

<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>
2B	Plant appropriate tree/scrub cover to connect main house roost emergence point to forage areas and enhance the forage areas.	£10,000	2016-20	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Consultant, Somerset Bat Group, Hestercombe Trust

3 Public Access/Disturbance

Hestercombe Gardens is a public access site and there is artificial lighting. Lesser horseshoe bat numbers may be negatively affected by this disturbance.

<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>
3A	Produce a management plan as guidance for minimising disturbance to bats caused by public access/ lighting/ use of buildings.	£1,000	2016	Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE): Common Agricultural Policy 2014-20 (New Environmental Land Management Scheme)	Rural Development Programme (RDPE)	Natural England	Consultant, Somerset Bat Group, Hestercombe Trust
3B	Minimise disturbance to bats caused by public access/ lighting/ use of buildings.	No funding required	2016-20	Major Landowner Group land ownership activities : Other	No funding required	Local partnership	Somerset Bat Group, Hestercombe Trust

4 Physical modification

Roof spaces used as roost sites can deteriorate over time and become less desirable for the bats. This could explain a decrease in numbers. Therefore this will need investigating to see if alterations are needed. There are also plans to re-roof the main house in the near future, so this will need care and a plan to avoid/minimise disturbance and maintain/maximise suitability for the bats.

<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>
4A	Produce a management plan as guidance for the modification/maintenance of both the house and stables roof spaces, to maintain and enhance the bat population.	No funding requirement	2016	Regulation: Grant Appropriate Planning Permission	No funding required	Hestercombe Trust	Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset Bat Group
<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>
4B	Modify the house roof space and stables roof space to maintain/enhance bat population.	No funding requirement	2016-20	Regulation: Grant Appropriate Planning Permission	No funding required	Hestercombe Trust	Taunton Deane Borough Council, Somerset Bat Group

5 Planning Permission: general

There is the potential for building development over land currently used as forage areas. This could negatively affect the forage capacity.

<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>
5A	Inform the Planning Process under Habitat Regulations.	No funding requirement	2016-20	Regulation: Grant Appropriate Planning Permission	No funding required	Taunton Deane Borough Council	Somerset Bat Group

Site details

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

Qualifying features

#UK Special responsibility

Hestercombe House SAC S1303 *Rhinolophus hipposideros*: Lesser horseshoe bat

Site location and links

Hestercombe House SAC

Area (ha) **0.08** Grid reference **ST240287** [Map link](#)

Local Authorities Somerset

Site Conservation Objectives [European Site Conservation Objectives for Hestercombe House SAC](#)

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.

Hestercombe House SAC

River basin

[South West RBMP](#)

WFD Management catchment

South & West Somerset

WFD Waterbody ID (Cycle 2 draft)

n/a

Overlapping or adjacent protected sites

Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	
Hestercombe House SAC	Hestercombe House SSSI

National Nature Reserve (NNR)	
Hestercombe House SAC	n/a

Ramsar	
Hestercombe House SAC	n/a

Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA)	
Hestercombe House SAC	n/a

<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Comment</i>
1.0	10/04/2015	

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ipens2000

