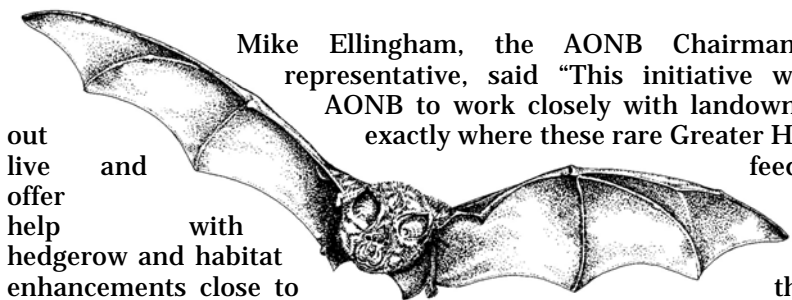


Looking out for bats in East Devon



AS A RESULT OF THE VALUABLE SUPPORT received from the Sid Vale Association, of £500 per year for the next three years, the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has successfully levered £61,000 grant money from the SITA Trust. The three year initiative 'Looking out for bats', is to be a survey of the rare Greater Horseshoe bats and enhance roost areas in this special area.

Mike Ellingham, the AONB Chairman and NFU representative, said "This initiative will allow the AONB to work closely with landowners. To find out exactly where these rare Greater Horseshoe bats live and feed. We will offer help with hedgerow and habitat enhancements close to these roosts, which are also an important feature of our protected landscape. This approach benefits the bats and our farmers, by rewarding them for their careful stewardship".



AONB Project Officer, said "With bats being nocturnal it is very difficult to trace their movements. It is not like watching birds with binoculars. We have to rely on picking up their echolocation clicks as they fly beside hedgerows and woodland edges. So we will be providing training and special bat detectors to volunteers so they can help us with this survey".

Already, through three events, at Gays Farm (Branscombe) and Lovehayne Farm (Southleigh), we have 28 'batmen and batwomen' who are helping search for Greater Horseshoe bat maternity roosts. They include farmers, interested individuals or woodland owners, from our East Devon Small Woods network. This is because the Greater Horseshoe feeds along the woodland edges and mature hedgerows. A bat trapping event at Offwell Woods has also been supported through this project.



Looking for bats, Gay's Farm

How did this happen?

'Looking out for bats' was developed by the East Devon AONB Partnership, of which the Sid Vale Association is part. "This project builds on a pilot bat tracking project, which culminated in a successful bat talk to farmers last October in Beer Quarry Caves" added Pete Youngman. "Interest in taking this work forward was resounding and we are pleased to announce that we have been successful in attracting significant new funding to our AONB, with a wide range of partners".

Funding of £61,000 has been provided by the SITA Trust, with additional contributions from the AONB's Sustainable Development Fund, East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, Axe Vale and District Conservation Society and finally the Sid Vale Association. The SITA Trust makes awards through its Landfill Communities Fund. SITA Trust provides funding to improve biodiversity and the environment around landfill sites throughout England. SITA Trust receives its funding from the waste management company, SITA UK.

If you would like to get involved with the project, or find out more, then contact Pete Youngman at the AONB Office 01404 46663 or email pyoungman@eastdevon.gov.uk.

Kimmo Evans, Communications Officer
East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership

What's so special?

Bats are a very rare species which need looking after. There are seventeen species found in the UK, seven of which hibernate at Beer Quarry caves, and one of these is the Greater Horseshoe Bat.

Greater Horseshoe bats at the caves are safely protected behind bars whilst hibernating in the winter months. When they leave in the spring little is known about where they go to feed or have their young. Greater Horseshoe bats are known to roost in large roof spaces such as old barns and older houses.

What next?

- 'Looking Out for bats' is a three year initiative which aims to;
- Φ find out more about the resident bats in the East Devon AONB;
 - Φ work with landowners to improve their bat habitats and roosts;
 - Φ encourage people to learn more about bats in their neighbourhood.

The project will run a series of walks, talks and even mountain bike rides about bats. It will visit local schools to help students find out more about the bats that might be found around their schools.

We will also be recruiting volunteers – our very own 'bat men' and 'bat women' – to help detect Greater Horseshoe bats whilst they are flying beside hedgerows and woodland edges and then tracking them to their roosts. Pete Youngman,

'Observing bats at the Observatory'. Do come to the FREE talk at the Norman Lockyer Observatory on Tuesday, April 21, 2009 at 7.30 p.m. Speakers will be Peter Youngman and Dr Fiona Mathews.