

7.4 Horseshoe Bat – Lead Partner Natural England

Main Objectives & Key Actions:

- 1) **Maintain and where suitable enhance current populations of lesser and greater horseshoe bats in Torbay.**
 - Ensure no maternity/hibernation site is threatened and seek remedial work if appropriate – ongoing.
 - Ensure a bat survey is carried out at all sites (where likely to affect bats) before granting planning permission – ongoing.
- 2) **Improve and increase favourable management of feeding areas and flight routes.**
 - Ensure all key feeding areas and flight routes are identified for both bat species by 2012.
 - Seek to establish favourable management of 25% of greater horseshoe feeding areas and flight routes at Berry Head by 2012.
 - Seek to increase favourable management of identified feeding areas and flight routes for lesser horseshoe bat by 2012.
- 3) **Increase an understanding of bat roost distribution in Torbay.**
 - Expand on existing knowledge of population figures and distribution of both bat species by 2009.
- 4) **Raise awareness of the bats in Torbay especially with local community, roost owners, planners, developers and land managers.**
 - Ongoing.

7.4.1 Background and Current Status

Greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*) and lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*) populations are restricted to South West England and South Wales. Bats depend on a good network of diverse habitats and are therefore vulnerable to habitat fragmentation and land change. This means they are good indicators of the health of the local environment.

Greater Horseshoe

The greater horseshoe is one of Britain's rarest bats and Berry Head holds a colony of between 80 – 100 individuals (English Nature, 2005), with an estimate of only 5,000 individuals in the UK. Nationally, it is estimated that the greater horseshoe bat has declined by over 90% in the last 100 years. This is believed to be due to disturbance of roosts especially nursery and winter hibernation roosts, and intensive agricultural practices.

The only known maternity roost in Torbay is at Berry Head and there are another five known hibernation sites and six further roost sites (see Figure 11).

The greater horseshoe's feeding habitat requirements include woodland, scrub, permanent pasture, water and continuous flight paths e.g. hedgerows. The greater horseshoe feeds on larger insects such as dung beetles, chafers and

moths. During the winter the bats hibernate in caves or mines, cellars, disused railway tunnels and, increasingly, in buildings. Greater horseshoe bats hibernate from late September to mid May, depending on the weather and food availability.

In the summer the bats roost in buildings and underground sites and use these roosts as maternity sites. Maternity sites are where reproductively active females gather to rear their young and they are strongly attached to these sites, returning year after year.

Lesser Horseshoe

The lesser horseshoe has suffered severe decline in the northern part of its range and suffers from loss or damage to summer roosts and winter hibernation sites. It has become extinct in northern England and the midlands in the last 100 years and is seriously threatened in many parts of Europe. Current estimates suggest a UK population of around 14,000. In Torbay there is currently recorded one breeding, six hibernation sites and thirteen other roost sites (see Figure 10).

The lesser horseshoe's feeding habitat includes deciduous woodlands, permanent pasture, scrub, parkland, wetlands and continuous flightpaths e.g. hedgerows. They feed on midges, small moths and other small insects. During the winter the bats hibernate in caves, tunnels and other underground sites and in the summer in buildings and warm attics. The lesser horseshoe bat hibernates from September/October until April/May and sets up maternity roosts in April/May.

This Species Action Plan will encourage favourable habitat management in foraging areas and future monitoring of the bat populations in Torbay.

Refer to EN report 'Dispersal and foraging behaviour of greater horseshoe bats, Brixham Devon.' (Robinson *et al*, 2000)

Current species and associated Habitat Protection:

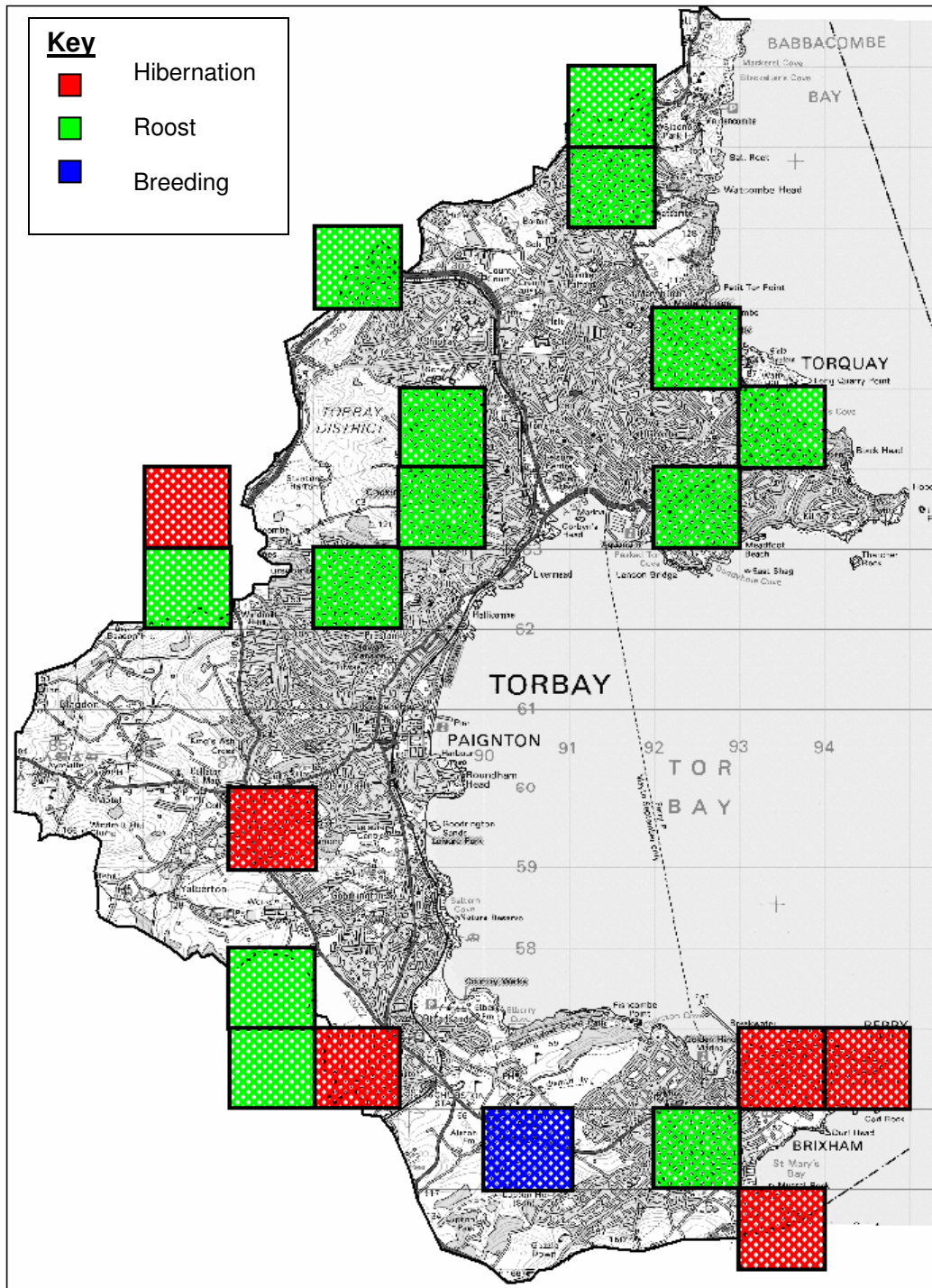
Berry Head to Sharkham Point is designated as a SAC and SSSI.

Both species are listed on Appendix II of the Bonn Convention, Appendix II of the Bern Convention, Annexe IVA and Annexe II of the EC Habitats Directive.

Protected under Schedule 2 of the *Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) Regulations, 2000* (as amended) and Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 (as amended).

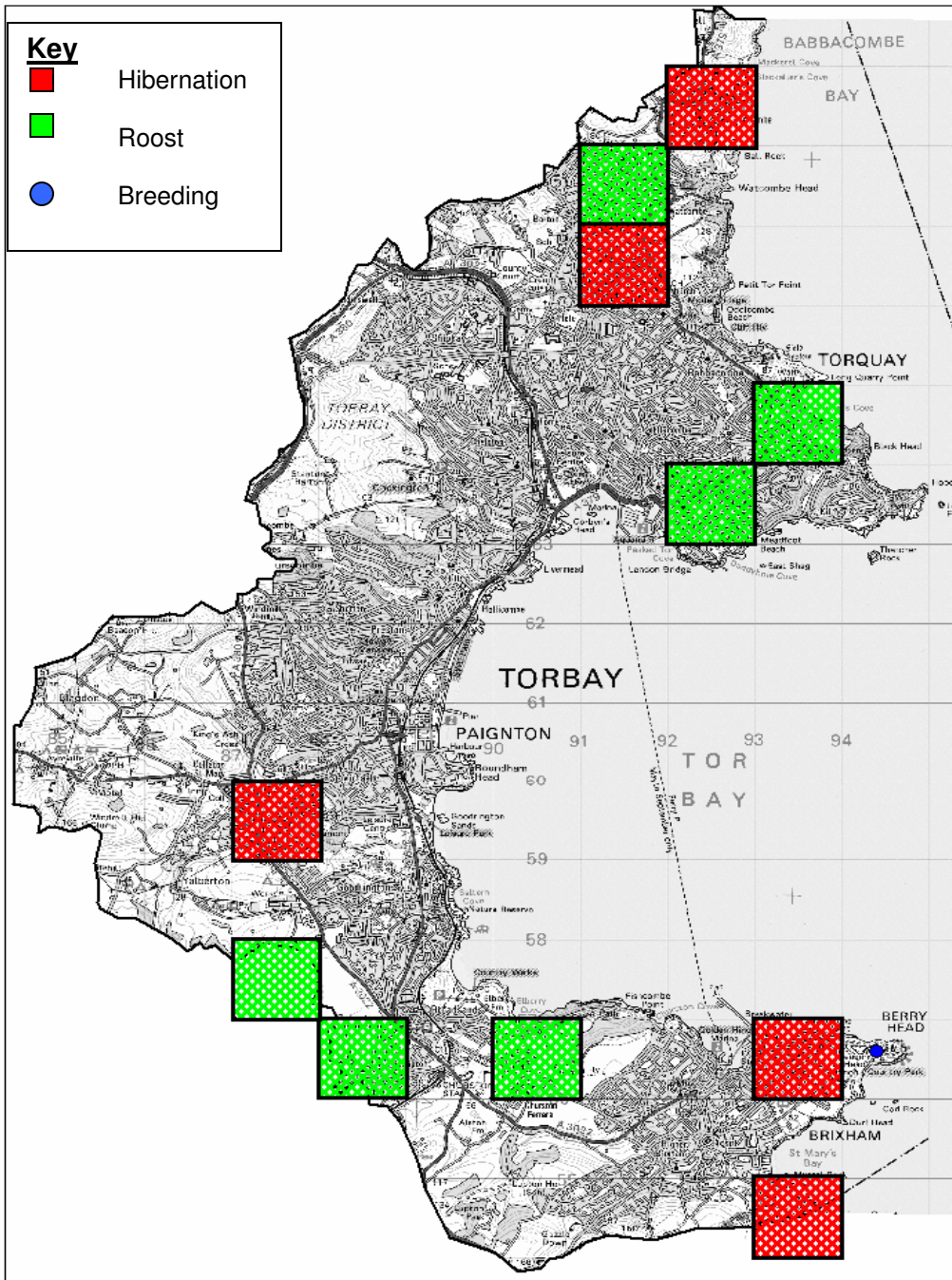
7.4.2 Current problems/threats to this species:

- Loss, destruction and disturbance of roosting and hibernation sites.
- Loss of food – Large insect abundance declined due to intensification of agricultural land resulting in loss of unimproved pasture, insecticides.
- Unsympathetic management of corridors e.g. good hedgerows that the bats use as networks to/from feeding and roost sites.
- Development and destruction of flight path features.



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Figure 10: Map to show lesser horseshoe hibernation, breeding and other roost sites in Torbay in 1km squares. Data was kindly provided by Devon Bat Group and Devon Biodiversity Records Centre.



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Figure 11: Map to show greater horseshoe bat hibernation, breeding and other roost sites in Torbay in 1 km squares. Data was kindly provided by Devon Bat Group and Devon Biodiversity Records Centre.

Table 16: Horseshoe Bat Action Plan. Actions that require further funding are shaded in grey.

High priority actions are proposed for completion within the next 3 years (to end of 2009).

Medium priority actions are proposed for completion within the next 6 years (to end of 2012).

Low priority actions are proposed for completion within the next 10 years (to end 2016).

Actions for Horseshoe Bat Priority Action Plan	Priority (High, Medium and Low)	Objective	Partners	Ongoing Action
Policy & Legislation				
HB1 - Ensure that TC follows PPS9 recommendations on species protection.	H	1	TC, NE	✓
HB2 - Ensure a licensed bat survey is carried out (where likely to have an impact) on all planning applications before permission granted.	H	1,3,4	TC, NE, Developers	✓
HB3 - Promote Environmental Stewardship as a good management tool and ensure that it is targeted at key areas for bats.	H	1,2	NE, TCCT, TC, DEFRA	✓
HB4 - Seek to establish statutory protection is given to all roost sites and key areas (corridors and feeding areas) are taken into consideration in respect to planning and land-use strategies.	H	1,3	TC, NE	✓
Species & Site Management				
HB5 – Carry out habitat enhancement schemes around roost sites.	H	1, 2	TCCT, NE, TC	✓
HB6 - Encourage favourable management of key corridors and feeding sites (aiming for up to 4 km around each roost) especially grazed pasture, woodlands and hedgerows.	H	1, 2	TCCT, NE, TC, Landowner, FWAG	✓
HB7 - Seek to establish new favourable roost sites – when identified.	M	1,2,3	TC, NE, TCCT, Devon Bat	✓

			Group	
HB8 - Promote and carry out, where appropriate, site protection works and improvements to key roost sites.	H	1,4		✓
Communication & Publicity				
HB9 - Improve communication between roost site owners and Devon Bat Group and other bat conservation bodies.	H	4	Devon Bat Group, DBRC, NE	✓
HB10 - Increase awareness with the public of the importance of conserving Torbay's bats, the appropriate steps to take if bats are discovered in their loft or outbuildings and the need to report roosts to Devon Bat Group.	H	4	NE, Devon Bat Group, public	✓
HB11 - Promote bat friendly building management to developers, TC, public and other appropriate parties.	H	1,4	NE, TC, Developers	✓
HB12 - Encourage public to enhance their houses and gardens for bats e.g. put up recognised bat boxes.	M	4	TCCT	✓
HB13 - Promote bat friendly management of woodlands, hedgerows and farmland with landowners and other appropriate parties.	H	2, 4	TCCT, NE, Devon Bat Group, FWAG	✓
Advisory				
HB14 - Advise farmers, horseowners and other livestock owners on the use of more environmentally friendly worming treatments, other chemical treatments and favourable management regimes for bats.	M	4	TCCT, FWAG, NE and Devon Bat Group	✓
HB15 - Offer advice to owners of roost sites about looking after the roost.	H	4	NE, Devon Bat Group	✓
Research & Monitoring				
HB16 - Identify and map all key corridors and foraging sites for both bat species.	H	3	NE, Devon Bat Group, TCCT	✓

HB17 - Research new roost sites and investigate into how to increase their favourability for bats.	M	3	NE, Devon Bat Group, TCCT	
HB18 - Monitor known roosts and ensure data is exchanged between NE, TCCT, TC, Devon Bat Group and DBRC.	H	3	NE, Devon Bat Group, TCCT, TC, DBRC	✓
HB19 - Establish a standard surveying protocol for all roost sites, foraging sites and corridors and implement.	M	3		
HB20 - Establish a bat potential section on the veteran trees survey and database for Torbay. Refer to Parkland HAP.	M	3,4	TCCT	

Abbreviations: Torbay Coast & Countryside (TCCT), Torbay Council (TC), Natural England (NE), Devon Biodiversity Records Centre (DBRC).