

1. CURRENT STATUS

1.1 Legislation and priority status

International	Bonn Convention (Appendix II and IV) Berne Convention (Appendix II) Habitats Directive ^a (Appendix II)
UK and Wales	Wildlife and Countryside Act (Schedule 5 and 6) Habitat Regulations ^b (Schedule 2) The Wild Mammals Protection Act 1996 UK BAP Priority Welsh S74 list ^c
Gwynedd	Snowdonia BAP

1.2 Status in Wales and beyond

The lesser horseshoe bat^d is widespread throughout central and southern Europe, but has undergone severe decline in the northern part of its range. Britain supports one of the remaining strongholds for the species, although the species is now rare within the British Isles as a whole, being confined to southwestern England, Wales and western Ireland. It was formerly present in southeast England and the Midlands. It is estimated that there is a UK population of 14,000 divided equally between England and Wales^e.

1.3 Status in Gwynedd^f

There are thought to be approximately 18 lesser horseshoe bat nursery roosts known from Gwynedd. There are also 9 hibernation sites and 7 other sites (satellite or night roosts) recorded within the Gwynedd Bat Group's database, although there are bound to be many others which are unknown.

Many SSSI have been designated in Gwynedd / Snowdonia National Park due to the presence of lesser horseshoe bat roosts, mainly around Dolgellau / Penmaenpool and Talsarnau. Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites candidate SAC comprises the centre of distribution for lesser horseshoe bats in Wales. Bat roosts have also been identified on Pen Llŷn and Glynllifon candidate SAC is both a maternity and hibernation site for a large population of lesser horseshoe bats.

^a Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora

^b European Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994

^c Welsh Assembly Government, *Going Wild in Wales - List of Species and Habitats of Principal Importance for the Conservation of Biological Diversity*. Crown Copyright 2003.

^d *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

^e UK Action Plan for lesser horseshoe bat

^f Within this document the term "Gwynedd" refers to areas outside the Snowdonia National Park area, except where specified otherwise

2. FACTORS AFFECTING THIS SPECIES IN GWYNEDD⁹

- Destruction, deterioration or renovation of old buildings and barns leads to the loss of roosting and hibernation sites. Recognising potentially small colonies of lesser horseshoe bats prior to a development may be problematic.
- Loss of hibernation roosts underground as sites are blocked for safety reasons.
- Loss of insect-rich feeding habitats especially linear features including hedgerows, tree-lines and wooded riparian vegetation, as well as woodlands, wetlands and old pastures, as a result of changes in agricultural practices, development etc.
- Habitat fragmentation and lack of flight paths between fragments, especially hedgerows - lesser horseshoe bats will cross short breaks in linear structures, but will fly very low to the ground and be susceptible to predation and vehicle impact while crossing roads.
- Use of toxic wood preservatives and other chemicals is believed to have a negative impact on bat populations - both by direct poisoning of bats and through reducing availability of prey species.
- The species is thought to be very vulnerable to severe winters.
- Disturbance of hibernating bats, which causes a significant decline in fat stores and may lead to increased mortality rates, may become a problem as a result of increased levels of leisure activity among other factors.

3. ASSOCIATED GWYNEDD SAPS / HAPS

Upland oakwoods, Wet woodland, Upland mixed ashwoods, Scrub woodlands, Veteran trees, lowland wood-pasture and parkland, Cloddiau, Inland rock, quarries, mines and scree, Lowland dry acid grassland, Lowland meadows and pasture, Hedgerows, Transport corridors, Buildings, River corridors, Rhos pasture, Wetlands

Bats

4. CURRENT ACTION IN GWYNEDD

4.1 Site and habitat protection

- Lesser horseshoe bats may occur in areas of Gwynedd identified as potential Wildlife Sites, or designated as LNR, SSSI, NNR or candidate SAC.
- Glynllifon candidate SAC (both a maternity and hibernation site) is designated primarily for its population of lesser horseshoe bats. Meirionnydd Oakwoods and Bat Sites candidate SAC includes most of the known maternity roosts in Meirionnydd and some hibernacula.
- Where EIA's are required for proposed developments (e.g. for road building schemes), these should include surveys for protected species including bats. Where found to be present mitigation measures may be required.

⁹ See also associated HAPs for more general factors affecting this species' habitats

4.2 Management and programmes of action

- Countryside Council for Wales carries out protection and restoration work on roost sites, and runs an advisory system implementing the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.
- The leaflet *Wildlife and Buildings - guidelines for property owners*, which includes information/contacts on what to do if there are bats in your building, is distributed by Gwynedd Council to all relevant applicants in conjunction with planning issues such as the renovation or conversion of buildings.
- Lesser horseshoe bat is one of the species eligible for funding from Countryside Council for Wales Species Challenge Fund.

4.3 Survey, research and monitoring

- Coordinated monitoring of summer roosts, maternity colonies and hibernation sites, by Countryside Council for Wales and Gwynedd Bat Group, which feeds into the National Bat Monitoring Programme coordinated by Bat Conservation Trust.
- Countryside Council for Wales is part-funding a PhD studentship on habitat use by lesser horseshoe bats to inform agricultural and other land management.

5. ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

- To identify and quantify all maternity colonies and major hibernation sites within Gwynedd.
- To maintain the current range of lesser horseshoe bats within Gwynedd, by maintaining all existing maternity roosts and hibernation sites and maintaining the overall level of total roost resource.
- To consolidate and enhance the area and quality of habitat around roost sites, including satellite and night roosts.
- To increase public awareness of lesser horseshoe bats.

6. PROPOSED ACTIONS

Code	Action	Partner(s) ^h
Policy and legislation		
1	Use planning conditions to ensure developments in sensitive locations are compatible with lesser horseshoe bat conservation TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC , Relevant partners
Species / habitat management and protection		
2	Consider designating suitable sites of importance for lesser horseshoe bats as Wildlife Sites TARGET/TIMESCALE: Start process of designation, By 2005	GC , CCW, GBG, NWWT, VWT
3	Develop a regional strategy for the management of lesser horseshoe bat habitat that favours the maintenance of, and expansion from, their current population centres TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2006	GBG , Cadw, CC, CCW, DEPC, EAW, FC, GC, SNPA, VWT
4	Promote and support grant schemes including Tir Gofal, Woodland Grant Scheme, Llŷn ESA and / or use management agreements where appropriate to secure favourable management of important feeding and commuting habitats for lesser horseshoe bat (for example hedgerows, woodlands and streamside corridors), taking into account the needs of associated LBAP species and habitats TARGET/TIMESCALE: To be set, Ongoing	CCW , CC, CLA, DEPC, FC, FUW, FWAG Cymru, GBG, GC, NFU Cymru, NT
5	Seek funding for land management by developing a biodiversity grant scheme, which would include grants for appropriate management of important lesser horseshoe bat habitat TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2005	GC , Relevant partners
6	Ensure that Tir Gofal and Woodland Grant Schemes, or any agri-environment scheme, in the vicinity of known lesser horseshoe bat roosts, include relevant habitat management prescriptions and capital works programmes to protect and improve potential feeding and commuting habitats TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	CCW , DEPC, FC, FWAG Cymru, GBG, GC, VWT
7	Review the need for management agreements on SSSIs with important feeding areas TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2006	CCW , GBG
8	Ensure that bats have unimpeded access to all roosts and protect by way of grilles or gates where necessary TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	CCW , GBG
Advisory		
9	Ensure that land managers and advisors (particularly those administering relevant agri-environment schemes) are advised of the location of key roost sites, their importance and appropriate management for the surrounding area TARGET/TIMESCALE: To be set, Ongoing	CCW , GBG, GC
10	Provide advice and regular training on lesser horseshoe bat conservation issues to development control officers, highways engineers, staff of EAW, including promoting future training events organised by Roads and Otters Steering Group TARGET/TIMESCALE: To be set, Ongoing	GC , CCW, EAW
11	Provide advice on lesser horseshoe bats and habitat management to landowners, architects, builders and land managers TARGET/TIMESCALE: Response on an ad hoc basis, Ongoing	CCW , GBG

^h Lead partner for this action is indicated by bold typeface, see section 7.2 for explanation of abbreviations

Survey, research and monitoring		
12	Continue to monitor priority maternity colonies and hibernacula. TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	CCW, GBG
13	Arrange appropriate bat surveys of old buildings due for renovation, demolition or change of use TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC, Cadw, CCW, GBG, NT
14	Arrange appropriate bat surveys of mines due for closure or change of use TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GBG, CCW, GC
15	Arrange appropriate bat surveys of any other potential bat sites identified by members of the public, etc. TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	CCW, GBG, GC
16	Assist with research into habitat and aerial route way usage of lesser horseshoe bats to maintain populations at a favourable conservation status, where appropriate and feasible TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	VWT, CCW, CEH, GC, UWB
Communications and publicity		
17	Distribute information leaflets including CCW booklet on Bats, leaflets on habitat management for bats produced by the Bat Conservation Trust, Joint Nature Conservation Committee, People's Trust for Endangered Species, Vincent Wildlife Trust and others, the CCW booklet on Bats in roofs and the leaflet on Wildlife and Buildings to landowners and managers at local events and shows TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC, CCW, FWAG, Cymru, GBG
18	In conjunction with other North Wales LBAP groups, CCW, GBG and NWWT, produce an updated version of the Wildlife and Buildings leaflet, and distribute among potential planning applicants, developers, architects and those receiving building renovation grants TARGET/TIMESCALE: By 2005	GC, CCW, GBG, NWWT
19	Distribute relevant information leaflets to key landowners and relevant organisations in the vicinity of key populations of the species TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	CCW, GBG, GC
20	Promote lesser horseshoe bats as a potential tourist attraction to local businesses by liaison with Wales Tourist Board TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC, GBG, VWT
21	Use Parc Glynllifon as a flagship site for lesser horseshoe bat conservation and best practice in habitat management in liaison with Coleg Meirion Dwyfor TARGET/TIMESCALE: Ongoing	GC, CCW, GBG, VWT

7 PARTNERS & OPPORTUNITIES

7.1 Overall Lead Partner for SAP

Countryside Council for Wales (CCW)

7.2 Key partners

Cadw

Coed Cymru (CC)

Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (CEH)

Country Land and Business Association (CLA)

Department for Environment, Planning and Countryside (Welsh Assembly Government) (DEPC)

Environment Agency Wales (EAW)

Forestry Commission (FC)

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group Cymru (FWAG Cymru)

Farmers Union of Wales (FUW)

Gwynedd Bat Group (GBG)

Gwynedd Council (GC)

National Farmers Union Cymru (NFU Cymru)

National Trust (NT)

North Wales Wildlife Trust (NWWT)

Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA)

University of Wales Bangor (UWB)

Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT)

7.3 Opportunities

Volunteers, students, landowners and managers, tourist board

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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9. ABBREVIATIONS

BAP: Biodiversity Action Plan, EIA: Environmental Impact Assessment, ESA: Environmentally Sensitive Area, HAP: Habitat Action Plan, LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan, LNR: Local Nature Reserve, NNR: National Nature Reserve, SAC: Special Area of Conservation, SAP: Species Action Plan, SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest

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