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Immediate release

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Boost for rare Greater Horseshoe Bats!

Radio tracking of bats carried out last summer by the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership has revealed exciting new information about how our local colony of rare Greater Horseshoe bats uses the East Devon countryside.

The surveys revealed the hedgerows or routes the bats use to get from their summer roost to their favourite dining areas! This information is now being used by Natural England to target key landowners and offer them a Higher Level Stewardship agreement to further help with bat conservation. These hedgerows can then be restored, enhancing both these important landscape features and the habitat for the bats. The AONB Team working with local landowners have been planting hedges and new hedgerow trees whilst also improving the hedge banks and fencing around them. Clare James, Land Agent for Clinton Devon Estates, said 'We are really pleased to be involved with this project as it benefits both the wildlife and the environment we enjoy every day. Clinton Devon Estates prides itself on being an exemplar landowner and business actively working to conserve over 15,000 acres of Outstanding Natural Beauty and sustaining habitat for thousands of different species'.

'Greater Horseshoes live in the area because of the mosaic of hedgerows and woodland edges that have been created by generations of farmers' said Pete Youngman, AONB Project Officer, he added that 'We are still looking for another roost somewhere in the Northleigh or Widworthy area as we have found lots of signs of them but have not yet identified their main roost. Once this has been found we will be able to carry out similar enhancements on the surrounding hedgerows and landscape'

If you would like to find out more about 'Looking out for bats' then please contact Pete Youngman AONB Project Officer on 01404 46663.

This landscape scale biodiversity initiative is funded by SITA, with additional contributions from East Devon District Council, Devon County Council, Axe Vale and District Conservation Society, Sid Vale Association and Natural England. SITA Trust makes awards through the 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.

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Notes for Editors

- **Images: East Devon landscape – great for bats (East Devon AONB) and Greater Horseshoe with special radio tag (East Devon AONB)**
- The East Devon AONB was designated in 1963 and covers 268 sq km. Core funding and support is provided by Natural England, Devon County Council and East Devon District Council. Sixteen organisations from environmental groups to statutory bodies, landowners and community representatives work together through the AONB Partnership to conserve this protected landscape. www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk.
- Each year, SITA Trust commits over £7 million nationwide through the Landfill Communities Fund. For information on how to apply for funding from SITA Trust call (01454) 262910 or click on www.sitatrust.org.uk
SITA Trust was set up in 1997 and runs three funding programmes:
 - Enhancing Communities – for community improvement projects around landfill sites owned by SITA UK
 - Enriching Nature – for biodiversity projects within the vicinity of landfill sites in England
 - GreenPrints – launched in June 2007 to encourage 16-25 year olds to volunteer their time and energy to improving green spaces in their local communities
- Clinton Devon Estate's aim is to secure the long term prosperity of the Estates and the people who live and work on them in ways which care for the countryside and assist the wider community. <http://www.clintondevon.co.uk/>
- Natural England is the government's advisor on the natural environment. We provide practical advice, grounded in science, on how best to safeguard England's natural wealth for the benefit of everyone. <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/default.aspx>
- 2010 has been declared the International Year of Biodiversity (IYB) by the United Nations. <http://www.biodiversityislife.net/>