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Contact: Pete Youngman

Immediate release

Phone: 01404 46663 /07734 568988

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Looking out for bats in East Devon

The East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has been awarded £61,000 grant money from the SITA Trust for a three year initiative, 'Looking out for bats', to survey 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 financial 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".

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, East Devon, 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 but 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;

- find out more about the resident bats in the East Devon AONB;
- work with landowners to improve their bat habitats and roosts;
- 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, as well as 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, 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”.

How did this happen?

‘Looking out for bats’ was developed by the East Devon AONB Partnership. “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 today we have been successful attracting significant new funding to our AONB”.

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.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

- **Images**

Magnificent Greater Horseshoe bat in flight (credit “(©) osf.co.uk All rights reserved.”).
The use of the above image (osof-00000555-001) is protected by copyright. The image can only be used for 1 month from date of issue of Press Release and only in conjunction with the East Devon AONB ‘Looking out for bats’ project articles, with the above credit.

‘Looking’ out for bats at Gays Farm, Branscombe with detectors (credit East Devon AONB)

- Telephone 01404 46663 or 07734 568988 to arrange an interview with Pete Youngman or John Scott (Manager of Beer Quarry Caves) or join one of our events
- The East Devon AONB was designated in 1963 and covers 268 sq km, or one third of the East Devon district. Core funding and support is provided by Natural England, Devon County Council and East Devon District Council. Sixteen organisations form part of the AONB Partnership from environmental groups to statutory bodies, landowners and community representatives. For more information visit www.eastdevonaonb.org.uk.

- **For information on how to apply for funding from SITA Trust call (01454) 262910 or click on www.sitatrust.org.uk**

SITA Trust

- 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
- Each year, SITA Trust commits over £7 million nationwide through the Landfill Communities Fund

- As of June 2007 SITA Trust became the first Environmental Body (EB) to be awarded EB Accreditation through the new ENTRUST process.

The Landfill Communities Fund (formerly the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme)

- Landfill tax was introduced in 1996 to encourage more sustainable ways of managing waste
- The landfill tax legislation also brought about the Landfill Communities Fund. This scheme allows landfill operators to voluntarily donate 6.6% of their landfill tax liability to environmental improvement projects
- The Landfill Communities Fund is independently regulated on behalf of HM Government's Revenue & Customs by ENTRUST

SITA Trust, The Barn, Brinkmarsh Lane, Falfield, S. Gloucestershire GL12 8PT