

8.3 Wildlife Survey and Report

Background

The National Park is rich in wildlife and has adopted a Biodiversity Action Plan which aims to increase Exmoor's biodiversity, targeting those species and habitats most valued nationally and locally. There is also a range of accompanying targets in the National Park Management Plan. The Local Plan has policies which seek to protect the nature conservation value of sites and species (LNC9 – LNC14).

Many parts of the National Park are designated County Wildlife Sites, SSSIs or Special Areas of Conservation. Many water courses are identified as sites important for both fauna and flora. Even simple proposals can give rise to biodiversity issues and potentially affect habitats. For instance, the National Park is home to all 16 of the British bat species which can roost in many types of building and/or trees. Bats are often found in the roofs of application sites. Simple applications such as the provision of forestry and farm tracks can affect habitats for vertebrates such as dormice which need to be considered and addressed in application proposals.

Examining wildlife issues and constraints at the outset will allow applicants to understand a potential key consideration to their proposals and demonstrate how issues have been addressed. Many species, such as bats, are protected by law and it would be a criminal offence to disturb such species and their roosts. If some harm is justified to a habitat then the Wildlife Survey and Report will give the ability for applicants to set out mitigation and replacement habitat, if that is possible.

Requirements.

The Planning Checklist, which should accompany all full planning applications, seeks to help applicants identify when wildlife issues may require greater investigation. The information is intended to target the situations where it is most likely that a wildlife issue needs to be understood and addressed in the initial design work. Where the checklist indicates that on initial evaluation no wildlife issues are evident then the application can be submitted with only the checklist completed. However, this does not exclude the consideration and potential requirement to address wildlife issues which may arise during the processing of an application. Where the Checklist highlights that a Wildlife survey is required then, unless it is can be demonstrated that an exemption applies, the survey report and analysis will need to be submitted with the application for it to be registered. If an initial survey report requires further survey work such as emergence surveys, this further survey work must be carried out and further reports provided in support of the application.