

Project Profile

Riviera Holiday Park: Ecology Chapter & HRA

Background

Riviera Holiday Park is located on the southern edge of Brixham, South Devon and owned by Park Holiday UK. It is dominated by single-storey chalet buildings but also includes areas of car parking, amenity grassland and recreational facilities. The eastern edge of the Park is marked by the South West Coastal path from which there are views over St Mary's Bay and out to sea, making the Park a very popular tourist destination

Park Holidays UK was seeking to re-develop and improve many areas of the Park. However the coastal path, where it lies adjacent to the holiday park, forms an important route for greater horseshoe bats as they commute between their roost at Berry Head to the north east and their foraging grounds to the south of the Park. The greater horseshoe bat colony is the primary reason for designation of the South Hams Special Area of Conservation (SAC), a part of which lies along the coastal strip immediately adjacent to the Park.

BSG Ecology's role in the project

BSG Ecology was appointed to lead all the ecological survey work necessary to support a planning application for the Park re-development, with a particular focus on the bat survey work required to determine the use of the site by commuting, foraging and roosting greater horseshoe bats associated with the SAC. Having previously worked with Park Holidays UK on the expansion of their sister Park at Landscope, approximately 1.4km to the north of Riviera, we were able to bring a high degree of local knowledge and technical expertise to the project. Our understanding of likely survey scope, requirements, methodology and mitigation measures; as well as an appreciation of the likely expectations of key stakeholders, including Natural England, were particularly important in providing effective advice.

We completed baseline survey work to identify key commuting routes for greater horseshoe bats adjacent to and through the Riviera site; these included two previously unidentified flight paths that bisected the Park.

We prepared the Ecology chapter of the Environmental Statement for the project and undertook the Habitat Regulations Assessment under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) these documents demonstrated that the scheme would not compromise the special interest of the SAC.

Outcome

Working closely with the project team, including lighting specialists and landscape architects, BSG Ecology ensured the greater horseshoe bat colony and the integrity of the SAC would be maintained. The design of the scheme meant that the bat flight corridors would be enhanced through the inclusion of innovative planting and design. Our approach successfully resolved concerns raised by Natural England, allowing the local planning authority to grant permission for the scheme.

BSG Ecology is retained by Park Holidays UK and continues to be closely involved with the project as it moves into the implementation phase. We are currently preparing the Ecological Management Plan necessary to discharge the planning conditions that relate to ecology. For the future we look forward to a continued involvement in monitoring the effectiveness of the mitigation and enhancement measures built into scheme design and that were an important factor in securing planning consent.