

SITE NAME: Withcall and South Willingham Tunnels COUNTY: Lincolnshire

DISTRICT: East Lindsey

STATUS: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Local Planning Authority: East Lindsey District Council
Lincolnshire County Council

National Grid Reference: TF215825 & TF265825 **Area:** 4.16 (ha) 10.28 (ac)

Ordnance Survey Sheet: 1:50,000: 122 **1:10,000:** TF18SE & TF28SE

Date Notified (under 1981 Act): 9 July 2002

Reasons for notification:

Withcall and South Willingham Tunnels are nationally important large bat hibernacula for a mixed assemblage of species which includes Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri*, Daubenton's bat *M. daubentoni*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, Brandt's bat *Myotis brandti* and whiskered bat *M. mystacinus*.

General description:

These two brick-built railway tunnels once formed part of the Louth – Bardney railway line within the Wolds of rural Lincolnshire. This part of the line closed in 1960. The internal environmental conditions of these now disused tunnels provide a wide range of underground microclimates, which are regularly utilized by large numbers of hibernating bats during the winter months. A diverse assemblage of at least five species of bat have so far been recorded roosting within the tunnel interiors; Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri* regularly occur in the largest numbers, with Daubenton's bat *M. daubentoni*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, Brandt's bat *Myotis brandti* and Whiskered bat *M. mystacinus*. The latter two are difficult to identify in the field but both have been recorded here.

These species are generally widespread across England but are increasingly threatened by the continuing loss of breeding and hibernation roosts. Examples of such large hibernacula are rare in the East Midlands.

Other information

This is a new site and is located within the Lincolnshire Wolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AoNB).