



CIEEM



What to Expect From a Bat Survey

A Guide for UK Homeowners



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Introduction

This document sets out broadly what is involved when a 'bat survey and report' is required in relation to small-scale development (householder planning applications) in the UK. This guidance may be provided to homeowners by those commissioned to undertake surveys, in order to provide some background to bat surveys and assessment. This document is not a guide to undertaking bat surveys. Further advice about bats and bat surveys is available from the Bat Conservation Trust website (www.bats.org.uk). If you are carrying out work that does not involve planning (e.g. maintenance) and need advice about bats then please call the National Bat Help Line (0345 1300 228).

If you disturb bats or interfere with their resting places you may be breaking the law. The presence of bats rarely stops development taking place. Development may need to be adapted or carried out in a certain way to ensure the bats are safeguarded.

Why is a Survey Needed?

Numbers of bats in the UK have declined considerably and now all species of bats found in the UK and Ireland and their resting places (roosts) are protected by law. Therefore where a project or development is considered likely to affect bats or their roosts a survey and assessment of impacts will be required.

The survey will need to establish the species and number of bats likely to be affected together with an assessment of the likely impacts on bats arising from the development proposal. A survey is needed if your local planning authority, or your architect, planning agent or ecologist consider that there is a reasonable likelihood of bats being present and affected by the development proposal. In coming to their conclusion they may have considered factors such as the nature and scale of the development, the suitability of existing structures (e.g. the age and style of the building), and the suitability of the surrounding landscape for bats and/or whether there are existing records of bats using the area.

FACT

There are 18 species of bats in the UK and Ireland. Pipistrelle bats are the smallest weighing around 5 grams (less than a £1 coin). The largest is the Noctule with a wingspan of 33-45cm.

Who Carries Out and is Responsible for a Survey?

It is the responsibility of the planning applicant to organise and pay for the survey. If the applicant has an agent they may be able to arrange for the survey to be undertaken on their behalf. The survey will need to be carried out by an ecologist who is experienced in carrying out surveys and assessment for bats. The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) provides a searchable directory of professional ecologists in the UK and Ireland (www.cieem.net/members-directory). The ecologist may need to approach a local records centre on your behalf to obtain records of bats in the area. You will be expected to pay for the costs charged by the record centre for this.



What's Involved in a Survey?

Surveys can be divided into two distinct stages:

Daytime Surveys

A daytime survey will need to be undertaken by an ecologist looking for:

- Signs that bats have or are using the buildings, structures or trees;
- Features in buildings, structures and trees which could potentially provide a roosting place; and
- The surrounding area's suitability for bats.

The ecologist will want to look at the inside and outside of all the buildings including lofts, outbuildings or cellars etc. They may use ladders to examine the roof and eaves and an endoscope (a small camera the thickness of a pen) will enable a closer look at small spaces which bats could utilise but are not ordinarily easy to see into. This first stage can be carried out at any time of year.

In some cases the ecologist may be able to conclude at this stage that there is negligible potential for bats to use the building, structures or trees affected by the development proposal, in which case no further surveys are likely to be required. Conversely, further surveys may be required (see below).

Emergence and Re-entry Surveys

The second stage is to carry out 'emergence' surveys. These surveys are likely to be necessary where:

- Evidence of bats was found during the daytime survey; or
- It was not possible to conclude that there was negligible potential for bats to use the building(s), structure(s) or tree(s) affected by the development proposal (field signs of bats are not always visible, dependent on the structure of the building or tree, and therefore further surveys may be needed to confidently confirm their presence or likely absence).

These surveys are designed to see if any bats emerge from a structure, building or tree, how many, what species and where from. These surveys involve the ecologist(s) standing outside of the building looking for bats and listening for them using a bat detector and camera when bats are most likely to be leaving their roost sites, around dusk. Depending on the size and layout of the building, structure or tree, several surveyors might be required in order to observe all

of the likely emergence points. These surveys can only be undertaken when bats are active, usually in the summer months and during 'good' weather conditions for bats (dry, mild, not windy). These surveys may also need to be undertaken on more than one occasion; the ecologist will be able to advise further on the likely requirements following the daytime survey and the best practice guidelines they intend to follow.

It may be possible to carry out the daytime survey followed by the first emergence survey in the same visit; provided the conditions and time of year are right.

The latest guidance for professional ecologists on conducting bat surveys is:

Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition) - Bat Conservation Trust (<https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/guidance-for-professionals/bat-surveys-for-professional-ecologists-good-practice-guidelines-4th-edition>).



What Happens When the Survey is Completed?

Following the survey the ecologist will need to write a report setting out how and when they carried out the survey, what they found, the impact of the development on bats and their recommendations.

If it is concluded that bats are present a 'mitigation strategy' will need to be developed, which may include specific timings for work, the use of certain materials and/or specific provision to allow bats to continue to use the original or a replacement roost.

Enhancement

National planning policy looks for development to enhance biodiversity. Whether your bat report concludes bats are affected by the development or not, you should consider incorporating enhancement features into buildings for bats. These can be as simple as 'bat bricks' and ridge tile roosts, and cost very little to buy and install (see sources of further information below).

FACT

Bats use high frequency calls normally beyond the range of human hearing. A bat detector makes these echolocation calls audible to humans - and because different species of bat make different calls these can help identify them.



What Happens Following Planning Permission?

If the development cannot avoid disturbance or other impact to bats, even for a temporary period, a 'licence' to carry out the proposed works must be obtained from the appropriate licensing body* before development can take place. This will need to be done following the granting of planning permission. The licence application will need to be submitted by the ecologist on your behalf. Your ecologist will be able to advise you on the process further.

You may also find planning conditions are attached to your planning permission, requiring your development to be carried out in a certain way or in accordance with the parts of the bat report submitted with your application.

*Licensing authorities: Natural England; Natural Resources Wales; NatureScot; National Parks and Wildlife Service Ireland; Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Sources of Further Information

- Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management: www.cieem.net
- Bat Conservation Trust: www.bats.org.uk
National Bat Helpline: 0345 1300 228
- Natural England: www.gov.uk/bats-protection-surveys-and-licences
- Natural Resources Wales: www.naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/species-licensing/list-of-protected-species/bat-licensing/
- NatureScot: www.nature.scot/professional-advice/protected-areas-and-species/licensing/species-licensing-z-guide/bats/bats-advice-homeowners
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/wildlife-licensing>
- National Parks Wildlife Service Ireland: <https://www.npws.ie/licencesandconsents>



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