

Bats

Protected Species
Guidance Note: 2014

Survey Season Calendar

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
				Activity transects								
			Dusk & Dawn emergence / re-entry									
			Tree survey for roosting features									
			Optimal			Sub-optimal			Inappropriate			

Why Survey?

SERVICES:

- Bat activity surveys
- Dusk & dawn emergence / re-entry surveys
- Site and building assessments for bat roost potential
- Building inspections for evidence of roosting bats
- EPS licence applications
- Bat mitigation design and implementation

Government planning policy guidance throughout the UK requires local planning authorities to take account of the conservation of protected species when determining planning applications. In the case of European Protected Species (EPS) such as bats, planning policy emphasises that strict statutory provisions must be given due regard by the planning authorities. Where there is a reasonable likelihood of bats being present and affected by the development, surveys should be completed before planning permission will be considered. Adequate surveys will establish the presence or absence of bats, predicting the likely impact on bats and their roosts. If necessary, mitigation and compensation measures can be designed, often to comply with and satisfy planning conditions. Bats are nocturnal and use a variety of roosts throughout the year in which to breed, hibernate, feed and give birth. They don't build nests, tending to hang from features or creep into cracks and crevices. It is not common for bats to use the same roost throughout the year as they require different roost conditions for breeding and hibernating. In flight bats tend to follow linear features such as lines of trees, hedges, buildings and waterways, whilst commuting from their roosts to feeding areas. Such features provide shelter and often a greater density of insect prey.

Methodology

Survey methods depend on the habitats recorded and the nature of the proposed works. Most commonly an initial daytime inspection will be undertaken. This allows identification of all features, grading their potential to support roosting bats. A detailed inspection can then follow, targeting points of interest including buildings, trees, tunnels or bridges. During such an inspection high powered torches, binoculars, ladders and endoscopes can be used to search for evidence of bats. This would be in the form of droppings, feeding remains, oil stains (from fur) and scratch marks. It may require tree climbing or the use of an aerial platform lift.

Often, this method alone proves inadequate to identify all bat species present, their numbers, or roost entrance locations, especially if roof voids are inaccessible. Following guidance from the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), two to three dusk emergence and dawn re-entry surveys are then scheduled throughout the active season (April to September). These require enough surveyors to adequately cover all aspects of the surveyed structure. Dusk surveys start approximately 30 minutes before sunset and continue for up to two hours thereafter. Dawn surveys start up to two hours before dawn and can





continue for up to 30 minutes after sunrise. Surveyors use bat detectors, digital recorders and their knowledge of individual bat species' behaviour (emergence times, flight patterns, etc.) to determine which species are present and where the bats are accessing roosts.

Details are annotated onto recording forms and site maps, to aid later analysis. The results of these surveys help determine the mitigation requirements. In other circumstances, bat activity surveys can be useful to identify key habitat features and favoured flight 'commuting' routes used by bats. These can prove especially important if proposed works include the removal of linear or sheltered features such as hedgerows and tree lines, or disturbance to road or rail corridors. Activity surveys involve walking a pre-planned transect route from dusk (targeting features described above) on a number of occasions. Results help identify the numbers and species of bats present (i.e. importance of the site), key commuting links and directions of flight.

Mitigation

Once it has been established that bats are using a site, adequate mitigation measures must be put in place to protect the bats, their roosting locations and required habitat features. The favoured option is always to try and maintain a roost by alterations to the proposed disturbance works. When this is not feasible, alternative roosting features can be created, either by putting up bat boxes or erecting purpose built structures (e.g. bat lofts). Exclusion measures can then be implemented.

Licenses are required for any work or surveys that would otherwise commit a criminal offence under UK or EU law. Licenses are issued under the Habitats Regulations by Natural England, and may be issued for a variety of purposes, including conservation. Only a licensed bat worker can enter a known bat roost, or capture and handle bats. A Habitats Regulations (EPS) licence is required for any work which would disturb bats or damage and destroy a roost. Examples include building demolition, renovation, conversion and tree felling.

