

Toolbox talks: Nature Conservation

Bats

What?

- ▣ There are 18 (17 breeding) species of bat in the UK, and all species and their roosts are protected by law.
- ▣ Because so many bats are endangered, both UK and European legislation gives them complete protection.
- ▣ They tend to return to the same roosts each year, so these sites are also protected whether the bats are present or not.
- ▣ The most common UK bat is the Pipistrelle. It is only 40 mm long and weighs about 5 grams.

Identification

- ▣ places where bats may be found include holes and cracks in trees, roofs and walls of houses and buildings, under bridges, underground in caves and old railway tunnels.
- ▣ every building and mature tree is a potential bat roost. Smooth, stained areas may be found around the entrance to roosting sites.
- ▣ look out for bat droppings – dark brown or black, around 4 to 8 mm in length. They look like mouse droppings but crumble easily, as they are made up of insect fragments. In well-established roosts, droppings may be several centimetres deep.
- ▣ other signs include a sharp characteristic odour and large numbers of moth wings discarded by feeding bats.
- ▣ bats can crawl into holes only 15 mm wide.

Why?

- ▣ avoid prosecution: it is a criminal offence for anyone without a licence to:
 - kill, injure, or handle a bat
 - possess a bat (whether alive or dead)
 - disturb a roosting bat
 - damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter, whether they are present or not.
 - breaking the law can lead to fines of up to £5000 and/or up to six months imprisonment.



Questions

- 1 Where are signs of bats expected to be found?
- 2 What tell-tale deposits will help identify bat roosts?
- 3 If it is suspected that bats are present, what should be done?
- 4 Where might bats be seen on this site?

Do

- ✓ If a bat or a bat roost is found on site, stop all works in the area IMMEDIATELY and inform a line manager.

Don't

- ✗ Try to touch or handle a bat (unless in immediate danger). They are very delicate, and this can cause them serious harm – it is breaking the law.

LEGISLATION

In Britain all bat species and their roosts are legally protected, by both domestic and international legislation by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

This means you may be committing a criminal offence if you:

- Deliberately take, injure, or kill a wild bat
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats.
- Damage or destroy a place used by bats for breeding or resting (roosts) (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time)
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat of a species found in the wild in the EU (dead or alive) or any part of a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.
- Penalties for breaking the law can include large fines and imprisonment and the seizure of equipment.

PRECAUTIONARY WORKING METHODS

The Chapel was assessed as providing 'moderate' bat roosting potential during an updated Preliminary Roost Assessment. It was identified that a record obtained from the Local Data Centre, that one roost was previously recorded within the chapel in 2008. The record related to a single common pipistrelle emerging from the building, but does not define the location of the roost, and/or a roost assessment.

The proposed development requires the investigative works of the Chapel to assess the buildings make up. As the Chapel is a listed building, the investigative works will be selective, and the location and extent of works will be determined on the day of works. As such, the following methods will be adapted to preserve the Chapel and to avoid features of bat roosting potential, to allow the investigation to proceed in a lawful manner. The following methods are to be completed under the bat licenced ecologist's supervision:

- The Ecologist will undertake an internal and external daylight inspection to assess the status of the site for bats prior to works commencing on site. The Ecologist will check for fresh droppings and accurately assess the levels of bat activity, with particular care taken in relation to the areas to be impacted by the works.
- The Ecologist will attend site on the days of the scheduled works to undertake a search for bats prior to the works commencing, specifically in relation to the roof. Any areas considered to have bat potential by the ecologist will be inspected using an endoscope. If no evidence of bats is found, a supervised strip in these areas will be conducted.
- If any evidence of bat use (i.e. field signs) are identified during the supervision, no works will proceed in that location with a minimum of 1m buffer to be maintained from that point.
- All contractors working on the site will be briefed with a Toolbox Talk by the Ecologist, on the legal protection afforded to bats and their roosts, and on how to proceed if a bat is discovered during the work.
- If bats are encountered during works, all works will cease, and no works can proceed until the relevant further surveys have been completed, and the relevant European Protected Species Licence has been obtained to allow the activities to proceed.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A BAT

All works must immediately stop, and the ecologist or environmental co-ordinator contacted to determine the best course of action. Leaving a voicemail is insufficient – you must speak directly to an ecologist or environmental co-ordinator.

At no time should you purposefully approach or attempt to handle a bat (unless in immediate danger).

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ANY QUESTIONS?

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