

PLANNING ADVICE: NUMBER 3 2012

BAT SURVEY REQUIREMENTS

Providing an adequate survey will save time in processing a planning application where bats may be affected. Survey and assessment should cover all phases of a phased development.

Ideally surveys should be carried out during the summer months when bats are active. However, in certain circumstances winter surveys may be acceptable for householder developments where all relevant areas of the building can be accessed. If evidence of usage by bats is found during winter surveys or the results are inconclusive, further survey work may be required in the summer months. Surveyors should make their clients aware of the limitations of winter surveys and the possible need for further survey.

As a minimum, all surveys submitted for development proposals should include the following:

- 1) Objectives of survey.
- 2) Date, time and duration of survey, and who carried out the survey.
- 3) Brief description of weather conditions at time of survey.
- 4) Description of the proposed works.
- 5) Sources of pre-existing information such as records from NBN or Local Records Centre together with local sightings of bats.
- 6) Description of the buildings (including type of structure and materials) and/or trees being surveyed and their suitability as a bat roost for all locally recorded species of bat.
- 7) Habitat description of site and surrounding area for context. This should include information on exposure of site, proximity to water courses and water features, trees/hedgerows/woodland or other semi-natural habitat. This is to allow identification of suitable foraging grounds.

- 8) Methods of survey – i.e. dawn and dusk emergence survey or daytime inspection of building and/or tree. Justification should be provided for the method of survey used and details of any equipment used. If dawn/dusk surveys were not carried out then there should be a clear justification as to why this was not necessary.
- 9) Results of survey including sufficient evidence to justify conclusions in 10 below. Results should include:
 - Species present and approximate numbers.
 - Details of signs of usage by bats found.
 - How habitats or features present are used by bats and an indication of level of use.
 - Identification of entry/exit points to roost and position of roost – a plan of the layout or photographs marked to illustrate access points and position of the roost.
 - Roost type and evidence leading to assessment of roost type.
 - Other species present (barn owls etc) where likely to be affected by proposals.
- 10) Interpretation and evaluation:
 - Presence/absence
 - Constraints and limitations on survey. This should include factors influencing survey results such as temperature and weather, and any limitations on accessibility to areas of the building and/or tree. Are any areas of the survey inconclusive and if so what is the worst case scenario.
 - If winter survey was carried out are the result conclusive, is a summer survey likely to be required.

Where bats are present:

- Assessment of usage by bats, type of roost i.e. winter site or maternity roost, and approximate size of roost.
- Site status assessment – importance of roost to local population of the species.

11) Impact assessment either at time of development or long term.

In order to assess this accurately, adequate information on the proposed development will have to be made available to the surveyor. If bats are present a summary of impacts should be provided including details of type, magnitude and duration of long term and short term impact. This should consider impact at a site level and in a wider context.

12) Consideration of Avoidance

Where bats are present options to avoid any impact/disturbance should be explored before mitigation is considered. This might include changes to the applicant's proposals or timing of works to avoid impact on bats present.

13) Detailed mitigation and compensation – essential where bats are present and will be affected by the development.

- Mitigation strategy – overview of how the impacts will be addressed with justification for timing of works if this is to be used to avoid disturbance to bats.
- Roost creation/restoration and/or enhancement
- Exclusion – timing and methods
- Post construction checks and monitoring requirements (with justification)
- Work schedule with phasing
- Relevant maps/plans/diagrams
- Requirement for pre-construction survey or repeat survey if work does not proceed within acceptable (one year) time period.

14) Requirement for a licence

- Opinion on whether measures can be taken to avoid an impact on bats and avoid the need for a licence for the current proposal. If uncertain then state reasons for uncertainty. Any decision on whether a licence is required will be made by SNH.

15) References

16) Photographs and maps of key features of structure and surrounding habitat.

17) Qualifications and experience of surveyor including relevant licences.

The information provided in a survey should be sufficiently comprehensive to form part of a licence application to Scottish Natural Heritage should bats be found and a licence required.

Timing of surveys

Surveys must be undertaken at the correct time of year. In the majority of cases this will be during May to August, however for underground structures which are likely to be used by hibernating bats, January and February would be the most appropriate time to survey. (For surveys of possible hibernation sites, the surveyor should hold a specialist licence and is likely to require an endoscope for a thorough survey as the bats/bat droppings are likely to be in crevices).

For householder applications and other small scale developments such as small/simple steading conversions, winter surveys may be acceptable to rule out the presence of bats but these will only be accepted where all relevant parts of the building can be adequately inspected. If winter surveys find evidence of use by bats, or where they are inconclusive, a further survey during the summer months may be required to establish extent of use and identify appropriate mitigation. If unsure whether a winter survey is likely to be acceptable for a particular site please confirm with Aberdeenshire Council before undertaking to carry out such a survey.

APPENDIX – INFORMATION FOR SURVEYORS

1. Bat Survey Proforma

Suggested headings for completed report to ensure all relevant information is covered.

1.1 Background/Introduction

Include description of works, objectives of survey, personnel carrying out survey, outline of legislation for applicants information.

1.2 Method

Include desk study, site survey, emergence survey details, weather conditions, timing etc

1.3 Limitations of Survey

1.4 Results

Include results of desk study, site survey, emergence survey, habitat assessment.

1.5 Assessment of impacts

1.6 Recommendations

Where winter survey - include opinion on whether survey is conclusive or whether summer survey is needed.

Where bats are present include avoidance, mitigation, compensation, opinion on need for a licence.

1.7 Appendices

Include surveyor qualifications, references, site photographs

2. Data Sharing - Release of Species and Habitat Information

Aberdeenshire Council encourages the release of habitat and species information recorded during a bat survey to the Local Records Centre (NESBReC – North East Scotland Biological Records Centre) and other relevant data holders.

Surveyors are requested to include a clause in any quote or contract that encourages the release of data.

Suggested wording for data release request

“Species and habitat data collected during the course of this contract will be made available to appropriate Biological Records Centres. Sharing environmental data improves the quality of future ecological surveys and increases the accuracy of ecological assessment for future projects. Address details will not be passed on. Any data held will be located by grid reference only. If you do not agree to these terms then please tick this box.”

Surveyors Please Note –

Please include acceptance of data sharing by the client at the end of your survey report, this will then be picked up by Aberdeenshire Council and the data will be forwarded to NESBReC for processing.