

How do I get a bat licence?

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Do you need a licence?

Some bat work can be carried out without holding a licence of any kind. Both volunteers and professionals can plan surveys and carry out bat detector activity surveys and emergence counts without requiring a licence.

A licence is only needed if there is a possibility of disturbing bats (e.g. by entering a bat roost).

NB - all bat survey licences require a significant amount of training and field experience; no single course will qualify you for a licence.

Training for a licence (England)

In England, licences are issued by [Natural England](#).

Types of licences in England

An individual can hold more than one licence type.

Volunteer Bat Roost Visitors Licences (issued for the purposes of conservation)

- a) Volunteer bat roost visitor (licence WML-CL15)
- b) Volunteer bat roost visitor trainer (licence WML-CL16)

Who is it for: This licence is for volunteer Bat Roost Visitors. These are licensed volunteers who visit householders who have bat roosts and who are either planning some work that may disturb the bats or are unhappy with their bats and may need some reassurance.

On behalf of Natural England these volunteers provide advice and reassurance about bats to homeowners (this free service also includes churches). The licence only covers official duties on behalf of the Natural England free advice service.

Training for this licence: The training scheme for this licence is entirely voluntary. Most bat groups have one or more voluntary trainers, who take on a certain number of trainees each year. The trainees must cover all of the relevant theory relating to bat work, and then do a number of accompanied roost visits to gain practical experience. Once the trainer considers that a trainee is competent (in the theory and

practice of bat work and the ability to talk to householders), they will sign them off for their licence. The training follows the [Bat Workers Manual](#).

Those training for this licence type must be linked to a specific trainer and be registered as a volunteer with Natural England. However a trainee can gain additional experience by attending training courses and accompanying other licensed bat roost visitors on visits. Trainees should keep a log of their experiences.

For more information see the [Natural England advice](#).

Survey licences (issued for the purposes of science and education including research)

- c) Level one – to survey bats by observation only (licence WML-CL17)
- d) Level two – to survey bats using artificial light, endoscopes, hand and handheld static nets (licence WML-CL18)
- e) Level three - to survey bats using artificial light, endoscopes, hand and handheld static nets, mist nets and acoustic lures (licence WML-CL19)
- f) Level four - to survey bats using artificial light, endoscopes, hand and handheld static nets, harp traps and acoustic lures (licence WML-CL20)

Please see the [Natural England Class Licensing website](#) for details about each class licence.

Who is it for: These licences are for all bat related activities (both voluntary and professional) outside of the Natural England volunteer bat roost visitor advice service. This includes:

- Bat box checks
- Hibernation surveys
- General survey work
- Professional survey work
- Use of harp traps, mist nets and acoustic lures for development purposes

Anyone who wishes to work as an ecological consultant (carrying out bat work that requires a licence) would need to hold this type of licence.

Training for this licence: Unlike the volunteer bat roost visit system, there is no specific training scheme relating to this licence. Sign off for this licence is via two references (individuals that hold this licence type).

A trainer (someone who holds a VBRV trainer licence) cannot sign individuals off for this licence type. They can however act as one of the two referees if they also hold a survey licence.

Some of the training for this licence may be possible via a [bat group](#) - particularly for those wishing to use the licence for bat group or voluntary activities such as:

- Bat box checks
- Hibernation surveys e.g. those monitored as part of the NBMP
- General surveys

Your local bat group is always the best place to start for anyone wishing to get involved with bats.

Some of the training for this licence can be gained by attending training courses, particularly the theory side such as bat biology and ecology and legislation, and some experience of survey skills. BCT (and other providers) offer a number of training courses which provide a good foundation for those wishing to undertake professional bat survey work. Some of these courses may also be suitable for other individuals wishing to train for this licence type.

However, following on from these courses, an individual would still need to get a substantial amount of experience in the field. Individuals should try to gain experience by accompanying individuals who already hold this licence type on surveys. A log book should be kept of all courses, reading, bat group activities and other bat experience as this will all help an individual in working towards a licence.

If your plan is to become an ecological bat consultant there are two options:

1. Find other licenced bat consultants who may be willing to take you along on some of their contract work.
2. Pay to attend a licencing course - a few trainers run their own licensing training courses.

It can be difficult to gain the necessary experience (outside of bat groups) for this licence. BCT is currently working to try and help those finding it difficult to gain a licence, particularly those who wish to undertake professional bat survey work. We have published a professional training standards document that provides information about the skills and knowledge an individual would need to become an ecological consultant. We would also like to provide information on where individuals can go to gain experience and how they can ultimately get a licence.

Project licences

Who is it for: Project licences are for those individuals needing to disturb, take or possess bats for a specific project, or those who wish to undertake activities such as ringing, tagging and marking bats for specific research projects.

Those wishing to apply for a specific project licence will need to demonstrate their experience in the skills to be used, to Natural England.

For more information please visit the licensing section of [the GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

Licences in Scotland

In Scotland personal licences are issued by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). There are two licences:

Bat Roost Visitor Licence:

This is the main licence for those undertaking general bat work in Scotland and allows the licence holder to visit or disturb bats and/or their roosts, and to temporarily take and handle bats.

This licence type would be required for:

- Visits to roosts in domestic properties usually for the purpose of assisting owner/occupiers with bat issues e.g. bats getting into their house or just for general advice about bats;

- Visits to bat roosts for surveys such as bat boxes, caves, mines etc.;
- Visits to bat roosts for professional surveys
- Carrying out specialised survey techniques such as trapping.

Individual activities e.g. species to handle and/or disturb, visiting hibernation sites, use of invasive trapping equipment such as harp traps, mist nets and acoustic lures, can be applied for, making each licence individual to the holder. This is very different to the English system in which different standard licences are required for different activities.

Training and sign off for a licence is via a licensed trainer (normally within the local bat group) or by two references (from individuals who already hold a licence for the activities you wish to undertake).

Science and Research Licence:

This licence is for science, research or educational purposes and is for individuals planning to carry out any experiment or research that might otherwise result in offences being committed in relation to bats or their roosts. This licence is for a specific project so requires details about the species involved, geographical location, methodology to be used and a description of the work. These licences are issued for a set time period in which the work will take place. The use of ringing, marking and tagging techniques requires this type of licence.

Sign off for this licence is via two references (from individuals who already hold a licence for the activities you wish to undertake).

Training

If you are looking to gain a licence to take part in bat group activities then you may be able to get some or all of your training via the local bat group. Most bat groups have one or more licensed trainers, who take on a certain number of trainees each year. The trainees must cover all of the relevant theory relating to bat work, and then do a number of accompanied roost visits or surveys to gain practical experience. The training follows the [Bat Workers Manual](#).

If your plan is to become an ecological bat consultant then you will need some formal training. For this there are three options:

1. Find a licensed trainer who is willing to provide training for professional survey work. As above these trainers are normally linked to a bat group.
2. Find other licensed bat consultants who may be willing to take you along on some of their contract work.
3. Pay to attend a licensing course - a few trainers run their own licensing training courses.

Some of the training for a licence can be gained by attending training courses, particularly the theory side such as bat biology and ecology and legislation, and some experience of survey skills.

BCT (and other providers) offer a number of training courses which provide a good foundation for those wishing to undertake professional bat survey work. Some of these courses may also be suitable for other individuals wishing to train for this licence type. However, following on from these courses, an individual would still need to get a substantial amount of experience in the field. A log book should be kept of all courses, reading, bat group activities and other bat experience as this will all help an individual in working towards a licence.

It can be difficult to gain the necessary experience (outside of bat groups) for this licence. BCT is currently working to try and help those finding it difficult to gain a licence, particularly those who wish to undertake professional bat survey work. We have published a professional training standards document that provides information about the skills and knowledge an individual would need to become an ecological consultant. We would also like to provide information on where individuals can go to gain experience and how they can ultimately get a licence.

For more information: <http://www.snh.gov.uk/protecting-scotlands-nature/species-licensing/mammal-licensing/bats-and-licensing/research/>

Licences in Wales

In Wales personal licences are issued by Natural Resources for Wales (NRW) for scientific, educational or conservation purposes. They are generally issued for specific counties but can be issued on an all-Wales or sub-regional basis.

Personal licences

The individual can apply for and obtain a single personal licence which details all of the activities (scientific, education and/or conservation) they can undertake in relation to bats. Individual activities e.g. bat box checking, handling, disturbing hibernating bats can be applied for, making each licence individual to the holder. This is very different to the English system in which different standard licences are required for different activities.

A licence is required for:

- Visits to roosts in domestic properties usually for the purpose of assisting owner/occupiers with bat issues eg bats getting into their house or just for general advice about bats;
- Visits to bat roosts for surveys such as bat boxes, caves, mines etc.;
- Visits to bat roosts for professional surveys
- Carrying out specialised survey techniques such as trapping

Training and sign off for a licence is via a licensed trainer (normally within the local bat group) or by two references (from individuals who already hold a licence for the activities you wish to undertake).

Project licences

Who is it for: Project licences are for those individuals needing to disturb, take or possess bats for a specific project, or those who wish to undertake activities such as ringing, tagging and marking bats for specific research projects.

Those wishing to apply for a specific project licence will need to demonstrate their experience in the skills to be used, to Natural Resources Wales

For more information: <https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/protected-species-licensing/european-protected-species-licensing/bat-licensing/?lang=en>

Training

If you are looking to gain a licence to take part in bat group activities then you may be able to get some or all of your training via the local bat group. Most bat groups have one or more licensed trainers, who take on a certain number of trainees each year. The trainees must cover all of the relevant theory relating to bat work, and then do a number of accompanied roost visits or surveys to gain practical experience. The training follows the [Bat Workers Manual](#).

If your plan is to become an ecological bat consultant then you will need some formal training. For this there are three options:

1. Find a licenced trainer who is willing to provide training for professional survey work. As above these trainers are normally linked to a bat group.
2. Find other licensed bat consultants who may be willing to take you along on some of their contract work.
3. Pay to attend a licencing course - a few trainers run their own licensing training courses.

Some of the training for a licence can be gained by attending training courses, particularly the theory side such as bat biology and ecology and legislation, and some experience of survey skills.

BCT (and other providers) offer a number of training courses which provide a good foundation for those wishing to undertake professional bat survey work. Some of these courses may also be suitable for other individuals wishing to train for this licence type. However, following on from these courses, an individual would still need to get a substantial amount of experience in the field. A log book should be kept of all courses, reading, bat group activities and other bat experience as this will all help an individual in working towards a licence.

It can be difficult to gain the necessary experience (outside of bat groups) for this licence. BCT is currently working to try and help those finding it difficult to gain a licence, particularly those who wish to undertake professional bat survey work. We have published a professional training standards document that provides information about the skills and knowledge an individual would need to become an ecological consultant. We would also like to provide information on where individuals can go to gain experience and how they can ultimately get a licence.

Licences in Northern Ireland

Licences are issued by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency on behalf of the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor Licence

Volunteer bat roost visitors may be required to visit a property where bats have been discovered in order to advise the property owner on the implications of the presence of bats and to encourage a favourable outcome for the conservation of bats. The visit is normally undertaken at the request of NIEA. A licence is required to carry out this work which may require the volunteer bat worker to examine or handle bats in their roost. The licence meets all the requirements of a bat worker who may need to examine or handle bats in their roosts. Where an applicant has little or no experience of handling bats the licence may be issued for disturbance only.

This licence is required to:

- Disturb bats in dwelling houses without handling them.
- Take bats by hand in dwelling houses for identification and release.
- Take bats by static hand net in roosts and outside roost entrances for identification and release.
- Photograph bats in the hand as an incidental part of the conservation.
- Disturb hibernating bats without handling them.

Licences for Surveying and Monitoring

These licences should be used to collect data to increase scientific knowledge or to determine presence of bats. You will be required to complete a report to give details of the work carried out under a licence and if this is part of a scientific project state how the scientific data has been used.

A licence is required to:

- Disturb non-hibernating bats without handling them.
- Take bats by hand for identification and release.
- Take bats by static hand net for identification and release.
- Disturb hibernating bats without handling them.
- Take hibernating bats by hand for identification
- Take bats by harp trap as part of a survey.
- Take bats by mist net as part of a survey.

- Photograph bats in the hand as an incidental part of survey and monitoring.
- Hold bat carcasses for identification.

Specific projects and scientific research (including ringing, radio tracking and photography)

If you will be catching bats for specific scientific projects, you will need to include a project plan as part of the licence application. If you wish to photograph bats for scientific or educational purposes (other than as an incidental part of surveying work) a licence may be issued where there is a special case for doing so. This will normally only be where results contribute directly to public awareness about bats, such as filming for television. The conservation of bats must be the prime consideration at all times.

Disturb bats without destroying the roost for non development works (e.g. maintenance)

This licence can be applied for in the same way as the others above, but there are separate application processes for development projects.

Further information: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/wildlife-licensing>

Training

If you are looking to gain a licence to take part in bat group activities then you may be able to get some or all of your training via [the local bat group](#). One of the activities undertaken by the Northern Ireland Bat Group is to offer training to members wishing to apply for a Bat Handler's Licence.

Usually trainees must cover all of the relevant theory relating to bat work, and then do a number of accompanied roost visits or surveys to gain practical experience. The training follows the [Bat Workers Manual](#).

If your plan is to become an ecological bat consultant then you will need some formal training. For this there are three options:

1. Find a licenced trainer who is willing to provide training for professional survey work. As above these trainers are normally linked to a bat group.
2. Find other licenced bat consultants who may be willing to take you along on some of their contract work.
3. Pay to attend a licensing course - a few trainers run their own licensing training courses.

Some of the training for a licence can be gained by attending training courses, particularly the theory side such as bat biology and ecology and legislation, and some experience of survey skills.

Various training providers including BCT offer a number of training courses which provide a good foundation for those wishing to apply for their licence. However, following on from these courses, an individual would still need to get a substantial amount of experience in the field. A log book should be kept of all courses, reading, bat group activities and other bat experience as this will all help an individual in working towards a licence.

