

BAT SURVEY - SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WINDFARM PROPOSALS

Bats are afforded a high level of strict protection under The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1995 as amended. On assessing your application NIEA consider that there is reasonable likelihood of bats being present on the proposed site. In order to meet national and international statutory obligations, NIEA has recommended to Planning Service that appropriate bat surveys should be carried out prior to the consideration of your planning application. The surveys should be carried out by a professional ecological consultant with relevant experience and qualifications in bat survey techniques. Once we have received the survey information we will be in a position to comment further on your proposal.

The applicant should be aware that due to the seasonal and highly mobile nature of bats, further survey work may be required where timing constraints and/or poor weather conditions occur.

- All survey work and survey reports must be carried out according to the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) 'Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines', the BCT 'Surveying for onshore wind farms' document and Eurobats guidance
- The applicant must ensure that the commissioned bat surveyor(s) have the necessary experience and qualifications to carry out this work. It is preferable that the surveyor(s) is a member of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM)
- The date and time of the survey and the qualifications and experience of the surveyor(s) should be included in the survey report
- The surveyor should ensure that equipment used is sufficient to identify all species of bat. We consider that both static and broadband detectors must be used to fully assess the spatial and temporal distribution of activity for different species. Please refer to page 13 and 14 of the BCT 'Surveying for onshore wind farms' document
- The survey report must include a map (at least A4 size) showing the location/ transect walked by each surveyor. The location of any other recording equipment must also be illustrated
- The survey should take advantage of any opportunity to survey at maximum proposed hub height
- Temperature and wind speed at 2 metres above ground at the time of surveying should be provided in the survey report for both manual and static surveys
- Transects should be completed within 2-3 hours after sunset and recordings taken at specified locations must be at least 3 minutes in length
- Surveys should be carried out within one year of submission to the department

- The survey must identify the site risk level for bats and justify their conclusions within the survey report.
- Survey methodology and frequency must be proportional to the site risk level (see Table 2 of the BCT minimum survey standards for Surveying for onshore wind farms' document)
- There should be an appropriate number of both dusk & dawn surveys
- The entire site and any suitable habitat within 200 metres of the red line boundary should be surveyed
- Approximate numbers of bats must be specified using the BCT bat activity index calculation
- Species of bats must be specified
- Approximate flying height should be specified if possible
- The survey should identify and map the presence of any established commuting and foraging paths within the survey area and any connectivity between the proposed site and potential/ known roosting sites
- Type of behaviour/activity of bats using the site should be identified. The survey should establish whether bats have established roosts, (active or inactive) or use the area for commuting, foraging, migrating or for breeding purposes, e.g. advertising posts for individual males. Swarming sites or significant hibernation sites should also be investigated and recorded
- The information should be presented in a written report and should include a large scale map. The exact location of roosts, roost entrances, advertising posts, swarming activity foraging and commuting movements should be shown. All evidence of use by bats found, for example droppings, should be included
- Further survey effort may be required if the proposed windfarm poses a high risk to the local bat population
- If necessary, the survey should recommend the most appropriate ways in which the Bats can be protected from the impacts of development throughout the duration of the development
- In the event that the planning application goes to appeal or public inquiry, the person(s) contracted to carry out survey work may be required to appear at, or give evidence to, the inquiry
- All located roosts should be reported to the Northern Ireland Bat Group*

- For more guidance and information on survey methodology and bat ecology please refer to the following publications and websites

NIEA Development Management website;

http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/land-home/plan/advice_and_information.htm

NIEA Wildlife Management and Licensing

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/niea/biodiversity/wildlife_management_and_licensing/wildlife.htm

NIEA Development Management publication – Bats and Development

http://www.ni-environment.gov.uk/bats_development_booklet.pdf

***NI Bat group**

<http://www.bats-ni.org.uk/index.html>

Bat Conservation Trust website and Best Practice Guidelines

<http://www.bats.org.uk>

Bat Conservation Trust – Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines

<http://www.bats.org.uk/publications.php?keyword=Bat+surveys&month=&year=&category=&search=Search>

Bat Conservation Trust – Surveying for Onshore Windfarms

http://www.bats.org.uk/download_info.php?id=379&file=BCT_Survey_Guidelines_web_final_version.pdf&referer=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bats.org.uk%2Fpages%2Fpublications_and_resources.html

NIEA reserve the right to determine whether the survey is adequate or when additional information is required.