

Environmental Standard Operating Procedure

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| ESOP Name | Bat mitigation for tree work |
| ESOP Number | 14 |
| Revision Date | 22/02/2024 |
| Related ESOPs | 4 Tree and scrub removal 27 Riverside tree and scrub removal |



Aim

Mature trees with scars, deadwood and ivy are potential roost sites for bats. All British bats protected under UK legislation, making it an offence to kill, injure or disturb bats or damage/destroy their roosts.

This standard procedure aims to avoid killing, injury or disturbance of bats and damage/destruction of roosts during tree removal or trimming.

Standard Methodology

- Identify potential tree work. Ranger/Operations Technician/Ecologist to assess the tree for age and potential bat roost features (PRF). The following are likely to attract bats; old trees, old woodpecker/rot holes, splits, loose bark, snags, dead/dying wood, epicormic growth and dense ivy cover – fill in Tree Work Assessment form recording tree tag numbers or marking tree clearly if not tagged. If in any doubt about the potential of a tree for a roost site, seek advice from an Ecologist.
- If trees are assessed from the ground as having PRF, an Ecologist should be called to discuss scope of tree work proposed and / or to discuss other mitigation options such as moving footpath to remove public safety issues.

- Ecologist to work with staff to establish if tree work can be completed without damage to PRF. If possible, complete work without impacting PRF.
- If damage to PRF is inevitable, further inspection of PRF required – using tree climbing, torches, mirrors & endoscope, suitably trained arborists (inc some BA staff or contractors) to confirm presence of PRF and to establish signs of use or bat presence.
- Following further inspection, presence of PRF's may be ruled out as not having roost potential (i.e holes visible from ground, when inspected, don't lead to internal cavities) & therefore work can proceed following guidance from Ecologist.
- If PRF's are confirmed, arborist will work with Ecologist to establish how to proceed depending on presence of bat signs, levels of usage, droppings, stains around entrance holes. The urgency of survey & urgency of tree work will depend on the potential threat to public safety and if this can be mitigated.
- A licence will be needed from Natural England where intended tree work has the potential to cause direct disturbance to bats or to destroy bats or their roosts. Guidance from a licenced bat worker will be required.
- If urgent / immediate tree felling is required as identified by qualified arborist for risk to public safety, and target tree supports PRF's, then Ecologist should contact Licensed Bat Ecologist for advice on how to proceed. Ideally, mitigation should be used to reduce urgency / risk to public, to allow more time for survey, i.e. fence off danger zone to prevent risk to public. Essential to document all decisions made.

Procedure

Pre-works

- Training to be provided for those carrying out tree works.
- Trees with bat potential to be identified and checked by the responsible Ecologist.

Operational

- In all situations, assessment of alternative mitigation measures should be considered. I.e. if foot paths can be moved, then risk to public safety can be reduced, so that tree work may not be necessary.
- Trees identified as negligible or low bat potential may be felled or tree work completed at any time but avoiding breeding birds (1st March – 31st August).

- Procedure for felling trees or completing tree work on trees with medium or high suitability for bats, will depend on results of further inspection. The method and timing will be decided following discussion with Ecologist
- Procedure for tree work or felling that will directly impact or disturb bats or their roosts will need to be completed under license. Work method and timing will be agreed as part of license procedure.
- If bats or signs of bats are found at any stage during felling and disposal of the tree, the work should stop and the responsible ecologist and a licenced bat worker should be contacted immediately.

Consultation

- Natural England will need to be notified of any maternity or hibernation roosts found.
- Consultation will be required with Natural England to get the appropriate protected species licence in place, if required.

Risk Assessment

| Hazard | Initial Risk | | | Controls / Safeguards / Precautions | Revised Risk | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|---|---|---|--------------|---|---|
| | S | L | R | | S | L | R |
| Killing and injury of bats | 4 | 3 | C | Ensure appropriate timing of surveys as per Bat Conservation Trust guidance. Ensure surveys are completed to the appropriate standard. If bats usage is suspected or confirmed by surveys, all work to be completed under protected species licence, to prevent any killing or injury. Ideally retain all trees known or suspected to have roosts, or with potential for roosts using alternative mitigation measures. Standard procedures to be followed if bats are found in a felled tree. | 4 | 1 | B |
| Destruction or damage to roost sites. | 4 | 4 | C | Completion of appropriate surveys should identify location of roost sites. If work cannot be completed without damage to roost sites, a protected species licence will be required prior to works and supervision by a Licensed Bat Ecologist. Ideally retain all roosts features within trees. | 4 | 1 | B |

Matrix

| | | LIKELIHOOD | | | | | RISK |
|---|---|---------------|----------|-------------------|--------|-------------|--|
| | | Very unlikely | Unlikely | Moderately likely | Likely | Very likely | |
| SEVERITY | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Low (minimal, short-term disturbance levels and negligible damage to native habitats.) | 1 | A | A | A | A | A | A OK. Work to provisions in risk assessment |
| Medium (moderate, short-term disturbance levels, some damage to native habitats/species. Regenerates quickly.) | 2 | A | A | A | B | B | B Proceed with caution. Dynamically review risks. |
| High (high disturbance levels over a longer period and displacement of species. Damage to native habitats. Significant time to regenerate) | 3 | A | B | B | C | C | C Cancel task. Approach project in a different way. |
| Very High (Long-term disturbance with displacement/death of species. Significant damage to native habitats that takes a significant time to regenerate.) | 4 | B | B | C | C | C | |