

Training for a licence (England specific)

Why do you want 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).

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

Types of licences (in England)

Please note an individual can hold more than one licence type

1. 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 on behalf of Natural England 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 reassurance and advice 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 website](#) (these pages are currently available via the National Archive whilst the Natural England web pages are being transitioned to the GOV.UK website).

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

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

The 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 licensed bat consultants who may be willing to take you along on some of their contract work.
2. Pay to attend a licensing 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.

3. 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](#).