

Bat Worker Forum 14th September 2012
Room L/N/002, Langwith College, University of York

ACTION POINTS

1. Heather McFarlane – will look into how BCT can make its policy, on photos showing bats being handled without gloves, clearer on our website, particularly the photo library and will arrange for the “Why Wear Gloves” document to be updated.
2. Attendees – Kelly Gunnell [kgunnell@bats.org.uk] would appreciate any case studies people may have that would be suitable for the new edition of “Biodiversity for Low and Zero Carbon Buildings”.
3. Attendees – Kelly Gunnell would welcome suggestions in relation to monitoring Habitat boxes and whether there are any bat groups that would be able to assist?
4. Attendees – Heather McFarlane [hmcfarlane@bats.org.uk] would welcome feedback from anyone that has used the Halloween Fundraising Pack as well as any photos too please.
5. Kat Walsh to look into the sharing of Natural England data from historic church surveys that have been undertaken by VBRVs and to talk to David Overton at Natural England.
6. Attendees – Kat Walsh encouraged everyone to get in touch with Natural England when they come across problems of non-compliance with Natural England letter or licensing. Please contact: specieenforcement@naturalengland.org.uk
7. Attendees – Please send information on planned domestic exclusions to karen.haysom@bats.org.uk so that they can be considered for the Bristol research.

ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD FROM 2011

- a. John Haddow to re-visit the house where bats have been returning to the special “in roof” bat box so he can write it up as an example.

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The meeting was chaired by Steve Parker.

In attendance

Aidan Matthews	Bedfordshire Bat Group
Alan Roe	Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group
Andrea Durn	Gloucestershire Bat Group
Anna Sutcliffe	Pembrokeshire Bat Group
Anne Youngman	BCT Scottish Officer
Bob Cornes	Bedfordshire Bat Group
Bob Moon	Manx Bat Group
Carol Williams	BCT Director of Conservation
Cathy Dyason	Dorset Bat Group
Chris Sherlock	Birmingham & Black Country Bat Group
David Gibbons	RSPB & BCT Trustee
Den Vaughan	Pembrokeshire Bat Group

Duncan Fisher	Essex Bat Group
Dwaine Martin	Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group
Elizabeth Burtenshaw	Surrey Bat Group
Greg Carson	London and Clwyd Bat Groups
Hazel Makepeace	Northumberland Bat Group
Julia Hanmer	BCT CEO
Karen Haysom	BCT Director of Science
Karl Martin	Clywd Bat Group
Kate Jones	BCT Chair
Katherine Walsh	Natural England
Kelly Gunnell	BCT Built Environment Officer
Liat Wicks	BCT Head of Biodiversity
Linda Kergon	Monmouthshire Bat Group
Lou Pickersgill	Somerset, Dorset and Avon Bat Groups
Lynn Whitfield	Surrey Bat Group
Maggie Brown	West Yorkshire Bat Group
Martyn Cooke	Surrey Bat Group
Pat Hatch	Essex Bat Group
Rebecca Collins	Herefordshire Action for Mammals
Roger Jiggins	Essex Bat Group
Ross Baker	Surrey Bat Group
Sheila Dyason	Dorset Bat Group
Stacey Waring	University of Reading / BCT
Stephen Davison	Monmouthshire Bat Group
Steve Lucas	BCT Wales Officer
Steve Parker	BCT Trustee, South Lancashire Bat Group
Steve Roe	Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group
Sylvia Jiggins	Essex Bat Group
Toby Nevitt	BCT Helpline Manager
Tom McOwat	BCT Trustee, Dyfed Bat Group
Tony Lane	East Yorkshire Bat Group
Zoe Tubbs	BCT Helpline Technical Advisor

Apologies

David Wells	Gloucestershire and Somerset Bat Groups
Jean Matthews	Countryside Council for Wales and Gwynedd Bat Group
Rob Raynor	Scottish Natural Heritage
Lisa Worledge	BCT Partnerships Officer

2. Minutes and actions from the September 2010 meeting

The minutes of the last meeting (16th September 2011) were accepted. At the last meeting, four actions were identified with a fifth carried over from 2010, as reported on below:

Action	Outcome
1. BCT to send out a separate email covering voting for the Pete Guest Award 2012 rather than include details within the normal Bat Group Bulletin.	Completed. Lisa Worledge believes we have received more votes for the Pete Guest Award as a result.
2. Helen Miller and Lisa Worledge to review the procedures sent around to cave and mine history groups and amend where necessary to bring in line with amended guidelines for bat workers.	Completed. Helen and Lisa will be reviewing the guidelines again this year and continue to work with other relevant organisations.

Action	Outcome
3. Kate Jones to send copy of WNS review paper due to be published in Trends in Ecology and Evolution.	Completed.
4. Helen Miller, in addition to the letter to vets, include a one side summary and send out guidelines electronically, arranging for them to go onto the relevant veterinary websites.	In progress. We've had an intern working on the contact list for all UK vets over the summer, still some more work to do on this but once complete we can get the letter and other information sent out. <i>Carried forward to 2012.</i>
5. (carried forward from 2011) John Haddow to write up his example of the bats returning to the special "in roof" bat box.	John says sorry he forgot to do it but he did put the Doune telephone exchange re-roofing on the Roost web site and will write-up the in-roof bat box this autumn. He will try to visit the house and see how it has been in the last year or two as an update. <i>Carried forward to 2012.</i>

3. Collection of Pete Guest Award Votes

Steve Parker invited attendees who had not already voted via email or post to submit a vote in person for one of the Peter Guest Award nominees: Matt Dodds, Daniel Hargreaves, Jenny Harris, Sally Humphreys, Colin Morris, Steve Parker, Lizzie Platt, Jan Ragg, James Shipman, Graham and Donna Street.

On behalf of Lisa Worledge, Steve Parker asked that the closing of the votes be brought forward to two weeks before the conference to allow BCT to engrave the winners name on the trophy so the winner can take the trophy back with them and to save on courier costs.

No objections were raised.

4. News from SNCOs

4.1 Kat Walsh gave updates on behalf of Natural England:

a) **Roost Data Sharing Agreement** – the process for releasing data to local record centres is underway; though some local record centres have yet to sign up to the agreement. It is still the case that names and addresses of roost locations cannot be given out; but the 6-digit grid reference has been agreed to.

- Martyn Cooke asked whether these records will include historic records. Kat Walsh said "yes".
- The question was asked whether there would be any text included in this data so that the information can be used for case studies? Kat Walsh replied some text would be included, yes.

b) **Class Licensing** – a flyer from Natural England on Class Licensing was included in each delegate pack for the conference.

- Roger Jiggins asked whether there would be additional training for those surveying churches due to the additional complexity of the surveys required and therefore, the scope for unsatisfactory survey results/recommendations. Kat Walsh was not sure whether additional training would be given or not.
- Karen Haysom and Julia Hanmer stated that BCT was talking with Stephen Rudd at Natural England about a project to focus on increasing support for churches. BCT has also raised the need for volunteer roost visitor training on churches with David Overton and others in Natural England as this would require additional funding.
- Lou Pickersgill asked whether licences would run concurrently. Kat Walsh stated that “yes” they would.
- Bob Cornes said that he thought the fact that licensing is contacting those with licences who aren’t on the VBRV list as a good thing. He also commented on the fact that he had been sent a ladder by NE but had no storage for it. Kat Walsh stated that Martin Rhodes is aware of the complaints raised about these ladders.
- Audrey Turner asked what happens when a bat worker does roost visits, bat box checks, science and education, and sub-contractor work for consultants; how many licenses will that person have? Kat Walsh said she wasn’t sure since the system is still being worked out.

c) **Reviewing SSSI (habitats and species)** – species under discussion: bats and water voles. JNCC are reviewing guidelines for the selection of habitats and species.

- Lou Pickersgill wanted to know whether SSSIs would be down-graded and then sold off?
- Kat Walsh stated the SSSI are not NE’s to sell and that the process would be a case of reviewing whether SSSIs have been appropriately assigned or not. Some sites will need to be de-notified, others extended and new ones designated. The de-notifying of a site is rare.
- Lou Pickersgill asked whether National Nature Reserves would be staying. Kat Walsh said yes, as far as she knows.
- Ross Baker asked whether local bat groups had been asked to propose SSSIs.
- Kat Walsh said that NE has known of a few potential SSSI bat sites since the last round of notifying sites. In the recent BCT review of potential SSSI’s, BCT approached bat groups who were involved with specific NBMP sites for further information which could support a case for possible notification.
- The SSSI Review process is ongoing, the review conducted by BCT is part of a five year process. Natural England is not in the position to inform the wider public of potential SSSI’s as yet as the review process is still underway and potential sites are still to be finalised.
- Ross Baker wanted to know how to put a site forward. Kat Walsh asked him to contact her. Ross also asked what the list of criteria for site selection was. Kat referred him to the JNCC website.
- Martyn Cooke asked whether private homes could be SSSI sites as well. Kat Walsh said that buildings could be designated SSSI but cannot give any further details on proposed sites.

4.2 Steve Lucas gave updates on behalf of Wales:

a) On the 1st April 2013 the CCW will cease to exist and there will be a new Natural Resources body in some guise. The effect on licensing is unknown but we believe that most licensing will be transferred from WG to the new body.

4.3 Anne Youngman gave updates on behalf of Scotland:

a) SNH is trying to reduce bat work so that they are becoming more strategic. In the past schools and churches received free roost visits but they will be reducing the free service to just homeowners.

b) SNH is also seeking to centralize calls instead of processing calls regionally – part of a standardizing process.

5. News from BCT

5.1 Introduction

Julia began her update by explaining that she wouldn't repeat what was being covered in talks over the weekend.

5.2 Thank you

Julia thanked everyone regarding their responsiveness to the Bat Group Bulletins. For example: sending in dropping samples for the GLE roost study; the result of which was that a new GLE roost was discovered in Devon. Julia especially thanked bat carers during what has been a very bad year for bats with pups being abandoned.

5.3 Events

The South East Regional Conference is taking place on 24th November and booking will open in a week or so. Next spring will be the North and South West Conferences, dates and venues are to be confirmed. If you have any suggestions on programmes please contact Lisa Worledge lworledge@bats.org.uk. In addition the Scottish Conference is taking place in November; contact Anne Youngman ayoungman@bats.org.uk for more information, and the Wales Conference next June, contact Steve Lucas slucas@bats.org.uk

5.4 GIS Project

BCT is currently at the early stages of creating GIS maps of bat records (and thank you to everyone who has contributed records). The maps will be hugely beneficial for bat conservation with multiple uses from strategic planning to local on the ground conservation, to research via predictive modelling. Going forward we will be engaging with bat groups and bat carers, planners and other audiences to discuss the kind of mapping outputs they would find useful.

5.5 Volunteer Training Brochure

A new Volunteer Training Brochure has just been published on the BCT website. This brings together the range of training opportunities we have for volunteers across our work. It is easier to see what courses and resources are available to volunteers and who to contact at BCT. It includes information on additional resources available to Partner Groups, e.g. detailed introduction to bat talks with PowerPoint presentation and tutor notes (free to Partner Groups).

5.6 Bat Survey Guidelines

The second edition of the Bat Survey Guidelines was published this year, to continue to strengthen best practice and guide professional bat work. There is a strong emphasis on adapting approaches and principles to suit each individual case.

5.7 Professional Training Standards

The Professional Training Standards have now been published. Unfortunately situations do still occur where guidance is misinterpreted or applied inappropriately, which can damage bat conservation.

Professional judgement remains an integral part of all bat work. This is why we have published Professional Training Standards and revised our training courses alongside the new Bat Survey Guidelines.

5.8 NBMP Online Data Entry

The NBMP team are finalising the first part of developing a new database and online data entry system. This has begun with Colony Counts this summer. We hope to trial online Hibernation Survey data entry this winter and will also be getting in touch with some volunteers to ask them to trial the pages for Colony Counts and provide feedback ahead of next summer. The next stage (timeframe to be established) will be waterway and Field Surveys.

- Ross Baker found the hibernation records difficult to submit online when he last tried. What will the new version be like?
- Karen Haysom answered that BCT are upgrading the database and online entry face so the new system will be a 'true online system'. However, this is first being piloted with the Colony Counts.

5.9 Bat Care

Bea Ayling has recently started a regular bulletin for bat carers (this goes out to everyone registered as a bat carer with BCT, but we would be happy to share it with other people who are involved in bat care).

We are planning on including a 'Helpline Surgery' as part of future regional conferences so that we can show people how the Google Maps system works (for roost visitors as well as bat carers) and provide an opportunity to raise issues with us face to face as well. We have included bat care workshops in the last two English regional conferences.

We held the first national Bat Care Conference in Wales last October.

As you heard, in the action points from last year, we are getting contact details for all UK vets and preparing a letter to go out to them all.

There is an awful lot more we would like to do. We are currently seeking funding to further our bat care work and support new and current carers. If successful this will include: bat care courses, a second edition of the Bat Care Guidelines, new courses and guidance for veterinary professionals as well as a bat care conference every two years.

- Chris Sherlock has been campaigning about published photos that show bats being handled without gloves and would like to know two things: can BCT update their document "Why Wear Gloves" and can BCT make our policy on photos such as these clearer?

ACTION: Heather will look into how BCT can make its policy on photos showing bats being handled without gloves clearer on our website, particularly our photo library and will arrange for the "Why Wear Gloves" document to be updated.

5.10 Bat Rings

BCT has taken over the sale of bat rings from the Mammal Society. Lisa Worledge is the contact and she will be in touch with everyone who has purchased rings previously with more information.

5.11 Built Environment

Kelly Gunnell thanked people for submitting case studies for the Roost awards (trophy to be awarded at the conference dinner). Any comments or questions about the Roost website should go to Kelly at kgunnell@bats.org.uk

There is a new BCT publication, "Landscape and Urban Design for Bats and Biodiversity" and a second edition of Carol William's book "Biodiversity for Low and Zero Carbon Buildings" is in the process of being produced.

ACTION: Kelly would appreciate any case studies people may have that would be suitable for the new edition of "Biodiversity for Low and Zero Carbon Buildings".

ACTION: Kelly would welcome suggestions in relation to monitoring integrated bat boxes, such as Habibat and whether there are any bat groups that would be able to assist?

5.12 Breathable Roofing Membrane Project

Stacey Waring explained the Breathable Roofing Membrane Project is in its final stages. The aim is to produce clear guidelines on what is suitable and what isn't. Additionally, they aim to clarify the buildings regulations.

5.13 Fundraising and Communications

Heather McFarlane thanked bat groups for communications and fundraising help. The European Bat Weekend has now been renamed the International Bat Weekend.

Heather also expressed many thanks for entries people had put onto the Big Bat Map.

The Halloween Fundraising Pack went quite well in 2011. Copies are available on the website and the BCT stall for 2012.

ACTION: Heather would welcome feedback from anyone that has used the Halloween Fundraising Pack as well as any photos too please.

6. Matters Arising Regionally/Locally

6.1 Solar Panels

Den Vaughan – came across solar panel works for the first time recently and was wondering what mitigation guidelines there are. Kelly Gunnell responded that more research needs to be done as to the impact. The University of Reading's research indicated that temperature increases in the roof void after solar panels are installed (the extent of which is dependent on the volume of the void), rather than decreasing as was thought. BCT would like to investigate this more fully. One of the ideas is to find homeowners who are willing to put data loggers in their loft after solar panels have been installed; unfortunately, this still leaves the problem of a control. Fundraising is needed.

6.2 Data Sharing between Natural England and Bat Groups

Roger Jiggins explained that this matter was raised before they were aware of Natural England's progress with it. Roger said thank you to NE for this progress and there was a round of applause from the attendees.

- Roger & Sylvia Jiggins did raise a further query which was whether it would be possible to have access to historic church surveys undertaken by VBRVs. This would be hugely helpful

to the work they do with churches in Essex where they advise on whether consultant surveys are needed or not.

ACTION: Kat Walsh to look into the sharing of data from historic church surveys that have been undertaken by VBRVs and talk to David Overton (the Natural England contact for this).

- Anne Youngman asked whether it would not be possible to just ask all churches to have surveys since 8/10 have bat roosts.
- Roger and Sylvia responded that there would be financial difficulties with this practically since many churches cannot afford consultant surveys.

6.3 Non-compliance with Natural England Letters

Roger & Sylvia Jiggins raised a concern about the lack of contact after the survey and letter process and its result: no idea as to whether works had been carried out properly or not. They have had experience of going back a 2nd or 3rd time and finding a huge amount of non-compliance. It then becomes difficult to pursue since the police cannot be contacted so long after the case and makes the letter and survey redundant if they aren't being followed.

- Stacey Waring reported similar situations with her breathable membrane research; contractors installing breathable membranes when they have been told to install bitumen and developers excusing themselves because they were not aware of this.
- Kat Walsh pointed out that Natural England is not the enforcing body but that lack of compliance is the developer's responsibility.
- Julia Hanmer suggested speaking to the Investigations Team.
- Lou Pickersgill asked what happens when the developer/contractor claims they haven't received a letter.
- Kat Walsh replied that this was not an excuse for breaking the law.
- Rebecca Collins commented that Diocesan architects are particularly bad at this.
- Roger Jiggins pointed out that recommendations in Natural England letters are not a legal requirement and suggested that letters be sent out by post AND email when/if BCT takes over the new contract.

ACTION: Kat Walsh encouraged everyone to get in touch with Natural England when they come across these problems. Please contact: speciesenforcement@naturalengland.org.uk

6.4 Bat Care

Steve Parker raised the issues outlined in Debbie Worland's (Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group) email in her absence. On the most part Lisa Worledge's email reply had already answered most of her queries but Steve touched upon Debbie's query about providing carer training and the fact that, currently, funding is being looked into for this.

- Rebecca Collins raised an issue where the nearest carer hadn't been contacted because his rabies jab was not up to date and yet he had not been told about this.
- Toby Nevitt commented that Bea Ayling (Bat Care Co-ordinator at BCT) sends out regular reminders and so, in this case, something must have gone wrong – he asked that any problems like this are notified to the helpline so we can investigate what happened.
- Maggie Brown told of incidents where the West Yorkshire Helpline had received complaints about bats not being picked up because a message was left with the WY Helpline but it wasn't responded to. Conversely if a carer doesn't immediately pick-up then the caller will automatically call the next carer. This means that if there are carers who are often unable to answer their phones then some carers end up getting all the calls.

- Toby Nevitt commented that we try, where possible to give out 3 carer numbers but will continue to look for ways to improve the system and any suggestions are welcome.

6.5 Bat Box Monitoring Protocol

Ross Baker and Lynn Whitfield wanted to know how this was progressing.

- Karen Haysom said that yes, BCT is setting up a new protocol based on case studies; Lisa Worledge is working on this.
- Carol Williams added that this project isn't being started from scratch but that information initially compiled by Bob Stebbings is being redeveloped so that the protocol is more suitable as a whole.

6.6 Other

Julia Hanmer provided an update on the Investigation Project. In 2011 BCT recorded the highest ever number of allegations of bat crime – 339, of which 138 were referred to enforcement organisations. This was a 20% increase on 2010. Building and development remains the main source of bat crime.

In 2012, Pete Charleston, BCT's Investigations Officer, was able to support the police in a number of investigations. Three cases went to trial, all relating to the destruction of bat roosts in building/demolition works. The first in January resulted in a conditional discharge and just £85 costs despite the best efforts of the police's investigating officer. BCT provided an impact statement, however this was not considered; a very disappointing result.

Two cases followed in July and August with better outcomes. BCT provided impact statements and expert witness services to these trials. The cases resulted in fines of £2,500 and £7,500. In both cases ecological consultants reported these incidents. BCT would like to thank the consultants, bat groups, volunteers and investigating officers for their efforts.

We will continue this crucial work, however this remains difficult work to fund. It takes special people to give to bat crime investigations. In 2012 Kent Bat Group donated £500 and we would ask everyone to consider making a donation to this vital work. Proceeds from the raffle and the silent auction during the conference will be going to the investigations project.

- Rebecca Collins wanted to know if any of the cases Julia mentioned went to the media; builders don't usually hear of these cases and as a result aren't deterred.
- Heather McFarlane confirmed that they had been covered in local media; the coverage wasn't great but it wasn't terrible.
- Greg Carson wanted to know whether the £85 could be taken to judicial review.
- Heather McFarlane said probably not since a lot of other things will have been looked at during the initial sentencing decision. However, the Head of Biodiversity is still working with Pete Charleston and magistrates to ensure fines are more appropriate. Though a positive slant is that fines are better than cautions.
- Stacey Waring asked whether social media could be used to advertise such cases.
- Heather McFarlane responded that social media methods were already being used but had limited success since they tend to be preaching to the already converted.

7. Pete Guest Award result

There were a total of 10 nominees and 239 votes. Julia Hanmer announced the winner since Steve Parker was a nominee.

Daniel Hargreaves was announced as winner of the 2012 Pete Guest award having received the greatest number of votes.

8. Update on Churches and Domestic Exclusion Research Projects

Karen Haysom gave an updated on the Churches and Domestic Exclusion research projects that BCT is involved in.

She thanked everyone for contributing information on prospective domestic exclusions and that this had allowed research to go ahead. However, there is still a need for information on sites for the 2nd year of the study.

Action: Attendees: Please send information on planned domestic exclusions to karen.haysom@bats.org.uk so that they can be considered for the Bristol research.

The church research project has gone ahead this summer. The Bristol research team has piloted radar, lighting and acoustic as possible deterrents to keep bats away from the most sensitive areas within the church. Data analysis will go ahead over the winter period. The project advisory group will meet in January to discuss the first year results and plans for the 2nd year of the project.

- Lou Pickersgill wanted to know whether, at this stage, either lights or acoustic deterrents had proved successful.
- Karen Haysom could not comment at this stage but did state that this is a case of looking for a win-win situation; one that will help churches and bats i.e. the church retains the bats but moves them to a more manageable area.
- Roger and Sylvia Jiggins commented that they know of a church where bats were evicted completely with the use of lights and the result was a lot of underweight bats. However, someone else commented that they had heard a story highlighting virtually the opposite: neither light nor acoustic deterrents worked at all.

9. Any other business

- Kate Jones mentioned a global volunteer scheme ("Bat Detective") she is working on which will involve an interactive website with bat calls on it. *[Since the meeting this has gone live at: www.batdetective.com]*
- Den Vaughan commented on a situation in which a bat roost visit in Pembrokeshire had to be handed over to CCW so that an exclusion could be applied for but after re-visiting the site it turned out that a completely inadequate exclusion was carried out. Kat Walsh suggested Jean Matthews as an appropriate contact with CCW.
- Greg Carson updated us on a sound recorder he had found at a very good price. He also managed to negotiate with the retailers that 10% goes to BCT with every purchase. Please talk to him if you are interested.

10. Date of next meeting

Friday 13th September 2013, University of Warwick (2013 BCT National Bat Conference)