

BCT – how is it doing?

Questionnaire analysis – key findings



Please refer to the 'Tables' and Text box entries' reports for the percentages (BCTQuestionnaire2007-tables.pdf and BCTQuestionnaire2007-textboxentries.pdf). Please note that for the most part the base for calculating percentages excludes respondents classified as providing 'No answer'.

Section 1 – About the respondents

Membership of BCT and of bat groups: Just over half the respondents (52%) stated they were members of BCT and 46% stated they were members of a local bat group (29% were members of both).

Paid employment and volunteering: While the percentage of total respondents whose main paid employment involved bats was 27%, this rose to 40% among bat group members and fell to 19% for those neither in BCT nor a bat group (it was 29% for BCT members). A high majority of these individuals also worked with bats on a voluntary basis (80% overall, rising to 85% for BCT members and 94% for bat group members). In total, 42% of the respondents worked with bats on a voluntary basis, rising to 51% for BCT members and to 72% for bat group members, falling to 20% among the rest of the respondents.

Survey participation: Around half the respondents had taken part in one or more surveys (NBMP, Sunrise/Sunset, Roadside), rising to 59% among bat group members.

Section 2 - Bat group members only

Involvement in bat groups(s): 41% of bat group members indicated that they were 'heavily' involved in their local bat group(s), rising to 49% for those who were also BCT members. Around a quarter indicated that they did not have a lot of involvement.

BCT/bat group working relationship: When it came to describing the current working relationship between their bat group(s) and BCT, 29% indicated it was 'close', 36% 'a little distant', 25% 'quite distant' and 10% that there was 'little/no relationship'. This fell far short of what was expected, though whereas 72% indicated it should be close, 25% indicated it should be 'a little distant' with 3% indicating it should be more distant than either of these. How to close the gap between the current and expected working relationship needs to be investigated.

For the 29% who used their own words in the text box to describe the current overall relationship between their local bat group and BCT, 30% used it to say that they didn't actually know or weren't sure what the relationship was. The next highest number of comments (13%) stated a positive about BCT closely followed at 12% by those expressing a negative in respect of BCT's handling or stance on the Defra/rabies issue.

Just under 20% entered comments about the expected relationship with the most frequently mentioned (by 30% of them) referring to some aspect of improved communications. Representing bat groups/members' views was the next most

frequently made comment (12%) followed by suggestions that BCT should be more actively involved directly with bat groups (9%).

BCT/bat group support: As regards support, 72% agreed that BCT currently did useful things for their bat group, though 95% expected this of BCT, identifying another gap to be investigated and closed. In contrast, 88% agreed that their bat group did useful things for BCT, basically matching the 89% expecting this of their bat group.

Trust in BCT: 64% indicated that they currently had trust in BCT (and 'can leave them to get on with their work'), with 18% indicating that they had lost some trust, 14% that they had lost a lot of trust and 5% that they had lost all trust. The proportion of bat group members who indicated that they expected to have trust in BCT was 91%. The principal reason entered in the text box for the loss of trust (completed by a third of the bat group members) concerned the Defra/rabies issue (for just over a half of them), particular in regard to communication about the research and lack of consultation/seeking views. It is clear that when available, information should be communicated early to allow for fuller consultation.

Additional comments (text box): As regards what was working well, just over half the respondents entered a comment with the most frequent (42%) being about BCT and how it was already supporting bat groups. Specific areas of BCT (such as NBMP, training and the helpline) were identified by 30% as working well and 11% referred to BCT and bat groups working well together. A few (7%) made the point that either nothing was working well or that there was no relationship at all.

For the 44% who entered a comment about what could be better, just over a third of them identified the approach/mindset of BCT (attitude, openness, consultation and communications were examples) with 21% saying that BCT and bat groups should work closer (improved communications, data flow and consultation were examples). Improved training opportunities (more, better, more structured, cheaper) was the next most frequently mentioned (12%) and some (7%) made the point that all was currently OK.

Section 3 – Communications (all respondents)

Forms of communication: For all except BCT members, the BCT website was identified as the most frequent form of communication respondents came across (for BCT members, not surprisingly, it was Bat News). Overall, however, around a third of the respondents didn't visit the website and around 10% didn't have access to the internet. Even for 15% with access to the internet it was limited in some way. Printed forms of communication therefore remain essential (some respondents used a text box to make the point that they required print because they weren't connected to the internet). Having a well structured, easily navigated and informative website is also essential given its importance.

Only around 55% of those with unlimited access to the internet (which was the case for approaching three-quarters of all the respondents) recalled receiving e-communications. How much of this was because they weren't aware of them is unknown (though the erratic nature of the e-bulletins, now corrected, won't have helped here). Making their existence known via the website and in print on a regular basis should help.

With so much of BCT's work appearing in its quarterly report, the number of respondents who recall receiving it and therefore aware of BCT's activities is disappointing. This is particularly so with respect to bat group members as there is a mechanism in place for distributing this report (a 46% recall, which may be why some don't feel BCT does useful things for their group and may be a contributing factor to their satisfaction scores, see later). It's availability on the internet (initiated earlier this year) should help here, though other changes may also be required to improve its accessibility. How BCT can improve communication about its work needs investigating.

Not everyone wants reports, bulletins and so on, they just want to support the trust in its work and Bat News is quite sufficient (some respondents making this point in one of the text boxes).

Satisfaction: At least 64% of respondents were 'totally' or 'mainly' satisfied with all the issues raised around communications (range, frequency, information they contained, opportunities for communicating with BCT, BCT's response to communications and the effectiveness of communications from respondents), be they BCT members, bat group members or individuals who aren't in either of these two. Main areas of dissatisfaction were with frequency, BCT's response and effectiveness, peaking at 10% with BCT's response (which rose to 13% for bat group members). Generally, the least satisfied were bat group members – they always had the lowest percentage for 'totally satisfied' (the lowest being 22% for range of communications) and the highest percentage for dissatisfied (ranging from 7% to 13%) with the exception of communication frequency where dissatisfaction was highest for those who were not BCT members or bat group members (11%). Although meeting the requirements of such a wide audience will inevitably be difficult (a point made by some respondents in one of the text boxes) a better understanding of how performance can be raised should be included in any investigation of communications.

In the text box provided for respondents to explain their satisfaction rating for BCT's response to their communications (completed by 56%), the most frequently entered comment was a positive about BCT (43% – includes helpful/informative, quick and always responds) while 13% made a negative comment (no response/nothing happened, unhelpful/question unanswered/comment ignored, slow). A third explained that they had not contacted BCT or that they had contacted BCT but it was too long ago or it didn't require a response.

A further text box was provided for respondents to explain their satisfaction rating for the effectiveness of their communication with BCT and what was meant by 'effective' (completed by 43%). The primary needs were to receive a response with information that met their requirements (such as useful/helpful/question answered/accurate/right information) given by 24% and to receive a quick/prompt response given by 12%. A further 24% of those who completed this text box explained that their satisfaction rating was because they had not contacted BCT or it was too long ago or it didn't require a response.

Additional comments (text box): When it came to what was working well (completed by 54%), it appeared that this was everything for around a quarter of them, e-mails/e-bulletins for 11% of them and Bat News for 9%. The next most frequently mentioned items concerned the surveys (7%) and the BCT website (6%).

As for what could be better (complete by 43%), this was e-mails/e-bulletins for 7% of them, everything for a further 7% and consulting/talking/listening to others in the bat

world for 6%. A number of respondents completing this text box used it to say everything was OK or that they had no suggestions for improvement (12%). The divergence of opinions in the bat world is further revealed by the 4% who said BCT's website could be better and the 4% who said Bat News could be better.

Section 4 – Representation (all respondents)

Satisfaction: Approaching 75% of respondents were 'totally' or 'mainly satisfied' with the extent to which BCT adequately represented their views about bat conservation, though this fell to 67% among bat group members (the biggest difference being seen in 'totally satisfied'). Around 55% of respondents then made an entry in the text box to explain their answer with some also explaining what conservation meant to them.

This particular text box contained a very wide range of responses which meant many of them were difficult to classify into cohesive groups. However, 6% made negative comments about the Defra/rabies issue and 3% referred to BCT not seeking or listening to their views (for both, the largest number came from the 'mainly satisfied' respondents, with the majority of the remainder being 'totally' or 'mainly dissatisfied'). When it came to what 'conservation' meant to the respondents not only was there a very wide range of views, some were almost diametrically opposed. The most frequently mentioned statements/words were 'education/promotion/PR' (11%), 'assessing numbers' or 'balance' (5%), 'campaigning' or 'lobbying' (2%), 'science' or 'ecology' (2%) and 'bat welfare' (2%). The percentages are of the respondents who made an entry in the text box.

Representation: Of the list provided in the questionnaire, the groups attracting most support in terms of respondents agreeing they should be represented by BCT were BCT members (88%), bat group members (86%), all volunteer bat workers (82%) and the general public at large who value bats (81%). Those attracting least support were government bodies (national or local) who fund work for bats (57%) and the general public at large who don't value bats (50%). Approaching two-thirds agreed that BCT should represent independent charitable funders of work with bats, all who earn income from working with bats and all who privately provide money for work with bats. Interestingly, those who were neither members of BCT nor members of bat groups were more 'generous' in agreeing who BCT should represent (even in respect of BCT members and bat group members), always having a higher percentage in agreement.

The groups attracting most support in terms of who BCT was currently seen to be representing were BCT members (90%) followed by bat group members (77%, though this fell to 63% with respondents who were bat group members). Nearly two-thirds saw BCT currently representing all volunteer bat workers and the general public at large who value bats. The groups who respondents saw BCT least representing at the current time were government bodies (national or local) who fund work with bats (53%) and the general public at large who don't value bats (34%).

There are a number of notable 'shortfalls' between who BCT is seen to represent and should represent. Among the groups for which there were high percentages agreeing BCT should be representing them, the notable shortfalls occur for volunteer bat workers (a 16 percentage point gap, which rises to a 27 percentage point gap for bat group members), the general public at large who value bats (another 16 percentage point gap) and bat group members (a 9 percentage point gap overall, which rises to a 21 percentage point gap for bat group members).

Although the diversity of views among these groups makes it impossible for anyone, or any body, to claim they represent everyone's views, ways of closing these gaps require investigation. What is possibly coming through here, however, is a criticism by some respondents of the current communication structure and how it operates, particularly in regard to enabling these respondents to make their views known.

Around 19% of respondents took advantage of the text box provided to note any exceptions for 'all who earn income from working with bats (full time or part time)'. As a group, consultants attracted the most comments from these respondents (18%) but these were evenly split between including and excluding them. Just over a quarter used the text box to say they were unable to answer.

Additions to the list (text box): Around 8% of respondents made an entry in the text boxes provided (a small number of them making two or three additions). A third of these respondents mentioned bats (of which 44% indicated BCT currently represented bats, 28% that they didn't currently represent bats and 28% making no entry for 'currently represents'). The next most frequently mentioned group (mentioned by 18% of those completing the text boxes) were a variety of 'conservationists' such as NGOs, local government ecologists, LBAP officers, land owners and planners which BCT was not seen as currently representing by most of them with the great majority believing BCT should represent them. Schools/teachers were mentioned by 10% and two thirds of these respondents believed BCT currently represented them.

Section 5 – Any other business (all respondents)

Performance of BCT: Overall, 84% of respondents believed BCT was doing a good or very good job and there was minimal difference in this view between the three respondent groups (BCT members, bat group members, and the rest). 'Very good' was given by around a third of the respondents and 'good' by around 50%. Less than 4% believed BCT was doing a bad or very bad job.

In the text provided for respondents to explain their answer (taken advantage of by 61%), 59% of those who made an entry were positive about BCT, 22% felt there were areas in which BCT could do better, 9% explained they were unable to make a comment on BCT's performance and 3% made a negative comment about BCT, all focusing on the Defra/rabies issue. A notable difference in opinions was seen in respect of BCT's external PR (including media) work with 10% being positive about it and 7% saying it could do better.

Issues for review: Just under a quarter of respondents identified issues they believed a review of BCT needed to address, with around half of them mentioning more than one issue (leading to a total of 602 issues, a figure which includes repeated issues). The most frequently mentioned issues were around relationships (43% of the issues), which included representation, communication, consultation, support, training and specific mentions of the Defra/rabies issue, followed by issues concerning planning and standards (23% of the issues) and then issues on strategic direction and role (12%).

As regards which of these issues must be addressed (even if it meant other conservation work being under-funded or sidelined), 11% of respondents identified 313 of their issues for this category. Of these issues, the most frequently mentioned were around relationships (52%), planning and standards (22%) and strategic direction and role (10%).

Additional comments (text box): Around 19% of respondents made an entry in this text box and as it was for anything they wanted to add the responses were quite varied. Positive remarks about BCT and its work were given by 16% of these respondents and 13% used the text box to explain they didn't know enough to answer. For a few (6%) the text box was used to state that the questionnaire was too complicated, confusing, a waste of time.

BCT Review Working Group
April 2007