



Bat Low Impact Class Licenses

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The pre release trial



- Natural England completed a Bat Class Licence trial during the summer of 2014 testing a streamlined licensing process which permitted works that had low impacts on certain bat species and certain roost types but which still needed to be licensed in order to meet legal requirements.
- The trial Class Licence successfully reduced the burden on the customer and on Natural England for a significant number of low impact type cases, by reducing the application paper work, scrutiny of the three tests prior to a licence being granted and speed in which a licence decision was determined. It also enabled a more proportionate approach to licensing to be taken for certain case types.

What does the Low Impact Class licence cover?



- The disturbance and/or capture of bats and/or damage or destruction of bat roost/s of low conservation significance (i.e. feeding perches/roosts, day and night roosts), affecting no more than three of the more common species of bats present in small numbers.
- The 7 species that will be covered within the remit of the licence are common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared, whiskered, Brandt's, Daubenton's and Natterer's.

Which species were most commonly affected?



- The two species most affected by licensed activities were common pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats. No site registrations were received which affected Daubenton's or Brandt's bats/roosts.

What scenarios were generally covered?



- Around a third of registered site requests (28%) were to facilitate “demolition and re-build” either of residential (dwellings) or non-residential buildings and approximately 20% of site registration requests were to facilitate conversion of agricultural farm buildings (non-residential) to barn conversion (dwellings).
- Just over 40% of registered sites supported roosts in non-residential buildings (e.g. warehouse, hospitals, office blocks, farm or agricultural buildings); over a third supported roosts in dwellings; 8% of registered sites were schools and 6% churches.

- Compensation is not a mandatory requirement under the BLICL but during the 12-month trial we found that c.90% of all registered sites clients of RCs were happy to include as a good will gesture. We followed this through to the BLICL formal licence and still find that the majority of sites are registered with some compensation, and/or some enhancement (under planning). We do however expect this to be proportionate.

- The licence does not include monitoring or maintenance – which is not required for the impacts that the licence covers, in line with the Bat Mitigation Guidelines.
- The licence does not affect the LPAs role or decisions.

- The BLICL does not describe operations it is meant to cover as this would restrict its benefits and the concept of Earned Recognition (placing trust in individuals) – it sets out the criteria that must be met in order to be able to apply to register a site (and was specifically designed to remove individual licence applications for individual or small numbers of certain species of bat, following a review of licences, and workshops with staff and stakeholders).

- Consultants applying to become a Registered Consultant must:
- Be an Associate or Full member of a relevant professional body (e.g. CIEEM or IEMA, etc);
- Hold a current level 2 (minimum) bat class survey licence and have held a bat survey licence for at least 5 years – which must have included disturbance and capture (handling) of bats for that period;
- Submit survey records to Local Records Centre's, in accordance with the condition of survey licences;

- Have held at least 6 mitigation licences over a 3 year period (if someone has had a career break within the last 3 years they can provide details of mitigation licences over the last 4 years) covering at least 6 species, including at least one species from each of the following species groups - Pipistrellus, Plecotus and Myotis;
- Have personally undertaken the majority of the surveys, assessed the impacts, designed the licensed works (mitigation, compensation, etc) and implemented (overseen) the licensed works on all of the licences cited;

- Have experience and understanding of a specified range of licensable methods;
- Be able to demonstrate work on and experience with a range of roost types (including both low and higher conservation status roost types than those covered by the low impact class licence);
- Have submitted all survey and mitigation licence returns;

- Not have been convicted of any wildlife-related or animal welfare offence in the last 5 years, which is not spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974;
- Be able to demonstrate knowledge, skills and experience are up-to-date and are maintained by undertaking relevant regular continuing professional development (CPD); and,
- Agree to attend a mandatory workshop (if the criteria are met) in order to become a Registered Consultant and receive a unique reference number.

The first 10 months of the new licence



- We now have 108 RCs across England, with a good coverage of areas. For example, although we have 5 RCs based in Norfolk, 1 in Bucks, 1 in Cambs we have 21 RCs who say they work across all counties; 27 cover Cambs; 26 cover Norfolk; 29 cover Bucks.
- The RC is the licensee and not the client (which is different to a mitigation licence). This 'low impact' licence is another licensing tool that they can use should they so wish.

- Typically registrations are for home improvements (e.g. extensions), demolition and re-build of dwellings, repairs and maintenance, barn conversions, improvements to public buildings (schools, libraries etc), listed buildings.
- We will map registered sites on a quarterly or 6-monthly basis and publish on Magic (as we do for all licences granted now).

- There will be another review of the criteria to become a RC in early 2016 – based on the last sift, which introduced 2 new ways of being able to demonstrate skills, competency and experience (so there were 3 ways you could apply rather than 1).
- If consultants meet the new criteria then they will be accepted to attend workshops - likely to be towards the end of the financial year/early next financial year. They must then pass an assessment before we accept them as a RC for this specific licence.

- Consultants are able to advertise they can apply to register sites under this licence (NE can't do this, or hold lists, or recommend consultants) and RCs do take work on from other non-RCs. If a RC does take on work from others then as the licensee they have to be satisfied with the level of survey and to be sure that the species, roosts and impacts have been correctly identified. We don't tell them what to do – but some will take a case straight on, some will do a top up survey, some will repeat the surveys and some won't take others work. The buck stops with the RC so they handle this however suits them.

Future plans



- We have – by the week ending 18/11/2015 – registered 216 individual sites across the country since the 1st site was registered at the end of April (each should have avoided submission of an individual licence application by the standard route).

LPA's and checking an ecologists registration



- Should you receive a planning application and the consultant states that they are registered to use this class licence and you wish to check, as we are not able to publish lists, please contact us at BatLowImpactCL@naturalengland.org.uk – mark your email “*Low impact bat class licence – is this person a registered consultant?*”

Further information on these licences.



- Natural England will publish our intentions within our EPS Newsletters and using our mail shot list. As we develop our plans further we will continue to keep you informed.
- EPS Newsletters and mailshots can be found on:

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/epsnewsletters.aspx>

And finally

Any questions?