



Planning: Bats and the Law

There are 17 species of bat resident to the UK with 11 found in Yorkshire. All bats are protected by both UK ([Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981](#)) and European law ([Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations](#)). The law protects bat roosts from damage, destruction or obstruction, whether or not bats are currently present.

Bats and Wind Turbine Developments

The impact of wind turbines on bats is not yet fully understood. Dead bats have been found under turbines in America and Europe so it is important to take a precautionary approach. Wind turbines may displace bats from suitable feeding habitat and therefore the location of wind turbines in relation to surrounding habitat is important.

Natural England has published guidance on assessing the impact of wind farms on bats, and on the required survey standards -- this interim guidance interprets Eurobats guidance. [Technical Information Note TIN051](#) applies to wind farms and [Technical Information Note TIN059](#) applies to single large turbine developments.

Bats and Single Wind Turbine Developments

Anecdotal evidence exists for bat casualties due to single large turbines (greater than 250 KW). Bat surveys are not always required for single wind turbine proposals. The need for a survey is assessed by considering the location of the turbine in relation to surrounding habitat and whether this is suitable habitat for bats.

It is important to consider the bat species present or likely

to be using the site because some are more at risk of collision due to their feeding habits. Other species are rare so need more protection: three species of bat have been assessed to be at high risk: Nathusius' pipistrelle, Noctule and Leisler's bat ([TIN051](#)).

An initial scoping survey (usually carried out by an appropriately qualified ecologist) should pick up high risk situations eg, bat roosts, good feeding or commuting areas in close proximity to the proposed location, or presence of vulnerable bat species. Natural England advise that: 'A bat survey should normally be recommended for applications for turbines that will be located within 50m of the following features': woodland, hedgerows, rivers, lakes, buildings or other features or structures (including bridges, mines etc) that might have potential as bat roosts, within or adjacent to a site designated for bats (SSSI or SAC). In the latter case more extensive surveys will be required. For further information see ([TIN059](#)).

Bat Conservation Trust guidelines [Surveying for Onshore Wind Farms](#) state that if a site is assessed as having no need for a bat survey, evidence to justify this assessment should be provided to support this assertion. These guidelines also provide information on the features of structures and habitats that increase the likelihood of use by bats.



Bat - Peter Christopherson



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The aim of a full bat survey, if required, should be to provide an assessment of the risk of placing a turbine at one or a choice of locations. Survey effort should be in proportion to the likely risk posed by the location and operation of the turbine. All structures with the potential to support a bat roost should be surveyed during the day. In addition, at least one evening survey should be carried out on any feature with high roost potential (for bats emerging from roosts), and all features with potential for commuting/feeding bats should be covered by at least one bat activity survey to assess if and how bats use the relevant features ([TIN059](#)).

Bats and Micro Turbines

There is some evidence to suggest that micro turbines may have an impact on bats, especially when they are installed close to bat roosts, commuting routes or feeding sites. Current guidance from Natural England and BCT recommends this impact should be assessed on a site by site basis. Surveys should be undertaken if there is likely to be a significant impact or if records suggest a roost is located close to a turbine ([Surveying for Onshore Wind Farms](#)).

The impact on feeding habitat can be minimised by avoiding areas close to woodland, hedgerows, water and fields containing livestock. In addition, the cumulative effects of several micro wind turbines, eg, in urban areas should be considered.

The presence of bat roosts can often go un-noticed.

Owner/occupiers wishing to install micro turbines must consider bats to avoid committing a crime under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. For more information see [BCT Microgeneration Schemes: Risks, Evidence and Recommendations](#).

Bats and Multi-Turbine Developments

Large wind farm proposals must assess the potential impact on local bat species and populations. A baseline survey is usually carried out which involves gathering information on, for example, habitats, records of known bat roosts within 10km of the site, habitat data, maps etc. This information can be used to inform the survey design to ensure that the survey is sufficient.

Subsequent bat surveys should be designed to provide the information required to complete a full impact assessment, including for example, assemblages of species using the site and their local and regional status; frequency of use by different species through the active season (April to October); behaviour, eg, commuting or feeding; spatial and temporal distribution of activity.

Surveys of known roosts identified from baseline surveys should follow guidance outlined in [BCT Bat Survey Guidelines](#). In terms of activity surveys, the minimum for multi turbine schemes is that manual activity surveys and static surveys at ground level should be carried out. Minimum survey standards are outlined in BCT's latest Bat Survey Guidelines.

What you can do if you are concerned

- If you believe a protected species to be under direct threat, contact your local [Wildlife Crime Officer](#)
- If the threat is as a result of a proposed development, contact the planning officer dealing with the application at [your local authority](#) to ensure adequate procedures have been followed
- You may also wish to contact [Natural England](#) the statutory authority for protected species.