



NPWS

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna
Náisiúnta agus Fiadhúlra
National Parks and Wildlife
Service

Application for Derogation Under Regulation 54 & 54A of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, as amended

Revision 2.0 – July 2025

- This form can be used by any individual or Company applying for a derogation under Regulation 54 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (“the Regulations”) **or** any individual applying on behalf of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage under Regulation 54(A) of the Regulations.
- Note this application form is not for Domestic Dwelling Derogations (bats within private homes) which can be found here > ([3D Application Form](#))
- Please ensure that you answer questions fully in order to avoid delays and/or your application being rejected on the basis that it does not contain sufficient information and detail for the application to be considered further.
- Please read and familiarise yourself with the [NPWS Guidance on Applications for Regulation 54 Derogations for Annex IV species: Guidance for Applicants](#)
- Please read and familiarise yourself with the [European Commission's Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive](#)
- Please also note that the responses to these questions are supplementary to the documentation required for the NPWS to be in a position to consider your application. A complete application should include both the application form and an associated report. Failure to supply either will result in your application being returned and/or refused.
- In circumstances in which a derogation is given on foot of this application, the Applicant is responsible for ensuring compliance with the conditions of any such derogation, even though they may employ another person to act on their behalf. To carry out any activity without, or not in accordance with, a derogation granted under regulation 54 or 54A of the Regulations constitutes a criminal offence, subject to prosecution.
- If you experience any problems filling in this form, please contact the Wildlife Licensing Unit: reg54derogations@npws.gov.ie
- Please note – applications, associated reports and derogations will be published on the NPWS website and/or the Department’s Open Data website.
- Where any applicant is applying for a derogation to carry out surveys, please ensure to list all qualified ecologists and trainees under their supervision. See section 1(c) of Part A.

Part A: The Applicant - Personal Details

These questions relate to the person responsible for any proposed works and who will be the **Applicant**. **If this application is being submitted on behalf of a third party, please also complete Part B below.**

1. (a) Name of Applicant

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr)	Forename(s)	Surname
Mr	David	Welsh
(b) Company Name, if applicable	RPS (Belfast)	
(c) Address Line 1	Elmwood House	
Address Line 2	74 Boucher Road	
Town	Belfast	
County	Antrim	
Eircode	BT12 6RZ	
(d) Contact number	[REDACTED]	
(e) Email address	[REDACTED]	
(f) Address where works are to be carried out if different from (b) above.		
Address Line 1	All of Ireland / Ireland wide	
Address Line 2		
Town		
County	Ireland	
Eircode		

Details of Person Submitting Application on Behalf of Applicant/Derogation Holder

Information relating to the person (e.g. ecologist) responsible for submitting the application on behalf of the applicant should be entered below:

1. (b) Name of Person/Ecologist

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms/Dr)	Forename(s)	Surname
Mr	David	Welsh
(b) Company Name	RPS (Belfast)	
Address Line 1	Elmwood House	
Address Line 2	74 Boucher Road	
Town	Belfast	
County	Antrim	
Eircode	BT12 6RZ	
(c) Contact number	[REDACTED]	
(d) Email address	[REDACTED]	
(e) Relationship to Applicant	Employee (Ecologist)	

For Survey Derogations Only

**1. (c) Please Indicate the Names to Appear on the Derogation Along with the Position Held
e.g. Supervisor/Trainee**

Forename(s)	Surname	Supervisor or Trainee
David	Welsh	Supervisor
Conor	Finlay	Supervisor
Roisin	Ward	Supervisor
James	McCrory	Trainee
Eve	Atkinson	Trainee
Robert	Nesbitt	Trainee
David	Mullholland	Trainee
Holly	Owen	Trainee
Suzanne	Lowry	Trainee

Part B: Species covered by the Derogation

1. **Species of Animal:** Please indicate which species is/are the subject of the application:

- Bat
- Otter
- Kerry Slug
- Natterjack Toad
- Dolphin
- Whale
- Turtle
- Porpoise

2. Please detail the exact species (scientific name): All bat species

3. Please provide the maximum number of individuals affected* Unknown

4. Please provide the maximum number of breeding or resting sites affected* Unknown

5. Please provide the maximum number of eggs to be taken* None

6. Please provide the maximum number of eggs to be destroyed* None

*If no figures can be provided for the maximum number of individuals, breeding sites, resting places and eggs to be covered by the derogation please provide reasons why.

 This application is for bat survey only. Numbers of species/resting sites affected/disturbed cannot be known at this time.

7. **Species of Plant:** Please indicate which species is/are the subject of the application:

- Killarney Fern
- Slender Naiad
- Marsh Saxifrage

8. If you previously received a derogation for any species of animal or plant, please state derogation number and confirm that you have made a return to NPWS on the numbers actually affected by that derogation.

C97 / 2022 Smooth Newt

DER-BAT-2022-77

DER-BAT-2023-63

DER-BAT-2024-174

DER-BAT-2025-18.

Licence returns have been made.

9. Proposed Dates for Activities: Please indicate the timeframe that you propose to carry out the activities. Dates set by NPWS may differ from dates proposed here. *A derogation will only be issued with a start and end date within a calendar year.*

Start Date:	1 st March 2026
End Date:	1 st March 2027

Part C: Nature of the Derogation.

1. Please tick which prohibition(s) the application for a derogation relates to:

Regulation 51	
Deliberately capture or kill any specimen of the relevant species in the wild	<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliberately disturb these species particularly during the period of breeding, rearing, hibernation and migration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Deliberately take or destroy eggs of the relevant species in the wild	<input type="checkbox"/>
Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of such an animal, or	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep, transport, sell, exchange, offer for sale or offer for exchange any specimen of the relevant species taken in the wild, other than those taken legally as referred to in Article 12(2) of the Habitats Directive.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regulation 52	
Deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy any specimen of these species in the wild, or	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep, transport, sell, exchange, offer for sale or offer for exchange any specimen of these species taken in the wild, other than those taken legally as referred to in Article 13(1)(b) of the Habitats Directive.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Further information should be provided in the format set out in Part E: Template for Supporting Information

Part D: Derogation Tests

Note: The following summary information must be provided by the applicant in all cases, and will be used to determine if a derogation can be provided. Further information must be provided in the format set out in Part E: Template for Supporting Information

Test 1: Reason for the Derogation

1. Please tick which reason(s) below explains how this application qualifies under Regulation 54(2)(a-e) or Regulation 54A(2)(a-e) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations: Please provide a summary of how the application meets the 3 conditions required to provide a derogation. Note that in all cases additional information must be provided (see Part E).

a.	In the interests of protecting wild flora and fauna and conserving natural habitats (proceed to 2a)	<input type="checkbox"/>
b.	To prevent serious damage, in particular to crops, livestock, forests, fisheries and water and other types of property (proceed to 2b)	<input type="checkbox"/>

c.	In the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment (proceed to 2c)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
d.	For the purpose of research and education, of re-populating and re-introducing these species and for the breeding operations necessary for these purposes, including artificial propagation of plants (proceed to 2d)	<input type="checkbox"/>
e.	To allow, under strictly supervised conditions, on a selective basis and to a limited extent, the taking or keeping of certain specimens of the species to the extent specified therein, which are referred to in the First Schedule (proceed to 2e)	<input type="checkbox"/>

2a. In the interests of protecting wild flora and fauna and conserving natural habitats:

i) Please state the wild flora, fauna or habitats that require protection and /or conservation.

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ii) Please summarise how the interests of protection and conservation of the species/habitat concerned justify affecting another species under strict protection.

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2b) To prevent serious damage, in particular to crops, livestock, forests, fisheries and water and other types of property:

i) Please summarise the nature of the potential damage, why it is considered “serious” and how this outweighs the conservation interest of the species under strict protection.

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2c) In the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment:

- i) Where the reason is for public health and public safety, summarise the evidence provided to support this reason (e.g. documentary evidence of the risk from a chartered structural engineer, tree surgeon, Garda Síochána, qualified health professional etc.)

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- ii) Where the reason is for “other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”, summarise the nature of the public interest and how this outweighs the conservation interest of the species under strict protection.

RPS Belfast are applying for a licence to permit the survey of bats only. There will be no adverse impacts on bats as a result of the licenced activity and therefore there will be no impact upon the *conservation interest of the species under strict protection*.

In order to comply with national planning polices, it is essential that ecological consultants undertake bat surveys to inform ecological/environmental impact assessments associated with a wide range of planning applications for projects that provide social and economic benefits for the private and public sector.

These projects include applications for renewable energy projects, social housing, residential regeneration and housing developments, mineral extraction and important infrastructure projects etc. These projects can often provide employment opportunities, economic growth, new housing, increased green energy development, and safer modernised infrastructure and transport.

- 2d)** For the purpose of research and education, of re-populating and re-introducing these species and for the breeding operations necessary for these purposes, including artificial propagation of plants:

- i) Please summarise the objective(s) of the proposed activities making reference to those listed above and how the the purpose of such activities overrides the interests of strict protection of the species.¹

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¹ Note that this reason may be appropriate for when research involves surveys that may cause disturbance of species under strict protection. But the sole purpose of the surveys should be for research and education or the other reasons listed above under 1d.

2e) To allow, under strictly supervised conditions, on a selective basis and to a limited extent, the taking or keeping of certain specimens of the species to the extent specified therein, which are referred to in the First Schedule

i) Please clearly state the objective of the activity and verify that this reason is being chosen as the objective of the activity does not match reasons a-d listed above.

ii) Please summarise how the activity will result in the taking or keeping of limited numbers of specimens of the species, how it will be applied on a selective basis and to a limited extent, and how it will be done under strictly supervised conditions.

Test 2: Absence of Alternative solutions

2. Please summarise the alternative solutions that have been considered and why these solutions are deemed unsatisfactory. This must include the option of the “do-nothing” alternative and evidence should be objective and robust. Note that in all cases further information must be provided in the format set out in Part E: Template for Supporting Information.

Alternative Solution	Reasons for “Unsatisfactory”
Do-Nothing	If bat surveys are not carried out to inform an ecological impact assessment, there is the potential for a proposed project to cause adverse impacts upon this group of strictly protected species.
Non-intrusive infrared bat emergence/re-entry survey	Infrared cameras can be used in some circumstances to establish the presence of roosting bats however this method is not practical in many cases, namely on large structures with complex internal features and on trees which are not always clear for ground camera viewing. This method cannot establish roost suitability and presence of bats based on forensic field evidence.

	Non-intrusive Infrared camera surveys have limitations and cannot replace close inspections.

* Please insert additional rows above if needed

Test 3: Impact of a Derogation on Conservation Status

3. Please summarise the possible impacts on the population of the species that is subject to this application, taking into account all the mitigation and/or compensation measures that are to be undertaken. Evidence that such mitigation has been successful elsewhere should be provided where relevant. Mitigation measures being relied upon must ensure that the derogation will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species to which the Habitats Directive relates at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. Note that in all cases further information must be provided in the format set out in Part E: Template for Supporting Information.

| If an untrained/inexperienced person was to carry out activities such as those relating to this bat survey licence application (Potential Roost Feature inspection using a torch or endoscope, entering a known bat roost) there would be a possibility of them causing significant disturbance to a bat roost. However, the licence applicant (RPS Belfast) has experience in this field and have sensitively undertaken numerous PRF inspection surveys and roost visits with no adverse impacts upon bats and their roosts. Typically, the PRFs or confirmed bat roosts are avoided or mitigated for as a result of the licenced survey results and assessments.

Therefore, it is considered that the proposed bat survey licenced activities will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species to which the Habitats Directive relates at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

The net result on the species' conservation status from the granting of a derogation would be neutral or positive for bat species. |

Part E: Template for Supporting Information

This application form should provide a summary of the evidence that the applicant has provided. In all cases, it is necessary to provide separate supporting information so that the assessment of the application can be undertaken in a robust and comprehensive manner. Applicants should refer to guidance provided by the NPWS and the European Commission whilst preparing this application form and the supporting information.

It is essential that supporting information is prepared in a consistent manner using the template below so that NPWS officials assessing the application can locate the relevant evidence to determine if the three Tests can be met. Failure to provide sufficient evidence will result in the application being refused.

The structure of the Supporting Information should be as follows:

- 1) Table of Contents
- 2) Introduction
 - a. Objective of the proposed works (for example, as part of construction of a national road, repair of roofing, undertaking surveys etc.)
 - b. Name, qualifications and relevant experience of scientific staff, including trainees, (e.g. ecologist) involved in the preparation of the application and those responsible for carrying out the proposed activity.
 - c. If this application is for the carrying out of surveys that may cause disturbance, qualifications of all involved must be provided and trainees must be clearly identified.
- 3) Background to proposed activity including location, ownership, type of and need for the proposed activity, planning history, policy context, zoning in relevant Development plan (or equivalent), etc.
- 4) Full details of proposed activity to be covered by the derogation (including a site plan). The site may be inspected by an NPWS representative, so the details given should clearly reflect the extent of the project. This information will be used to compare site conditions with the Method Statement.
- 5) Ecological Survey and site assessment (Not required for applications to carry out surveys)
 - a. Pre-existing information on species at location and environs.
 - b. Status of the species in the local/regional area (relevant to the consideration of the impact on the population at the relevant geographic scale (Test 3))
 - c. Objective(s) of survey
 - d. Description of Surveys Area
 - e. Survey methodology (including evidence as to how the methodology represents best practice and is appropriate to the Objective). Methodology should include survey maps, details of timing, climate, equipment used and identify any uncertainties or difficulties encountered.
 - f. Survey results including raw data, any processed or aggregated data, and negative results as appropriate. Photographs and maps must be provided where site-specific features are referred.
 - g. Population size class assessment.
- 6) Evidence to support the Derogation Tests
 - a. Test 1 - Reason for Derogation:
 - i. There should be a clear explanation as to why a specific reason(s) has been selected in the application form.

- ii. Applicants are advised to read the guidance published by the NPWS '[Guidance on Applications for Regulation 54 Derogations for Annex IV species: Guidance for Applicants](#)' with specific reference to Section 3.1.
- b. Test 2 - Absence of Alternative Solutions
 - i. Applicants must list the alternatives to the proposed activity that have been considered, including the do-nothing alternatives in a clear and objective manner. A basic requirement is that these alternatives should be compared in terms of their impact on the species subject to strict protection. It should be clear to NPWS officials as to why the chosen approach has been selected.
 - ii. Applicants are advised to read the guidance published by '[Guidance on Applications for Regulation 54 Derogations for Annex IV species: Guidance for Applicants](#)' with specific reference to Section 3.2.
- c. Test 3 - Impact of a derogation on Conservation Status
 - i. Applicants should include details of the population at the appropriate geographic scale and an evaluation of how the proposed activity will affect the conservation status both before and after mitigation measures have been applied.
 - ii. Full and detailed descriptions of proposed mitigation measures that are relevant to the potential impact on the target species. Evidence that such mitigation has been successful elsewhere should be provided, where available.
 - iii. Applicants are advised to read the guidance published '[Guidance on Applications for Regulation 54 Derogations for Annex IV species: Guidance for Applicants](#)' with specific reference to Section 3.3.

7) Monitoring the impacts of the derogations

- a. Applicants must include details of how they propose to verify whether the derogations have been implemented correctly and whether they achieved their objective, using scientifically based evidence, and, if necessary, how the applicant will take corrective measures where required.
- b. Applicants should provide details of proposed reports to be submitted to the NPWS including the results of monitoring.
- c. Applicants are advised to read the guidance published by the European Commission "[Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive](#)" with specific reference to Section 3.4.

Part F. Declaration

I declare that all of the foregoing particulars are, to the best of my knowledge and belief, true and correct. I understand that the deliberate killing, injuring, capturing or disturbing of protected species, or damage or destruction of their breeding sites or resting places or the deliberate taking or destroying of eggs is an offence without a derogation and that it is a legal requirement to comply with the conditions of any derogation I may be granted following this application. I understand that NPWS may visit to check compliance with a derogation.

Please note that under Regulation 5 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011-2021 an authorised officer may enter and inspect any land or premises for the purposes of performing any of their functions under these Regulations or for obtaining any information which they may require for such purposes.

Signature of the Applicant

David Welsh

Date

| 15-01-26

Name in BLOCK LETTERS

| DAVID WELSH

PRIVACY STATEMENT

See Privacy Statement at www.npws.ie/licences

npws.ie

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage



An Roinn Títhíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

Part E: Supporting Information

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Introduction

RPS Belfast are applying for a bat survey (derogation) licence to permit survey/inspection for roosting bats and evidence of roosting bats. RPS Belfast undertake ecological assessments throughout Northern Ireland and the ROI, covering a wide range of project types, some include national road schemes, renewable energy development, residential developments, industrial developments, marine port developments and public greenway schemes. RPS Belfast require a bat survey licence to permit the survey and potential (limited) disturbance of bat roosts across the ROI in order to adequately record important ecological information to inform bat mitigation plans and strategies.

Ecologist Information

Mr David Welsh (Associate Ecologist) – Supervisor

David Welsh is an Associate Ecologist with RPS (Belfast) and holds a BSc (Hons) in Marine Science, a MSc in Ecological Management and Conservation Biology with over seven years of experience in conservation and over ten years in ecological consultancy. David has in-house training in bat ecology and bat survey and specialist training in sound analysis and species identification, mitigation and compensation; Bat Tree Habitat Key Tree-roost Bat Survey and Woodland Bat Survey; and Lantra Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue. David is a protected species licence holder (NIEA Licensee No. 2368), a former Northern Ireland Bat Group (NIBG) volunteer bat rescuer with bat handling experience. David is also an associate member of CIEEM (ACIEEM). David currently coordinates and leads the bat survey work carried out by RPS (Belfast) in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. He is an experienced bat activity surveyor and bat roost assessor (including ground-based assessment, tree climbing, and endoscopy), and has carried out various NIEA licenced bat roost exclusion works.

David Welsh has held the following derogation licence in relation to bat roost disturbance for assessment:

DER-BAT-2022-77 (survey licence); 21/6/2020 - 21/06/2023 – and **DER-BAT-2023-63** (survey licence);

- - Brennanstown estate woodland, Bray, Co. Wicklow. Endoscopic and torchlight inspection of 12 trees which are potentially within the footprint of a greenway path. No evidence of roosting bats recorded.
- – Donegal Ten-T Road Scheme, Letterkenny – BallyBofey, Co. Donegal. Endoscopic and torchlight inspection of 12 trees which are potentially within the footprint of a new road. A single Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* was recorded in a beech tree cavity in September 2022. Approximately 2 weeks later, three Soprano Pipistrelle bats were recorded in the same cavity indicating that the lone bat was a male seeking breeding female (small breeding roost).
- - Greater Dublin Drainage Scheme, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin. 17 trees within the potential footprint of new drainage works were climbed and inspected for the roosting bats. No evidence of roosting bats recorded.
- -N61 Road Scheme, Tulsk, Roscommon. Endoscopic and torchlight inspection of 15 trees which are potentially within the footprint of a new road. No evidence of roosting bats recorded in trees. A confirmed (non-maternity) roost building was carefully entered and searched for the presence and evidence of roosting bats. No roosting bats were recorded.
- -Naas, County Kildare, endoscopic and torchlight inspection of 19 trees which are potentially within the footprint of a large industrial development. No evidence of roosting bats recorded.

Recent licences-

DER-BAT-2024-168 & DER-BAT-2025-18

Mr Conor Finlay (Senior Ecologist) - Supervisor

Conor is a Senior Ecologist with RPS and holds a BSc (Hons) in Environmental Science, a MSc in Ecological Management and Conservation Biology with four years of experience in ecological consultancy. Conor has in-house training in bat ecology and bat survey and professional training in Lantra Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue and holds a BatAbility Certificate of Bat Acoustics Analysis. Conor is a Qualifying member of the CIEEM. Conor currently coordinates and leads bat survey work carried out by RPS (Belfast) in Northern Ireland. He is an experienced bat activity surveyor and bat roost assessor (including ground-based assessment, tree climbing and endoscopy).

He has assisted previously on the following derogation licences in relation to bat roost disturbance for assessment:

DER-BAT-2024-168 & DER-BAT-2025-18:

- Greater Dublin Drainage Scheme, Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin. 17 trees within the potential footprint of new drainage works were climbed and inspected for the roosting bats. No evidence of roosting bats recorded.
- Naas, County Kildare. Endoscopic and torchlight inspection of 19 trees which are potentially within the footprint of a large industrial development. No evidence of roosting bats recorded.
- Derrygrogan Little Solar Farm, County Offaly. Endoscopic and torchlight inspection of 8 trees which are potentially within the footprint of a solar farm development. No evidence of roosting bats recorded.

Mrs Roisin Ward (Principal Ecologist) - Supervisor

Roisin is a Principal Ecologist with RPS and holds a BSc (Hons) in Land Use and Environmental Management and has over 11 years of experience in environmental and ecological consultancy. Roisin has in-house training in bat ecology and bat survey and professional training in sound analysis and species identification, mitigation and compensation and Lantra Tree Climbing and Aerial Rescue. She is an experienced bat activity surveyor and bat roost assessor (including ground-based assessment, tree climbing and endoscopy). Roisin holds NIEA bat survey licences and has carried out endoscopic inspections for bats. Roisin is an Associate member of CIEEM and an Affiliate member of the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA).

Miss Suzanne Lowry (Senior Associate Ecologist) - Trainee

Suzanne Lowry, a Senior Associate of Ecology within RPS. Suzanne holds a BSc (Hons) in Biological Sciences, a MSc in Environmental Management and has over 20 years of experience in the field of ecology and environmental consultancy. Suzanne has extensive experience of project management and co-ordination, ecology field survey and technical report writing. She is an experienced bat activity surveyor and bat emergence/re-entry surveyor. Suzanne is an Associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Mr David Mullholland (Consultant Ecologist) - Trainee

David is an Ecologist with RPS and holds a BSc (Hons) in Biological Sciences with Professional Studies, a MSc in Ecological Management and Conservation Biology and has almost three years of experience working in consultancy and conservation. David has training in bat ecology and bat survey. David has experience in bat activity surveys, emergence/re-entry surveys and ground level-tree roost assessment. David is a Qualifying member of the CIEEM.

Miss Holly Owen (Consultant Ecologist) - Trainee

Holly is a Consultant Ecologist with RPS and holds a BSc (Hons) in Biological Sciences, specialised in Animal Biology with two years of experience in ecological consultancy. Holly has in-house training in bat ecology and bat survey and holds a BatAbility Certificate of Bat Acoustics Analysis. Holly is currently a Qualifying member of CIEEM.

Mr Robert Nesbitt (Ecologist) – Trainee

Robert Nesbitt is an Ecologist with RPS and holds a BSc (Hons) in Natural Sciences and Botany, and a MSc by Research in Marine Biodiscovery and Ecology. Robert has over 8 years of environmental science and ecology experience between the University of Galway, Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and Ecological Consultancy. Robert has undertaken BCT endorsed in-house training with NIEA in bat surveys and legislation for developments and has gained a season of NVA bat survey experience with RPS. Robert is also a current member of Bat Conservation Ireland.

Miss Eve Atkinson (Graduate Ecologist) - Trainee

Eve is a Graduate Ecologist with and holds a BSc in Biological Sciences with Professional Studies and has two years of experience in ecological consultancy. Eve has in-house training in bat ecology and bat survey and has assisted with bat activity surveys and emergence/re-entry surveys.

Mr James McCrory (Technical Director - Ecology) - Trainee

James McCrory is the Technical Director of Ecology with RPS. James holds a BA (Hons) in Natural Sciences (Mod) Botany and a MSc in Habitat Creation and Management. James is a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv), a Chartered Ecologist (CEcol), a Chartered Biologist (CBiol) and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and the Royal Society of Biology (MRSB). James is a former member of the CIEEM Irish Section Committee and CIEEM Policy Review Group in Ireland and a member of the CIEEM technical working group updating the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom and Ireland. James currently sits on the CIEEM technical working group for EclA accreditation across the Institutes practitioner network. James has assisted with bat activity surveys and emergence/re-entry surveys.

Details of the Proposed Activity

As outlined above, the derogation licence will be used for survey only, the survey will be carried out by suitability trained and proficient ecologists and will entail the careful and sensitive use of torchlight and endoscope if deemed necessary. The endoscope / torch light survey will be very brief (usually less than 1 minute) and therefore will cause limited disturbance to any roosting bats present. Once an endoscopic photo / video has been captured there will be no further disturbance completed under this derogation licence.

As part of the assessment process, confirmed bat roosts (non-maternity roosts) *may* require careful, sensitive inspection to establish roost usage during different periods throughout the year. This aims to better inform potential mitigation measures.

Confirmed maternity roosts will not be surveyed using an endoscope to prevent unnecessary disturbance to a maternity colony. The survey will help to inform mitigation measures which will aim to prevent detrimental impacts to bat species conservation status.

Any physical disturbance such as roost exclusion works will be the subject of a separate derogation licence application.

Evidence to Support the Derogation Tests

Test 1 – Reason for Derogation

RPS Belfast are applying for a licence to permit the survey of bats only. There will be no adverse impacts on bats as a result of the licenced activity and therefore there will be no impact upon the conservation interest of the species under strict protection.

The option of *“In the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment”* was chosen given that this is an application to permit the survey of bats in order to comply with national planning policies and to protect the species and minimise impacts associated with developments, developments which would provide social and economic benefits for the private and public sector. These projects include applications for renewable energy projects, social housing, residential regeneration and housing developments, mineral extraction and important infrastructure projects etc. These projects can often provide employment opportunities, economic growth, new housing, increased green energy development, and safer modernised infrastructure and transport.

Test 2 – Absence of Alternative Solutions

Do Nothing – If detailed bat surveys are not carried out to inform an ecological impact assessment, there is the potential for a proposed project to cause adverse impacts upon this group of strictly protected species

Non-intrusive infrared bat emergence/re-entry survey - Infrared cameras can be used in some circumstances to establish the presence of roosting bats however this method is not practical in many cases, namely on large structures with complex internal features and on trees which are not always clear for ground camera viewing. This method is also very resource heavy and is primarily limited to the summer months.

When non-intrusive methods such as emergence surveys are feasible, it is still preferable on occasions to carry out close inspections as this can confirm if features are suitable for potential roosting and can record forensic roosting evidence or bats which have remained in roosts, whereas emergence surveys cannot.

Test 3 – Impact of a Derogation on Conservation Status

If an untrained/inexperienced person was to carry out activities such as those relating to this bat survey licence application (Potential Roost Feature inspection using a torch or endoscope, entering a known bat roost) there would be a possibility of them causing significant disturbance to a bat roost. However, the licence applicant (RPS Belfast) has experience in this field and have sensitively undertaken numerous PRF inspection surveys and roost visits with no adverse impacts upon bats and their roosts. Typically, the PRFs or confirmed bat roosts are avoided or mitigated for as a result of the licenced survey results and assessments.

Therefore, it is considered that the proposed bat survey licenced activities will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species to which the Habitats Directive relates at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

The net result on the species' conservation status from the granting of a derogation would be neutral or positive for bat species

Monitoring the Impacts of the Derogations

As previously discussed, RPS Belfast are applying for a licence to permit the survey of bats only and therefore there will be no adverse impacts on bats as a result of the licenced activity. RPS Belfast will ensure that they submit a licence return report which will detail findings for the licenced period in order to facilitate EU Reporting under Article 16 of the Habitats Directive.