

Wildlife Licensing Unit,
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage,
National Parks and Wildlife Service,
Wildlife Licensing Unit, R. 2.03,
90 North King Street,
Smithfield,
Dublin 7,
D07 N7CV.

Date: 09/02/2026
Re: Bat derogation licence
Subject: Licence application

Dear Wildlife Licensing Unit,

This letter supports the Application Form submitted by Síofra Sealy, Senior Ecologist of Roughan & O'Donovan Consulting Engineers pursuant to a Derogation Licence under Regulation 54 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477 of 2011).

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Introduction

ROD carries out a range of bat surveys and mitigation design on infrastructure projects in Ireland. In order to inform Environmental Impact Assessment Reports and Ecological Impact Assessments which require the identification of the presence or absence of bat roosts prior to applying for planning permission for a development. This licence will be used to carry out routine inspections on potential bat roost features in trees and built structures in Ireland.

To this end, I, Síofra Sealy, seek to submit an application for a licence under Regulation 54 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 47 of 2011) to undertaken examinations of potential bat roosts. Names of trainees (ecologists and graduate ecologists) who may be present to assist surveys undertaken as part of this licence application are named on the application form and include Rachel Heaphy, Jane Stafford,

Mark Gilligan, Evan Browne and Bronagh Barnes. Qualifications of all individuals named on this licence application are below:

Síofra is a Senior Ecologist with more than seven years' experience in ecological consultancy. She holds a BA (Hons) degree in Natural Sciences (Zoology) from Trinity College Dublin and is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM). Síofra has previously held a derogation licence for carrying out inspections of bat roosts.

Rachel is an Ecologist with more than four years' experience in ecological assessment. She holds a BSc in Zoology from University College Cork and an MRes from the University of Roehampton. She is a Qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Rachel has held derogation licences in respect of bat species in 2023 and 2024 (licences returned). Renewal of a bat derogation licence is currently in progress.

Mark is an Ecologist with three years' experience in ecological assessment. He holds a masters degree (MSc) in Applied Ecology from the University of Gloucestershire and is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (ACIEEM). In his tenure working in consultancy, Mark has undertaken 150+ hours of bat surveys, comprising a variety of emergence surveys, transects surveys, ground level PRF surveys and endoscope tree inspections accompanied by licensed surveyors.

Jane is an ecologist with over two years' experience. She holds a BSc in Wildlife Biology from the University of Montana, and is a Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Jane has extensive experience with bat surveys including ground level roost assessments, bat activity transects, and emergence surveys using night vision aids.

Brónagh is a Graduate Ecologist with less than one years' experience in ecological consultancy. She holds a BSc degree in Biological, Earth and Environmental Sciences (Zoology) from University College Cork and is a Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Brónagh has experience in bat activity surveys and ground inspection surveys.

Evan is a Graduate Ecologist with two years' experience in ecological consultancy. He holds a BSc (Hons) in Zoology and a MSc in Environmental Science from University College Dublin. He is a Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Evan had experience with bat surveys including ground level roost assessments, bat activity transects, and emergence surveys using night vision aids.

Background

Roost inspection surveys are required to inform the Ecological Impact Assessment and/or Environmental Impact Assessment for various infrastructure development projects in Ireland. These assessments require the identification of the presence or absence of bat roosts prior to applying for planning permission for a development. Inspection surveys are a reliable and effective way to identify roosts. This derogation will be used to carry out routine inspections on potential bat roost features in trees and built structures in Ireland.

Proposed activity

For the duration of the licence only, if granted, identification of potential roost features in trees and built structures will involve inspection at ground level, using a ladder or mewp (or other suitable alternative). Inspection will in the first instance involve unobtrusive visual inspection only; and if required, the use of a torch; or, if the full extent of the feature is inaccessible, the use of a Rigid CA300 Endoscope. Where features are inaccessible, or a full characterisation of the entire feature cannot be ascertained, emergence and re-entry surveys will be conducted following best practice guidelines.

Actions permitted under the Licence sought in this application will not be detrimental to the maintenance of bat species populations to which the Habitats Directive relates at a favourable conservation status in their natural range as is required under Section 54 (2) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations.

At all times during surveying, the derogation licence will be kept in my possession and available for inspection by any member of An Garda Síochána or any person authorised by Regulation 4 of the Habitats Regulations.

Where a bat roost has been confirmed and may be impacted by a development, appropriate mitigation measures will be prescribed according to the below best practice guidance documents:

- *Bat Mitigation Guidelines for Ireland – V2* (Marnell, F., Kelleher, C. & Mullen, E., 2022).
- *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines 4th edition* (Collins, J., 2023).
- *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines – V1.1* (Reason, P.F. & Wray, S., 2023).

Need for the Derogation

This application qualifies under Regulation 54(2)(A-E) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations as it is 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.

Projects undertaken by ROD generally involve infrastructure improvements, which may be required for health and safety or infrastructure development for the purposes of social and economic nature. Such projects include road improvements to dangerous roads, flood relief schemes, bridge and rail improvements. Other types of projects undertaken by ROD include infrastructure development for the purposes of social and economic nature such, buildings, housing and greenways. The vast majority of projects undertaken by ROD are promoted by public bodies and are required for improvements to national and local infrastructure.

In order to inform Environmental Impact Assessment Reports and Ecological Impact Assessments for such projects it is important to identify the presence or absence of bat roosts prior to applying for planning permission for a development. This licence will be used to carry out routine inspections of potential bat roost features in trees and built structures in Ireland using an endoscope, to identify bat roosts, which may result in disturbance to roosting bats.

Alternatives

The following is a list of alternatives considered to carrying out roost inspection surveys:

1. Do nothing

The do-nothing scenario would be to not carry out any roost inspection surveys at any potential roost sites. Then any potential roost sites would not be adequately surveyed to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment for a planning application and it would not be possible to prescribe appropriate mitigation. Without complete survey data, impact assessment and mitigation, it could result in the destruction of a bat roost.

2. Emergence Surveys with no inspection surveys

If this licence is not granted then it would not be permitted to carry out inspection of potential roosts with an endoscope. The alternative is to carry out dusk emergence surveys with night vision aids of any potential roost features. While bats may be detected in some settings, not all settings can be adequately surveyed using these methods, in particular potential tree roosts can be very difficult to adequately survey using dusk emergence surveys alone. Trees may contain very dense foliage which can obscure roost features or the roost feature may be located very high above ground level. These and bats leaving the roost may not be detected. As per Scenario 1, any potential roost sites would not be adequately surveyed to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment for a planning application and it would not be possible to prescribe appropriate mitigation. Without complete survey data, impact assessment and mitigation, it could result in the destruction of a bat roost. In certain circumstances, as per the Bat Conservation Trust Guidance (2024), further surveys to inspect the roosts are appropriate.

The alternatives presented here have the potential to contravene the requirements of Section 54 (2) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, as they could result in the destruction of bat roosts and negatively impact bat populations. Therefore, the derogation sought is the only available option for works and no suitable alternative exists as per Regulation 54 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations.

Test 3 - Impact of a derogation on Conservation Status

The licence being sought is for surveys only. Where these surveys identify a roost(s) for a specific project and the roost(s) may be impacted, a specific derogation licence will be submitted for the project and roosts which may be impacted. Such an application will include specific information regarding the bat populations of the area, specific impacts, impacts to conservation status, mitigation and monitoring will also be detailed.

The surveyors named on this licence will undertake inspection surveys according to best practice methodologies to ensure that minimal disturbance is caused to roosting bats during the surveys. Minor disturbance is possible through inspection surveys however this will not be detrimental to the conservation status of bat species.

Monitoring the impacts of the derogations

As above, where known roost(s) are to be impacted, monitoring of impacts will be proposed as part of the specific project derogation licence application.

Summary

A derogation licence is sought to comply with the requirements of Section 54 (2) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations. As such, actions permitted under the licence sought in this application will not be detrimental to the favourable conservation status of bats in their natural range.

Yours sincerely,



Síofra Sealy
Senior Ecologist, MCIEEM
Roughan & O'Donovan