

Vincent Wildlife Trust Supporting Information for Bat Derogation Licence

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

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Introduction

Objective of the proposed work

Vincent Wildlife Trust (VWT) requires a derogation licence to carry out monitoring of 12 lesser horseshoe bat reserves owned and leased by VWT (listed in section 3 below). The buildings host nationally important lesser horseshoe bat maternity and hibernation roosts as well as roosts of other species, including Common Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), Soprano Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), Leisler's Bat (*Nyctalus leisleri*) and Brown Long-eared Bat (*Plecotus auritus*).

The roost will be checked throughout the year for signs of disturbance, predation, or deterioration of the buildings, and to monitor the bat populations using the buildings.

Staff involved

Both Kate McAney and Victoria Knight will be responsible for carrying out the work detailed in section 4 below.

- Dr Kate McAney- PhD focused on the Lesser horseshoe bat. Over 30 years of experience in monitoring and managing lesser horseshoe bat roosts.
- Victoria Knight- Hon BSc Environmental Science. 13 years' experience working in the conservation of various habitats and species. Three years of lesser horseshoe bat emergence surveying, and two years of hibernation count experience across Ireland and Wales. One year of experience in managing VWT bat roosts with the supervision of Dr Kate McAney.

Background to proposed activity

VWT's 12 owned and leased reserves are located across counties Kerry, Clare, Galway, and Mayo. Since their purchase or lease, each site has undergone structural upgrades and the installation of features designed to safeguard lesser horseshoe bats and other species that use the buildings.

Routine checks and monitoring are carried out throughout the year to ensure the structures remain in good condition, to prevent predator access, and to track the bat populations present. These activities include both external and internal building inspections, summer emergence counts, and, at our Kerry reserves, winter hibernation counts.

Surveying these bat roosts is essential for detecting population changes. If declines are observed, swift action can be taken to investigate potential causes and determine how best to prevent further losses.

Roost numbers and locations:

538; Askive Wood, Derryquin, Sneem, Kerry; V712 657
435; Caher East, Kenmare, Kerry; V965 729
522; William King, Caher, Kilgarvan, Kerry; W035 741
365; Cow Ridge, Drombohilly, Tousist, Kenmare, Kerry; V778 620
472; Releagh Bridge, Bonane, Kenmare, Kerry; V924 628
615; Red River, Shronahiree More, Glencar, Kerry; V731 807
800; Derreen Bridge Cottage, Waterville, Kerry; V606 760
860; Gullaba Barn, Kilgarvan, Kerry; W00593 69405
668; Towerhill Cottage, Carrownagreggaun, Ballyglass, Mayo; M202 755
13; Old Domestic Cottage, Rylane, Tulla, Clare; R434 832
669; Curraghmore, Ballinrobe, Mayo; M144 645
216; Fiddaun, Tubber, Galway; R400 953

Full details of the activity to be covered by derogation

Routine building checks will be carried out at the 12 lesser horseshoe bat reserves owned or leased by VWT (listed in Section 3 above) to monitor for signs of disturbance, predation, or structural deterioration. These checks may occasionally require entering the buildings; however, this will be avoided during sensitive periods, such as when young are present. If entry is required at such times, it will be carried out in the evening after the bats have left to feed. Additional perching substrates will also be installed where needed to enhance roost suitability.

Summer emergence counts and winter population counts for the National Bat Monitoring Programme will also take place. Winter counts will be conducted at our Kerry roosts, where

lesser horseshoe bats overwinter. These surveys are undertaken once each winter and involve entering the buildings to count the bats present. The following precautions will be taken when entering the roosts:

- Entry will occur only when necessary and only when bats are inactive or not present
- Doors will be closed immediately after entering or exiting.
- The number of people entering the roost will be kept to a minimum to avoid increases in temperature from body heat.
- No heat sources, such as gas lamps, will be used inside the roost.
- Animals will not be touched, and care will be taken to avoid accidental contact with low-hanging bats.
- Animals will not be illuminated for longer than necessary, and red light will be used where possible.
- Noise will be kept to a minimum throughout the visit.
- Anyone showing signs of COVID-19 will not enter the building, and all participants will wear masks.
- Photographs inside the roost will only be taken when required to support hibernation counts or document changes within the roost.

Evidence to support the derogation tests

Test 1- Reason for derogation

Entering bat roosts to monitor both the bats and the condition of the buildings is essential for tracking population changes and ensuring that necessary maintenance is carried out in a timely manner.

All data collected feeds into the Lesser horseshoe bat national database, which helps to understand the health and trends of the population.

Test 2 - Absence of Alternative Solutions

Activity	Alternative Solution	Reasons for “Unsatisfactory”
Monitoring Bats	Do nothing	If population declines go unnoticed, there may be no opportunity to intervene before the colony disappears.
Monitoring Building	Do nothing	If building issues go unnoticed, they can lead to declines in bat numbers. Routine inspections allow maintenance needs to be identified early, enabling proactive action rather than reactive repair.

Test 3 - Impact of a derogation on Conservation Status

VWT’s lesser horseshoe bat reserves contain approximately 25% of Ireland's known lesser horseshoe bat population, making the protection of these of national importance. Annual monitoring data, submitted to NPWS, show that the population at VWT sites has remained stable over the long term.

The limited and carefully controlled entry to roosts, as outlined in Section 4, does not affect the bats using these sites and long-term data confirm that these activities have had no negative impact on the population's conservation status.

Monitoring the impacts of the derogations

A full report of all monitoring activities, including emergence counts, winter counts and observations on building condition, will be submitted to NPWS annually.