

Report to append application to renew Derogation Licence No. DER/BAT 2024-55

Summary of work in 2024

This licence, along with two other licences (Licence No. C31/2024: Licence to capture protected wild animals for educational, scientific or other purposes, and Licence to photograph/film wild animals) was granted to me as part of my education and monitoring work on behalf of Bat Conservation Ireland in 2024.

All licences were applied for so that BC Ireland could undertake bat training workshops in conjunction with different bat groups and local authorities in Ireland for educational purposes. These workshops included demonstrations on bat survey techniques and in particular, the use of harp traps for capturing bats. The purpose of these exercises was to demonstrate bat handling techniques to the attendees as well as serving as a method for gathering scientific information on swarming and roosting in caves.

Two events took place at Dunmore Cave, County Kilkenny in partnership with OPW on 20th and 21st September 2024. A harp trap was positioned inside the cave and allowed us to capture so that we could identify species, demonstrate safe handling techniques and gather biometrics on each individual. Daubenton's bat, Natterer's bat and Brown Long-Eared bats were captured, only handled by me and released safely.

In order to adhere to Article 12 of the Habitats Directive concerning disturbance of animals, every care was taken to ensure that disturbances to any bats encountered were kept to a minimum. This included careful planning to ensure that the trapping events did not take place during the bat's hibernation period, or their main nursery period when adult bats were still caring for their young. Additionally, other potential disturbances such as excessive lighting and noise were kept to minimum during the events. To help ensure this, group sizes were limited to only cater for a small number of participants (less than ten people in both cases). Attendees were asked to keep noise levels to a minimum, and where applicable were asked to use low light settings (preferably red light) on torches/headtorches where at all possible.

As co-ordinator of the Brown Long-Eared Bat Roost Monitoring Programme, one of my sites at Glengariff Forest Park, County Cork involved entering a known roost to count the bats as emergence is not possible due to the complexity of the roost. To keep disturbance to a minimum, I was the only one to enter the roost. A thermal camera was used instead of torches to minimise light disturbance and to obtain accurate counts. The visit was completed as quickly as possible. No bats were handled and no harm was done to the roost. The monitoring programme forms part of the Irish Bat Monitoring Programme which helps NPWS with Article 17 reporting.

Proposed work related to these licences in 2025

BCIreland are planning a number of events in 2025 that will require the use of these licences. These include up to three workshops to be conducted in August/September for the training of individuals on bat survey techniques. The BLE roost in Glengariff will continue to be counted internally so this will also be included in the planned works in May and August 2025.

Addressing of points in section 11 of the ‘Application for Derogation Licence’ document

11.1. The derogation licence is being sought as it is the only available option in that during our proposed workshops and ground truthing events we will be examining live bats for educational and scientific purposes. No alternative is possible in order to examine the morphological characteristics of bats for ID purposes, and for teaching these relevant skills to potential bat workers.

11.2. The actions permitted by a derogation licence will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the bat species involved. This is because these activities will be coordinated by a competent individual with ample experience in surveying and handling bats, and nothing will be done to place the bats or their roosts at risk. As in 2024, any activities scheduled will be done so outside of the potential hibernation period for Irish bats (November-March) and as per Article 12, will avoid periods of the rearing of young bats.

11.3. The main mitigation measures planned for any of the potential species that will be encountered are:

- Keeping noise levels to a minimum
- Keeping artificial light levels to a minimum (where possible, to only use red light sources) and to avoid direct illumination of bat roosts, if encountered. For more guidelines on lights and bats, see https://www.batconservationireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/BCIrelandGuidelines_Lighting.pdf
- Bats to be handled/processed as efficiently and quickly as possible to minimise any potential disturbance to them.

11.4. Please see the other documents attached with my original application. These outline my relevant experience and competencies, as well as the letter of support from Bat Conservation Ireland Senior Projects Manager Dr. Niamh Roche.

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Yours sincerely,

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