Derogation Number
DER-BAT-2025-294

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (BIRDS AND NATURAL HABITATS) REGULATIONS, 2011 (S.I. No 477 of 2011)

DEROGATION

Granted under Regulation 54 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, hereinafter referred to as "the Habitats Regulations".

The Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage, in exercise of the powers conferred on him by Regulation 54 of the Habitats Regulations hereby grants to **Thomas Dillon** of **Laois County Council, Borris-in-Ossory/Mountmellick Municipal District Roads Office, Durrow Library, The Old Courthouse, Chapel Street, Durrow, County Laois** a derogation. It is stated that this derogation is issued:

A. 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
B. As there is no satisfactory alternative, and the action authorised by this derogation will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of **bats** referred to below at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

This derogation authorises the following:

1. Roost disturbance
2. Actions authorised within the derogation

The derogation is issued in respect of the following **bat species**:

- **Natterer's Bat** **Myotis Nattereri**
- **Whiskered Bat** **Myotis Mystacinus**

Terms and Conditions

1. This derogation is granted solely to allow the activities specified in connection with the works located at **Skerry Bridge local road L2095, Skerry/Clonaheen, Mountmellick, County Laois** for **Thomas Dillon**
2. All activities authorised by this derogation, and all equipment used in connection herewith, shall be carried out, constructed and maintained (as the case may be) so as to avoid unnecessary injury or distress to any species of **BAT**. Anything done other than in accordance with the terms of this derogation may constitute an offence
3. This derogation may be modified or revoked, for stated reasons, at any time.
1. The mitigation measures outlined in the application report (**Bat Roost Assessment of Skerry Bridge, Mountmellick, Co. Laois**), together with any changes or clarification agreed in correspondence between NPWS and the agent or applicant, are to be carried out. Strict adherence must be paid to all the proposed measures in the application.
2. The actions which this derogation authorise shall be completed between **8th September – 30th September 2025, inclusive.**
3. The works will be supervised by bat ecologist: **Isobel Abbott.**
4. If this derogation addresses works that are subject of a planning application, no such works permitted under this derogation can occur until planning permission is granted.
5. If this derogation expires prior to works permitted under this derogation commencing, a new application must be sought in advance, including the provision of any updated data or reports.
6. This derogation shall be produced for inspection on a request being made on that behalf by a member of An Garda Síochána or an authorised NPWS officer appointed under Regulation 4 of the Habitats Regulations.
7. The local **NPWS District Conservation Officer,** ciara.powell@npws.gov.ie**,** must be contacted prior to the commencement of any activity, and if bats are detected on site during the course of the work, under the terms of this derogation.
8. On completion of the actions which this derogation authorises, all recordings of bat species affected will be made using the standardised data form provided below and must be submitted to the NPWS **within four weeks of the expiry date of this derogation**. Included with the below returns form, a report will also be submitted to wildlife.reports@npws.gov.ie detailing results of works and success of mitigation. **Both documents must be submitted to constitute a derogation return.**

For the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage

(an officer authorised by the Minister to sign on his behalf)

08 September 2025

Any query in relation to this derogation should be sent to reg54derogations@npws.gov.ie

Derogation Assessment

Name of Applicant: Thomas Dillon

Location/Name of Project: Skerry Bridge (L2095), Mountmellick, County Laois

Tick the following prohibition as chosen on the application:

(a) Deliberately capture or kill any specimen of the relevant species in the wild	☐
(b) Deliberately disturb these species particularly during the period of breeding, rearing, hibernation and migration	☒
(c) Deliberately take or destroy eggs of the relevant species in the wild	☐
(d) Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of such an animal, or	☒
(e) 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.	☐
(a) Deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy any specimen of these species in the wild, or	☐
(b) 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.	☐

Test 1: A reason(s) listed in Regulation 54 (a)-(e) applies to the proposed activity

i. Tick which reason <u>the applicant claims</u> should be applied to the derogation

(a) In the interests of protecting wild flora and fauna and conserving natural habitats,	☐
(b) To prevent serious damage, in particular to crops, livestock, forests, fisheries and water and other types of property	☐
(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,	☒
(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, or	☒
(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.	☐

ii. Test 1: Conclusion

Please tick the following where it applies:

There is a valid reason(s) listed in Regulation 54 (a)-(e) which applies to the proposed activity:	Yes	☒
	No	☐

Please outline your analysis below and state how the applicant has provided evidence to support your conclusion:

The application form and associated documentation provided by the applicant have been reviewed in full. The application relies on regulation 54(2)(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*' as the reason chosen for a derogation that they believe applies to the proposed activity.

In the detail provided it is clear that the applicant is relying on the Public health and public safety aspect of Reason C to facilitate the proposed works at Skerry Bridge, a single span masonry arch bridge, on the border of the townlands of Skerry and Clonaheen, Co. Laois. It is noted in the accompanying report the structure was given an **Eirspan Rating of 5** i.e. Ultimate damage and is in danger of total failure, possibly affecting the safety of traffic. It is therefore necessary to implement emergency repair work immediately or rehabilitation work without delay after the introduction of load limitation measures. If the proposed works are not conducted, then the bridge will deteriorate further.

The applicants have provided evidence as to the nature and scale of the public health and public safety reasoning and the proposed activity is necessary to achieve the overall objective. Based on the above this application has passed Test 1 and can now proceed to Test 2.

Test 2: Absence of a satisfactory alternative

Please tick the following where it applies and add a comment below to support the recommendation:

The applicant has provided satisfactory evidence that alternative solutions have been considered and have given reasons why the proposed approach is the only satisfactory alternative:	Yes	☒
	No	☐

Please outline your analysis below and state how the applicant has provided evidence to support your conclusion (If you wish to add additional conditions please complete pg. 6):

The following alternative solutions suggested by the applicant are-

1. Do – nothing . Without repair, the bridge and the road would collapse. This is unsatisfactory due to the public safety risk and the need to permanently close the road. Bat roosts will also be destroyed if the bridge collapses
2. Alternative 1. Permanently close the road where Skerry Bridge is located- This is unsatisfactory because the road is needed by local people, and there are no feasible alternative means of access to farms/homes/businesses. .
3. Three remedial options were outlined in the Skerry Bridge report and the applicant wishes to proceed with the proposed works involve remedial works to the arch barrel to restore structural integrity and safety of the structure. The general work plan is outlined in the report by MMConsult to Laois Co. Co.).

• Underpin the abutments and grout the fill material behind the abutment and arch barrel;
• Install stainless steel stitching bars;
• Pressure point all open cracks with pinning stones;
• Install a reinforced concrete saddle above the arch barrel;
• Relay the carriageway and install rubbing strips.
• Remove ivy from the parapets
• Repoint existing parapets and carry out localised concrete repair
• Repair of existing rock armour and additional rock armour
• Underpin wing walls

The applicant has provided satisfactory evidence that alternative solutions have clearly been considered as outlined in their application and bat roost report. *A number of alternative solutions, including the "do-nothing alternative" were examined by the applicant*

Based on the assessment of the application documentation and my site visit with Bat ecologist Isobel Abbott and Rory O'Callaghan of Laois County Council on the 3rd Sept 2025 it is regarded that the applicant has considered all available alternative solutions and at this time no other alternative solutions are apparent. Laois County council have stated that they will adhere to the recommendations as outlined in the Skerry Bridge Bat roost assessment. Having weighed the possible solutions to solve the applicant's problem against the effects of a derogation on the species concerned, it is concluded that the application has passed Test 2 and can proceed to Test 3.

Upon completion of your assessment, please return this Recommendation to WLU to continue the application process.

Test 3: Impact of a derogation on conservation status of the species

Please tick the following where it applies and add a comment below to support the recommendation:

The derogation would NOT be detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species in question at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.	Yes	☒
	No	☐

Please outline your analysis below and state how the applicant has provided evidence to support your conclusion. (If you wish to add additional conditions please complete pg. 6):

Minor roosts of both Natterer's Bat and Whiskered Bat were confirmed in Skerry Bridge. These species are not widespread or common in Ireland, but are currently in favourable conservation status.

Extensive mitigation measures are included in the bat survey report, including the timing of the works, the supervision of the works by a bat ecologist and the retention of suitable crevices to allow for continued roosting after the repair works are completed.
Providing these mitigation measures are implemented I am satisfied that there should be no significant impact on the conservation status of the bats on site.

If the answer above is Yes then the derogation may be granted, providing Tests 1 and 2 have also been met.

Upon completion of your assessment, please return this Recommendation to WLU to continue the application process.

Derogation decision

The application for a derogation under Regulation 54 of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), as amended, has been assessed by officials in the Department and the following decision has been made:

Tick box where appropriate:

There is no satisfactory alternative	☒
and the derogation is not 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.	☒

Therefore, a derogation may be granted to the applicant, since it is—

(a) in the interests of protecting wild fauna and flora and conserving natural habitats,	☐
(b) to prevent serious damage, in particular to crops, livestock, forests, fisheries and water and other types of property,	☐
(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,	☒
(d) for the purpose of research and education, of repopulating and re-introducing these species and for the breeding operations necessary for these purposes, including the artificial propagation of plants, or	☐
(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.	☐
OR **This application has been refused as one or more of the conditions set out above have not been met**	☐

The following conditions should be attached to the derogation:
1.
2.
3.
4.
[add additional conditions where required]

Signed: Date: September 8, 2025

Position: Ecologist