

Detailed guide: Wildlife licences: when you need to apply

Updated: Change to the email address to send an organisational licence application.

You can get an unlimited fine and up to 6 months in prison if you don't have a licence when carrying out an activity that needs one.

You must normally be at least 18 to apply for a wildlife licence. However, you might be able to apply if you're at least 16 and you have wildlife licensing qualifications or awards.

When you need a licence

You need a licence from Natural England if you plan to disturb or remove wildlife or damage habitats.

You'll need a licence if your work is to:

- prevent damage to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, property or archaeology
- protect public health and safety, such as demolishing an unsafe derelict building that hosts a bat roost
- maintain or develop land, for example converting farmland or a brownfield site to housing
- prevent disease among species
- keep or release species not native to England
- sell, own, exhibit or transport protected species
- survey for the presence of wildlife on your land for science or educational research or for conservation work

Most licences are free and last for a limited period. You'll only need to pay if you get a licence for a business or an organisation.

Conditions of using licences

To use any licence you must:

- follow the conditions written in each licence
- submit records and annual reports if Natural England ask you to

When you don't need a licence

You don't need a licence to control pests such as rats and cockroaches. Read more on [pest control on your property](#) to find out what you can do without a licence.

Types of licence

General licences for low-risk work

You need a general licence for some types of work that have a low risk for the conservation or welfare of a protected species.

See the full list of [species and activities that need a general licence](#).

You don't need to apply for these licences but you must follow the conditions written on any licence you use.

Class licences

You need a class licence if you're doing work that needs a specific skill or experience to avoid risk to the conservation or welfare of a protected species.

See the full list of [species and activities that need a class licence](#).

You must check the licence conditions written on the licence you want to use to see if you're eligible.

To use any of these licences you must register with Natural England. How you register, and how long it takes, depends on the licence. Registration usually takes about 15 days.

You may need to provide references or other documentation to support your application.

Individual licences

You must apply for an individual licence if you're doing any activity that affects a protected species and isn't covered by a general or class licence. This includes activities such as:

- disturbing, trapping or handling protected species
- disturbing their habitats, for example by cleaning out a pond or building a housing development.

To find out if you need to apply for an individual licence, see the full list of licences for:

- [badgers](#)
- [bats](#)
- [bumblebees – non-native species](#)
- [deer](#)
- [dormice](#)
- [freshwater fish](#)
- [great crested newts](#)
- [invertebrates](#)
- [mink, coypu, muskrat and grey squirrel](#)

- [natterjack toads](#)
- [otters](#)
- [plants](#)
- [reptiles](#)
- [water voles](#)
- [white-clawed crayfish](#)
- [wild birds](#)

You also need an individual licence to [release a species into the wild](#) if it's not a species usually found in Great Britain or is listed as an [invasive species](#).

If your work affects European protected species you need to apply for a mitigation licence. See the [list of species that need a mitigation licence](#). You'll need to send additional information to support your application.

It usually takes 30 working days to get an individual licence.

Licences for businesses and organisations

You can get an organisational licence if your business undertakes an activity that:

- is regular and routine
- affects one or more protected species

This means you won't need to apply for a separate licence each time you carry out that activity.

To get an organisational licence you'll need to show you've consistently met the conditions of other types of wildlife licences in the past.

You can't get this licence if:

- your activity will have a medium or high impact on a European protected species
- you're doing a one-off activity like development

You can ask Natural England if you need an organisational licence before you apply. This advice is free.

To apply for this licence, complete the [request form for an organisational licence](#)
(MS Word Document, 145KB)

and send it to protectedspecieslicensingandmanagement@naturalengland.org.uk.

Natural England will contact you within 15 working days to:

- tell you if your request is eligible
- give a timetable of what happens next

You must pay Natural England for the time it takes to produce your

organisational licence and this will be agreed in advance.

You'll pay:

- £110 per hour for this work
- £110 per hour if you need to change your licence, eg if you want it to cover different types of work
- £330 each time you renew your licence

If Natural England need to visit your site you'll pay:

- £110 per hour for travel time
- travel costs at 45p per mile

If you're doing conservation work, your organisational licence might be free. Natural England will tell you if this is the case.

Read

[Natural England's special terms for organisational licences](#)

(PDF, 15.9KB, 3 pages)

and [Natural England's terms and conditions for paid-for services](#).

How to apply

You only need to apply for individual and organisational licences.

You can apply for individual licences online or by post. You may find it quicker to apply by post if you only need one licence.

You need to send applications for organisational licences to protectedspecieslicensingandmanagement@naturalengland.org.uk.

Apply online

Find out [how to apply for individual licences online](#) using Natural England's case work management system.

If you've already registered with Natural England and have a [Government Gateway](#) account you can [apply online](#).

Apply by post

Send your completed application and any documents to:

Wildlife licensing

Natural England
Horizon House

Deanery Road

Bristol
BS1 5AH

Email
wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Telephone
020 8026 1089

When you might need to provide more information

You'll get a letter from Natural England asking you for more information if they think you haven't provided enough information in your application.

You won't get your licence unless you provide the information they need.

Your application will be closed if you don't provide the information needed within 6 months.

When we might share your information

Natural England may sometimes share the information you submit to them with third parties. We only share information when necessary and, whenever possible, anonymously.

Read the [wildlife licensing privacy notice](#) for more information.

When to contact Natural England

Replace your licence documents

You can get your licence replaced if you lose it. Email:

- wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk if your work is for wildlife management
- wildlife.scicons@naturalengland.org.uk if you're doing conservation work or scientific research
- eps.mitigation@naturalengland.org.uk if you need an EPS licence

Replacement licences are free.

Extend your licence

You can sometimes apply for an extension to your licence if you're unable to complete an activity before a licence expires.

Contact Natural England as soon as possible at:

- wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk if your work is for wildlife management
- wildlife.scicons@naturalengland.org.uk if you're doing conservation work or scientific research
- eps.mitigation@naturalengland.org.uk if you need an EPS licence

Renew your licence

You must apply for a new licence if your licence has expired.

[Guidance: Protected species licences: references for applications](#)

Updated: Clarification on guidance to upgrade a survey class licence.

You must give written references to support a photography, survey, science, conservation, research or European protected species mitigation licence application or registration if you:

- have not held a licence for the species (or a similar species) in the last 3 years
- have a licence but want to add new activities

Use this guidance to find out about who can be your referee and the experience you both need.

[Form: Bats: licence to disturb or take bats for science or conservation \(A34, Class-A34 and LR34\)](#)

Updated: Separate class licence registration form Class-A34 added for volunteer bat roost visitor and survey use.

Personal licences

You should use form A34 to apply for a personal:

- research licence for scientific projects
- licence for photography or other special projects

To apply for a personal licence you need to include a project plan showing the objectives of the project and why the work is necessary.

Volunteer bat roost visitor licences

You should use form Class A-34 to register for a:

- level 1 volunteer bat roost visitor (VBRV) licence (allows you to do visits for Natural England's bat advice service)
- level 2 VBRV licence (allows you to train new volunteers towards their level 1 licence)
- bat survey licence for science or education

When applying for your first level 1 VBRV licence you must:

- have your application form endorsed by a registered and licensed trainer
- be registered as a Natural England volunteer (email batvolunteers@naturalengland.org.uk to do this)

When applying for your first level 2 VBRV licence you must:

- already have a level 1 licence
- already be registered as a Natural England volunteer
- have completed Natural England's 'train the trainer' course

You'll need a [different licence](#) to capture, disturb or transport bats, or damage their roosts.

References

You may need to complete a [reference form](#) when you apply for these licences if you:

- haven't held a licence for the species or a similar species for the last 3 years
- have a licence but want to add new methods

How to report your actions

You must report any actions you took using these licences on the report form LR34 on this page. You must a report no later than 2 weeks after your licence expires, even if you've taken no action. Send your completed form by post or email to Natural England using the details on the form.

[Detailed guide: Construction near](#)

protected areas and wildlife

Updated: Updated the section on 'exceptional cases' for carrying out works without a licence.

Protected areas

You are responsible for finding out if your development is likely to affect a protected area or site. Your planning authority may not grant you planning permission if it damages a protected area or site.

The following areas are protected:

- [national parks](#)
- [areas of outstanding natural beauty](#)
- [sites of special scientific interest \(SSSIs\)](#)
- special areas of conservation (SACs)
- special protection areas (SPAs)
- [Ramsar wetlands](#)
- [local sites](#)
- sites in the process of becoming SACs or SPAs ('candidate SACs', 'possible SACs', 'potential SPAs' and sites of community importance (SCIs) or a Ramsar wetland ('proposed Ramsar site')
- [Marine Conservation Zones](#)

Search the [mapping tool](#) to see if your development is in or near protected land. To find out how your development proposals will be affected by a protected site, [contact your local planning authority](#).

You can [get advice from Natural England](#) if your plans affect protected areas. You might have to pay a fee.

Protected sites

You must consider how your development proposal will affect any nearby SSSI, SPA, SAC or Ramsar site.

Check how your activity could affect an SSSI, SPA, SAC or Ramsar site with the 'risk zone' feature of this [mapping tool](#), or [download the SSSI impact risk zone data](#) for your own software.

Your planning authority may consult Natural England if your activity potentially affects a protected site in the risk zone. They can ask you to change your plans, do the work in a certain way or refuse you planning permission.

Government agencies, councils and other public bodies need to [request permission from Natural England](#) for activities that could damage SSSIs.

If your proposal also affects a European protected site which is, or is proposed as, a SAC, SPA or Ramsar wetland, the planning authority will need to do a Habitats Regulations assessment. You may need to give the planning authority extra information to help them do this assessment, eg extra survey information.

Protected species

Many species of plant and animal in England, and their habitats, are protected by law. What you can and can't do by law varies from species to species.

European protected species

European protected species have the highest level of protection and include:

- [all species of bats](#)
- [great crested newts](#)
- [hazel or common dormice](#)
- [otters](#)
- [natterjack toads](#)
- [reptiles](#) (some species)
- [protected plants](#) (some species)
- [large blue butterfly](#)
- [sturgeon](#)

You're breaking the law if you:

- capture, kill, disturb or injure a European protected species (on purpose or by not taking enough care)
- damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even accidentally)
- obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (on purpose or by not taking enough care)
- possess, sell, control or transport live or dead individuals, or parts of them

Disturbing a protected species includes any deliberate activity that affects:

- a group's ability to survive, breed or raise their young
- the species' numbers or range in the local area

If you're found guilty of an offence you could get an unlimited fine and up to 6 months in prison.

Other protected species

Other protected species and groups include:

- [badgers](#)
- [water voles](#)
- [wild birds](#)
- [ancient woodland and veteran trees](#)

- [white-clawed crayfish](#)
- [freshwater pearl mussels](#)

You need to [apply for a development licence if your plans affect badgers](#). However for other non-European Protected Species, you can't apply for a development licence. In some circumstances Natural England will consider issuing a licence where there's a conservation benefit for the affected species, such as the water vole.

Exceptional cases

In most circumstances, you should be able to avoid causing harm to protected species by either:

- timing your planned activity
- applying other mitigation methods

In exceptional cases, avoiding harm isn't possible. In these cases the law allows for actions which would normally be illegal if you can show that:

- the activity is lawful, such as development with planning permission
- you've not been able to avoid the impact of the activity

This exception is often called the 'incidental result defence'. You can only use this if you're able to show you've covered all parts of the defence by:

- following good practice in planning and carrying out the works
- trying to reduce the impact of development on the protected species

A court would decide if you have applied the defence properly. You should get professional advice before you use the defence.

Decide if you need a mitigation licence

You'll need to decide if your project will affect a protected species or its habitat, and whether you'll need a licence. You can get expert advice from an ecologist to help you decide.

You should try everything else possible to avoid disturbing the species, blocking access to or damaging its habitat. In most cases you should be able to plan the work to achieve this.

If this isn't possible and your activity will affect the species, you can apply for a mitigation licence. Applying for a licence should be your last resort and only applies to a minority of cases. Your ecologist should help you with your application.

Your ecologist will conduct surveys to show how the species uses the area, and develop mitigation plans to reduce any negative effects.

You'll need to include the survey findings, impact assessments and mitigation plans (to reduce harm to the species) with your mitigation licence application.

Find out what's required to [get a mitigation licence](#)

Get expert help

If you apply for a mitigation licence from Natural England, you'll need an ecologist to:

- carry out surveys to work out how your activity will affect the species
- develop your mitigation plans
- help with your licence application

You can find an ecologist from:

- the [Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management](#)
- the [Environmental Data Services \(ENDS\) Directory](#)

Appointing an ecologist isn't required by law, but you'll need expert help with your mitigation licence application.

When you need a survey

Commission a survey by an experienced and qualified ecologist if you think protected species could be present on or near the site you intend to develop. If there's no evidence of protected species, you can continue with your development or planning application.

If the survey shows that protected species use the site, your ecologist will:

- assess the impacts of your development
- adjust the plans if possible
- arrange mitigation strategies to reduce or compensate for any damage
- tell you if you need a mitigation licence from Natural England

Surveys should be done at the right time of year. Read the [how to review planning proposals guidance](#) to find out when you can do surveys.

Mitigation and compensation plans

Your planning authority is likely to refuse planning permission if your proposal would harm protected species. You'll need to show that you've considered the following steps.

Avoid harming the species, eg by locating the works far enough away from protected species.

If you can't avoid affecting the species, reduce harm (mitigate), eg by restoring habitats to how they were before the development.

If avoidance and mitigation aren't possible, compensate for any harmful effects, eg by creating new habitats.

You may need to include a mitigation strategy with your survey report if you're applying for planning permission. The planning authority will review your mitigation plans along with the survey data to assess how your proposals

will affect wildlife. If you're applying for mitigation licences from Natural England, you'll include mitigation plans and survey findings as part of your method statement.

Your mitigation strategy should aim to:

- maintain species' population size and distribution
- enhance the population in the medium to long term
- avoid harming other species

Apply for a licence

Licences are free. Allow up to 30 working days for a licensing decision to be made.

Find out how to [apply online, by post or email](#).

You should get planning permission (if it's required) before applying for a mitigation licence.

Get advice about your licence application

You can [get advice from Natural England about your draft licence application](#). This advice is available for bats, great crested newts and hazel dormice. You'll have to pay a fee.

Contact

Wildlife licensing

Natural England
Horizon House

Deanery Road
Bristol
BS1 5AH

Email
wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Telephone
020 8026 1089

Further information

Find out [what planning authorities look for in applications](#) that affect protected sites and species.

Collection: Producer responsibility regulations

Updated: 'Packaging producer responsibility monitoring plan 2018' added under the 'Packaging' heading.

Producer responsibility is about making sure businesses that manufacture, import and sell these products are responsible for their end of life environmental impact.

The regulations require businesses to:

- minimise waste arising from these products and promote their re-use
- ensure the waste products are treated and meet recovery and recycling targets for the waste materials
- design products by reducing material use and enhancing reusability and recyclability

Enforcing compliance: the regulators

The UK environmental regulators for producers, producer compliance schemes and treatment facilities are:

[Environment Agency \(England\)](#)

[Natural Resources Wales \(Wales\)](#)

[Northern Ireland Environment Agency \(Northern Ireland\)](#)

[Scottish Environment Protection Agency \(Scotland\)](#)

[Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy \(BEIS\)](#) for the ELV regulations

[Regulatory Delivery \(RD\)](#) for placed on the market regulations for WEEE and batteries, for distributors of WEEE and batteries, producers of industrial and automotive batteries and restrictions on heavy metals in vehicles.