



Bats in Churches

Our Guidelines

Any known bat colonies in our churches will have been surveyed and recorded by each regional team. The presence of bats in a specific church will be noted on the General Buildings Risk Assessment. The following guidelines are a summary of our policy on bats in churches and some basic precautionary measures to take if you come across Bats or their droppings.

Why are Bats protected?

Bats and churches have a long association. The age of CCT's churches means that bats may have been there for decades, if not hundreds of years.

Originally roosting in trees and caves, Britain is now one of the least forested countries in Europe so alternatives for bats are limited and they are uniquely dependent on buildings for roosting.

Eight of the 17 species of bats in the UK are known to use churches for roosting including some of the less common species. All species of bat are protected by the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 and it is the CCT's policy to co-exist in harmony with bats.

Usually the numbers of bats in churches are small and they may even go unnoticed. Occasionally a church may attract a larger colony. In these cases the droppings, though usually limited to an area under the roost, can be a problem for the cleaner. However, they carry no disease and are generally odourless. For the few months when bats are active sensitive areas can be protected.

What to do if you come across a bat or a bat colony

The two most important things to avoid are being bitten and harming the bat. Do not touch the bat unless absolutely necessary and never with your bare hands.

The first thing to do on finding a bat is to contact your Local Community Officer or CCT contact and if known a local bat group or the Bat Conservation Trust bat helpline on **0845 1300 228**.

If you are bitten or scratched by a bat, you should immediately wash the wound with soap and water. This alone is very effective in reducing the risk of any type of infection, but you must also seek medical advice on whether additional treatment is required.

Bat Droppings

Bat droppings are made up of largely indigestible insect exoskeletons with some oils and fats. As they are small in size the droppings tend to dry out quickly and turn to dust.

Bat urine decays and leaves behind dilute ammonia which can cause pitting, staining and etching on wooden and polished surfaces.

Whilst the risk to human health is relatively small, please see below English Heritage's guidelines on the risks and precautions when in contact with bat droppings:

RISK	PRECAUTION
Gastro-intestinal infection from accidental hand-to-mouth transfer	Hands should be washed after exposure to bat droppings and urine, and gloves worn when cleaning (rubber gloves are sufficient)
Dust inhalation from dry bat droppings	Avoid inhaling dust from dry bat droppings. When cleaning up quantities of bat droppings, a dust mask can be used to reduce the risk of inhalation. (the face mask should contain a decent filter, rather than a standard, non-filter, dust 'nuisance' mask.) Dispose of the droppings in sealed refuse bags
Allergic reaction	Parasites that live in bat droppings can cause allergic reactions in some people. Reactions are rare and no particular precautionary measure is advised. Medical advice should be sought if you become concerned that you are reacting to the droppings

For more Information...

Please speak to your Local Community Officer. There is a full document of guidelines available on request and the Trust's H&S policy also features a section on bats as well as cleaning guidelines.