

Partner Agreement

This document is a memorandum of understanding between the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) and Partner Bat Groups.

This document was originally developed in consultation with bat workers and BCT members. Its primary aim is to be open and transparent about the expectations of BCT and the Partner Group with regards to their working partnership.

The agreement symbolises an understanding that BCT and bat groups can achieve more for bat conservation by working co-operatively and by having a better understanding of each other's work.

Shared expectations

Both BCT and the Partner Group agree to:

- Work together in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect.
- Discuss issues in an open and non-confrontational manner, listening to and respecting other people's opinions.
- Seek to build consensus but be able to disagree.
- Keep to commitments.
- Respond to requests within 10 working days. This response should, at a minimum, be a confirmation of receipt. In such case, a deadline for a more comprehensive response should be provided at the time of receipt.
- Follow a standard complaints procedure (see Appendix 1).
- Comply with copyright, for example, by accrediting photographs and text appropriately.
- Have a meeting once a year, or at a frequency agreed between the Partner Group and BCT, at a time suitable for both parties. This could be in the form of talks on projects at BCT or other areas of interest, or with the relevant Officer to update each other on activities, new projects, and issues that may arise. Also, an opportunity to discuss whether both parties are meeting the expectations defined in this agreement and, if not, why, and how this can be addressed.

What BCT will bring to the Partnership

Appendix 2 provides an overview of the differences in what Partner and Network Groups can expect from BCT.

For Partner Groups BCT will:

Communication

- Provide a contact for any queries relating to the agreement, bat group or BCT activities, or other feedback or enquiries. The Bat Groups and Country Officers covering regions of the British Islands can be found here: <https://www.bats.org.uk/the-trust/team/bct-staff/conservation-services-and-partnerships>. Alternatively, if this link isn't functional, please email batgroups@bats.org.uk explaining who you need to contact.
- Prioritise Partner Group enquiries over those of Network Groups in relation to bat group needs and support if Officer time is limited.

- Include details of the Partner Group on the BCT website, which can be changed and updated by the Partner Group via a request to the relevant Officer.
- Send Partner Groups bat group bulletins containing information on relevant new reports, legislation and policy updates, best practice guidance, etc.
- Where practical/relevant, and within the confines of legal obligations, share information and data with the Partner Group.
- Within the confines of legal obligations, inform the bat group should BCT enter a partner arrangement with another organisation within the bat group's area.
- Send details of BCT members, who have identified an interest in joining their local group and given permission for their details to be shared, to the Partner Group Contact.

Consultation and representation

- Where appropriate, inform the Partner Group when developing strategy, policy, best practice, and standards and procedures, and consider subsequent feedback. Should the work be specific to a bat group's area then BCT will engage directly with the bat group during development.
- Provide an email facility by which Partner Groups can respond directly to Trustees on issues prior to Board of Trustee meetings (the email address is trustees@bats.org.uk).
- A Partner Group can nominate a person to a vacancy on the BCT Board of Trustees (BoT) at any point. Where the BoT has identified that it would benefit from a trustee with bat group experience, the BoT will actively invite and encourage nominations from Partner Bat Groups. Any such nomination to be put forward to BCT members as part of the BCT Annual General Meeting.

Support

- Champion Partner Group activities when BCT is made aware of them, for example via the BCT website, Bat News, and local and national media, as appropriate opportunities arise.
- Respond to the group's training needs and provide skills and training advice accordingly.
- Provide an annual Partner Group Support Fund to which the Partner Group can apply for a project grant to support their local activities.
- Provide an annual Conference Bursary to which the Partner Group can apply to help local members attend the National Bat Conference.
- Provide logins for each Partner Group to access a dedicated Partner Group Area on the BCT website, which hosts the latest Bat News and Young Bat Worker, partner group logos, photographs for bat group use, an introduction to bats talk, year round information on the Partner Group Support Fund, and suggested talks that can be requested from BCT.
- Provide a BCT Partner Group logo for the group to display on their website, in publication or funding material, as relevant.
- Keep the 'resources for bat groups' area of the website up to date, including generating new material where suitable and required: <https://www.bats.org.uk/resources/resources-for-bat-groups>.

Insurance

- Provide third party liability insurance (See Appendix 3 for details).

What the Partner Group will bring to the Partnership

In addition to the bat group's own activities, the Partner Group will:

Communication

- Nominate a contact person to liaise with BCT on behalf of the group.
- Receive the bat group bulletin; circulate information received from BCT to bat group members, and keep BCT up to date with significant bat group activities.
- Inform BCT of any press releases, television or radio interviews given by the group where these may result in BCT receiving additional calls from media contacts.
- Consider sending a copy of the bat group newsletter (where the group has one) to the relevant BCT Officer to help keep them up to date on bat group activities.
- Inform BCT if entering into a partnership arrangement with another organisation.

Consultation

- Where bat group resources are available, engage with local biodiversity initiatives where these are in place (for example, contribute to a Local Biodiversity Action Plan, Local Nature Partnership, Local Biodiversity Partnerships, etc.).
- Where bat group resources are available, assist BCT with appropriate national consultations.

Best Practice

- Be open to having new members who are interested in the activities of the group.
- Follow best practice guidance on bats and diseases, including Bats and Rabies Good Practice Guidelines, white-nose syndrome guidance, and SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 guidance, during bat group activities.
- Within the confines of legal obligations and agreements about the supply of data to other parties, set up a data exchange agreement with the local records centre and/or share data via the NBN Gateway.

Supporting BCT

- Whilst determining its own work programme, a Partner Group will aim to undertake an activity, or activities, to further one or more of BCT's strategic objectives (see Appendix 4). For example, this may include taking part in the National Bat Monitoring Programme, holding education events, relevant research projects, etc.
- Promote and encourage membership of BCT, for example by providing join leaflets at local events and/or by including BCT join leaflets in welcome packs.
- Consider providing opt-in tick boxes on bat group membership forms, allowing contact details to be shared with BCT.
- Consider making a financial contribution to BCT's annual request for donations towards specific projects, linked to what the group thinks is appropriate and affordable to them.

Insurance

- If making use of third-party liability insurance through BCT, adhere to the stated policy terms and conditions, including compliance with BCT's safeguarding policy and supply a signed compliance statement to this effect when requested (See Appendix 3 for details).

Process for reviewing the relationship

BCT will contact the group annually via email to confirm the status of the Partner Group relationship. With this, BCT will provide information about alternative options (i.e. Network Group or no formal relationship with BCT) for the group to consider, as relevant. The bat group will be asked to respond to the email within 28 days confirming their relationship with BCT. (This time-period may be extended by request.)

By confirming their relationship with BCT, both the Partner Group and BCT are agreeing to live up to the expectations set out above, understanding that flexibility may be required in some circumstances, and that this is acceptable provided the need for that flexibility is discussed and agreed with the relevant contacts up front.

It is understood that both BCT and the bat group have the option to withdraw from this agreement at any time by submitting email notification to the other party.