

Bat Conservation Trust



## **BATS AND LIGHTING IN THE UK**

### **Bats and the Built Environment Series**

This document is aimed at lighting engineers, lighting designers, planning officers, developers, bat workers and anyone specifying lighting. It is intended to raise awareness of the impacts of lighting on bats and mitigation is suggested for various scenarios. It also offers an explanation of the facts associated with the lighting industry for the benefit of bat workers.

This is a working document and as such the information contained will be updated in line with advances in our knowledge both into the impact on bats and also to reflect the advances in technology available in the lighting industry.

The information provided here is believed to be correct. However, no responsibility can be accepted by the Bat Conservation Trust, the Institution of Lighting Engineers or any of their partners or officers for any consequences of errors or omissions, nor responsibility for loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from action as a result of information and no claims for compensation for damage or negligence will be accepted.

## **ABOUT BATS – FOR THE LIGHTING INDUSTRY**

### **General Ecology**

Bats are the only true flying mammals. Like us, they are warm-blooded, give birth and suckle their young. They are also long-lived, intelligent and have a complex social life. In Britain there are 17 species, all of which are small (most weigh less than a £1 coin) and eat insects.

Bats have evolved a number of unusual features, mainly connected with their ability to fly. Their wings are formed from a web of highly elastic skin stretched over greatly elongated finger bones, the legs and tail, though their thumbs remain free to help them cling on when roosting. Bats have also developed a highly sophisticated echolocation system that allows them to avoid obstacles and catch tiny insects, which they seize in flight or pick off water, the ground or foliage, even in complete darkness. When they're flying, bats produce a stream of high-pitched calls and listen to the echoes to produce a sound picture of their surroundings.

Some bats specialise in catching large insects such as beetles or moths but others eat large numbers of very small insects, such as gnats, midges and mosquitoes. Bats gather to feed wherever there are lots of insects, so the best places for them include traditional pasture, woodland, marshes, ponds and slow moving rivers.

During the winter there are relatively few insects available, so bats hibernate. In September and October they put on weight and then, as the weather gets colder, they seek out appropriate sheltered roosts, let their body temperature drop to close to that of their surroundings and slow their heart rate to only a few beats per minute. This greatly reduces their energy requirements so that their food reserves last as long as possible. Bats don't hibernate right through the winter but may wake up and go out to feed on mild evenings when insects are active.

During the spring and summer period female bats gather together into maternity colonies for a few weeks to give birth and rear their young (called pups). Usually only one pup is born each year. This is looked after carefully and suckled for between four and six weeks until it is old enough to fly out and hunt for itself. Bats don't build nests and don't bring food back to the roost to feed their young, so the baby lives only on its mother's milk until it is old enough to fly. Once the baby is independent, the colony breaks up and the bats generally move to other roosts. Bats may gather together from a large area to form these maternity roosts, so any disaster at the summer breeding site can affect the whole colony of bats from a wide surrounding area. Many of these maternity sites are used every summer as bats have a strong tradition of returning to the same site year after year.

### **Legal Protection of bats**

Due to the decline in bat numbers, all species of bat are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). This makes it illegal to: kill, injure, capture or disturb bats, obstruct access to bat roosts or damage/destroy bat roosts. Lighting in the vicinity of a bat roost causing disturbance could constitute an offence, so it is important that Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage or Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland is consulted and allowed time to provide advice on lighting proposals in the vicinity of bats and roosts.

## **Impacts on bats**

### **Roosts**

Illuminating a bat roost creates disturbance and may cause the bats to desert the roost. Light falling on a roost access point will at least delay bats from emerging and this shortens the amount of time available to them for foraging. As the main peak of nocturnal insect abundance occurs at and soon after dusk, a delay in emergence means this vital time for feeding is missed.

### **Insects and foraging**

In addition to causing disturbance to bats at the roost, artificial lighting can also affect the feeding behaviour of bats. There are two aspects to this. One is the attraction that light from certain types of lamps has to a range of insects; the other is the presence of lit conditions.

Many night flying species of insect are attracted to light, especially those lamps that emit an ultra-violet component and particularly if it is a single light source in a dark area. As well as moths a range of other insects can be attracted to light such as craneflies, midges and lacewings. Studies have shown that, although noctules, Leisler's, serotine and pipistrelle bats swarm around white mercury street lights (this would also apply to metal halide) feeding on the insects attracted to the light, this behaviour is not true for all bat species. The slower flying broad winged species such as long-eared bats, *Myotis* species (which include Brandt's, whiskered, Daubenton's, Natterer's and Bechstein's), Barbastelle and greater and lesser horseshoe bats generally avoid street lights. In addition it is also thought that insects are attracted to lit areas from further afield. This is thought to result in adjacent habitats supporting reduced numbers of insects. This is a further impact on the ability of the light avoiding bats to be able to feed. It is noticeable that most of Britain's rarest bats are among those species listed as avoiding light. Clearly, effective mitigation where there is potential for impact on bats has importance in the conservation of these species.

Artificial lighting is thought to increase the chances of bats being preyed upon. Many avian predators will hunt bats which may be one reason why bats avoid flying in the day. Observations have been made of kestrels (diurnal raptors) hunting at night under the artificial light along motorways.

Lighting can be particularly harmful if used along river corridors, near woodland edges and near hedgerows used by bats. In mainland Europe, in areas where there are foraging or 'commuting' bats, stretches of road are left unlit or lighting is designed in such a way as to avoid isolation of bat colonies.

## Other behaviours

Artificial lighting disrupts the normal 24-hour pattern of light and dark which is likely to affect the natural behaviour of bats. Bright light may reduce social flight activity and cause bats to move away from the light area. Studies have shown that continuous lighting along roads creates barriers which some bat species cannot cross. For example, Daubenton's bats move their flight paths to avoid street lamps. The following images indicate possible scenarios where bats' commuting routes may cross a road. They are linear features such as tree lines, river corridors, hedgerows or where tree canopies form a link over the road.



## ABOUT THE LIGHTING – FOR BAT WORKERS

### Types of lights in use

A range of lighting equipment is available:

- 1) **Low pressure sodium lamps (SOX)** (typical orange lamps seen along roadsides). Light is emitted predominantly at one wavelength, contains minimal ultraviolet (UV) light and has a low attraction to insects. The lamps tend to be large which makes it more difficult to focus the light from these lamps. These are in the gradual process of being removed or replaced.
- 2) **High pressure sodium lamps (SON)** (brighter pinkish-yellow lamps). Commonly used as road lighting. Light is emitted over a moderate band of long wavelengths including a small UV component. Insects are attracted to the brighter light. The lamp is of medium size and the light can be more easily directed than low pressure sodium. This is the predominant lamp now in use.
- 3) **Mercury lamps (MBF)** (bluish-white lamps). These emit light over a moderate spectrum including a larger component of UV light to which insects are particularly sensitive. Insects are attracted in large numbers along with high densities of bat species. (Rydell & Racey 1993). They are rare now and are not used in new developments.
- 4) **White SON**. This is whiter than High Pressure Sodium and has a larger component of UV light.
- 5) **Metal Halide**. A small lamp and therefore more easy to focus light and make directional. Emits less UV light than mercury but more than high pressure sodium. It comes in three forms a) Quartz arc tube (HQI); b) Ceramic arc tube (CDM-T) and c) Cosmo which is a new ceramic form.

- 6) **Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs)**. Predicted to compete with metal halide and high pressure sodium as a widely used light source within the next few years. The light emitted is more directional. The light is produced in a narrow beam. It is instant light.
- 7) **Tungsten Halogen** (more directional). It is not used in new lighting schemes but may be encountered as security light on a private household.
- 8) **Compact Fluorescent** Mostly in use in residential street lighting. It produces a white light; variants are available with minimal UV output. It can be used at a low wattage and therefore on a low output to achieve low lux.

**Legal requirements for lighting**

There is no legislation requiring an area or road to be lit.

The Building Regulations specify that 150 W is the maximum for exterior lighting of buildings but this does not apply to private individuals.

There are a number of British Standards that relate to various components of lighting and there are also guidelines that relate to crime prevention, prevention of vehicular accidents and amenity use.

Many County councils and less often District and Borough councils set out standards in local guidance policy documents. These are sometimes based on the advice given by the Highways Authority ‘TA49 – Approval of new and replacement lighting on trunk roads and trunk road motorways’.

In assessing the need for lighting it would be beneficial to ask the local authority for their lighting policy document as this should incorporate all of the above.

**The installation of lighting and the planning system**

Domestic lighting needs no planning permission and depends on direct advice being given to the householder. Lighting associated with new development or a listed building does require planning permission. Planning officers or developers when dealing with applications for lighting in an area of suitable bat habitat eg. woodland, old pasture, linking hedgerows and water habitats) should seek information on bat roosts in the area.



If assistance is needed they can contact the BCT Bat Helpline 0845 1300 228 who may be able to suggest how best to access information on bat roosts known in the area. If bat

roosts are suspected, it may be necessary to conduct a bat survey. A survey may need to determine the species of bat affected, their population levels, the likely impact of the lighting on the bats and possible mitigation.

The need to install lighting should be questioned. Where lighting is permitted, as may be necessary for public safety, conditions should be imposed to ensure the impact of the lighting on the bats is kept to a minimum. The use of a lighting design computer program that predicts where light will fall should be used to predict the potential impact and to plan mitigation.

The consultation on the addition to PPS23 on Pollution Control of Annex 3 on lighting is on hold at the present time (July 2007) until the outcome of the Baker review is known.

## **MITIGATION OF LIGHTING IMPACTS ON BATS**

### **1. BAT ROOSTS**

No bat roost (including access points) should be directly illuminated. If it is considered necessary to illuminate a building known to be used by roosting bats, the lights should be positioned to avoid the sensitive areas. Close offset accent lighting causes less light pollution; it is more specific and can be designed to avoid bat sensitive areas, and better highlights the features of the subject of the illumination.

### **2. FORAGING AND COMMUTING**

#### **Type of lamp (light source)**

The impact on bats can be minimised by the use of low pressure sodium lamps or high pressure sodium instead of mercury or metal halide lamps where glass glazing is preferred due to its uv filtration characteristics.

#### **Luminaire and light spill accessories**

Lighting should be directed to where it is needed and light spillage avoided. This can be achieved by the design of the luminaire and by using accessories such as hoods, cowls, louvres and shields to direct the light to the intended area only. Planting can also be used as a barrier or manmade features that are required within the build can be positioned so as to form a barrier.

#### **Lighting column**

The height of lighting columns in general should be as short as is possible as light at a low level reduces the ecological impact. However, there are cases where a taller column will enable light to be directed downwards at a more acute angle and thereby reduce horizontal spill. For pedestrian lighting this can take the form of low level lighting that is as directional as possible and below 3 lux at ground level. The acceptable level of lighting may vary dependent upon the surroundings and on the species of bat affected.

#### **Predicting where the light cone and light spill will occur**

There are lighting design computer programs that are widely in use which produce an image of the site in question, showing how the area will be affected by light spill when all the factors of the lighting components listed above are taken into consideration. This should be a useful tool to inform the mitigation process.

### Light levels

The light should be as low as guidelines permit. If lighting is not needed, don't light.

### Timing of lighting

The times during which the lighting is on should be limited to provide some dark periods. Roads or trackways in areas important for foraging bats should contain stretches left unlit to avoid isolation of bat colonies. These unlit stretches should be 10 metres in length either side of commuting route.

## 3. FLOODLIGHTING OF SPORTS OR EVENTS

The use of asymmetric beam floodlights (as opposed to symmetric) orientated so that the glass is parallel to the ground will ensure that the light is cast in a downward direction and avoids horizontal spill.



See the National Trust guide to 'Events, concerts and bats' at [http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-bat05\\_events.pdf](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-bat05_events.pdf) for further advice on ways to reduce the impact of event lighting.

## 4. SECURITY LIGHTING

**Power** It is rarely necessary to use a lamp of greater than 2000 lumens (150 W) in security lights. The use of a higher power is not as effective for the intended function and will be more disturbing for bats.

**Movement sensors** Many security lights are fitted with movement sensors which, if well installed and aimed, will reduce the amount of time a light is on each night. This is more easily achieved in a system where the light unit and the movement sensor are able to be separately aimed.

**Timers** If the light is fitted with a timer this should be adjusted to the minimum to reduce the amount of 'lit time'.

**Aim of light** The light should be aimed to illuminate only the immediate area required by using as sharp a downward angle as possible. This lit area must avoid being directed at, or close to, any bats' roost access points or flight paths from the roost. A shield or hood can be used to control or restrict the area to be lit. Avoid illuminating at a wider angle as this will be more disturbing to foraging and commuting bats as well as people and other wildlife.

### Alternatives

It may be a better solution for security lighting on domestic properties to use a porch light.

## Ongoing areas of research

- The impact of light on commuting corridors used by lesser horseshoe bats. Emma Stone, University of Bristol
- The effects of lighting on prime bat foraging areas within London, concentrating on riparian habitats and open spaces. Alison Fure.
- The effect of light and noise on British bat species. Frank Greenaway.

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## Glossary of terms

(used in this article or that may be used by the lighting industry)

Arc tube	A tube normally ceramic or quartz enclosed by the outer glass envelope of a HID lamp that contains the arc stream.
Asymmetric beams	Lamp is off-centre in a reflector more steeply curved at one end.
Candela	The intensity of a light source in a specific direction. Unit of Luminous intensity
Contrast	The relationship between the luminance of an object and its background. The higher

	the contrast the more likely it is an object can be seen.
Cowl	Physical light spill control accessory.
Diffuse	Term describing dispersed light distribution referring to the scattering of light.
Efficacy	A measure of light output against energy consumption measured in lumens per watt.
HID	High Intensity Discharge. Describes mercury vapour, metal halide and high pressure sodium lamps.
High Pressure Sodium Lamp	A HID lamp whose light is produced by radiation from high pressure sodium vapour which usually includes a small amount of UV light.
Hood	Physical light spill control accessory.
Illuminance	Illuminance is the quantity of light, or luminous flux, falling on a unit area of a surface. It is designated by the symbol E. The unit is the lux (lx).
Lamp	Light source.
Light cone	The angle at which the beam falls off to 50% of peak intensity.
Light Pollution	The spillage of light into areas where it is not required. Also known as obtrusive light.
Light spill	The light that falls outside the light cone.
Light Trespass (nuisance)	Light that impacts on a surface outside of the area designed to be lit by a lighting installation. The correct legal term is nuisance.
Louvres	Physical light spill control accessory.
Low Pressure Sodium	A discharge lamp in which light is produced by radiation from low pressure sodium vapour. Emits light predominantly at 589nm.
Lumen	The unit of light output from a lamp.
Luminaire	Light fitting or unit designed to distribute light from a lamp or lamps.
Luminance	The physical measure of the stimulus that produces the sensation of brightness measured by the luminous intensity reflected in a given direction. The unit is the candela per square metre (cd/m <sup>2</sup> ).
Lux (LX)	Illuminance is the quantity of light or

	luminous flux, falling on a unit area of a surface in the environment. It is designated by the symbol E. The unit is lux (lx).
Metal Halide (includes CDM-T)	<p>A type of HID lamp in which most of the light is produced by radiation of metal halide and mercury vapours in the arc tube. Emits UV light.</p> <p>UV poor variants are available.</p> <p>It comes in three forms a) Quartz arc tube (HQI); b) Ceramic arc tube (CDM-T) and c) Cosmo which is a new ceramic form</p>
Mercury	High pressure white light lamp that emits significant UV light.
Optic	The components of a luminaire such as reflectors, refractors, protectors which make up the directional light control section.
Photocell	A unit which senses light to control luminaires.
Reflector	A device used to reflect light in a given direction.
Refractor	A device used to redirect the light output from a lamp when the light passes through it. It is usually made from prismatic glass or plastic.
Shield	Physical light spill control accessory.
Sky glow	The brightening of the night sky caused by artificial lighting.
Symmetric beams	Lamp mounted in the centre of the reflector.
Ultra violet (UV)	Radiation that is shorter in wavelength and higher in frequency than visible violet light.
Voltage	The difference in electrical potential between two points of an electrical circuit.
Watt (W)	The unit for measuring electrical power.