

Durham Bat Group

Registered Charity No. 1170672

Trustees' Annual Report 2020

enquiries@durhambats.co.uk

Durham Bat Group Trustees

Trustee Name	Committee Position	Dates serving as a trustee in 2020
Claire Dewson	Chair	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020
Julia Brown	Treasurer	01/01/2020 – 29/09/2020
Clare Rawcliffe	Treasurer	29/09/2020 – 31/12/2020
	Trainer	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020
David Sowerbutts	Recorder	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020
Tony Purcell	Asset Manager	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020
Alistair Lockett	Communications Officer	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020
	Membership Coordinator	01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020
Gwynevere Kipling	Secretary	01/01/2020 – 29/09/2020
	Bat Care Coordinator	29/09/2020 – 31/12/2020
Barry Anderson	Secretary	29/09/2020 – 31/12/2020
Jodie Morgan	Events Coordinator	29/09/2020 – 31/12/2020

Trustees

The Trustees have acted with due regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit with respect to Durham Bat Group's charitable activity, and in particular to Public Benefit Guides PB1, PB2 and PB3. This report is prepared in accordance with the Charities SORP (FRS 102).

Signed on behalf of the Trustees.....

Governing Document

The constitution of Durham Bat Group was adopted on 20 October 2016, and is based on the Charity Commission's model 'Association' constitution for Charitable Incorporated Organisations.

The group is further governed by byelaws adopted on 20 February 2018 which define criteria for membership, the structure of the governing committee, and group policies on bat work training, partnerships with other organisations, providing advice to the public, group meetings, data and financial management, and insurance.

Objectives and Activities

The objectives of the Durham Bat Group (DBG) are promotion of the conservation and welfare of bats, primarily within the geographic area between the rivers Tees and Tyne, but also including parts of Durham south of the Tees and excluding parts of Northumberland south of the Tyne. This includes the provision of practical advice and help to any individual or organisation with regard to bats, education of the public about bats by means of public talks, bat walks, talks to school groups etc., and encouragement of community participation in bat related activities. It also includes the study of bats to further understanding of their biology and ecology, and working with other organisations sharing similar aims.

Durham Bat Group is the umbrella body for bat workers within its area of activity. It holds indoor meetings during the winter months and field activities at all times of the year, but focusing on the main period of bat activity from May to October.

It is the local coordinator for Natural England's Volunteer Bat Roost Visitor (VBRV) Scheme, whereby licensed VBRV's respond to enquiries made through the National Bat Helpline run by the Bat Conservation Trust on behalf of Natural England. It therefore helps Natural England to deliver its statutory duty to provide advice to the

public regarding interactions with bats, which are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2018 and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

DBG maintains a database of bat records within its area of activity, and provides records, on request, to further the understanding of bats and to ecological consultants carrying out Ecological Impact Assessments. Durham Bat Group carries out searches of its database and produces reports for which a charge is made to commercial organisations. Typically this charge will be about £25 for a standard 2-km radius search; charges for more wide-ranging searches are subject to negotiation.

The group has a network of bat carers who rehabilitate sick and injured bats found by the public for release back into the wild where possible. Bat carers must receive training from group members experienced in bat care before carrying out any bat rehabilitation independently. DBG works closely with Durham Cathedral to care for grounded bats found regularly in the Cloisters, primarily in late summer / early autumn.

DBG maintains and monitors bat box schemes in the county, undertakes surveys and runs bat walks for the public. It also works with other groups and organisations to provide educational talks and bat walks, and benefits the public through bat conservation activities.

Occasional financial donations to bat-related scientific or charitable work by outside individuals or bodies are assessed on their merits and voted on by members during group meetings. Grants may be provided to groups or individuals whose activities are considered to provide added value for bat conservation to those of Durham Bat Group.

The membership of Durham Bat Group stands at 98.

2020 Achievements and Performance

General Indoor Meetings of Members

DBG member meetings were held at Belmont Community Association with the exception of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) which was held online via Zoom.

February 2020 - Discussion on bat group activities, Trustee Roles and bat records - attended by 17 members.

March 2020 - Presentation by Kim Stabler, the Associate Director of Tricolor (a Heritage company) regarding the potential works on the Cloisters at Durham Cathedral. followed by a group input and discussion.

2020 Meetings of the Board of Trustees

The Trustees met on 15th January, 5th May, 13th May, 27th May, 18th June, 15th July, 21th July, 17th September, 19th November and the 11th December to facilitate the running of the Group.

2020 Annual General Meeting

The 2020 AGM was held online via zoom on the 29th September. The minutes of the 2019 AGM were agreed as were the 2019 financial report and trustees annual report.

Julia Brown stood down as a trustee. Barry Anderson and Jodie Morgan were appointed as trustees.

There was then a presentation by Lisa Worledge from BCT – Bats and Disease.

National Bat Helpline Support

There were 204 enquiries via the BCT helpline.

Of these, 7 were Natural England roost-related enquiries which required a roost visit. Due to COVID-19 restrictions roosts visits were suspended last year and so very few visits took place across England during 2020

Approximately 40 were NE roost-related enquiries which did not require a visit, and approximately 150 were bat care related calls. The rest were 'other' enquiries.

Training

International guidance advised against any non-necessary handling of bats due to the Covid-19 pandemic to reduce risks to both bats and people. A series of national and regional lockdowns restricted training in 2020.

Projects

Durham Cathedral

'Jodie Morgan managed the Cathedrals voluntary rota for 2020 to collect any grounded bats on a telephone based system due to COVID-19 restrictions preventing volunteers carrying out the usual bat patrol of the cloisters. When the restrictions had eased in late August, they were then allowed in to conduct patrol surveys, out of hours from the public following health and safety measures.

A total of 6 volunteers contributed to a daily 'on call' basis, awaiting a bat rescue call from Durham Cathedral to recover and rehabilitate grounded bats during the annual Common Pipistrelle swarming period in the cathedral cloister.

Volunteers who volunteered during the pandemic:

Jodie Morgan

Melissa Young

Antonio Barbaro

Mike Wilson

Gwyn Kipling

Bridget Black

This resulted in the recovery of 54 grounded bats, of which only 20.37% were rehabilitated and released. Of the others, 40.74% died in captivity, and a high total of 30.88% were found dead.

As a conclusion due to the restrictions volunteers were not able to carry out patrol duties and with a lack of watchful staff and public to inform porters of groundings this resulted in a high mortality rate of undiscovered bats, therefore demonstrating the importance of the role of the volunteers undertaking bat patrols within the cloisters.

Hamsterley Forest

International guidance advised against any non-necessary handling of bats due to the Covid-19 pandemic to reduce risks to both bats and people, therefore no bat box checks were undertaken in 2020.

WWT Washington Bat Box Checks

International guidance advised against any non-necessary handling of bats due to the Covid-19 pandemic to reduce risks to both bats and people, therefore no bat box checks were undertaken in 2020.

Bat Flight Cage

A bat flight cage is an outdoor mesh room where bats that have been in care can build up their flight stamina and feed on the wing in a safe environment until they are ready for release. It is a particularly crucial tool to ensure that bats brought into care as pups

or juveniles can learn and practise flying and foraging before release. Prior to 2020, any juveniles requiring a flight cage have kindly been taken on by other bat group carers with access to a flight cage, but this was not a reliable solution due to the capacity of other groups. Durham Bat Group's carers made a case for having a flight cage within our area and Julia Brown identified a suitable location within her allotment site in Darlington. DBG agreed to pay for the materials and some labour with additional labour provided by group volunteers. The flight cage was installed in Autumn / Winter 2020.

Other Events / Activities

International guidance advised against any non-necessary handling of bats due to the Covid-19 pandemic to reduce risks to both bats and people. Also the group followed government guidance on social distancing and numbers gathering at events, therefore no other events were undertaken in 2020.

Records

The number of new records received during 2020 was again low - fewer than 100 – though this was not entirely related to Covid restrictions, since observers could have recorded bats on local walks or in their gardens. One notable emergence count carried out on 15th June was of over 700 Soprano Pipistrelles, the largest bat roost so far recorded in the county.

For much of the season special arrangements were in place for ecological consultants to carry out surveys using Covid-safe methods. This meant that the demand for data searches was not suppressed and 124 were carried out during the year.

More records have been received from ecological consultants in respect of 2020 work than has been the case in most recent years, but the majority of these (233) did not arrive until after the end of the year under review.

Financial Review

		2020		2019	2018
Receipts					
				£	£
Data searches	£	3,320.00		2310.00	2695.00
Donation - bat care		0		0.00	40.00
Donation - talk		0		0.00	50.00
Income sub Total for year	£	3,320.00		2310.00	2785.00
Payments					
				£	£
Room hire & Refreshments	£	301.68		231.50	39.87
Postage		0		390.40	360.98
Insurance	£	100.00		1059.69	1117.46
Bat Care	£	250.02		130.36	0.00
Website subscription		0		0.00	64.66
Repair of detectors		0		0.00	55.20
Recorder buttons		0		0.00	717.76
DNA analysis		0		0.00	42.00
Bat flight cage (materials and labour)	£	1,836.79			
Donation (Nathusius' Project)		0		0.00	1000.00
Expenditure total for year	£	2,488.49		1811.95	3397.93
Income minus expenditure	£	831.51		498.05	-612.93
Balance brought forward from previous year	£	23,042.21		22544.16	23157.09
End of year balance	£	23,873.72		23042.21	22544.16

DBG has no restricted funds or endowed funds.