

# Cottage Remediation for Pipistrelle Protection

## CHALLENGE

ECOSA was appointed to undertake an ecological assessment of a New Forest property undergoing remediation works when a soprano pipistrelle maternity roost was discovered.

## SOLUTION

ECOSA completed three surveys to understand the full bat presence, the cottage's available remediation options, and the requirements to obtain an EPSM license from Natural England.

## RESULT

Despite restricted timescales and significant administrative burden, close liaison between ECOSA and involved parties ensured all tasks were undertaken in compliance to secure the best outcome for both the client and the soprano pipistrelle maternity colony.

## CHALLENGE

A local client identified that remediation works were required for the roof of a cottage located in the New Forest and ECOSA, a Trinity Consultants team, was appointed to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment of the site to support a planning application for this work. During the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey, the cottage showed signs of being highly suitable for roosting bats, with bat droppings recorded around possible access/egress points on the roof. Bat droppings were sent to a lab for DNA analysis and were found to belong to soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*.

All bat species are designated as European Protected Species and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 meaning it is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture bats and damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places. It is also an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection or obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection. Therefore, bat surveys were necessary to determine the nature of the bat roost present, and the potential impacts of any works undertaken.



## SOLUTION

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Three subsequent surveys confirmed the presence of a high-status soprano pipistrelle maternity roost with a peak count of approximately 250 bats roosting within the cottage.

Although it was clear that remediation works to the roof were required, the exact nature of the remediation could not be determined until the roof tiles had been removed and the state of the roofing materials underneath could be fully inspected by the relevant professionals. Therefore, to minimise the risk of harm to individual bats and the risk of the maternity colony permanently abandoning the roost, it was very important that the roost location was not affected during the summer. This meant that a large number of administrative and practical tasks had to be achieved within a narrow timeframe.

First, a European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence was sought from Natural England. The EPSM licence was necessary because the proposed works to the roof would result in the loss of the maternity roost and possibly in the killing/injury of bats. This is an offence under Regulation 43 the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Regulation 55 allows otherwise illegal activities to be undertaken where a licence has been granted.

In order to gain the EPSM licence, the ECOSA team was required to demonstrate that there were no feasible alternatives that would be less damaging or avoid damage to the site, that the proposals needed to be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, and that suitable compensatory measures could be secured. The licence was successfully obtained in October 2022.

The investigative works to the roof were undertaken under the supervision of a bat licensed ecologist. Works were undertaken during October, outside of both the bat maternity and hibernation season, to minimise disturbance to roosting bats.

## RESULT

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The investigative works revealed the need to improve the cottage roof through the addition of insulation and minor alterations to the roof structure. A new full planning consent was required from the New Forest National Park authority for this additional work with consent granted in January 2023.

Due to the new consent and the change in the nature of the proposals, the granted EPSM licence needed modification. A suitable mitigation strategy for the cottage was devised with the client to reinstate the original roof tiles where possible and to install modified bat roof tiles to give the bats continued use of the building. This strategy was agreed by Natural England and the EPSM modification was approved in March 2023, with sufficient time for the roof to be reinstated for the start of the bat maternity season in May 2023.

Despite restricted timescales and significant administrative burden due to the nature of the works and the presence of the maternity roost, close liaison between ECOSA, the client, the New Forest National Park Authority and Natural England ensured all tasks were undertaken in compliance with planning policy and legislation to achieve the best outcome for both the client and the soprano pipistrelle maternity colony.

### ABOUT TRINITY CONSULTANTS

Trinity Consultants, a leading global environmental consulting firm, provides services and solutions in the EHS Regulatory Compliance, Built Environment, Life Sciences, and Water & Ecology markets. Founded in 1974, Trinity has the technical expertise, industry depth, and capabilities to help clients achieve their goals across the natural and built environments.