

## Facilities Management from A to Z

Based on The FM Lexicon by Martin Pickard  
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# B ats

In England, Scotland and Wales the law protecting bats is considerably stricter than it is for most other animals. All bat species are protected under schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Since 2007 the most effective protection for bats comes from Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994, which defines "European protected species of animals".

There are 18 species of bat in the UK and they fly several miles at night so they can be seen almost anywhere regardless of where they are roosting. Most bats are colonial and roost in groups or singly in trees, buildings and other structures. These can be within the same building structure or several kilometres apart and they hibernate during winter months to conserve energy.

The easiest proof of them roosting in premises is if they are seen leaving the building at dusk, usually from a small hole high up on the building. If they are in the roof space the best thing is to leave them alone. Bats and their roosting places are protected by law and it is illegal to do anything which may harm them or stop them entering or leaving their roost site.

The roosts are protected at all times, not just when bats are using them. Bats originally lived in natural crevices like tree holes, but because many of their natural homes have been destroyed, plenty of them have adapted to live in the buildings conveniently provided for them.

They make use of existing nooks and crannies and do not build nests, so they cause no damage to the property. The worst problems to be encountered are a few droppings beneath their entry point. Bats are insect eaters and their waste comprises mostly of insect wings, so they don't smell or carry diseases transmissible to humans.

They breed at a very slow rate so big increases in numbers are very rare. A bat is usually several years old before it breeds for the first time and even then it may not breed every year. When it does breed, it only gives birth to one youngster a year and many of these die in their first winter.

Because bats are a protected species whose numbers have declined dangerously over the years it is important that socially responsible property owners do not only protect them but also actively encourage them and support their breeding and development. The presence of bats is a good indicator of natural bio diversity. The facilities landscaping team should be encouraged to grow a wide range of plants, trees and shrubs that attract insects which the bats can feed on.

*For more advice on protecting and encouraging bats contact the Bat Conservation Trust [www.bats.org.uk](http://www.bats.org.uk)*