



Credit: Tina Aughney

Bat Conservation Ireland Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Council

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INTRODUCTION

This plan, which was developed by the Council and staff of Bat Conservation Ireland (BCIreland), provides us with a 3-year roadmap to guide the services we provide to our stakeholders, to enhance our offering to our members, and to develop our organisation to meet future needs.

The plan was developed over several weeks in 2021, with comprehensive input by BCIreland Council members and staff. During this exercise, our team revisited our vision, mission and guiding values, and reflected on current and future approaches to our work.

I would like to thank Council and staff members who together undertook the planning process and who provided the valuable expertise, analysis and support necessary to complete our plan. My thanks also to Adjust Consulting for their facilitation of our meetings.

Our team will continue to review our progress regularly and, subject to internal and external developments, will review and update the plan as necessary. We would be grateful of any constructive input from members on areas that we need to address that are vital to bat conservation in Ireland and worldwide.

Brian Keeley

Chair, Bat Conservation Ireland

September 2021



VISION

Our vision is for humans and bats to co-exist in harmony in Ireland.

MISSION

Bat Conservation Ireland is an independent, non-profit, charity that is Ireland's leading authority on bats. We conduct monitoring and research to increase knowledge of all Irish bat species and work to secure and expand existing bat populations, and where feasible to extend their ranges. We aim to develop a genuine and widespread understanding and appreciation of bats amongst the public, state agencies and other organisations, and to secure consistent protection of all bat species and the ecological infrastructure necessary to support them.

VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Professionalism: We are committed to promoting the conservation of bats and bat habitats through science-based education, emerging research and contemporary best practices.

Collaboration: Together we are stronger and through collaboration, our work is better as we strive to achieve our collective goals.

Learning: By learning from our experiences and each other, and implementing those learnings, we are continuously moving forward, innovating, and improving.

Respect: We foster and safeguard a culture where everyone's contributions and relationships are respectful and respected.

Integrity: We consistently conduct ourselves ethically with honesty, openness, fairness and accountability.

Diversity: We value the different ideas, strengths, interests, and cultural backgrounds that make our organisation successful. We welcome healthy debate and differences of opinion.

Reflection: We continuously monitor and evaluate our plans and performance to ensure that we meet our goals efficiently and effectively.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Council of BC Ireland recognises the need to advance and promote the highest standards and levels of achievement in protecting, monitoring, and supporting bat species and populations in Ireland. In this context, the BC Ireland Strategic Plan 2022-2025 identifies seven key objectives that it will prioritise, through its annual operational plans, to keep pace with changing ecological infrastructures and to meet the needs of our stakeholders*.

1. **Advocacy.** To advocate on behalf of bats to a variety of audiences including the general public, agencies, and public bodies within Ireland and the EU. This work is focused on increasing the general understanding of the value of bats, as well as the benefits they provide and obtaining commitments to their protection.
2. **Education.** To be a trusted and reliable source of information and commentary for students and the public by providing up-to-date education initiatives which increase knowledge and understanding about bats and which drives support for their protection.
3. **Monitoring.** To conduct extensive monitoring of bat populations across the island of Ireland and to ensure accurate knowledge of these and ongoing related trends.
4. **Research.** To facilitate, develop and share a comprehensive knowledge-base of bat species through BC Ireland's activities and collaboration with institutions on the island of Ireland and internationally.
5. **Resources.** To produce contemporary resources to support bat populations, including information and guidance, for diverse stakeholders.
6. **Collaboration.** To network, co-operate, collaborate and work with other national and international bat and ecological organisations and groups.
7. **Organisational Development.** To align and integrate our capabilities, communications and infrastructure: to uphold our vision, mission and values; to meet the expectations of our stakeholders, and to implement the initiatives of our Strategic Plan.

**our stakeholders are defined as persons, groups or organisations that have an interest in, or concern about, bats and bat species.*

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES

In pursuit of our overall vision and strategic objectives, Council has identified and agreed in principle a programme of initiatives and activities as areas of particular operational focus over the next three years. The following outline of undertakings will provide a template to guide the strategic direction and future development of BC Ireland. Some of these undertakings are mutually supportive and the accomplishment of one initiative may facilitate the achievement of other goals.

Council understands that strategic and annual operational plans and activities may be impacted from time to time by external forces beyond BC Ireland's control, e.g. COVID health and safety restrictions. Council is committed to responding quickly to any such external influences and to advance the pursuit of its mission within any imposed restrictions.

1. **Advocacy**

To advocate on behalf of bats to a variety of audiences including the general public, agencies, and public bodies within Ireland and the EU. This work is focused on increasing the general understanding of the value of bats as well as the benefits they provide and obtaining commitments to their protection.

- a. Obtain clear information on the impact of becoming a lobbying organisation (listed on the Register of Lobbying kept by the Standards in Public Office Commission) in terms of:
 - the work involved in becoming registered and ongoing compliance, and
 - potential implications for ongoing and new contracts and submission of future tenders.
- b. Review how BC Ireland's activities fit best between advocacy and education and decide whether BC Ireland should register as a lobbying organisation or focus its promotion of bats solely through educational activities.

2. **Education**

To be a trusted and reliable source of information and commentary on bat conservation for students and the public by providing up-to-date education initiatives which increase knowledge and understanding about bats and drives support for their protection.

- a. Maintain and continue to develop our current educational resources via our website and other online platforms.
- b. Provide straightforward information (on the website & as downloads) on relevant legislation protecting bats, including information materials for planning applicants and local authority planning staff on considerations and requirements relating to the protection of bats and their habitats.
- c. Offer a range of short training webinars to members and the public via the website, with a view to further developing them to meet demand or necessity.
- d. Continue to facilitate bat-walks and talks throughout the country to educate the general public about bats and their importance.

3. **Monitoring**

To conduct extensive monitoring of bat populations across the island of Ireland and ensure accurate knowledge of these and ongoing related trends.

- a. Continue managing the four established national and All-Ireland monitoring schemes:
 - All Ireland Daubenton's Bat Waterway Survey
 - Brown Long-eared Roost Monitoring Survey
 - Car-based Bat Monitoring Surveys
 - Lesser Horseshoe Bat Database
- b. Develop technological supports for the All-Ireland Monitoring Schemes to ensure greater efficiencies in collating and reporting data.
- c. Establish a monitoring scheme for Natterer's bats & Whiskered Bats, including:
 - A review of the pilot scheme already undertaken
 - A literature review of other methods for monitoring these species
 - Use of static detectors in woodlands.
- d. Explore the potential for carrying out static cave site monitoring in collaboration with NPWS rangers, including:
 - Activity during swarming
 - Gauge winter activity, usage between roost sites in the winter period
 - Species other than Lesser Horseshoe bats
 - Caves that are not monitored by state agencies.
- e. Explore the possibility of carrying out a pilot scheme to conduct monitoring of bats in bridges, to improve knowledge on roost disturbance and produce guidance on best practice for bridge repairs/maintenance.
- f. Restore BCireland's small grant scheme to support bat conservation projects around the country.

4. **Research**

To facilitate, develop and share a comprehensive knowledge-base of bat species through BCireland's activities and collaboration with institutions on the island of Ireland and internationally.

- a. Explore the provision of support for a UCD PhD student to research the ecosystem services provided by bats.
- b. Initiate research into whether the Greater Horseshoe bat is moving into Ireland.
- c. Explore opportunities for further research into the impact of climate change on bats.

- d. Carry out smaller research projects which support the overall work of BCIreland.
- e. Conduct a review evaluating the usage of trees as bat roosts to increase research in this area, and to provide necessary information for Local Authorities, arborist, foresters etc.

5. **Resources**

To produce contemporary resources to support bat populations, including information and guidance, for diverse stakeholders.

- a. Produce booklet on bat identification.
- b. Review and update existing guidance material and produce additional necessary materials, according to a phased schedule, and where possible these should complement webinar/ video training.
- c. Update and maintain BCIreland's two websites to support our education work: www.batconservationireland.org and www.learnaboutbats.org
- d. Produce a downloadable publication about BCIreland grant-aided projects to showcase bat conservation work being carried out around the country.
- e. Produce a guideline document which outlines contemporary planning methodologies for all windfarm developments.

6. **Collaboration**

To network, co-operate, collaborate and work with other national and international bat and ecological organisations and groups.

- a. Continue to work with valued partners to support the work of bat conservation throughout the island of Ireland.
- b. Conduct a survey of stakeholder views on BCIreland to inform monitoring, evaluation and review of BCIreland's Strategic Plan and its amendment as necessary.
- c. Explore the potential to establish a programme for joint research fellowship(s) with third-level education institutes where BCIreland supplies expertise, data, fieldwork support, etc. and the academic body provides resourcing, recruitment and institutional support.
- d. Maintain links with UK and NI organisations (BCT & CeDAR) and share new learnings and best practices in protecting our bat species.

- e. Continue to work with international partners such as BAT Life Europe, Eurobats, Bat Conservation International, to share learnings, collaborate on research and continue to advocate on behalf of bats, both nationally and internationally.

7. **Organisational Development**

To align and integrate our capabilities, communications and infrastructure; to uphold our vision, mission and values; to meet the expectations of our stakeholders, and to implement the initiatives of our Strategic Plan.

- a. Ensure an adequate funding model is in place to support the current and future work of BC Ireland.
- b. Ensure staff roles are adequately resourced and staff have necessary supports in place to execute their functions.
- c. Explore the practicalities of establishing a new Education Officer role to support BC Ireland's educational remit.
- d. Build a strong membership, where members are valued, and they participate and are engaged in the work of BC Ireland.
- e. Support local Bat Groups such that they enhance the work of BC Ireland by means of their independent projects and activities.
- f. Conduct a survey of members, including the evaluation of their expectations and their views on how their membership delivers value.
- g. Develop an updated and comprehensive communications plan (addressing the use of all media) including provision for how this will be rolled out.
- h. Recruit additional Council and Board members, with a range of skill sets that will enhance all aspects of BC Ireland's operation.
- i. Develop a comprehensive membership database linked to the BC Ireland website to handle all membership and communication transactions.
- j. Complete all work necessary to ensure compliance with the Charities Regulator Governance Code and ensure that all policies are implemented.
- k. Regularly monitor and review strategic and operational workplans.



The goal of Bat Conservation Ireland is to have a major impact on bat survival and welfare.

Through the implementation of these strategic initiatives and activities, we will strive to raise awareness of the ecological and economic importance of bats and their conservation needs.

Through our diligence in maintaining our leadership position as a source of knowledge, inspiration and motivation to the next generation, we will ensure that individuals, agencies, and organizations understand the important environmental role of bats and will know how to support their wellbeing and conservation.