

Detailed guide: Wildlife licences: when you need to apply

Updated: Change to the email address to send an organisational licence application.

You can get an unlimited fine and up to 6 months in prison if you don't have a licence when carrying out an activity that needs one.

You must normally be at least 18 to apply for a wildlife licence. However, you might be able to apply if you're at least 16 and you have wildlife licensing qualifications or awards.

When you need a licence

You need a licence from Natural England if you plan to disturb or remove wildlife or damage habitats.

You'll need a licence if your work is to:

- prevent damage to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, property or archaeology
- protect public health and safety, such as demolishing an unsafe derelict building that hosts a bat roost
- maintain or develop land, for example converting farmland or a brownfield site to housing
- prevent disease among species
- keep or release species not native to England
- sell, own, exhibit or transport protected species
- survey for the presence of wildlife on your land for science or educational research or for conservation work

Most licences are free and last for a limited period. You'll only need to pay if you get a licence for a business or an organisation.

Conditions of using licences

To use any licence you must:

- follow the conditions written in each licence
- submit records and annual reports if Natural England ask you to

When you don't need a licence

You don't need a licence to control pests such as rats and cockroaches. Read more on [pest control on your property](#) to find out what you can do without a licence.

Types of licence

General licences for low-risk work

You need a general licence for some types of work that have a low risk for the conservation or welfare of a protected species.

See the full list of [species and activities that need a general licence](#).

You don't need to apply for these licences but you must follow the conditions written on any licence you use.

Class licences

You need a class licence if you're doing work that needs a specific skill or experience to avoid risk to the conservation or welfare of a protected species.

See the full list of [species and activities that need a class licence](#).

You must check the licence conditions written on the licence you want to use to see if you're eligible.

To use any of these licences you must register with Natural England. How you register, and how long it takes, depends on the licence. Registration usually takes about 15 days.

You may need to provide references or other documentation to support your application.

Individual licences

You must apply for an individual licence if you're doing any activity that affects a protected species and isn't covered by a general or class licence. This includes activities such as:

- disturbing, trapping or handling protected species
- disturbing their habitats, for example by cleaning out a pond or building a housing development.

To find out if you need to apply for an individual licence, see the full list of licences for:

- [badgers](#)
- [bats](#)
- [bumblebees – non-native species](#)
- [deer](#)
- [dormice](#)
- [freshwater fish](#)
- [great crested newts](#)
- [invertebrates](#)
- [mink, coypu, muskrat and grey squirrel](#)

- [natterjack toads](#)
- [otters](#)
- [plants](#)
- [reptiles](#)
- [water voles](#)
- [white-clawed crayfish](#)
- [wild birds](#)

You also need an individual licence to [release a species into the wild](#) if it's not a species usually found in Great Britain or is listed as an [invasive species](#).

If your work affects European protected species you need to apply for a mitigation licence. See the [list of species that need a mitigation licence](#). You'll need to send additional information to support your application.

It usually takes 30 working days to get an individual licence.

Licences for businesses and organisations

You can get an organisational licence if your business undertakes an activity that:

- is regular and routine
- affects one or more protected species

This means you won't need to apply for a separate licence each time you carry out that activity.

To get an organisational licence you'll need to show you've consistently met the conditions of other types of wildlife licences in the past.

You can't get this licence if:

- your activity will have a medium or high impact on a European protected species
- you're doing a one-off activity like development

You can ask Natural England if you need an organisational licence before you apply. This advice is free.

To apply for this licence, complete the [request form for an organisational licence](#) (MS Word Document, 145KB)

and send it to protectedspecieslicensingandmanagement@naturalengland.org.uk.

Natural England will contact you within 15 working days to:

- tell you if your request is eligible
- give a timetable of what happens next

You must pay Natural England for the time it takes to produce your

organisational licence and this will be agreed in advance.

You'll pay:

- £110 per hour for this work
- £110 per hour if you need to change your licence, eg if you want it to cover different types of work
- £330 each time you renew your licence

If Natural England need to visit your site you'll pay:

- £110 per hour for travel time
- travel costs at 45p per mile

If you're doing conservation work, your organisational licence might be free. Natural England will tell you if this is the case.

Read

[Natural England's special terms for organisational licences](#)

(PDF, 15.9KB, 3 pages)

and [Natural England's terms and conditions for paid-for services](#).

How to apply

You only need to apply for individual and organisational licences.

You can apply for individual licences online or by post. You may find it quicker to apply by post if you only need one licence.

You need to send applications for organisational licences to protectedspecieslicensingandmanagement@naturalengland.org.uk.

Apply online

Find out [how to apply for individual licences online](#) using Natural England's case work management system.

If you've already registered with Natural England and have a [Government Gateway](#) account you can [apply online](#).

Apply by post

Send your completed application and any documents to:

Wildlife licensing

Natural England
Horizon House

Deanery Road

Bristol
BS1 5AH

Email
wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk

Telephone
020 8026 1089

When you might need to provide more information

You'll get a letter from Natural England asking you for more information if they think you haven't provided enough information in your application.

You won't get your licence unless you provide the information they need.

Your application will be closed if you don't provide the information needed within 6 months.

When we might share your information

Natural England may sometimes share the information you submit to them with third parties. We only share information when necessary and, whenever possible, anonymously.

Read the [wildlife licensing privacy notice](#) for more information.

When to contact Natural England

Replace your licence documents

You can get your licence replaced if you lose it. Email:

- wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk if your work is for wildlife management
- wildlife.scicons@naturalengland.org.uk if you're doing conservation work or scientific research
- eps.mitigation@naturalengland.org.uk if you need an EPS licence

Replacement licences are free.

Extend your licence

You can sometimes apply for an extension to your licence if you're unable to complete an activity before a licence expires.

Contact Natural England as soon as possible at:

- wildlife@naturalengland.org.uk if your work is for wildlife management
- wildlife.scicons@naturalengland.org.uk if you're doing conservation work or scientific research
- eps.mitigation@naturalengland.org.uk if you need an EPS licence

Renew your licence

You must apply for a new licence if your licence has expired.