

The New BCT-Bat Group Relationship Approach

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are a selection of frequently asked questions relating to the new BCT-bat group relationship approach. If you are viewing this document electronically, quick links can be accessed by holding down the Ctrl key, and selecting a question from the box below.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Partner Agreement, Network Agreement and associated appendices. For copies of these documents, please contact Laura Dunne at ldunne@bats.org.uk or 020 7501 3633.

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1. Why are we doing this?

As BCT has evolved and developed, so too have local bat groups and bat conservation in general. Consequently, the relationship between the national and local organisations has changed, but this has not always been recognised. Events, such as those surrounding the Defra rabies experiments in particular, flagged up cracks in communications and lead to frayed working relationships. Therefore it has been vital to reassess how the whole system works.

The new relationship categories (Partner Group, Network Group and No Relationship Group) have evolved from an externally lead review, involving extensive consultation with not only bat groups, but BCT members and NBMP volunteers. This review has been overseen by a Steering Group, which comprised representatives from BCT and bat groups.

It was important to move away from affiliation because it became clear during consultation there was confusion regarding the term; some viewed affiliation as symbolic of a close working relationship, whilst others aligned Affiliation more closely with insurance cover.

2. How is this new approach different from affiliation?

The new approach offers greater transparency regarding the relationship categories and what they mean for BCT and bat groups in practice. As part of the Partnership Agreement, BCT and bat groups will also make a commitment to meet annually. (For example, a BCT representative may attend a committee meeting or the AGM.)

3. Are the agreements legal documents?

No, both the Partner and Network Agreements are memorandums of understanding. Their sole purpose is to help both sides be clear about expectations in the working relationship.

If either party does not meet those expectations, there will be an opportunity to discuss why, and work towards address this, at the annual meeting (for Partner Groups) or over the phone (for Partner and Network Groups). In a worst case scenario, one or both parties might agree that a different relationship category is more appropriate. However, there will be no legal repercussions.

4. What would we get out of being a Partner Group?

For a summary of what all bat groups, Network and Partner Groups, and Partner Groups only get from BCT, please see Appendix 2 of the Partner/Network agreements. However, please be aware that the agreements are not only about what each group gets from the agreement; they ultimately represent a shared view that both parties can achieve more for bat conservation by working cooperatively.

5. What does it cost to be a Partner or Network Agreement?

Nothing. Bat groups can sign up to either agreement free of charge.

If a group would like to opt into our third party liability insurance we do, however, ask for a contribution towards our insurance premium, based on the group's income the previous financial year, and the type of agreement they are signing up to (i.e. Partner or Network).

6. We recently paid our affiliation renewal fee – what will happen to this if we opt into the insurance under the Partner/Network Agreement?

For ease of administration, insurance payment dates will be aligned with the agreement start date. This will mean the majority of groups are owed money from existing affiliation agreements. BCT will therefore make a refund proportional to the number of months remaining until their next scheduled affiliation renewal (see Appendix 3 of the agreement appendices for insurance contributions and a description of what the insurance policy covers).

So: $Refund = £50/12 \times \text{number of months left on the agreement.}$

Table 1. Refund that groups can expect to receive based on: 1) how much they paid and 2) how many months are left on their affiliation agreement with BCT.

Months remaining until affiliation renewal	Refund owed (if the group paid £50)	Refund owed (if the group paid £25)
1	£ 4.17	£ 2.08
1 ½	£ 6.25	£ 3.13
2	£ 8.33	£ 4.17
2 ½	£ 10.42	£ 5.21
3	£ 12.50	£ 6.25
3 ½	£ 14.58	£ 7.29
4	£ 16.67	£ 8.33
4 ½	£ 18.75	£ 9.38
5	£ 20.83	£ 10.42
5 ½	£ 22.92	£ 11.46
6	£ 25.00	£ 12.50
6 ½	£ 27.08	£ 13.54
7	£ 29.17	£ 14.58
7 ½	£ 31.25	£ 15.63
8	£ 33.33	£ 16.67
8 ½	£ 35.42	£ 17.71
9	£ 37.50	£ 18.75
9 ½	£ 39.58	£ 19.79
10	£ 41.67	£ 20.83
10 ½	£ 43.75	£ 21.88
11	£ 45.83	£ 22.92
11 ½	£ 47.92	£ 23.96
12	£ 50.00	£ 25.00

7. You say it costs nothing to be a Partner Group, but ask we contribute to the annual Bat Group appeal – how does this work?

We only ask groups to consider making a contribution that’s affordable to the group.

Bat group projects, equipment and training must take priority. However, we do ask that if the group has any excess funds in a year, it considers donating to the bat group appeal. This is because we really struggle to find match funding for projects such as the Investigations Project, which is important not only because it provides an Officer who can respond quickly, and provide support advice, where bat crime is suspected, but also because though this project, Wildlife Crime Liaison Officers are trained in bat ecology and bat law, so are far better placed to act when cases do arise. And we are wholly reliant on the kind donations of bat groups to keep these kinds of projects going.

Therefore we do ask groups to keep these projects in mind when looking at future spending.

8. Will Network Groups be given a separate ‘Network Group’ BCT logo?

No, there will only be a ‘Partner Group’ BCT logo. If groups that were formally affiliated to BCT opt to become a Network Group, they will be asked to phase out the use of the affiliated logo over the coming year.

9. Most of our bat group funds come from records, therefore why should we be expected to share them ‘freely’?

BCT recognises that records are an important source of revenue for many groups, and does not want to impede this right. However, we also feel strongly that records are of no use sitting in dusty cupboards.

In the context of the agreement, the term ‘freely’ does not mean we expect groups to give away records free of monetary charge. It instead means we expect Partner Groups to be open to sharing records with other groups and organisations so that these can be used to effectively inform policy, planning strategy and conservation management.

For example, a Partner Group may already;

- Share records with their local records centre for an agreed annual fee;
- Charge a fee to those seeking records as part of a planning application, but provide records free to those requiring records to inform planning policy or conservation action;
- Post records on the NBN but only allow public access at a 1km resolution, directing individuals/organisations seeking records at a higher resolution to group who can then assess need on a case by case basis.

Or agree to work towards one/more of these methods over the coming year.

10. On page 2 of the Partner Agreement, the last point says “Be welcoming to new members”: what if a new member causes problems for, or within, our group? Does this still apply?

Be welcoming to new members implies that we expect Partner Groups to encourage recruitment of new bat group members who are interested and able to participate in the activities of the group. If a new member gives the group cause for concern, for whatever reason, this is a matter for internal bat group policy.

If the group would like further advice about how to deal with difficult situations arising between members of the group, please feel free to contact Laura Dunne ldunne@bats.org.uk 020 7501 3633.

11. Showing the Good Practice Guidelines (GPG) for Bats and Rabies to all new members seems excessive, as they won’t be relevant to those who aren’t actively involved. Is there any flexibility in this?

We do not expect the group to inflict the GPGs on arm chair enthusiasts who join to receive a newsletter and attend the odd bat walk. However, we do request that all active members of the Partner Group are aware/follow the following guidelines in particular:

- Photos of bats in bare hands should not be used in publicity material, for example in newsletters, on the website or provided to the press.
- Daubenton’s bats should not be taken to public events.
- At public events, all bats should be handled with gloves in front of members of the public, irrespective of the species.

With regards to photos, these can be phased out over the coming year, and BCT is happy to provide a stock of library photos if this would help.

12. Partner Groups are asked to provide an opt-in tick box on membership leaflets so that details can be shared by BCT. What will these details be used for?

BCT membership leaflets have an opt-in tick box that states “would you like your details passed on to a local bat group”. When our members tick “yes” we then send their details to the group, who can in turn send details of forthcoming events and/or bat group membership. We ask Partner Groups to phase a similar sentence into new membership leaflets.

If contact details of a bat group member are sent to us as a result, we will send that person a general introductory email/letter with information about the National Bat Monitoring Programme, training courses, resources on our website and details of how to join information. Their email will not be stored on file, so they will not be contacted further, unless they approach us to do so.

13. How will Partner Groups be able to nominate ‘Partner Group Representatives’ on the BCT Board of Trustees?

There may be up to four bat group representatives on the BCT Board of Trustees at any one time. When a space becomes vacant, the trustees will contact all Partner Groups and ask for nominees. If there is more than one nominee, and only one position, Partner Groups will be invited to vote for their preferred candidate. Once a preferred candidate has been agreed, this will be put to the BCT member vote at the AGM.

Please note that the group can nominate anyone as a regular trustee at any stage and this will not require a Partner Group vote. In such cases, the nominee will be invited to meet with representatives from the Board. If the Board agrees with the nomination, the vote, again, will be put to BCT members at the subsequent AGM.