

PERTH & KINROSS COUNCIL



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Media Release

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For Immediate Release

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Volunteers go batty again this summer!

Wildlife volunteers in Perth are getting ready for the next stage of the Perth City Bat Project, preparing to carry out further summer surveys.

The project is a partnership venture between Perth and Kinross Council, the Perth Bat Group and the Bat Conservation Trust, supported through funding by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership. The aim behind it is to build up a clearer picture of bat populations in Perth and where they are, to help decide what steps could be taken to help these flying mammals survive and thrive in the Fair City.

At the start of Summer 2009, Perth residents were invited to submit records of bats they had seen, either from their homes or whilst out in the evenings, via a postcard or by email. This armchair survey has led to many reports of bat sightings, all of which can be seen on the Council website at www.pkc.gov.uk/countryside by following the links to the Perth City Bat Project. There is still time to contribute by emailing your sightings to countryside@pkc.gov.uk. Reports should include what you saw, where you saw it, preferably with a post code, and what the area was like when you saw the bats.

Alongside this, volunteers are gearing up to carry out a second survey using a bat detector after a successful first run in June. To date, 40 volunteers have received training and are borrowing specialist equipment to survey areas right across Perth to understand where bats are living.

A number of other surveys have been completed as part of the project, leading to some fascinating recordings being made of bat calls. Bats were found on the fairways of the Craigie Hill Golf Course at night, with a wide range of species heard, including both the Common and Soprano Pipistrelle. These bats are the smallest and commonest species of bat in Scotland, but are still endangered due to dramatic declines in populations over the past 100 years. The most exciting find of the night

was a Brown Long-Eared Bat, otherwise known as the 'whispering bat' because it is so hard to hear on the bat detector. This is one of the rarer bats in Scotland, tending to live in old houses near well established mature woodland, so the volunteers were delighted to find it on the golf course.

In late July, a dedicated band of surveyors headed out to Perth Lade and surveyed the length of the waterway, finding that bats are using the whole length of the Lade, from St Catherine's Retail Park all the way out to the Crematorium. This included four sightings of Brown Long-Eared Bats, suggesting that this rare species may have chosen Perth to be their home!

More surveys are to follow thanks to the growing enthusiasm of the local volunteers. Niall Loble, Senior Countryside Ranger with Perth & Kinross Council said: "There has been an amazing response to our request for help and the enthusiasm and dedication of the volunteers has been excellent. We have lots of really 'batty' people living in Perth and caring for these wonderful furry flying mammals! The results of the surveys to date have been very interesting, with the Craigie area coming out on top in terms of bat records so far. The surveys at Craigie Hill Golf Course and the Lade show that Perth can support a wide variety of bat species. We still want to know more though, and would encourage local people to submit their sightings by visiting www.pkc.gov.uk/countryside and telling us about what they saw."

Also, on Saturday 29th August, to celebrate the work being done through the Perth City Bat Project and to mark European Bat Weekend, there will be a day of free events in Perth for people of all ages. This will include activities at the AK Bell Library and an evening batwatching talk and guided walk.*

ENDS

Notes for editors

1. The Perth City Bat Project is a partnership between the Perth Bat Group, the Bat Conservation Trust (www.bats.org.uk) and Perth and Kinross Council. Further details of the project can be found online at www.pkc.gov.uk/countryside. The project is funded through the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership SITA Landfill grant scheme.
2. Attached with the electronic version of this release are images (copyright the Bat Conservation Trust) of a Pipistrelle bat and a Brown Long-Eared bat in flight, and of local volunteers taking part in a bat survey.
3. *A separate release will be issued shortly with further details of the day of events on Saturday 29th August.

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