

Update - Project PEMBUS Pan-European Monitoring of Bats in Underground Sites

Bat Conservation Trust, March 2010

At the 14th Eurobats Advisory Committee (AC) meeting in Cyprus (11-13 May 2009), the AC agreed that BCT should put together a bid for EU Life+ funding for Project PEMBUS with a view to submitting it for consideration to Life+ in September 2009. BCT developed technical bid documents, based on the PEMBUS Feasibility Study and outline costings. We contacted Eurobats Parties and Range States requesting their involvement in the project and match funding. However, it was necessary to postpone submission for a range of reasons, including the complexity of the bid and because insufficient match funding had been identified from Eurobats Parties and Range States.

To make the Project more manageable and attractive to match funding we recommend that the project be split into two phases: (1) development of indicator methods and (2) capacity building for monitoring. Phase 1 would include the development and testing of indicator methodology and the construction of a data portal. This would be funded from a Life+ bid applied for in September 2010 with match funding raised from 4-6 partner countries and international agencies/funding bodies. An international project to develop an indicator fits well with the Life+ funding criteria. We also think that the existence of such an international umbrella project would make the funding of national schemes by governments and other funders more attractive. Assuming the bid is successful, work would commence on this phase in September 2011 – an exciting flagship project to celebrate the Year of the Bat.

The other aspect of the Project - capacity building for monitoring (including engagement of volunteers and training in field protocols, data handling, provision of equipment) would be ongoing in the interim at country/regional level, according to national priorities. National monitoring schemes should be encouraged to follow the monitoring standards guidelines produced by Eurobats, so that data produced are suitable for inclusion in the indicator at a later date. Eurobats Parties and Range States might consider applying for additional funding bids to assist development of their monitoring schemes. A future Life+ bid to build capacity to extend the scope of the indicator to include more European countries will be considered, depending on the outcome of Phase 1 of the Project. For example, a bid could be submitted in 2012 for commencement of work in 2013.

The way forward:

PHASE 1

What will it deliver?

- An indicator of European bat populations compiled from data from existing monitoring schemes, developed, tested and results disseminated. Bat populations can be considered good indicators of the broad state of wildlife and environmental quality, including pollution and factors affecting their insect prey. Creating a European level indicator would allow governments and policy makers to evaluate the efficacy of environmental measures across Europe. It may also provide a means of monitoring wide scale changes that may occur due to climate change impacts. An important spin-off is that bats will not only be valued for their intrinsic value or role in ecological processes, but also as a tool for policy and wider landscape and nature conservation.
- Multinational and Pan-european indices and trends of individual species.
- An online data portal for input and management of data from participating countries.
- Statistical tools to calculate national trends for each contributing partner.
- A cooperation platform including data sharing agreements between participating countries. It is intended that the coordinating beneficiary of the PEMBUS bid be a partnership of European NGOs operating as BatLife Europe, a newly formed organisation, that will undertake the coordination and management of the project in partnership and collaboration with government agencies and academic institutions. BCT is currently in the process of setting up BatLife Europe as a legal entity to facilitate this process.

What is needed to make it happen?

- A core team of between 4 and 6 EU countries that will work on Phase 1 of the project. Ideally these countries will have existing monitoring schemes with data that can be used in indicator development (see below).
- A representative from each country to be involved with bid development on a small working group, so will need to have the time to commit to this work from May-September 2010.
- Confirmation from those countries that the national authority with responsibility for monitoring bats will be an associated beneficiary on the bid, and will provide a reasonable contribution towards the project costs.
- Permission to use data from national monitoring schemes for development of international indices and trends of individual species.

How much will it cost?

Total cost year 1 = €244,961. Total cost year 2 = €167,073. Total over two years = €412,034.

The cost is greater in the first year due to costs of recruitment of staff and database/website development.

We have factored for some match funding from a European end user of the data (total €44,685 over 2 years). This results in a country contribution of between €16,745 and €25,117 in the first year and between €10,144 and €15,216 in the second year depending on whether 4 or 6 countries take part. If further match funding can be found from other European sources, then the amount required from each country's national authority will be reduced. Similarly the figures will be affected by the number of countries participating.

Who will be involved?

To submit a bid to Life+ in September 2010 we need commitment from our international colleagues of their wish to be involved in the project. What better way to celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 than by forming an international alliance for the creation of a European level indicator of bat populations?

So far, the following countries have expressed interest in being involved in Phase 1 of the bid and who have identified potential interest in government match funding:

- UK
- Hungary
- Netherlands

Other countries identified by the PEMBUS feasibility study and/or in a report to Streamlining European Biodiversity Indicators 2010 as having long term monitoring programmes running that may be suitable for inclusion in an indicator and who may be interested in taking part are:

- Austria
- Czech Republic
- France
- Ireland
- Latvia
- Portugal
- Slovak Republic
- Switzerland (not EU so can't be on Life+ bid but could be involved separately)

Other countries would be most welcome to join a project Steering Group to keep in touch with the development of the project. Once an indicator has been developed, we would hope to widen participation to include all Eurobats Parties and Range States in Europe.

We will discuss the bid at the Bonn meeting and would value your input. Please consider whether and how your country can be involved. For further information please contact the Bat Conservation Trust representatives at the meeting or email katie.parsons@bats.org.uk.