

Bat Boxes

Specification extract · Pages 16–19

What this document is

This is an extract of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) document “ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification”, Version 2.2, July 2026. It contains the pages covering the Bat Boxes action (pages 16–19 of the full specification).

Because the specification runs each action straight into the next, the first and last pages of this extract may also show the end or beginning of a neighbouring action. The section for this action starts on page 16 (the printed page number matches the page number in the full document).

Always check the current version

DAFM updates the specification from time to time. The full document is the authoritative version and should be consulted before undertaking any work. It is available from:

Full specification (PDF, opens at this action):

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/f8e2ccf8/NPI_specifications_July_2026_2.pdf#page=16

ACRES NPI page on gov.ie:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/f5a48-agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres/#non-productive-investments>

About this action on the ACRES CP website

<https://acresireland.ie/action-projects/npi-bat-boxes/>

Bat Boxes

Objective

To provide roosting sites for bats by installing bat boxes (3 boxes per location).

Background

There are nine species of bat established in Ireland and all are protected under both Irish and EU legislation (Wildlife Act and Habitats Directive respectively). Bats are protected because of the important ecological services they provide and their role as indicators of the health of an ecosystem. A single bat can consume up to 3,000 insects per night as well as pollinate plants and disperse seeds. While bats are common in our nocturnal landscapes, they are threatened by insensitive developments, night lighting and habitat loss. Old traditional farm buildings with nooks, crannies and gaps in the roof slates can be used by bats. The installation of bat boxes provides bats with a location for roosting in areas where appropriate roost sites may not be present.

Site Suitability

- This action can be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare ≥ 0
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- On CP parcels, this action can be selected on fields with any scorecards assigned or submitted.
- Boxes should be located near areas where they feed, around woodlands, hedgerows, treelines and farm buildings, however bat boxes should not be erected in conifer plantations.
- Bat boxes should not be located within 250m of a wind turbine.
- Bat boxes should not be located along or within 30m of major roads, such as motorways and busy national or regional roads, and near street lighting.
- Each group of 3 boxes should be placed a minimum of 10m apart.
- Where Bat Boxes are installed in the same parcel/farmyard as Barn Owl Nest Boxes, they should not be facing each other to reduce the risk of predation. Bat boxes should not be placed in the same building as Barn Owl/Kestrel nest boxes.
- Barn Owl/Kestrel boxes and Bat Boxes should be sited at least 20m apart from each other.
- If installing externally on farm buildings, install close to the eaves of the building, on a south-facing wall and if possible close to a hedgerow or treeline. Locations should be 6m clear of obstacles such as branches.
- Although boxes might be attached to suitable large trees commonly found at some types of archaeological monuments (e.g. ringforts), they should never be attached to the fabric of the monuments themselves, particularly monuments which are masonry structures (e.g. castles, churches etc).

Requirements

1. Install new bat boxes in groups of at least three bat boxes per tree or building. The boxes in each location must face different directions. New bat boxes can be applied for annually

up to the maximum. Each 3 boxes applied for is only eligible for NPI payment once and once claimed must be maintained in the same position for the remainder of the ACRES contract.

2. The location(s) of the bat boxes must be clearly marked on the map submitted. Each point drawn on the GLAM map represents 3 Bat Boxes.
3. Boxes must be installed at least 3m above ground level.
4. Bat boxes can be purchased through retailers or can be made. Box plans can be downloaded from appropriate CP websites. See design measurements and specifications in Figure 1. and 2 below. **Note 1:** this is a minimum specification, the use of higher standard materials e.g. woodcrete is permitted. If you are making your own boxes, use untreated, unpainted timber (such as Duraply). The finished product must be well constructed and draught free.
5. Repair or replace damaged boxes as required throughout the remainder of the contract.
6. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

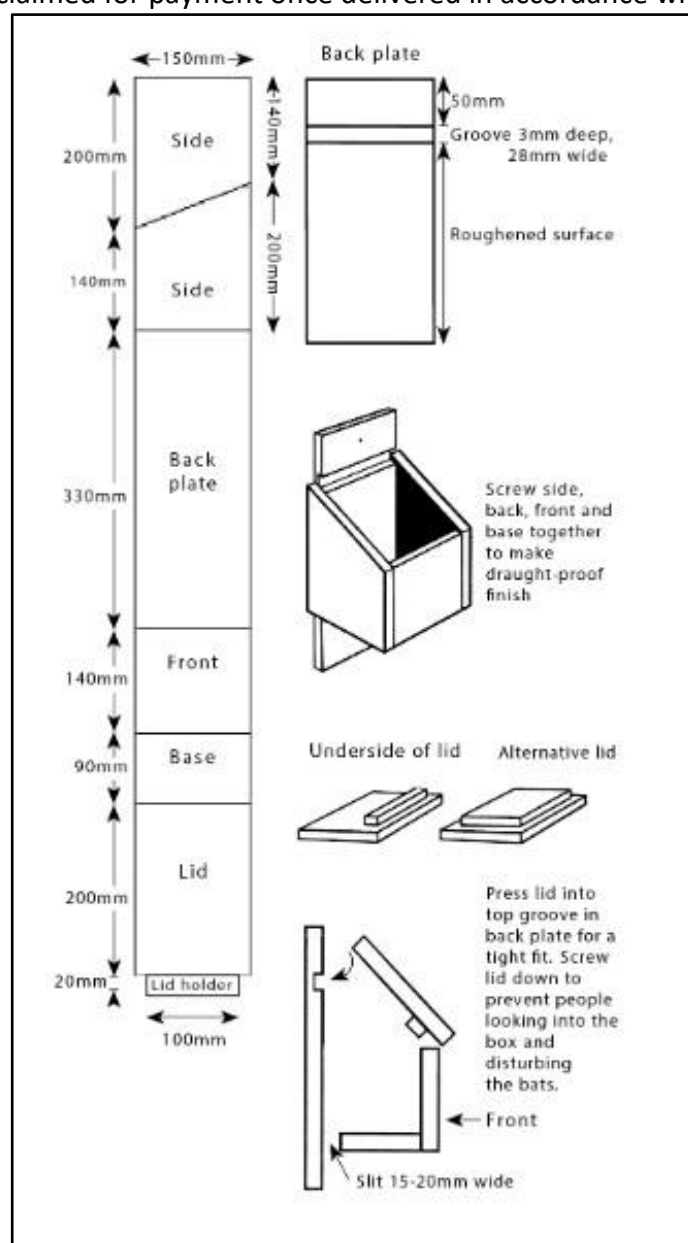
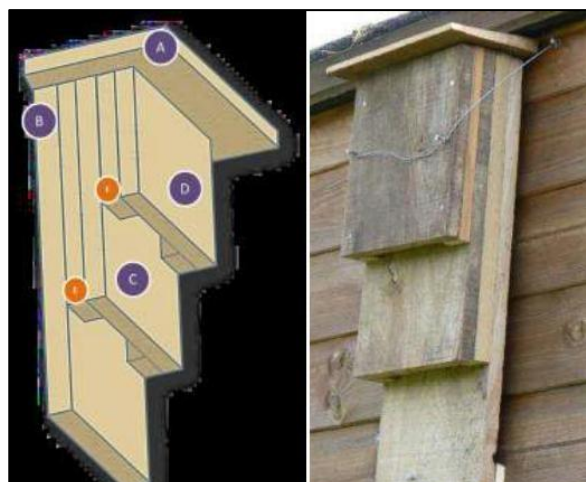


Figure 1. Example of bat box dimensions

Source: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds



Part	Quantity	Size (mm)
Roof (A)	1	250 x 160 x 20
Back (B)	1	450 x 200 x 20
Centre (C)	1	330 x 200 x 20
Front (D)	1	210 x 200 x 20
Centre Rails (E)	2	330 x 20 x 20
Front Rails (F)	2	210 x 15 x 15
Stand-offs (optional)	2	200 x 20 x 20

Figure 2. Example of Kent bat box dimensions. The only critical measurement is the width of the crevices for bats emerging/re-entering, which should be between 15 – 20mm. Other measurements are approximate. Timber should be approximately 20mm thick.

Source: Bat Conservation Ireland. Bats and Bat Boxes. Guidance Notes for Agri-environmental Schemes.

Additional Guidance

- Do not place boxes near artificial lighting that are not dark sky friendly. If lighting is nearby, it should be max power 150W or LED equivalent, be on a sensor/timer and have a hood to only shine the light downward. See www.mayodarkskypark.ie for additional information.
- If installing on a mature tree, select a height above 3m where there are no branches for a 1-meter radius around and install 3 boxes facing different aspects.
- If installing within farm buildings, ensure there is a constant opening and that it is present in a dark shed where there is no constant, artificial light source.
- Once the boxes are installed, they should not be opened again. Observing the boxes at dusk will give an indication if the box is occupied.
<http://www.batconservationireland.org/>
- Bat Conservation Ireland has a [guide to using bat boxes on the farm](#) as part of agrienvironmental schemes.

- A video on the importance of buildings for supporting wildlife can be found on [BirdWatch Ireland](#).
- The design measurements and specifications above were obtained from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) [“Build a bat box”](#) initiative.
- If you are in an area where Lesser Horseshoe bats are known to occur, please contact the local CP team.

Bracken Strimming

This action is not available in NPI AWP 2026 onwards. Contact your CP Team if Bracken is an issue on the holding, as it can possibly be dealt with as a ACRES Landscape Action.

Objective

To control the spread of Bracken by strimming in areas where there is a risk of it replacing high quality grassland or dry heath habitats.

Background

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is a common fern in the Irish countryside, easily recognised by its tall, bright green fronds which can reach over 1.5m in height and turn brown in Autumn. Bracken was originally a woodland species which has spread into many other habitats. It tolerates a range of soil types from very acidic to very alkaline. Under certain conditions, such as where there has been heavy grazing or fires, Bracken can become dominant and where it does so; it can shade out the native vegetation leading to the loss of rare and protected heath, bog and high-quality grassland habitats.

Where Bracken comes to dominate the vegetation, it can lead to the loss of protected habitats, loss of grazing land, it can be poisonous to livestock, and it can provide a refuge for ticks which can transmit Lyme’s disease.

Site Suitability

- This action can only be delivered on parcels with an Eligible Hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP parcels only that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- This action can only be selected on fields that have a scorecard submitted and is available on any scorecard. It should be targeted to fields that are losing marks due to encroaching bracken.
- There will be restrictions to its approval on fields assigned with the Rough Grazing scorecard and within identified ‘raptor zones’.
- Areas of dense Bracken that pose a threat to protected habitats, grazed habitats, to livestock or public health should be targeted for control.
- Can also be used to control areas of dense Bracken at key locations where it is interfering with access. Management of Bracken for access purposes is restricted to within 100m of existing access points to reduce the potential tick burden in these locations and reduce the spread of tick-borne diseases.
- This action is not suitable for areas of Bracken that support woodland plants, e.g. Bluebells or ferns of ecological interest, as these are transitional woodland habitats and should be retained.