

Dormice survey guidelines

Ecology

Dormice have a limited distribution with the UK, typically found in the south of England and parts of Wales and North West England. They can occupy a range of woodland habitats, including coniferous, broad-leaved woodlands and hedgerows with adequate connectivity between habitats and a diverse structure to these habitats being key requirements.

Dormice are active from April to November, hibernating during the winter months.

Legislation

Dormice are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Consequently, it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill a dormouse, disturb a dormouse whilst it is occupying a resting place or breeding site.



Survey effort required

To ensure that Local Planning Authority and the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation organisation can successfully determine either a planning application or a licence application it is important that sufficient survey data is gathered. In the UK, surveys typically follow the standards set within the English Nature (2006) Dormouse Conservation Handbook-2nd Edition. Deviation from these guidelines needs to be fully justified and could lead to the refusal of planning permission or a licence application.

The following, with reference to the dormouse conservation handbook is the typical process for undertaking dormouse surveys.

Where development works may result in the killing, injury or disturbance of dormice the following additional survey work as per the dormouse conservation handbook will be required;



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Presence/ absence survey- Specially designed dormouse nest boxes and dormouse tubes are positioned within areas of suitable habitat, with at least 50 tubes set out, spaced at a distance of 20 m. Tubes are best set out in the winter months to allow the tubes to 'bed in'.

The tubes are then checked for the presence of dormice during **April to November** by an ecologist who holds either a Natural England or Natural Resources Wales Dormouse survey licence. For the purposes of a dormouse survey, months are given a score, with key survey months (May, August and September) given a higher score. The score from each month that surveys were undertaken is then added together, with a score over 20 required for the survey to be considered valid. This means that surveys are usually required to extend over a number of months.



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