



## ***A Guide to Choosing an Ecological Consultant***

Based on guide originally produced by



ASSOCIATION OF

Local Government Ecologists

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## **Choosing an Ecological Consultant**

The choice of ecological consultants able to undertake work in relation to planning applications or similar schemes can be guided by the following principles:

### **1. *Membership of an appropriate Institute:***

Individuals with expertise in ecology that are employed by any consultancy should be eligible for membership of an appropriate professional body, in this instance the **Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management** [CIEEM]. A list of members may be obtained by contacting CIEEM at 43 Southgate Street, Winchester, Hampshire. SO23 9EH Tel: 01962 868626 or visit <https://cieem.net/i-need/finding-a-consultant/>

Where a formal Environmental Impact Analysis is required, membership by a consultancy or individual of the **Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment** [IEMA] is a useful additional indication of competence. A list of members may be obtained from IEMA at St Nicholas House, 70 Newport, Lincoln LN1 3DP Tel. 01522 540069 (<http://www.IEMA.net>).

### **2. *Knowledge of the Local Area***

Ecologists who have a knowledge of the local area may be able to make contact with the local relevant organisations more efficiently, undertake survey work more rapidly, and assess the implications of a scheme in relation to the local context more realistically than consultants who do not have a knowledge of the local ecology. For these reasons local knowledge may be seen as advantageous.

### **3. *Located reasonably locally***

Since ecological survey work sometimes requires repeat visits, visits in the early hours of the morning (e.g. for bird surveys), or at night (e.g. for bat or badger surveys) ecologists who are located reasonably locally may be advantageous. CIEEM can advise on ecologists who are locally based. Alternatively the consultancy can sub-contract certain elements of work to locally based ornithologists or similar, but they should demonstrate that such sub-contractors have appropriate expertise.

### **4. *"In house" Ecologists***

Not all environmental consultants will have their own in-house ecological specialists and a contract ecologist may be used. In such a case it is advisable to ascertain who this will be, and what professional qualifications or relevant expertise they possess.

### **5. *Relevant Species/Habitat Knowledge***

It is important to ensure that any ecological consultant, that is appointed, is qualified and experienced in those topics that require survey and assessment; for example a consultant may be an expert in bat ecology, but have no experience in botanical evaluation.

### **6. *Licensing requirements***

Some survey work may demand that an ecologist holds a special protected species licence or licences as disturbance may occur, e.g. in order to inspect bat roosts or to handle dormice found. Natural England issues such licences and additionally some developments once granted may also be subject to the granting of a separate licence so that works can be implemented.

### **7. *Appropriate timings of surveys***

Certain species groups and habitats can only be surveyed at certain times of the

year, for example it is very difficult to survey for woodland ground flora in mid-winter. Thus the timing of all surveys should be carefully planned.

**8. *Tenders and detailed written proposals***

It is always advisable to seek, for comparative purposes, several written tenders that include details of the work that the ecological consultants would undertake. Professional Indemnity Insurance should be held by the consultants to cover the costs of any legal liabilities established against them.

**9. *Existing Data***

It should be noted that relevant ecological data (records of designated sites, notable species and habitats) may be available from the Gloucestershire Centre for Environmental Records (GCER) see <https://www.gcer.co.uk/> or tel. 01452 389950 or email [gcer@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk](mailto:gcer@gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk). The information has been collected by volunteers, the Wildlife Trust, consultants and local authorities and is stored and collated by GCER and then made available in response to data/record requests. There is a charge for this service. A reputable consultant would carry out this existing data/records search on your behalf but you may wish to contact GCER direct before engaging the services of a consultant.