

Wanted – Subcontract/Freelance Bat Surveyors for 2024

What do we want?

In 2023, around the UK, Arbtech undertook a bit over 1,600 Bat Emergence and Re-entry Surveys (“**BERS**”). Many of these surveys were undertaken with the help of subcontract and/or part-time bat surveyors (assistants, surveyors and senior/lead surveyors), supervised and project managed by Arbtech permanent staff.

We are looking for **BERS Surveyors and Assistants** to undertake part-time subcontractor work during the summer bat survey season (May – September¹) to support our project managers and full-time ecologists.

What does it entail?

We work to the Bat Conservation Trust’s Good Practice Guidelines for Professional Ecologists². This means the work typically involves spending around 2.5 hours on site in the late evening (and less frequently, the early morning) outside the surveyed property. The objective is to accurately record bat activity, normally by way of handwritten on survey sheets, but sometimes digitally. Like last year, in 2024 we will also be using infrared cameras on site.

The use of this equipment means we can reduce the number of pre-dawn surveys required, leading a safer working environment and reduction in risk for our surveyors resulting from lack of sleep. It’s also a lot less grim going out for peri-dusk surveys than getting up and driving to site to survey pre-dawn.

How do I get work from Arbtech?

We have a frictionless, easy to use online allocation system to ensure available work is easily visible, and you can sign up to help us with as much or as little as you like.

¹ Occasionally, April and October where useful data can be collected. This is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

² Unless we have a very good reason to deviate from them, which is rare. For probity, we always use the prevailing edition.

We have some subcontractors who only take on a handful of surveys a season, and others who do a survey 5-6 nights a week (students, mostly!) and use this as their main source of income during the summer. Most surveyors fall somewhere in-between these extremes, taking on 2-3 surveys a week to maintain a good balance with any other work commitments, and their home life.

Again, to be perfectly clear, *we* don't allocate you work. *You* allocate it for yourself.

Location

We work *literally* everywhere in the UK, including the Crown Dependencies; however, the bulk of our work is in England and Wales.

Pay

Naturally, subcontractors vary in skill and experience, and we reflect this with a variable rate of pay. We have a basic rate for assistants (at the lower end of the experience spectrum) and an increased rate for skilled surveyors. We also have a higher band for those surveyors than want to lead surveys on site and undertake some associated admin.

If you're not sure where you fall, drop us a message and we'll send out a document that set outs the experience level required (and responsibilities) for the various pay bands.

Rates

Skill level	Rate	Notes
Assistant	£50	Anyone not qualifying as a surveyor.
Surveyor	£90	Can competently survey without direct supervision.
Senior Surveyor	£100	Accredited or licenced.
Lead/Arbtecher	£120	Generally, the most experienced surveyor on the site. Ensures smooth running of survey on site.
PM (admin)	£30	Administrates the survey with the client, client's agent, site security, subcontractors, and internally at Arbtech.
IR footage review	£20/40	We pay you £20 to review the footage and double it if you identify bats. More details below.

Assuming 2.5 hours on site and 1.0 hours travelling to and from site, an assistant would average £16.67/hr and a Lead would average £34.29/hr.

Nota bene

Most consultancies either pay a fixed hourly rate or a fixed rate of pay, and we are no different. These rates do not change for dusk or dawn surveys, they don't change if we ask you to go into London, and they don't change because you are some sort of local bat guru; so don't ask. We're a big business with thousands of surveys each year to administer so we don't flex the rules for people as it literally grinds our processes to a halt. Accept or decline the work on the basis of what has been offered.

IR analysis

Subcontractors can opt in to helping us analyse the infrared footage that we generate during our surveys.

- £20 per video analysed
- An additional £20 bonus if a bat is identified in the footage

Our testing last year has taught us that 90% of IR videos are simple, if boring, to analyse. However, the point is to spot bats, and the 10% of videos with bats in also take longer to analyse. Therefore, we will pay a bonus for spotting bats, both as an incentive to pay attention and to reflect the higher workload.

Subcontractors will be expected to fill out a Google docs spreadsheet to record emergencies and any other activity, and collect screenshots and timestamps of any emergencies, and submit these at the end of the analysis.

Weekend working

We get many requests each year to work weekends, particularly in schools. To help compensate you for the interruption to your weekend, we offer an increase of £10 on each of the rates for weekend working, which again, you can accept or decline at your own discretion.

Mileage

Mileage is paid in addition to the above rates for the most efficient route for your

journey to and from site. Our 2024 rate for mileage is 35p per mile. This is increased by 10p per mile for any extra people you bring with your site to encourage ride sharing and decrease our carbon footprint.³

Travelling time

This is dealt with in the example above.

To be clear, we do not pay travel time. This allows us to quote a fixed price to our clients. You know in advance where the subject site is when it is offered to you and can elect to accept or decline work at your discretion based upon how far away it is.

Training and Kit

We are committed to offering you **free training** to help you develop your skills.

- All Assistants that need upskilling or refresher training can come on our 'BERS Academy' training surveys, before the survey season starts.
- Our full-time ecologists can offer you shadowing opportunities for Preliminary Roost Assessments and other bat-related surveys. This will help to advance you toward Surveyor and Senior Surveyor (accredited/licenced) status much more rapidly than working for other consultancies who like to "pump and dump" their subcontractors, and don't take any time to invest in their training and CPD.
- Surveyors at all levels will have the option of supplying their own kit, or having us buy it for you and you can a); give it back, or b); work it off and keep it.

How to apply

Email a covering letter and your CV to dreamteam@arbtech.co.uk. Include the following information as a minimum, ideally using the same numbering system:

- Subject line **must** read: "*FULL NAME: BERS SURVEYOR*".
- Your full postal address and the county you live in.
- Any other counties you would be willing to work in (our allocation system is done by county).
- A CV that contains your experience of various ecology survey types; particularly BERS (if any).

³ COVID-safe practice is encouraged so only ride share if you feel comfortable to do so.

- Your kit/equipment (if any) – you will need a full spectrum detector for all Arbtech surveys. Leads will need to provide IR kit.
- Your mobile phone number and e-mail address (add @arbtech.co.uk to your safe senders list).
- Confirmation that you have your own means of transport to and from Arbtech sites.

Every person to do this will get a response.

Applications that do not contain all information requested in 1-7 (above) will be rejected without a response.

What Next

Once you have applied, one of us will reach out with a response and we can put you in touch with an Arbtecher. Depending upon the time of year and your skill level, you might be invited to join us at a pre-season training and orientation event.

Once that is done, you will be added to our company database of BERS subcontractors, sent our subcontractor agreement, and if you agree to that, provided with a link to videos showing you how to access the online system through which we allocate BERS work.

Finally, see our FAQ section below!

We look forward to you joining us!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. Does common sense apply to the answers below?

Yes. A lot of the questions below will say you are *not expected* to do X or Y, but you are in control of your own life and if you want to write reports or arrange your own surveys back-to-back, it's your own decision. Talk to us about it.

2. What skills and qualities are you looking for in applicants?

We find that good BERS subcontractors come in all shapes and sizes. However, some qualities are universal: enthusiastic and friendly, happy to tolerate bad weather and late nights/early starts, and above all are organised and conscientious.

If you regularly cancel things at late notice, are poorly organised and can't trust yourself to turn up to the right site at the right time (early!) with the right kit – don't waste our time and yours. It's a small industry and a tough one to break into... the last thing you need is a reputation among 90 Arbtechers, 50 interns, and 200+ subcontractors for being sloppy, unreliable and disorganised.

Finally, experience with and knowledge of bats is a definite plus (and will affect your pay rate) but is not essential for a new BERS Assistant. If you have any ecology (particularly bat) licences or experience definitely mention it, but do not feel discouraged in applying if you don't. That's what (free) pre-season training is for.

3. How do I know if I'm an Assistant, Surveyor or Lead?

An Assistant is usually someone in their first season working to identify bats and needs a fair bit of handholding from more experienced surveyors. They should however be able to spot bats, identify their species with the aid of an auto-ID detector (e.g. the Echometer Touch series), and record those results accurately. We provide free training to get all our new BERS Assistants up to the required standard and pass our in-house assessments.

A Surveyor is expected to be able to do the above with minimal input and zero babysitting, and we should be able to have concrete confidence in the results they record. We expect Surveyors to own their own bat detector(s) and be competent in their use. An Arbtecher or Lead should be able to show you on a plan your survey position

and arcs of reference and leave you to your own devices.

A Lead should be able to lead a bat survey independently on site, including positioning subcontractors, confirming everyone has reached site, and collecting data at the end of the evening. You will also be the point of contact on site for emergencies, as well as talking to surveyors, clients and members of the public with questions. You will not be expected to recruit your own subcontractors, although you can if you wish, and the off-site admin (including arranging site access) will be handled by an Arbtech project manager.

4. What kit will I need?

- Echometer Touch 2 bat detector (or equivalent standard)⁴
- Clipboard for writing upon (ideally a weatherproof clipboard like the Weatherwriter series)
- Raincoat and/or umbrella
- Thermos!
- Infrared camera (for leads). If you are a lead and don't have one, we can loan you one, or we can purchase one for you and you work it off. Choice is yours.

5. When will I be paid, and how?

We *normally* do a weekly pay run. However, last year this placed an immense strain on our finance team. In 2024, we aim to do a fortnightly pay run.

However, to process your invoices as fast as possible, we provide our own invoice template (we have a template for VAT and non-VAT registered subcontractors).

If you choose not to use this, at the very busiest times this will probably delay your payment by at least one run.

Your invoices will be audited to ensure every last little detail is accurate, including mileage claims.

Finally (it's super sad that we need to point this out, but for probity): deliberately false

⁴ We can lend these to new BERS assistants – or buy them for you and you can work them off, but please let your lead or an Arbtech project manager know **well in advance** if you need this kit so they can arrange it. Having your own detector is expected for BERS surveyors and leads.

claims for things like VAT will be reported to the police and HMRC.

Pro Tip: Bear in mind that our staff are not robots. At the peak of the survey season, we often undertake >50 surveys a day. Each one generates myriad supplier invoices and people in our team headquarters (“THQ”) don’t just magically grow an extra head and set of arms during the summer, so they can operate two keyboards and screens at once. Even at capacity, we normally manage a weekly pay run, but when people in THQ are off for socials, CPD, paternity/maternity, compassionate leave or, heck, even a holiday, it slows us down a bit. Don’t send a shitty email because your invoice hasn’t been paid like clockwork this one time – it won’t speed up getting you paid, but it is the fastest way to get yourself kicked off our system.

6. How far will I be expected to travel?

Up to you! We can’t control where our jobs will be, and you are free to sign up to any job that takes your fancy – whether its next door to you or three hours away! Most surveyors travel between 15 minutes and an hour and a half to get to site, but some are willing to go much further, especially if they are keen to level up their experience from assistant to surveyor or lead, which comes with a huge kick in pay (see above).

7. Where do you get the most work?

We get work all over the country, however most of our work is in England.

8. Will I be expected to do back-to-back dusk and dawn surveys?

No.

Firstly, Arbtechers, our full-time staff are banned from doing this. It’s dangerous and should be considered bad practice by any responsible employer.

Secondly, while you are free to **accept** as little or much work as you like, including dusk/dawn surveys (e.g. Friday dusk and Saturday dawn), we will never **expect** you to do this.

9. Do you offer overnight accommodation?

Not usually.

Most of the time we don't provide overnight accommodation because, most of the time, we don't like people to do back-to-back dusk and dawn surveys. You will normally be asked to do one or the other and expected to drive home and get some a proper night's sleep after your survey!

However, for some large and important sites where we have to draw on lots of subcontractors from multiple counties (and therefore ask them to drive a long way) we may choose to offer accommodation.

10. Will I be expected to write up the results of my surveys digitally?

Yes. You will need to write up a summary of your survey sheet the next day and send it to the project manager.

10. Something about the skill levels, survey responsibilities or training package doesn't fit me – can I get a custom arrangement?

No.