

HAWKESWOOD ECOLOGY

Specialists in Ecological Survey and Assessment

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PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT AND OBSERVATION SURVEY, 8 PONTMORLAIS, HIGH STREET, MERTHYR TYDFIL.

On behalf of

FERGUSON-MAN ARCHITECTS LTD

September 2019

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We confirm that in preparing this Report we have exercised reasonable skill and care, taking into account the project objectives, the agreed scope of the work and prevailing site conditions.

All habitat and protected species surveys present a ‘snapshot’ of conditions existing and species present, or considered having potential to be present, at the time of survey. Many species are mobile and distributions can vary across time. Results and findings presented in this report should be considered with these factors in mind.

Protected species surveys are recognised as having a ‘shelf life’ of two years maximum. Surveys older than this are unlikely to be accepted by a Local Planning Authority or Natural Resources Wales as viable documentation.

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SUMMARY

Hawkeswood Ecology was instructed to carry out a daytime Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) at Pontmorlais in High Street, Merthyr Tydfil. Following the PRA, observations surveys were undertaken as suitable bat access had been found in the structure. The building was also assessed for breeding birds over the course of the surveys.

The PRA found no direct evidence of bats but noted a substantial number of potential access points that would allow bats into the loft space and to the wall tops. As a consequence of this, dusk and dawn observations surveys were undertaken.

The surveys found no evidence of bats using the building for roosting purposes but did note that the yard was used consistently for foraging purposes with bats entering the Site mainly from the adjacent Nant Morlais corridor.

Because of the potential for buildings and the foraging taking place in the yard, recommendations are made for the works to be carried out in a safe manner and under supervision in relation to bats and for limited mitigation to be provided.

Feral pigeons were seen inside the building but no other breeding species noted during the Site visits. Recommendations are made in regard to their removal.

It is considered that with proper safeguards there are no ecological reasons to prevent the works going ahead.

The conclusions of this report are considered valid for two years from the survey dates noted in Section 1 of the report.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Hawkeswood Ecology was instructed by Ferguson-Man Architects Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Bat roost Assessment (PRA) and emergence/re-entry observations at Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil. The building is a terrace on Old Mill Lane with a shop fronting onto High Street. Two derelict cottages lie to the rear, numbers 3 and 4 with a further cottage having completely collapsed; all of the buildings are open throughout despite having previously been separate cottages. The structure dates from around 1830 and is in the Merthyr Tydfil town heritage area. It is located at Grid ref SO 04994 06465 in the centre of Merthyr Tydfil but adjacent to the Nant Morlais which offers a green corridor leading to the River Taff, a known foraging area for bats.
- 1.2 The building consists of two cottages to the rear of the shop, one which has a cellar. Differing ridge heights may indicate different stages of construction but all are from the nineteenth century. The PRA found no direct evidence of bats using the building but did find many suitable points by which they could access the building loft spaces and wall tops. The roofs are of asbestos sheet or slate and only one elevation, the western pitch of the slate roof, is underlined with bitumen felt. The building is of stone construction with no cavity and the roof structure is 'open cut'.
- 1.3 The objectives of the survey was to:
 - To establish whether the building is currently used by bats;
 - To assess the potential impacts on bats of the proposed works;
 - To provide mitigation proposals in the case of bats being found.
- 1.4 The PRA was carried out on 2nd April 2019. Dusk emergence and dawn re-entry observations were carried out on 23rd May and 27th June respectively. Any evidence of breeding birds using the building was also looked for during the survey period.

2. METHODOLOGY

Desk Top Study

- 2.1 The South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBReC) was asked to carry out a search for bats and roof nesting birds. The search buffers were 2 kilometres for bats and 150 metres for birds. Given the urban location of the Site, this was considered to be a commensurate level of search.

Field Survey

- 2.2 The study methodology followed accepted guidelines set out in the Bat Conservation Trust documents '*Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines*' 2016.
- 2.3 The principal aim of the daytime inspection was to survey the main structures of the building for the presence of, and potential to, support roosting bats. Firstly, an external examination was made of the design and structure of the building to assess the suitability for use by bats and for potential access points. Following this an internal search of the building was made. Evidence such as bat droppings (faeces) or urine staining on doors, walls or other surfaces was looked for.

- 2.4 The daytime inspection was carried out with the aid of close focusing binoculars, an endoscope, ladders and a 1,000,000 candlepower spot lamp (but see constraints).
- 2.5 Observations involved two observers and covered all relevant aspects of the buildings. Machines used were Echo Meter 3 Real Time Expansion units. An Anabat Express remote bat detector was deployed inside the building and a night equipped video camera was also used to ensure full coverage. Observers carried two way radios. Locations of the observers and ancillary equipment are shown in Figure 1.
- 2.6 Recordings were made continuously on the EM3 machines. The recordings were analysed using AnalookW software, by use of which it is possible to separate most species present from the sonograms produced.

Constraints

- 2.7 Access was limited to two areas of loft space with a section above the shop not accessible. This could be observed from an adjacent loft space but not entered constraining the search.
- 2.8 During the first dusk observation an observer was asked to leave the Site in Old Mill Lane as it was private ground. This curtailed this element of the observation which was ended after 56 minutes.
- 2.9 Views of the roof were limited due to the nature of the Site and the proximity of surrounding buildings, however good communication between the observers is considered to have overcome this potential problem.

3. SURVEY TEAM EXPERIENCE

- 3.1 The survey leader and report author is Eric Hawkeswood. Eric has been an active member of the Brecknock Bat Group since 1999 and been involved in a number of long running surveys within the county. He is a Natural Resource Wales (NRW) and Natural England licensed bat worker (nos. S085546-1, 2018 and 2017-28420-CLS-CLS respectively) and has extensive experience of roost inspections and emergence work. He has been a professional in the nature conservation field for thirty years formerly working as Reserves Manager and Conservation Officer at Gwent Wildlife Trust and Woodland Manager for the Ruperra Conservation Trust. Eric has worked as an Ecological Consultant as joint proprietor of Hawkeswood Ecology since 2001.
- 3.2 Assistant surveyor on the evening and morning observation was Liam Kelly; Liam has been working with Hawkeswood Ecology since 2012 and also has extensive experience of bat emergence and activity survey.

4 DESK TOP STUDY FINDINGS

- 4.1 SEWBREC report 119 records from the search area with the nearest to Site being a record of soprano pipistrelle some 100 metres to the north west of the Site. Further records of soprano and common pipistrelle bats come from approximately 125 metres to the north; no roosts were identified.
- 4.2 More distant records include a number of reports not specified to species level, brown long-eared, serotine and more noctule, common and soprano pipistrelle bat records. Near to the River Taff and tributaries to it are a number of records of Natterer's, Daubenton's and lesser horseshoe bats. These are from approximately 1.5 – 2 kilometres west of the Site,
- 4.3 Twenty two roof nesting bird species are reported. These are swift, jackdaw, swallow, herring gull, lesser black backed gull, house sparrow and starling. All are identified as being recorded in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre.
- 4.4 The Site does not fall within 10 kilometres any Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) that has been designated for bats.
- 4.5 SEWBReC records are confidential and cannot be released into the public domain. The biological data search findings will be held by Hawkeswood Ecology in accordance with the SEWBReC terms and conditions in case of need for further investigation. The search has the unique reference number 0190-015 in case of query.

5 FIELD SURVEY

Daytime Inspection

- 5.1 The building is stone built with solid walls and no cavity. A small section of number 4 to the rear has been consolidated, presumably following the collapse of the former cottage with a section of block work. There is a difference in ridge height between number 3 and 4 of approximately 0.5 metres. The buildings are thought to date from around 1830 although the differing ridge heights suggest construction over a period; indeed, inspection of the unrendered stonework shows them to be of two construction phases which are poorly tied in. All buildings would appear to date from the nineteenth century. Photographs of the buildings are given in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 The roof of number 4 is covered with slate tiles and is in poor condition. The roof overhangs by approximately 0.5 metres where the collapsed cottage would have stood and there are numerous gaps at this point and in other places around the eaves and ridge. The roof cover of the shop and number 3 is single skin asbestos sheet which looks in decent condition. The front of the roof onto High Street is hipped with a brick built new shop front and parapet constructed on the road frontage.
- 5.3 The building is rendered on the front and western elevations with painted stonework on the eastern elevation. The rear of the property consists of the internal walls of the collapsed building with plaster and the fireplace/chimney exposed. The render is in poor condition but showed only a few cracks likely to support roosting bats. Masonry cracks

in the unrendered stonework were visible on the eastern elevation which offers some potential for bats to access the wall interior.

- 5.4 The soffits are all of wood, in very poor condition, or missing; the gable verge on number 3 is asbestos. Gaps are apparent under all of these and there is access to the gap between the slate and underfelt on number 4.
- 5.5 Internally, the building is largely in extremely poor condition with some fitting stripped out, rotting floorboards, many missing and damaged ceilings. Access was only fully available to the loft space above cottage number 3 but the other loft spaces could be seen to varying extents. In number 4, the ceiling is partially replaced and large gaps are present which allowed a close inspection, but the area above the shop was difficult to see and limited views only were had over the dividing wall. The roof construction is collar beam type construction in number 4 with a modified Queens post type roof in number 3 and the shop. Only the western pitch of the slate roof at number 4 is underfelt; this is with Type 1F woven bitumastic underfelt.
- 5.6 There was a cellar under the floor of number 3 which was searched. There was no evidence of use by bats however access is possible and there is limited potential for bats to access this area, possibly to hibernate.

Surrounding area

- 5.7 The building sits on the edge of Merthyr Tydfil town centre, lying on a small alleyway that leads to the Nant Morlais. This is a green corridor leading to the River Taff allowing commuting and foraging and is within 50 metres of the Site. Approximately 50 metres to the east are grounds of a former hospital and parks offering potential foraging areas.

Evidence and Potential for roosting Bats

- 5.8 The PRA found no direct evidence of bats using the building. Access to the property was noted through gaps between the walls and fascias, open doors and windows and via gaps in the ridge. Bats also frequently utilise the overlap between sheets of corrugated asbestos.

Birds

- 5.9 Feral pigeons were present in the property and are probable breeders within it. No other nesting was noted during the PRA or during the observations.

Observations

- 5.10 Dusk and dawn observations were carried out in on 23rd May and 27th June respectively. The conditions at the time of the observations are detailed below in Table 1:

Table 1: Weather conditions for dusk observations:

Date	Survey type	Times	Weather conditions
23 rd May 2019	Evening emergence	20.50 – 22.15 (sunset 21.11)	15 -15°C, 20% low cloud with a high hazy cloud cover at nearly 80% variable. Dry, good visibility, F1/2 W breeze.
27 th June 2019	Dawn re-entry	03.30 – 05.00 (sunrise 04.59)	12 - 14°C, clear, dry, good visibility, F2/3 S breeze.

23rd May 2019

- 5.11 The first bat noted was at 21.25 when flew into the Site from the High Street and then over a wall to the rear of the Site. At 21.32 a common pipistrelle was foraging in the building yard and from this point foraging in the yard and the adjacent Old Mill Lane area was fairly consistent. Bats were seen to enter the Site and Old Mill Lane from the green wedge of the Nant Morlais.
- 5.12 Between the two observers 116 passes were recorded of which all but two were common pipistrelle, the others being soprano. The Anabat inside the building did not record any bat activity although bats were seen flying up to the building as it grew dark.
- 5.13 No emergence or other roosting activity was noted during the observation.

27th June 2019

- 5.14 The dawn observation had an observer in the yard again but this time the other observer was on the High Street looking down Old Mill Lane. This was not a particular issue and the whole side of the building and roof was visible. Unfortunately, video equipment could not be used due to the bright street light in the lane (see Photos, Appendix 1).
- 5.15 Far less activity was noted in this observation, with the observer in comparable position to the first survey in the building yard recording only 21 passes against 57 previously. All but one pass was common pipistrelle, the other soprano pipistrelle. The observer on the High Street recorded only 5 passes, all common pipistrelle.
- 5.16 No activity was recorded that was associated with the building although on this occasion, the Anabat inside the building did record a passing bat; the quality of the recording suggests it picked the bat up passing a window.

6 DISCUSSION AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The daytime inspection of the building found no direct evidence of bats using the buildings but did find potential for them to gain access to the wall tops, roof and all other parts of the building as there were open windows and doors. The observation surveys found no activity associated with the building though, and this may be in some part due to the large numbers of feral pigeon present in the loft spaces.
- 6.2 During the first visit there was a large amount of activity around the building yard and in the Old Mill Lane area. Bats were seen to enter the Site both from the High Street but mainly from the land to the rear of the Site in the Nant Morlais corridor.
- 6.3 The area at the rear of the building and the lower end of Old Mill Lane is dark; although a security light was noted it was on a timer and the Passive Infra Red trigger could be avoided. A bright sodium street light lit the upper area of Old Mill Lane. The bat activity was largely restricted the darker areas of Old Mill Lane whilst the yard provided good foraging conditions in conjunction with the adjacent Nant Morlais corridor.
- 6.4 As the observations give only a snapshot of the use of a building in time and it must be considered a possibility, given the potential access to it, that bats may use the buildings on occasion. However there was no evidence of such use during the survey. Recommendations are made in Section 8 that reflects the level of activity in the locality to ensure the works are carried out in a safe manner unlikely to harm bats.
- 6.5 The buildings were considered to be generally low potential for hibernating bats due to the poor condition and likely varying temperatures through the winter. The cellar offers a potential hibernation site but given the species of bats present its use is considered unlikely.
- 6.6 The proposed works are to restore and refurbish the Site as part of the regeneration of the Town Centre. Within the works, there may be scope to introduce bat tubes at the Nant Morlais end of the building and this could lead to a biodiversity gain in this area.
- 6.7 Dependent upon the proposed use of the buildings once restored, artificial light may be an issue. Recommendations are made with regard to this in Section 8. It is important to note that unrestricted use of artificial light could impact upon the ability of bats to forage successfully.

Potential Impact on Bats

- 6.8 Whilst foraging bats were noted around the building during the observations no activity was directly associated with the building itself. Given that the observations were undertaken during the peak activity season it is considered that the proposed works will have **no impact** upon the favourable conservation status of bats within the local area if the recommendations made in Section 8 are employed.

Birds

- 6.9 Feral pigeons were recorded but no other species noted. The proposed works will remove the nesting sites of feral pigeons but this is of **no significance** in either a local or wider context.

7 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

Birds

- 7.1 Part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) makes it an offence (with certain limited exceptions and in the absence of a licence) intentionally to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or intentionally to damage, take or destroy its nest whilst being built or in use, or to take or destroy its eggs. Consequently, even common birds such as blackbirds or robins, and their nests and eggs are protected in this way. Any works involving removal or other management of trees or shrubs must be undertaken outside the breeding bird season (March- August).
- 7.2 Further, section 1(5) of Part 1 of the W&C Act states any person intentionally disturbing any wild bird included in Schedule 1 whilst it is building a nest or is in or near a nest containing eggs or young or disturbs the young of such a bird is committing an offence and liable to a special penalty.
- 7.3 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 has strengthened the protection of wild birds and their habitats. The amendment is “To help preserve, maintain and re-establish habitats for wild birds.”
- 7.4 Under the amended Regulations, Local Planning Authorities (as well as national statutory conservation bodies such as Natural Resources Wales) are required to protect and create bird habitat.
- 7.5 Pest species, as listed on the Natural Resources Website, can be removed under certain circumstances under General Licences. The appropriate licence should be selected if necessary and conditions applied to. Feral pigeon is identified as a pest species

Bats

- 7.6 British bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Schedule 5 of this act made it illegal to intentionally kill, injure or take any British bat. It is also an offence to intentionally damage or destroy their place of rest (the roost).
- 7.7 Further all bat species are protected under Annex IV of the European Communities Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (The Habitats Directive) as amended which requires the United Kingdom government to provide bats with strict protection.
- 7.8 The Habitats Directive is transcribed into England and Wales Law by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, this legislation consolidates amendments made to the earlier 2010 act. This legislation states in Part 3, Protection of Species, paragraph 43(1) that a person who:

- (a) deliberately captures, injures or kills any wild animal of a European protected species,
 - (b) deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such species,
 - (c) deliberately takes or destroys the eggs of such an animal, or
 - (d) damages or destroys a breeding site or resting place of such an animal,
- is committing an offence.

- 7.9 Further, with regard to disturbance of EPS, Paragraph 43(2) that disturbance is an act which is likely to:
- (a) to impair their ability—
 - (i) to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or
 - (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate;
 - or
 - (b) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.
- 7.10 In the case of a development involving the loss or modification of a building which may affect bats the above legislation must be considered and it may be necessary to apply to Natural Resources Wales for a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL).
- 7.11 The introduction of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 has removed the defence of killing or injuring a protected species during a lawful operation, thus even in an instance where planning permission is granted, the presence of bats must be considered and mitigated for prior to commencement of works. Under the above regulations, a WAG licence can only be given if three tests are satisfied:
- The action proposed is in the interest of preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment;
 - That there is not a satisfactory alternative;
 - That the action proposed will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.
- 7.12 Failure to satisfy the regulations and obtain an EPSL where required is likely to result in prosecution and can lead to severe fines of up to £5000 per bat and possible imprisonment.
- 7.13 Eight species of bat are listed under section 7 of the Environment Wales Act (2106). Section 7 of the Act provides a list of living organisms of principal importance for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in relation to Wales. This is a list of species considered at threat within Wales and in need of conservation management to maintain and enhance population numbers.
- 7.14 A duty is placed on the Local Authority by the Welsh Assembly Government to maintain and enhance populations of species listed in Section 7.

TAN 5

- 7.15 Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5, Nature Conservation and Planning, provides advice on how the planning system should contribute to biodiversity protection and enhancement. TAN 5 recognises the importance of biodiversity and the enjoyment of it. TAN 5 requires Local Planning Authorities (LPA's) to protect and enhance biodiversity during the planning process and to encourage sustainable developments. It also requires LPA's to ensure that protected Sites are properly accounted for within the planning system.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 An Ecological Clerk of Works will be appointed to oversee ecological issues through the development period. The ECW will be available on standby to assist in the case of unforeseen ecological issues arising. Prior to works commencing a toolbox talk will be given by the ECW with all staff involved in the roof strip.
- 8.2 The removal of asbestos sheets and slates will be undertaken by hand and under the supervision of the ECW. Should evidence of bat use such as droppings or live or dead animals be found, work will cease and advice given on how best to proceed. In this instance, it may be necessary to obtain a derogation licence to allow works to proceed.
- 8.3 Integral bat tubes should be built into the gable walls nearest the Nant Morlais corridor, suggested locations are shown in Figure 2 and a typical example shown in Figure 3.

Artificial Lighting

- 8.4 All bat species are affected by artificial light to a greater or lesser extent. Their emergence time may be delayed if exit points are lit or they may no longer enter the Site. This can have an impact upon their foraging success. Consideration will therefore be given to the level of external lighting around the Site. If lighting is considered necessary, installation of security or other external lighting will be:
- Located with consideration for bats and other nocturnal species, i.e. any lights will be pointed towards the ground and not to the surrounding areas and should be no higher than 3 metres from the ground;
 - Will be confined only to areas where there is access or particular security considerations and where health and safety issues need to be considered. Light spill into the adjacent Nant Morlais corridor should be prevented;
 - Lighting must not be left on overnight.
- 8.5 Should a bat be found at any time during the works, the ECW will be called to Site to advise on how best to continue. In this instance, it may be necessary to obtain a Derogation Licence to comply fully with the Regulations.
- 8.6 Works should be undertaken to exclude feral pigeons before the works commence to avoid the need to destroy nests under licence. Feral Pigeon are noted as a Pest Species but all efforts must be made to prevent them nesting before any action is undertaken under General Licence. It is probable that General Licence 02-2019, acting to preserve Public Health and Public Safety would be the relevant licence in this instance.

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 There is no evidence to suggest that bats are using the building at Pontmorlais for roosting purposes. However, there is potential and as such recommendations are made to ensure works are carried out in a safe and legal manner.
- 9.2 The use of artificial lights will be controlled to allow continued foraging by bats in the area.
- 9.3 The works can proceed without need for a derogation licence being sought, however, should a bat be found at any stage, works will cease immediately and the ECW be called to Site to Advice on correct procedures.

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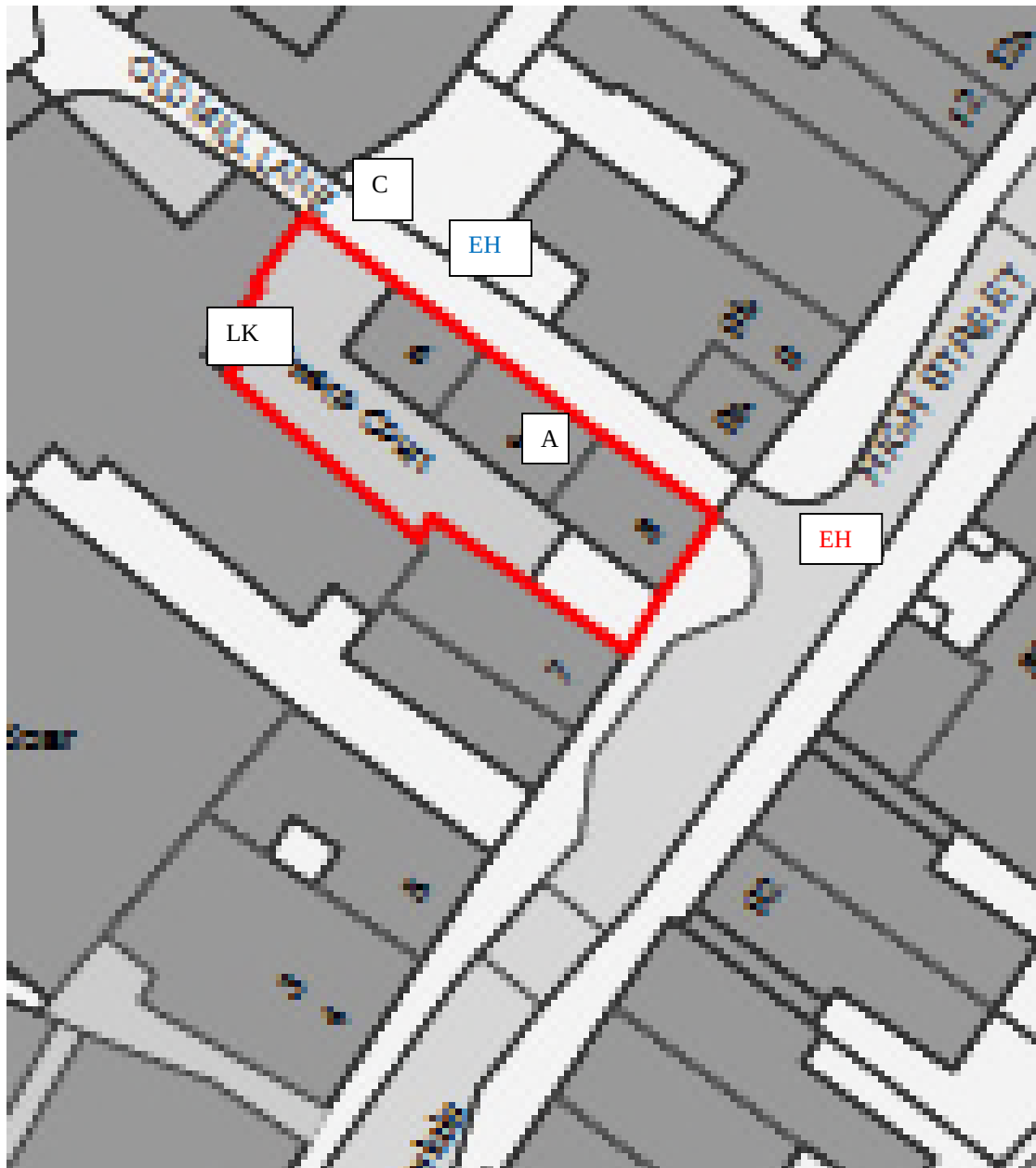
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FIGURE 1:
LOCATIONS OF THE OBSERVERS AND EQUIPMENT DURING SURVEYS



Key to Observers and equipment

LK	Liam Kelly
EH	Eric Hawkeswood, dusk obs
EH	Eric Hawkeswood, dawn obs
A	Location of passive detector
C	Location of nightshot camera

FIGURE 2
PROPOSED LOCATION OF INTEGRAL BATBOXES

Preliminary Roost Assessment and Observations, Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil.
Hawkeswood Ecology – September 2018



FIGURE 3
TYPICAL INTEGRAL BAT BOX, A HABITAT CUSTOM STONE FACED BOX

Figure 2, Typical Integral Bat Box, a Habitat Custom
Stone faced box



Habitat 001 - Bespoke Facing

Dimensions: 215 mm wide x 440 mm high x 102 mm deep

Material: Concrete plus facing product

Weight: approximately 7 kg

The Habitat Bat Box is a large, solid box made of insulating concrete which provides an internal roost space, and can be seamlessly integrated into the fabric of a building as it is built or renovated. Suitable for most species commonly found in the UK, this single chambered unit features an integrated V system to increase the surface for bats to roost against, whilst allowing them to move around.

The Habitat Bat Box can be faced with a number of products to suit the design build. This includes, brick, block, stone, wood or a rendered finish, ensuring the box is unobtrusive and aesthetically pleasing. There are a choice of 3 plinth colours available: smooth blue, smooth red, or buff.

This box is made to order with a choice of finishes.

BIM

BIM versions of the Habitat 001 Bat Box are available for download, to request these please contact us.

To get a quote for this product, please use the Request a Quote form below.

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Product Category:

Bat Boxes

**APPENDIX 1:
PHOTOGRAPHS**

Preliminary Roost Assessment and Observations, Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil.
Hawkeswood Ecology – September 2018



The High Street frontage and Old Mill Lane



The side elevation of the building in Old Mill Lane

Preliminary Roost Assessment and Observations, Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil.
Hawkeswood Ecology – September 2018



Looking along the front of the property and the yard



Part of the extensive damage to the one end (nearest Nant Morlais) of the property

Preliminary Roost Assessment and Observations, Pontmorlais, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil.
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Internal views, loft space top (asbestos sheeted section), typical condition of rooms apart from the former shop, below.



The street light in Old Mill Lane

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