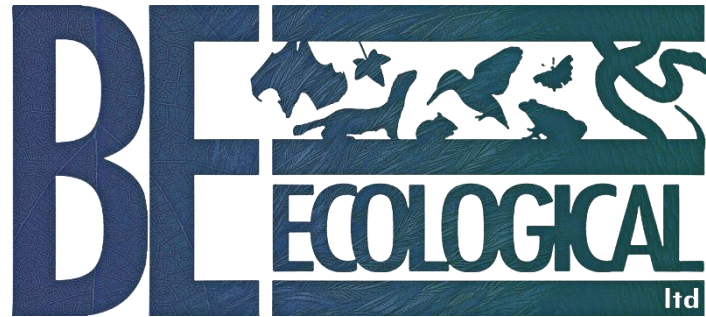




Canolfan Soar

Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8UB



Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) Report

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Executive Summary

It is proposed to undertake refurbishment works at basement level at Canolfan Soar, Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8UB.

An initial bat inspection survey of the site was undertaken on 9th July 2026. No bats or evidence of bats was seen on the exterior of the building or within the basement.

No access points suitable for use by bats were identified on the external elevations of the building into the basement. The basement is fully enclosed within the building envelope, is lined internally and has no external access points; it therefore offers no opportunities for roosting bats.

Due to a number of factors justified within this report, it is considered that the areas of the building to be affected by the proposed development are of negligible potential for roosting bats.

In the unlikely event that any bats or evidence of bats are found, all works will cease and Natural Resources Wales consulted. Works will not recommence until such a time that Natural Resources Wales have provided written confirmation to do so. This may involve further survey effort and/or a European Protected Species Licence being issued.

No evidence of breeding birds was found throughout the buildings at the time of survey.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

BE ECOLOGICAL LTD was commissioned by the client to undertake an initial bat inspection survey of the basement level of Canolfan Soar, a former chapel and adjoining vestry and schoolroom range now in community use, for the potential presence of birds and bats in order to support a planning application to carry out refurbishment works at basement level.

The surveys were undertaken in line with the current guidance on standards for bat surveys (Bat Conservation Trust, 2023).

1.2 Site Description

Canolfan Soar occupies a town centre site at Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tydfil. The site comprises the former Soar Chapel together with an adjoining two-storey vestry and schoolroom range, the two being connected by a later link and entrance extension. The buildings are listed.

The chapel is of two storeys and is constructed of solid masonry beneath painted render, finished in white. The principal elevation is regularly fenestrated, with round-arched, margin-glazed windows at first floor level and rectangular multi-pane timber sash windows at ground floor level. The roof is shallow-pitched and slate covered with a boxed, painted timber eaves detail. All windows and door openings are tightly fitted and the render is sound and unbroken.

The adjoining vestry and schoolroom range is also of two storeys and is of solid masonry construction beneath painted render, finished in terracotta red and articulated with shallow pilaster strips. Fenestration comprises multi-pane timber sash windows with projecting stone cills. The roof is pitched and covered in natural slate, with a black painted timber fascia and boxed eaves, and cast iron rainwater goods discharging to gullies. The slate covering is in good order and closely laid, with no slipped, lifted or missing slates observed and no gaps at the verges, ridge or eaves.

At basement level, beneath the vestry and schoolroom range, the structure is formed of solid coursed rubble stone walls. At the time of survey the internal linings had been partially stripped, exposing the stonework, and new galvanised metal stud framing had been erected against the perimeter walls in preparation for re-lining. The basement is fully enclosed within the footprint of the building, is served by a plasterboard suspended ceiling and has no openings to the exterior.

The site lies within a built-up urban setting, bounded by hard standing and parking to the front and by retaining walls and adjoining property to the rear. Vegetation on site is limited to self-seeded buddleia and ruderal growth on the rear retaining wall.

1.3 Proposed Development

It is proposed to undertake refurbishment works at basement level only, comprising the stripping out and renewal of internal wall linings, floor finishes and associated services within the existing basement rooms. The works are wholly internal and confined to basement level. No works are proposed to the roof, roof voids, external walls, eaves, verges or any other part of the external building envelope, and no demolition is proposed.

This assessment is confined to the basement level works described above. Any subsequent proposals affecting the roof, roof coverings, roof voids or external elevations of the building — including any future roof-mounted photovoltaic installation — fall outside the scope of this report and would require separate ecological assessment prior to those works being undertaken.

Refer to the proposed drawings prepared by Volute Architects Ltd for full details of the proposed works.

2 LEGISLATION & POLICIES

Bats

2.1 Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) provides safeguards for European Protected Species (those listed under Annex IV Habitats Directive). With regards to bats, this makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately (or recklessly in Scotland) capture, injure or kill a bat
- Deliberately (or recklessly in Scotland) disturb a bat in a way that would (significantly in Scotland) affect its ability to survive, breed or rear young (or hibernate or migrate in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or (significantly in England, Wales and Scotland) affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.
- Damage or destroy a roost (this is an 'absolute' offence)
- Possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat

2.2 Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the legislation for England and Wales for nature conservation, making it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat at a roost
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a roost

Birds

In Britain, all naturally occurring species are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The legislation protects all birds, their nests and eggs, and it is an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take a wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built; and
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

In addition, birds listed on Schedule 1 of the above legislation, such as the red kite (*Milvus milvus*), are afforded further protection, and it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb the bird whilst nest building or while at (or near) a nest with eggs or young; and
- Disturb the dependant young of such a bird.

Some birds however are exempt from this protection for certain purposes.

2.3 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces a Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty, requiring all public authorities in Wales to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Survey Objectives

- To carry out an initial bat inspection survey of the building
- To present the above details and if necessary further surveys, recommendations for mitigation, future research and compensation within this report.
- To carry out a scoping survey for breeding birds

3.2 Survey Summary

The bat survey comprised of one part:

- Initial bat inspection survey of building (including birds)

3.3 Surveyor Information

The inspection survey was undertaken by Beth Evans. Beth is the owner of BE ECOLOGICAL LTD and has a postgraduate degree in Environmental Biology: Conservation & Resource Management, specialising in British bats. Beth has 11 years' experience of ecological surveys, both in a small scale and large multi-disciplinary context. Beth also holds Natural Resources Wales and Natural England bat licences to disturb and handle bats.

3.4 Internal & External Inspection

An initial inspection survey was carried out on 9th July 2026 by Beth Evans to search the building, both internally and externally to identify potential bat roosting areas and signs of bat use including; live bats, dead bats, droppings, urine staining, grease marks and discarded prey items. The buildings and all areas/items of interest were recorded and photographed. Extension ladders/steps were used to safely access areas where no safe access was available; the survey was conducted using close focus binoculars and/or a high powered lamp.

3.5 Survey Limitations

Any survey for bat species can only be a series of snapshots in time. Bats are highly mobile, long lived creatures (capable of living up to 30 years, sometimes longer) with complex social structures and utilising multiple roost sites within a year. The implications of this are that surveys and surveyors have to make informed assumptions based on observations, recorded data, local information and a detailed knowledge of the species.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Inspection Survey

External Survey Results

All external elevations of the building were inspected from ground level using close focus binoculars. The render to both the chapel and the vestry and schoolroom range was found to be sound, continuous and free of cracking, blown areas or voids. Window and door openings throughout were tightly fitted, with no gaps at the frames, reveals or cills.

The slate roof coverings were closely laid and in relatively good condition. Eaves appear to be sealed in the majority of places.

No access points suitable for use by bats were identified anywhere on the external envelope to the basement of the building. No droppings, urine staining, grease marks or other evidence of bat use was observed on any elevation, cill, reveal or below any feature of the building. No bats were seen.

No birds nests, either in use or historic, were observed on any elevation, and no evidence of nesting birds was identified beneath the eaves or elsewhere on the exterior of the building.

Internal Survey Results

The basement was inspected in full on foot, all rooms being open and directly accessible from the internal stairs. The survey was undertaken using a high powered lamp.

The basement rooms comprise solid coursed rubble stone perimeter walls, partially stripped of their previous plaster and lining finishes at the time of survey, with newly erected galvanised metal stud framing standing off the walls in preparation for re-lining. Ceilings throughout are of plasterboard on a suspended framework and were intact. The remaining rooms at basement level retained their existing finishes and were in current community use.

The basement is wholly enclosed within the footprint of the building. No openings, vents, ducts, gaps or other connections to the exterior were identified, and there is no connection between the basement and the roof voids of the building. The basement is warm, dry, lit and in regular daily use.

No bats were observed. No bat droppings, urine staining, grease marks, feeding remains or discarded prey items were identified within the basement. No features suitable for use by roosting bats, either as crevices within the exposed stonework or elsewhere, were identified.

4.2 Identified Roosts

The building was not identified as a bat roost on this date.

4.3 Conclusion & Recommendations

The proposed works are confined to the refurbishment of the basement level of the building and are wholly internal. The basement is fully enclosed within the building envelope, has no openings to the exterior, no connection to the roof voids, and is warm, dry, lit and in regular daily use. No features suitable for use by roosting bats were identified within it, and no bats or evidence of bats were recorded during the inspection.

The external inspection identified no access points suitable for use by bats on any elevation of the building, and no evidence of bat use anywhere on the exterior. The areas of the building to be affected by the proposed works are therefore considered to be of negligible potential for roosting bats, and the building was not identified as a bat roost on this date.

In the unlikely event that any bats or evidence of bats are found, all works will cease, BE Ecological Ltd and NRW consulted. Works will not recommence until such a time that NRW have provided written confirmation to do so. This may involve further survey effort and/or a European Protected Species Licence being issued.

4.4 Breeding Birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found throughout the buildings at the time of survey. If a birds nest is identified within the building, it will be left until such a time that the birds have left the nest of their own accord.

5 INTERPRETATION & IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Active Season Usage

The property has not been identified as a bat roost.

5.2 Hibernation Season Usage

It is extremely unlikely that bats will use the building for hibernation due to a lack of access points. The basement, whilst below ground, is warm, dry, lit, in regular daily use and has no external access points, and therefore offers none of the stable, undisturbed, humid conditions required by hibernating bats.

5.3 Ecological Impacts of Development

The impacts of the development have been assessed using the current information of the proposed works. Should any changes be made to the proposed works, the assessment will need to be reviewed and amended as necessary.

The building has not been identified as a bat roost and as such impacts on roosting bats are unlikely to be present. The works are confined to the basement level and will not affect the roof, roof voids or external envelope of the building.

6 ENHANCEMENT

6.1 Bats

An Elisa Bat Box will be installed on the southern or eastern elevation of the building, at a height of at least 3m above ground level, in a position sheltered from prevailing wind and away from artificial light sources. Product details: <https://www.nhbs.com/elisa-bat-box>

Should the Elisa Bat Box prove difficult to source, a Schwegler 1FF Bat Box will be installed in its place, in the same position and to the same specification.

6.2 Birds

A Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace, or similar, will be installed on the western or northern elevation of the building, at a height of at least 2m above ground level. Product details: <https://www.nhbs.com/1sp-schwegler-sparrow-terrace>

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Timing

It is considered that the building is not a bat roost, as such, the work can be undertaken at any time of year.

Timber/Roofing Materials

It is considered that the building is not a bat roost, as such, restrictions on roofing materials are not required. The proposed works do not affect the roof or roof coverings.

Lighting

Bat boxes will not be directly illuminated. All external lighting will face downwards and be set on timers to ensure that bats can use the area should they wish. In addition to this, any onsite lighting will conform to the following guidelines: <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Bat Licensing

A European Protected Species Licence obtained from NRW will not be required before any works commence. If at any point bats or evidence of bat is found, all works must cease and NRW consulted. Further surveys and/or a licence may be required prior to works recommencing.

Supervision

N/A

Compliance

Following completion of the project, the ecologist will visit the site to verify the correct installation of the enhancement measures (see below). E-mail confirmation will be issued to the LPA.

8 METHOD STATEMENT

Given that the building has been assessed as being of negligible potential for roosting bats, no precautionary mitigation is required during the proposed basement refurbishment works.

Should any bats or evidence of bats be found during works, all works shall immediately cease. BE Ecological Ltd shall be notified and Natural Resources Wales (NRW) contacted for advice. Works shall not recommence until written confirmation has been received from NRW. This may necessitate further survey effort and/or the obtaining of a European Protected Species Licence prior to works recommencing.

Enhancement measures shall be installed as described in Section 6 of this report. The ecologist shall visit site following completion to verify correct installation.

9 REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust. (2016) Bat Surveys - Good Practice Guidelines. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. & McLeish, A.P. (2004) The bat workers' manual (3rd Edition). Joint Nature Conservation Committee.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. Natural England

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (HMSO).

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) (as amended) (HMSO).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (HMSO).

APPENDIX A – PHOTOGRAPHS



Plate 1 – Chapel elevation, showing painted render, round-arched first floor windows and closely detailed slate roof with no access points for bats at eaves level



Plate 2 – Vestry and schoolroom range, showing painted render, timber sash windows, boxed painted eaves and natural slate roof in good condition.



Plate 3 – Rear elevation of the vestry and schoolroom range, showing sound render, cast iron rainwater goods and closely laid slate roof beyond.



Plate 4 – Modern link extension between the two ranges



Plate 5 – Basement level, room retaining existing finishes and in current community use at the time of survey.



Plate 6 – Basement level, showing exposed coursed rubble stone perimeter wall, new galvanised metal stud framing and intact plasterboard ceiling. No evidence of bats was recorded.



Plate 7 – Basement level, alternative view of the stripped perimeter wall and stud framing prior to re-lining.