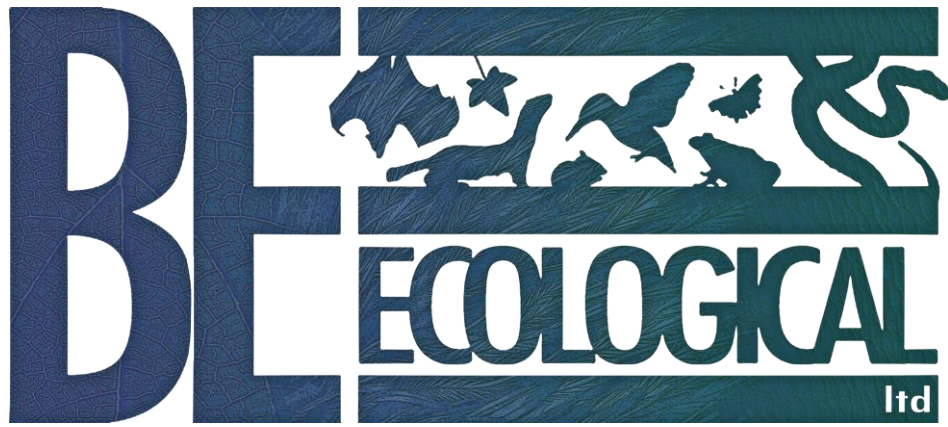




120-121 HIGH STREET, MERTHYR TYDFIL

INITIAL BAT INSPECTION SURVEY

ISSUE 1, VERSION A

FEBRUARY 2022

Bat Survey Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It is proposed to renovate a 120-121 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil South Wales. As part of the proposals the roof will be removed.

An initial bat inspection survey of the site was undertaken on 18th January 2022. No bats or evidence of bats was seen on the exterior or in the interior of the building.

The building is a rectangular building beneath a pitched tile roof.

Due to a number of factors justified within this report, it is considered that the building is of low potential for roosting bats. Due to the ongoing deterioration of the building, it is considered that it is possible that providing appropriate provisions are in place, the work may be undertaken in line with a method statement and ecological supervision following a discussion with the local planning authority ecologist. However, this approach will need to be agreed with the council and it is possible that a single activity survey will be required in May due to the building being of low potential for roosting bats.

In the unlikely event that any bats or evidence of bats are found, all works will cease, 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 were 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 a commercial building for the potential presence of birds and bats in order to support a planning application to renovate the property.

The surveys were undertaken in line with the current guidance on standards for bat surveys (Bat Conservation Trust, 2016).

1.2 Site description

The property subject of this survey is located at 120-121 High Street, Merthyr Tydfil.

The building is a brick and block structure that is rendered to the rear. The building has a pitched tile roof, barge boards and fascias where present are of uPVC. There is a single storey extension to the rear with a pitched tile roof. Again barge boards and fascias where present are of uPVC. The building is in need of updating.

The property is situated in a wholly urban area with no obvious connections to the wider landscape.

Figure 1: Approximate location of site (arrowed red)



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1.3 Proposed development



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

2.3 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires that all public authorities, when carrying out their functions in Wales, seek to "maintain and enhance biodiversity" where it is within the proper exercise of their functions. In doing so, public authorities must also seek to "promote the resilience of ecosystems". This ensures that biodiversity is an integral part of the decisions that public authorities take in relation to Wales. It also links biodiversity with the long term health and functioning of our ecosystems, therefore helping to align the biodiversity duty with the framework for sustainable natural resource management provided in the Act. In Wales, this legislation replaces and enhances the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) which sought to raise the profile of biodiversity and to make sure that it is considered in all local authority decisions by ensuring that "Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.". Other elements of NERC 2006 may still apply.

BIRDS

In Britain, all naturally occurring species (including hawfinches) 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.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Survey Objectives

- To carry out an initial bat inspection survey 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 two parts:

- Initial bat inspection survey of building (including birds)
- Data Search (SEWBRc)

3.3 Data Search

The South East Wales Biodiversity Records Centre (SEWBRc) were formerly requested to supply a Bat and Roof-nesting Birds (BARB) survey for the site. The survey to provide; bat records within a 2km buffer, roof nesting birds within 150m buffer plus a list of all Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and sites of Special of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated for bat species within a 10km site buffer in May 2020. The data search reference number is 0212-814.

3.4 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.

3.5 Internal & External Inspection

An initial inspection survey was carried out on 18th January 2022 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.

3.6 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 Designated Sites

Information regarding statutory and locally designated sites for bats within a 10 km buffer study received from SEWBrEC revealed;

The search area **DOES NOT** fall within 10km of an SAC or SSSI that has been designated because of its bats.

4.2 Bat and Bird Records within the Local Area

The SEWBrEC search returned 104 records of bats within 2km of the development site. Species include, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, natterers, brown long-eared, myotis sp. and noctule. The majority of records refer to bats in flight. The closest known roost is a day roost of common pipistrelle bats, 201m from site.

There are 28 bird records from the data search, the closest three refer to great tit, pied wagtail and blue tit 533m from site.

4.3 Inspection survey

4.3.1 External survey results

The survey carried out by BE Ecological Ltd revealed no droppings or evidence of bats on the exterior of the buildings and failed to find any suitable, obvious access points for roosting bats.

Some of the roof is difficult to view from the ground due to obstruction. There are small gaps beneath fascias and barge boards.

No evidence of nesting birds was seen on the exterior. However, a pigeon was seen on the street outside of the building.

There is no external access to the basement of the building.

Please see appended plates for photographs of the building exterior.

4.3.2 Internal survey results

Internally the building is extremely damp, the ceilings are unsafe and in desperate need of repair. The roof is a king post design with an approximate height of 3m from joist to ridge. The roof is lined. There is old plaster board present that is currently crumbling due to the state of the building. The roof space is musty and dirty.

No bats or evidence of bats were found in this location. There are no obvious light ingress' into the roof void.

4.4 Identified Roosts

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

4.5 Conclusion & Recommendations

There appear to be some limited access points into the building. However, given the ongoing deterioration of the property and its location, it is considered that the building is of low potential for roosting bats only.

Due to the ongoing deterioration of the building, it is considered that it is possible that providing appropriate provisions are in place, the work may be undertaken in line with a method statement and ecological supervision following a discussion with the local planning authority ecologist. It is possible that a single activity survey will be required in May due to the building being of low potential for roosting bats.

Should the work be able to proceed under a method statement, in the unlikely event that any bats or evidence of bats are found, all works will cease, BE Ecological Ltd 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.

4.6 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 or the ivy, 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 and the ongoing deterioration of the building.

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. However, should the local planning authority ecologist agree, the works will be undertaken in line with a method statement and ecological supervision to safeguard the unlikely presence of bats and birds.

6 ENHANCEMENT

6.1 Bats

A Schwegler 1FF bat box will be attached to the eastern elevations of the property. Should the 1FF prove difficult to source, an eco bat box (crevice box) <https://www.nhbs.com/title?slug=eco-bat-box> will be installed in its place.

6.2 Birds

A Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace or the following <https://www.nhbs.com/sparrow-terrace-nest-box> will be attached to the western elevation of the property.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1.1 Timing

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

7.1.2 Timber/roofing materials

It is considered that the building is not a bat roost, as such, restrictions on roofing materials are not required.

7.1.3 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/>

7.1.4 Bat Licensing

A European Protected Species Licence obtained from Natural Resources Wales 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

7.1.5 Supervision

Supervision for the removal of the roof will be required.

7.1.6 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 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













