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BLAGDON MANOR FARM NORTH TAMERTON CORNWALL

Bat & Nesting Bird Survey

JUNE 2021

A REPORT TO:

Mr & Mrs Coleing
Blagdon Manor Farm
North Tamerton
Cornwall
EX22 6RL

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PES reference: PES/1277

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Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	4
2	SITE DESCRIPTION.....	4
3	SURVEY METHODOLOGY	6
3.1	Desk Study	6
3.2	Barn Owls.....	6
3.3	Bats	6
4	SURVEY RESULTS.....	7
4.1	Desk study	7
4.2	Site Survey.....	8
5	CONCLUSIONS.....	10
5.1	Bats	10
5.2	Nesting Birds	11
6	CHIROPTERA METHOD STATEMENT.....	11
7	REFERENCES.....	12

Executive Summary

Penpont Ecology Services Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Bat and Nesting Bird Survey at Blagdon Manor Farm, North Tamerton, Cornwall, EX22 6RL. This was undertaken to support a Listed Building consent application to make repairs to the farmhouse and roof structure.

Due to evidence of Brown Long-eared bat droppings found inside the loft void, it was determined that a dusk emergence survey would be undertaken to identify access points, confirm species assemblage, and the conservation status of any roost present.

Four Common Pipistrelle, one Soprano Pipistrelle, and three Brown Long-eared bats were identified emerging from the building during the dusk emergence survey. These species are common and widespread, and the roosts are considered to be of low conservation status.

In the absence of mitigation the proposed works will disturb roosting bats. Natural England does not advocate the use of the licensing system for domestic house repairs, and states that 'if works are timed and organised in such a way to avoid offences a Natural England licence will not be required'.

It shall become a Condition of any planning permission or consent given, that the enclosed Method Statement is strictly adhered to.

The Method Statement includes:

- Timing of works – commencing after 1st October
- Continued provision for crevice dwelling bat species
- Use of materials and remedial timber treatments
- Sign-off to Local Planning Authority by licensed ecologist.

It is concluded that nesting birds are absent from Blagdon Manor Farmhouse, and these species shall not provide a constraint to the proposed works being undertaken.

Blagdon Manor Farm – Bat & Nesting Bird Survey

1 Introduction

Penpont Ecology Services Ltd was appointed by Mr & Mrs Coleing to undertake a Bat & Nesting Bird Survey at Blagdon Manor Farm, North Tamerton, Cornwall, EX22 6RL. This was carried out to support a Listed Building consent application to make repairs to the existing farmhouse and roof structure. The Bat & Nesting Bird Survey was undertaken to determine presence/likely absence of bat and nesting bird species and to assess the impact the proposed works may have on any species found to be present.

Bats are a European Protected Species under the EC Habitats Directive. In England and Wales all bat species are fully protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under this legislation it is illegal to:

- intentionally or deliberately* kill, injure or capture (or take) bats.
- deliberately disturb a bat in a way that would 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.
- recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts.
- damage or destroy a roost (this is an 'absolute' offence and need not be deliberate or intentional).
- possess, control, transport, sell, exchange or offer for sale/exchange any live or dead bat or any part of a bat.

** In a court, 'deliberately' will probably be interpreted as someone who, although not intending to capture/injure or kill a bat, performed the relevant action, being sufficiently informed and aware of the consequence his/her action will most likely have.*

Some bat species (Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Greater and Lesser Horseshoes) are included on the S41 list of UK Biodiversity Action Plan species. Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, local authorities must consider the conservation of these species in planning decisions.

All nesting birds are protected by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. Barn Owls are specially protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, making it an offence to;

- intentionally kill, injure or take them
- take, damage or destroy their nest or eggs
- disturb them at the nest

2 Site Description

Blagdon Manor Farm is located in Cornwall at OS Grid Reference: SX 2914 9748 (Fig 1). The farm buildings occupy a rural location with the River Tamar located 1500m to the northeast. The immediate surrounding countryside is in agricultural production of

permanent pasture, grass leys and arable, with fields bordered by typical Cornish hedgebanks providing good connectivity with surrounding riparian habitats and woodlands of the River Tamar (Fig 2).

Blagdon Manor Farmhouse is of traditional stone construction (Fig 3)

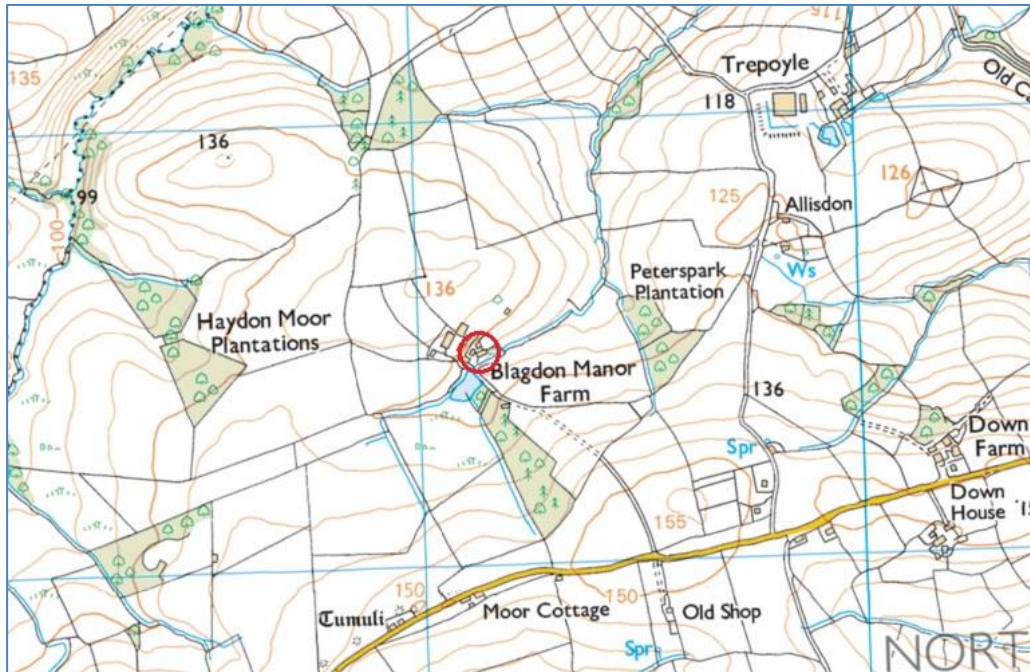


Fig 1 – OS Map of location (1:25 000)

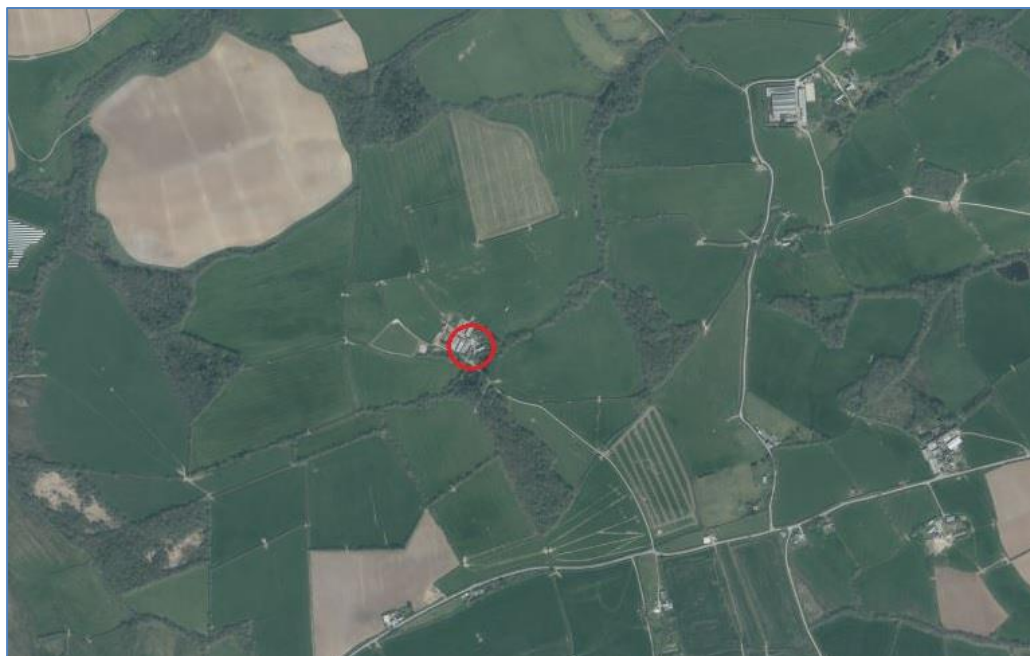


Fig 2 – Aerial photograph showing surrounding land-use.



Fig 3 – Blagdon Manor Farmhouse.

3 Survey Methodology

3.1 Desk Study

A search of local records was made to identify any previous records of bats and Barn owls in the area.

3.2 Barn Owls

Blagdon Manor Farm and its surrounding environs, were surveyed for Barn Owls using methodologies outlined by Natural England (2002) and the Barn Owl Trust (2010), and included looking for:

- Individuals, corpses, feathers, droppings and pellets
- Nests & potential nesting sites

3.3 Bats

The bat survey was conducted in accordance with guidelines given by Natural England and the Bat Conservation Trust in *'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines'* (Collins, 2016) and *'Bat Worker's Manual'* (Mitchell-Jones, 1999). The bat survey was carried out to determine presence/likely absence of bat species, and comprised a building inspection, and one dusk emergence survey.

The building inspection survey included:

- an inspection (with a high powered torch where necessary) of the eaves, ridge beams and hips, and any other likely building habitat for bats; for signs of bats and individuals
- examination of walls and floors for droppings, dead individuals and skeletons
- a search for signs of bats including oily stains at entrance/exit holes, feeding remains, lack of cobwebs, characteristic smells and sounds
- an inspection of the surrounding area for suitable habitats.

The dusk emergence survey included:

- experienced surveyors watching from pre-determined strategic locations (opposing corners of the Building) for bats emerging from any potential access points
- the survey beginning 15 minutes before sunset and continuing for 90 minutes thereafter
- surveyors carrying hand-held bat detectors (Elekon Batscanner) and recording devices (Anabat Express) to capture any bat calls heard

4 Survey Results

4.1 Desk study

Barn Owls

Table 1: Records of Barn Owls within 10km

Location	Date	Distance	Recorder
North Tamerton	1991-2010	Within 10km	BTO* & BOT*

* British Trust for Ornithology

* Barn Owl Trust

Barn Owls (and other owl species) require mixed farmland with rough grazing, and habitat suitable for their food source, ie. small mammals. Barn Owls commonly nest in tall, mature trees and in the eaves of larger, older agricultural buildings (BOT, 2010).

A search of local records identified Barn Owls within 10km of the site, made by the British Trust for Ornithology and the Barn Owl Trust.

It is considered likely that the surrounding countryside provides suitable habitat for nesting and foraging Barn Owls.

Bats

The desk study identified the following records of Bats:

Table 2: Records of bats within 5km

Species	Location	Date	Distance	Recorder
Pipistrelle sp. (<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>)	Clawton	2015	5km	*ERCCIS

Long-eared sp. (<i>Plecotus sp.</i>)	Ashwater	2015	5km	*ERCCIS
Lesser Horseshoe (<i>Rhinolophus hipposideros</i>)	Clawton	2015	5km	*ERCCIS
Greater Horseshoe (<i>Rhinolophus ferrumequinem</i>)	Tetcott	2003	5km	*ERCCIS
Noctule (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>)	Chapmans Well	1999	5km	*ERCCIS

*Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS)

The Desk Study has identified five species of bat recorded within 5km of the site. It is considered likely that the surrounding countryside provides suitable habitat for foraging and roosting bats.

4.2 Site Survey

Blagdon Manor Farmhouse is a Listed, 17c, two-storey detached building of traditional stone construction with a natural slate roof, and terracotta ridge tiles. The roof has two rendered brick-built chimney stacks with lead flashing at the base. There are wooden fascias carrying plastic guttering throughout. There are some gaps underneath ridge tiles, wooden fascias, and at raised flashing around the base of chimney stacks.

Access to the loft was made via a single loft hatch over the first-floor bathroom. The roof comprises a simple timber frame which is unlined. Insulation material is laid between the floor joists throughout. A thorough inspection of the loft was limited due to floor joists showing signs of deterioration. A scattering of Brown Long-eared bat droppings was identified throughout the loft. Daylight is visible in some parts of the loft where slates are slipped or raised. No evidence of nesting bird presence was identified.

Due to the presence of bat droppings inside the loft, it was determined that a dusk emergence survey would be undertaken to confirm species assemblage, access points and the conservation status of any roost present.

The results of the emergence survey may be summarised as follows:

Table 3: Results of Emergence Survey 9 June 2021

Date of Survey: 09/06/21			
Type of Survey: Sunset/Emergence			
Sunset Time: 2128			
Weather Conditions: 100% cloud cover. Still & dry.			
Start Time: 2113		Finish Time: 2243	
Start Temp: 16°C		Finish Temp: 15°C	
Time	Species Recorded	Emerging?	Behaviour/Notes
2128-2151	Common Pipistrelle	No	Foraging over farmhouse and garden/surrounding habitats.
2151	1 x Common Pipistrelle	Yes	Emerged from underneath ridge tile (Fig 5).

2152	1 x Common Pipistrelle	Yes	Emerged from underneath ridge tile (Fig 4).
2152	1 x Soprano Pipistrelle	Yes	Emerged from underneath external fascia boarding at eastern elevation (Fig 4).
2200	2 x Common Pipistrelle	Yes	Emerged from underneath ridge tile (Fig 5).
2200-2209	Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle	No	Foraging over farmhouse and garden/surrounding habitats.
2209	1 x Brown Long-eared	Yes	Emerged from underneath ridge tile (Fig 5).
2210	1 x Brown Long-eared	Yes	Emerged from underneath ridge tile (Fig 5).
2212	1 x Brown Long-eared	Yes	Emerged from underneath ridge tile (Fig 5).
2212-2220	Brown Long-eared and Noctule	No	Foraging over farmhouse and garden/surrounding habitats.



Fig 4 – Bat emergence points.



Fig 5 – Bat emergence points.

5 Conclusions

5.1 Bats

Scattered bat droppings were identified inside the loft. Four Common Pipistrelle, one Soprano Pipistrelle, and three Brown Long-eared bats emerged from the roof at the ridge tiles, and beneath wooden fascias (Figs 4 & 5). These species were observed foraging around the house, and gardens.

Common and Soprano Pipistrelle are common and widespread throughout the UK. Pipistrelle bats are known to form maternity roosts in new and old buildings during the summer months. Maternity roost sizes normally comprise between 50 and 75 females. The males usually roost away from the maternity roost either singularly or in small numbers (Bat Conservation Trust, 2020). It is considered that the low numbers (4) of Common Pipistrelle's and (1) Soprano Pipistrelle seen to emerge from the ridge tiles and fascias, are bachelor males, or non-breeding females.

Brown Long-eared Bats are also common and widespread throughout the UK. They are commonly found in older houses or buildings that have a loft void. Brown Long-eared bats use buildings as summer maternity roost sites. Maternity colonies of this species are typically between 10 and 20 females (Bat Conservation Trust, 2020). It is considered that the low numbers (3) of Brown Long-eared bats seen to emerge from ridge tiles are bachelor males, or non-breeding females.

It is recommended that the proposed works, with careful mitigation, may be undertaken without the need for a Natural England European Protected Species Licence provide the following Chiroptera Method Statement, in Chapter 6, is strictly adhered to.

5.2 Nesting Birds

It is concluded that nesting birds are absent from Blagdon Manor Farmhouse, and these species shall not provide a constraint to the proposed works being undertaken.

6 Chiroptera Method Statement

It shall become a Condition of any planning permission or consent given that the following Method Statement is strictly adhered to.

It is recommended that the following mitigation measures be strictly adhered to ensure that no offences are made and that the temporary impacts will be minimized thus ensuring there will be continued ecological functionality of the building in relation to bats.

- *In order to avoid offences of potential fatality, injury or disturbance, works shall be undertaken when bats are absent. Most roosts are used seasonally, and it is considered unlikely that Blagdon Manor farmhouse will provide suitable conditions for hibernating bats.*
- *Works shall therefore commence after the bat active season has ended and bats have departed for their hibernation sites. Roofworks shall not commence until after 1 October.*
- *Access points and suitable habitat for roosting crevice-dwelling bats shall be retained. These shall include the provision of small gaps and spaces measuring 2.5cms in width x 7cms in length underneath at least four ridge tiles along both sides of the main ridge. At least one 2.5cm x 7cm gaps shall also be made available underneath wooden fascias carrying guttering at the eastern elevation.*
- *Conditions inside the loft spaces shall remain unchanged; ie. no rooflights, airvents, no stored items, no installation of electric lighting.*
- *Should roof underfeltting be required Bitumastic Type 1F shall be used. This is the only membrane considered to be safe for roosting bats.*
- *Should remedial timber treatments against wood-boring insects be required, or to treat cluster flies, etc. these should be safe for bats, such as pyrethroids and boron compounds (eg. Permethrin, Flurox™).*
- *Should any bats be discovered at any time during the works, works shall cease immediately, and the advice of a Licensed Bat Ecologist or Natural England shall be sought.*
- *The acting ecologist shall inspect the works upon completion to ensure suitable provision for bats has been made in accordance with this Method Statement. A sign-off letter shall be provided to the Local Planning Authority, from the licensed ecologist, confirming compliance.*

7 References

Barn Owl Trust (2012). *Barn Owl Conservation Handbook*, Pelagic Publishing, Exeter.

Bat Conservation Trust (2021) www.bats.org.uk

Bat Conservation Trust (2014). *Bat News*. Issue 103. Spring 2014.

Collins, J. (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists - Good Practice Guidelines*
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Mitchell-Jones, A J & McLeish, A P., (Edits) (1999). *The Bat Workers' Manual*. JNCC
Peterborough.

Mitchell-Jones, A J (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

This report has been produced in good faith, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence based on the information provided and accessible at the time of its preparation and within the scope of the work agreed with the client.

We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above.

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