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Preliminary Visual Assessment for Bats and Breeding Birds
Puffins, Trevone Road, Trevone, Cornwall
September 2023

A report by

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(Natural England licence no: 2019-39576-CLS-CLS)

Report details

Site address:	Puffins, Trevone Road, Trevone, Padstow, PL28 8QX
Grid reference:	SW 89367 75829
Survey date:	23 rd September 2023
Surveyors:	John Blackburn BSc (Hons), MSc, MCIEEM, Ecologist (Natural England licence no: 2019-39576-CLS-CLS)
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Declaration of compliance

BS 42020:2013

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 Biodiversity, Code of practice for planning and development.

Code of Professional Conduct

The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

Validity of survey data and report

The findings of this report are valid for 12 months from the date of survey. If work has not commenced within this period, an updated survey by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required.

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Non-technical summary

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of a holiday let - Puffins, Trevone Road, Trevone, Padstow PL28 8QX. The building will be subject to a planning application.

Prior to works commencing, a survey has been commissioned to ensure that the proposed works do not adversely affect bats and breeding birds. The survey will:

- Identify the past and/or current use of the site by bats and breeding birds;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development on bats and breeding birds;
- Provide a basis upon which to propose further survey work or mitigation, should they be affected by the development.

The survey was completed on 23rd September 2023 with an air temperature of 16°C, no wind and 30% cloud cover.

Assessment for bats

No bats, or evidence of bats, were found associated with the structures surveyed, and there is negligible potential for bats based on a lack of evidence such as droppings or feeding remains and lack of suitable habitats for bats. Works can proceed with negligible risk to bats and does not require a method statement for bats or a European Protected Species licence. It should be noted that in any building, individual bats could occasionally roost or move in at any time, and recommendations are made within Section 5.

Assessment for breeding birds

No evidence of nesting birds was found. The proposed works can proceed with negligible risk to nesting birds.

Biodiversity enhancement

Simple biodiversity enhancement is recommended in section 6.

1. Introduction

Western Ecology has been commissioned to complete a preliminary visual assessment for bats and breeding birds of a holiday let - Puffins, Trevone Road, Trevone, Padstow PL28 8QX.

This survey has been prepared in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's "Bat Surveys Good Practice Guidelines" (Collins, 2023) and the results presented in this report.

1.1. Site description

The building is located in a semi-rural position on the north-eastern edge of the village of Trevone on the north coast of Cornwall (Plan 1). Garden planting is adjacent to the structure. In the wider landscape, most immediately to the northeast, lies large open fields of arable land bound by managed hedgerows. Approx. 100m north-west lies Trevone Bay and its associated intertidal habitats. The surrounding landscape provides potential for foraging and commuting bats, including light-averse bats.



Plan 1. The location of the building surveyed.



Plan 2. The building surveyed at this site (red line)

1.2. Proposed works

The building will be the subject of a planning application.

1.3. Survey aims

To ensure that the proposed development does not adversely affect bats and breeding birds, the survey will:

- Identify the past and/or current use of the site by bats and breeding birds;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development on bats and breeding birds;
- Provide a basis upon which to propose further survey work or mitigation, should they be affected by the development.

2. Methods

2.1. Bat roost assessment

All areas of the building were carefully examined internally and externally for signs of use by bats, with the aid of torches, by a suitable qualified and licenced ecologist. This included a search for bat droppings, feeding remains, urine stains and polished/scratched woodwork. A search was also made for individual bats, as well as potential access points and cavities capable of providing a roosting space for bats.

This survey method complies with guidelines produced by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2023).

The survey was completed on 23rd September 2023 with an air temperature of 16°C, no wind and 30% cloud cover.

A data search was not considered appropriate due to the highly mobile nature of bats. It is assumed that all species of bat that are present in Cornwall could be active within the vicinity which includes Barbastelle, Serotine, Noctule, Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Common Pipistrelle, Soprano Pipistrelle, Nathusius Pipistrelle (very rare), Whiskered, Brandt's, Natterer's, Daubenton's, Brown Long-eared and possibly Grey Long-eared.

It is very unlikely when considering the location and structure being assessed that a data search would provide further meaningful information.

2.2. Breeding birds

The building was searched for evidence of nesting bird species.

2.3. Surveyors

The survey was completed by John Blackburn. Mr Blackburn has 12 years' experience working on ecology and conservation projects in the UK and abroad. He has been working on bat surveys for the last 9 years, holds a Level 2 Class Licence to survey bats, holds a licence to survey barn owl roosts and is a competent ornithologist.

3. Results

3.1. Bat roost description

The buildings is a single storey block built structure with a gabled roof that is joined onto a large residential property and used as a holiday let. The roof is covered in slate with clay ridge tiles. Solar panels cover one side of the roof. The roof is well maintained and in good condition with no cracks or crevices. Plastic soffit boxes secure the eaves of the building. The gable apexes were secure, with no missing mortar. A smaller gable roofed extension is present on the southern aspect and serves as a porch. This is similar in design to the rest of the building however lacked a roof void.

Internally a small roof void is present that runs the length of the holiday let, accessible from a small loft hatch. It is low, less than 1m in height with exposed timber frames and insulation lagging at the base. A breathable roof membrane is present behind the roof slates. No evidence of bats was recorded.



The building viewed from the western aspect.



The small porch extension.



The eastern aspect of the roof



The roof void

3.2. Breeding birds

No evidence of nesting birds was recorded.

4. Assessment

4.1. Survey constraints

The survey was completed at a suitable time for the inspection of buildings and structures for bat roosts (Collins, 2023), and areas to be searched had not been cleaned/swept prior to survey. All areas of these buildings were accessible, and a full and complete assessment was made.

It is the professional opinion of the surveying ecologist that this survey provides sufficient information in relation to bats and breeding birds to allow the decision-maker to determine the planning permission. Further survey work would not make any material difference to the information provided.

4.2. Assessment for bats

As part of the assessment, it is required that the building is valued for their suitability to support roosting bats, irrelevant of any signs of roosting. This is due to the highly cryptic nature of bats, in particular those species that roost in crevice habitat associated with roof coverings, fascia, soffit, bargeboards, flashing, feather boarding and stonework.

Buildings are valued as follows (Collins et al, 2023):

- No suitability – No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices / suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
- Negligible suitability - Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats
- Low suitability - A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e., unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
- Moderate suitability – A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
- High suitability - A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

No bats, or evidence of bats, were found associated with the structures surveyed, and there is negligible suitability for bats based on a lack of evidence such as droppings or feeding

remains and lack of suitable habitats for bats. Works can proceed with negligible risk to bats and does not require a method statement for bats or a European Protected Species licence.

4.3. Assessment for breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found. The proposed development can proceed with negligible risk to breeding birds.

4.4. Legislation

Bats

Bat species and their breeding or resting places (roosts) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. They are identified as European Protected Species. Under these laws it is an offence to:

- capture, kill, disturb or injure bats (on purpose or by not taking enough care);
- damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even accidentally);
- obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places (on purpose or by not taking enough care); or
- possess, sell, control or transport live or dead bats, or parts of them.

Seven species of bat are listed as being of principal importance, in the Secretary of State's opinion, for the purposes of conserving biodiversity. Under section 41 (England) of the NERC Act (2006) there is a need for these species to be taken into consideration by a public body when performing any of its functions with a view to conserving biodiversity.

These are Barbastelle, Bechstein's, Noctule, Soprano Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Greater Horseshoe and Lesser Horseshoe and are the subject of National and Local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Activities that can affect bats include (from GOV.UK):

- renovating, converting or demolishing a building
- cutting down or removing branches from a mature tree
- repairing or replacing a roof
- repointing brickwork
- insulating or converting a loft
- installing lighting in a roost, or outside if it lights up the entrance to the roost
- removing commuting habitats such as hedgerows, watercourses or woodland
- changing or removing their foraging areas
- using insecticide
- treating timber

Breeding birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from being killed, injured or captured whilst their nests and eggs are protected from being damaged, destroyed or taken. Birds which are listed under Schedule 1 of the Act are given additional protection against disturbance.

Fifty-nine species of bird are listed as species “of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity”.

5. Recommendations and mitigation

5.1. Roosting bats

Works can proceed with negligible risk to bats and does not require a method statement for bats or a European Protected Species licence.

It should be noted that in any building, individual bats could occasionally roost or move in at any time, and we recommend the following approach:

- Prior to the start of works, all site staff will be briefed that bats can move into a building at any time and may be encountered during works.
- If bats are found unexpectedly during works, work should stop immediately and Natural England (0300 060 3900) or Western Ecology (0800 622 6828) be informed.
- Any bats found that are exposed and vulnerable should be protected from the elements and predators (particularly cats). You may need to contain the bat in a shoe box or similar sized container (with holes punched in the lid). You should not handle bats with bare hands.

5.2. Breeding birds

No evidence of breeding birds was found. The proposed development can proceed with negligible risk to breeding birds.

6. Biodiversity enhancement

In line with the Environment Act 2021, the majority of Local Planning Authorities (LPA) are now requiring suitable enhancements for wildlife within minor developments, with the aim of securing net gain. Although applying a measurable net gain does not apply to permitted development, change of use, or alterations to buildings and housing extensions, the LPA will likely seek proportionate enhancements for wildlife from these developments. Depending upon the LPA's requirements, this might include bat box/brick/tubes, bird box/bricks and bee bricks. If structurally inappropriate to the design, the use of alternative, but equivalent, wildlife features is possible.

Creating new habitats, enhancing existing habitats or providing new wildlife features, can all contribute towards biodiversity enhancement, and helping to rebuild habitat networks in the wider area improves ecological resilience and adaptation to climate change.

Enhancements are additional to any measures necessary to deal with potential impacts on site, as they are an opportunity to provide new benefits for biodiversity as a consequence of the proposals being implemented.

For this development, we recommend (per unit):

- One bat box/brick/tube;
- One bird box/brick;
- One bee brick.

6.1. Bats

Bat box/brick/tubes could be fitted on a south or west facing aspect. Where practicable, on developments where only roof works are being carried out, enhancement could be a Schwegler 1FF bat box, a Beaumaris Woodstone Bat box (Figure 1), or similar. These boxes are designed to be installed on the external walls of buildings.



Figure 1. Schwegler 1FF bat box (left) and Beaumaris bat Box (right)

For new extensions or rebuilds, enhancement could comprise a Green & Blue Bat Block bat brick or similar (Figure 2). These boxes are designed to be recessed into the external walls of buildings and can be rendered over.



Figure 2. Green & Blue Bat Block bat brick

Where fitting enhancement to the building is not practicable, new roosting opportunities could be created for bats using a 2F Schwegler Bat Box (Figure 3). Bat Boxes should be secured to trees or untreated wooden posts (the base of the posts may be treated) at least 3 metres above the ground,



Figure 3. 2F Schwegler bat box.

6.2. Bird Boxes

New nesting opportunities could be provided for birds on the Site, through the provision of bird nesting boxes: this could include a Sparrow Terrace (Figure 4) fitted to the northern or eastern aspect of any new build. This terrace has been designed to help redress the balance of falling House Sparrow numbers. The current UK population of 6 million pairs is half what it was in 1980 and this is thought to be due to habitat destruction and lack of suitable nesting spaces. Sparrows are social birds and like to nest in company.

This House Sparrow Nest Box is manufactured from WoodStone - a mix of concrete and FSC wood fibres. This material is strong and highly insulating which helps to provide a thermally stable environment within the box. It also protects against damage from predators such as cats, woodpeckers and squirrels. It has two breeding chambers making it particularly suitable for house sparrows as they prefer to nest in colonies.

The House Sparrow Nest Box can be integrated into the masonry of a new build or fixed onto an external wall of a conversion using strong screws and wall plugs (not included). If possible, it should be positioned near to vegetation and at a minimum of 2m above ground (taken from NHBS website).



Figure 4. Sparrow Terrace

6.3. Invertebrates

Where practicable, an invertebrate brick (Figure 5) could be fitted 1 to 2 metres above ground level on the southern side of a build. These attract solitary bees, wasps and other invertebrates.



Figure 5. A bee brick

7. References

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th edition). The Bat Survey Trust, London. ISBN-978-1-7395126-0-6

Environmental Act 2021: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>