

## BAT PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEYS (PAS)

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### THE ATLANTIC, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY



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# Executive Summary

<b>Overview</b>
<p>Two Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS) were undertaken on the Atlantic building. The purpose of the PAS surveys was to provide an evidence base which meets Best Practice Guidance following the initial findings of the Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) produced in August 2023.</p> <p>The results of these PAS surveys are compiled in this report.</p>
<b>Results</b>
<p>The surveys did not identify any bats roosting within the Atlantic building.</p> <p>The surveys generally recorded low activity levels of common pipistrelle bats in the vicinity of the site, including foraging behaviour especially associated with the top of Town Beach which the Atlantic fronts directly onto. No other species were recorded.</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>
<p>No bats were identified roosting within the building. The survey evidence accords with the Best Practice Guidance requirements to conclude 'Probable Absence' of bats.</p> <p>No further surveys are required and there is no requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML).</p>
<b>Mitigation Strategy</b>
<p>Works should take place with due regard for the unlikely eventuality that bats may make transient use of roosting features on the Atlantic building.</p> <p>A Precautionary Method of Works (PMW) is therefore provided in Appendix 1. This should be followed during works to ensure legislative compliance on the part of the contractors.</p> <p>The proposals would not affect any confirmed roosts, commuting routes or foraging habitat – therefore no habitat creation is required with regards to roosting bats. The location of the building, coupled with the abundance of potential roosting habitat within Hugh Town, would make the likelihood of occupation of bat boxes relatively low.</p>
<b>Planning Recommendations</b>
<p>A Planning Condition requiring compliance with the Precautionary Method of Works (PMW) outlined in Appendix 1 could be attached to a Decision Notice. If so, it is recommended that this should be compliance only – no further information would be required as the methodology outlined in the PMW is comprehensive.</p> <p>The PRA and PAS reports together provide an appropriate ecological baseline for the purposes of assessing the Planning Application. No further surveys would be required.</p> <p>This report provides an appropriate baseline to inform Planning and allow works to take place within the next 12 months. After September 2024, an update should be undertaken.</p>

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background to Surveys

The site is located on Hugh Street in Hugh Town, St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly. The site under consideration is a contiguous building complex which is in active use as a pub, restaurant and hotel.

The proposals involve the re-roofing of various elements of the building complex.

A Preliminary Roosting Assessment (PRA) was carried out in August 2023 – this assessment identified elements of the building which offer moderate potential for use by roosting bats.

The PRA report stated that further PAS surveys would be required to provide an evidence base sufficient to identify the status of the buildings with regards to bats, and inform any mitigation measures required to ensure legislative compliance. This PAS report provides the results of the recommended surveys. It should be read alongside the PRA report to provide a comprehensive assessment of the buildings with regards to roosting bats.

## 1.2. Survey Objectives

The PRA report identified the following bat roosting potential with regards to discreet elements of the Atlantic building:

- **Building elements J and K** have negligible potential to support roosting bats;
- **Building elements D, H and I** have low potential to support roosting bats;
- **Building elements A, B, C, E, F and G** have moderate potential to support roosting bats.

These assessments and classifications are illustrated in Map 01.

The objective of the PAS surveys reported in this document was to observe the aspects of the building with roosting potential, and undertake emergence surveys to further assess the use of these features by roosting bats.

In accordance with the Best Practice Guidance<sup>1</sup>, the elements of the building with low and moderate potential were subject to two PAS surveys.

The overall objective is to provide a comprehensive baseline upon which to assess the potential impact of the proposed development works to roosting bats.

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, J. (ed.) 2016 Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.



**Map 01** – Showing the building comprising multiple different roof pitches. Note that this reflects the area subject to the survey in this assessment – areas within the redline ownership which are not subject to survey are not shown.

## 2. Survey Methodology

### 2.1. Surveyor Details

The surveys were led and supervised by James Faulconbridge. James has undertaken Professional Bat Licence training and is a Level 2 licenced bat worker with over fifteen years' experience in undertaking emergence, re-entry and activity surveys.

Additional surveyors are experienced in undertaking emergence and re-entry surveys and worked under the supervision of the Licenced Bat Worker.

### 2.2. Survey Methodology

The dusk emergence and dawn re-entry surveys were conducted following Best Practice methodology for bat surveys. A comprehensive survey of the building required five separate surveyor positions. The Atlantic backs directly onto Town Beach which is submerged at high tide – during both of the survey occasions, the tide prevented surveyor position S5 (see Map 02) from being occupied for at least part of the survey. For this reason, the surveyor position S5 in each instance was undertaken on the following dawn to provide a comprehensive assessment of the entire building across a single night.

The first PAS survey was carried out on the evening of 24<sup>th</sup> August and the dawn of 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The second PAS survey was undertaken on the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> September and the dawn of 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The dusk emergence surveys commenced from 15 minutes before sunset and continued until 90 minutes after sunset. The dawn re-entry surveys commenced 90 minutes before sunrise and continued until 15 minutes after sunrise.

The surveys were undertaken with regard for the appropriate weather conditions ( $\geq 10^{\circ}\text{C}$  at sunset, no/light rain or wind).

Frequency division bat detectors were used to detect and record all bat passes. The surveyors recorded metadata including the time the pass occurred, the behaviour observed (foraging/commuting) and where possible, the species of bat observed. Results from the bat detector recordings were analysed using BatSound/Analook sonogram analysis computer software.

Both an Infra-Red and Thermal Imaging camera were used to watch key aspects of the buildings on all four survey occasions. The footage of these was watched back by the Licenced Bat Worker to review and confirm the conclusions of the surveyors undertaking the survey.

### 2.3. Survey Validity and Update

Bats are transient in their use of habitats and apparently minor changes in condition or use of the building can affect suitability. However in the absence of significant changes in condition or building use, the nature and character of the

site suggest that the PAS survey can be considered proportionately valid for a period of 12 months after the survey was completed, until September 2024.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Surveyor Positions

In order to ensure that the different elements of the building received a survey effort in line with the Best Practice Guidance, five surveyor positions were identified. These are identified in Map 02 below.



**Map 02** – showing surveyor positions around the building. The different elements of the building are identified by different colours.

### 3.2. PAS Survey 1 - Dusk

#### 3.2.1. Survey Conditions

The dusk survey was undertaken on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The survey commenced at 8:12pm, approximately 20 minutes before sunset at 8:27pm. It was completed at 9:57pm.

The temperature throughout the survey was 16°C. The evening was dry and clear with a light breeze and 10% high cloud. The survey followed a warm, sunny day.

#### 3.2.2. Survey Results

The emergence survey did not identify any emergence of bats from the Atlantic building.

The first common pipistrelle bat was heard by the surveyors in positions S2 and S4 at 8:54pm – the bat flew from Town Beach the north of the Atlantic. Further



foraging in the vicinity of the property was recorded until 21:38pm by both surveyors.

Very little activity was recorded by the surveyor in position S1 – this was restricted to several brief foraging passes from 9:37pm onwards.

The surveyor within the roof structure in position S3 did not record any activity aside from occasional distant foraging passes which were recorded accurately by the surveyors in positions S2 and S4.

No species other than common pipistrelle were recorded.

### **3.3. PAS Survey 1 - Dawn**

#### **3.3.1. Survey Conditions**

The dawn survey was undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023. The survey commenced at 5:00am and completed at 6:45am, approximately 15 minutes after sunrise at 6:30am.

The temperature was 16°C throughout the survey. The morning was dry and overcast with 85% high cloud. A light breeze picked up towards the end of the survey.

#### **3.3.2. Survey Results**

The emergence survey did not identify any evidence of bats returning to roosts within the Atlantic building complex.

Brief foraging passes were detected between 5:37am and 5:57am, then two common pipistrelle bats were observed foraging intensely from 6:00am until 6:09am at the interface between Building K and the shoreline. Both bats were observed to fly offsite to the north along the beach at the end of this foraging activity.

No species other than common pipistrelle were recorded.



**Photograph 01** – showing the foraging common pipistrelle beside the steps of the Atlantic on the dawn survey. Screenshot from infra-red video recordings.

### **3.4. PAS Survey 2 - Dusk**

#### **3.4.1. Survey Conditions**

The second dusk survey was undertaken on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The survey commenced at 7:40pm, approximately 20 minutes before sunset at 7:57pm, and completed at 9:30pm.

The temperature was 19°C throughout the survey. The evening was dry and warm with 10% high cloud cover following a warm, humid day.

#### **3.4.2. Survey Results**

The survey did not identify any emergence of bats from the Atlantic Building.

The first bat was recorded by surveyor S4 at 8:30pm flying from Town Beach to the north of the building complex. Further occasional bats were subsequently recorded in flight for approximately the next hour with the last detection at 9:23pm. These same individuals were picked up by the surveyors in positions S1 and S2 as they flew along the south-western portion of the building.

The surveyor within the roof structure in position S3 did not record any activity aside from occasional distant foraging passes which were recorded accurately by the surveyors in positions S2 and S4.

No species other than common pipistrelle were recorded.

### **3.5. PAS Survey 2 - Dawn**

#### **3.5.1. Survey Conditions**

The dawn survey was undertaken on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The survey commenced at 5:10am and completed at 7:00am, approximately 15 minutes after sunrise at 6:45am.

The temperature was 19°C throughout the survey – the visibility was reduced by light fog but this was not sufficiently dense to affect the efficacy of the survey. The morning was very still with no precipitation.

#### **3.5.2. Survey Results**

The survey did not identify any re-entry of bats to the Atlantic Building.

Brief passes by common pipistrelle bats were recorded at 5:50am and 5:54am. A common pipistrelle spent around 3 minutes foraging at the interface between Building K and the shoreline at 6:16am before continuing to fly offsite north along the top of the beach.

No species other than common pipistrelle were recorded.

### **3.6. Summary and Evaluation**

#### **3.6.1. Overview**

The surveys did not identify any bats emerging or returning to roosts at the Atlantic building – this is sufficient to conclude ‘Likely Absence’ in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance.

The surveys generally recorded low activity levels of common pipistrelle bats foraging in the vicinity of the site, but rarely associated directly with the site itself.

#### **3.6.2. Requirement for Further Surveys**

No further surveys are required to provide an appropriate ecological baseline in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance.

### **3.7. Limitations and Constraints**

#### **3.7.1. Seasonal Timing**

The timing of the surveys was within the Best Practice window of late-May to early-September and the surveys were spaced appropriately with the two surveys spaced two weeks apart.

### 3.7.2. Survey Conditions

The weather conditions were optimal on all survey occasions with no precipitation or other adverse conditions which might be expected to affect bat behaviour.

### 3.7.3. Visibility and Coverage

The surveys were comprehensive with regards to surveyor visibility.

## 4. Mitigation Strategy

### 4.1. EPSML Requirement

The project does not require a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) to proceed.

### 4.2. Precautionary Method of Works

As individual bats can be exploratory or make transient use of roosting opportunities, it is important that contractors undertaking the proposed works are aware of the low risk for bats to be encountered - works should therefore proceed with appropriate caution and vigilance.

A Precautionary Method of Works (PMW) is outlined in Appendix 1 of this document and should be followed by contractors undertaking works.

### 4.3. Timing of Works

#### 4.3.1. Bats

The results of the PRA/PAS surveys do not indicate that there is a requirement for seasonal constraints on the timing of works with regards to bats.

#### 4.3.2. Nesting Birds

Assessment of potential for nesting birds, and appropriate mitigation measures, are provided in the PRA report. These recommendations are not repeated here, for brevity.

### 4.4. Habitat Enhancement / Mitigation

The proposals would not affect any confirmed roosts, commuting routes or foraging habitat – therefore no habitat creation is required with regards to roosting bats.

The location of the building, coupled with the abundance of potential roosting habitat within Hugh Town, would make the likelihood of occupation of bat boxes relatively low – these are not therefore recommended.

## APPENDIX 1 - PRECAUTIONARY METHOD STATEMENT WITH REGARDS TO BATS

The purpose of this Method Statement is to ensure that proposed works can proceed where presence of bats has been determined to be unlikely, but a precautionary approach is still advisable. It has been determined that direct harm to roosting bats during the proposed works would be highly unlikely.

Contractors should, however, be aware of **their own legal responsibility with respect to bats**:

### **Relevant Legislation regarding Bats**

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, or the 'Habitat Regulations 2017', transposes European Directives into English and Welsh legislation. Under these regulations, bats are classed as a European Protected Species and it is, therefore, an offence to:

- *Deliberately kill, injure or capture bats;*
- *Deliberately damage or destroy bat roosts.*

A bat roost is commonly defined as being any structure or place that is used as a breeding site or resting place, and since it may be in use only occasionally or at specific times of year, a roost retains such a designation even if bats are not present.

Bats are also protected from disturbance under Regulation 43. Disturbance of bats includes in particular any disturbance which is likely:

- (a) *To impair their ability -*
- *to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or*
  - *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.*

Bats also have limited protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended). It is, therefore, an offence to:

- *Intentionally or recklessly destroy, damage or obstruct any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection.*
- *Intentionally or recklessly disturb bats whilst occupying any structure or place used for shelter or protection.*

Contractors should be aware of **where bats are most likely to be found in respect to the existing building**. The generic recommendations relating to each type of feature are outlined below – locations where these features occur are listed in the PRA report:

### **Fascias**

There are intermittent gaps where the fascias meet the walls on various elements of the building. Where these are to be removed or impacted as part of the proposed works, the fascias should be carefully removed and the gaps behind them exposed in such a way that, in the unlikely event that bats are present, they are not injured or killed by the action.

Once these areas are fully exposed, they can be visually inspected by contractors. Any cavities exposed by this action should also be carefully inspected and features dismantled by hand where necessary until absence of bats can be confidently confirmed.

### **Damaged/Lifted Tiles**

There are occasional locations where the tiles are lifted or damaged, especially in the case of Building A. Where these tiles are to be removed as part of the proposed works, the tiles around any lifted/damaged sections should be removed carefully and the undersides inspected in such a way that, in the unlikely event that bats are present, they are not injured or killed by the action.

### **Lifted Flashing**

Where lead flashing is lifted, such as around dormer windows, it should be peeled back and the space behind exposed in a careful and methodical manner in such a way that, in the unlikely event that bats are present, they are not injured or killed by the action.

Contractors should be aware of **the process to follow in the unlikely event of finding bats** or evidence indicating that bats are likely to be present:

If bats are identified or suspected, works should cease and the named ecologist contacted immediately for advice.

If the bat is in a safe situation, or a situation which can be made safe, they should remain undisturbed.

Only if the bat is in immediate risk of harm can the bat be moved with care and using a gloved hand. This is a last resort and should only be undertaken for humane reasons if the bat is at immediate risk of harm **and** if the ecologist cannot be contacted for advice.