BAT PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEYS (PAS)

1 BUZZA STREET,
ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY

Client: *Leonie Jones*

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Planning reference: *Report produced in advance of submission*

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Executive Summary

Overview
One Presence/Absence Survey (PAS) was undertaken on 1 Buzza Street to assess the use of the structure by roosting bats in advance of proposed re-roofing and renovation works. This was undertaken to provide an evidence base which meets Best Practice Guidance following the initial findings of the Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) report.
Results
The survey did not identify any bats emerging from the property. The survey generally recorded moderate activity levels of common pipistrelle bats in the vicinity of the site. No other bat species were recorded.
Conclusion
The survey evidence accords with the Best Practice Guidance requirements to conclude 'Probable Absence' of bats. No further surveys are required and there is no requirement for a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML).
Mitigation Strategy
As no roosts were identified, there is no requirement for mitigation measures to be built into the development. A precautionary method of working would represent good practice during re-roofing and renovation works – outline recommendations are provided in this report.
Planning Recommendations
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.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background to Survey

The property is the residential dwelling known as 1 Buzza Street situated within the residential area of Hugh Town in St Mary's in the Isles of Scilly.

The proposed schedule of works involve the replacement of the wet-laid scantle tile roof on the eastern and northern pitches; and the removal of the existing chimney in the northern pitch.

A Preliminary Roosting Assessment (PRA) was carried out in August 2024 - this assessment identified Low Potential for use by roosting bats.

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

1.2. Survey Objectives

In accordance with the Best Practice Guidance[1] for a Low Potential building, the structure was subject to a single PAS survey with one surveyor and two Night Vision Assistance (NVA) cameras positioned to observe the eastern pitch of the roof where potential access or roosting features were identified.

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

[1] Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London

2. Survey Methodology

2.1. Surveyor Details

The survey was led by Darren Hart. Darren has undertaken Professional Bat Licence training and is a Level 2 Licenced Bat Worker with experience in undertaking emergence, re-entry and activity surveys.

The NVA review, assessment and reporting were completed by James Faulconbridge, trading as IOS Ecology. James is a Level 2 Licenced Bat Worker with over 15 years' experience in undertaking ecological assessments to support Planning and Development.

2.2. Survey Methodology

The dusk emergence survey was conducted following Best Practice methodology for bat surveys.

The PAS survey was carried out on the evening of 12th August 2024.

The dusk emergence survey commenced from approximately 15 minutes before sunset and continued until 90 minutes after sunset. The survey was undertaken with regard for the appropriate weather conditions (≥10°C at sunset, no/light rain or wind).

Frequency division bat detectors were used to detect and record all bat passes. The surveyor 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.

Two NVAs were used to provide comprehensive coverage of the potential access or roosting features identified on the eastern aspect of the property – these were two Nightfox Whisker infra-red cameras with additional infra-red torches. Footage from these NVAs was watched back to verify or update the survey results confirmed in the field.

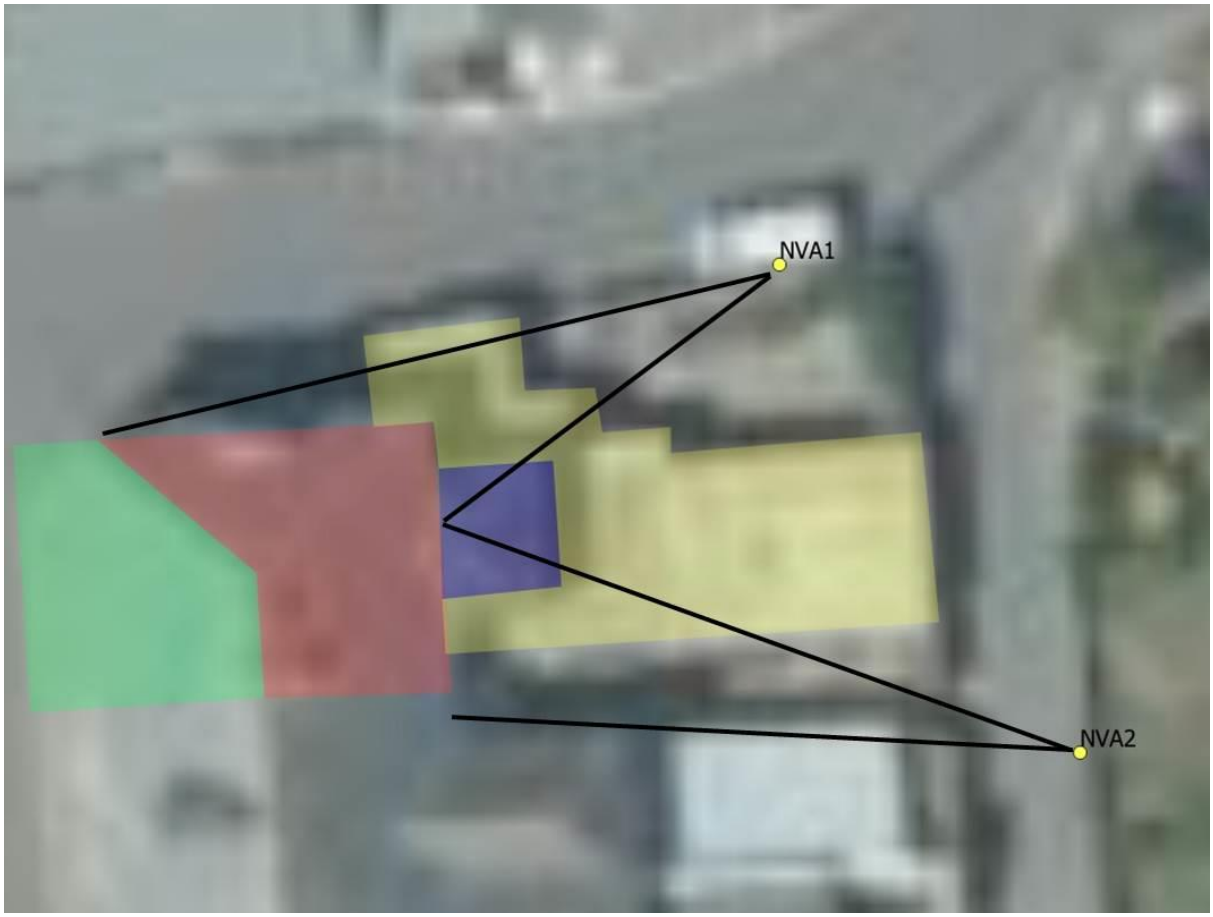
2.3. Survey Validity and Update

Bats are transient in their use of habitats such as these, 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 results of the PAS surveys can be considered proportionately valid to support a Planning Application until the next active season in May 2025.

3. Results

3.1. Surveyor Positions

In order to ensure that the building received a survey effort of a single bat survey for a Low Potential building (in line with the Best Practice Guidance), one surveyor position and two NVAs were deployed. These are identified in Map 01 below.



Map 01 – showing two NVA positions with the surveyor positioned adjacent to NVA1. The two-storey hipped roof extension is indicated with the blue wash and the flat-roof single-storey extension is indicated with the yellow wash. These building components are described fully in the PRA report for this property.

3.2. PAS Survey

3.2.1. Survey Conditions

The dusk survey was undertaken on 12th August 2024. The survey commenced at 8:33pm, approximately 15 minutes before sunset at 8:48pm. It was completed at 10:18pm.

The temperature at the beginning of the survey was 18ºc falling to 17ºc by the end of the survey - the evening was dry and clear with 30% cloud and a light south-westerly wind.

3.2.2. Survey Results - Emergence

No emergence activity was recorded during the survey.

3.2.3. Survey Results - Activity

No species other than common pipistrelle bats were positively identified during the survey.

The first bat was recorded a 9:14pm, 41 minutes after sunset, when a common pipistrelle flew in from the south and passed west across the rear of the property. Intermittent foraging was then heard from this time onwards until the end of the survey, with behaviour indicative of commuting recorded at 9:25pm and 9:30pm by two different bats.

3.3. Limitations and Constraints

3.3.1. Seasonal Timing

The survey was undertaken within the main active season in 2024 – this conforms with the recommended survey timings within the Good Practice Guidelines.

3.3.2. Survey Conditions

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

3.3.3. Visibility and Coverage

The PRA survey only identified potential access features for bats on the eastern aspect of the building. The presence of the two-storey extension precluded a full view of the fascia from a single surveyor position; therefore the surveyor was positioned at the point of optimal visibility beside NVA1. The small area outside of the visibility of the surveyor was addressed through the use of a second NVA in the NVA2 position. The surveyor was sufficiently close to the two NVAs to operate both cameras and record activity and behaviour visually. A careful review of the footage from both NVA cameras allowed the absence of emergence to be confirmed after the survey.

3.3.4. NVA Footage

The visibility of the eastern aspect was comprehensive – see Appendix 2.

The NVA1 and NVA2 cameras were operated by a single surveyor S1 - the footage from these two cameras was watched back carefully to ensure that there was no emergence activity overlooked by the S1 surveyor.

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, but remain valid and should be addressed in any appropriate Planning Conditions and work practices.

4.4. Habitat Enhancement / Mitigation

The proposals would not directly 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 eastern fascia meet the wall. Where this is to be removed or impacted as part of the proposed works, the fascia should be carefully removed and the gaps behind it 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

If any tiles are lifted or damaged at the time of works; they 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.

Extra care should be taken when removing the first run(s) of tiles around the gables and eaves especially on the eastern aspect close to the fascia board.

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.

Appendix 2 – NVA Screenshots

NVA1 – showing a screenshot from the Nightfox Whisker at position NVA1. This is covering the northern side of the eastern aspect. The fascia (potential access feature) is indicted with the red box.

NVA2 – showing footage from the Nightfox Whisker on position NVA2. This is covering the southern side of the eastern aspect. The fascia (potential access feature) is indicted with the red box.