

COACH ROAD, WHITEHAVEN

BAT INSPECTION SURVEY REPORT

Prepared for: United Utilities

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 SK Environmental Solutions Limited was commissioned by United Utilities to undertake a bat inspection of a derelict building on Coach Road, Whitehaven, Cumbria. United Utilities are proposing to demolish the building. To make space for future infrastructure development.

Aims and Objectives

- 1.2 The purpose of the survey was to:
 - Identify, where possible, whether bats are roosting within internal or external features of the building proposed for development;
 - Identify any potential access points within the external features of the building;
 - Assess the potential for bats to be roosting within the building; and
 - Make recommendations as to whether any further survey work is required.
- 1.3 The instructed works at this stage comprised a detailed internal and external inspection of the building.

2. METHODOLOGY

Field Survey

Inspection

- 2.1 A full internal and external inspection of the buildings was undertaken on the 29th July 2020 by a licenced bat ecologist (Rich Flight Class 2 Natural England Licensed Bat Worker) to search for evidence of bat roosts. The internal inspection involves accessing any roof voids and surveying for evidence of bats. The external inspection was undertaken at the ground level using a high powered torch and binoculars, surveying for features which may be used as access points by bats.
- 2.2 Evidence of bat presence could include:
 - bats;
 - bat droppings;
 - signs of feeding;
 - polished surfaces; and
 - staining.

Personnel

2.3 The inspection was led by Rich Flight (licensed bat worker 2015-15641-CLS-CLS) assisted by Emma Jennings, an experienced bat surveyor.

3. LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) provide legal protection to all UK bat species.
- 3.2 In summary, a person may be guilty of an offence if they:
 - Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place of bats;
 - Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat/s;
 - Deliberately disturb bats, and in particular disturbance likely to impair animals' ability to survive, breed or nurture young, their ability to hibernate and migrate and disturbance likely to have a significant effect on local distribution and abundance;
 - Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat/s while occupying a structure or place used for shelter and/or protection (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)); and / or
 - Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place that a bat/s use for shelter or protection (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)).
- 3.3 The legislation applies to bat roosts even when they are not occupied.
- 3.4 Maximum penalties are punishable with unlimited fines per offence and up to 6 months' imprisonment. Fines can also be incurred under the Proceeds of Crime Act (2002) to any financial gain obtained through the otherwise unlawful acts
- 3.5 Under certain circumstances licences can be granted by the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England in England) to permit actions that would otherwise be unlawful.
- 3.6 Local authorities have obligations under Section 40 and Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in carrying out their duties. Seven species of bat species are listed on Section 41 the NERC Act.

Limitations

3.7 There were no limitations to the building inspection.

4. **RESULTS**

General Site Description

- 4.1 The property comprises two attached disused properties located alongside Coach Road, in the centre of Whitehaven, in the north-west of Cumbria.
- 4.2 To the south lies an extensive area of green space, comprising scrub land, playing fields, and other amenity areas. To the north and east lies a more urban landscape, comprising a mixture of industrial and residential land-use. To the west lies a mix of green spaces and built-up land.
- 4.3 The properties comprise two relatively small bungalows. The walls are rendered and the roofs are slate covered. The roofs are constructed in a hipped roof style, with dormer windows projecting to the south-east. At each end of the building is a gable elevation that projects at a right- angle to the main north-east to south-west roof ridge. At the north-eastern end of the property is a small flat-roofed section.



Figure 1 - Overhead Satellite Imagery of the Surveyed Buildings

Summary of Development Proposals

- 4.4 Proposed work to the property (see Appendix 1) comprises:
 - Demolition of the existing the existing buildings.

Desk Study

4.5 Eight species of bats have been recorded breeding in Cumbria which include; whiskered *Myotis mystacinus*, Brandt's *Myotis brandtii*, Natterer's *Myotis nattererii*, Daubenton's *Myotis Daubentoni*,

JN00466/D01 August 2020 noctule *Nyctalus noctula* and brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* and soprano pipistrelle and *P. pygmaeus*.

- 4.6 According to Birds and Wildlife in Cumbria 2010/11' A County Natural History Report the status of the above species are as follows:
 - Whiskered bat widespread;
 - Natterer's bat widespread near water;
 - Noctule widespread but local;
 - Brown long-eared bat common and widespread;
 - Common and soprano pipistrelle common and widespread;
 - Brandt's bat local (2005/07 edition); and
 - Daubenton's bat widespread but local (2005/07 edition).
- 4.7 A further two bat species have been identified in Cumbria through auditory detection alone, with no roosts being found: Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii* and Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri*.

Field Survey

External Inspection

- 4.8 Externally, the elevations provide little potential for bats, as they are rendered throughout, leaving no gaps for bats to access the walls. At the wall tops however, there are often gaps between the rendered elevations and the overlying roof structure. This is most apparent at the north-eastern end, where a gap exists between the wall and the flat roof. No droppings were observed on this wall but the gap is large enough for bats to access and roost.
- 4.9 Further gaps exist around the dormer windows and around various areas of rotten timber- work. Some of these gaps are large and may actually provide access for birds and be too open for bats, which generally prefer smaller more discreet crevices.
- 4.10 The roof is slate covered and is backed with lime mortar on the inside; there is no membrane behind the slates. There are several locations where slates have slipped and access is possible into the roof, either for bats or other wildlife. The ridge also features several gaps beneath the ridge tiles, these may allow bats to access the small void between the tiles and the underlying ridge beam.

Internal Inspection

- 4.11 Internally, the ground floor has little potential to be used by bats. The windows have been boarded up, which can provide a crevice between the board and the window into which bats may roost. However, the boards are well sealed and access through these is considered unlikely. The remaining areas of the ground floor lack the features required for roosting bats. No signs of bats were observed.
- 4.12 Cobwebs are abundant within the roof voids and dirt / debris is present. The latter feature cobwebs provide some evidence that bats have not been flying with the roof voids in recent times, as the cobwebs would have been broken.

- 4.13 Structurally, the roof voids are suitable for bats, with exposed timbers, onto which bats can hang and perch, and a suitable sized cavity within which bats can fly. However, roofs with lime mortar parging tend to be less well used by bats due to the lack of a usable cavity between the slates and an underlying membrane.
- 4.14 There are signs of rats in the right-hand property roof void; where rats are present it is rare to find a bat roost. Rats are opportunistic hunters and will predate small animals, including bats. Also found within the left-hand property was a large vacant wasp nest along with signs of further wasp occupation.
- 4.15 No bat droppings were found in either of the roof voids.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 During the inspection, no bats or signs of bats were found within the survey building. Although the roof voids lacked evidence of bats and the presence of rats makes internal bat occupation less likely, the building has external features that may provide suitable roosting locations for bats; namely, the crevice at the wall tops and the gaps around the dormer windows and beneath the ridge tiles. These would be suitable for crevice-dwelling bats, such as pipistrelle bats and small Myotis bats, both of which are common in the area.
- 5.2 The property therefore has potential to provide roosting locations for bats and it is recommended that evening emergence or dawn re-entry surveys be carried out to establish the presence or likely absence of bats in the property.
- 5.3 The property is considered to have moderate potential for bats. Therefore, in accordance with the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists (BCT 2016) it is recommended that at least two activity surveys are carried out during the recommended survey period (May- September).

6. PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1: Left-hand building (from Coach Rd)



Photograph 2: Right-hand building (from Coach Rd)





Photograph 3: North-eastern flat roof extension





Photograph 5: Crevice at wall top of flat roof



Photograph 6: Crevice at wall top of eaves



7. **REFERENCES**

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