



Wyndrush Wild

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PRELIMINARY PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT

Deva Aberystwyth, Ceredigion

Client – Mr Vince Morgans

Survey Date – 25th September 2020

Report Reference – WWE/Bats/250920b

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Summary

A former hotel on the seafront in Aberystwyth is proposed for redevelopment and conversion into flats. An assessment of the likelihood of bats being present in the building was required by the client.

No signs of bats were found within the building, but potential bat access points were noted via missing slates on one side; cavities in the stone-walls on this side also have some potential to support low numbers of roosting bats. At least one bat activity survey, not now possible until May 2021, will be required before the proposed work could proceed.



Survey Details

An assessment of the potential of Deva, a former hotel in Aberystwyth, to support bats was required by the client. The role of this assessment was simply to establish the presence or absence of bats, and not to carry out a detailed survey with associated recommendations.

The external and internal space of the building was carefully examined on 25th September 2020.

If bats are present, they may be impossible to see if they are squeezed into cavities. Bats are generally detected in roof spaces or buildings by searching for droppings or prey remains such as moth wings.

The whole of the inside of the building was accessed. The four storey building is currently empty. Floor spaces and window-sills were examined for evidence of droppings, whilst window surrounds were examined for stained render and possible entrance points.

The external façades of the building, roof and chimney were examined carefully from multiple angles with binoculars (Leica Ultravid 10x32). The slate roof was viewed by looking out from upper storey windows. This would have revealed crevices, cavities or squeeze gaps potentially allowing bats into the building.

Building Structure

The external photos below illustrate the roof and wall structures. The west-facing section of the pitched roof has been re-roofed relatively recently, with new slates, solid insulation and a well-fitted breathable membrane below. The east-facing section has older slates with a bitumen felt membrane below the supporting battens; tears in the felt showed that there is no insulation above.



External photographs (clockwise from top-left): rear of building; dormer window on front of building; slate roof and dormer window; slate roof detail

The front external wall is blockwork, rendered and painted, affording no crevices. The rear of the building has a mortared stone wall, with some central sections around windows repaired in brick.

Junctions with dormer windows on the rear side of the building appeared to be poorly sealed; those on the front of the building could not be seen clearly. The junction between slate roof and southern chimney is poor, and the roof is damaged adjoining this, with some slates missing. One other individual missing slate was noted below a dormer window. The fascia board on the rear of the building is wooden and not tightly fitted to the wall top. The chimneys to either end appear to be of sound construction. Some original windows are intact, others are boarded. The upper level comprises a large attic room with dormer windows to either side. Those to the rear have wooden frames protruding over the windows. Internal walls are stone and only partly mortared.



Internal photographs (clockwise from top-left): Upper storey; currently un-tiled ridge showing newer (white) membrane and older (black) bitumen membrane; ground floor; crevices in internal gable-end wall

Survey Results

Bats are present in the centre of Aberystwyth, primarily pipistrelles but a roost of brown long-eared bats is also known.

The survey found no bat droppings, either fresh or old. No moth wings or other signs of bats were found. No bats were visible.

Feral pigeons had gained access to the building. Numerous pigeon droppings and several carcasses were apparent, and birds were seen in the upper level.

Potential access points for bats were apparent in several places. Missing slates on the roof to the rear of the building would afford access into the void between slates and bitumen felt. The ridge line currently lacks ridge tiles, and light was visible through the gap between membranes to either side. There is a missing window on the ground floor to the rear of the building, and a higher window showed a gaps between boarding and glass. The fascia board on the rear roof-top is not tightly sealed to the stone-work, which looked potentially to be poorly-mortared here. The stone-work lower down the rear wall has occasional cavities formed by missing stones and bricks. Internally, the building has no enclosed spaces suitable for a significant roost; but crevices in the stonework on either gable end appear to have some minor potential to be used as roost spaces by low numbers of bats.

The survey concluded that bats have some potential to access the building, or use features on the roof and rear wall. At least one activity survey will be required, and this would not be possible until early May 2021.

Legislation

All species of bat and their roosts are protected under United Kingdom law by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and in addition are classified as European Protected Species (EPS) under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). This makes it an offence to kill, injure or disturb a bat and to destroy any place used for rest or shelter by a bat.

Development works that affect a bat roost can only be permitted under a licence from Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Licences in respect of European Protected Species for this type of development can be granted for “...the purpose of preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment.”

Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended) licences can only be issued for a development if NRW is satisfied that:

- There is no satisfactory alternative to the specified works, and;
- The authorised action will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

The author of this report was Vicky Swann, a partner in Wyndrush Wild, and experienced licenced bat surveyor (NRW licence number S088465/1). She has completed numerous scoping reports, activity surveys and accompanying reports for a variety of schemes.

Reports are valid for 2 years, or as specified by the County Planning Department.