



Wyndrush Wild

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PRELIMINARY PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT

**Belle Vue Hotel
Aberystwyth, Ceredigion**

Client – Mr Vince Morgans

Survey Date – 25th September 2020

Report Reference – WWE/Bats/250920

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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 during internal inspection of the building. The building was investigated externally and found to be generally well sealed. The only obvious access points for bats were through windows which had been left open over recent weeks. These are due for imminent replacement, and will be kept shut following this. The proposed works then would not appear to provide a threat to bats; no other protected species are present.



Survey Details

An assessment of the potential of Belle Vue Hotel, 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 has been empty since suffering fire damage. 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): southern gable end; upper front (west) face; rear of building; eastern roof section

The external walls are blockwork, rendered and painted, affording no crevices. Junctions with chimney, dormer windows etc. are generally tightly sealed. The guttering and soffit boards are tightly-fitted and no squeeze gaps are apparent behind these. The chimneys to either end are of sound construction. Some original windows are intact, others are boarded. The upper level comprises a large attic room with dormer windows to the front and Velux windows to the rear. Internal walls on the top storey are stone and well-mortared. Minor cavities were apparent in the gable-end walls.



Internal photographs (clockwise from top-left): Upper storey; ridge showing newer (white) membrane and older (black) bitumen membrane; minor cavity 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.

Windows have been left open over part of the summer, and feral pigeons had gained access to the building. Pigeon droppings and feathers were apparent, and birds were seen in the upper level. Aside from the two open windows noted, no obvious potential access points for bats were apparent. The west-facing roof section comprises tightly sealed slates above solid insulation, and holds no roosting

potential. The east-facing roof section has a void between the slates and the membrane, but views from the Velux window here suggested that the slates are all tightly laid, with none missing, cracked or lifted. Internally, the building has no enclosed spaces suitable for a significant roost; minor gaps in the stonework on the northern gable end were the only minor potential roost spaces apparent.

The survey concluded that bats are not likely to be present in the building. They would have the potential to colonise if windows were to remain open, but these are reportedly due for imminent replacement and closure.

Licencing

No further action is required, and no licence necessary.

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.