BAT PRESENCE/ABSENCE SURVEYS (PAS)

ROCK HOUSE & ROCK COTTAGE, HIGHER TOWN, ST MARTIN'S, ISLES OF SCILLY

Client: *Neil & Nicky Godden*

Our reference: *25-6-5*

Planning reference: *P/25/037/FUL*

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Executive Summary

Overview
A total of two Presence/Absence Surveys (PAS) were undertaken on the semi-detached residential properties known as Rock House and Rock Cottage in Higher Town, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly. The results of these PAS surveys are compiled in this report which should be read alongside the Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) report for this site.
Results
The surveys did not identify any bats emerging from the property. The surveys recorded individual common pipistrelle bats in flight on both occasions – these were foraging or commuting individuals in the garden and local environs but were not associated with the building itself. 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
A precautionary method of working would represent good practice during construction and renovation works – outline recommendations are provided in this report. Recommendations to enhance the provision of roosting habitat for local bat populations 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 Surveys

The scope of the survey includes the semi-detached properties of Rock House and Rock Cottage. The survey scope does not include outbuildings or extensions which would not be directly or indirectly impacted by the proposals.

The proposed works include the replacement of the existing roof covering and works to repair or replace the chimneys.

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) of the site undertaken in February 2025 identified 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 building 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 site with regards to ecological receptors.

1.2. Survey Objectives

In accordance with the Best Practice Guidance[1], the relevant aspects of the building were subject to two PAS surveys with two surveyors with Night Vision Aids (NVAs) positioned to observe those locations where potential access or roosting features were identified.

The overall objective is to provide a comprehensive baseline upon which to assess the potential impact of the proposed works on 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, 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.

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 surveys were conducted following Best Practice methodology for bat surveys.

The two PAS surveys were carried out on the evenings of 25th May 2025 and 23rd June 2025 – scheduled over three weeks apart in accordance with Best Practice guidance.

The dusk emergence surveys commenced from approximately 15 minutes before sunset and continued until 90 minutes after sunset. The surveys were 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.

Night Vision Aids (NVAs) were used at each surveyor position – these comprised two Nightfox Whisker infra-red cameras with additional infra-red torches. The footage from these NVAs was watched back to verify or amend the survey results confirmed in the field.

2.3. Survey Validity and Update

Bats are transient in their use of roosting 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 valid for a period of 12 months after the survey was completed, until June 2026.

3. Results

3.1. Surveyor Positions

In order to ensure that the building received a survey effort in line with the Best Practice Guidance appropriate to its potential (as identified in the PRA survey) there were two surveyor positions at the north-eastern and south-western corners of the property. Each surveyor had an NVA occupying the same survey position.

3.2. PAS Survey 1

3.2.1. Survey Conditions

The first dusk survey was undertaken on 25th May 2025. The survey commenced at 9:00pm, approximately 15 minutes before sunset at 9:17pm. It was completed at 10:47pm.

The temperature at the beginning of the survey was 14°c dropping to 13°c by the end. The evening was mild with a fresh breeze and 10% high patchy cloud cover. There was no precipitation.

3.2.2. Survey Results

The survey did not identify any emergence activity.

3.2.3. Bat Activity Results

One common pipistrelle bat was recorded foraging briefly in the garden to the east of the property at 9:48pm before flying offsite to the north-east. A second individual was recorded flying from the south-west along the eastern aspect of the property and continuing offsite to the north-east at 10:10pm.

No further bat activity was recorded.

3.3. PAS Survey 2

3.3.1. Survey Conditions

The second dusk survey was undertaken on 24th June 2025. The survey commenced at 9:20pm, approximately 15 minutes before sunset at 9:38pm. It was completed at 11:08pm.

The temperature throughout the survey was 16°c. The evening was dry and overcast with a light breeze and high patchy cloud. There was no precipitation.

3.3.2. Survey Results

The survey did not identify any emergence activity.

3.3.3. Bat Activity Results

One common pipistrelle was recorded flying in from the north and foraging around the north-eastern side of the property at 9:58pm before continuing offsite to the west. Further foraging activity was recorded intermittently but infrequently in the garden to the west of the property throughout the remainder of the survey.

3.4. Summary and Evaluation

3.4.1. Overview

The surveys did not identify any bats emerging from the building – this is sufficient to conclude 'Likely Absence' in accordance with the Best Practice Guidance.

3.4.2. Requirement for Further Surveys

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

3.5. Limitations and Constraints

3.5.1. Seasonal Timing

The surveys were undertaken within the main active season in 2025 and spaced more than three weeks apart – this conforms with the recommended survey timings within the Good Practice Guidelines.

3.5.2. Survey Conditions

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

3.5.3. Visibility and Coverage

The surveys were comprehensive with regards to surveyor visibility.

3.5.4. NVA Footage

The NV camera Field of Vision (FOV) covered the key areas under survey – see Appendix 2 for example screenshots from the footage. There were minor aspects which could not be covered by the cameras due to the space available or obstructions to the FOV. This constraint is addressed by three factors:

1) The NVAs focussed on the aspects where the key PRFs were identified – the areas outside of the FOV had lower suitability features;

2) Surveyors were positioned to ensure that the areas not covered by the NVAs were most proximate to their survey position and were carefully monitored in the field;
3) The NVAs were positioned at opposite corners of the property such that, in the event that a bat appeared from an aspect of the property outside of the FOV, it's exit would be recorded by the NVAs and could be cross-referenced with notes in the field, triggering further surveys if necessary.

The results of the survey, combining the results of the NVAs and the surveyor records allow high confidence that the results are robust.

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 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 directly affect any confirmed roosts, commuting routes or foraging habitat – therefore no habitat creation or enhancement is required.

If the applicant wished to provide enhancement measures, the installation of a bat box positioned below the eaves on either aspect of the property would have a high likelihood of occupation given the location in good quality habitat towards the edge of the settlement.

An open-based box design would ensure that it would not require cleaning. The location and aspect would be optimal for bats such as common pipistrelle which is the dominant species present on the island and the most likely species to use the environs for foraging and roosting.

A suitable box could be purchased or constructed following freely available plans. Kent Bat Box style boxes are slim and easy to construct from appropriate timber using the plans provided at:
http://www.kentbatgroup.org.uk/kent-bat-box.pdf

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 occasional gaps where the fascias meet the walls - where these are to be removed or impacted as part of the proposed works, they 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.

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

NVA S1 – showing footage from the Nightfox Whisker located at the survey position at the south-western corner.

NVA S2 – showing footage from the Nightfox Whisker located at the survey position at the north-eastern corner.