

**SARON VESTRY
PEN Y CAE RD
PORT TALBOT**

**BAT SURVEY
July 2019**

- 1 survey at the request of-**
Mr Martyn Jones, owner.
- 2 proposed works**
Conversion of former chapel vestry to-dwelling use.
- 3 site: name/grid ref**
Saron Vestry, Penycae Road, Port Talbot SA13 2EP
SS772903
- 4 nature & date of survey**
09th July 2019- assessment of bat-use *via* external/internal search
09th July 2019- roost-emergence/activity watch/survey.
24th July 2019- roost-emergence/activity watch/survey
- 5 objectives-**
 - to assess the likelihood of any bat (or other protected species) use of the building
 - to identify any constraints consequent upon the discovery of bats (or other protected species) in the building.
- 6 surveyors**
*Rob Colley Associates; 4-5 Waterfall Terrace, Resolven, Neath SA11 4EE
01639 710239 rob.colley@ecosurveys.uk.com*

Rob Colley: scientific/conservation bat licence 1999-, SO86091/1
Rob Taylor: scientific/conservation licence, 1995-
Len Moran: named agent, SO86091/1
- 7 ecology & legal status**
 - 7.1** Different bat species have different life-cycle strategies but, in general, each requires the following features:
 - hibernation roost sites, where stable winter temperatures allow a period of winter torpor (e.g. underground sites such as caves and mines, or crevices and hollows in mature standing trees)

- nursery roost sites, where females gather in the spring/early summer to give birth and rear their single offspring (e.g. roof spaces, crevices and hollows in mature standing trees)
- roost sites for individual, or small congregations of, males during spring-autumn (e.g. roof spaces, or crevices and hollows in mature standing trees)
- an insect-productive (usually ecologically diverse) feeding environment additionally, there is a poorly understood need for social-gathering sites at certain times of the year (e.g. the autumn mating season) for some, or all, species.

Most, if not all, British bat species are believed to be in decline; main threats to bat populations can be summarised as:

- the loss of invertebrate-rich foraging areas (eg. woodland, hedgerows, ponds)
- the loss of nursery and hibernation roosts (eg. caves and mines, roof spaces, large standing trees)
- the effects of toxic chemicals (eg. timber preservatives in roof-space roosts, agricultural insecticides which reduce prey species).

- 7.2 All British bats, and their roosts (occupied or not) are protected by i) **The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010** (the "Habitats Regs"): this legislation implements the EC Habitats and Species Directive in the UK, and ii) the **Wildlife and Countryside Act** (as amended by the **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**) Schedule 5.

Developments which compromise the protection afforded to a European Protected Species require **Natural Resources Wales licence** (Habitats Regs). The granting of licence will be conditional on i) an agreed "works methodology", designed to minimise impact on the bat(s), ii) agreed "mitigation", to ensure the provision of alternative roost potential at/near the development. Where planning permission is sought, the LPA will need to know, at application stage, what methodology/mitigation is being proposed: this is to i) avoid changes in planning designs, post pp, ii) ensure that LPAs comply with reg 3(4) of the Habs Regs, and iii) allow the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (NRW) to properly advise the LPA.

These protections can be summarised as prohibiting- taking, killing or injuring a bat; damaging or destroying a roost (occupied or not); obstructing access to a roost; disturbing in-roost bats.

The **Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006/Environment (Wales) Act 2016** requires all public authorities/bodies to have regard for the conservation of biodiversity- eg. when considering planning applications. There is a particular requirement to address those species and habitats targetted by the **UK Biodiversity Action Plan**, in pursuance of which the Welsh Gov't have listed Common and Soprano pipistrelles, Noctule, Brown long eared, Greater and Lesser Horseshoe, Barbastelle and Bechstein bats at Section 42: Species of Principal Importance (NERC)/section 7 (EWA) for Conservation of Biological Diversity. Implementation of this responsibility varies across authorities but, typically, some LPAs ask for "bat accommodation" as a routine req't, and some require survey data to be passed to a Local Records Office.

8 methods

Survey methodologies are implemented as appropriate, based on experienced surveyors' assessment of the features at each site and with reference to the advice in *Bat Surveys: Good practice guidelines* (Bat Conservation Trust, 2007/2012/14) & *Bat Workers' Manual 3rd ed.* (JNCC 2004).

building assessment:

Internal/external daytime survey of the building was made, searching for possible bat (or other protected species) entry/exit and roosting points, incidental evidence (principally faeces) of bat use of the building and direct evidence of roosting bats.

emergence watch: On two dates, over the period during which bats can be expected to leave their roosts, direct observation was made of the building exteriors to monitor any bat movement in or out; heterodyne, time expansion and frequency-division bat detectors were used to assist species detection/identification.)

DNA genotyping: n/a (When surveyors are unsure of the origin of any bat faeces found, these are submitted to Dr Robin G Allaby, University of Warwick, for species ID via genotyping.)

overnight (dusk-dawn) remote data recording: n/a (At sites where initial investigation suggests that it is appropriate, Anabat (or Songmeter) detector-recorder equipment is left *in-situ* to indicate species identification and patterns-of-use at the site.)

methodology/mitigation: Methodology/mitigation measures, where appropriate, are based on the surveyor's experience of similar situations, with reference to *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (English Nature, 2004) & *Bat Workers' Manual 3rd ed.* (JNCC 2004).

9 results

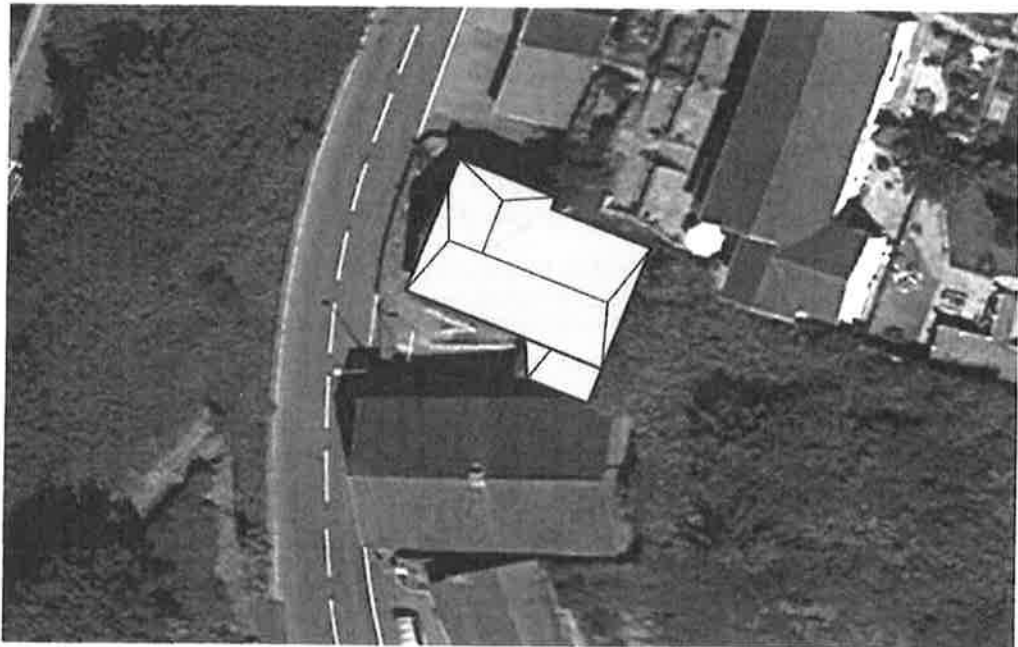
9.1 site location, adjacent habitat:



The site is roadside, at ribbon housing on the eastern side of the Afan valley, at the northern edge of Port Talbot urbanisation. To-west (over road) a steep wooded bank falls to the Afan river and tree corridor, with extensive valley floor housing beyond; to-east (beyond ribbon housing) there is extensive hillside (Mynnyd Emroch) heath/rough grazing.

The valley bottom riparian corridor supports a range of bat species: pipistrelle day-roosts are known at housing 200m to-west (over river) and 0.5km to-north up-valley, two *Myotis* spp and Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* bats are activity-survey recorded at the river corridor.

The survey building is a former vestry/schoolroom, at the (north) side of a larger chapel building; the building is unused and, at the time of survey, partly gutted internally. The main through-valley road is immediately to the front/west of the building; there is roadside housing to-north and to-south, and further housing at the uphill bank to-east.



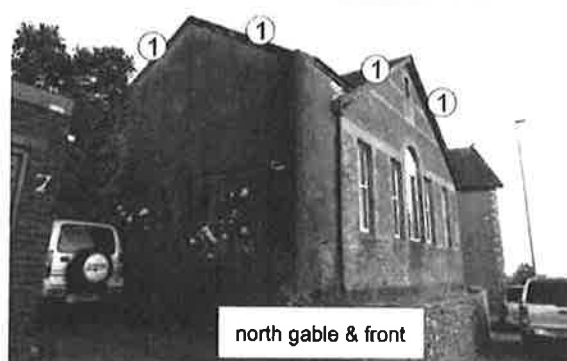
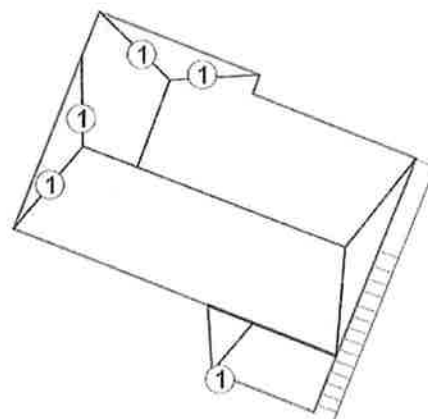
9.2 general description; bat access points; potential bat-roost opportunity; evidence of bat presence:

annotation refers to sketch plan/photo's, below

The survey building is a single large space, under a main east-west pitched roof with a subsidiary north-south pitched roof and gable at its western end; there is a small, monopitch roofed, extension at the south-east corner of the building. Immediately to rear, at <2m, is a 5m high stone wall, with a scrub covered abandoned garden above.

Walls are dressed stone, with cement rendering at the north gable; all are in good repair, with no potential intra-masonry bat-access; all doors/windows are intact and tight fitting, giving no fly-in bat access opportunity. Open louvres at a rectangular vent, high at the west gable, give potential attic access for (eg. *Plecotus* sp.) bats.

At walltops, there are bat accessible gaps between wall masonry and-soffits/fascias at west and north gable barges and at the small south east extension longwalls (1, sketch plan/photo); rear (east) gable barges are mortar sealed.



All roofs are slate clad; all are in good repair, with no visible from ground bat-access opportunity; a (red brick) chimney stack at the small south-east (kitchen, cuddy) extension is good repair/sealed.

Internally, a single attic space extends over the building: the attic-floor level steps down below the subsidiary north-south ridge, with a low through-connection from the void below the main east-west roof void. Roof timbers are tight jointed trusses, with simple rafters and ridgeboards; all of the roofs are unsarked; there is no insulation at the (l&p) attic floors; internal gable masonry is good repair/sealed, and roof-timber over gable walltops which are open/exposed.

No bat interest was identified inside the (kitchen, cuddy) extension rooms.

Potential bat roost opportunity is limited to behind fascias/soffits and above ridgeboards. No evidence of bat use was found externally, including at walls, windows and paths below the bat-accessible fascias/soffits. No evidence of bat (or owl) use was found, internally, including at the part-gutted building interiors and the attic void.

9.3 emergence watch:

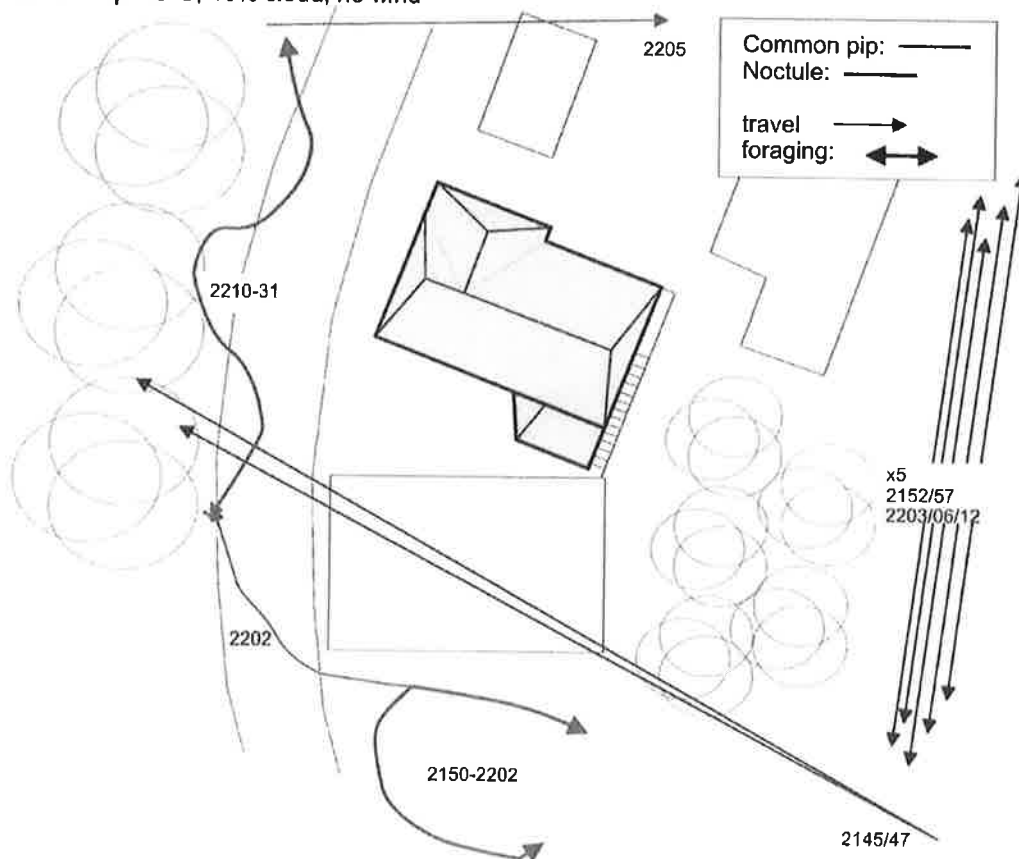
At two dates, observers were positioned to allow detection of any bat movement from, to, or past the buildings.

Common pipistrelle *P. pipistrellus*, and Noctule *Nyctalus noctula* were seen/heard at/near to the site.

10th July 2019

2130-2245

start temp. 15°C; 10% cloud; no wind



Common pipistrelle: x1 feeding at front gardens downhill/south of site, 2150-2202; x1 crossed road, south of site, to below road scrub, 2202 (thought to be same animal); x1 west-east to north of site, 2205 x1 feeding above to-west downhill scrub, 2210-31.

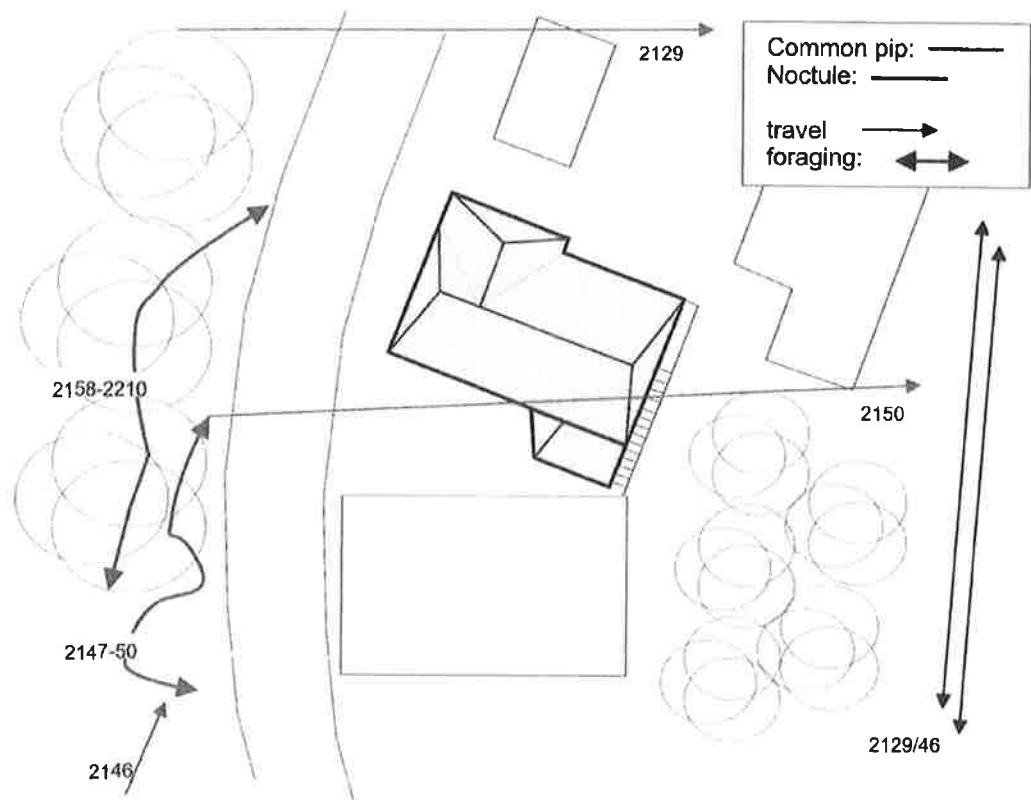
Noctule: x2 (high) across valley, east-west, 2145/47; audio detections and visual sightings above the to-east hillside, 2152-2212, were thought to be five different animals.

No bats emerged from (or entered) the survey building; no other bats were seen/heard.

23rd July 2019

2115-2235

start temp. 21°C; 5% cloud; wind fc2 ne



Common pipistrelle: x1 west-east across road to north of site, 2129; x1 from south to over-road scrub, 2146, with x1 foraging here 2147-50, before overflying site to-east, 2150; x1 foraging over-road/downhill scrub bank, 2158-2210.

Noctule: two detections/sightings above to-east hillside, 2129/46.

No bats emerged from (or entered) the survey building; no other bats were seen/heard.

9.4 No owl activity was seen/heard at either visit.

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- 9.5 overnight (dusk-dawn) remote data recording: n/a
- 9.6 DNA genotyping: n/a
- 9.7 other-season bat use- assessment: no "likely" winter-roost sites were identified: there is no intra-masonry bat-access and the roof is too subject to thermal fluctuation to give suitable winter-roost conditions.

10 **summary/assessment**

No evidence of bat (or owl) use/presence was found, internally or externally; no bat emergence was seen at two-date direct observations, and no bat-activity close to the building was seen.

No bat-related constraint to the proposed renovation/conversion is identified by this survey.

Rob Colley
August 2019