

**Derelict House at
Llandarcy Park
Llandarcy
Skewen
Neath SA10 6FJ**



**A Preliminary Roost
Assessment Report
By:**



On Behalf Of:



March 2022

Client	NPTC Group of Colleges
Project Name	Derelict House at Llandarcy Park, Llandarcy, Skewen, Neath SA10 6FJ
Report Title	A Preliminary Roost Assessment Report
File Reference	JM3122

Status	Name	Position	Date
Author	Robert W Morgan	Ecologist	17th March 2022
Reviewer	Phillip L Morgan CEnv MCIEEM	Assistant Principal Ecologist	23rd March 2022

Contents

	Page No.
1 Executive Summary	1
2 Introduction	1
3 Surveyor Experience	1
4 Survey Methodology	1 – 2
5 Site Description	2
6 Desktop Study	2 – 3
7 Survey Constraints	3
8 Survey Results	3
9 Discussion and Conclusions	3 – 4
10 Recommendations	4
11 References	4
Appendix I: Site Location Plan	5
Appendix II: Site Photographs	6 – 7
Appendix III: Ecology of British Bats	8
Appendix IV: Relevant Legislation	9

List of Tables

Table	Description of Contents	Page
Table 1	Survey Site Details	1
Table 2	Summary of Survey Activity and Weather Conditions	3

List of Figures

Figure	Description of Contents	Page
Figure 1	Aerial view of the site	5

List of Plates

Plate	Description of Image	Page
Plate 1	View of the house from the north-east	6
Plate 2	View from the north	6
Plate 3	View from the south	6
Plate 4	View from the north-west	6
Plate 5	Eastern facing gable end wall	6
Plate 6	View of the roof structure and bitumen liner	6
Plate 7	Internal view of the eastern gable wall	6
Plate 8	Internal view of the western gable wall	6
Plate 9	Gaps behind barge boards at east gable	7
Plate 10	Gaps at eaves on the northern elevation	7
Plate 11	Gaps at barge boards on western gable 1	7
Plate 12	Gaps at barge boards on western gable 2	7
Plate 13	Gaps behind fascia boards on south elevation	7
Plate 14	Holes in the flat-roofed section attached to the eastern gable	7
Plate 15	Missing fascia boards on flat-roofed section	7
Plate 16	Active robin nest within dense ivy growth on eastern elevation	7

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The NPTC Group of Colleges wish to demolish an existing two-storey derelict house at Llandarcy Academy of Sport, at Skewen, near Neath. The proposed demolition is to make way for additional parking required at the site. These proposals will require consent from the local planning authority, Neath Port Talbot Council. To inform the planning process, a Preliminary Roost Assessment was carried out in March 2022, by an experienced, licenced Ecologist and assistant.
- 1.2 Day time inspection found no live bats both internally and externally. No evidence of bats was found (e.g. bat droppings, staining or insect remains). The building was assessed to have moderate roost suitability and has potential to be used by both crevice and non-crevice roosting bat species, with several gaps around the exterior shell of the building that offer potential access points. Roost and access features included gaps behind barge boards, fascia boards and opportunities created by the dense ivy growth covering four sides of the building. Given this potential, additional survey is required.
- 1.3 It is recommended that two dusk emergence/activity observations must be carried on the structure between the beginning of May and the end of September. This is the minimum level of additional appraisal required to adhere to national guidelines, and support the needs of the planning authority, as well as apply to Natural Resources Wales for a European Protected Species licence, if one is subsequently required.
- 1.4 Breeding birds were also considered during the survey. No active or inactive nests were found internally. However, during the external inspection, an active robin nest was noted within the ivy growth covering the flat-roofed section attached to the east side of the house. This bird was observed flying back and forth to this location, but was not observed carrying nest material or food at the time. The building also offers potential nesting opportunities for birds. Breeding birds are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and active bird nests cannot legally be disturbed or destroyed. General advice on the legal protection afforded to breeding birds is provided in this report in an unlikely event a nest is found during demolition.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The NPTC Group of Colleges wish to demolish the existing two-storey derelict house at Llandarcy Academy of Sport, at Skewen, near Neath. The demolition is to make way for additional parking required at the site. These proposals require consent from the local planning authority, Neath Port Talbot Council.
- 2.2 In order to consider the presence or potential presence of protected species, a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was commissioned from Just Mammals Limited, and undertaken by a licenced Ecologist and assistant in March 2022. Assessment comprised of a day time inspection of the building, both externally and internally. Details of the site location are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Survey Site Details

Address	Grid Reference	Altitude
Derelict House at Llandarcy Park, Llandarcy, Neath SA10 6FJ	SS 71854 95583	47m Above Ordnance Datum

- 2.3 Objectives of the assessment effort were to:
 - determine if bats or birds are present in, or have the potential to roost at the property;
 - consider if there will be impacts on bats from the proposed works;
 - gather sufficient information to be able to make appropriate recommendations.

3 Survey Team Experience

- 3.1 The lead surveyor and author of this report, is Robert Morgan, an experienced, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) licenced, Ecologist (S090915/1: expiry 20th February 2024), with Just Mammals Limited. Assisting with the PRA was Trainee Ecologist, Daniel White.

4 Survey Methodology

- 4.1 The PRA involved a day time visual appraisal of the derelict house (externally and internally), seeking signs of bat presence. External survey examined outer surfaces from the ground, looking for signs of bat presence, including bat faeces (droppings). A high-powered lamp and close focusing monocular were used to examine potential access and roosting areas. Gaps or crevices were inspected as closely as possible. The context of the building within the surrounding landscape

was also assessed.

- 4.2 Internal survey searched for bats or the remains of dead bats (including dead juveniles and babies, which might indicate the presence of a maternity site), and signs of bats including bat faeces (droppings) on floors, ledges, walls, stored items and other surfaces. The roof structure was inspected. The ridge area, which is a favoured roost location, was checked for live bats. Beneath this line, a careful search for droppings and insect parts was conducted. Urine staining, both on paintwork and window glass or staining on timbers caused by oil from bat fur were also searched for, as well as discarded fragments of insects, such as moth wings.
- 4.3 Nesting birds were also considered at the time of the assessment, with the surveyors looking for signs of historic bird activity, nest remains, evidence of collections of bird dropping, feathers or any other indications of use by birds.

5 Site Description

- 5.1 The house is located along the western boundary of Llandarcy Academy of Sport, in Llandarcy which is owned by NPTC Group of Colleges. From the Ordnance Survey 25 inch map of Great Britain, it appears to have historically been known as Henbarc Cottage. It is situated towards the southern end of the site, some 60m north from the south-west boundary corner, within the community of Llandarcy. The area comprises residential and commercial properties and is some 3.6km north-east of the centre of Neath. The surrounding countryside consists of a mixture of different habitats with pastoral farmland to the south and some small pockets of arable land with associated farmsteads. Further south is the Pant-y-Sais Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC), and Swansea Bay Golf Club. To the west there are remnants of the old Llandarcy Oil Refinery, and beyond that Crymlyn Bog SSSI/SAC. There are also multiple woodland areas in close proximity to the survey site.
- 5.2 A two-storey former dwelling, the house is rectangular in shape, and closely aligned to an east-west axis. It is constructed with a mixture of materials including stone, cement blocks and brick. Exterior walls have been covered with a stone-chip or Canterbury spa render, and it features a pitched roof covered with cement tiles; supported by a timber purlins, rafters and trusses. A central ridge board is present and the roof is lined with a bitumen membrane. At the west end of the roof is a brick chimney. Attached to the east and north elevations are two single storey flat roofed sections, which are accessed internally. These two flat roofs are covered with felt and stone chippings. There is dense ivy (*Hedera helix*) growth partially covering all elevations of the structure.
- 5.3 All barge boards and fascia boards are timber. At the western gable end wall, the barge boards are rotten. The single door on the north wall is metal with a metal frame. All window frames are wooden, and many of the ground floor level windows have been boarded with plywood. The rainwater products are all uPVC.
- 5.4 Habitat connectivity to the property is relatively good. A mature tree line along the western boundary of the Academy provides links to several nearby woodland blocks and the wider countryside. There are several water bodies in the vicinity which can provide excellent foraging habitat for bats which include the Afon Nedd, the Tennant Canal, and several other small unnamed water bodies. A large unnamed reservoir situated approximately 1km to the north. Both Crymlyn Bog SSSI/SAC and Pant-y-Sais SSSI/SAC provide a range of habitats, including bog, meadows, reed beds, waterlogged scrub and woodland which will all offer foraging opportunities for bats, as would the mainly broadleaf woodlands to the south. Overall connectivity to these features is good.

6 Desktop Study

- 6.1 The context of the site was considered with regard to statutory sites of nature conservation interest, such as a SSSIs, SACs, National Nature Reserves (NNRs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) etc. Within a 2km radius there are three designated sites; Pant-y-Sais SSSI/SAC is located approximately 1.06km to the south. Cors Crymlyn/Crymlyn Bog SSSI/SAC is situated approximately 1.23km to the west, and Earlswood Road Cutting and Ferryboat Inn Quarries SSSI is some 1.35km to the south-east. The development proposals are not considered likely to impact on any of the designated sites in the vicinity.

7 Survey Constraints

- 7.1 The only constraint or limitation resulted from the dense ivy growth covering the structure which

partially obstructed assessment of the barge boards at the gable ends and eaves on the southern elevation, hiding potential access features.

8 Survey Results

- 8.1 A single day time visit was made to the site on Monday the 7th of March 2022. Table 2 below summarises the details of the conditions under which the survey was undertaken. Wind speeds shown employ the Beaufort scale.

Table 2: Summary of Survey Activity and Weather Conditions

Date	Survey Type	Timing	Weather Conditions
07/03/2022	Day time visual inspection (RM, DW)	10.00 – 11.45 hours Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)	Air temperature: 12°C Cloud cover: 4/8 oktas Wind speed: F3, gentle breeze Conditions: Dry
Surveyors	Robert Morgan, Daniel White		

- 8.2 Assessment commenced with an internal inspection of the house, including the loft space; which found no live bats. No evidence of bats was found internally (i.e. no bat droppings, staining or insect remains). Nothing was found to indicate the presence of a bat roost within the building. A live brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) was seen briefly within the ground floor area and evidence of this species was seen inside the loft. Additionally, mouse droppings were noted in the loft.
- 8.3 Externally, survey revealed no live bats or evidence of bats in the form of bat droppings, staining or insect remains. However, the building was considered to offer moderate potential for crevice roosting bat species. Several potential access points which bats could exploit were noted. These features were identified as:
- gaps between the barge boards and the render provide access to the wall plates over the east facing gable end wall;
 - gaps between the fascia boards and the render provide access to the wall plates on the north and south facing elevations;
 - gaps in the fascia boards of the northern flat roofed section;
 - rotten timber barge boards with gaps at the west facing gable end wall;
 - several raised roof tiles;
 - large holes in the flat felt covered roof located at the base of the eastern gable end wall of the structure;
 - gaps around some of the boarded windows, potentially allowing bats to access the space between the wooden boards and the glass;
 - dense ivy growth over the east, north, south and west facing elevations.
- 8.4 Breeding birds were also considered during the inspection. No active or inactive bird nests were found internally. However, during the external inspection of the house, an active robin (*Erithacus rubecula*) nest was noted within the dense ivy growth covering the flat-roofed section attached to the east side of the house. This bird was observed flying back and forth to this location however, it was not observed carrying nest material or food at the time. Robins are known to be one of the earliest birds to build nests, especially in mild winters. This survey was conducted in early March within the bird nesting season. During the survey several birds were seen around the site which included jackdaw (*Corvus monedula*), Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*), and high above the site a sparrow-hawk (*Accipiter nisus*). Opportunities for birds to create nests were identified as:
- large holes in the flat felt covered roof located at the base of the eastern gable end wall;
 - missing fascia board on the west elevation of the northern flat-roofed section;
 - gaps in the rotten timber barge boards and gaps behind them large enough for small birds to access;
 - opportunities for birds to create nests within the dense ivy growth covering four sides of the building.

9 Discussion and Conclusions

- 9.1 As noted above, the owners wish to demolish a derelict house at Llandarcy Academy of Sport to make way for additional parking needed at the site. A PEA found no live bats internally or externally. No evidence of bats was found inside the loft or other internal parts of the building and no evidence was found externally. However, the house does offer moderate roost suitability to be used by both crevice and non-crevice roosting bats species.

- 9.2 As noted above there were multiple locations around the exterior of the house which would offer potential access to both crevice and non-crevice roosting bat species. This potential will require further assessment.
- 9.3 Presence of bats at other times of year, apart from the summer, was also considered. In this respect the structure is assessed to have negligible potential to be used by hibernating bats. There are no low-level features on the house that are suitable for hibernating bats. It is not considered a suitable structure for hibernation.
- 9.4 Survey found no active or inactive bird nests internally. However, during the external inspection of the house, an active robin nest was noted within the dense ivy covering the flat-roofed section on the east side of the house. The bird was observed flying back and forth to this location. Survey was conducted in early March within the bird nesting season. Opportunities for birds to create nests around the structure was also noted, and set out above. All breeding birds are legally protected and once a nest is established it is an offence to disturb or destroy the nest. Advice concerning breeding birds is given below.

10 Recommendations

- 10.1 The Preliminary Roost Assessment of the house found no live bats. No evidence of bat presence was found internally or externally. However, the property does offer moderate roost suitability for both crevice and non-crevice bat species. All bats and their places of rest are fully protected under British legislation, and as such, where there is evidence for the presence of bats, or where there is potential for them to be present, further assessment is required. It is necessary to examine this derelict house in greater detail to gain an understanding of any bat activity, roosting behaviour, and the bat species present.
- 10.2 Consequently, two dusk emergence/activity observation must be carried out on the property between the beginning of May and the end of September. This is considered to be the minimum level of extra assessment to comply with national guidelines and required to support the needs of the local planning authority and to apply for a European Protected Species (EPS) licence, if one is required.
- 10.3 Sufficient observers will be needed in order to watch key aspects of the property, and survey must be undertaken under appropriate climatic conditions in compliance with national guidelines. Survey must therefore be carried out on dry evenings, with relatively low wind speeds and at temperatures in excess of 8°C.
- 10.4 Breeding birds are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and active bird nests cannot legally be disturbed or destroyed. Once a nest is established, the birds must be able to have access at all times until the young have fledged and the nest is no longer active. The bird breeding season commences as early as March for some species and continues to late August for species which rear a second or third brood. If an active nest is found, it must be retained and protected from disturbance. A cordon must be established for a safe working zone a suitable distance from the nest site, and not until the chicks have fledged can the nest be destroyed and the cordon taken down.

11 References

- Aebischer, N.J., Balmer, B., Brown, A.F., Eaton, M.A., Douse, A., Lindley, P., McCulloch, N., Noble, D.G., Stanbury, A., Win, I. (2021). *'Birds of Conservation Concern 5: The Population Status of Birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man'*. British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford
- Collins, J. (Ed.) (2016). *'Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines – 3rd Edition.'* Bat Conservation Trust, London
- Mitchell-Jones A.J. and McLeish A.P. (2004). *'The Bat Workers Manual – 3rd Edition'*, English Nature, Peterborough
- Ninnes, R. (2015). *'NRW Approach to Bats and Planning'*, Natural Resources Wales, Bangor

Appendix I: Site Location Plan

Figure 1: Aerial view of the site



Aerial View of the Site		Legend ● Site location □ Extent of building
Site Reference: JM3122	Just MAMMALS Limited	
Map Scale: 1: 15 000 & 1: 500		
Source: © Google Satellite Imaging 2022		

Appendix II: Site Photographs

Plate 1: View of the house from the north-east



Plate 2: View from the north



Plate 3: View from the south



Plate 4: View from the north-west



Plate 5: Eastern facing gable end wall



Plate 6: View of the roof structure and bitumen liner



Plate 7: Internal view of the eastern gable wall

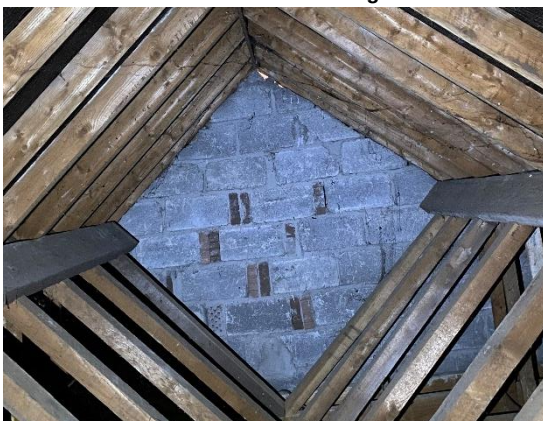


Plate 8: Internal view of the western gable wall

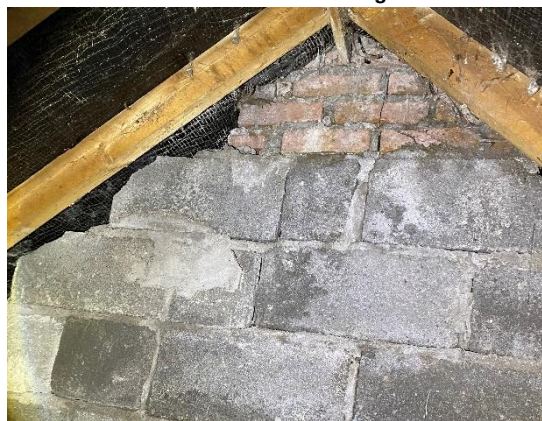


Plate 9: Gaps behind barge boards at east gable



Plate 10: Gaps at eaves on the northern elevation



Plate 11: Gaps at barge boards on western gable 1



Plate 12: Gaps at barge boards on western gable 2



Plate 13: Gaps behind fascia boards on south elevation



Plate 14: Holes in the flat-roofed section attached to the eastern gable

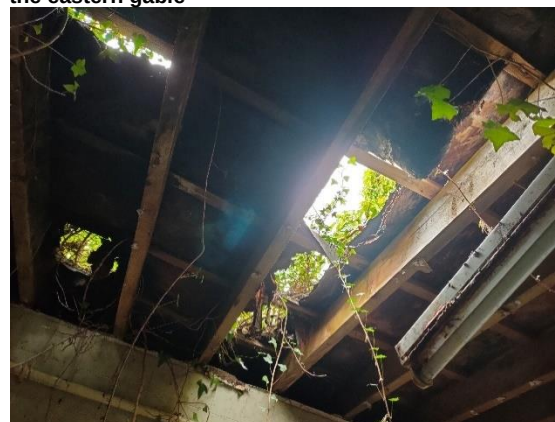


Plate 15: Missing fascia boards on flat-roofed section



Plate 16: Active robin nest within dense ivy growth on eastern elevation



Appendix III: Ecology of British Bats

There are at least 18 species of bats breeding in Britain. Most of them are regarded as threatened due to a variety of factors including habitat loss, intolerance and disturbance/damage or loss of roosts. Of these species a number regularly use buildings at certain times of year in order to find safe secure roost sites. Often several different species can use a building over the course of the year, and not all species are present at the same time, making assessment of their presence complex.

Bats are highly mobile flying mammals, which in Britain feed entirely on insects. They have evolved over seventy million years and have developed sophisticated mechanisms to allow them to effectively 'see' in the dark by using sound waves. This system is called echo-location which enables them to track and hunt down small moving insects whilst in flight, rather like radar does in a modern military fighter aircraft. It is possible to record this sound, and because each species of bat echo-locates in a different way, determine what the species is without actually handling the animal which made the call.

In winter, when their prey is scarce, British bats hibernate or enter torpor, in cool parts of caves, buildings (cavity walls), and tree cavities. They may wake occasionally and will feed if evening temperatures are greater than 7°C, when flying insects can be active. Generally however, activity during cold winters is very limited and bats only become fully active in spring, with late March and early April being a critical time for animals desperately trying to save energy whilst gaining weight. Disturbance during these months can therefore be more devastating to bats than at other times of year.

By late spring female bats will gather together in maternity roosts in order to give birth and rear their single baby in June. Such maternity roosts are often near to important foraging areas in order to save energy as flight requires vast energy resources. Flight routes to and from such roosts can therefore also be important and some bats are extremely light averse preferring dark locations without street or security lamps which can force them to take complex routes to reach foraging areas. Such lighting can also badly degrade foraging areas where they occur close to buildings and hedgerows and tree lines can be particularly important areas for bat foraging to take place particularly when close to the roost building.

Whilst females form maternity colonies, usually in warmer roofs or trees, male bats tend to seek out cooler sites which may not be so close to the foraging areas. Males are often solitary and do not exhibit the social behaviour that marks out females during the birthing period. Non-breeding females will also roost in this way, when they have no need to spend energy on raising a single baby.

Several British bat species are known to rely heavily on buildings to roost. Of these species, the most likely are the soprano pipistrelle bat and the common pipistrelle. Other bat species regularly found in buildings are the brown long-eared bat; Natterer's bat; Brandt's bats and whiskered bat. Pipistrelle species and the small myotis or mouse-eared species (Brandt's, whiskered etc) often favour locations at the ridge or around the exterior shell of the structure. Brown long-eared and Natterer's tend to prefer living within the roof area of a building – large lofts being popular.

Other species that are known to use the internal areas of built structures such as barns include the two horseshoe species, the greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), and lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), as well as western barbastelle bat (*Barbastella barbastellus*).

Appendix IV: Relevant Legislation

Bats

All species of bat in Britain, and their places of rest are protected under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA), Section 9(1), 9(4)(a) and 9(4)(b) as amended by Schedule 12 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Further protection is afforded by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019. In relation to structures used by bats for shelter or protection (i.e. roosts), this legislation makes it an offence to either intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any site used by bats, whether bats are present at the time or not, or to intentionally or recklessly disturb bats within a roost.

Infringements under this legislation include building demolition, removal of hollow trees, blocking, filling or installing grills over old mines or tunnels, building alteration or maintenance work, re-pointing of stone walls, getting rid of unwanted bat colonies, re-roofing, remedial timber treatment, re-wiring or plumbing in roofs, treatment of wasps, bees or cluster flies (Mitchell-Jones, 1992; Childs, 2001). Greater horseshoe bat, lesser horseshoe bat, Bechstein's bat, greater mouse eared bat and barbastelle are included in Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019 and hence require special protection.

Maximum penalties for committing offences relating to bats or their roosts can amount to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to fines of up to Level 5 on the standard scale under the Criminal Justice Act 1982/1991 (i.e. £5000 in April 2001) per roost or bat disturbed or killed, or to both. Bodies corporate and their directors/secretaries are liable for offences under the 2017 Regulations and the WCA. Additionally, where such an offence results in the offender benefitting in a monetary form from the illegal action, confiscation or civil recovery of the proceeds can occur under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

It is sensible to assess as soon as possible if bats are present at potential sites for development – preferable before the land is acquired. In some cases the period required for adequate survey work may span more than one calendar year. If a development, including demolition or change of use, is likely to impact on bats and their roosts then a licence will usually be required. Adequate survey results are a necessary input to any licence application. If bats are not found until late in the development stage this may result in delays while a licence is sought and even in offences being committed.

The law with respect to dwellings and other structures is applied equally. Where disturbance is deemed likely to have a significant effect on bats to survive, breed and rear their young or will affect the local distribution and abundance of the species, a European Protected Species licence issued by Natural Resources Wales. A licence application must demonstrate that the development will not be detrimental to the maintenance and conservation status of the species concerned.

This explanation must be regarded only as a guide to the law. For further details, reference must be made to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) 2019 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

Wild birds

All wild birds, their eggs and nests are protected by The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence, with certain exceptions, to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;
- intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird;
- sell wild birds or put them on display for sale;
- use traps or similar items to kill, injure or take wild birds; and
- intentionally, or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird

Penalties that can be imposed for criminal offences in respect of a single bird, nest or egg contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is an unlimited fine, up to six months imprisonment or both. In exceptional cases NRW and Natural England issues licences for specific purposes, so that legitimate work may be undertaken without breaking the law.

This document has been produced by Just Mammals Limited for NPTC Group of Colleges solely. It may not be used by any person for any other purpose other than that specified without the express written permission of Just Mammals Limited. Any liability arising out of use by a third party of this document, for purposes not wholly connected with the above, shall be the responsibility of that party, who shall indemnify Just Mammals Limited against all claims, costs, damages, and losses, arising out of such use.

Unless specifically assigned or transferred within the terms of agreement, the consultant asserts and retains all Copyright, and other Intellectual Property Rights, in and over the document and its contents.

We confirm that in preparing this document we have exercised reasonable skill and care, taking into account the project objectives, the agreed scope of the work, prevailing site conditions, the degree of manpower and resources allocated to the project, and in compliance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct.

This document is valid for a period of two years from the front cover date.

Just Mammals Limited is an ecological consultancy based in Mid-Wales. Specialising in legally protected mammal, reptile and amphibian species, but providing a wide range of ecological services, it provides appropriate expertise on behalf of a range of clients.

Clients include government departments, local and regional authorities, development agencies, commercial and industrial enterprises as well as statutory nature conservation organisations, wildlife trusts and other charitable bodies.

Please visit our web site www.justmammals.co.uk to see the full range of services we offer and some of the projects we have undertaken in the past.