

Lower Dolfawr, Newbridge-on-Wye, Builth Wells LD2 3SA 201597 860142

# ECOLOGICAL WORKING METHOD STATEMENT AND NETT GAIN BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENTS

Pontfaen Barns Near Clifford Herefordshire

January 2019



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## 1.0 Introduction

Protected Species Ecology Ltd (PSE) were commissioned to produce a revised **Ecological Working Method Statement and Nett Gain Biodiversity Enhancement Document** to accompany a new planning application for Pontfaen Barns, Near Clifford, Herefordshire HR3 5EW. PSE produced an earlier version of the **Ecological Method Statement** to satisfy Condition 11 of planning permission P142687/F granted by Herefordshire County Council on 03/09/2014, and this revised document is based on the original surveys together with a site visit completed in January 2019 (see below).

### 1.1 Site location

The centre of the site was situated at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SO235438.





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#### 1.2 Survey results

Old Pontfaen Barns comprised two adjoining Grade II listed barns forming an L-shaped structure. The northern barn had stone walls to 1.25 with a mix of timber cladding and woven timber panels above. It had a pitched roof, orientated east-west, clad in corrugated tin sheet with a tin ridge with a bitumastic felt liner. There were narrow timber barge boards on the gables, but no soffits and no fascia/soffits or rain-water goods on the northern elevation.

The southern barn had random stone walls with narrow slit openings on the eastern, western and southern elevations; the lintels of which were formed of timber and stone. It had a pitched roof, oriented north-south, clad with stone tiles over bitumastic felt. There were no bargeboards, fascia or soffits.

Internally, both barns were open to the roof and there were high light levels throughout. The roof timbers were original, and comprised a large ridge timber with series of tie, brace & collar beams.

A semi-mature oak tree was present to the north of the barn, which was to have been retained. The remainder of the area around the barn was bare ground/hard standing with derelict stone walls and former outbuilding to the west of the barns (a pile of rubble in 2014). There was a narrow strip of species-poor improved grassland (mown) along the western side and a strip of ground dominated by ruderal species (bramble/nettle)along the northern boundary with abandoned vehicles.

There were barn swallows *Hirundo rustica* nesting inside both barns (two nests in total).

#### 1.3 Bat survey results and assessment of impacts

Bat surveys of Pontfaen barns were completed in 2014. These confirmed the presence of a summer (breeding) and transitional roost used by up to 26 soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* bats and a summer (non-breeding) and transitional roost used small numbers of common pipistrelle *P. pipistrellus* whiskered *Myotis mystacinus* and brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus*.





The proposed conversion would have resulted in the loss of some of the transitional/hibernation roosting opportunities. This were assessed as having a minor negative impact on bats at a site or individual level, but not likely to have an impact on the conservation status or distribution of any of the bat species.

#### 1.4 Licensable works to date

The mitigation strategy for bats was to

- 1. Erect bat boxes on a nearby tree, to provide alternative roost sites during works,
- 2. Retain all the roosting opportunities for bats in the ridges and slit openings,
- 3. Retain bitumastic underfelt throughout the roof
- 4. Create new/additional accesses for bats into the ridge
- 5. Create two enclosed 1m high lofts (running the full length of both barns)
- 6. Retain or re-create gaps in the stone walls to maintain transitional/hibernation roosting opportunities.

Licence 2015-8990-EPS-MIT was issued by Natural England on 28/04/2015, and licensable works (damage/obstruction of roosts and disturbance to bats) took place between 18/05/2015 and 22/04/2016 under the direction of the named Ecologist (David Lewns) or an Accredited Agent (Penny Lewns).

All of the construction/conversion works likely to affect bats and all of the bat mitigation specified in Points 1 to 5 were completed during the 12 months up to April 2016. Stone gaps in the walls were filled and repaired following an detailed inspection for bats, but the gaps associated with the slit openings remain unchanged (the windows remain unglazed), and no new gaps in the stone walls (Point 6) have been created to compensate for losses.



## 2.0 Method Statement

#### 2.1 Original scheme recommendations

Sections 5.3 and 5.4 of the Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), dated August 2014, produced by PSE for the original planning application (P142687/F), included the following recommendations *that have been completed*:

- 1. A bat ecologist to inspect all potential bat roost sites prior to works starting,
- 2. Retain the existing bat roosting opportunities in the ridges and slit openings,
- 3. Retain (or replace) hessian based bitumastic felt throughout the roof
- 4. Incorporate bat boxes or replacement, equivalent bat roosting opportunities into the Barn,
- 5. Create additional access points for bats into the ridges,
- 6. The conversion to begin before the swallow nesting season (mid-April to end September).

The following recommendations were included in the EcIA and Ecological Method Statement (dated January 2015), but have *yet to be completed*.

- 7. The light spill from the building will be kept to a minimum on the western and northern boundaries, to maintain a dark corridor for bats. Where external lighting is required, lights with a low UV component, cowlings (or directional beams) and/or timers will be used to minimize overall light levels within the site. No lights will be directed at the bat exit points on the western or southern gables. Ecological mitigation and enhancements for other species
- 8. A native species hedge comprising a double staggered row of whips will be planted on the northern boundary.
- 9. Two pairs of Schwegler swallow cups (9A or 9B) will be installed inside the outbuilding to the east of the barns.



#### 2.2 Revised scheme recommendations

An EcIA of the revised scheme was completed by PSE in January 2019 (PSE2044\_EcIA\_Ltr\_Pontfaen\_Jan19). The following additional and modified recommendations were given. The measures are illustrated in **Figures 3.1 to 3.3 and Photo 1**:

- The three bat boxes (a Schwegler 1FF and two 2FN boxes) will be re-positioned under the direction of the Named Ecologist (or their Accredited Agent) before April 2019. It is proposed to use a group of three telegraph poles (since no suitable trees remain in the site) installed on the edge of the site boundary, adjacent to existing woodland.
- 2. Light levels around the Northern Barn exits will be minimised by incorporating measures to deflect light spill away from the exits. The western gable will have a deflector above or louvres fitted to the windows on the western elevation. The eastern gable will have fully overlapping timber cladding to least 750mm below the bat exit and louvres to deflect light from the upper window below that.
- 3. To compensate for the loss of roosts/functionality of roosts, two new bat roosts will be incorporated into the stone wall of the outbuilding. These will comprise integrated boxes (Schwegler 1FE or equivalent) or gaps in the stonework with equivalent functionality on the eastern elevation. The boxes or roosting opportunities will be installed or created under the direction of the Named Ecologist (or their Accredited Agent).
- 4. To prevent harm to bats, the outbuilding will be lined with hessian based Type 1F felt. Alternatively, if a breathable roofing membrane is to be used, the roof must be fully sealed to prevent bats access the membrane.
- 5. To compensate for the loss of biodiversity (semi-mature oak tree) new native species trees and shrubs of local provenance will be planted in the first planting season after the completion of the conversion/construction works. These will include a double staggered row of native hedge plants on the northern boundary, and at least two oak trees in the shelterbelt on the eastern boundary
- 6. To compensate for the loss of biodiversity (loss of swallow nests) two Schwegler 9B cups will be installed below the eaves, on the western aspect of the southern barn.



These will be suitable for use by house martin or swallow and will be sheltered from prevailing winds by the existing farmhouse and trees.

- 7. To provide biodiversity enhancement, a swallow terrace (Schwegler or similar) will be provided on the western aspect of the southern barn, below the eaves.
- To provide biodiversity enhancement, a native species hedge will be planted along the northern boundary of the site.

#### 2.3 Ecological clerk of works

The Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) and named ecologist on the EPS licence will continue to be **David Lewns** MCIEEM. David is a highly experience Ecological Clerk of Works (the first in the UK) and an experienced bat ecologist with over 20 EPS derogation licences issued in the last 5 years. David Lewns may appoint accredited agents (other suitably experienced and qualified ecologists) to assist under his direction or undertake work in his place.

The ECoW will be responsible for supervising any aspect of the work where bats are likely to be encountered, ensuring effective, accurate implementation of the Bat Mitigation Strategy, and for ensuring all other considerations in respect of ecology are conducted in accordance with UK legislation and best practice guidelines.

The ECoW will provide the contractor with a toolbox talk, covering details of the location of protected species on the site (principally bats), the mitigation measures that need to be followed, wildlife legislation and licensing, and procedures to follow should any protected species be found on the site during construction.



NET











EAST ELEVATION KEY:





Figure 3.3 Location of new bat roosts/bat access features on eastern elevation of outbuilding









PSE2044\_PontfaenBarns\_EcoMS\_Jan19



## 4.0 Timetable of works and persons responsible

The work covered by this timetable is expected to start in January 2019 and continue until September 2021:

WORK	DATE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	ECOLOGIST PRESENT?	DESCRIPTION
Repositioning 3 bat boxes on poles erected to north of barn	Before March 2019	Ecologist	YES	Ecologist to carry out work
Toolbox talk for contractor	Before March 2019	Ecologist	YES	Ecologist to carry out work
Installation of 2 swallow nesting cups and 1 sparrow terrace on western elevation of Southern barn	Before March 2019	Contractor	YES	Ecologist to oversee work
Inspection of bat access points on eastern and western gables of Northern barn following renewal of timbers.	Before March 2019	Ecologist	YES	Ecologist to oversee work
Inspection of lintels prior to installation of glazing to slit windows	As required	Ecologist	YES	Ecologist to carry out work
Installation of new bat roost in on eastern gable of outbuilding	As required	Contractor	YES	Ecologist to agree specification, location and oversee work
Planting native species hedge on northern boundary & 2 no. oak trees on eastern boundary	November 2019 to January 2020	Contractor	YES	Ecologist to oversee work
Bat monitoring surveys – Year 1	May to September 2019	Ecologist	YES	Ecologist to carry out work
Bat monitoring surveys – Year 3	May to September 2021	Ecologist	YES	Ecologist to carry out work