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Angela Graham Bat Consultancy Service

Preliminary Bat Survey Report for

25 Watt Street,
Sabden

Commissioned-by:
Oliver Eminson

Survey Date: 10/7/14 Report Date: 11/7/14

Introduction.

I was asked to assess the importance of this property to bats as part of the planning process, prior to it being extended to the rear.

This is an end stone terraced house:

It is in a rural location, less than 0.5kms from the nearest water and woodland:

The pipistrelle bat (2 species but especially *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) is common and widespread in the area. Roosts of this species can occur in any building that provides suitable roosting crevices, with the risk of bat presence increased by close proximity to good bat feeding habitat and commuting routes. The bats use different roosts at different times of year, sometimes singly and sometimes in large groups of females with dependent young. They can move frequently and unpredictably between the roost sites known to them.

No formal records search has been undertaken but my personal knowledge of the area suggests other species almost certain to occur within 2 kilometres include the brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) - the species most likely to leave evidence of roosting within lofts - and Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*), with species such as noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), whiskered (*Myotis mystacinus*), Brandt's (*Myotis brandtii*) and Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*) probable.

Bats and the Law.

All British bats and their roosts are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 (as amended) and the EC Habitats Directive of 1992 as implemented by the 2010 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations. (Further information is available via http://www.legislation.gov.uk/)

As a result of these two pieces of legislation, amongst other things it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats, disturb bats or damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts. Doing so can result in a custodial sentence. Fines of up to

£5000 per bat can be issued in cases of non-compliance with the law. Bat roosts are protected whether or not bats are present at the time.

Under the European legislation, it is necessary for a development to maintain the favourable conservation status of bats in their natural range. This has generally been interpreted as meaning no net loss of roosts, and it is expected that roosting provision for bats will be made better than or equal to whatever is being lost to development. Wider environmental issues such as changes to feeding and commuting habitat, and lighting, also require consideration. However, the term "roost" in this context, tends to be interpreted to exclude places used opportunistically on a single occasion by just one bat.

Under English legislation (the Wildlife and Countryside Act, as above), a "bat roost" is described as "any structure or place which any wild [bat]... uses for shelter or protection".

Implications.

Where a development will potentially impact on the favourable conservation status of bats in their natural range, a European Protected Species Licence is required before the roost can be interfered with in any way. It takes approximately 7 weeks for these to be issued once the application has been submitted. The application includes a Method Statement, and this along with the licence itself forms a legally binding document.

European Protected Species licences are issued providing planning permission has been granted, where appropriate.

Three conditions have to be met in order to obtain a licence and planning authorities are now required to apply the same 3 tests before granting planning consent:

- That the development is necessary for the purpose of "preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequence of primary importance for the environment";
- That there is "no satisfactory alternative";
- That the action authorised "will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range".

Accordingly, planners must now satisfy themselves before issuing planning consent that they have enough information to conclude that either the project will not have a negative impact on the favourable conservation status of bats, or if it seems likely it will, then appropriate mitigation and compensation measures will be employed to ensure this does not occur.

The mitigation and compensation measures would include appropriate timing and methodology for the work including details of how the bats will be provided-for in the long term.

Natural England, the Government body responsible for administering the law relating to bats, have issued guidelines to planners on how to proceed with respect to bats (http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningtransportlocalgov/spatialplanning/standingadvice/advice.aspx).

Outside the planning system, the onus is on developers/members of the public, to have sufficient investigations undertaken to satisfy themselves (and the authorities in the event of a subsequent investigation), that their actions are unlikely to be in contravention of bat legislation. Where this is in doubt it is necessary to seek appropriate advice and licencing before commencing any work on site.

N.b. It should always be remembered that bats often roost in places not anticipated by a lay person, such as modern buildings, trees with cavities and bridges. Some leave no signs in lofts, as they roost underneath external features such as roof slates, ridges, weather-boarding and cladding.

In the case of a building, tree or other feature not already known to be a bat roost, if bats are found during the course of work, contractors are legally obliged to stop work and seek advice. This should be from an appropriately experienced and licenced bat ecologist. Assuming good-quality bat survey work had been carried-out before the commencement of the project, and its recommendations followed, it would be unlikely that the discovery of bats during the course of the work would be considered to be "reckless" interference.

Additional Relevant Legislation and Policy.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) of 2006 requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. This is commonly referred to as the 'biodiversity duty', which relates to section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW).

The aim of the biodiversity duty is to raise the profile of biodiversity in England and Wales, so that the conservation of biodiversity becomes properly embedded in all relevant policies and decisions made by public authorities.

Accordingly, certain more vulnerable habitats and species are the subject of National and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plans. Some bat species are covered by such plans.

(http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/habsandspeciesimportance.aspx provides more information)

Birds.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 gives protection to the nests of all wild birds whilst being built or in use. The bird nesting season is generally considered to be 1st March to 31st July.

Survey

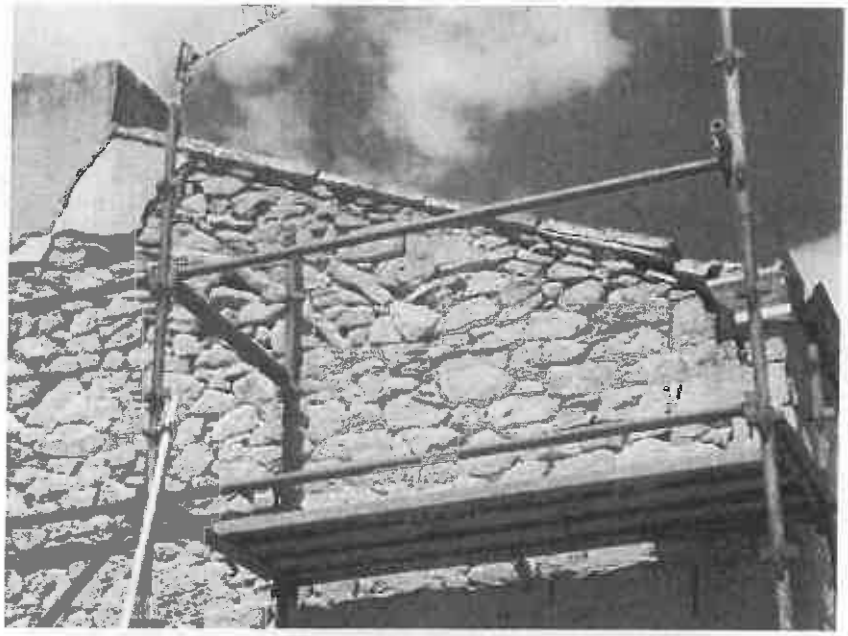
I made a daytime visit on 10/7/14 to undertake a preliminary survey of the building, assess its likely importance to bats and advise whether or not a precautionary approach or further survey work is needed.

Having being involved with bat survey work for 27 years and consultancy work for 18 years, it is always my objective to carry-out my work in a manner consistent with accepted Good Practice Guidelines (1) and consistent with the code of practice of the CIEEM. I hold Natural England Class Licences CL16 and CL18, Registration CLS03475 with respect to bats and a licence to disturb barn owls, number 20131271.

As far as possible, I surveyed the building inside and out with the aid of ladders, million candle-power torch and binoculars.

Findings.

Upon arrival I discovered a gable wall with a multitude of gaps that would allow bat access into the wall and would allow bird species such as the swift (*Apus apus*) - which was heard calling during the survey - to nest on the wall-head:

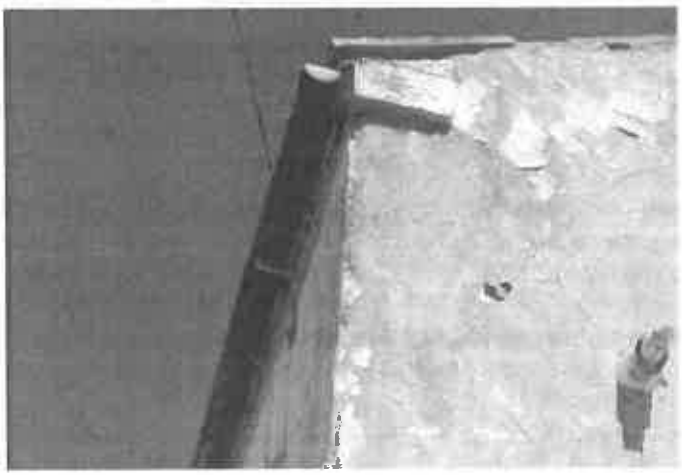


However, as the scaffold in the above photograph indicates, the render that covered these gaps was still in the process of being removed, and there was no evidence to suggest nesting by birds.

Ideally the render would not have been touched until after the bat survey, as bats can roost behind loose render, and in this case could probably also access gaps into walls via that route.

In addition there are gaps under roof slates on the house and rear annexes:

There is also a gap behind the rear fascia board:



The loft is small and the roof has been lined with bitumastic felt:

It well insulated with material that was laid at least a year ago, probably longer. The loft was difficult to move around but could be seen well with the aid of torch and binoculars. No evidence of roosting was found though daylight was visible at the front corner eaves and a large flap of bitumastic felt was hanging down suggesting access may be possible from the roof.

Flaps of felt could also be seen flapping:

Their function was uncertain.

Conclusions.

N.b. In arriving at these conclusions I am using my judgement as a licenced bat worker of over 20 years standing, with a wide range of experience of bat behaviour and activity, supplemented by formal training, as both a volunteer and a consultant.

There was no evidence at this visit to suggest roosting by bats but there are gaps under roof slates and behind a soffit, as well as into the gable wall where render has recently been removed.

I understand the property will not be re-roofed, though the extension will require the demolition of the annexes and the new roof will need to be tied into the old. Roosting potential under the annexe roof slates will be lost. Although these gaps may never be used and the losses probably wont be significant, it would be good practice to recreate some replacement gaps under roof-slates on the extension. See Appendix 1. This would however require the use of traditional bitumastic felt as a lining material as breathable membrane can be lethal to bats.

The recent changes to the gable wall have been significant and it is unknown the extent to which bats may have been able to gain entry to roost under render or within the wall previously.

I am told the wall will be re-rendered within the next week which should ensure there is no opportunity for new roosting places to become established while the gaps are exposed.

However it would be good practice to either retain some gaps through the new render to allow bats into the wall, or to install at least one commercially available, purpose-made, self-contained roost unit in the wall towards the gable apex. See Appendices 2 and 3.

I don't think the roosting potential associated with the property is so great that additional bat activity survey work is needed before work continues, or that a bat consultant needs to be present as the roof slates are removed, but care should still be taken when removing slates.

If gaps into walls remain open for more than a week, as pipistrelle bats in particular are so resourceful, it would be wise to check no bats are present before pointing-up the walls.

Recommendations.

These recommendations should be read in conjunction with the conclusions above.

If bat access into the gable wall remains possible for more than a week have a bat activity survey undertaken in favourable weather conditions before commencing re-pointing.

Retain bat access into the gable wall via one of the methods illustrated in Appendices 2 and 3.

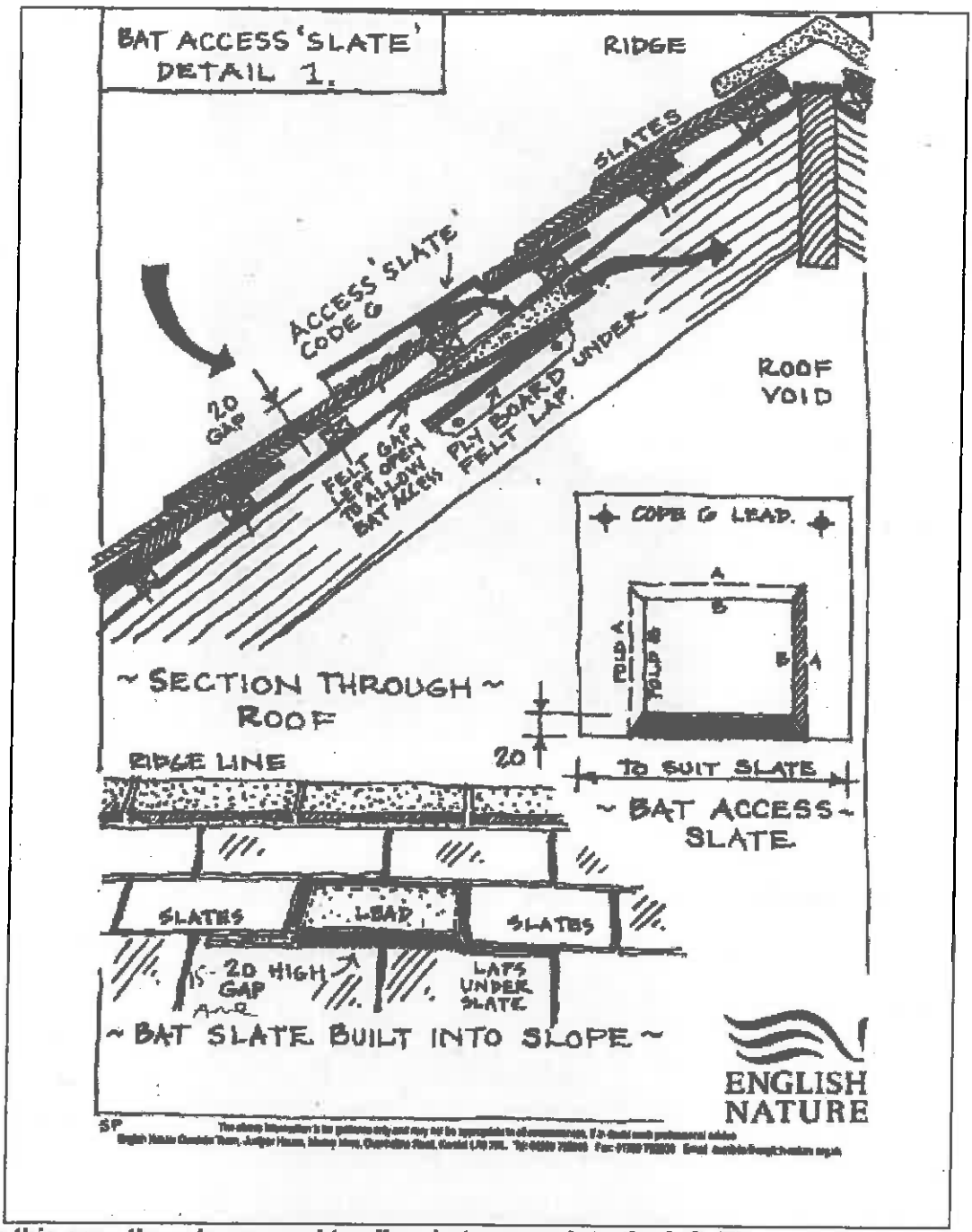
Ensure roof slates are removed by hand with care. If a bat or droppings that may have come from a bat are found work **must** stop immediately. There is a legal obligation to do this. As far as practicable the feature that was sheltering the bat/s should be replaced. Further advice **must** then be sought from the bat consultant before work continues.

Consider providing continued bat access under roof-slates on the extension, avoiding the use of breathable membrane. See Appendix 1. (Wherever access is provided for bats, it must be ensured that bitumastic felt is used to separate the potential bat roosting area from any breathable membrane used. It must be secured in such a way that bats cannot enter between the two layers. The reason is that it is now known that breathable membrane represents a serious threat to bats as their claws loosen the fibres allowing them to become fatally entangled, destroying the integrity of the membrane in the process.)

References.

1. Hundt L. (2012). Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines - Second Edition. Bat Conservation Trust.

Appendix 1 – bat access provision under roof slates



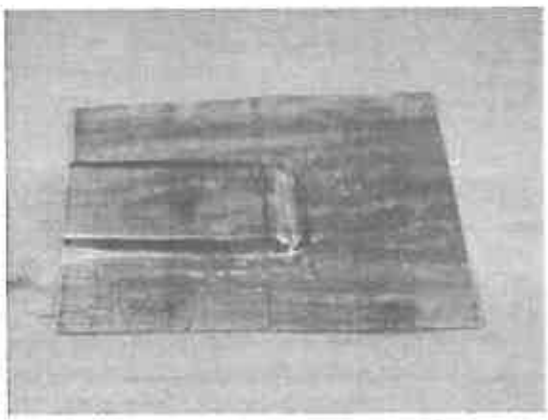
In this case there is no need to allow bat access into the loft. They need only to be able to roost beneath the slates.

Bitumastic felt must be used where bats are likely to come into contact with roof lining material. This is because bats can get their claws fatally entangled with the fine, tough fibres that go to make-up breathable membrane. There should be no possibility of bats coming into contact **with** breathable membrane.

Examples of provision of bat access under roof slates:

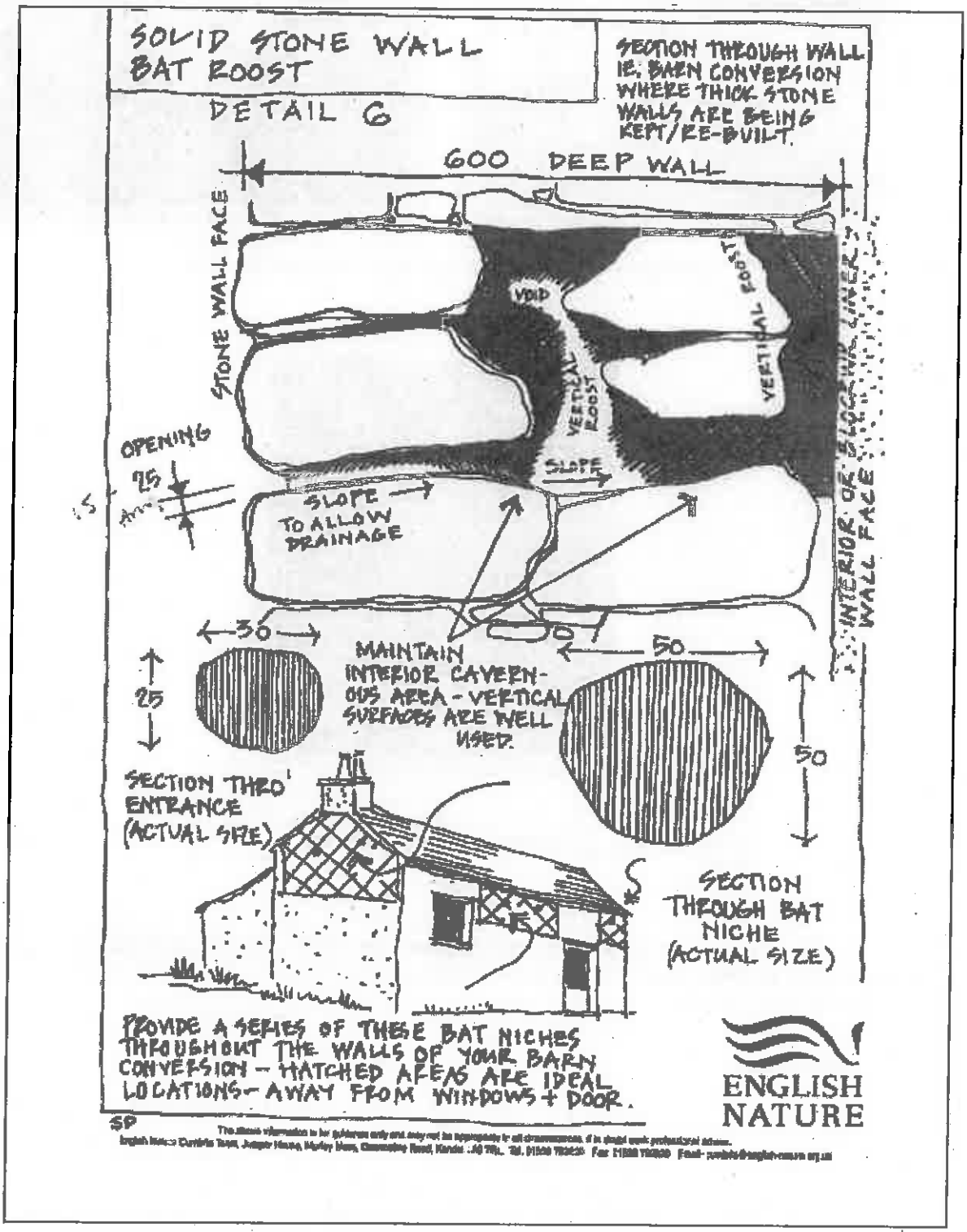
Access under slates is best provided close to gable edges and just below the ridge.

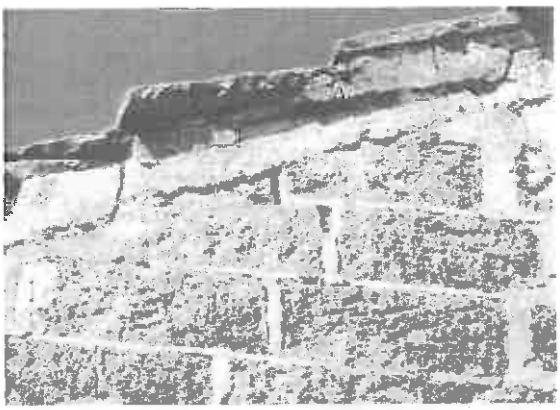
Example lead-work for bat access slate. Lead should be Code 6:



All photos above © Angela Graham

Appendix 2 – bat access into walls





Examples of appropriate openings into walls for bats.

Photos © Angela Graham

In addition a range of commercially available roost units are available that can be embedded in walls to provide a safe roosting environment for bats. Information can be provided upon request.

Appendix 3 – examples of available bat roost units

N.b. Other makes of unit are available but an alternative should only be used if approved by the bat consultant.

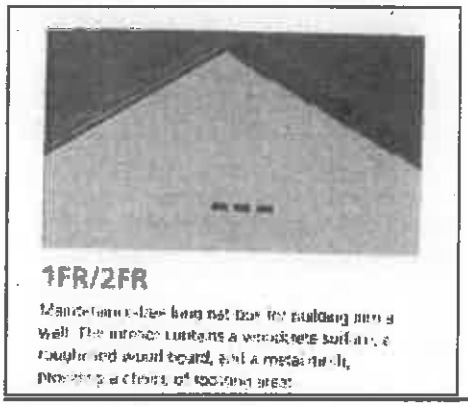
EcoSurv Habibat

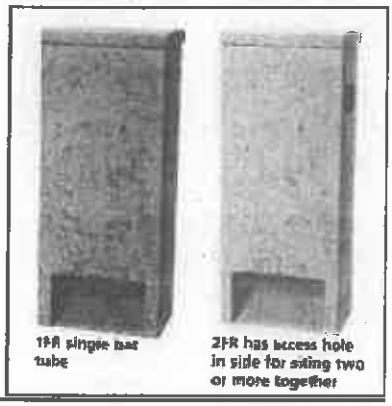
http://www.ecosurv.co.uk/product/habibat-bat-boxes

"Designed to be built into an exterior wall and is available in a variety of faces to match the building. Standard facings of red or blue brick - ideal for new builds - are normally available from stock, or boxes can be made to your specific requirements with a face of brick, stone, timber, or plain (for rendering). Supplied unpointed."

Brick example of Ecosurv Habibat. Can also be faced with stone.

Schwegler 1FR/2FR





Schwegler 1W1

Summer & Winter Batbox 1WI
for flush installation into walls of buildings and structures

The 1WI is usually set into an external wall or incorporated in the masonry and then rendered flush with the surface so that only the entrance is visible. Easy for integration into insulation when new buildings are constructed or when renovation work is taking place. In such cases use of the holes and screws/plugs provided. Its rear of the box is fitted with a fine gauze, which helps, for example, to prevent any unwanted items or material from entering the box and also gives the animals a secure place on which to roost.

The 1WI has been designed to provide many decades of use in nature conservation.
Maintenance: self-cleaning and therefore maintenance-free.
Interior: the interior has a variety of different surfaces at various heights, from which the bats can hang. Along with certain climatic advantages this arrangement enables the individual species to find a suitable roost.
Exterior: the tunnel-shaped entrance area is provided with small steps offering a good foothold, making the box more acceptable, especially for inexperienced younger animals.
Colour: the one-piece box is supplied unpainted.
Material: weather-resistant and air-permeable wood concrete.
Dimensions:
Height: 54.5 cm
Width: 34.5 cm
Depth: 9.5 cm

Weight: 15,0 kg

Order no. 00 766/7

Wall Bat Box Suppliers

Schwegler woodcrete:

NHBS: http://www.nhbs.com/bat_boxes_eqcat_421.html

Envisage Wildcare. 01793 724848:
http://www.wildcareshop.com/Products_Results.php?pageNum_WADAProducts=0&totalRows_WADAProducts=25&Search=1&ProductCategoryID[]=5

Jacobi Jayne: http://www.livingwithbirds.com/nest-boxes-by-species/bats/

Other:

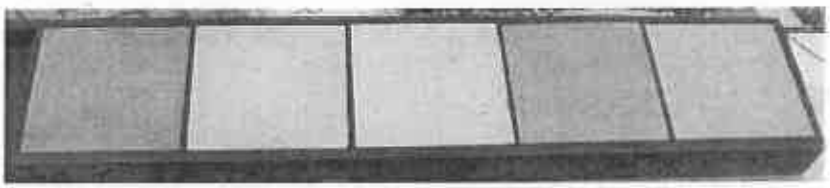
Habibat. 01642 724800: http://ecosurv.co.uk/habbitat%20range.html
Also available from NHBS. (See above.)

Forticrete: http://www.forticrete.co.uk/products/184/bat-boxes.html

Forticrete

http://www.forticrete.co.uk/products/184/bat-boxes.html.

Above and below - standard colours available. Others available to order



Photos above © Angela Graham

"Forticrete's boxes have been designed to be fitted to your property easily. Suitable for new build construction or renovation work where there is a requirement to provide a habitat for Pipistrelle bats."