



Head Office: Rain-Charm House, Stoke Climsland, Callington, Cornwall, PL17 8PH
Exeter Office: Unit 1, Innovation Centre, University of Exeter, Rennes Drive, Exeter EX4 4RN
☎ : +44 (0) 1579 372 141 ✉ : info@tamarecology.co.uk 🌐 : www.westcountryrivers.co.uk/tamar-ecology

Project Name:

Sydenham House, Chillaton, Devon

Client:

Mr and Mrs G Hart c/o Rodney Melville and Partners Ltd (Historic Building Consultants)

Commencement: February 2013

Keywords: Preliminary Ecological Assessment, Bat Surveys, Barn Owl Survey, Ecological Mitigation Strategy, European Protected Species Licence



Summary:

Tamar Ecology (then Tamar Consulting) were appointed by Historic Building Consultants Rodney Melville and Partners Ltd on behalf of the owners to undertake a Bat and Barn Owl survey at Sydenham House, Marystowe, Devon in February 2013. The works were

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required to inform a planning application to restore the 17th century Grade I listed building that was badly damaged in a fire in November 2012.

Tamar Ecology has worked with Rodney Melville and their contractors throughout various phases of the works, advising in relation to associated planning permissions and Listed Building Consents, and to inform the on-going restoration process with relation to environmental considerations.

An initial inspection of the site was conducted in February 2013 to assess the building for bats and other ecological concerns. The fire damage to Sydenham House was extensive and a section of the roof structure had collapsed shortly before the initial survey was undertaken. Evidence of historic bat roosts was noted in areas such as where hanging tiles had been present, however the level of destruction of the roof structure made it highly unlikely that any bat roosts remained within the remnants of the roof. Evening and dawn surveys and the use of static bat detectors recorded seven species of bat using the grounds and surrounding habitats, but no bats were recorded entering or exiting the buildings.

It was considered that a European Protected Species Licence was not required for the works, but given the historic presence of bats within the building and the presence of bats within the surrounding habitats, Ecological Method Statements have been prepared for each phase of the works, and agreed with ecologists at West Devon Borough Council. These EMS documents provide a robust procedure for the repair and renovation works at Sydenham House and ensure that the site contractors can complete their works in the most practical and timely fashion, whilst in full compliance with the wildlife legislation affecting bats and birds in particular. This includes toolbox talks to contractors and periodic checks by a licensed bat worker, use of static bat detectors to assess potential investigation of the building by bats and watching briefs within specific parts of the building.

In addition Tamar Ecology have worked with the architects to ensure that the renovation includes opportunities for a range of bats to use the building, whilst remaining within strict guidance specified by Listed Building Regulations and in relation to the aesthetics and appropriate material palette within the site. Bat slates, hanging tiles and a specific horseshoe bat access point have been approved for the building, and will ensure continued and enhanced opportunities for a range of bat species within the building. In addition, and to provide alternative roosting opportunities during the construction works, four Schwegler bat boxes have been installed on mature trees adjacent to the river; this area was the site of most bat activity during the surveys.