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1. Introduction

The proposed works have the aim of surveying bat roost locations in Dowth Hall and Netterville House in order to determine bat numbers, species and specific roost locations.

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- a. A presentation in relation to the practical aspects of bat roost inspection survey and ground level tree assessment, covering the health, safety and welfare considerations, theory in relation to bat ecology and general approach and limitations associated with surveys. The presentation also instilled the need to avoid and reduce any potential disturbance effects on bats and referred the attendee to the *BCT Guidelines*.
- a. Demonstration on how to complete a preliminary roost assessment and roost inspection survey at a known *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* roost in the attic of a building at Bohernabreena Reservoir Park, Rathfarnham, Co. Dublin under the supervision of Colm Clarke with DER/BAT 2024-53
- a. Demonstration on how to use an endoscope device and completion of ground level tree assessment and roost inspection of trees at Marlay Park, including 3 no. *Fagus sylvatica* trees known to host *Nyctalus leisleri* and *Pipistrellus* sp. (no bats encountered) using a RIGID CA-350 endoscope under the supervision of Colm Clarke with DER/BAT 2024-53.

2. Background to proposed activity

The buildings to be surveyed are all owned by the National Parks and Wildlife service, and sit within the lands of Brú na Bóinne National Park. Netterville House is currently used for NPWS offices. Dowth Hall is in a state of semi-dereliction with only the basement of the building safely accessible to surveys.

3. Evidence to support the Derogation Tests

Test 1: Reason for Derogation

Dowth Hall is in a state of semi-dereliction and will need major works done, in order to prevent the collapse of this heritage Georgian building. Netterville House houses electronic equipment in the attic so the location of bat roosts need to be known in case of the need for future maintenance. Because of this, both buildings need to have thorough internal roost inspections. Surveys done in 2018-19 by FERS Ecology Ltd indicated bat roosts in the attic of Netterville House and in both the attic and basement of Dowth Hall. Surveying is required to see if these roosts are still present.

Test 2: Absence of Alternative Solutions

The alternative of carrying out emergence surveys from outside the building would not give precise enough information about where the bats are roosting within these large structures. It is entirely possible that they emerge from one side, whilst roosting elsewhere within the building. In the case of Dowth Hall there are several points of egress at considerable distance from possible roost areas within the building. This would make it difficult to properly plan any future mitigations needed should works go ahead.

Test 3: Impact of a derogation on Conservation Status

The 2017 Article 17 report produced by NPWS indicates that all of the bat species covered by this derogation have a stable status at a national level with a presence within the broader survey context. Surveying would be carried out following best practice¹ guidelines avoiding surveying in June and early July when females are heavily pregnant or dependent young are present. Emergence surveys would be carried out before entering the property to assess approximate numbers and species of bats present. These would also be carried out post-survey to ensure no impact on bat numbers from the works.

¹ Collins J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.