

2026 Bat Survey at Skerry Bridge, Mountmellick, Co. Laois

Summary prepared for: AtkinsRéalis Unit 2B 2200 Cork Airport Business Park Cork T12 R279 <i>on behalf of</i> Laois County Council	Summary prepared by: Dr. Isobel Abbott Abbott Ecology Ballinahina White's Cross Co. Cork <div style="background-color: black; width: 150px; height: 20px;"></div>
May 2026	

1. Background

Abbott Ecology was commissioned by AtkinsRéalis, on behalf of Laois County Council, to conduct a 2026 repeat check of a stone masonry bridge, Skerry Bridge (Plate 1), which had been found to have minor day roosts and night roosts of Natterer's Bat (*Myotis nattereri*) and Whiskered Bat (*Myotis mystacinus*) in stone crevices in July 2025, as detailed in the attached 2025 report (Abbott, 2025).

Skerry Bridge is located c. 5 km southwest of Mountmellick, Co. Laois. The bridge carries the L2095 local road across the Murglash River at Lat. 53.100399, Long. -7.395913. The bridge is structurally unsound, and in need of urgent repair.

Laois County Council wish to apply for a new 2026 bat derogation license. The proposed repair works were previously granted a bat derogation license, DER-BAT-2025-294, in September 2025, but Laois Co. Co. ran out of time in last year's programme to get Skerry Bridge done. A 'nil to report' license return for the previous license was emailed to the NPWS on 29 January 2026. The works are now provisionally scheduled for the fisheries open season between July and September 2026.



Plate 1. Views of Skerry Bridge, L2095 road, Mountmellick from the south-west (left) and north-east (right)

2. Methods

A daytime visual survey of the bridge was conducted by Isobel Abbott, licensed bat ecologist, during daylight on 24 April 2026. Directional torch light and an endoscope were used to inspect confirmed and potential bat roost crevices underneath the bridge, and to inspect the walls, parapets, and ivy of the bridge. In addition, a DNA sample of a bat dropping was taken on 24 April 2026 and sent to SureScreen Scientifics Ltd. for analysis of bat species identity. The weather was warm, calm, and dry, with good visibility during the survey.

3. Results

Visual survey and DNA from Natterer's Bat: No bats were found day-roosting in the bridge on 24 April 2026. There were no suitable roosting spaces in the ivy which was growing on the bridge. There were far fewer bat droppings present in

the stone crevices where single individuals Natterer's Bats and Whiskered Bat had previously been day-roosting in July 2025. Bat droppings had fallen away over time since July 2025, and this also suggests lower usage of the bridge at the time of this survey. The stone crevices where bats had roosted in 2025 were re-marked with red paint over the previous white paint (e.g. Plate 2).

There was an additional crevice identified as having evidence of bat usage, albeit low usage, in 2026. A single bat dropping was present in a crevice close to where the north-east side of the stone arch joins with the adjoining concrete culvert (crevice also marked with red paint, Plate 3). This dropping was sent to SureScreen Scientifics for DNA analysis, and was identified as being a Natterer's Bat dropping (see DNA analysis report in Appendix A).



Plate 2. Bat roost crevices re-marked with red paint in April 2026 (previously marked with white paint in 2025).



Plate 3. An additional roosting stone crevice toward the NE side of the bridge (left photograph) where bat roosting of Natterer's Bat was confirmed by DNA analysis of a single dropping that was caught in spider webs, circled in red

References

Abbott, I. (2025) (July) Bat roost assessment of Skerry Bridge, Mountmellick, Co. Laois. Report prepared for AtkinsRéalis on behalf of Laois County Council.

Appendix A. DNA sample result

Folio No: 1429-2026
 Purchase Order: SCIN-2456
 Contact: Abbott Ecology
 Issue Date: 26.05.2026
 Received Date: 12.05.2026



Biological Sample Analysis

Summary

Most biological materials (tissue, feces, hair, blood, etc.) contain small amounts of DNA from the organism of which it originated. Using molecular methods such as PCR (polymerase chain reaction) and DNA sequencing, SureScreen Scientifics are able to analyze an unknown sample to determine which species the sample originates from our methods are optimized for the detection of species including bats (over 92% of bat species worldwide can be identified including all 18 UK bat species), mammals; bees, wasps & hornets; birds; fish; plants (from roots, leaves, stem and even dried wood) and many more species.

Results

Lab ID	Site Name	OS Reference	Sample Type	Species Name	Match(%)
B26 0317	Bantry House Stables 1		Bat Dropping	Natterer's bat (Myotis nattereri)	98.47
Genetic Sequence CGGAGGCTTCGGAAGTACTGGTTCTTCTTATAATCGGAGCTCCTGATATAGCCTTTCCTCGAATAAATAATATAAG CTTCTGACTTCTTCCCCTTCTTTTTTACTATTATTAGCCTCATCTATAGTTGAAGCAGGAGCTGGTACTGGTTGAAC AGTTTATCCACCTTAGCAGGAAACCTAGCACACGCAGGAGAG					
B26 0318	Skerry Bridge 2		Bat Dropping	Natterer's bat (Myotis nattereri)	98.52
Genetic Sequence TTATGATCGGAGGCTTCGGAAGTACTGGTTCTTCTTATAATCGGAGCTCCTGATATAGCCTTTCCTCGAATAAATA ATATAAGCTTCTGACTTCTTCCCCTTCTTTTTTACTATTATTAGCCTCATCTATAGTTGAAGCAGGAGCTGGTACTG GTTGAACAGTTTATCCACCTTAGCAGGAAACCTAGCACACGCAGGAGAG					

Matters affecting result: none
 Reported by: Chelsea Warner

Approved by: Vanessa Hind