



Environmental Consultants

## Swift Survey Report

Tuam Townhall

Co. Galway

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## DOCUMENT DETAILS

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Client: Galway County Council

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of a swift survey completed as part of a wildlife surveys examining the townhall in Tuam, Co. Galway.

This report aims to;

- Examine the building for evidence of nesting swifts.

The survey undertaken took guidance from methodologies outlined in the Tipperary Swift survey 2018 (Birdwatch, 2018).

The project in question refers to an occupied townhall building used as office and meeting place situated at the junction between Dublin Road and High Street, Tuam, Co. Galway.

The survey consisted of an examination of the building using binoculars examining for the present of swift nests. Surveys were conducted in good weather conditions from 19:00 to 20:10 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August and again from 06:50 to 07:50 on the 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2021. John is an experienced ornithologist having completed a range of bird surveys since 2013.

The surveys were conducted in good weather conditions, within the optimal period for swift surveys. Swift nests are located high up in the roof space under the eaves of old houses and churches where the birds are able to drop into the air from the nest entrance. The nest is built by both adults out of any material that can be gathered on the wing, including feathers, paper, straw, hay and seeds. It is cemented together with saliva and renovated and reused year after year.

Young birds looking for a nest site will fly past prospective sites brushing or 'banging' the entrance with their wings (RSPB).

## 2 DESKTOP STUDY

### 2.1 SWIFTS IN IRELAND – LEGISLATIVE PROTECTION

There are two main pieces of legislation which cover wildlife protection in Ireland – the Wildlife Act and the Habitats Regulations. These are outlined below, with particular reference to the protection afforded to bat species in Ireland.

#### The Wildlife Acts 1976 and 2000

The primary pieces of national legislation for the protection of wildlife in Ireland are the Wildlife Act (1976) and the Wildlife [Amendment] Act (2000). All species of wild birds in Ireland are listed.

#### The Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC)

This directive came into force in Ireland in 1981 and Article 12 of this directive sets out that “Member States shall forward to the Commission every three years, starting from 7 April 1981, a report on the implementation of national provisions taken under this Directive.” Under the terms of the EU Birds Directive, all EU member States, including Ireland, are bound to take measures to protect all wild birds and their habitats.

Swifts are amber listed in the birds of conservation concern in Ireland because its population has declined by over 40% in the last 15 years. One reason for the decline may be due to the upgrade of old buildings using modern construction techniques.

### 2.2 SWIFTS RECORDED IN THE SURROUNDING AREA

The NBDC database was consulted for details on bat records held for the site and the surroundings. The database was consulted on the 25/11/2021 for details on historical records from the site, the surrounding 2km (M45F and M45G) and the 10km hectad; M45. 6 records (with an additional 3 repeat records) have been noted from the 10km square M45 with 1 record from the M45G 2km square located just to the north of the subject site and another from 700m west.

**Table 2-1: Historical swift records from surrounds**

Date	Location	Details
2007-2011	2km square just to the north of the site	Bird Atlas 2007-2011 Probably breeding
1968-1972	2km square 700m to the west of the site	Bird Atlas 1968-1972 Breeding
1968-1972	Vague 10km hectad subject site resides in	Breeding
1988-1991		Breeding
2007-2011		Breeding
1988-1991		Breeding

Birdwatch Ireland publication; Saving Irelands Swifts state the species can be found in Ireland from May to later August. The species does not form a nest rather sits in nooks and crevices of houses and old buildings. Because of this, they are a well-known bird in urban areas.

### 3 SURVEY FINDINGS

A survey was conducted for swifts taking guidance set out in the Tipperary Swift Survey 2018. The survey took place for an hour on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August and again for one hour after dawn on the 26<sup>th</sup>. During this time the birds make communal calls and roost sites are easily identifiable.

No evidence of breeding swifts was noted from the site although the roof space contains suitable habitat.

#### 3.1 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The swift survey was undertaken in late August slightly outside the optimal time period but still within the swift season. All surveys were carried out during good weather conditions.

### 4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT, MITIGATION AND CONCLUSION

It is proposed to complete some internal improvements and change of use for the building. No external changes will be made. The works will present no impact to the exterior of the building. The building contains several high-quality ledges suitable for swifts including on the roof and the belfry. These will not be impacted by the development (see Plate 4-1 and 4-2 below).



**Plate 4-1 & Plate 4-2: Ledge above front wall and befy provide suitable nesting habitat.**

Given the low impact of the proposed works and lack of evidence of swifts it is the surveyors opinion that no negative impacts are expected on the local swift population by the proposed development.