



Environmental Consultants

Swift Survey Report

Loughrea Towhall Redevelopment

Loughrea, Co. Galway

DOCUMENT DETAILS

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Project Title: Renovation and restoration of the townhall building

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings of a swift survey completed as part of a proposal for the upgrade works to a semi-derelict townhall in Loughrea, 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 a semi-derelict townhall building situated at the junction between Barrack Street and Church Street, Loughrea, 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 20:45 to 21:30 on the 06th of July and again from 05:20 to 07:20 on the 07th of July 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 28/10/2021 for details on historical records from the site, the surrounding 2km (M61L) and the 10km hectad; M61. One record has been noted from the 2km square M61D; to the west of the site where 4 were recorded breeding in the Bird Atlas 2007-2011.

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 45 minutes on the 6th of July and again for two hours after dawn on the 07th. 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 July within the optimal swift season. All surveys were carried out during good weather conditions.

4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT, MITIGATION AND CONCLUSION

Given the lack of evidence of breeding swifts it is not expected the renovation works will have an impact on the species. The works will present little impact to the exterior of the building.

It is proposed to install a swift box to the northern aspect of the building, fitted under the eaves. Given the low impact of the proposed works and lack of evidence of swifts the surveyor feels there is no need to install a swift calling system to promote the birds into the site. No negative impacts are expected on the local swift population by the proposed development