Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

MWC0116, COLWYN BAY STEPS.

OS REF: SH 87591 – 78711.

ECOLOGY SURVEY.

Ref No: **190125.**

Date: **18th January 2019.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Amco Rail plans to repair a stone and concrete staircase that leads down to the beach at Colwyn Bay that has gradually been eroded by the sea.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out an ecology survey of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 18th January 2019 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendix I of this report provide additional information on specific species and is designed to assist the reader to understand the contents of this report.

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2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Prior to visiting the site, the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.2. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

* Badger setts.
* Badger latrines or dung pits.
* Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
* Badger paths.
* Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
* Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.3. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Rob Strachan, Tom Moorhouse and Merryl Gelling (2011). *Water Vole Handbook: Third Edition*: -

* Water vole burrows.
* Water vole faeces and latrines.
* Water vole feeding stations.
* Water vole runs.
* Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
* Water vole lawns.
* Predator field signs.

2.4. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter* and *Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines: -*

* Otter prints in soft mud.
* Otter spraints.
* Otter Holts.

2.5. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies. Where found, and where safe to enter the water, all were thoroughly searched for the presence of crayfish, for approximately 50m in each direction of the site, by searching under rocks and logs. Where stated, crayfish traps were also deployed into the watercourse. All survey work was carried out in accordance with the *Conserving Natural 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 1, Protocol for Monitoring the White Clawed Crayfish*.

2.6. The survey area was searched for mature trees and derelict buildings and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

* Holes, cracks or crevices.
* Bat Droppings.

2.7. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.8. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.9. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.10. Where appropriate, the habitat within and surrounding the survey area was searched for species such as hazel, oak, honeysuckle, bramble and other species which may provide potential habitat for hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Field signs such as feeding remains and nests were also searched for where possible, in line with P Bright, P Morris and T Mitchell-Jones *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition*.

2.11. Where appropriate, the area within and surrounding the survey area was assessed for its potential to house habitat for red squirrels. Field signs of red squirrels were searched for at least every 50m, looking for any dreys, feeding signs or sightings of red squirrels.

2.12. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.13. This survey was carried out by Stevan Roebuck. Since 2011 Stevan has had experience carrying out great crested newt and bat surveys. Since 2013 Stevan has had experience in a professional capacity as a Wildlife Consultant carrying out ecology surveys, badger, great crested newt and bat surveys. Stevan holds a Natural England Survey License for Great Crested Newts and Bats and is currently working towards gaining further Natural England, NRW and SNH survey licences. Stevan is also a Qualifying Member of CIEEM.

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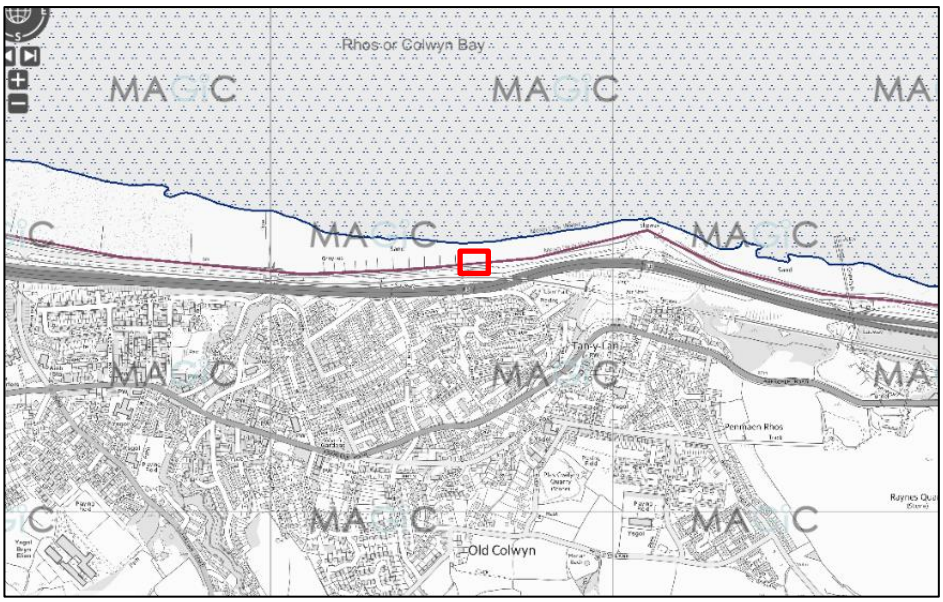
3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. An online data search of the area was undertaken to identify if there are any records of protected species or designated sites within the survey area.

3.1.2. The data search conducted on the internet found that there are records of badgers and seven species of bat within 2km of the surveyed area.

3.1.3. The data search conducted on the MAGIC website found that Liverpool Bay/ Bae Lerpwl (Wales) Special Protection Area (SPA) lies adjacent to the surveyed area to the north. The aerial photograph below shows the location of the surveyed area highlighted in the red box and the SPA identified by the blue line just above the site.



3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The surveyed area was a set of stone and concrete steps that link the promenade to the beach at Colwyn Bay. The aerial photograph below shows the surveyed area highlighted in red and the surrounding area.

3.2.2. The area surrounding the surveyed site consists of the Irish sea to the north and heavily built up residential areas and road and rail infrastructure to the south.

3.2.3. The surveyed steps are constructed from stone and concrete and have metal rails. At the bottom of the surveyed steps is a further set of steps that lead to the sea, (these steps are not part of the proposed works).

3.2.3.1. The photographs below show the surveyed steps.

3.2.3.2. The photographs below show the steps that lead from the bottom of the surveyed steps to the sea.

3.2.4. No vegetation was identified around the surveyed area other than sea weed and algae.

3.3. Survey Results.

3.3.1. No badger setts or other badger field signs were identified within the surveyed area during this survey of the site.

3.3.2. No watercourses that may provide a suitable habitat for water voles, otters or freshwater white clawed crayfish were identified within the surveyed area.

3.3.3. The surveyed steps have been corroded by salt water. However, the stone and concrete wall sections of the steps are generally in a good state of repair with no deep cracks, gaps or missing stones that could provide any suitable roosting opportunities for bats.

3.3.4. No trees were identified within the surveyed area that could provide any suitable habitat for roosting bats.

3.3.5. The surveyed area is extremely exposed with no vegetation or tree lines and is highly unlikely to provide any suitable habitat for foraging or commuting bats.

3.3.6. No ponds with the potential to provide any suitable habitat for great crested newts were identified within 500m of the surveyed area whilst on site or by looking at Ordnance Survey maps of the surrounding area.

3.3.7. The surveyed steps do not provide any suitable habitat for nesting birds and there is no vegetation within the surveyed area that could provide any suitable habitat for nesting birds.

3.3.8. Due to the isolated location of the site, it is highly unlikely that reptiles will be present within the immediate surrounding area.

3.3.9. As there is no vegetation within the surveyed area, the site is unsuitable for hazel dormice and red squirrels.

3.3.10. No alien invasive species of plant listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were identified within the surveyed area. although some species die back over the winter and may have been missed.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The data search conducted on the MAGIC website found that Liverpool Bay/ Bae Lerpwl (Wales) Special Protection Area (SPA) lies adjacent to the surveyed area to the north. Therefore, there may be an impact on this site during the proposed works unless suitable precautionary measures are put into place.

4.2. No badger setts or other badger field signs were identified within the surveyed area. Therefore, there will be no impact on badgers during the proposed works.

4.3. No watercourses that may provide a suitable habitat for water voles, otters or fresh water white clawed crayfish were identified within the surveyed area. Therefore, there will be no impact on habitats suitable for these species during the proposed works.

4.4. The surveyed steps have been corroded by salt water. However, the stone and concrete wall sections of the steps are generally in a good state of repair with no deep cracks, gaps or missing stones that could provide any suitable roosting opportunities for bats. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on roosting bats within the steps.

4.5. No trees were identified within the surveyed area that could provide any suitable habitat for roosting bats. Therefore, there will be no impact on bats roosting in trees.

4.6. The surveyed area is extremely exposed with no vegetation or tree lines and is highly unlikely to provide any suitable habitat for foraging or commuting bats. Therefore, there will be no impact on foraging or commuting bats during the proposed works.

4.7. No ponds with the potential to provide any suitable habitat for great crested newts were identified within 500m of the surveyed area whilst on site or by looking at Ordnance Survey maps of the surrounding area. Therefore, there will be no impact on great crested newts during the proposed works.

4.8. The surveyed steps do not provide any suitable habitat for nesting birds and there is no vegetation within the surveyed area that could provide any suitable habitat for nesting birds. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on nesting birds.

4.9. Due to isolated location of the site, it is highly unlikely that reptiles will be present within the immediate surrounding area. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that reptiles will be present within the surveyed area.

4.10. As there is no vegetation within the surveyed area, the site is unsuitable for hazel dormice and red squirrels. Therefore, there will be no impact on either species during the proposed works.

4.11. No alien invasive species of plant listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were identified within the surveyed area, although some species die back over the winter and may have been missed. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the proposed works will have any impact on spreading such species.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The Liverpool Bay/ Bae Lerpwl (Wales) Special Protection Area (SPA) lies adjacent to the surveyed area to the north. If works are carried out with suitable precautions in place the works can be carried out with no impact on the SPA. Care should be taken to prevent any pollutants or debris from entering the sea. A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) with regards to the SPA will be provided in a separate report.

5.2. It is recommended that all personnel working on the site are made aware of the "Check-Clean-Dry" campaign to stop the spread of invasive species and that the measures outlined by the campaign are implemented on the site. A "Check-Clean-Dry" poster has been included at the end of this report for information.

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Prepared by:	
Stevan Roebuck	Date: 18th January 2019.

Checked by:	
Steven Whitcher, MCIEEM.	Date: 21st January 2019.

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“CHECK-CLEAN-DRY” POSTER.