

Ecological Appraisal and Impact Assessment at
Whitegate Cottage, Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog,
Llangollen, Denbighshire,
LL20 7LD
Grid Ref. SJ 1573 3290

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Survey by:
Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM
Lyngarth,
Ellesmere Road,
St. Martins,
Oswestry,
Shropshire
SY11 3HT

01691 772310
or 07752 105600
s.worsfold@hotmail.co.uk

Requested by:
R.F. Davies Architectural Services
Riverside Barn,
Oswestry,
Shropshire
SY10 9AF

01691 662813
rfdaviesarchitectural@hotmail.com

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1. Summary

The purpose of the report is to assess the potential ecological impacts of a proposed development at Whitegate Cottage, Llanarmon DC, Denbighshire and advise on any mitigation measures to comply with local planning policy and government legislation.

The proposed scheme entails the construction of three camping pods on the site of a former domestic garden.

The site and adjacent land were examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals.

Impacts during the development should be low provided that no bird nests are constructed or occupied while work is taking place. If birds are building nests or any are occupied at any stage of the development work in that area must stop until the young have left the nest.

There is not considered to be any threat to the conservation status of bats, however no lighting should be directed at the old sycamore tree which may be suitable for temporary shelter by transient bats.

Since the site may be used by foraging and commuting bats a lighting plan should be designed in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines:<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

It is recommended that some planting of trees and shrubs (e.g. hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, holly) take place at the northern corner and extending along the river bank for 10 m or so, to provide further screening from the river to prevent disturbance to any commuting species. A buffer of 25 m should be maintained between the river and the pods.

There should not be any significant impact on any protected species or habitat as long as the recommended mitigation and compensation measures are followed.

2. Introduction

Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM is an experienced wildlife surveyor, licensed bat worker and voluntary bat roost visitor. Registration number CLS0895 2015-12555-CLS-CLS (CL15 Bat Roost Visitor Level 1) and registration number CLS 0895 2015-12556-CLS-CLS (CL18 Bat Survey Level 2) (Natural England) and S086005/1 (Natural Resources Wales);

Licensed great crested newt worker, registration number 2016-19947-CLS-CLS (NE) and S086057/1 (NRW)

This report was commissioned by RF Davies Architectural Services.

The site, at Whitegate Cottage, Llanarmon DC, Denbighshire, is a 0.1 ha area of previously domestic garden. The proposed scheme involves the erection of three camping pods and associated access and parking. The purpose of the report is to identify and address any significant ecological effects which are likely to occur as a result of the proposed development. This is necessary to comply with local planning policy and government legislation and avoid any offence being committed. Also, to describe any compensation, mitigation and enhancement measures which should be taken.

3. Methodology

3.1. Scope of the Assessment

The report incorporates an preliminary bat roost and nesting bird assessment, while also searching for use or potential use by any rare, threatened, endemic and non-native invasive species which might be associated with such a site in accordance with:

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and listed in:

Schedule 2. European protected species of animals

Schedule 5. European protected species of plants

The protection of Badgers Act 1992

Protected species which might be associated with such a site include bats, owls and other breeding birds. The area around the site might be used by badgers, dormice, amphibians and reptiles, and might contain protected plant species. Zones of influence for great crested newts (GCN) were considered after taking the presence of any nearby ponds into consideration.

3.2. Desk Study

Denbighshire Planning Portal was consulted for a review of previous ecological surveys carried out in the area. Magic Maps was consulted for the presence of designated sites and protected habitats. A data search for protected species within 1 km was commissioned from Cofnod and the results are summarised in the appendices. Otter, swift, red kite and several other bird species have been recorded within 700 m of the site, as well as hare and bat.

3.3. Field Survey

The site was examined to establish the presence of any protected species or habitats, and for evidence of use by protected species of animals. Trees were assessed for suitability for use by bats. The site and surrounding habitat was examined for signs of use by other protected species. Maps of the site and surrounding environment were examined to identify any nearby waterbodies suitable for use by great crested newts within an influencing distance of the site. The variety of plant species was mapped according to the convention of Phase 1 habitat surveys as described by the JNCC (2010). Photographs were taken of all relevant areas.

The visual assessment of the site was carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2017) on 3rd February 2021 by Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM.

4. Baseline Ecological Conditions/Results

4.1 Designated Sites

The nearest designated site is the river Ceiriog (SSSI and SAC) adjacent.

4.2 Habitats

Site: Rural, village location, secluded. 10 km from the nearest town of Llangollen. The approximate area of the site is 0.1 ha. There were no hedgerows, the boundaries comprising wood and wire fencing apart from the south east boundary which was formed by a stone wall. There were some ornamental trees and shrubs lining the boundaries. These are to remain, as well as the mature trees near the house.

Adjacent land: There is a road adjacent at the south east boundary and a river at the north east boundary. The land to the south west is residential and the to the north west is pastoral, as is all the land in the wider area. There are several significant areas of woodland within 1 km. There is a good network of hedgerows surrounding the site.

4.3 Species and Species Groups

Plants

The only ground flora vegetation to be affected is short grass and a clump of spreading conifer in the east section and some non native ornamental species in the area adjacent to the building. No trees are due to be felled. Plant species found are mosses, primula (*Primula spp.*), foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*), rose (*Rosa spp.*), rush (*Juncus spp.*), plantain (*Plantago spp.*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*), laurel (*Laurus sp.*), buddleia, common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), magnolia, dogwood (*Cornus sp.*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*)

Amphibians and Reptiles

None seen during the survey. No ponds were apparent on maps within 500 m.

Birds

There were trees on site which were suitable for use by nesting birds. None were seen at the time of the survey.

Bats

The site is suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats. No evidence of use of the trees as roosts or resting place by bats was found but this would be almost impossible to tell without the use of an endoscope. The mature sycamore tree shown in the survey diagram did not appear to have any potential roost features.

Badgers

There were no badger setts, tracks or latrines found on the site or within 30 m of the site.

Dormice

No hazelnuts were found which indicated gnawing by dormice and the site was not favourable for use by them.

5. Description of the Development

The proposed scheme involves removal of a section of wall to provide access to three camping pods, to be erected at the west corner of the site. Some vegetation will be removed to allow for a track down to the pods and a parking area. No trees are to be felled as the track will wind around them.

6. Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

Designated Sites:

It is not considered that the development will have any significant impact on the river due to the small scale of the proposal. No lighting must be directed at the river to prevent disturbance to any commuting species.

Habitats:

No priority habitat is affected by the proposal and no net loss of potential roosting or nesting sites should occur if enhancements are provided.

Species:

Birds

The impacts which the proposed work might have on birds should be small, providing that no nests are occupied or being built at the time the work is done. If birds should gain access to the buildings and begin building nests during the work, then the work in that area must stop until the young have left the nests.

Bats

There is not considered to be any threat to the conservation status of bats, however the old sycamore tree may be suitable for temporary shelter by transient bats. No lighting should be directed at this tree. If bats are found at any stage of the development then work in that area must stop and a licensed bat worker contacted for advice. Since the site may be used by foraging and commuting bats, and bats have been identified within 400 m, a lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines: <https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Reptiles and amphibians

Is is considered highly unlikely that the development would harm any reptiles or amphibians, or affect their conservation status.

Otters

There are records of otter signs within 700 m, on the river. These were in 2001. It is unlikely that activity from the camping pods would impact on the behaviour of otters using the river, as long as the proposed distance of approximately 25 m from the river is maintained. There is an unidentified tree and some further shrub cover at the north corner. It is recommended that more trees and shrubs (e.g. hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, holly) are planted in this corner and extending along the bank for 10 m or so, to provide further screening from the river.

Residual Effects

No significant residual effects anticipated.

7. Compensation

None considered appropriate.

8. Enhancement Recommendations

Tree and shrub planing in the north corner as described in section 6.

9. Ecological Constraints

Surveys of this type should ideally be carried out during the spring, summer or autumn to give the best chance of identifying all species present on site. However, it appeared clear that no significant vegetation, places of shelter or habitat would be affected and no animals should be harmed if all mitigation measures are taken.

10. Monitoring

None considered appropriate.

11. Conclusions

If the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures are taken the overall ecological impacts of the proposed development will be low due to its small scale and lack of evidence of any rare or threatened species or priority habitat on site.

12. Bibliography

Bat Conservation Trust available at: <http://www.bats.org.uk>

BCT and ILP Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting available at:
<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Collins J. (Ed) (2016) *Bat surveys for professional ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

Google Maps available at: <https://maps.google.com/maps>

JNCC, (2010), *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit*, ISBN 0 86139 636 7

Magic Maps available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk>

Natural Resources Wales available at: <https://naturalresources.wales/?lang=en>

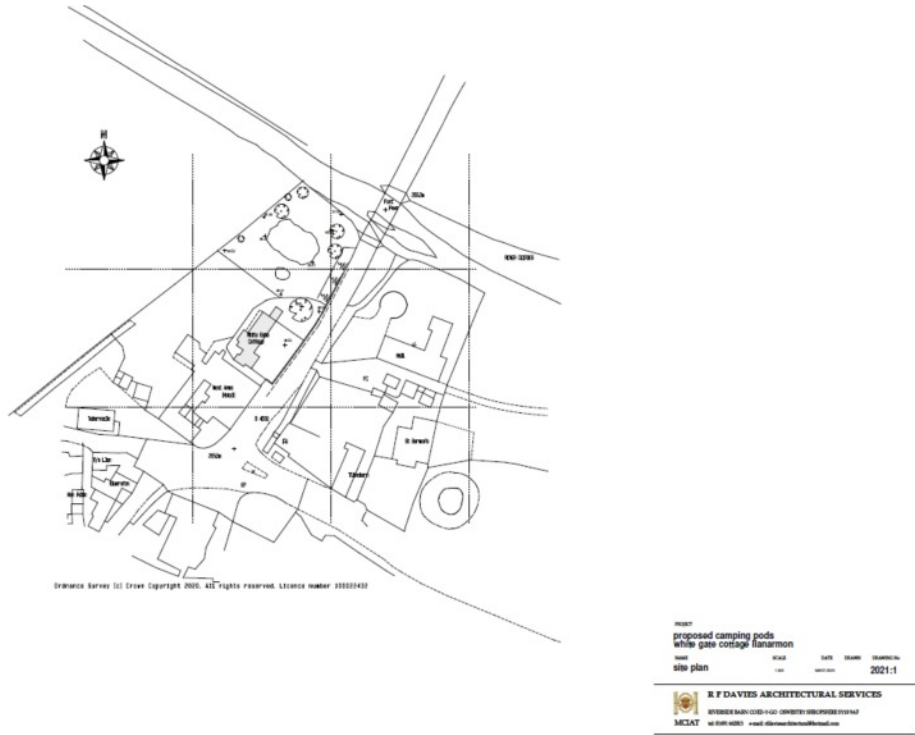
The National Vegetation Classification available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

UK BAP Priority Habitats available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

Wildlife and Habitat Conservation available at: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/wildlife-habitat-conservation>

Denbighshire Council Planning Portal available at: <https://www.denbighshire.gov.uk/en/home.aspx>

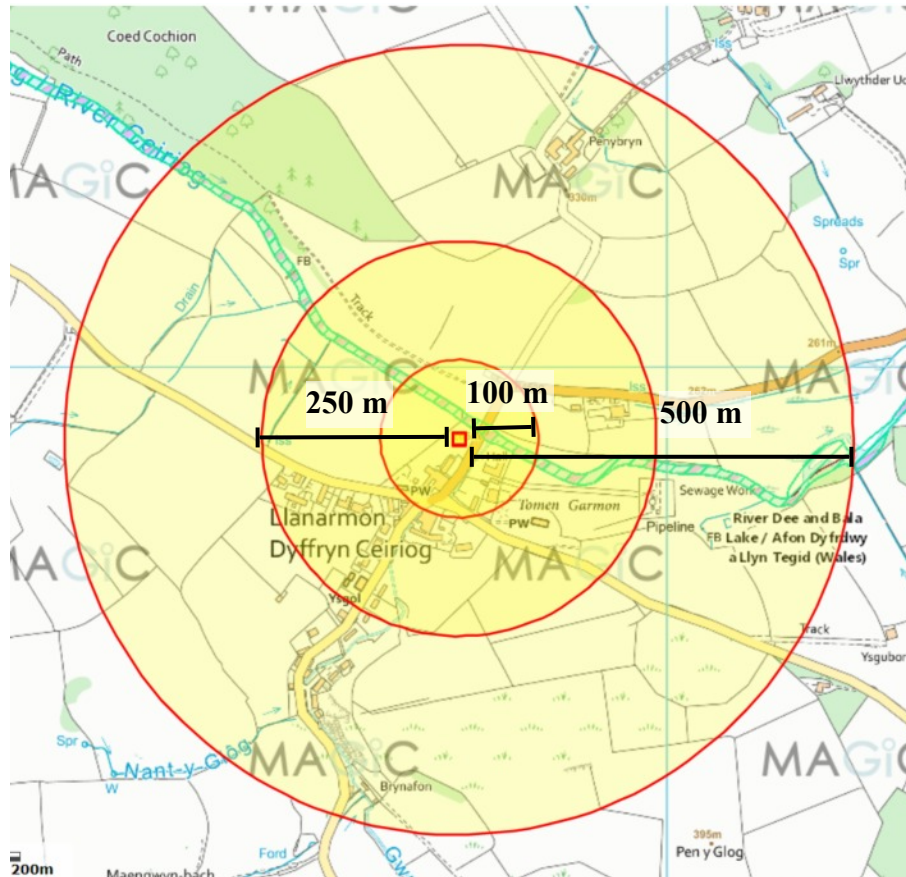
Appendix 13.1: Site Plan



Appendix 13.1: Plan as Proposed



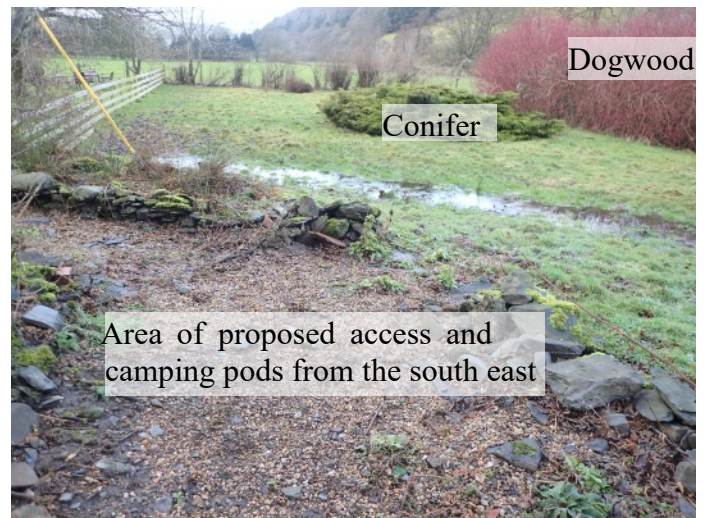
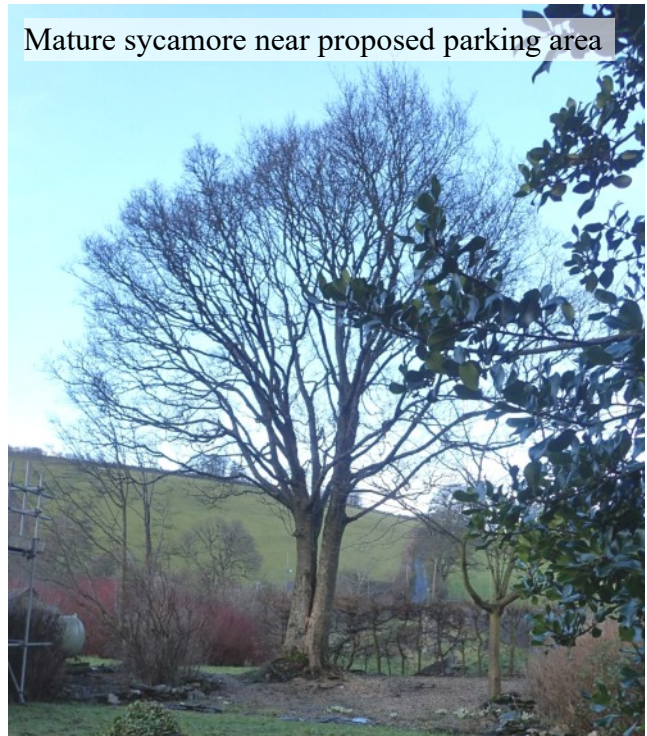
Appendix 13.2: Location Map, Designated Sites and Zones of Influence



Appendix 13.3: Aerial Photograph



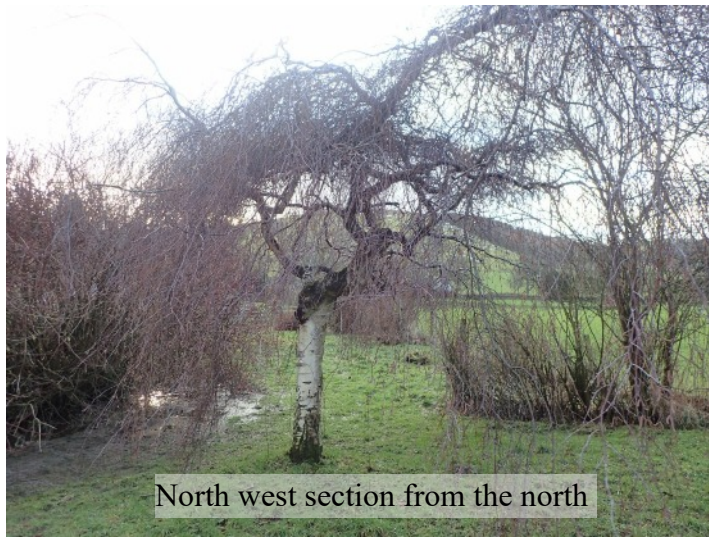
Appendix 13.4: Photographs of the Site



Appendix 13.4: Photographs of the Site



North east section from the south (composite)



North west section from the north

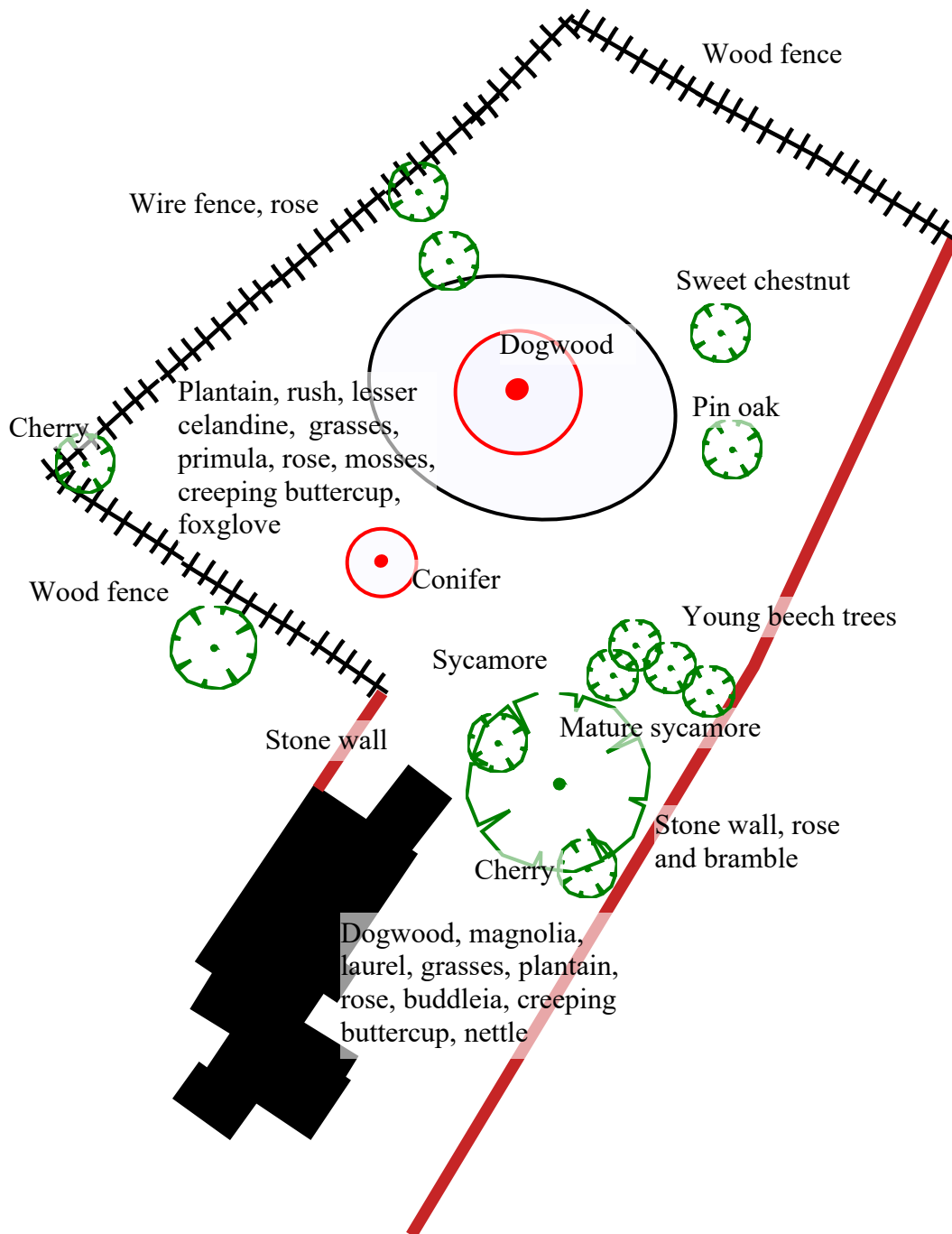


North west boundary



West section from the west (composite)

Appendix 13.5: Survey Diagram



[illegible]

Appendix 13.7: Legislation Relating to Birds

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected. It is an offence to intentionally:

kill, injure or take any wild bird,
take, damage or destroy the nest of a Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle or Osprey (even if disused),
take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built,
take, damage or destroy an egg or any wild bird,
possess any live or dead wild bird or the egg of any wild bird, or any derivative
Many rare birds are listed on Schedule 1, which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

disturb a Schedule 1 bird while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
disturb dependent young of such a bird

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) issues licences for specific purposes, so that you can undertake legitimate work without breaking the law. See 'Bird licensing' for more information.