

# **Black Guillemot Nest Survey**

## **Warrenpoint Harbour**

**July 2021**

**Sterna Environmental Ltd**

### **Report prepared by:**

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### Maps

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# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Project Description

- 1.1.1 Warrenpoint Harbour are to carry out repair work to two areas of the harbour: the Dolphins and Berth 6. This work is likely to commence sometime in late July 2021.
- 1.1.2 Black Guillemots *Cephus grylle* are known to nest within the wider harbour area but the current status within the areas to be repaired is unknown.
- 1.1.3 By late July many Black Guillemots will have fledged but some will still be within the nest. Black Guillemots have an extended nesting season with chicks in Northern Ireland fledging any time from early July to mid-August

## 1.2 Scope of document

- 1.2.1 This document covers the results of a survey for nesting birds carried out on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

## 1.3 Statement of Authority

- 1.3.1 The assessment was carried out by Kerry Leonard BSc (Hons), MSc, MCIEEM. Kerry is the principal of Sterna Environmental Ltd, an ecological consultancy in Bangor, Co. Down. Kerry has 37 years of experience identifying and monitoring Northern Irish wildlife, with a principal interest in birds, mammals and Lepidoptera. He is knowledgeable in the identification, tracks and signs of these and other relevant species groups in Northern Ireland. Kerry has experience on a wide variety of projects including wind farms, single wind turbines and for large and small commercial development works of many types including bat roost assessments, bat surveys, mammal surveys, bird surveys, marine mammals, Biodiversity Checklists and Preliminary Ecological Assessments. He has been operating as a professional consultant ecologist for thirteen years.
- 1.3.2 Kerry has a first-class honours degree in Environmental Biology from QUB, a Masters degree from UU and is a full Member of CIEEM, the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

## **1.4 Licensing**

1.4.1 This survey was observational only, observations being carried out at a suitable distance from a small boat and from the land. No direct disturbance or investigation to active nests took place, so no licence was required.

## **1.5 Policies and guidance**

1.5.1 This report has been prepared with reference to the following policies and guidance:

- Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.
- The Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017.
- The Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations (NI) 2015 (as amended).
- The Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002.
- Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland.
- Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 2 – Natural Heritage.
- Planning Standing Advice for Wild Birds, Hedgerows and Priority Habitats.
- EU Directive on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (92/43/EEC - The Habitats Directive).
- List of Northern Ireland Priority Species.
- CIEEM Guidelines to preparing Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (2017).
- CIEEM Guidelines to preparing Environmental Impact Assessments (2018 update).
- British Standard 42020:2013: Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development.

## 1.6 Species conservation value

- 1.6.1 There are a number of ways in which the value of a bird species present at a site can be assessed. Species which have protection through European or local legislation, or at a designated site, have the highest value and level of protection in the eyes of the regulatory authority. The main ways value can be assigned are: species listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Order (1985) as amended by the Northern Ireland Wildlife Act (2011); species protected under the EU birds directive; feature species of designated sites; species listed in the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 3 (2014-2019); and Northern Ireland Priority Species. These are not mutually exclusive categories - species have been listed on Schedule 1 for example, or designated as site feature species, because of their presence on priority species lists.
- 1.6.2 The nests or nesting sites of all birds in Northern Ireland are protected. Schedule 1 of the Northern Ireland Wildlife Order (1985), as amended by the NI Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, lists species which are afforded extra protection from disturbance and destruction of nests in the breeding season, and will attract special penalties if an offence is committed.
- 1.6.3 European protected species which are listed in Annex 1 of the EU Directive on the conservation of wild birds are specially protected. Most often this protection is enacted by the designation of SPAs (see above). However, developments outside a SPA may also impact upon such species, particular where that species is mobile and may only spend part of its life cycle within the SPA. Species which are listed as features of SPAs or ASSIs will receive extra protection, and are therefore of higher value, as the integrity of the protected site should be protected. At a European level SPAs are the highest level of protection possible for a species in Europe.
- 1.6.4 The Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BOCCI) list operates as a 'traffic light' system where the status of each species is reviewed against a set of quantitative criteria and assigned to Red, Amber or Green lists, providing a simple and understandable mechanism for identifying priorities (Gilbert *et al.* 2021). The list covers the whole of the island of Ireland. While it has no formal role in Northern Ireland planning policy this list is integral when identifying Northern Ireland priority species. Red-listed species are those of highest conservation priority. A

number of criteria were used to assess every bird species and assign to the Red or Amber list, including:

- International Union for Conservation of Nature status;
- European Conservation status;
- Historical decline in breeding population;
- Breeding population declines;
- Non-breeding population declines;
- Declines in breeding range;
- Breeding rarity;
- Localised breeding or wintering population within Ireland;
- International importance of breeding or wintering populations.

1.6.5 The status of all individual bird species in Northern Ireland is periodically assessed by statutory conservation bodies and NGOs, the resulting output being a list of Northern Ireland priority bird species. Northern Ireland priority species are written into Northern Ireland planning policy. Priority species have been identified using a number of scientific criteria. Species which meet any one of the following criteria are considered to be Northern Ireland Priority Species.

1. Rapid decline (2% per year).
2. Decline (1% year) with Northern Ireland being a stronghold consisting of either:
  - >50% of the All-Ireland population or.
  - >20% UK population/range or;
  - the Irish or UK population is restricted to Northern Ireland.
3. Rare - confined to a small population of one or two sites in Northern Ireland with Northern Ireland being a stronghold consisting of either:
  - >50% Irish population or;

>20% UK population/range or;

the Irish or UK population restricted (R) to Northern Ireland.

4. At least 20% of the international population of species or well-recognised subspecies occurring in Northern Ireland.
5. Irish Red Data Book (RDB) species classed as critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN) or vulnerable (VU).
6. Red-listed species in either Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BOCCI) or the UK Birds of Conservation Concern (UK BOCC) lists. The current Northern Ireland Priority species list uses species listed in BOCCI 2 (200-2013).
7. Rare - confined to a small population of one or two sites in Northern Ireland with Northern Ireland being a stronghold consisting of either:
  - >50% Irish population or;
  - >20% UK population/range or;
  - the Irish or UK population restricted (R) to Northern Ireland.
8. At least 20% of the international population of species or well-recognised subspecies occurring in Northern Ireland.
9. Irish Red Data Book (RDB) species classed as critically endangered (CR), endangered (EN) or vulnerable (VU).
10. Red-listed species in either Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BOCCI) or the UK Birds of Conservation Concern (UK BOCC) lists.

## 2. Methods

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### 2.1 Nest Survey - searches

- 2.1.1 Black Guillemots nest in holes and crevices, and such features in harbour walls are often utilised around Northern Ireland.
- 2.1.2 By early July any active nests will have chicks. Some chicks may be about to fledge, while the youngest will be recently hatched.
- 2.1.3 Nests with large young are very obvious, as guano is fountained out of the front of the nests as the chicks rush out to retrieve fish from the adults.
- 2.1.4 Nests with smaller chicks can be trickier to confirm but some guano is usually present from a young age.
- 2.1.5 Holes where there is no obvious guano, but at which adults are sitting or visiting, may have young chicks. While non-breeders will be visiting holes, unless it is clear from the behaviour of the birds they are not nesting, such holes must be considered as presumed active nests. A nest can therefore be strongly suspected (probable or near-certain) based on the balance of evidence gathered through expert observation. Evidence from bird behaviour and observation is therefore sufficient to decide that, in all likelihood, based on the experience of the surveyor and operating on a legally precautionary basis, a nest is present and mitigation should be employed at the site. Such holes need further intrusive investigation to confirm the presence of birds.
- 2.1.6 The survey covered the entirety of the port area from the pier at Marine Parade, at the east end, to the Dolphins (Figure 1). Only the areas marked in red in Figure 1 are to be worked upon.
- 2.1.7 The entire area was surveyed from a small boat, which allowed a good view of the walls beneath the harbour. Additional observations were carried out from Marine Parade.
- 2.1.8 All individual Black Guillemots were counted.



Figure 1 Survey area



## 3. Results

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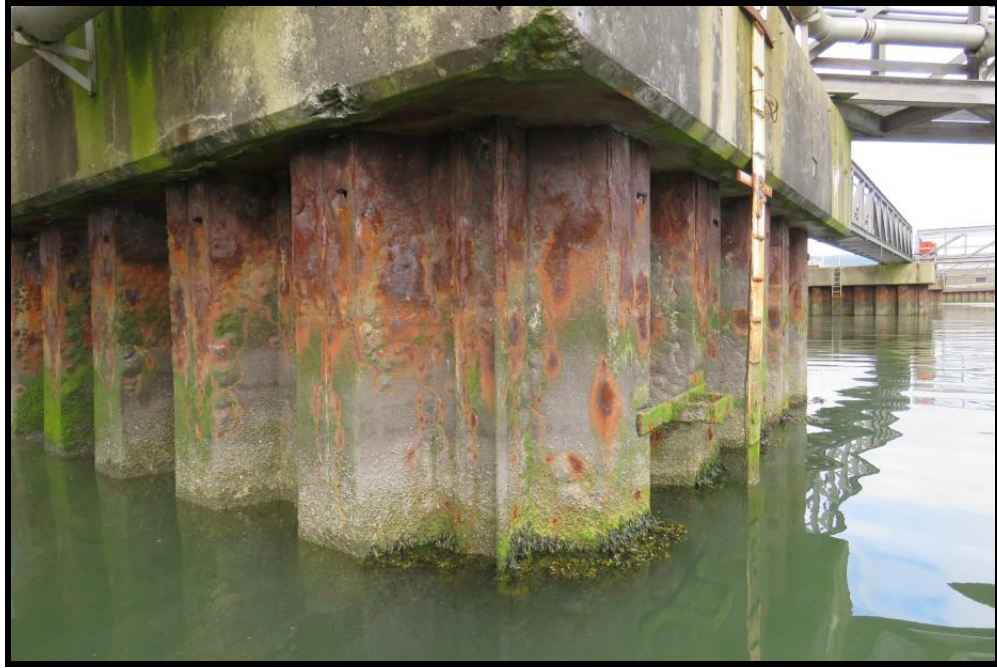
### 3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The site was visited on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

### 3.2 Dolphins

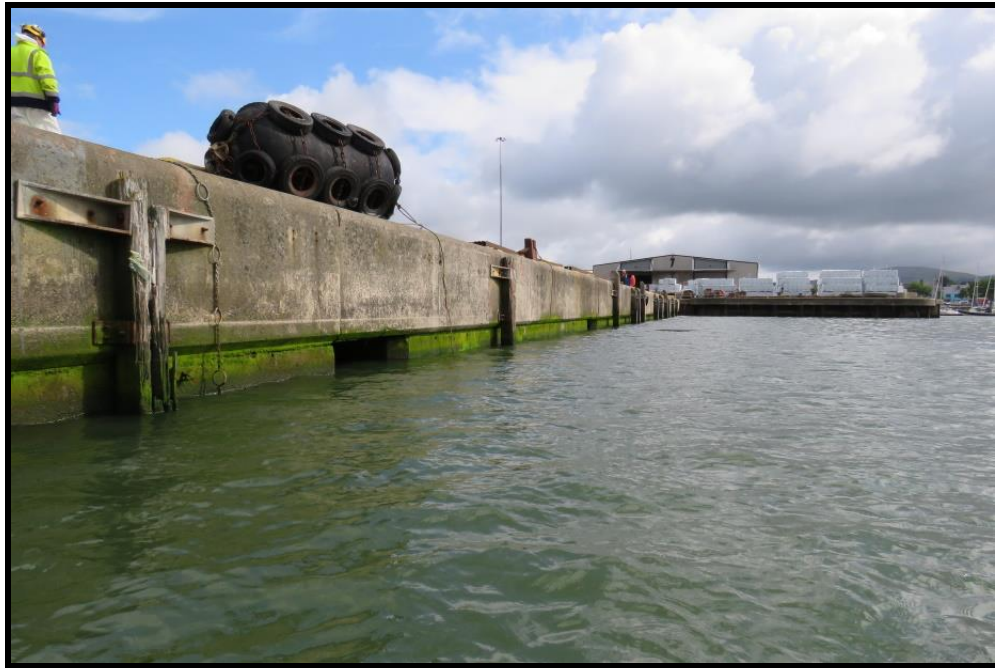
3.2.1 There were no Black Guillemot nests on the Dolphins or the adjacent harbour wall.

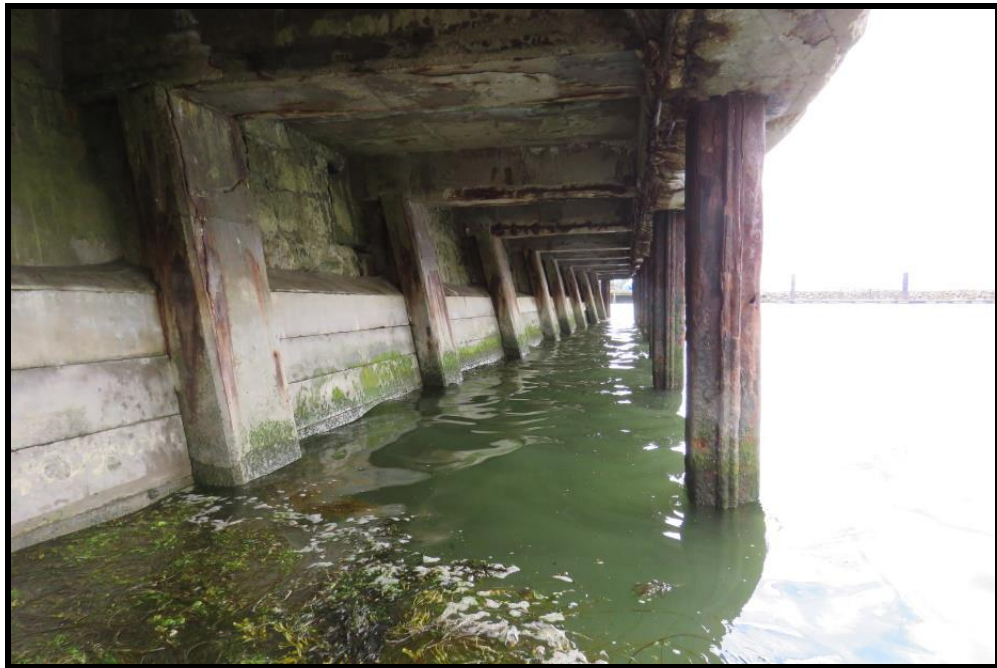




### 3.3 Berth 6

3.3.1 There were no Black Guillemot nests at the area of harbour known as Berth 6.





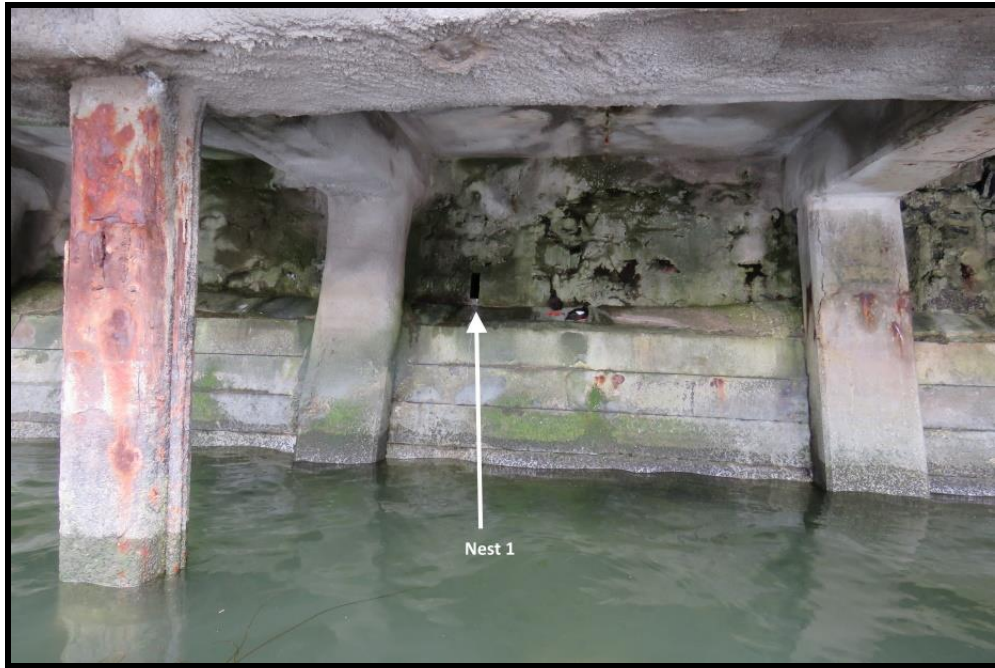


### **3.4 Other areas**

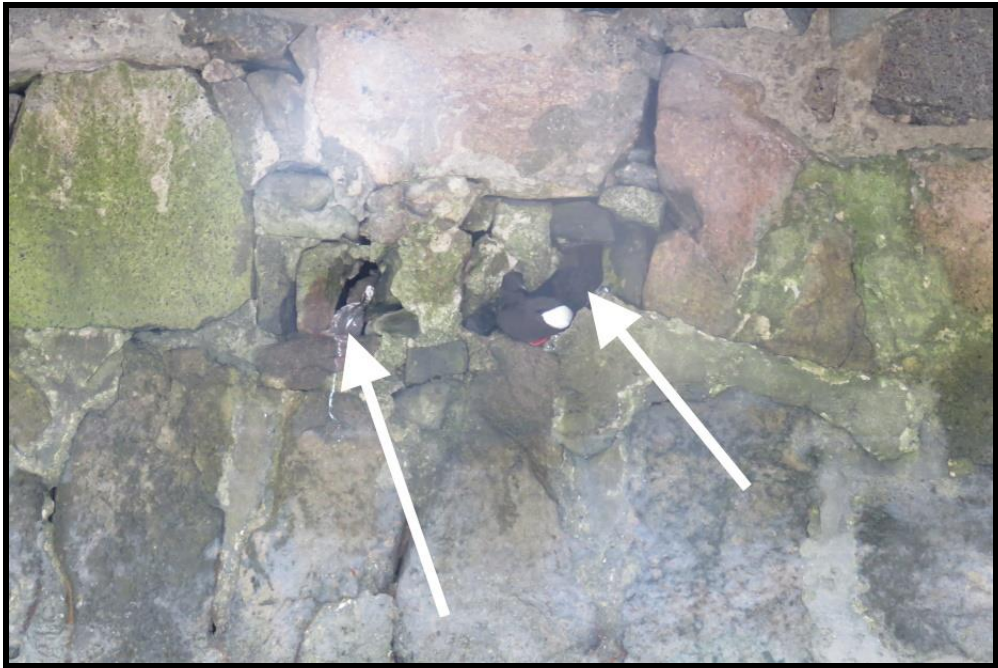
- 3.4.1 A minimum of six active Black Guillemot nests were present in other parts of the harbour.
- 3.4.2 All of these nests were in the central Warrenpoint area of the harbour, at the eastern end of the harbour, and outside the areas to be worked upon.
- 3.4.3 The nearest nest is approximately 45m from the works.
- 3.4.4 There were probably a seventh, eighth and ninth active nests. A long crack had guano along its length and likely had two separate pairs within (7). A single crevice, in examining the photos, was actually apparently two very close nests (8). Similarly, another crevice, on examining the photos, had guano from a hole above at an oblique angle to the front, difficult to see (9).
- 3.4.5 In addition, there was a 10<sup>th</sup> site (red 10 in Figure 2) being visited by a bird but unlikely to be active at this time.
- 3.4.6 A total of 20 individual Black Guillemots were observed.

Figure 2 Active nests located









## **4. Mitigation plan**

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### **4.1 Works**

4.1.1 No mitigation is required.

### **4.2 Nest boxes**

4.2.1 There are many locations with the eastern part of the harbour where nest boxes or tubes could be located, underneath the pier, which would not interfere with the running of the harbour. It is likely that available nesting sites are a limiting factor for the local population.

4.2.2 Details of nest site construction have been provided to the Harbour Master.

## **5. Summary**

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- 5.1.1 No Black Guillemots are nesting in the areas to be repaired.
- 5.1.2 The works may proceed as planned.
- 5.1.3 No further survey work is required.

## 6. References

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Gilbert G., Stanbury A. & Lewis L. 2021. Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2014-2019. *Irish Birds* 43, pp. 1-22.

Ferguson-Less, J., Castell, R., & Leech, D. 2011. *A Field Guide to Monitoring Nests*. British Trust for Ornithology, Thetford.