

# GREAT CRESTED NEWTS AND DEVELOPMENT



**ces ecology**  
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## Ecology

Adult great crested newts (GCN) utilise ponds for breeding purposes during the spring and summer months. Females lay their eggs on aquatic plants and GCN larvae develop in the pond over the spring and summer.

Predominantly GCN live terrestrially, foraging at night and sheltering by day in cool, moist places such as rubble piles, wood piles, under paving slabs, within gaps in deteriorated brick/stonework, cracks and fissures in the ground, disused mammal burrows, etc.

## Legislation

GCN are protected under both *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010* and the *Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981* (as amended).

Natural England (NE) and Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) issue licences for the disturbance of European Protected Species including GCN, certain criteria must be met before a licence can be issued to enable otherwise prohibited works to proceed. Such criteria may be subject to change without notice. For further information please visit [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk) or [www.ccw.gov.uk](http://www.ccw.gov.uk)



Male Great Crested Newt © James Grundy

## Habitat Appraisal

An initial site appraisal visit is usually required to assess the suitability of aquatic and terrestrial habitat to support GCN. This allows the position of any ponds within up to 250m of the proposed development site to be identified and recorded and a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) score for each pond to be calculated. The HSI score can then be used to assess the potential of a water-body to support GCN. The habitat appraisal visit usually allows the likelihood of GCN presence to be assessed, and provides information on how any newts may be affected by the proposed works.

Should there be potential for the development to impact upon GCN (see table overleaf), a full survey may be required to establish presence (and possibly population size class) or indicate likely absence of this legally protected species.

## Survey requirements

Natural England stipulate the survey effort required; either presence/absence or population size class surveys. This depends upon the size of the proposed development work and the distance of the site from any ponds. The acceptable age of any pre-existing survey information is also specified. Please refer to the chart on the back of this information sheet for further details.

Owing to the legally protected status of GCN such surveys must only be carried out by appropriately licensed and experienced surveyors.

## Survey Methods

Natural England recommend that a combination of three survey methods are used during each survey visit, with up to four survey visits being required for presence or absence survey, and six survey visits required for population size class surveys. Pond surveys may be carried out between mid-March and mid-June, but at least half the survey visits should take place during peak survey season (mid-April to mid-May).

- Egg search – this method involves searching the submerged leaves of aquatic plants for GCN eggs.
- Torch search – this method involves searching for GCN at night by shining a powerful torch into the pond.
- Bottle Trap – this method involves placing bottle traps in the pond margins overnight and retrieving them the following morning.
- Netting – this method involves using a long-handled dip-net to catch newts around the pond margins. Netting is considered to be less likely to detect adult newts, particularly in deep, open ponds, but may be useful in augmenting other survey techniques.

### GCN Development Licence

If the proposed development works are considered likely to disturb or harm GCN and/or their habitat, a European Protected Species (EPS) development licence must be obtained before any works commence. A strategy to protect the newts and replace any habitat lost to the development must be agreed as part of the licence application process. Licences are only issued if strict criteria are met, and full planning permission (if needed) is usually required before an EPS licence can be issued.

CES are able to guide you through the licence application process, and carry out any necessary mitigation measures such as the capture and re-location of amphibians, creation of replacement habitat, etc.

### Experience and qualifications

CES employ some of the most experienced amphibian ecologists in the country, who have a proven track record of carrying out amphibian surveys and designing and implementing mitigation schemes for projects of all sizes. CES is a member of the Association of Wildlife Trust Consultancies (AWTC). Our ecologists are licensed to survey for great crested newts throughout England and Wales and are members of the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (IEEM).

Some of our clients include: The Highways Agency · Balfour Beattie · Bovis Homes · North West Water · Taylor Wimpey Homes · National Grid · United Utilities · McAlpine · Transco · Mouchel Parkman · Bloor Homes



English Nature – Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines: Table summarising the scale of site level impacts

Habitat Feature	Development Effect	Scale of Impact		
		Low	Medium	High
Breeding Pond	Destruction			✓
	Isolation caused by fragmentation			✓
	Partial destruction; modification		✓	
	Temporary disturbance	✓		
	Post-development interference			✓
Other pond used by GCN	Destruction		✓	
	Isolation caused by fragmentation		✓	
	Partial destruction; modification	✓		
	Temporary disturbance	✓		
	Post-development interference	✓		
Immediate terrestrial habitat (approx <50m from breeding pond)	Destruction			✓
	Isolation caused by fragmentation			✓
	Partial destruction		✓	
	Modified management, resurfacing etc		✓	
	Temporary disturbance	✓		
	Post-development interference		✓	
	Temporary destruction, then reinstatement	✓		
Intermediate terrestrial habitat (approx 50-250m from breeding pond)	Destruction		✓	
	Isolation caused by fragmentation		✓	
	Partial destruction	✓		
	Modified management, resurfacing, etc.	✓		
	Temporary disturbance	✓		
	Post-development interference	✓		
	Temporary destruction, then reinstatement	✓		
Distant terrestrial habitat (approx >250m from breeding pond)	Destruction	✓		
	Isolation caused by fragmentation	✓		
	Partial destruction	✓		
	Modified management, resurfacing etc	✓		
	Temporary disturbance	✓		
	Post-development interference	✓		
	Temporary destruction, then reinstatement	✓		