



The great crested newt District Licensing Scheme

Natural England has granted Gloucestershire County Council a District licence for great crested newts, allowing those seeking a county, minerals or waste planning permission for development/operations in Gloucestershire to participate in a new great crested newt licencing scheme. This new scheme can save time and costs for developments where great crested newts may be impacted, at the same time as benefitting the great crested newt population.

Developments which may impact great crested newts

Surveys have shown that great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are present in around a third (32%) of ponds in the South Midlands region, although this varies in places it is usually higher than the national average (13%).

Ponds are critical to great crested newts for breeding, but newts are also dependent upon other habitats too, as they spend most of their life on land in habitats such as woodland, hedgerows, rough grassland and scrub, travelling up to 500 metres between ponds (and sometimes further).

Great crested newts have protected status through UK legislation and must be considered as part of the planning application process. If present, the mitigation hierarchy needs to be considered, whereby detrimental effects should be:

- Avoided;
- Mitigated; or
- Compensated.

Where permission is granted, it is often necessary to incorporate safeguards into the development, as a planning condition and/or by legal agreement. It is also then necessary to secure a protected species licence from Natural England, the licensing authority in England.

In the Gloucestershire County Council area, developers now have an additional licensing option: either the standard licensing routes directly through Natural England - or the new District Licensing Scheme whereby Gloucestershire County Council can itself authorise the developer alongside planning permission.

Natural England Licensing Route – see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects>

- Surveys need to be carried out during the survey season (mid-March to mid-June) to confirm the presence/likely absence of great crested newts. A population size class assessment (6 visits to each pond during this period) may also be needed.
- When presence of great crested newts is confirmed, details of surveys, mitigation and compensation will need to be submitted and agreed with the local planning authority as part of the planning application in order to comply with legislation as well as national and local planning policy.

- Planning permission is usually required before a licence application is made to Natural England, so post-planning, an application will need to be prepared and submitted to Natural England, including details of impacts, mitigation, compensation, management and monitoring. This would need to demonstrate that compensation will maintain or enhance the great crested newt population.
- If great crested newts are considered to be absent from a development site, but are then subsequently discovered during construction, all works must cease, and Natural England contacted for advice. A licence application may subsequently need to be submitted to Natural England and granted before works can recommence.

The District Licensing Route – see www.naturespaceuk.com

- Natural England has already granted a great crested newt District Licence to Gloucestershire County Council which means that the Council can now authorise individual developments under its District Licence, rather than developers having to separately seek a licence from Natural England.
- Developers opt into the District Licensing Scheme during the planning process so that the required planning conditions can be included on the planning consent (if granted)
- Ponds surveys are not required to use the District Licensing Scheme.
- The Delivery Partner for the District Licensing Scheme is NatureSpace Partnership. Developers contact NatureSpace Partnership to enter the scheme.
- Once a developer has joined the scheme, NatureSpace Partnership carry out an assessment of eligibility and requirements under the District Licence. This assessment embeds the mitigation hierarchy and identifies what level of mitigation and compensation is required for the specific development proposal.
- Compensation, monitoring and long-term habitat management is delivered off-site by the Newt Conservation Partnership, a not-for-profit Community Benefit Society. Compensation effort is focused on providing high-quality, connected habitats as part of a landscape-scale conservation plan for great crested newts.
- All associated costs in using the scheme are dependent on the development size, location and impacts. The costs are confirmed by NatureSpace once the developer has joined the scheme and before planning permission is granted by the local planning authority.

Contacts for further information on licensing options:

Natural England Licencing

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence>

NatureSpace District Licence Scheme

www.naturespaceuk.com

info@naturespaceuk.com

01865 688307