



## GREAT CRESTED NEWT DISTRICT LICENSING

**BETTER FOR DEVELOPERS**

**BETTER FOR PLANNERS**

**BETTER FOR NEWTS**

Great crested newts have declined dramatically in the UK over the last 50 years and although still widespread across lowland England, they are no longer common. Despite protection under UK and European wildlife law, numbers are still declining, and habitat loss is their biggest threat.

Our scheme offers a simple and quick licensing route that is available all year-round. There is no need to wait for the short seasonal survey window, no requirement for additional survey information to be provided, and we can deliver a site assessment within 10 working days.

[www.NatureSpaceUK.com](http://www.NatureSpaceUK.com)



### Benefits



Simple licensing process for your legal newt requirements



Speeds up housing delivery



Available all year (unlike Standard Licensing)



Delivers a long-term, landscape-scale, conservation strategy



## WHAT IS DISTRICT LICENSING?

Our District Licensing Scheme **minimises delays, simplifies the licensing process** and has proportional fees based on the level of impact involved with each individual development. The scheme has demonstrated that with a mix of innovation and partnership the licensing and planning process can be **integrated to benefit developers, planners and newts.**

The new system, overseen and regulated by **Natural England**, and run by NatureSpace in partnership with local planning authorities was introduced in 2018 and delivers **better overall conservation outcomes** by providing a strategic approach to identify which developments will have an impact on newts.

NatureSpace work with local planning authorities to create a very fine scale 'risk map' for newts. The map **saves developers time and money** as there are no surveys requirements. The map uses the **latest eDNA, satellite and modelling technologies** to produce a highly accurate picture of where great crested newts are likely to be found.

**All newt licensing requirements are laid out by NatureSpace before planning permission is applied for**, and the developer knows exactly how much (if anything) it will cost. **Licences for great crested newts are held by the planning authorities** instead of individual developers: offering a 'one-stop shop' for developers who can then work under a planning authority's Licence as soon as they receive their planning permission.

**The District Licence Scheme is quick, simple, certain, risk-free and sustainable, with better outcomes for everyone involved in the process.**



## THE OLD LICENSING SYSTEM WAS NOT IDEAL

1. Developments would need to consider great crested newts (and other protected species) as part of their planning proposal.
2. If it was likely an impact would occur, the developer would need to carry out survey work to inform a mitigation strategy. This might involve fencing, trapping and other costly measures.
3. Surveys were seasonally constrained to the survey season from March to June, which meant that a development could be delayed for up to a year waiting for a survey (which often showed that no newts were present anyway).
4. If the development received planning approval, the developer would then apply to Natural England to seek a European Protected Species Licence (no guaranteed timeframe).
5. **The old system was expensive, time consuming and unpopular with developers.**

## NATURESPACE WORKS WITH NGO AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT PARTNERS

NatureSpace work with **Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC), Freshwater Habitats Trust and Newt Conservation Partnership**, to design and implement a spatial conservation strategy for each planning authority. All compensatory habitats are created in strategic locations for great crested newts away from the pressures of development to ensure a long term sustainable future for newts.



## BETTER FOR DEVELOPERS

Most developments will be in low-risk zones or have low impacts on newts and will not need a licence; but the developers in the high-risk zones that may have an impact on newts have the option to use the District Licencing Scheme.

NatureSpace offers developers a **free consultation and assessment** of their development impact; if they choose to go ahead and **join the scheme**, they **pay a fee** for an official report. The report is guaranteed to be completed within 10 working days at any time of the year and is submitted alongside their planning application. If the development has a **high impact on newts** a second stage fee may be applicable, but this is **payable after planning permission is granted**, to ensure there is no financial risk. A certificate is then issued to discharge any planning conditions.

The scheme is designed to be **fair and proportionate** for everyone, as each development is individually assessed for its impacts on great crested newts.

The cost of entering the scheme ranges from:

£500 - £2,000  
+VAT for low  
impact  
developments

£5,000 - £10,000  
+VAT for high  
impact  
developments  
(plus a second stage  
fee, if applicable)

In every case, District Licencing is a **quick, simple, cost-effective and sustainable scheme for developers**: there are no delays, no long-term commitments, and no special works needed (in most cases) – **the scheme saves time and cuts red-tape**.



## BETTER FOR PLANNERS

The scheme fundamentally relies on the planning authorities applying a few simple planning conditions to **integrate planning and licencing**.

Authorities like the District Licencing Scheme for several reasons:

1. It **delivers conservation gain** for great crested newts (and wider biodiversity) within their district and helps them **meet (and exceed) their environmental responsibilities**.

2. The scheme embeds the 'mitigation hierarchy', which **respects and rewards good on-site conservation actions**.

It helps and encourages their developers to do the above as well – providing an option that both **speeds up development** but also **ensures it is sustainable**.

3. It **saves time and money** – the scheme pays for each county to have a dedicated **'Newt Officer'** to support the local authority planners and ecologists in every aspect of the scheme. The scheme also covers the **analysis** of developmental impacts on great crested newts, **saving the local authority ecologists and planners a huge amount of time**.

## BETTER FOR NEWTS



Most importantly, the scheme **delivers huge conservation gains** for great crested newts. For every newt pond that is lost to development, at **least four high-quality newt ponds are created/restored** in the landscape and then managed in perpetuity. The scheme pays fees directly to the not-for-profit **Newt Conservation Partnership** community benefit society, which guarantees that funds can only be spent on newt habitats and ensures the long-term management of the newly created ponds.

The **ponds are designed, created, managed and monitored by experts** in the field. Landowners are paid for the initial ponds, plus an annual management fee to make sure the **pond stays in perfect condition for great crested newts**. Our partner landowners range from **Councils, Forestry England, Wildlife Trusts, farmers and others**. All our partners enter into contracts that guarantee 25-year funding to create a great wildlife asset on their land.

## SCHEME PROGRESS IN 2022

By the end of 2022 the scheme had **created/restored 225 clean water ponds** and **over 645 hectares of terrestrial land** (where newts spend most of the year) for great crested newts across England.

The ponds are designed to be in the right place at the right time and are rapidly colonised by newts and other biodiversity.

Each pond that goes back into the landscape is **reversing** the much-quoted **'death by a thousand cuts'**, with NatureSpace's new paradigm of **'recovery through a hundred stitches'**.

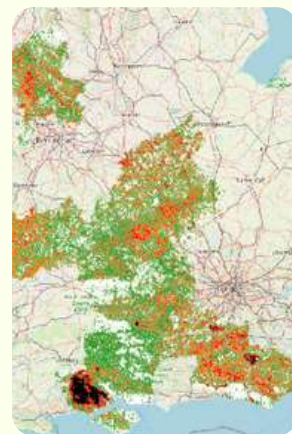
We look forward to expanding the scheme across England and Wales wherever planning authorities invite it.



## WHERE WE OPERATE

The scheme currently operates across 48 local planning authorities across:

- Bedfordshire
- Berkshire
- Buckinghamshire
- East Sussex
- Gloucestershire
- Milton Keynes
- Northamptonshire
- Oxfordshire
- Staffordshire
- Surrey



*\*West Sussex and Hampshire are due to join the scheme in early 2023.*

## CONTACT US

**To find out more about the scheme and how it could work for you, get in touch with us today.**

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