

Developer Frequently Asked Questions

Why should I consider great crested newts in planning?



Great crested newts are a rapidly declining species and are fully protected under UK law, which makes it illegal to harm (or even move) them, or damage their habitat, unless a licence is in place.

Where the NatureSpace District Licence Scheme is available, the statutory guidance for local planning authorities is clear. When development falls into the **red** or **amber** zones on the impact risk map, developers **MUST** prove to their local planning authorities that their development plans pose 'no risk' to great crested newts.

What do I need to do?

In the red and amber zones you **MUST** demonstrate that your development proposal poses 'no risk' to great crested newts, this can be done in one of three ways:

1. Demonstrate that newts don't occur on your site (usually by commissioning an ecological consultant to carry out a site assessment).
2. Apply to Natural England for a Standard Licence – this can only be done after planning permission. You will need to commission an ecologist to carry out a survey and design a great crested newt mitigation scheme.
3. Join the NatureSpace District Licence Scheme, which usually provides the quickest, most certain and least risky option where a licence is required.



What do I get out of joining the scheme?

By joining the District Licence Scheme you save yourself the time, cost and effort of:



- Commissioning surveys during the 3 month breeding season, sometimes over several years (dependent on development proposal).
- Carrying out lots of on-site mitigation (requiring pre-approval from Natural England), including months of trapping and miles of plastic fencing (often with high costs and rarely finding newts).
- Setting aside a lot of on-site land for newt mitigation that cannot be developed and creating habitats for newts on-site before the start of any development works.
- Committing to managing and monitoring your newt mitigation for years after development has finished.



You can submit your certificate alongside your planning application, rather than having to wait for planning permission first (as with the Standard Licensing) - saving you time.

Most importantly, if you are authorised under the scheme and great crested newts do turn up on-site, you do not have to stop development, you can simply move the newts and carry on.



The District Licence Scheme Conservation Strategy

Our District Licensing Scheme has been carefully designed to offer numerous benefits both to developers and planners, but also to protect and conserve great crested newts.

That is why together with our partners, the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust, the Freshwater Habitats Trust, and the Newt Conservation Partnership, we have developed a long-term, fully-funded landscape-scale conservation strategy for great crested newts – the first of its kind in the UK.

When developers enter our scheme, the funds are used for scheme delivery which provides large-scale, upfront and long-term habitat creation, management and monitoring at compensation sites across the region. We aim to increase the number of high-quality, clean water ponds which are connected by suitable terrestrial habitat, creating a network of high-quality habitats where newt populations can thrive.

For every pond occupied by great crested newts that is lost through development, we create or restore at least four high-quality ponds, and ensure suitable surrounding terrestrial habitat is in place.



Compensation Ratio **4:1**



How the District Licence Scheme works

High Impact Developments



QUICK



SIMPLE



CERTAIN



SUSTAINABLE



There are two routes within the scheme depending on the development type:

Low Impact

If you fit the 'low impact' criteria e.g. householders or infill, you make a single payment to NatureSpace of either £500, £1,000 or £2,000 plus VAT. You will then receive a certificate within 5 working days to prove that you can be covered under the District Licence, which can then be submitted to your local planning authority alongside your planning application. You will then get 'authorised' to use the District Licence by the Council - alongside the granting of planning permission.



HIGH OR LOW IMPACT?

Enquire today to find out!

High Impact

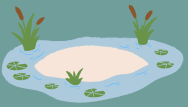
If you are a 'high impact' development e.g. more than two houses, there are three stages to the process.



1. Prior to applying for planning permission, you pay either £5,000 or £10,000 plus VAT (depending on the development size) and receive a NatureSpace report within 10 working days. This report will detail our analysis of your development and the impact on great crested newts and will also outline the second stage fee for off-site compensatory habitat creation. The second stage fee allows the Newt Conservation Partnership to provide the compensatory habitats needed for the District Licence to be used. The sum within the report is guaranteed and will not change (unless there are any significant development changes). It is then up to you to decide if you wish to enter the District Licensing Scheme.



2. If you decide to enter the scheme, you simply submit the report with your planning application to the local planning authority and they will condition any planning consent accordingly.



3. After receiving planning permission, you pay the second stage fee and apply to the council to discharge the relevant planning condition with a copy of your NatureSpace certificate and then get authorised to use the Council's District Licence.

Why might I have a second stage fee and how much would this be?

NatureSpace applies a Natural England approved 'District Licence Impact Metric' to the habitat maps your ecologist provides during the application process. The metric is precautionary and calculates fees on the aquatic, terrestrial and linear impacts of the development proposal. It considers lots of factors in the assessment including, but not limited to:

- habitat type
- condition for great crested newts
- connectivity and distance from a pond
- prospects
- impact type
- whether the habitat will be damaged, degraded or removed

The metric result will depend on the ecological information submitted, which is fine-tuned to pick up small details your ecologist submits. We are held to very strict and objective protocols to ensure that conservation status is improved as a result of the scheme being used.



Where does my money go and what does it provide?

All fees paid to join the scheme will help deliver a long-term, landscape-scale, great crested newt conservation strategy. Funds from both first and second stage fees are apportioned as follows:

One third of the funds cover:

- The management and administration of the scheme, including biennial licence renewals
- The annual monitoring and reporting on the scheme to Natural England
- All NatureSpace staff time and costs, including the 'Newt Officers' that provide advice and support to local planning authorities
- The initial (and repeated) surveys and modelling that are needed to produce the 'impact risk maps'.

Two thirds of the funds cover:

The costs of the creation, management and monitoring of all the compensatory ponds and terrestrial habitat:

- directly by monies paid to landowners to create and manage ponds
- indirectly through staff and administration costs in the not-for-profit Newt Conservation Partnership
- Half of the direct costs are set aside in an endowment fund – this can only be used for newt management and ensures future management for all ponds and habitat created under the scheme for 25 years
- it also covers the long-term monitoring and reporting of all the sites.

Whilst we are aware that second stage fees can sometimes seem high, they are always proportional to the net impact. Larger developments or those with high impacts will incur higher fees as the compensation required to cover these is greater. The scheme delivers and carefully manages high-quality aquatic and terrestrial habitat as well as contractually managing these habitats for 25 years+. The second-stage fees are carefully calculated for each case through the metric assessment and are non-negotiable, all developers are fully advised of the total costs within the NatureSpace Report, and the fees are guaranteed for three years if you choose to join at a later date (providing habitats/impacts have not changed).

Can I go and see the ponds that have been created?

Most compensation delivered through the scheme are conducted under private agreements with landowners, where public access is not available. However, a handful of compensation sites are publicly accessible either on council-owned land or Wildlife Trust nature reserves, please get in touch if you would like further information on these or if you would like some publicity material.



Regular updates on the compensation delivered by the Newt Conservation Partnership (supported by Amphibian and Reptile Conservation (ARC) and Freshwater Habitats Trust) are posted through on our website and social media channels.



If you have any other questions,
please get in touch:

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