

# Charlotte Peacock Associates



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY

## Great Crested Newts

| Type of Survey                  | Most Suitable Time of Year  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) | All year  |
| Presence / Absence Survey       | 4 surveys with at least 2 surveys between mid-April and mid-May and the rest completed by mid-June. |
| Population Survey               | An additional 2 surveys to the presence / absence surveys to be completed by mid-June.              |

### Legislation

The great crested newt is one of three native species of newts found in the UK. All newts are amphibians and spend most of their life cycle on land but require water to breed. In recent years both terrestrial and aquatic habitat used by great crested newts have experienced significant decline. Due to this, great crested newts are protected under both UK and European law in the form of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

This makes it illegal amongst other thing to:

- kill or injure a great crested newt;
- damage, destroy or obstruct the places used for shelter and protection; and
- disturb great crested newts when they are using such places.

### Preferred Habitat

Great crested newts will utilise static water bodies including ponds and ditches to lay their eggs.

Young great crested newts and adults which are not breeding also use terrestrial habitat. Woodland, rough grassland and scrub are preferred and this species will commute to these areas along hedgerows and other features.



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## Great Crested Newts Continued.....

### *Survey Methodology*

#### HSI Survey

The Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) is used as a way of rapidly assessing waterbodies to determine their potential to support GCN. The methodology was developed by Oldham *et al* (2000).

These surveys require one visit at any time of the year and are usually conducted in conjunction with an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey. However, the most accurate results are obtained in the spring or summer when vegetation and invertebrates are easily seen.

The assessment will assign a category to the waterbody ranging from unsuitable to excellent and indicate whether further surveys will be required. This assessment alone is not sufficient to facilitate development or to apply for a development licence.

#### Presence / Absence Survey

The guidance used for these surveys can be found in English Nature's (now Natural England) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines* (2001).

Surveys to determine whether the species are present or absent on a site are conducted over a relatively short period with at least two of the four surveys needing to occur within the critical period of mid-April to mid-May. If the species is found to be present then a population survey is required.

There are four recognised techniques of which a minimum of three must be used each visit. The techniques are: bottle trapping, torch survey, egg search and netting.

#### Population Survey

A population survey follows the same guidance as the presence / absence surveys and involves an additional two surveys (i.e. six in total) which must also be completed by mid-June.

### *Licensing and Mitigation*

Licences are granted by the relevant statutory nature conservation organisation (SNCO) (i.e. Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales or Scottish Natural Heritage). These licences involve submitting details of the surveys undertaken, an assessment of the potential impacts and the details of mitigation measures which will be taken to minimise the impacts which could range from habitat manipulation to translocating individual newts to another site.

This is a particularly detailed document which can take a number of months to complete depending upon the complexity of the project. The SNCOs also need time to consider the application which is likely to add further time to the project. It should be noted that any works including site clearance can not commence until a licence has been granted.