

Reasonable Avoidance Measures for Great Crested Newts

The following Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) should be adopted to minimise impact on GCN during works. RAMs include sensitive clearance of vegetation and good working practices/ site housekeeping to avoid attracting newts onto development sites.

Sensitive Vegetation Clearance

Sensitive and phased vegetation clearance can be undertaken to make habitats less suitable for newts within areas which are soon to be cleared/soil stripped. Best practice is to do this in phases: first cut any scrub and other tall vegetation to a height of c.250mm with all arisings removed; 48hrs later cut remaining vegetation to a height of c.150mm. The second phase should be undertaken in a directional manner, moving towards suitable areas of retained habitat, with arisings removed from the site. Soil strip can progress 48hrs after the second phase of vegetation clearance, again working towards retained habitat areas.

For the purpose of minimising impact on GCN, vegetation clearance and soil stripping can be restricted to areas where works are soon to commence. Once soil strip has been undertaken it is advisable to maintain the area as bare earth to minimise the likelihood of newts re-colonising. In order to be effective vegetation clearance should be undertaken during the active season for newts, typically February to October inclusive when temperatures are >5°C, and should avoid prolonged periods of hot dry weather when newt activity is reduced.

Working practices and site housekeeping

For the protection of GCN, retained and offsite areas can be fenced using appropriate site fencing or hoarding, and vehicles, pedestrians and storage of materials excluded from these areas.

Storage of materials/waste is best undertaken on areas of hard standing or bare ground (for example areas which have been subject to the clearance measures identified above). Waste is best stored in skips or removed off site as soon as possible to avoid creating refuges which could be colonised by newts. If possible storage areas, waste material and site compounds are best placed in areas not adjacent to highly suitable off-site or retained habitat which may act as a source of colonisation by newts. Mounds of soil can be compacted around the base to avoid creating refuges which newts could occupy.

Site working should avoid the creation of temporary waterbodies which may be attractive to newts. For this purpose, excavations can be backfilled as soon as possible following creation, or fitted with ramps to allow a means of escape (for example a wooden plank set at an angle no steeper than 45°). A check for the presence of newts is advisable before excavations are infilled.