



Coxwood Farm, Cox Lane, Rossett, Wrexham, LL12 0BG

Amphibian Risk Assessment

INTRODUCTION

Leigh Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Mr Hill to assess the potential risk to Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* from the construction of a farm workers dwelling and associated infrastructure..

The site was surveyed on the 3rd October 2021 and data gathered from this survey was used in this assessment.

METHODOLOGY

The proposal site and all ponds within 150m of the proposal site, that were not fragmented by major barriers such as major roads or rivers and streams, were assessed using the habitat suitability assessment methodology (ARG 2010, Oldham et al 2000). The assessment also incorporated the terrestrial habitat, which will be lost to the proposal and the area between the pond and the proposal.

SITE

The proposal site comprises a farm workers dwelling set on a farm yard type habitat a waterbody (pond A) is located 110m to the south of the site (see figure 1 below).

Pond A has medium potential potential for GCN.

The pond is a marl pit type pond set in cattle grazing pasture.



Fig 1 Pond A is approximately 110m from the proposal site.

Pond A was subjected to a Habitat Suitability Assessments as shown below.

Table 1: HSI score of the pond located within 150m of the proposal site at the proposal site												
pond	area (m2)	pond drying (never, rarely, sometimes, annually)	water quality (good, moderate, poor, bad)	shade (% 1m from shore)	fowl (absent, minor, major)	fish (absent, possible, minor, major)	ponds (count within 1km)	terrestrial habitat (good, moderate, poor, none)	macrophytes (%)	notes	HSI	category
A	1320	Never	Moderate	10%	Major	Possible	6	Moderate	20	Marl Pit	0.8	Medium

Pond A was assessed following the habitat suitability index which classifies the ponds habitat as containing medium potential to host great crested newts.

Pond A is approximately 110 m from the proposed development, a majority of the land in between is improved pasture and farmyard, both habitats can be deemed as sub optimal habitat for amphibians. However, it is noted that a hedgerow act as a boundary of the farm yard, this could offer some potential amphibian foraging and hibernating habitat.

GREAT CRESTED NEWT

LEGISLATION

Great crested newts (GCN) and their habitat are fully protected under national (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)) and European law (The Habitats and Species Regulations 2010) as a European Protected Species (EPS). The combined legislation makes it illegal to:

- Intentionally or deliberately capture, kill or injure a great crested newt.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used for shelter and protection including resting and breeding places, whether occupied or not.
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt when in a place of shelter.
- Possess a great crested newt, or any part of it, unless acquired lawfully.
- Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale great crested newts or parts of them.

Anyone carrying out activities, which may affect EPS, must consider the presence of EPS, their breeding sites and resting places. Good practice guidance is available from Natural England, which advises on assessing for the presence of EPS, and the possible impact of operations (including strategies for avoiding committing offences). If an offence cannot be avoided, then a derogation licence should be sought from Natural Resources Wales.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The site information (distance of pond from the proposal and land lost within 250m) was inputted into the Natural England risk assessment matrix, see below (Table 1)

When the information is inputted into the Natural England risk assessment model the result is **Green – Offence Highly Unlikely**.

Green: offence highly unlikely" indicates that the development activities are of such a type, scale and location that it is highly unlikely any offence would be committed should the development proceed. Therefore, no licence would be required. However, bearing in mind that this is a generic assessment, you should carefully examine your specific plans to ensure this is a sound conclusion, and take precautions (see **Non-licensed avoidance measures tool**) to avoid offences if appropriate. It is likely that any residual offences would have negligible impact on conservation status, and enforcement of such breaches is unlikely to be in the public interest.



Fig 2 A schematic plan showing the positions of the pond in relation to the proposal site.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
Maximum:		0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

Table 1

There for it is concluded that the proposed development can proceed as planned.

However, given a hedgerow is located in the intervening area it is suggested that the works follow an Amphibian Safeguarding method statement as provided in appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Amphibian : Tool Box Talk

Method Statement objectives

The objectives of this method statement are: -

- Avoid committing an offence under the above legislation; and,
- To ensure that favourable conservation status of amphibians and reptiles are maintained.

Any development related activities on the site, such as vegetation clearance or excavations in areas of suitable newt habitat may potentially affect this species. As a result, safeguards must be implemented to protect this species and the Method Statement below details measures to be implemented to ensure these objectives are achieved.



LEGISLATION

Some Reptiles and Great crested newts (GCN) and their habitat are fully protected under national (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)) and European law (The Habitats and Species Regulations 2010) as a European Protected Species (EPS). The combined legislation makes it illegal to:

- intentionally or deliberately capture, kill or injure a great crested newt or reptile.
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used for shelter and protection including resting and breeding places, whether occupied or not
- deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a great crested newt or reptile when in a place of shelter
- possess a slow worm, adder, grass snake, sand lizard or great crested newt, or any part of it, unless acquired lawfully
- Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale reptiles or great crested newts or parts of them.

METHOD STATEMENT

This method statement should be followed for the initial phase of works within the site, which may affect the surrounding terrestrial habitat. Minor or short term destructive or disturbance works will also follow this Method Statement to ensure legal compliance and to ensure the favourable conservation status of the species is not compromised.

The following measures will be adopted throughout the construction period of the proposed development:

- A toolbox talk covering the following points will be presented to the developer undertaking the construction activities.
- A fingertip search by a licensed ecologist of the proposed dwelling area immediately prior to any turf removal.
- Should any trenches or excavations be required, an escape route for animals that enter the trench must be provided, especially if left open overnight. Ramps should be no greater than of 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered.
- All excavations left open overnight or longer should be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling.
- There will be no impacts on surrounding hedgerows. All hedgerows will be maintained throughout the construction programme.
- Any excavated material should be placed on boards or sheeting to reduced damage to the grass sward (if present). If left overnight this material should be searched prior to being used as infill.
- Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an ongoing process to the work in hand.
- Terrestrial and aquatic habitat improvements should be undertaken on ponds in the wider ownership of the client as part of the proposed development, this should include pond vegetation clearance and provision of more primary terrestrial habitat within proximity of the ponds.
- If a GCN or Reptile is found during the construction activities, work must stop immediately and contact should be made with a licensed, qualified ecologist, who will liaise with Natural Resources Wales.