



ELM Associates

Croes Howell

Protected Species Survey

Great Crested Newt RAM's & Biodiversity Net Gain

16 September 2021

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Natural England Licence Number: 2020-44324 CLS

Natural Resources Wales License Number: S088531/1

Summary

- A site visit and assessment for protected species was carried out on 9th September 2021.
- A Great Crested Newt method statement and Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs) are included.
- The proposed development will have no impact on other protected species including Badgers.
- Measures to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain are included.

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1 Introduction

Croes Howell is located on the B5102 approximately 1.3km east of Llay. It consists of a pub/restaurant, carpark and two grass areas totalling 0.5ha, one of which is the pub garden and the second currently managed as mown grassland. There are species rich, native hedges around the site and 3 mature Oak trees. There are no watercourses or ditches on the site and one pond within 500m. The area is a stronghold for Great Crested Newts, and they are assumed present in the wider area.

The planning proposal is for six glamping pods on the second grass area NW of the site.

1.1 Location Plan



2 Methodology

Species assessed are Great Crested Newt and Badgers.

A desktop survey was undertaken to assess the habitat using google earth and historic records. The site within a rural area and the surrounding landscape is dominated by dairy and arable farming with predominantly improved grass leys, arable fields of maize and winter wheat. A working gravel quarry is opposite the site. Surrounding habitats include native hedgerows with mature trees, ponds and small pockets of woodland. Great Crested Newts are known to be present in the wider area.

Chwarel Singret SSSI notified for its geological formations is located 420m south of Croes Howell and Marford Quarry SSSI 1.2km south east.

2.1 Constraints

No constraints. The area was surveyed on 9th September 2021 on a warm sunny day following a spell of dry weather and little rainfall. Access was good.

3 Results: Habitat Assessment

Please see habitat assessment map, appendix 1.

3.1 Grass Sward

The site has a modified sward of perennial rye grass and white clover with occasional ragwort and dandelion. There is little plant diversity, other than cleavers and nettles in the adjacent hedge bottoms. The sward is approximately 4cm long and mown regularly to keep a tidy appearance for the pub/restaurant. It is not good terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts or reptiles with no structure or rough grass areas in which to hibernate or find refuge.

3.2 Hedgerows

There are five native hedgerows on the site, four of which qualify as species rich by having 5 or more plants per 30m stretch.

Hedge 1: Mixed species roadside hedge comprising of hawthorn, field maple, ash and blackthorn. Cut short for visibility. Continue to manage in this way.

Hedge 2: Dense, mixed species rich hedge separating the two grass areas. Species present are holly, blackthorn, elder, hazel, dog rose and hawthorn. Cut to approximately 1.5m high and 1.5m wide. Continue to manage in this way.

Hedge 3: Species rich hedge along NW boundary with two mature Oak trees. Comprising of hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, holly, ash, field maple, hazel dog rose with abundant bramble. This hedge has the opportunity to be managed by cutting on rotation so that the blossom and berry production is maximised.

Recommendation 1: Cut less frequently to maximise its value for wildlife.

Cut every other year after Christmas and allow to grow up to 2m tall. This will allow the hedge to blossom and produce berries which are a valuable food source for wildlife. It will also add to the overall feel of 'being with nature' for your glamping clients. The next section of hedge out of your ownership (extending NE) also has the opportunity to be managed in this way if you liaise with the neighbouring farmer.

Recommendation 2: Leave a 2m uncut, longer grass margin adjacent to the hedge. The longer grass with more structure is of value for a wide range of wildlife including insects, small mammals, reptiles and birds. The grass can be cut to approximately 15cm high every September/October to prevent it scrubbing over with thorn.

Hedge 4: Species rich, SW boundary hedge, comprising of hazel, holly, elder, hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, oak, elm and field maple. As above this hedge has the opportunity to be managed by less frequent cutting.

Recommendation 3: As for hedge 3 cut less frequently to maximise its value for wildlife.

Recommendation 4: Plant additional trees and shrubs along the hedge which will thicken the boundary for noise and screening purposes. Species selection is focused on quicker growing species with wildlife and amenity benefits.

Hedge 5: Predominantly hawthorn hedge around the car park. Managed by regular cutting to a height of 1m. Opportunity to grow this hedge higher so that it is similar to hedge 2.

Recommendation 5: Grow up this hedge to 1.5m tall which will also help screen the building from the glamping pods.

3.3 Rough Area in SW corner

There is an area of nettles and lawn clippings in the SW corner which could be suitable for great crested newts to hibernate. They were not noted during a refuge search.

Recommendation 6: This area can be planted with trees and shrubs to provide wildlife habitat and the natural feel of the site.

3.4 Mature Oak Trees

A tree assessment has been undertaken and is not the subject of this report.

4 Results: Protected Species

4.1.1 Badgers

No evidence of badger was noted. There are no latrines or badger trails through the hedgerows or within the grassland. The proposed development will not impact on badgers.

4.2 Great Crested Newt

The closely mown grassland is not good foraging or refuge habitat for great crested newts. There is a possibility they could be present in the rough area on the SW corner and GCN do travel hence could be present on the site during the construction of the pods.

4.2.1 GCN Reasonable Avoidance Measures:

Mowing: Continue to keep the grassland mown short so the site is not providing good foraging habitat for GCN.

Site Induction: As part of the site induction, all staff working on site will be made aware of the potential for the presence of GCN within the site and immediate landscape and of their legal protection and status as European Protected Species through a Toolbox Talk, with an illustration of the species (see Photo 1 in the Appendix) displayed in the site office for reference for the duration of the work.

Storage of Materials: Building materials should be stored only within existing areas of hard-standing (car park) and should be raised above ground level using pallets in order to prevent amphibians from seeking shelter underneath. In addition, care should be taken that all works, plant and materials remain on existing open areas of hard-standing; avoiding the surrounding hedge boundaries

Removal of Rubbish: Waste materials should be removed from site immediately or placed in skips. No piles of rubbish or waste should be allowed to remain on site as this could create a potential shelter for amphibians which could then be disturbed in their removal. This is a precautionary measure only, and the chance of significant numbers of newt moving to shelter under stored materials is considered to be very low.

Trenches and Holes: All trenches, or holes should not be left open overnight. They should either be backfilled or covered, and the edges sealed to prevent amphibians getting trapped overnight. They should be checked in the morning prior to work restarting.

Where GCN are found: In the unlikely event that any individual GCN is found during development, then all works must cease immediately, and advice sought from an ecologist holding a Great Crested Newt Survey Licence.

5 Biodiversity Net Gain

The loss of mown grassland to the glamping pods is to be replaced with 6m of new native hedge, 28 new trees/shrubs, an area of longer grass adjacent to hedge 3 and wildflower planting along the fence. This will deliver significant overall biodiversity net gain on the site.

5.1 Rotational Hedge Cutting

The rotational cutting of hedges 3 and 4 will provide biodiversity benefits with hedgerow blossom and berries more abundant.

5.2 New hedge

6m of new native hedge is to be planted between hedge 5 and 2 to close the current gap and provide screening. Species to include are: Hawthorn, hazel, holly, field maple and dog rose at a rate of six plants per meter in a double staggered row.

5.3 Tree Planting

Three areas will be planted with trees to benefit wildlife and provide screening. Totalling 120m² 28 trees will be planted.

Tree species to be planted:

- Rowan – attractive in autumn with red berries, eaten by berry feeding birds such as redwing
- Silver birch – quick growing, attractive to invertebrates
- Hazel - the nuts are a valuable food source, can be coppiced for stakes, relatively quick growing
- Guelder rose – stunning spring flower clusters, bunches of berries in autumn, native shrub.
- Dog wood – native shrub with attractive red or yellow stems in winter
- Holly – evergreen shrub, already present on site, try to buy female plants so that they produce berries

Trees to be spaced 1.5-2m apart in loose clusters to give a more random appearance.

5.4 Long Grass

2m adjacent to hedge 3 is to be left unmown and allowed to develop a tussocky sward as longer grass. This will benefit invertebrates, reptiles and small mammals who all use longer grass for overwintering and cover. This will also buffer the mature oak trees as the glamping pods will not be located under the tree canopy. The long grass can be cut to 15cm every September/October to ensure it does not scrub over.

5.5 Wildflower Area

A 2m wide wildflower border will be established along the north boundary of the site adjacent to the fence. Designed to be of benefit for pollinators and visually attractive the area will be planted with perennial species for ease of management. Species to include are: Greater Knapweed, Field Scabious, Oxeye Daisy, Purple Loosestrife, Grandmother's Garden, Purple Coneflower & Perennial Flax.

For a supplier and details on how to establish the mix see:
<https://www.johnchamberswildflowers.co.uk/wildflower-seeds-mixes/wildflower-meadow-seed/john-chambers-impact-violet-heart-perennial-wildflower-seed-mix>





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Biodiversity Net Gain



The land app



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20 m
Scale 1:606 (at A4)



Legislation: European Protected Species (EPS)

Great crested newts are European Protected Species and are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under the legislation it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately capture, kill or injure Great Crested Newts
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb them in a place used for shelter or protection.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.
- Possess a great crested newt, or any part of it, unless acquired legally.
- Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale great crested newts or parts of them.





Fence: Wildflower strip proposed along here.



Rough area with lawn clippings and nettles. Tree planting proposed here.



Hedge 3. Long grass buffer, tree planting in corner



Modified grass sward where pods are to be located. Little sward diversity and closely mown.