

GCN Mitigation Proposals

Potential Impacts Great Crested Newts

It is considered that the conservation status of GCN may be affected by the proposed development. Some terrestrial land will be lost within 150m of a breeding pond. There is chance that individual newts may be affected during clearance and ground works necessary for the development. Work will therefore need to be conducted under European Protected Species Licence from Natural Resources Wales. Comprehensive GCN mitigation and habitat enhancement with a management strategy will be necessary.

Great Crested Newts spend the majority of the year in terrestrial habitat such as tree and hedge roots, in roots of tussocky grass. Piles of materials such as bricks, timber and rubble provide excellent refugia for newts.

GCN travel to ponds to breed at any time between February to June and may travel between breeding ponds during this breeding season.

The closest pond known to support GCN is 139m to the southwest of the site. There are closer ponds with good connectivity to the field comprising ditches and hedgerows. The area is known to support a good breeding population of GCN.

It is considered that although there is no standing water on this site, there is potential for GCN to cross the site during the breeding season or to be present on the site during the terrestrial phase. Clearance of the site, removal of any hedge and work on ditches including culverting may therefore cause harm and damage to individual newts and may remove important terrestrial habitat. This may affect the conservation status of GCN in the immediate area during the construction work.

Damage to GCN is considered an offence under the legislation. A careful mitigation strategy will therefore have to be recommended so that no offence is committed.

It is considered that work will therefore need to be conducted under European Protected Species Licence from Natural Resources Wales.

Comprehensive GCN mitigation and habitat enhancement with a management strategy will be necessary.

Mitigation and Compensation for Newts

As there is potential for the damage to individual newts and the loss of terrestrial habitat suitable for the species, work will follow a strict method statement outlining reasonable avoidance measures. Compensation for the loss of terrestrial habitat will be made.

Summary of Mitigation

1. The licensed consultant will be employed as the Ecological Clerk of Works to oversee the work in areas sensitive to GCN on site.
2. The developer and licensed consultant who will be responsible for overseeing the GCN related work will work together to complete the licence application forms.
3. This can only be applied for once planning permission has been granted.
4. Plans will show enhancements for GCN on site. This will include terrestrial features such as artificial refugia and shrub and tree planting.
5. A scheme has been planned whereby newts that are found in the work area will be translocated close to breeding pond 4 where the habitat is suitable for terrestrial and aquatic phases of GCN life.
6. Guidance from the "Great Crested newt Mitigation Guidelines, 2001" will be used to design the exclusion fencing and pitfall traps.

7. Exclusion fencing will be erected by an experienced amphibian fencing contractor around the site preferably in February. This will be conducted under the supervision of the licensed ecologist.

8. The fencing will exclude newts from the development area.

9. The newt fencing will be subject to searches for 60 days prior to work commencing.

10. It will then be left in situ until the major earth works and disturbance have been completed on site- including drainage, development of the houses and landscaping.

Works to be conducted by ECW

11. The ECW will provide contractors with a toolbox talk for works on site where there is the potential to find GCN.

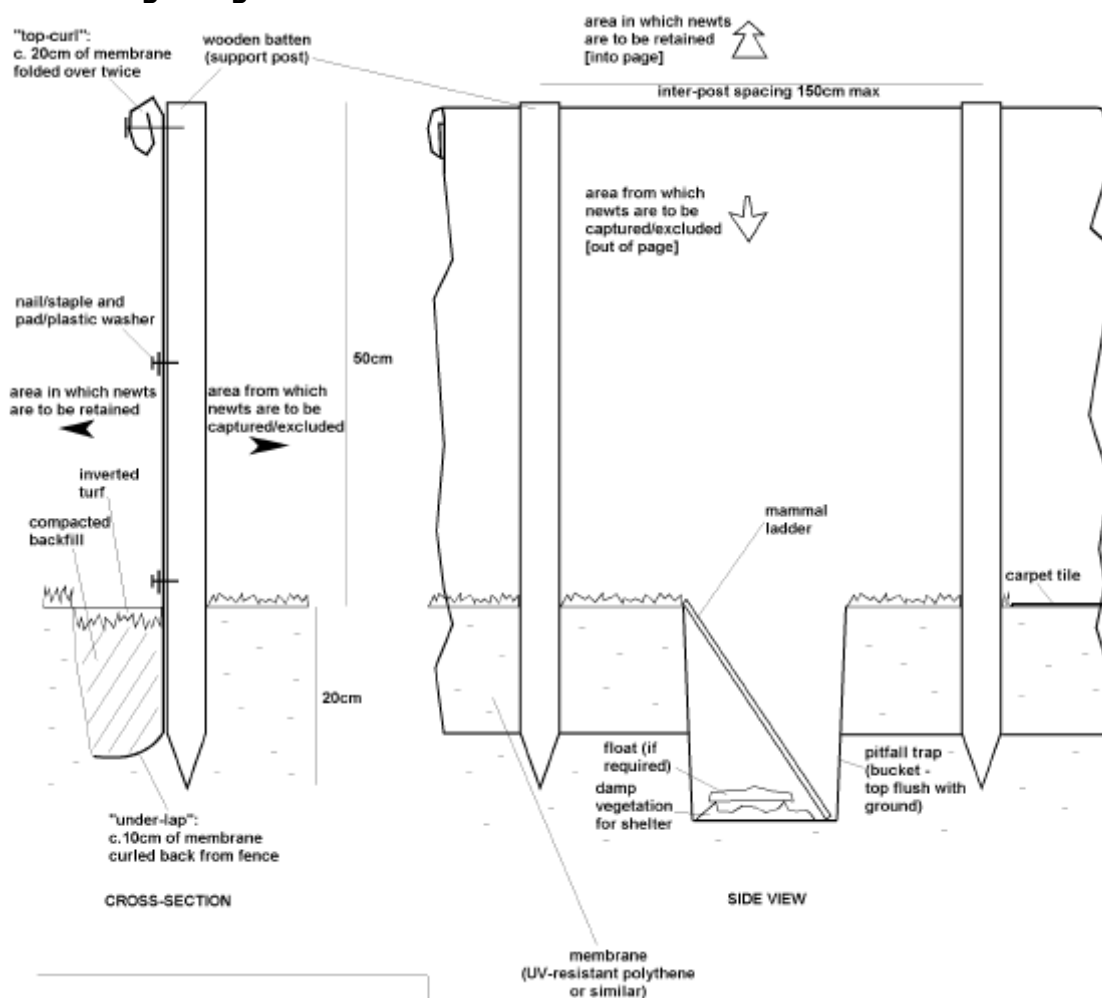
12. Contractors are advised not to handle GCN at any time.

13. A fingertip search along the line of fencing will be conducted by a licensed ecologist during the erection of the fencing.

14. The fencing will be back filled and compacted by the end of each day of erection of fencing.

15. Exclusion fencing will not be erected between October and February as there will be the risk of mortality to hibernating newts.

GCN fencing design



16. Drift fencing will be used across the area, with pitfall traps placed along the fence.
17. Pitfall traps will be placed between 5-10m along the fence and drift fencing.
18. Carpet tiles will also be placed along the fence lines to assist with capture.
19. Pitfall traps and refugia will be searched each day before 11am.
20. All captures will be noted, location, species, sex and life stage to provide a capture record.
21. Any amphibians caught will be removed to the receptor area immediately.
22. A torch survey will be conducted along fence lines on warm wet nights to improve newt capture rates.
23. As the area supports a population of newts, the minimum number of trapping nights will be 60. (Night temperature $>5^{\circ}\text{C}$, with rain or with rain in the last few days and damp ground.
24. After this time, 5 trapping nights with no newts caught will indicate that suitable effort has been expended.
25. A fingertip search will be conducted after 60 days trapping with any further habitat destruction conducted carefully by hand. This will include removal of any hedge plants to the front of the site.
26. The ECW will be present when the ditch is culverted and will ensure, by means of a hand search, that there are no newts in the banks of the ditch.

Works to be conducted by developer

1. The land to be developed will be strimmed low and cleared before development begins. This will be undertaken with the presence of the ECW. This should stop newts using the terrestrial features and potentially using the areas for hibernation.
2. Ground work will commence between May and October once newts have successfully been excluded from the development area.
3. All work will be conducted during daylight hours as newts are least likely to move during this time.
4. Any heavy machinery will be stored within the development area.
5. Stored material will be raised on pallets to reduce the potential they might act as a temporary resting place. (e.g. stored on pallets).

Landscaping

Enhancements will need to be made to compensate for the loss of terrestrial habitat close to breeding ponds.

It is recommended that a pond is dug to provide potential aquatic habitat for newts. A refugia will be provided which is designed based on Mitigation Guidelines.

Refugia to be created

