



Website Text Guidance for LPAs

The below text has been written to assist local planning authorities in communicating information about the District Licensing Scheme on their Council's websites.

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District Licensing Scheme for great crested newts

Any development within 500m of a pond may affect newts

Great crested newt populations have declined significantly over recent decades due to habitat loss. The species spend most of their life on land in habitats such as woodland, hedgerows, grassland and scrub, but return to freshwater ponds in the spring to breed. They are generally found within 500m of ponds, although they can travel much further than this – up to 1.6km.

Great crested newts and their habitats are protected under UK and European legislation, therefore planning authorities must consider the species as part of the planning application process. Where impacts on newts may arise, developers should obtain a licence to make their activities lawful and ensure that the impact on the species will be mitigated.

What is District Licensing?

District Licensing is a simple and quick solution for developers to meet legal obligations, in comparison to standard mitigation licensing. Under District Licensing, individual newt surveys are not required, so there is no need to wait for the survey window in the spring. If great crested newts are found during development works, the licence permits moving the newts out of harm's way without having to stop works or apply for another licence. District Licensing benefits great crested newts by creating new high quality habitats in targeted areas to increase and re-connect populations at a landscape scale.

Natural England have produced a guidance document for all planning authorities using the NatureSpace District Licensing Scheme – the most recent version of this guidance document can be found in the resources section of the NatureSpace website [here](#). This document sets out guidance for how the Scheme should be implemented by the local authorities and the expectations for developments.

In the higher risk areas (red and amber impact risk zones), planning applicants must demonstrate how risks to great crested newts and/or their habitats will be dealt with. This may be through the Council's District Licence (administered by NatureSpace), or by applying separately to Natural England for a standard mitigation licence. You can read more about the Impact Risk Zone maps on the NatureSpace website [here](#).



In summary, for developments within the Forest of Dean District Council area where a risk of impacting great crested newts has been identified, there are now three options for licensing available. These are:

- Joining the District Licence Scheme offered by Forest of Dean District Council shortly after planning permission has been approved and becoming authorised under their licence; or
- Applying directly to Natural England for a standard mitigation licence post-planning; or
- By working with a registered ecologist under the low impact class licence (if applicable for the development).

District Licence and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Users of the District Licence scheme can also benefit from the integrated Biodiversity Net Gain package managed by NatureSpace and the Newt Conservation Partnership. This package offers developers who join the District Licence scheme a cost-efficient route to securing off-site BNG units. Through using the biodiversity value of District Licence compensation towards offsetting your off-site BNG requirement, users can reduce overall costs without sacrificing quality and outcomes for nature. More information on this can be found on the [NatureSpace website](#).

Using the Council's District Licence

- Forest of Dean District Council holds a Great Crested Newt District (or "Organisational") Licence, designed by NatureSpace and granted by Natural England, under which developments can now be authorised.
- If you wish to use the District Licence, you must apply before or during the planning process, otherwise amendments or variations to planning permission would be necessary and this can cause delays in project timescales.
- To find out more about the District Licensing Scheme, contact NatureSpace to receive a free quotation within 3 working days. The first stage fee to join the scheme is based on the location (i.e. which impact risk zone) and scale of the development. Once paid, a detailed assessment of the development proposals will be carried out to determine associated costs, timings, mitigation and compensation requirements within 10 working days. To understand more about the process, visit: [Application Process - NatureSpace Partnership \(naturespaceuk.com\)](#)
- The quickest and simplest way to join the District Licensing Scheme and become authorised by the Council is to submit your NatureSpace Report or Certificate planning application so that the required planning conditions are attached to planning permission. However, if you already have planning permission and there is a reason why you'd like to consider joining the District Licensing Scheme, then there are options available to you – please submit an enquiry to NatureSpace to find out more.

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- Under the District Licensing Scheme, habitat compensation is delivered by the Newt Conservation Partnership, who take responsibility for habitat creation as well as long-term monitoring and management from the developer. Compensation through the scheme delivers landscape-scale conservation for great crested newts. To learn more about the conservation strategy and read case studies on habitat delivered by the scheme, visit: [Conservation - NatureSpace Partnership \(naturespaceuk.com\)](https://www.naturespaceuk.com/conservation)

District Licensing Scheme contact:

www.naturespaceuk.com

info@naturespaceuk.com

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Natural England standard mitigation licence

- Planning permission needs to be in place before a licence application can be submitted to Natural England.
- Full great crested newt surveys of ponds within 500m of the development site would be required during the survey season from mid-March to mid-June (up to end of June for eDNA surveys) to establish presence/likely absence of great crested newts. A population size class assessment (involving 6 survey visits throughout the survey season) may also be needed.
- Where great crested newts are present, details of surveys, impact assessment, mitigation and compensation must be submitted to, and approved by, the planning authority as part of a planning application to comply with legislation and planning policies.
- Once planning permission has been granted, a licence application would need to be prepared and submitted to Natural England, including details of impacts, mitigation, compensation, management and monitoring. This would need to demonstrate (amongst other things) that compensation would not be detrimental to the great crested newt population.

Natural England Licencing contact:

[Great crested newts: apply for a mitigation licence \(A14\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-apply-for-a-mitigation-licence-a14)

Non-licensed route

- In some cases, the risk of impacting great crested newts may be considered to be so low that a licence is not necessary. A precautionary method of working, including reasonable avoidance measures (RAMs) to avoid offences and the need for a licence, may still be required.



- However, if great crested newts are subsequently discovered, all works must cease, and Natural England or a professional/suitably qualified and experienced ecologist must be contacted for advice on any special provisions before continuing (including the need for a licence). It is illegal to move great crested newts without a licence. A licence is likely to be required before works can re-commence and the developer should explore which options are available to them.

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