

ADVISORY INFORMATION – GREAT CRESTED NEWTS



Male Great Crested Newt ©Fred Holmes

A common concern amongst quarry managers is that creating ponds on their site will allow the strictly protected great crested newt to colonise, potentially causing management conflicts and having cost implications for future quarrying activities (for example, because of necessary survey and/or mitigation work). However, with careful planning, conflicts can normally be resolved.

Great crested newts are protected because of enormous population declines suffered in the last century, due to destruction of suitable habitat. They have a widespread distribution in Britain but have declined throughout much of Europe.

Key Points

- Great crested newts are strictly protected under national and European legislation (the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010).
- **In practice, this means that it is illegal to capture, injure, kill or disturb individual great crested newts. Their habitat is also protected.**
- **Breaking the law can lead to fines of up to £5000 per offence and/or up to 6 months in prison.**
- If there is no alternative to the loss of great crested newt ponds or terrestrial habitat, it may be necessary to translocate newts out of the development area, under a European Protected Species (EPS) licence.
- Survey work should be carried out at night prior to soil stripping if presence of GCN's is suspected.

GCN's AND QUARRIES

The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is the largest and most vulnerable of our native newts.

Females can grow up to 16cm in length. They are dark brown in colour with bright orange bellies with dark blotches. During the breeding season, males develop a jagged crest and a distinct white flash along the tail.

Great crested newts have a widespread distribution across mainland Britain, though are less common in the west and in Scotland. They are found in a range of ponds, but tend to prefer small to medium size ponds (50m² – 250m²) in lowland areas. Nearby suitable terrestrial habitat is important for great crested newt populations, in particular broadleaved woodland, scrub and rank grassland. They use both terrestrial and aquatic habitats, sometimes travelling distances of up to 500m from their breeding pond.

Great crested newts are strictly protected under European and national legislation due to dramatic population losses during the last century. It is illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb great crested newts or to damage or destroy their habitat.

Learning Points

- **Survey work should be carried out prior to site stripping if presence of GCN's is suspected.**
- **Do not Destroy any potential habitat e.g. ponds, without getting it surveyed or checked.**
- **If you think you have found a great crested newt on site, IMMEDIATELY stop all works in the area and inform your site management.**
- **Newts should only be handled by a trained newt handler unless they are in immediate danger.**

Restored quarries

Restored quarries can provide important opportunities for creating amphibian habitats. Clean water ponds that benefit a range of freshwater wildlife, including amphibians, should be created as part of aggregates restoration activities, because these will contribute to national Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

If within 500m of operations, potentially GCN suitable pond creation should be delayed until after operations have ceased. If in doubt, delay pond creation until all quarrying in the area has been completed. For example, ponds can cheaply and easily be created after closure as part of the aftercare management of quarries that have been restored to nature conservation.

Remember, Great Crested Newts are protected by legislation making it an offence to intentionally to capture, injure, kill or disturb individual great crested newts.

Useful Contacts

Amphibian and Reptile Conservation www.arc-trust.org