

Method Statement for Amphibians and GCN Best Practice Avoidance

Protected Species	Great Crested Newts (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>)
Site Name	Land off Parkwood Road, Golcar Huddersfield, HD3 4TT
Project Code	14823/AmB
Client	Parkwood Ventures LLP and Sir Robert Ogden Estates Ltd
Legal Protection	
In the UK and Europe Great Crested Newts (GCN) are afforded special protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, NERC Act section 41 for species and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended. This being due to the species declining population throughout the UK and Europe in recent years. Under these 'it is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill GCN, disturb this species, take or destroy GCN eggs or damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of GCN'.	
Background	
Land off Parkwood Road, Golcar is situated 3.8km east of Huddersfield, at grid reference: SE102168. The site comprises of grassland with scattered broadleaved trees growing across the centre of the site and to the west and east. There is a beech hedgerow to the west with dense scrub to the north of the site. Tall ruderals are growing sporadically around the grassland. Boundaries are a mixture of fencing, stone and walls. The site is surrounded by residential dwellings and a residential mill 48m from the site with a mill chimney stack and mill pond to the north-east. Next to the mill building is a derelict mill with windowpanes broken and roof tiles slipped. Hard standing for car parking is in front of both mills. To the north is Claywood Brook with Longwood reservoir 500m west. To the north-west 369m is Compensation reservoir. To the east is dense woodland with agricultural land to the north-east and west. Over the boundary to the south-east and south-west is a new housing development currently under JCA Ltd carried out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. See report ref: 14823a/AmB for further details on the extent of the site and habitats present. Due to the presence of ponds within, 500m of the site that may contain the required habitat conditions and features that GCN require, it has been deemed necessary for a method statement to be constructed. This is aimed to facilitate the development of terrestrial habitat on site and adjacent to the site that may support over wintering amphibians. This method statement will provide best practice avoidance methods for harm and disturbance to any GCN that be present on or surrounding the site.	
Measures to be implemented Pre-construction	
All contractors must undertake a toolbox talk and ecological site induction carried out by the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECow) prior to entering the site. The ECoW assigned for this project must be a fully trained and certified ecologist. All contractors must be aware of where to access the working method statement, understand who is responsible for implementing and managing the ecological method statement and be aware of the contact details for the ECoW assigned to the project. Contractors must remain vigilant when carrying out works, and report to the site manager any ecological issues arising relating to the GCN present on site. The site manager is responsible for informing the ECoW of any incidents, accidents or problems occurring. Failure to follow procedure will result in the development being stopped until the ECoW has determined the GCN are protected and safe from further disturbance, harm or interference. Advice from the ECoW must be sought by all staff and personnel should issues arise. The ECoW is responsible for informing the relevant governing bodies if issues/problems occur relating to any GCN on site. If any GCN are found inside the construction zones all works must cease immediately and the ECoW contacted. No works are to continue until given the consent to proceed by the ECoW for the project. The works should be carried out during the months of March to June to reduce the possibility of encountering amphibians, as during this time period GCN are likely to be within ponds and not terrestrial habitats. The timeframe	

for the entire project will be short-term and all groundwork must be kept as short as possible to reduce disturbance to any GCN in the vicinity. In terms of working hours, this must be done during daylight hours and for the purpose of this report this is defined as one hour after sunrise and 1 hour before sunset. This timeframe is due to GCN newts being most active during the night and allows GCN to return to their shelter after sunrise and avoids any GCN emerging early before sunset. Works within internal dwellings (once constructed) are exempt from this timeframe of working hours. Pre-construction an exclusion zone must be constructed to protect the hedgerows and trees along the boundary of the site. The choice of fencing must be considered as the footpads of 'heras' type fencing can create a suitable and attractive hibernaculum for amphibians, therefore putting GCN at risk of injury or death. The use of two-tiered electric fence wire and posts to enhance visibility is advised to create a 2m buffer zone from the hedges and trees where practical. This will serve as a low-impact solution for creating a boundary fence.

The amenity grassland included within the development area should be at a height of no higher than 10cm and maintained at this height or below prior to construction. Amenity grassland should remain at this height for the entirety of the construction phase through the use of a stammer, as this will discourage wildlife from entering the development area of the site and to discourage amphibians and reptiles taking refuge within the development site.

Attention must be given to site hygiene. Food wrappers, cans and detritus must be disposed of correctly. The ECoW reserves the right to halt construction processes should hygiene procedures not be adhered to on site. It must also be noted that the ECoW may stop all works at any point if the advice of this method statement is not followed.

Construction phase

Toolbox talks and ecological inductions must be given to all new contractors/staff/personnel entering the site. Failure to comply will result in these persons being banned from the site, or the development being halted until the ECoW is satisfied with the knowledge of the staff relating to ecological issues and the GCN present on site. As part of the toolbox talk, a handout must be handed out to all contractors/staff/personnel detailing information on what to look for and how to identify newts. Regular pre-construction commencement will be carried out by the ECoW to ensure that the construction zone perimeters are maintained and are not damaged.

If a GCN or suspected GCN are found to be present on site during the construction phase all works must cease until the ECoW has assessed the situation. The ECoW will determine whether additional measures are required, and whether or not Natural England must be contacted and a development license may be required before works can continue. This may entail considerable delays and costs. At no point should any worker handle a GCN or suspected GCN. Unlicensed handling is illegal and untrained handling may cause the newt unnecessary stress and injury.

If the boundary fencing is found to be damaged or moved at any point, then the ECoW must be contacted and the fencing repaired immediately. If required, the ECoW will determine whether construction works need to be halted while the relevant repairs are made.

All hazardous machinery and materials must be removed prior to the fencing being removed.

Construction lighting must not be used between the period of sunset and sunrise. Construction lighting is limited to only the areas under construction; no light spread onto neighbouring habitats is permitted. The lighting scheme must be pre-approved by the ECoW before construction works begin. The lighting plan must use low level LED lights, with lights positioned away from adjacent features such as grassland, hedgerows and trees,

Additional working methods

The storage of materials must be stored on pallets that are placed on hard standing, bare soil or short grassed areas and brought to the necessary area of the site when required. The discouragement of newts to the development area must be maintained throughout the construction. To aid with this aim there is to be minimal piles of rubble, earth piles and other collections of materials that may provide areas of refuge and potential artificial hibernacula. If any collection of materials does occur on site, they are to be removed or stored within skips within four hours and under no circumstances can be left overnight. If a collection of material does remain on site for longer than this time period and is not stored as previous described, then the ECoW must be contacted to check for the presence of GCN.

Trenches and other excavations should be backfilled before nightfall. If this is not possible, ramps must be left to allow all wildlife to easily exit. Contractors/staff/personnel must avoid burning or machine removal of any potential hibernacula (wood piles, debris etc.) without a thorough hand search for GCN. Any work that will result in temporary habitat disruption and reinstatement, such as laying services needs ecological supervision by ECoW.

No potential refuge features are to be removed, as these may be used by hibernating amphibians. If the removal of such features is required, then these must be first checked for GCN by the ECoW.

If the storage of chemicals is required on site, then these must be stored within adequately sealed containers. All sealed chemicals must then be placed within a storage container that will contain any chemical spills that may accidentally occur. If a chemical spill happens outside of this container then an ECoW must be called to assess the risk to GCN.

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