

[Press release: New strategic licensing for developers in Cheshire to better protect great crested newts](#)

An innovative approach by Natural England to protect great crested newts and support sustainable development was today (28 March) launched in Cheshire.

Developers in Cheshire can now apply for a licence under District Level Licensing for great crested newts. This follows our [announcement of a nationwide roll-out of great crested newts District Level licensing in 2017](#), which was [officially launched in Kent last month](#). District Level Licensing is now available across 23 local planning authority areas, including in Woking and the South Midlands.

Whilst great crested newts are found throughout lowland England, the species needs suitable ponds to thrive. Although strictly protected by law, great crested newt populations continue to decline – over the last century there has been a dramatic decline in ponds within the UK. Approximately 50 per cent of ponds in the UK have been lost, and 80 per cent of current ponds are in a poor state leading to large declines in great crested newt populations.

The previous licensing system was focused on preventing harm to great crested newts on individual development sites rather than addressing the wider health of newt populations. Through District Level Licensing, developers can invest in mitigating the impact of a development by restoring and creating offsite compensatory ponds in areas of the county suitable for newts, rather than the species being squeezed in around the margins of a development. Importantly, this means the species benefits from an overall increase in breeding grounds to better support their populations over time.

Dave Bell, Natural England Area Manager said:

We're really pleased to announce that our new county-level approach to licensing for these distinctive animals is now open for business in Cheshire.

The new approach will provide specially created habitat in areas where newts can thrive, bringing with it broader benefits for wildlife across the landscape. It will also mean developers can avoid costly delays in the planning system to build homes for communities.

I'd like to thank everyone involved for all their hard work. This county scale of working, championed in the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, highlights our continued commitment to maintain the health and resilience of this protected species and ensure environmental regulation better serves both the natural environment

and the economy. If we create the right conditions for nature to flourish, we will leave the environment in a better place for the next generation.

In partnership with Natural England, Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Wildlife Trust have been working on the scheme in Cheshire. Funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has helped advance the project in Cheshire, contributing to the creation and restoration of 26 ponds ready for the launch of the scheme today. These new and restored ponds have been strategically located to join up and expand existing newt habitats, to help make newt populations more resilient.

Frank Jordan, Cheshire East Council's executive director of place said:

Cheshire East has been pleased to engage with Natural England on the development of this innovative approach to protecting and enhancing the population of great crested newts within the borough.

[For guidance on how to apply in Cheshire and Kent click here](#) and to [find out more about the scheme visit our blog](#)