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[New innovative scheme to protect newts and promote sustainable development is rolled out across Yorkshire](#)

- The scheme helps developers avoid costly delays and uses conservation payments to create new habitats for the protected species

This week an innovative new scheme to protect newts and promote sustainable development has been rolled out across Yorkshire.

Great crested newts have seen dramatic declines in their populations over the last 60 years despite being legally protected. The new 'District Level Licensing' scheme better protects this orange-bellied amphibian by using conservation payments from developers to create new ponds in locations that will benefit the species.

The scheme also benefits local people and authorities by avoiding costly delays for developers, helping to ensure homes are built and local authorities can deliver their plans.

The scheme will create a network of ponds across Yorkshire providing vital habitat for our biggest native newt, helping to join up sometimes isolated populations and helping them to thrive.

This week, District Level Licensing for Newts launched across seven local authority areas in North East Yorkshire: Ryedale, Scarborough, York, Selby, North York Moors National Park, Hambleton, and Redcar and Cleveland.

This means the new scheme is now available across Yorkshire and the whole of North East England. Developers in Yorkshire have already expressed interest in joining the scheme.

Craig Thomas, Natural England Natural England's District Level Licensing Customer Relations Adviser, said:

"District level licensing is transforming a difficult planning process into one that is a real conservation success story.

"The rollout of this scheme in Yorkshire represents a win-win for both local developers and the future of this iconic species. It's a fantastic example of working in partnership at a landscape scale and bringing improved conservation outcomes for our largest native newt – helping local populations to expand and link up across North East England. What's more, the approach can also help meet our ambitions to build back greener."

Alongside local authorities, Natural England is working in partnership with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Wildscapes and Tees Valley Wildlife Trust to create and maintain habitat for great crested newt which would otherwise be threatened by development.

Previously, developers had to apply for a mitigation licence before building on or around the places where newts live. Seasonal restrictions on work in places where the newts were present led to delays and uncertainty over the costs and scheduling of planned development. This new 'landscape-scale' licensing approach is better for both developers and newts. It provides a faster and more straightforward process than the traditional approach to licensing while helping to provide more homes for newts.

Thirty seven new ponds have already been created or restored for great crested newts, and together with our partners Natural England are already working on over one hundred more new ponds across Yorkshire. This new habitat will be monitored and looked after by our local, expert partners for 25 years – all funded by the initial payment.

Jeremy Garside, Chief Executive, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust said:

"We're really pleased to be working with Natural England on this scheme. Our Wildlife Trust is already working with farmers and landowners who are committed to restoring habitats for other protected species such as water vole and barn owl; it is great to have this new opportunity to create newt ponds as well.

"Having witnessed a steady loss of ponds from the landscape over past decades, it is heartening to see this trend reversed and while ponds will be carefully designed to benefit great crested newts, we know that they will be of huge benefit to a much wider range of threatened wildlife species and will help to build networks of habitats which aid nature's recovery."

You can apply to join a district level licensing scheme to manage great crested newt populations if you are developing land on .gov.uk at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/great-crested-newts-district-level-licensing-schemes>.

More about district level licensing in Yorkshire

- Yorkshire is the latest area to launch a district level licensing scheme. This innovative, strategic approach to licensing is now available and being used by developers across 157 local authorities.
 - This new licensing approach to authorising development affected by great crested newts is part of a larger programme to reform protected species licensing by focusing conservation effort where it will create maximum benefit. It aims to leave the environment in a better state than before.
 - Previously, licences were only granted on a site-by-site basis. This missed opportunities to manage populations of great crested newts on a landscape scale and resulted in habitat for newts being squeezed around development, sometimes in disconnected patches.
 - As part of the District Level Licensing project, Natural England has completed the largest ever survey of its type for great crested newts across England, funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The data is open and has been published to ArcGIS Online and is available at Data.gov.uk.
 - Individual site-by-site mitigation licences are still available; since 17 February 2020, there is now a charge for these licences. In areas where there is a District Level Licensing scheme, joining a scheme will be the quickest option to enable development that affects great crested newts.
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[Work begins in Lincolnshire on innovative flood management project](#)

The million pound research and development project will use natural flood management techniques to hold back water to reduce the risk and severity of flooding.

The project will help 3 villages Swaton, Threkingham and Spanby who currently have 25 homes and 38 businesses at risk of flooding.

The Environment Agency is working closely with farmers to install specialist ponds and grassed areas. Together these measures will slow the flow of water by storing it and letting it slowly seep into the soil.

There will be 5 specialist attenuation ponds across 3 farms. These will have the capability to hold back approximately 22,000 cubic meters of flood water, the equivalent to 9 Olympic sized swimming pools. In addition, the Swaton ponds have been designed to include a permanent wildlife pond in the centre of the attenuation area.

The Environment Agency on site at Swaton.

The grassed areas, known as field edge swales, are 2 to 4 metre wide strips capable of intercepting water flowing over the land. There will be 29 swales across the 3 farms which will be sown with wildflower seeds to boost benefits for pollinators. They'll also have the capacity to hold back approximately 26,000 cubic meters of flood storage water, the equivalent of another 10 Olympic sized swimming pools.

The Environment Agency provided the funding for this project and the Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board are undertaking and supervising the works on the ground. Some of the swales are also being installed by the farmers themselves.

Katharine Samms, a flood risk advisor for the Environment Agency said:

So far we have constructed 1 pond and around 1.8 kilometres of swales and are pleased with the progress we are making. The rest of the features should be constructed over the summer, finishing with the last ponds and swales after the harvest.

The project is 1 of the first natural flood management schemes to be installed in an arable landscape. More usually schemes are located on grazed land or in woodlands, so we are keen to see how well it will work.

We would like to thank the 3 farmers whose farms we are installing the scheme on. The project wouldn't be possible without them.

One of the attenuation ponds.

Barbara Rumble, Project manager at the Environment Agency said:

It's been a pleasure to get involved in this unique project and to build a strong team consisting of the Environment Agency, suppliers, the Internal Drainage Board and farmers.

I am pleased we are able to see progress on the ground. I am looking forward to seeing the findings from the monitoring to see how effective the project is in reducing local flooding.

The Environment Agency is working in partnership with Heriot Watt University who will be monitoring this pilot project. After completion this winter the work will be monitored for 3 years by their PhD student who will gather data and report on the scheme's effectiveness.

- 2 of the farms are owned by the Crown Estate, who have allowed the Environment Agency to undertake this work to benefit the local community.
- The features have been designed by Environment Agency delivery partners

Arup.

- Roger Wardle Consultancy have been key to the success of this project, undertaking farmer engagement and liaison.
- Roythornes Solicitors for the Black Sluice IDB have assisted with all the legal agreements required between the parties to allow this work to proceed.
- The Swaton NFM project has been predominantly funded through the Natural Flood Management Research Programme funding provided by the government between 2016 and 2021. In addition the project budget has been topped up using other government department funding. This includes local levy funding from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and a small amount of Flood and Coastal Risk Management Grant in Aid.

Minister for Defence Procurement's speech at the stand-up of UK Space Command

It's great to be here and I was delighted to have the privilege of cutting the ribbon which formally and officially stands up our Space Command.

And it's not a moment too soon. Space is in the news like never before.

As scientists test the limit of our abilities to conduct space travel and billionaire entrepreneurs explore the commercial potential of space tourism, our competitors are trying to assert their dominance by recklessly testing anti-satellite missiles.

And this is why our dependence on space has never been greater. Satellite constellations in low-earth orbit link up almost every aspect of our daily lives, from mobile phones, the internet and television to transport networks, and even banking systems.

Militarily, our Skynet satellite system is critical for communication and reconnaissance, weather tracking and navigation.

But with dependency comes vulnerability.

That's why in our recent Integrated Review we recognise space as a major strategic challenge.

And that's also why our Defence Command Paper set out our determination to invest in space capabilities over the coming years, backed by around £1.4bn funding on top of the £5bn already being invested in Skynet.

We're using that money to set up a National Space Operations Centre, so that

we can track activity and ensure our awareness.

And we're developing a UK-built Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance satellite constellation.

We'll shortly be handing out our first ever space badges to these pioneers.

But the key part of the plan is our Space Command. It will allow us to do three things:

First, it will strengthen the military's command in space, helping to coordinate commercial space operations and leading to the development of new space-based capabilities.

Second, as a corollary of that, it will open up exciting new opportunities for industry.

Our nation has bold space ambitions that will require the most imaginative and innovative companies to come forward with cutting-edge solutions; solutions that enhance our reputation as a science superpower.

Third, this Command will help us bolster our bonds with key partners like Australia, France and, especially, the US.

I'm delighted Air Vice-Marshal Godfrey has already welcomed his US counterpart General Dickinson here to discuss joint operations.

And we're also delighted to welcome Lt Gen Shaw, Deputy Commander of US Space Command, here today, further emphasising our close cooperation in the Space Domain.

I know they are acutely aware that, at a time when there is limited international agreement on how to regulate satellites and a lack of clarity on international standards to encourage their use, we have a joint responsibility to safeguard the space commons.

That means properly understanding this complex domain, protecting our whole space enterprise – be that on Earth or in orbit – and stopping our upper atmosphere becoming a cosmic junkyard.

In the coming months, we'll be publishing a Space Strategy and alongside that will be a Defence Space Strategy, with both setting out our plans in more precise detail.

But, before I hand over, perhaps there is another aspect to what we're doing in the space domain.

It is now 30 years since Helen Sharman became the first British person to go into space.

After 18 months of intensive training, the then 27-year-old embarked on an eight-day mission to the Mir satellite.

She inspired a generation, in the same way Tim Peake is doing so today.

And so, I hope Space Command's work will have a similarly inspiring effect of the next generation.

Filling them not just with a sense of wonder and majesty for our universe but a sense of the boundless possibilities for their future, because the sky is literally no longer the limit.

And the dawn of a new space age starts here.

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