

Cambridgeshire to benefit from sustainable development initiative

[Natural England's](#) district level licensing initiative helps put an end to the costly delays faced by developers building in areas where the iconic species is present.

In the past, landowners or housing developers in Cambridgeshire had to apply for a licence before building on or around the newts' pond habitat – on a site-by-site basis.

One simple application

Now, [licensing is applied at a district level](#). This 'landscape-scale' approach means that developers need only make a single application and payment to join their local, area-wide scheme.

The one-off payment covers the creation, restoration, maintenance and monitoring of ponds around the area for 25 years, in locations specially chosen to provide the best habitat and most benefit.

Quicker and easier

This [award-winning](#), evidence-based approach to licensing helps streamline regulation to better protect newts for the future, while enabling developers and local authorities to deliver on their investment and home-building plans.

Great crested newts are the UK's largest species of newt. But their population has seen dramatic declines over the last 60 years.

Despite being protected under UK and EU law, the species suffered the loss of around 50% of its pond habitat in the 20th century.

Halting newts' decline

[District level licensing](#) aims to halt that decline and enable developers to more easily contribute to '[Build Back Greener](#)' aspect of the government's [economic recovery strategy](#)

Bridget Smith, leader of [South Cambridgeshire District Council](#), said:

Protecting nature needs to be at the heart of the UK's and Cambridgeshire's recovery and growth. We need to find ways for both nature and business to thrive. District level licensing is a welcome, clear and straightforward approach that enhances habitats for this iconic species without needless delays to well-planned, appropriate development.

Aidan Lonergan, West Anglia area manager at Natural England, said:

This scheme is one example of how a fresh look at the relationship between species needs and the growth agenda might achieve more harmony. It is one that illustrates our ambition to find ways to work with development – at a landscape-scale – in order to restore nature and not merely slow its rate of loss, as well as ensure new developments are built greener from the outset.

Martin Baker, conservation manager at the [Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire](#), said:

I welcome the district licencing scheme which should produce better outcomes for great crested newts in the county, with more ponds created in the right places, allowing local newt populations to grow and recover. Developer financial contributions will become more certain and will be made knowing that they will better contribute towards the long-term conservation of our most impressive species of newt.

70 areas on board

Cambridgeshire is the latest area to launch a district level licensing scheme, joining 70 others including Kent, Cheshire, Essex, Shropshire and Greater Manchester. Natural England is working to expand the initiative to 150 local authorities across the country, as part of a programme funded by the [Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#).

More about great crested newts

- Great crested newts are a European Protected Species. Under the Habitats Directive, it is an offence to capture, kill, injure or disturb them or their habitat without a licence from Natural England. Although rare across Europe, they can be locally abundant in England.

More about district level licensing

- 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.
- Individual site-by-site 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 it will be the quickest option to enable development that affects great crested newts.

- Natural England is working in partnership with [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group for the Eastern Region](#), local authorities including South Cambridgeshire District Council, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Wildlife Trusts including that for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, and more.
-

Love Culture Week as part of Enjoy Summer Safely

Love Culture Week, part of the Government's Enjoy Summer Safely campaign, takes place this week to encourage everyone to support cultural organisations across the country as they recover from the impact of Covid-19.

Museums, galleries, heritage sites, and cinemas are opening up again after months of closure, and socially distanced performances can now restart in theatres and venues, making this summer the perfect time to get out and enjoy culture safely.

Caroline Dinenage, Culture Minister, said:

So many arts and cultural organisations worked incredibly hard to keep us entertained during lockdown, with streamed performances and virtual tours. It has been a challenging time for our cultural sector, and they need us all now more than ever. Summer is the perfect time for people to fall in love with culture again, so I encourage everyone to get out there and visit the wonderful venues and attractions on their doorstep.

Neil Mendoza, Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal, said:

The coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on our culture sector in recent months but now we can all play a part in the sector's recovery. Every visit, ticket and tour will help support our cultural places when they need it most. Much-loved venues and attractions have been working hard for months on measures to keep visitors safe, so there has never been a better time to visit the museum you've always been meaning to, or rediscover the rich history of heritage sites on your doorstep.

The Government is investing £1.57 billion – the largest ever investment in the culture – to support the sector and protect jobs. Applications are now being accepted for the first wave of £880 million in grant funding and detailed guidance has been published for larger organisations through the

£270 million repayable finance option. The funding will provide a lifeline to vital cultural and heritage organisations across the country hit hard by the pandemic. But everyone can play a part in getting their favourite organisations and venues back on their feet by visiting them when they reopen.

Every organisation has taken careful steps to re-open in line with Covid-secure guidance, for example implementing social distancing measures, advanced booking, one-way systems and hand sanitiser stations to protect visitors.

Visitors can look out for the We're Good To Go COVID-19 industry standard and consumer mark when planning cultural activities. The We're Good To Go mark provides a 'ring of confidence' for businesses, attractions and destinations, as well as reassurance to local residents and visitors, that clear processes are in place and that businesses are good to go. Further details can be found on the Visit Britain website.

[UK launches multinational training to enhance Ukrainian Navy against threats from the East](#)

The UK will lead a multinational Maritime Training Initiative for the Ukrainian Navy, boosting their ability to combat threats in the Black Sea, Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has confirmed.

Visiting Ukrainian partners in Kyiv, Mr Wallace also announced that the UK will send Royal Navy ships to visit the region later in the Autumn, where they will train alongside the Ukrainian Navy.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

It's great to be in the Ukraine for my second time since becoming Defence Secretary. The Maritime Training Initiative is another step forward for the UK's defence relationship with Ukraine.

We have already assisted thousands of Ukrainian personnel in a plethora of skills ranging from basic first aid to operational planning, all of which defends their territorial integrity from Russian-backed separatists.

Now, the Maritime Training Initiative will enable even closer collaboration with the NATO Alliance and Armed Forces around the world, and allows us to build on Ukraine's new NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner status.

Mr Wallace discussed issues of regional security and areas of mutual interest and cooperation in meetings with defence minister Andriy Taran and Ukrainian commander-in-chief Colonel General Ruslan Khomchak. Beyond the bilateral talks, the Defence Secretary paid tribute to members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine who have died in combat since the start of the conflict in East Ukraine in 2014, laying a wreath at the Hall for the Defenders of Ukraine.

In support of that effort, the Ministry of Defence is increasing its support to the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) by coordinating an international maritime training package that will share the expert knowledge of the Royal Navy and partners from next month.

Courses will be delivered by the Royal Navy and naval personnel from Sweden, Canada and Denmark in areas such as navigation, operational planning, military diving, sea surveillance, fire-fighting and damage control. More nations are expected to join in the near future.

Ukraine lost much of its Navy capability during Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Ukraine has since continued to face a rising number of threats in the Black Sea and Sea of Azov. In response, Ukraine has been rebuilding its Navy to protect its economic interests and its right to freedom of navigation. The Maritime Training Initiative will boost that effort, enabling them to uphold the rules based international order and European security in the region on which the UK's own security depends.

As well as bringing skills, knowledge and expertise to the Ukrainian Navy, the Maritime Training Initiative will empower the Ukrainian Navy to work even more closely alongside international partners in defence of the Black Sea region. This will be in evidence later this year when Royal Navy ships visit the region.

Operation Orbital

The new initiative will follow the resumption of Operation Orbital, the UK's training mission to Ukraine, after a Covid-19-enforced suspension. Since the training mission began in 2015, British troops have trained over 18,000 members of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF). Their efforts have made a real difference and saved lives as Ukraine faces down Russian aggression and threats to its sovereignty. Last year the Defence Secretary extended Operation Orbital until 2023.

The UK's Operation Orbital and Maritime Training Initiative will be complemented by US security assistance support. This will further enhance Ukraine's capabilities and situational awareness in the maritime domain to more effectively defend itself against Russian aggression. The UK continues to urge all allies and partners to enhance their support for Ukraine.

Ukraine defence reform

The strengthening UK-Ukraine defence relationship has seen the UK support Ukraine in its process of conducting vital defence and security sector reform. A Special Defence Advisor has been deployed to Ukraine to assist in this process, which has also been aided by UK representation on the country's Defence Reform Advisory Board (DRAB), General Sir Gordon Messenger.

Waste crime taskforce conducts raid on site in Great Harwood, Lancashire

Today the Joint Unit for Waste Crime (JUWC) has conducted a successful raid on an illegal waste site in Lancashire as it continues to combat serious and organised waste crime across the UK.

JUWC Enforcement Officers and Lancashire Police raided the site, which is operated by two skip hire firms, in Great Harwood near Blackburn. It is alleged that illegal waste activities are being carried out on the site, including the handling and storage of scrap metal, the landfilling of mixed waste, and illegal burning.

During the raid, enforcement officers gathered evidence of a large-scale waste operation. An estimated 50,000 tonnes of waste has been landfilled at the site and a number of skips containing mixed household and business waste were observed.

A spokesperson for the JUWC said:

We are dedicated to clamping down on serious and organised waste crime. By working collaboratively with a wide range of enforcement agencies, our vital work disrupts criminality and ensures those responsible are held to account.

Our previous order to cease waste operations on this site was ignored, and we have therefore taken the necessary enforcement action.

We will continue to take action against the operators of this site until the activity has ceased or is being carried out in compliance with the law.

Everybody has a legal duty to ensure the waste they produce is taken away by registered waste carriers and that waste is only taken to authorised sites for treatment or disposal. Residents in Lancashire should therefore make sure any local skip hire firm they use has the necessary permits.

The government estimates that waste crime costs the economy in England alone around £600 million a year. The JUWC was being established in January 2020 to disrupt and bring down the criminals and gangs who carry out illegal waste operations.

The Unit is comprised of the UK's four environmental regulators, the National Crime Agency, HMRC and the police. To tackle the growing trend in criminal waste networks, the JUWC conducts site inspections, makes arrests and, where necessary, take enforcement action including prosecution.

Members of the public can check if a waste business is genuine by contacting the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506, 03702 422 529 (minicom), via email at enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm) or online at www.gov.uk/ea.

Ofqual statement on grading of VTQs, 18 August 2020

These are extraordinary times for young people who have recently taken exams and we want to reassure learners who have taken vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs) after yesterday's decision to revert to centre assessment grades (CAGs) for GCSEs and A levels. Our priority has always been to ensure that no student is disadvantaged, that results issued this year are robust and reliable, and that as many students as possible get their results this summer.

It is vital that people understand that the statistical standardisation approach – the grading algorithm – used in A levels and GCSEs was not used in most VTQs, including BTECs.

VTQs are structured differently to A levels and GCSEs, and so the approach to awarding results has been different. Many VTQs were able to use evidence of work completed during the course and use this as a basis for calculating results. Indeed, for many qualifications, learners had taken adapted assessments and so there was no calculation process needed at all. For those qualifications that did use calculation, not all used CAGs. Where they did, it was often at unit level – so the CAGs did not weigh so heavily in arriving at the final result.

That's why we have seen little divergence between the results that schools and colleges thought learners would get, and the results that have been issued. We haven't seen the same downward moderation of results following statistical standardisation.

In BTECs, for example, students complete modular units and are assessed at regular stages during their course of study. This summer, Pearson was able to

use those banked unit grades and CAGs for units that hadn't been completed – and all but a fraction of unit-level CAGs were accepted – after quality assurance checks – to generate the final overall qualification-level grade.

For the very small number of unit-level CAGs that were adjusted down (about 0.5%), Pearson will be reviewing those results with centres on a case-by-case basis, following the same principles as those announced for A levels.

A small proportion of qualifications did use a statistical standardisation approach similar the one used for A levels, and those awarding organisations are reviewing their approach in light of what was been decided about GCSEs and A levels yesterday. As a result, we are starting to see them re-running their awarding processes, to ensure that learners are not disadvantaged when compared to their peers taking GCSEs and A levels. We think that a small proportion of Level 3 VTQ results that were issued last week will be regraded upwards as a result.

There are a small proportion of results at Level 2 and below which are due for issue this Thursday that will need to be recalculated. It is possible that they may not be available until a few days later than expected and any awarding organisations in this position will provide information as soon as possible about when this will be.

The overwhelming majority of VTQ learners have now received the results they expected last week. Some awarding organisations did notify us of late results and we understand the anxiety this causes every single learner who is still waiting. We are monitoring this very closely and can confirm that all the awarding organisations are working as fast as they can with schools and colleges to resolve the remaining issues so that learners are not being disadvantaged when it comes to applications to higher education.

If learners have questions about vocational and technical qualifications, they should speak to their centre in the first instance, who may wish to contact the relevant awarding organisation. There is [further information about the grading of vocational and technical qualifications](#) on our website.