

**NatureSpace and the South Midlands Newt Conservation Partnership are delighted to report a highly successful first 9 months of the South Midlands District Licensing scheme for great crested newts.**

The South Midlands District Licensing scheme, which operates across 7 Local Planning Authorities, allows developers to apply for their newt licence at the same time as they apply for planning permission – saving them time and money. Developers pay a fee to enter the scheme, which is proportional to their impact on the habitats of great crested newts. Funds are held by the SMNCP (the South Midlands Newt Conservation Partnership), a non-profit Community Benefit Society overseen by the country’s two leading amphibian and freshwater NGOs. The fund directly pays for the creation, management and monitoring of both ponds and special terrestrial habitats – which are chosen, sited and managed to improve the status of great crested newts throughout the region.



## IN THE FIRST 9 MONTHS

- 36 ponds have been designed and created at 9 sites across the region
- All these ponds are now being managed by the landowners, on behalf of the SMNCP, to provide perfect habitat for great crested newts
- Over £250k has been transferred to the SMNCP for habitat creation, monitoring and long-term management of the sites for the next 25 years
- Four ‘newt officers’ have been permanently appointed to help Local Planning Authorities better deal with their great crested newts
- Since the launch earlier this year a significant number of enquiries have been received from developers about how District Licensing scheme can save them time and money and give them certainty to move to development. A large proportion of those enquiries have led to developers entering the scheme, with funds flowing into the SMNCP habitat fund.
- There is further interest from other Local Planning Authorities to extend the scheme. NatureSpace will be applying for additional licences in the next quarter for an additional 10 LPAs.

Caroline Levett, Trustee of Greenway and Cyclerroutes Limited, and Project Manager for the Waddesdon cycleway who were one of the first major projects to enter the scheme, said “This is a new scheme which has considerable benefits for not only the conservation of great crested newts but also other freshwater wildlife. From my first-hand experience, I can state with absolute confidence that it is also hugely beneficial from a project delivery perspective.”



Dr Tom Tew, Chief Executive of NatureSpace, said “The scheme has really taken off. It’s saving projects time and money, and both developers and conservationists are delighted with the way it’s going. We’re delivering very significant conservation gains for great crested newts across the region – which was the objective of Natural England in designing the District Licensing scheme. We expect to expand the scheme next year, and look forward to partnering with Local Planning Authorities, developers and NGO’s to create a process that streamlines development and creates and conserves new ponds and other habitat for newts and other wildlife – and provides funds for the long-term care of those sites for at least 25 years.”