



NATURESPACE

PARTNERSHIP

Great crested newt mitigation scheme expands across the South Midlands

NatureSpace is now offering even more developers the opportunity to join an innovative scheme which provides a quick, simple, certain and sustainable solution for meeting their legal obligations to great crested newts. Today the company is announcing the scheme's expansion into nine new Local Planning Authorities across the South Midlands.

With an unfortunate reputation for causing significant delays to development, great crested newts are nevertheless a protected species in the UK and are declining across their range. The NatureSpace scheme, approved and licenced by Natural England, removes risk and uncertainty for developers, and dramatically speeds up the licensing process. It also ensures a sustainable future for great crested newts by creating new habitats across the whole region.

The scheme was trialled in seven Local Planning Authority areas across the South Midlands and has been running successfully for 18 months, with 150 enquiries and over 40 licences granted to date. Today's announcement is the next step towards national roll-out of the scheme.

The new areas which will be covered by the scheme include Cherwell District Council, Cotswold District Council, Cheltenham Borough Council, Forest of Dean District Council, Gloucester City Council, South Northamptonshire Council, Tewkesbury Borough Council, Stroud District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

NatureSpace CEO, Dr Tom Tew commented: "The expansion into the new districts is great news for both developers and great crested newts. The scheme provides developers with a certain and risk-free approach to meet their great crested newt obligation in a much shorter timescale than the old system allowed. The developer has a much quicker and simpler option that deals with all newt-related aspects of a project to be quantified at the beginning of the process, without requiring any surveys, and then discharged immediately planning consent is granted, with no further long-term obligations. The scheme has proved to be very popular with developers to date."

Developments that may potentially impact on great crested newts are often constrained into completing detailed surveys during a small three-month window once a year. Dr Tew explains: “The need to provide detailed survey information is a huge problem for development. If the survey season window is missed, the development can be postponed for a year, costing hundreds of thousands of pounds. With our new scheme, we have already surveyed the districts and produced a great crested newt ‘risk map’. Under the scheme, a simple contribution to offset the impacts of their project puts an end to spiralling mitigation costs for developers.”

David Wilson Homes Southern, who have already used the NatureSpace scheme, added: “We have found our experience with NatureSpace to be time and cost-effective and we would recommend them. It has allowed us to progress with our future development on the site which is very important to us and we are now looking forward to starting construction work onsite in due course.”

In partnership with the South Midlands Newt Conservation Partnership and supported by the main conservation NGOs, the Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust and the Freshwater Habitats Trust, the scheme creates at least four new ponds for every pond lost with associated terrestrial habitat as part of a landscape-scale and long-term conservation strategy. So far, the scheme has delivered over £250,000 towards conservation projects for great crested newts.

NatureSpace’s Director of Conservation, Sarah Garrett adds: “At the heart of this scheme is a detailed assessment that embeds the mitigation hierarchy. This ensures that contributions made by development are appropriate and fair, but also that it takes into account high-quality habitat that shouldn’t be lost to development and seeks to mitigate and enhance where necessary. The strategic conservation approach carried out by the South Midlands Newt Conservation Partnership works across the landscape focusing on character areas, restabilising great crested newt habitat and developing connective corridors across the South Midlands. With the new districts coming on board it will open up even more opportunities for us to deliver long-term conservation for great crested newts.”

NatureSpace Partnership now works alongside 16 Local Authorities in enabling them to authorise developments in their region under a great crested newt district licence. The new approach to licensing provides a simple, certain, quick and sustainable solution to newt mitigation.

To learn more about the NatureSpace scheme and how it can help support your developments, please contact:

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