

# District Licensing: A New Approach for Great Crested Newts

## What is District Licensing?

In February 2017, [Natural England announced](#) that a new approach to Great Crested Newt conservation is to be rolled out across England, moving away from the current site-by-site approach to a more strategic, landscape-scale system. This new approach identifies geographic 'zones' based on Great Crested Newt populations and the presence of suitable habitat. These zones are colour coded as:

- White** – Low habitat suitability (low probability of Great Crested Newt)
- Green** – Moderate habitat suitability (Great Crested Newt may be present)
- Amber** – Suitable habitat (Great Crested Newt likely to be present)
- Red** – Highly suitable habitat (the most important areas for Great Crested Newt)
- Black** – Nationally designated sites for Great Crested Newt (excluded from the scheme)

Unlike standard Great Crested Newt mitigation licences obtained for a specific site or development, District Licences are held by the Local Planning Authority who are able to authorise operations that may affect Great Crested Newt without the need for standard surveys to confirm their presence / likely absence. As part of this approach, Great Crested Newt habitat is enhanced or created prior to development taking place, by the Council, saving developers time and money and targeting conservation efforts.



## How Can Developments and Developers Benefit?

Developments which fall within the participating districts and are located within the white, green, amber or red zones are able to take advantage of the District Licensing approach by making a proportionate financial contribution to fund off-site strategic compensatory habitat which is overseen by NatureSpace. Taking this approach would avoid the standard ecological requirements including surveys, impact assessment and trapping / translocation. However, on-site mitigation may still be required which will be assessed based on the risk to Great Crested Newt by the development proposals.

## How Can Aspect Ecology Help?

Aspect Ecology has direct knowledge of this new approach, having provided information to a number of developers and planning authorities regarding District Licensing, and submitting the first District Licence application through NatureSpace. As such, if you would like to know more about district licensing, or would like to apply, Aspect Ecology would be pleased to help.

## Which Planning Authorities are currently using District Licensing?

Natural England has granted District Licences to Milton Keynes, Aylesbury Vale, Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Oxford City and Vale of White Horse. The current plan is to roll-out the District Licensing approach across England.