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Great Crested Newt Species Action Plan

Introduction

This document outlines the actions required to conserve the great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) in Britain and provides a framework for all conservation work. More detail of each action is provided in the implementation guide. Each action has been assigned the appropriate level for implementation i.e. United Kingdom, country, region or local. Key actions have been identified through a 'signposting' exercise; these statements are shown in two shades of green and the corresponding signposted actions are marked with a similarly coloured signpost symbol.

Action Level Key

- UK All high-level actions, including European actions
- C Country
- R Region
- L Local

 Signposted action related to each preceding Signpost Statement

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Targets as agreed by Government

1. Increase the range of the species (10km squares)

	Baseline	2010	2015	2020	2030
UK	904	926	952	976	1,026
E	796	813	833	851	888
S	51	54	58	62	70
W	57	59	61	63	68

2. Increase the range of the species (vice counties)

	Baseline	2010	2015	2020	2030
UK	88	89	90	91	93
E	58	58	58	58	58
S	21	22	23	24	26
W	9	9	9	9	9

3. Increase the number of occupied ponds

	Baseline	2010	2015	2020	2030
UK	100,000	120,000	140,000	160,000	200,000
E	88,000	105,600	123,200	140,800	176,000
S	6,000	7,200	8,400	9,600	12,000
W	6,000	7,200	8,400	9,600	12,000

4. Increase the number of ponds with a Habitat Suitability Index of > 0.7

	Baseline	2010	2015	2020	2030
UK	60,000	72,000	84,000	96,000	120,000
E	52,800	63,360	73,920	84,480	105,600
S	3,600	4,320	5,040	5,760	7,200
W	3,600	4,320	5,040	5,760	7,200

Information about the Species Action Plan targets

Data has always been insufficient to make precise status assessments for the great crested newt. The figures in the table, produced with the available data, are likely to be refined as more survey information becomes available.

Two range targets have been agreed; vice counties provide a broad picture of distribution, and 10km squares, to show finer resolution. A priority now is to replace the 10km square range target by 1km squares, providing a more accurate assessment of distribution.

Population size is measured by occupied ponds, with the baseline figures calculated from extrapolation from blanket surveys. The target of 'occupied ponds' is considered to be a pragmatic measure as this reflects the most efficient sampling unit. This population size target has been especially difficult to set because of poor data availability. The figure may represent an over-estimate, particularly for Scotland, and further work will refine this.

However this is not a serious problem in the short term, as it is clear that increasing the population size is a key aim for great crested newt conservation nationally, and changes in the target figure will not affect this broad message. Additional survey work is needed to be able to verify the accuracy of the target values.

Viability is expressed using the Habitat Suitability Index, developed by Oldham *et al.* (2000)¹ as a way of evaluating habitat quality for great crested newts. Currently about 60 percent of occupied ponds are thought to have a high great crested newt Habitat Suitability Index (0.7). Actions under this target will aim to maintain the same proportion of ponds with a high Habitat Suitability Index score. Further research and survey work is needed to determine whether this 60 percent value needs to be amended.

¹ Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). *Herpetological Journal* 10 (4), 143–155.

1. Action Plan/SAP Management

Objective 1.1

To provide direction and ensure efficient implementation of the great crested newt Species Action Plan.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	Coordination	UK, C, R, L
(ii)	Produce guidance as required	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	Review Action Plan	UK, C, R, L
(iv)	Review targets and objectives	UK, C, R, L
(v)	Reporting	UK, C, R, L
(vi)	Liaison with key BAP Partners	UK, C, R, L

2. Policy and Legislation

Objective 2.1

To have legislation and policy that is effective for great crested newt conservation that ensures no nett loss of conservation status and promotes opportunities for enhancement of the status of the species and their habitats and to ensure its effective transposition and implementation.

Great Crested Newt Signpost Statement

Wider Action – Planning: Taking account of/or determining its presence during the early stages of local authority development plans, land allocation (especially of `brownfield sites`) and then development schemes, could significantly enhance its current conservation status.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	sign post Evaluate the effectiveness of legislation in attaining conservation for the species, and identify and promote mechanisms for improvement.	UK, C
(ii)	sign post Use the Biodiversity Duty introduced by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, to embed species conservation needs in all relevant policies.	C, R, L
(iii)	sign post Interpret, implement and enforce legislation and policy in such a way as to ensure effective conservation for great crested newts.	UK, C, R, L
(iv)	sign post For key areas, encourage the preparation and implementation of supplementary planning guidance and local spatial strategies to ensure the strategic long term safeguard and management of populations.	C, R, L
(v)	sign post Promote the inclusion of the great crested newt in development control policy frameworks and relevant strategic policies as a 'species of principal importance to nature conservation'.	C, R, L
(vi)	sign post Review licensing regime and the impact of derogations on great crested newts and promote mechanisms for improvement.	UK, C,
(vii)	sign post Develop standard guidance and protocols to ensure consistent high quality advice and clear working practices in (to inform developers/consultants and local authorities).	C

Objective 2.2

Ensure adequate information and knowledge base is available for decision-making.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	sign post Ensure availability of and access to appropriate data and ecological knowledge early in policy development or decision-making and that there is an appropriate framework and skills base for interpretation.	UK, C, R, L
(ii)	sign post Incorporate great crested newt data/knowledge into strategic and spatial plans.	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	sign post Ensure understanding of habitat use and distribution, and the extent and impacts of fragmentation and possible changes due to climate change, and that information is available to incorporate these into planning and policy decisions.	UK, C, R, L

Objective 2.3

To ensure mechanisms are in place to support policies that achieve BAP objectives.

Great Crested Newt Signpost Statement

Wider Action – Agri-Environment: Declines in this species are linked to changes in agricultural practices. Hence, the reversal of this situation and restoration of great crested newt populations lies within wider measures, notably targeted agri-environment strategies that will protect and restore breeding ponds and enhance terrestrial habitat. A landscape scale approach needs to be taken so that the benefits of such schemes are maximised and the viability of the targeted populations are maintained.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	sign post Ensure agri-environment schemes are able to support great crested newt conservation and see that these are developed. Target agri-environment strategies to deliver habitat creation and management targets/objectives.	UK, C, R, L
(ii)	Review existing non-agricultural funding mechanisms for habitat creation, restoration and management and population linkages, especially ponds.	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	Consider and promote expansion of funding mechanisms where gaps exist.	UK, C, R, L
(iv)	sign post Integrate great crested newt conservation needs into landscape and ecosystem level schemes and approaches.	UK, C, R, L

Objective 2.4

Ensure effective and appropriate site safeguard.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	Review the role of all designated sites for great crested newt conservation in England, Scotland & Wales, and evaluate and refine the selection criteria. (All SAC, SSSI and Local Sites).	UK, C, R, L
(ii)	Produce a register of key sites and, where appropriate, forward site details to SNCOs, NGOs and/or local authorities for consideration as protected sites.	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	Where appropriate ensure that great crested newts are noted as SSSI 'interest features' to promote appropriate habitat management.	UK, C
(iv)	Pursue opportunities for site acquisition to benefit the conservation of this species.	UK, C, R, L

3. Species and Habitat Management

Objective 3.1

To maintain the range and populations of the species through favourable management of occupied sites, linking populations and the restoration and creation of sufficient new sites to compensate for local losses.

Great Crested Newt Signpost Statement

Habitat Action – Extent and Condition: Loss and degradation of ponds coupled with fish introduction/ invasive alien plant species have exacerbated habitat losses. Management to restore and create aquatic and terrestrial habitats to suitable conditions is required. A landscape approach needs to be taken so that the benefits of such schemes are maximised and the viability of the targeted populations are maintained.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	sign post Produce and distribute advice on habitat management and restoration to encourage positive management of habitats and to prevent losses through mismanagement or neglect: target owners/managers of all important sites. Provide information about the creation and management of ponds and associated terrestrial habitat.	UK, C, L
(ii)	sign post Identify sites which have potential for restoration or creation of new habitats.	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	sign post Distribute information on grant schemes that help conserve great crested newts to land owners/managers and encourage uptake.	UK, C, R, L
(iv)	sign post Implement positive management.	C, R, L

Objective 3.2

Increase the number of populations and range through habitat creation and management by encouraging natural dispersal and translocation where needed.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	Develop means for effective targeting of habitat creation/expansion/ management using spatial planning techniques and see targets integrated into landscape level projects, sub-regional and local plans, etc.	UK, C, R, L
(ii)	Encourage landowner/ land manager involvement in active great crested newt conservation e.g. via liaison through local conservation groups, distributing management advice and information on grant schemes.	C, R, L
(iii)	Translocate great crested newts where appropriate according to good practice (e.g. JNCC/IUCN guidelines): develop & promote 'best practice' for deciding when translocations are appropriate.	UK, C, L
(iv)	Undertake positive management to manage/create habitats (ponds and terrestrial habitat) and link sites.	C, R, L

4. Advisory and Communications

Objective 4.1

To ensure understanding of habitat needs and management requirements, survey, conservation objectives and legal obligations by local authorities, land managers, volunteers, conservation professionals and others to raise standards and gain their further involvement to benefit great crested newt conservation.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	Review the need for advice; produce a list of desirable publications with suggested lead organisations for their development.	UK, C
(ii)	Develop protocols for informing landowners of the presence of great crested newts on their land, the legal implications and management requirements.	UK, C
(iii)	Produce and disseminate documents including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habitat guidance • guidance on legislation and its application • the re-introduction process • bio-security • pond creation and management • guidance on fish control • application of agri-environmental schemes for great crested newts in Scotland • amphibians, reptiles and roads publication • amend/re-write Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook • update Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines • measures to prevent accidental killing/capture • FCS Conservation Strategies for key areas • non-native species (animals and plants). 	UK, C
(iv)	Train professionals and volunteers involved in the surveying, management and conservation of great crested newts.	UK, C, L
(v)	Provide advice to landowners/managers.	L

Objective 4.2

To achieve, through publicity, media and other approaches, a wider and more sympathetic understanding of great crested newt conservation and provide opportunities for engaging more people.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	Identify main audiences and messages to be conveyed to them to further great crested newt conservation and the appropriate mechanisms and approaches to achieve this.	UK, C, L
(ii)	Undertake activities to further the understanding of great crested newt conservation including the provision of seminars, conferences and workshops.	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	Produce information on great crested newt conservation, including via articles, press releases, websites, television and radio etc, to reach a wide audience.	UK, C, L
(iv)	Encourage positive interpretation material and displays about great crested newt conservation at country parks, visitor centres and zoological gardens etc.	UK, C, L
(v)	Develop great crested newt based environmental education initiatives.	C, L
(vi)	Provide opportunities to see great crested newts in the wild and their habitats.	C, L
(vii)	Encourage the appreciation of the great crested newt, and management to benefit them in schools, gardens, allotments and similar open spaces.	C, L

5. Research and Monitoring

Objective 5.1

Understand the conservation status and distribution of the great crested newt and changes therein.

Great Crested Newt *part* Signpost Statement

Monitoring: **Monitoring and surveillance is required to allow for species status assessments to be made, including measurements towards the achievement of the SAP targets and the success criteria.** Dissemination of the monitoring and surveillance work to all relevant groups (LRCs, planners etc.) is essential.

		<i>Action Level</i>
(i)	sign post Develop monitoring and surveillance schemes to address the information needs. Further refine and develop the National Amphibian & Reptile Recording Scheme (NARRS) projects.	UK, C, R, L
(ii)	sign post Maintain and develop monitoring/surveillance networks, including via workshops/training etc. Clarify and develop relationships between recording bodies/organisations and establish effective mechanisms for data exchange and the flow of information.	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	sign post Undertake monitoring and surveillance exercises.	C, R, L
(iv)	sign post Define appropriate measurable units/descriptors of status and develop a measure of Favourable Conservation Status.	UK, C
(v)	Consider developing appropriate indicators to reflect the status of great crested newts.	UK, C,
(vi)	Identify threats to the species, the risks of incidental capture and killing, and the activities that give rise to them.	UK, C, R, L
(vii)	Develop recording and monitoring schemes to assess the impact of threats e.g. incidental capture/killing, and relate these to impacts on Favourable Conservation Status.	UK, C, R, L
(viii)	sign post Promote distribution surveys amongst volunteer groups, local authorities.	UK, C, R, L
(ix)	Make distribution data collected under contract available to local/national recording schemes wherever possible.	UK, C, L

Objective 5.2

Disseminate appropriate information to stakeholders and fulfil reporting requirements.

Great Crested Newt *part* Signpost Statement

Monitoring: Monitoring and surveillance is required to allow for species status assessments to be made, including measurements towards the achievement of the SAP targets and the success criteria.

Dissemination of the monitoring and surveillance work to all relevant groups (LRCs, planners etc.) is essential.

		Action Level
(i)	sign post Prepare an analysis of stakeholder information needs as part of surveillance strategy.	UK, C, R, L
(ii)	sign post Ensure data from wide range of sources is available in an appropriate format.	UK, C, R, L
(iii)	sign post Undertake status reporting.	UK, C, R, L

Objective 5.3

Undertake research that benefits great crested newt conservation.

		Action Level
(i)	Refine list of research subjects to be addressed, and identify appropriate organisations to undertake research.	UK, C
(ii)	Establish and undertake research. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Population Viability Analyses especially as related to isolated or fragmented populations. Increase understanding of population genetics and their significance in different contexts e.g. populations on brownfield sites, those isolated by new development etc. Determine how terrestrial and aquatic habitat quality relates to the presence/absence/abundance of great crested newts. For example, relationships with presence and species of fish present, terrestrial habitat use and requirements per type. Conduct one-off exercise to determine appropriate units for conservation status assessment and target setting. Methods for predicting presence and habitat suitability in terrestrial and aquatic environments. 	UK, C
(iii)	Disseminate results of the research and disseminate conservation messages.	UK, C