



Knighton  
Countryside  
Management

WOODLAND • ECOLOGY • LANDSCAPE

# CASE STUDY

## BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT

### Woking Great Crested Newt Pilot Project

**Knighton Countryside Management** worked with **ADAS** and **Woking Borough Council** in partnership with **Natural England**, on a groundbreaking and pioneering pilot project to enhance and create habitats for the great crested newt. All whilst minimising delays to significant building projects.

## BACKGROUND

This initiative was the first in England to implement great crested newt conservation on a district licensing scale, setting a new standard for wildlife preservation in the context of urban development.

## CHALLENGE

Under the current Government legislation and rules. If great crested newts (GCN) are present or potentially present on a development site, developers are required to carry out specific surveys to assess the impact of the proposed development on this protected species.

If they are unable to avoid or mitigate impacts, developers must apply for a license to move the reptiles before building or development works can begin. The process is expensive and not easy to coordinate at a local authority scale to create significant new habitats.

In this pioneering pilot scheme, Woking Borough Council was issued an organisational licence. This licence allows developers to opt to fund compensatory habitat creation rather than carrying out their own on-site mitigation (where populations of GNC are low).

Following borough-wide survey work and the production of a local conservation plan for the GCN, this new approach provides natural environmental benefits, in particular for great crested newts, while making the process more straightforward for developers and saving time and costs on vital building work within the Borough.

## SOLUTION

**Knighton Countryside Management** was commissioned to create and enhance habitats for great crested newts (GCN) in line with licensing requirements and conditions. This involved extensive large-scale creation of lined and unlined ponds tailored for GCNs, alongside woodland management and measures to improve habitat connectivity within the local landscape and integration with local land use. Additional works included constructing numerous dead hedges, log piles, and hibernaculum to support the newt population.





## CONCLUSION

**The Woking Great Crested Newt Project** provided a successful model for district-level GCN licensing, which is now being rolled out nationally.

Protecting and restoring great crested newt habitats enhances local biodiversity and supports ecosystem health much more effectively than site-level licensing.





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