



PRECAUTIONARY NON-LICENSED METHOD STATEMENT: GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

**Horncastle
Plawhatch Lane
Sharpthorne
East Grinstead
West Sussex**

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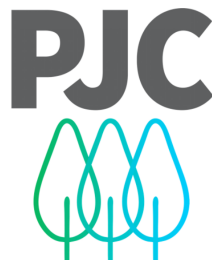
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Instruction

- 1.1.1 PJC Consultancy Ltd was commissioned by SHC Clemsfold Group Ltd to prepare a precautionary non-licensed method statement for great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* to ensure legal compliance during the construction phase of the proposed development at Horncastle, Plawhatch Lane, Sharpthorne, East Grinstead, West Sussex (hereafter referred to as the 'Site').

1.2 Background Information

- 1.2.1 The requirement to consider the potential impacts of the proposed development on GCN was identified within the original Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report (PJC Consultancy, 2024) which should be read in conjunction with this precautionary non-licensed method statement.
- 1.2.2 The PEA report determined that given the number and proximity of potentially suitable waterbodies outside of the Site, although unlikely development proposals could result in adverse direct and indirect impacts on GCN, resulting in the death or injury, or disturbance to GCN during their terrestrial phase or result in the damage or destruction of a GCN resting place such as a hibernation site.
- 1.2.3 The PEA report therefore recommended that the applicant applies to join the NatureSpace Partnership District Licensing (DL) scheme, which is an alternative option to the traditional surveys, mitigation and compensation and the licensing process. However, NatureSpace Partnership have subsequently advised that potential impacts / risks to GCN are considered so low that the DL scheme is not considered a viable option, and instead advise that all construction works (including habitat clearance works) be undertaken in strict accordance with a precautionary non-licensed method statement.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

- 1.3.1 The purpose of this method statement is to ensure that there are no detrimental impacts on the favorable conservation status of GCN and no risk to individual GCN potentially present within the Site as a result of construction activities.

1.4 Legislation

- 1.4.1 GCN are a European Protected Species and are afforded protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). GCN are also listed as a Species of Principal Importance (SPI) under the NERC Act 2006. Under this combined legislation it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a GCN;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN;
- Deliberately take or destroy GCN or the eggs of GCN;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a GCN;
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a GCN (dead or alive) or any part of a GCN, and
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used by GCN for breeding or shelter.



2 PRECAUTIONARY NON-LICENSED METHOD STATEMENT

- 2.1.1 The avoidance and mitigation measures detailed below are provided to ensure that in the highly unlikely event of GCN being present within the Site, they are protected from death, injury or disturbance and that their breeding or resting places are also protected from damage, destruction, or obstruction of access.

2.2 Prior to Construction Works

- 2.2.1 All site workers undertaking habitat clearance works must have received an ecological Tool Box Talk (TBT) with a focus on GCN from a suitably qualified ecologist prior to undertaking habitat clearance works on Site.

2.3 During Construction Works

- 2.3.1 Access and egress routes for people and plant must be kept to existing tracks or areas of hard-standing and existing grassland (providing the grassland sward is maintained below 150mm in height).
- 2.3.2 Habitat clearance must be conducted using a two-stage directional cut in a northeast to southwest direction, the first cut reducing the vegetation to approximately 150mm, then the second reducing it to ground level. This technique will allow any protected species potentially present to naturally disperse to other areas of suitable semi-natural terrestrial habitat outside of the Site boundaries, including mature hedgerows.
- 2.3.3 A suitably qualified ecologist must hand-search the cleared areas either before the first cut or immediately after, depending on the height of the vegetation and visibility. All clearance of suitable GCN and reptile habitat must be supervised at all times by the ecologist. Potential refuge features i.e. log piles or exposed tree roots potentially used by hibernating GCN must not be moved or affected during construction works.
- 2.3.4 All arising's generated from habitat clearance works must be removed from Site and should not be stored on Site for any longer than a 24hr period, which will reduce the likelihood of the arisings being utilised by GCN, reptiles and other wildlife.
- 2.3.5 All excavations should be excavated individually and back filled immediately after where possible. Where this is not possible, excavations must be covered to prevent GCN or reptiles (or other animals) becoming trapped within the excavation. If this is not possible, one or both sides of the excavation must be sloped in order to allow egress from the excavation.
- 2.3.6 All machinery, equipment and materials must be stored on areas of hard-standing or on other areas identified by the ecologist as being unsuitable for GCN and reptiles i.e. existing grassland of short sward (<500mm).
- 2.3.7 All site workers, particularly those involved in habitat clearance works must remain vigilant at all times during construction works. If at any point during construction works any protected species or signs of protected species including GCN are identified, the following instructions must be adhered to:
- Stop works immediately and leave the area;
 - Inform an ecologist immediately who will then provide further guidance/instructions;
 - Do not try to handle a GCN, and
 - Do not resume construction works until advised it is safe to do so by an ecologist.
- 2.3.8 It should be noted that should individual GCN be found at any point during the works, a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) may be required to permit works that would potentially cause disturbance. An EPSL for development are issued by Natural England under Regulation 53(2)(e) of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). This application process can take up to six weeks.



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