



**BRAMLEY SCHOOL  
GREAT CRESTED NEWT SURVEY  
REPORT**

June 2012

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## QUALITY MANAGEMENT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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RPS was commissioned by Hampshire County Council to undertake Great Crested Newt surveys at a pond within a wildlife area of the grounds of Bramley Primary School, Bramley, Hampshire to help inform the extension and remodelling of the school.

The surveys were conducted following the standard guidelines given by Natural England. The presence/absence of Great Crested Newts, together with any other amphibian species was recorded.

No Great Crested Newts were recorded in the pond. Therefore, this species does not represent a constraint to development proposals.

Smooth and Palmate Newts were recorded, with a combined peak count of 124 adult Smooth and Palmate Newts which, using the criteria given in the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature 2001) would equate to a large population of Palmate and Smooth Newts on the site.

Other recommendations relating to the enhancement of the site with regards to biodiversity include the provision of new log piles or the retention (and movement if likely to be affected) of existing ones and the creation of small habitat piles around the site boundary from any arisings resulting from site clearance works. If the pond and wildlife area are to be lost as part of the development, it is recommended that the existing pond is only filled in during winter months October to January when newts are unlikely to be present. Also, it is recommended that suitable mitigation in the form of a new pond/wildlife area is created within the final scheme to ensure the retention of this important habitat in the wider area.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## **Background to the Study**

- 1.1 RPS was commissioned by Hampshire County Council to undertake Great Crested Newt surveys at a pond within the grounds of Bramley Primary School, Bramley, Hampshire to help inform the extension and remodelling of the school.

### *Conservation Status*

- 1.2 Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which affords them protection under Section 9, as amended. They are also listed on Annex II of the EC Habitats Directive. In combination, this makes it an offence to:

- intentionally kill, injure or take (capture etc.);
- possess;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, obstruct access to any structure or place used by a scheduled animal for shelter or protection, or disturb any animal occupying such a structure or place; and
- sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale (live or dead animal, part or derivative) or advertise for buying or selling such things.

- 1.3 Great Crested Newt is listed as being a species of principal importance in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

- 1.4 Palmate Newts *Lissotriton helveticus* and Smooth Newts *Lissotriton vulgaris* are also afforded protection against sale only under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

## **Aims and Objectives**

- 1.5 The aims of the surveys were to:

- determine the presence/absence of Great Crested Newts within the pond on site as well as other species of amphibian; and
- estimate the population size class for each species of newt recorded.

- 1.6 The aim of this report is to:

- present the findings of the surveys;
- provide information on the population size class estimates for any amphibian species recorded; and
- make recommendations for habitat improvement if required, based on the findings.

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### **Pond Description**

- 1.7 The pond was located within a fenced-off wildlife area consisting of un-mown grass, scattered trees and log piles (i.e. good terrestrial amphibian habitat). As the proposed development was within 50 m of the pond, it was within the terrestrial habitat area of any amphibians using the pond for breeding.
- 1.8 The pond comprised around 10 m<sup>2</sup> of water surface, bisected by a dipping platform across the width of the pond. The majority of the pond was un-shaded with a wide variety of submerged and floating aquatic and marginal vegetation such as Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* and Water Lilly *Nymphaeaceae sp.*, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and Pond Weed *Potamogeton sp.* A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) score for the pond found the pond to score 0.69 and therefore of “average” suitability to support Great Crested Newts, its value decreased somewhat by the relatively small size of the pond.
- 1.9 The water in the pond was clear with good visibility throughout the surveys.

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## 2 METHODS

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- 2.1 Four survey visits were undertaken during mid-March and the end of May, the optimal survey period for newts.
- 2.2 Surveys followed the standard guidelines (English Nature, 2001) and combined torch counts, netting and egg searches.
- 2.3 Clusson torches (1,000,000 candlepower) were used for the torch counts. Suitably qualified, experienced and licenced ecological surveyors walked slowly around the edge of the pond after dark, looking for Great Crested Newts within the water with the torch.
- 2.4 A net was carefully swept through the water every few meters around the pond edges. Care was taken to minimise disturbance to dense areas of aquatic vegetation in case any eggs were present.
- 2.5 Aquatic vegetation and suitable debris in the pond was searched for the presence of Great Crested Newt eggs.
- 2.6 Records were made of any other notable wildlife observed during the surveys.
- 2.7 Surveys were not undertaken during periods of heavy rain or when the night time air temperature was below 5°C.

### **Limitations**

- 2.8 The pond was lined which prevented the use of over-night bottle traps – the other recognised technique for surveying Great Crested Newts. However, three other survey methods were successfully used and as such there are no perceived limitations to the surveys.

### 3 RESULTS

3.1 Table 3.1 below gives the weather conditions for the four survey dates.

**Table 3.1 Weather conditions during the survey visit**

Visit number	Date	Night time air temperature	Weather conditions
1	19.04.12	7°C	Fine, slight breeze
2	03.05.12	8°C	Fine and clear
3	23.05.12	17°C	Fine and still
4	30.05.12	18°C	Fine and still

3.2 Both Palmate Newts and a small number of Smooth Newts were recorded and results/peak counts for these are presented in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Amphibian survey results**

Survey Method	Netting				Torch count			
	Visit number	Male	Female	Juvenile	Peak count of adults	Male	Female	Juvenile
1	5	1	0	6	42	38	0	80
2	8	4	0	12	63	61	0	124
3	3	4	0	7	19	15	0	34
4	4	2	0	6	3	3	0	6

3.3 No Great Crested Newts were recorded.

3.4 Large numbers of Palmate/Smooth Newt eggs, which are greyish-brown or dirty white in colour, surrounded by a transparent jelly capsule and about 3 mm across, were recorded on submerged vegetation during the egg searching. No Great Crested Newt eggs, which have a jelly capsule around 4.5 – 6mm long, with a light yellowish centre, were observed.

3.5 Large numbers of fresh water snails were also recorded along with Dragonfly/Damselfly larvae and a wide range of other aquatic invertebrates.

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## 4 EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

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- 4.1 No Great Crested Newts were recorded using the pond on site during the surveys. The proposed development of the school will therefore have no affect on the potential habitat of this species and as such not contravene any legal regulations in respect to Great Crested Newts.
- 4.2 A combined peak count of 124 adult Smooth and Palmate Newts was found on site. Using the criteria given in the Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (English Nature 2001), this equates to a large population of Palmate and Smooth Newts.
- 4.3 While Palmate and Smooth Newts do not receive the same level of legal protection afforded to Great Crested Newts, as recommended by Hampshire County Ecologists in such situations, any habitat clearance should be carried out under an ecological watching brief to ensure any animals are safely moved to surrounding retained habitat.
- 4.4 Other recommendations relating to the enhancement of the site with regards to biodiversity include the provision of new log piles or the retention (and movement if likely to be affected) of existing ones and the creation of small habitat piles around the site boundary from any arisings resulting from site clearance works. If the pond and wildlife area are to be lost as part of the development, it is recommended that the pond is only filled when newts are not present (between around October and January) and that suitable mitigation in the form of a new pond/wildlife area is created within the final scheme to ensure the retention of this important habitat in the wider area.

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## 5 REFERENCES

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English Nature (2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.