



ARG UK Meeting
Great Crested Newt Licensing Reforms
26 January 2017
Roe Hill Hall
Briars Lane, Hatfield, AL10 8EY

Outcome 1: ARG UK - Key questions to ask:

1. We request clarification of the extent to which delays in planning are due to protected species licencing rather than other factors. Notably we are concerned that a Natural England consultation yielded an observation that only 0.32% of developments are subject to licensing¹.
2. Where is the funding coming from for this scheme: initially; and over the 25-year period. (developers, central government, license fees?). What happens after the 25-year period?
3. How will the fees be spent? Will the funds be ring-fenced for GCN, or will they be used for general green spaces? How will this be monitored and enforced?
4. How will local authorities without ecologists operate and monitor this system?
5. Is there a contingency plan if there are changes after BREXIT?
6. If developers pay up front, and there is a subsequent shortfall in funds, who will meet this?
7. Are councils aware of their liability? If the local council is the license holder, then does it bear the risk?
8. How is it costed – is there a fixed fee, or is it based on area/type of habitat/number of newts and complexity of mitigation? If there are fewer newts will the fee be lower?
9. Who will set the fees? Will this be the local council, how will it be set, will it be universal, will it be capped? Will it be more cost-effective for the developer if it is too high?

There is already a system in place for SAC and SSSI where developers can pay into a scheme to avoid having to deal with the difficulties imposed by protection. This is coordinated by the county council in Kent – but how would this work at the borough council level?

10. Will local implementation be coordinated by the county council – or will each borough council be independent (local authority structures vary by county)?
11. Will the conservation strategy include monitoring? This should be an integral part of the conservation strategy. How will monitoring be funded, who will pay for it? Will the fee levels be high enough – will monitoring cover the whole county, or just the newt strongholds?

¹ Proposed new policies for European Protected Species licensing. Analysis of responses to the public consultation held between 25 February and 7 April 2016, December 2016

Amphibian and Reptile Groups of UK (ARG UK) is a registered charity (number 1165504) committed to the conservation of native amphibians and reptiles and their natural environment by supporting the development of a network of independent volunteer amphibian and reptile groups (ARGs)

12. Will monitoring lead to a regular reassessment of the newt strongholds and zones. Is there an opportunity to reassess the zones? How often will this be done. Is there a mechanism to revise the boundaries, what is the feedback mechanism?
13. How will this work with other protected species – notably bats, dormice, voles? Will there be a patchwork of strongholds for each species across the county or borough (this works against landscape level protection). How are the different species groups being consulted?
14. How will compensation sites be protected into the future?