

Copeland Field Farm, Salters
Lane, Werrington, Stoke-on-
Trent, ST9 0DA.

for Julie Brien.

GREAT CRESTED NEWT SCOPING SURVEY



March 2021

S5043

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Report control

Site address	Copeland Field Farm, Salters Lane, Werrington, Stoke-on-Trent, ST9 0DA.		
Survey date	17 March 2021		
Surveyor	Andrew Tillson-Willis MRSB MCIEEM		
Version	Date	Ecologist	Action
1.0	17 March 2021	Andrew Tillson-Willis	Document created
1.0	18 March 2021	Andrew Tillson-Willis	Document completed & issued

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IMPORTANT

Please note, due to the dynamic nature of the natural environment, our reports can only provide a snap-shot of what was present at the time of survey and as such often have a limited period of validity. Many statutory authorities regard one year as the maximum time that should elapse before a report will need to be updated. Where a protected species licence is required, a walk-over of the site should be conducted within three months of an application being submitted to check that the habitats have not changed significantly since the survey was conducted. Any information relating to legal matters in this report is provided in good faith but does not purport in any way to give any advice on or interpretation of the law whatsoever. Professional legal advice should always be sought. Any designs, specifications, advice, suggestions, or comments written or verbal relating to construction or supervision of building-related work of any kind are provided for consideration only and under no circumstances are to be interpreted as provision of design, management or supervision *sensu* the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007.

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Objectives, Methods, & Limitations

Objectives

Andrew Tillson-Willis independent ecological consultant was commissioned by Julie Brien to undertake a scoping survey for great crested newt of ponds on, and within 0.5km of, land at Copeland Field Farm, Salters Lane, Werrington, Stoke-on-Trent, ST9 ODA, centred on Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SJ 93906 46910. Proposed works entail the formation of an equestrian menage.

Methods

The site was surveyed by an experienced and appropriately licenced ecologist on 17 March 2021 (current Natural England personal licence number: 2020-50505-SCI-SCI).

The scoping survey followed the Habitat Suitability Index for great crested newt methodology of Oldham *et. al.* as adapted by Lee Brady of Kent ARG and through consultation at, and following, the 2007 Herpetofauna Workers Meeting as published in ARG UK Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index.

Limitations

Ecological survey based on a single site visit will typically under-represent the biodiversity of a site due to seasonal variations in plant growth and animal activity.

Two ponds, 0.46km and 0.5km south of site within private grounds could not be assessed for their suitability for great crested newt due to access restrictions.

A third-party data search was not commissioned as part of this preliminary ecological assessment.

These limitations are not considered to have altered key recommendations detailed within this report.

Results

General description

The site surveyed comprises a parcel of land and pond at Copeland Field Farm, Salters Lane, Werrington, Stoke-on-Trent, ST9 ODA. Ordnance Survey online mapping shows one on-site pond and two off site ponds within 0.5km of the proposed menage.

Onsite pond (Pond 1) located at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SJ 93887 46912 borders the area of the proposed menage. This pond was subject to a Habitat Suitability Index for Great Crested Newt survey which found it to have **‘poor’ suitability to support great crested newt**, this score is commensurate with the ecologist’s opinion (For full details of the assessment please see the Habitat Suitability Index section below).

Offsite ponds (Pond 2 & Pond 3) are located approximately 0.46km & 0.5km south of the site within the private grounds of Salthouse Farm, permission was not provided to access these ponds for survey. However, desk study revealed a 2016 Ecological Assessment of Salthouse Farm conducted by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. containing a HSI assessment of these ponds which found them both to have **‘poor’ suitability to support great crested newt**. Viewing from publicly accessible land of Salthouse Lane on 17 March 2021 confirms that both ponds remain stocked with fish and domestic waterfowl, as such pond suitability for great crested newt is unlikely to have improved since the 2016 assessment.

The site of the proposed menage comprises an area of improved to poor semi-improved grassland used as horse pasture, boundaries are post and wire fence, immediate surrounding habitat is more of the same pasture to the south and west, and semi-improved grassland to the east. Land to the north features the onsite pond in a small strip of rank grassland between pasture and hard standing of the active farmyard, suitable habitat for great crested newt is restricted to this 0.024ha strip of pond and rank grassland.

It is the ecologist's opinion that further survey for great crested newt is not considered necessary for the proposed installation of an equestrian menage.

Habitat Suitability Index for Great Crested Newt survey results

Ponds known to be present and accessible within five hundred metres of the development site were assessed for their suitability to support great crested newts according to the Habitat Suitability Index (*sensu* Oldham *et alii* 2000). The Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) incorporates ten suitability indices (SIs), all of which are factors believed to affect this species. It is a numerical score where 0 indicates unsuitable habitat and 1 represents optimal habitat.

Pond name / reference to key plan: Onsite pond No.1.

Date: 17 March 2021.

8-fig grid ref, centre of pond: SJ 93887 46912.

Surveyor: Andrew Tillson-Willis.

Pond immediately adjacent to proposed menage installation on land at Copeland Field Farm. Pond is not associated with spring, ditch, or watercourse and is most likely to receive water as run-off from hard standing of active yard. Measuring approximately 35m² at highest possible water level, at time of survey the pond contained an approximate water depth of 100mm while water levels in the wider surrounding area were noticeably high. The landowner reports the pond dries annually, the pond is heavily silted and contains a large amount of straw and brick rubble, vegetation is mostly couch grass, some willowherb, and a small amount of water forget-me-not in the western margin indicates that this part of the pond likely remains wet throughout most of the year. Banks of the pond are steeply bunded and planted with 1.5mtr tall unidentified shrub, a pile of manure sits on the eastern bank. While the pond is unlikely to support waterfowl, chickens kept on site entered the pond during the survey.

	HSI factor	Site assessment	HSI value	Explanatory notes / rationale
S1	Location	Zone A	1	
S2	Pond area (m ²)	35m ²	0.05	A score of 0.05 should be used for ponds under 50 m ² .
S3	Years out of ten that pond dries out	Dries annually	0.1	Landowner reports the pond dries annually.
S4	Water quality	Poor	0.33	Netting revealed very few invertebrates namely low numbers of <10mm ram's-horn snail shells (family

				<i>Planorbidae</i>), and non-biting midge larvae (<i>Chironomus sp.</i>).
S5	Shade - % of 1m belt of pond within perimeter	0%	1	No tree cover, surrounding shrubs maintained at 1.5mtr, pond may receive small amount of shade from farm building to the north at certain times of day but unlikely to alter score (0-60%).
S6	Waterfowl – #/1000m ²	Absent	1	Waterfowl absent at time of survey and no signs of waterfowl impact.
S7	Presence of fish	Absent	1	Pond not suitable for fish stocking and no fish revealed by netting.
S8	# ponds / km within 1km radius	3/3.14=0.955	0.63	Ordnance Survey online shows 3 waterbodies within 1km excluding those separated by major barriers.
S9	Quality of terrestrial habitat	Moderate	0.67	Suitable terrestrial habitat restricted to 0.024 hectare strip of rank grassland.
S10	% macrophyte cover	5%	0.35	Vegetation limited to couch grass, willowherb, and small amount of water forget-me-not.

$$\text{Score} = (S1 \times S2 \times S3 \times S4 \times S5 \times S6 \times S7 \times S8 \times S9 \times S10)^{1/10} = 0.44$$

*omit this factor if pond is over 2000m², and calculate the 9th root

HSI score	Pond suitability for great crested newts
Less than 0.5	Poor
0.5-0.59	Below average
0.6-0.69	Average
0.7-0.79	Good
More than 0.8	Excellent

Pond name / reference to key plan: Offsite pond No.2.

8-fig grid ref, centre of pond: SJ 94011 46457 (0.46km south of site)

Pond within private gardens of Salthouse Farm, access was not provided to assess this pond. A HSI assessment conducted by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. in 2016 scored the pond as 0.3 'Poor'. While the Arbtech report is limited in explanatory notes the pond was identified as a nursery pool for the fish stock of Pond No.3 and heavily used by waterfowl, viewing of the pond from publicly accessible land of Salters Lane on 17 March 2021 confirmed that the pond is still stocked with fish and domestic waterfowl, as such pond suitability for great crested newt is unlikely to have improved since the 2016 assessment.

Pond name / reference to key plan: Offsite pond No.3.

8-fig grid ref, centre of pond: SJ 94133 46442 (0.5km south of site)

Pond within private grounds of Salthouse Farm, signposted from Salters Lane as a private fishing lake, access was not provided to assess this pond. A HSI assessment conducted by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. in 2016 scored the pond as 0.32 'Poor'. While the Arbtech report is limited in explanatory notes the pond was identified as being stocked with numerous fish species for sport and heavily used by waterfowl. Viewing of the pond from publicly accessible land of Salters Lane on 17 March 2021 confirmed that the pond is still stocked with fish and subject to both domestic and wild waterfowl, as such pond suitability for great crested newt is unlikely to have improved since the 2016 assessment.

Pond name / ref to key plan	Date	8-fig grid ref	Surveyor	HSI score	HSI assessment	Further survey required
Onsite pond No.1	17/03/2021	SJ 93887 46912	Andrew Tillson-Willis	0.44	Poor	N
Offsite pond No.2	2016	SJ 94011 46457	Jason Guile (Arbtech)	0.3	Poor	N
Offsite pond No.3	2016	SJ 94133 46442	Jason Guile (Arbtech)	0.32	Poor	N

Concluding remarks

A scoping survey for great crested newt was undertaken on 17 March 2021 using the Habitat Suitability Index method to assess ponds within 0.5km of land at Copeland Field Farm.

Proposed works entail the formation of an equestrian menage.

The area proposed for installation is currently improved to poor semi-improved grassland used as horse pasture, field boundaries are post and wire fence, and surrounding habitat offers very limited suitable terrestrial habitat for great crested newt.

One onsite pond was subject to a Habitat Suitability Index for great crested newt, this assessment resulted in a score of 0.44. Ponds scoring below 0.5 are considered to offer 'poor' suitability to support great crested newt.

Two offsite ponds located within private grounds 0.46km and 0.5km south could not be assessed due to access not being provided. Desk study identified a 2016 Ecological Assessment of Salthouse Farm conducted by Arbtech Consulting Ltd. containing a Habitat Suitability Index for great crested newt assessment of these ponds which found them both to have 'poor' suitability to support great crested newt. Viewing from publicly accessible land of Salthouse Lane on 17 March 2021 confirms that both ponds remain stocked with fish and domestic waterfowl, as such pond suitability for great crested newt is unlikely to have improved since the 2016 assessment.

The scores provided by the Habitat Suitability Index for great crested newt are commensurate with the ecologist's opinion and further survey for great crested newt are not considered necessary.

Photographs

All photographs taken 17 March 2021.

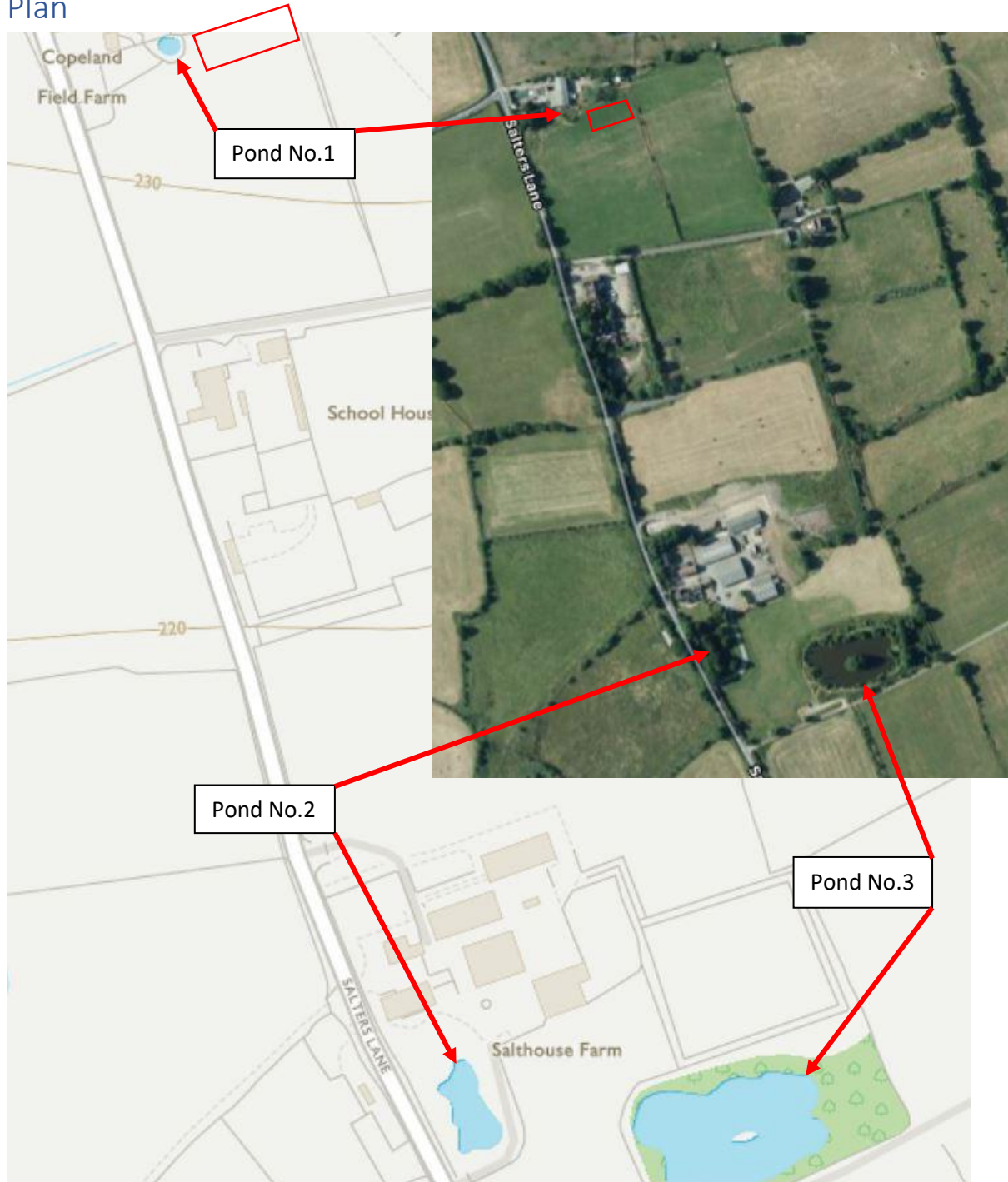


Plate 1. The onsite pond (Pond No. 1).



Plate 2. The area of the proposed menage, currently improved to poor semi-improved grassland used as horse pasture.

Plan



Legislation

Triturus cristatus (great crested newt) are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) prohibiting the intentional or reckless damage, disturbance, or obstruction of access, to their places of shelter, both aquatic and terrestrial. They are also given European wide protection via Annex II and Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 transpose the EC Habitats Directive into UK law thus making it illegal to:

- deliberately capture, injure, or kill
- deliberately disturb with the significant likelihood to affect population survival, breeding, local distribution or abundance
- deliberately take or destroy eggs
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place
- possess, control, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange

The above applies to all life stages in whole, part, or any derivative thereof.

References

Herpetological Journal, Vol. 10, pp. 143-155 (2000). R.S. Oldham *Et. Al.* Evaluating the Suitability of Habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Department of Biological Sciences, De Montfort University, Leicester LE7 9SU, UK

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English Nature 2001. Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough, UK.

Froglife 2001. Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook. Froglife, Halesworth, UK.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/great-crested-newts-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects>

<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/magicmap.aspx>

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Arbtech Consulting Ltd. (2016). Ecological Assessment, Salthouse Farm Salters Lane, Werrington, Staffordshire, ST9 0DA.

Quality assurance & capability

Andrew Tillson-Willis / ATW Ecology is a subsidiary of Pollywog.

Founded in 2003 Pollywog is a zoological consultancy dedicated to improving the captive husbandry and propagation of amphibia in zoological, educational, and private collections and has established itself as the UK's leading independent batrachocultural research facility with an international reputation for advancements in herpetoculture. Other subsidiary companies within the Pollywog group specialising in entomology, ichthyology, animal nutrition, and media services, provide a unique and diverse base of in-house expertise.

In 2013 following customer demand Pollywog began offering herpetological fieldwork services including freelance ecological surveying and supervision, these services have expanded greatly over recent years working with a network of freelance partners to cover all aspects of ecological consultancy. Contracts undertaken by Andrew Tillson-Willis / ATW Ecology cover a wide spectrum of projects at local and national levels in the construction, agricultural, leisure, and utilities sectors. All our scientific staff and freelance partners belong to appropriate professional institutes by whose codes of practice they abide.

Andrew Tillson-Willis MRSB MCIEEM — Principal consultant

Andrew is an experienced ecologist, herpetologist, and entomologist with seventeen years' experience as a zoological consultant and eight years as a freelance ecological surveyor before joining full time ecological consultancy two years ago. He holds Natural England survey licences for great crested newt (personal licence), bats (level 2 class licence), and white-clawed crayfish (class licence), Natural Resources Wales survey licence for great crested newt, is registered under the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS), is a registered member of the Royal Society of Biology, and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. In his spare time Andrew is co-ordinator and recorder for the Worcestershire Reptile & Amphibian Group, long-standing committee member of the Herefordshire Amphibian & Reptile Team, committee member of Worcestershire Mammal Group, and an active member of the Worcestershire Bat Group, Herefordshire Mammal & Bat Group, and Malvern Hills Crayfish Group.

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Please note that this report is a baseline ecological site audit of factors and features that may be significant for regulatory compliance and biodiversity policies relating to change of use or other disturbance. Such reports may not, on their own, contain sufficient information for a planning application and may require further more detailed study to assure compliance.

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