

# Light Valley Solar

Environmental Statement Volume 3

## Appendix 6.6: GCN Report

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Light Valley  
Solar

# Infrastructure Planning

## Planning Act 2008

### The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulations 2009

# Light Valley Solar

## DCO Submission

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### Appendix 6.6: GCN Report

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview and purpose of the document

- 1.1.1 This great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) survey report has been produced by Tyler Grange Limited on behalf of Light Valley Solar Limited ('The Applicant') and relates to the Proposed Development of a solar photovoltaic (PV) modules, Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and associated infrastructure.
- 1.1.2 The Proposed Development's boundary, herein referred to as the 'Order Limits', is made up of four broad areas, the Solar Development Sites (900 (hectares) ha), Cable Route Corridor (328.5 ha), Highways Improvements Areas (17.1 ha), and Solar Development Site 8 Access (24.1 ha). Underground electric cables laid within the Cable Route Corridor will connect the Solar Development Sites and the existing Monk Fryston Substation, where the Proposed Development will connect to the National Grid. The Highways Improvement Areas are sections of the highway network that will contain localised improvements to allow movement of construction vehicles on narrower sections of the local highway network, such as improvements to the road edge, traffic management, and provision of temporary passing places or visibility splays. The Solar Development Site 8 Access area will provide optionality to access Solar Development Site 8 from the north. The entirety of the Order Limits is within the administrative area of North Yorkshire Council and falls within what was Selby district.
- 1.1.3 The Solar Development Sites are split across a total of seven separate land parcels (Solar Development Sites 1-4 and 6-8) as presented in Figure 2.1: Illustrative Site Layout Plans (ES Volume 2) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.02.01] and in Outline Environmental Masterplan [EN110012/APP/LVS/02.12]. The Solar Development Sites largely comprise agricultural fields bound by hedgerows, ditches and mature trees, with smaller areas of woodland, grassland and scrub. The Cable Route Corridor is similarly comprised of agricultural fields and associated boundary features and passes through the River Ouse and Selby Dam. The Highways Improvements Areas, and Solar Development Site 8 Access largely comprise hardstanding roads and adjacent habitats, with Solar Development Site 8 Access also passing through Selby Dam.
- 1.1.4 Within the report, the Cable Route Corridor, Highways Improvements Areas, and Solar Development Site 8 Access are collectively referred to as "Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites".
- 1.1.5 The only Solar Development Site with ponds present is Solar Development Site 1, with five ponds recorded, comprising Pond 1.1 (P1.1), Pond 1.2 (P1.2), Pond 1.3 (P1.3), Pond 1.5 (P1.5), and Pond 1.12 (P1.12). There are also 40 ponds within 250 metres (m) of the Solar Development Sites. All ponds within the Order Limits will be retained and protected throughout the construction, operation and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

- 1.1.6 No ponds are located within the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites. There are however 29 ponds present within 250 m of the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites (all 29 ponds are outside of the Order Limits).
- 1.1.7 GCN eDNA surveys of ponds within the Solar Development Sites, and within 250 m of the Solar Development Sites were undertaken (where access was possible) to determine the presence/likely absence of GCN within these ponds, as 250 m is generally taken as the average commuting distance for GCN from breeding ponds (Ref 2).
- 1.1.8 As the works to the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites will largely be temporary, small scale, extend over sub-optimal GCN habitat (cropland and hardstanding), and avoid all ponds and their 250 m buffers where possible, no eDNA surveys were deemed proportionate for ponds within 250 m of the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites. Instead, the limited impacts to GCN that may be experienced during the works with the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites will be suitably mitigated through the implementation of Precautionary Working Methods (PWM) for the species as detailed within Outline Construction and Environmental Management Plan (oCEMP) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/07.02]. This approach was agreed with North Yorkshire Council (see Table 6-8 within Chapter 6: Biodiversity (ES Volume I) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.01.06]). Data search records for the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites are however presented in this report.

## 1.2 Quality control

- 1.2.1 All ecologists at Tyler Grange Group Limited are members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) or are working towards membership, and act under the direction of members and abide by the Institute's Code of Professional Conduct (Ref 1).

## 1.3 Legislation and conservation status

- 1.3.1 As a European Protected Species (EPS), GCN receive legal protection in England under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (Ref 7) and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Ref 8).
- 1.3.2 Under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Ref 7) GCN are listed as a EPS. Regulation 41(1) makes it an offence to:
- 1) Deliberately capture, or injure an EPS;
  - 2) Deliberately disturb an EPS;
  - 3) Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of an EPS; or
  - 4) Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS.
- 1.3.3 Although GCN still maintain a widespread distribution in England, they are in decline, notably through loss of breeding ponds. A greater decline has been noted

across the European range of the GCN, and now the UK holds a large proportion of the world population of the species. GCN is listed on the UK and Selby District Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (Ref 9) and is a Species of Principal Importance (SoPI) under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (Ref 10).

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Desk study

- 2.1.1 The local records centre, North and East Yorkshire Ecological Data Centre (NEYEDC) was consulted for protected and priority species records within 2 kilometres (km) of the Order Limits within the past 10 years.
- 2.1.2 Additionally, the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the countryside (MAGIC) website was checked for GCN survey licence returns within 2 km of the Order Limits within the past 10 years.

### 2.2 Field survey

#### Survey area

- 2.2.1 GCN eDNA surveys of ponds within the Solar Development Sites, and within 250 m of the Solar Development Sites were undertaken (where access was possible) to determine the presence/likely absence of GCN within these ponds, as shown on Figure 6.10: GCN eDNA Results (ES Volume 2) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.06.10]. GCN can move up to 500 m between breeding ponds although, as a general guide, only habitats within 250 m of breeding ponds are most frequently used (Ref 2).
- 2.2.2 The presence of ponds within 250 m of the Solar Development Sites was established with the use of ordnance survey maps, aerial photographs and data search results.

#### Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment

- 2.2.3 A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment (Ref 3 and Ref 4) was undertaken of all ponds within 250 m of the Solar Development Sites, where access allowed (as discussed below in the limitations) and shown on Figure 6.10: GCN eDNA Results (ES Volume 2) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.06.10]), on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025. The HSI uses a number of factors including pond location, water quality, macrophyte cover and shading. A score is given to each pond between 0 and 1, with scores closer to 0 having lower probability of GCN occurrence.
- 2.2.4 The HSI scores are provided below:
- 1) <0.5 Poor;
  - 2) 0.5 – 0.59 Below average;
  - 3) 0.6 – 0.69 Average;
  - 4) 0.7 – 0.79 Good; and
  - 5) >0.8 Excellent.

- 2.2.5 Although the HSI score cannot confirm the presence or likely absence of GCN, it can be used as a guide to assess the habitat in terms of its potential to support GCN.
- 2.2.6 A HSI assessment was not completed for dry ponds. Ponds found to be dry at the time of survey are shown on Figure 6.10: GCN eDNA Results (ES Volume 2) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.06.10].

### eDNA survey

- 2.2.7 In order to confirm the presence or likely absence of GCN, the ponds within the Solar Development Sites (five ponds), and within 250 m of the Solar Development Sites (40 ponds), were subjected to environmental DNA (eDNA) analysis (where access was possible) which provides a positive or negative result for GCN DNA. Ponds surveyed are shown on Figure 6.10: GCN eDNA Results (ES Volume 2) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.06.10].
- 2.2.8 Water samples were taken from the ponds on the same dates as the HSIs detailed above. Field surveyors acted under an appropriate Natural England GCN licence. This approach followed standard methods (Ref 5), which are approved by Natural England and provides a rapid means of establishing the presence / likely absence of GCN.
- 2.2.9 Survey methodology, as provided by SureScreen Scientifics (Ref 6) and approved by Natural England, are:
- 1) Identify 20 sites around the perimeter of the pond where you plan to collect your subsamples from. To ensure the sampling effort is representative of the site, space these as evenly as possible and include vegetative areas and areas likely to contain GCN.
  - 2) Gloves should be worn at all times during sample collection to avoid contamination of samples.
  - 3) Using the ladle, collect a subsample from at least 5-10 cm deep from each of the sites previously identified in step 1 (total 20 samples). Transfer each ladle full of water to the bag provided.
  - 4) Once all sites have been sampled, tightly scrunch the bag and shake vigorously for 10 seconds (to mix any DNA within the sample equally).
  - 5) Using the pipette, transfer water from the bag to each of the preservative filled tubes. Repeat this step multiple times until 15 ml is transferred (tube is filled to the 50 ml mark).
  - 6) Close the tubes and ensure the lids are tight and not cross threaded. Shake each vigorously for 3 seconds.

## 2.3 Limitations

- 2.3.1 Of the 45 ponds to be surveyed, 32 ponds could not be accessed to complete the eDNA survey. Three of these ponds were unable to be surveyed due to health and safety concerns, and 29 of these were unable to be surveyed due to

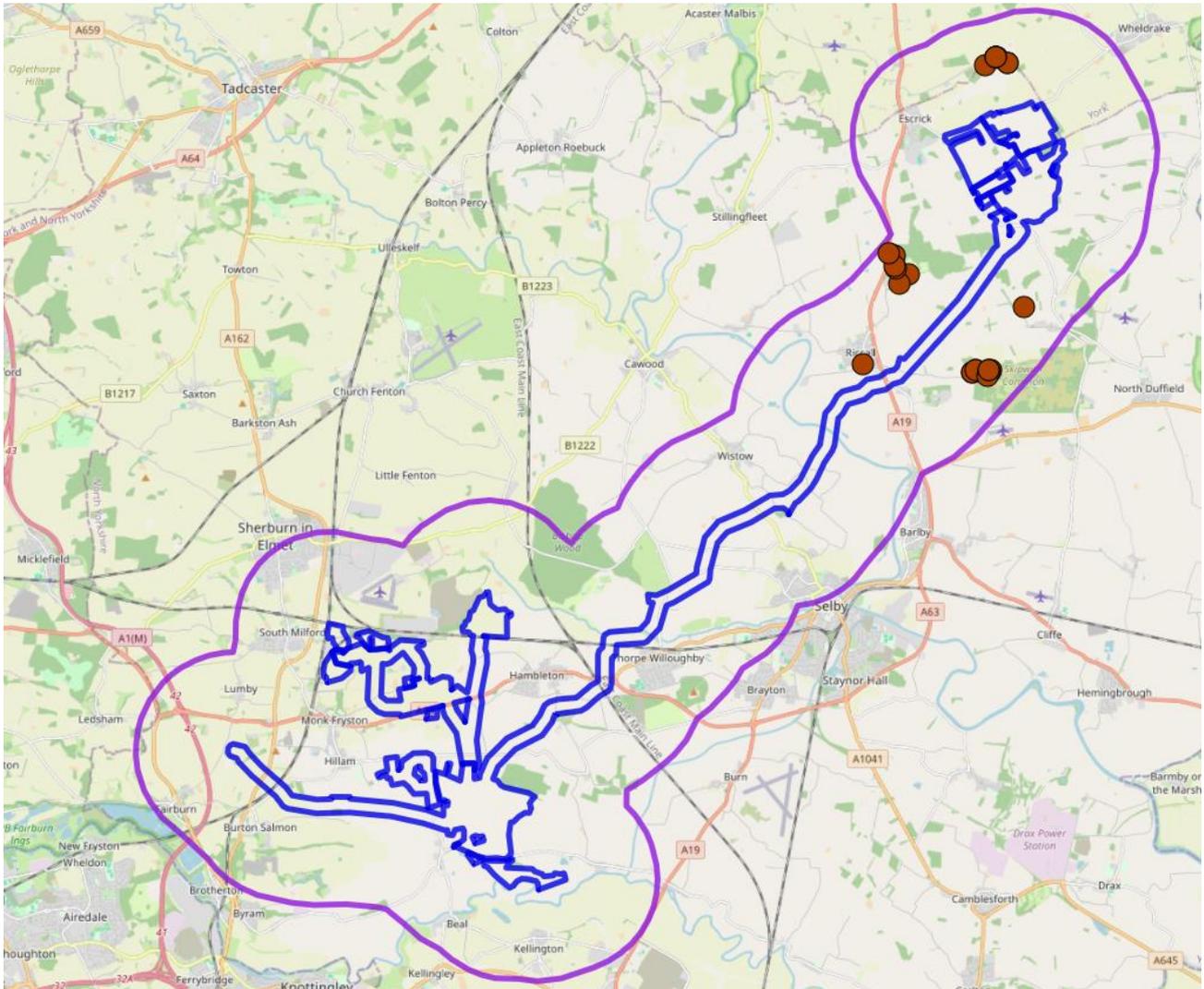
landowners restricting access. As a precautionary approach, prior to further survey of these ponds, these ponds are assumed to be positive for GCN in the assessment.

## 3 Results

### 3.1 Desk study results

- 3.1.1 A total of 28 records of GCN have been returned with 2 km of the Order Limits within the last 10 years.
- 3.1.2 The closest GCN record to the Order Limits was located within Scarrow Green Pond Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) where juveniles were observed in the pond in 2020. The Highways Improvements Areas overlaps approximately 3.5 m of Scarrow Green Pond, Little Skipwith SINC adjacent to Glade Road, with this 3.5 m comprising a hardstanding road. The GCN record is associated with the pond immediately west of this road.
- 3.1.3 The road adjacent to the pond will be utilised for construction traffic for part of the Cable Route Corridor, and as such will only be used for a limited time during the construction phase in this area.
- 3.1.4 With regards to the remainder of the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites, the only other GCN records in 2 km were located within Skipwith Common Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (closest record located approximately 1.1 km east of the Cable Route Corridor), within Hollinscarrs Wood SINC (closest record located approximately 1.1 km north-west of the Cable Route Corridor), and within a pond in Riccall located approximately 310 m west of the Highways Improvements Areas, which is beyond the accepted dispersal limit for GCN. All these records are associated with northern extent of the Cable Route Corridor referenced as CRC 1-4, as shown in Plate 1 below.
- 3.1.5 With regards to the Solar Development Sites, the only Solar Development Site with GCN records within 2 km is Solar Development Site 1. These records are all associated with North Selby Mine SINC and adjacent disused mining works, with the closest GCN record located approximately 1 km north of Solar Development Site 1.
- 3.1.6 All other Solar Development Sites do not have any GCN records within 2 km, as shown in Plate 1 below.

**Plate 1 GCN Data Search Results\***



\*GCN records shown in red, Order Limits shown in blue, 2 km buffer shown in purple

3.1.7 Additionally, following consultation with MAGIC, there are three granted European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) permitting the damage and destruction of a GCN resting place approximately 1.1 km north of Solar Development Site 1 associated with the North Selby Mine disused works from 2021-2023 (2014-5853-EPS-MIT, 2014-5853-EPS-MIT-1 and 2014-5853-EPS-MIT-2). There are also seven positive GCN class licence returns in this location.

3.1.8 There are no other GCN ESPLs or class licences with 2 km of all other Solar Development Sites, or within 250 m of the Order Limits Outside of the Solar Development Sites.

**3.2 Field survey**

3.2.1 A total of five ponds are located within Solar Development Site 1 (P1.1, P1.2, P1.3, P1.5 and P1.12). There are no ponds within any of the other six Solar Development Sites. An additional 40 ponds are located within 250 m of the Solar

Development Sites. These ponds are shown on Figure 6.10: GCN eDNA Results (ES Volume 2) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.06.10].

- 3.2.2 Of the 45 ponds to be surveyed, 32 ponds could not be accessed to complete the eDNA survey in 2025. Three of these ponds were unable to be surveyed due to health and safety concerns, and 29 of these were unable to be surveyed due to landowners restricting access. As a precautionary approach prior to further survey of these ponds, these ponds are therefore assumed to be positive for GCN.
- 3.2.3 Of the 13 ponds successfully surveyed, eight were dry and therefore unsuitable for breeding GCN. The remaining five ponds received negative GCN eDNA survey results and it can therefore be concluded that GCN are likely absent from these 13 ponds.
- 3.2.4 Detailed results including pond location, description, HSI assessment and eDNA survey results (where applicable) are available in Table 3-1 below and Figure 6.10: GCN eDNA Results (ES Volume 2) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.02.06.10]. The detailed HSI calculations are available in Annex A. The results of the eDNA surveys, as provided by SureScreen Scientifics, are appended to this report (Annex B).

**Table 3-1 HSI and eDNA Survey Results**

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P1.1	Dry	Within Solar Development Site 1	P1.1 comprised a small pond in the corner of the field which at the time of survey was completely dry. Soft rush <i>Juncus effusus</i> and bulrush <i>Typha latifoli</i> indicate there was water inundation for at least part of the year. No shade was present, and fish and waterfowl are unlikely. There was some willow <i>Salix sp.</i> scrub present.	N/A	N/A	
P1.2	Dry	Within Solar Development Site 1	At the time of survey, no pond was present in this location.  During the habitat survey in April 2024, P1.2 was recorded as inundated corner of an arable field, and therefore is assumed to be ephemeral.	N/A	N/A	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P1.3	No access due to H&S	Within Solar Development Site 1	P1.3 had slightly turbid water, but the bottom of the pond was still visible. The pond was almost completely shaded, with no/ minor presence of waterfowl, and it was unlikely to contain fish. The pond was mostly inaccessible due to deep mud and dense vegetation, with willow species trees and reeds present on the margins, blocking access to edge.	Below average	N/A	
P1.5	eDNA sample taken	Within Solar Development Site 1	P1.5 had muddy edges which suggested the pond had partially dried, and there were signs of cattle poaching. Few macrophytes were present and the pond was 70% shaded by alder trees on banks. Ducks were likely to be present, and some algae was recorded.	Poor	Negative	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P1.12	No access due to H&S	Within Solar Development Site 1	P1.12 was not easily accessible due to dense vegetation surrounding the pond with very steep banks, so access to the pond edge was not possible. The pond was surrounded by ruderal vegetation, including nettles and willowherbs with occasional willow trees. No macrophytes were present, ducks were recorded, and the pond was 10% shaded by willows. The water was turbid, and fish presence was unknown but unlikely.	Poor	N/A	
P1.4	Dry	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.4 was completely dry and shaded by trees within small copse. No macrophytes, fish, or waterfowl impacts were likely.	N/A	N/A	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P1.6	Dry	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.6 was completely dry and completely shaded by woodland plantation. Only terrestrial vegetation was present.	N/A	N/A	
P1.7	eDNA sample taken	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.7 was a muddy pond, with high turbidity and poor water quality. There was a flock of mallard, shading from trees, and no aquatic plants present.	Below average	Negative	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P1.8	eDNA sample taken	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.8 was turbid with signs of some drying. No macrophytes were present, and there were overhanging willow trees. The pond was used by geese and ducks.	Poor	Negative	
P1.9	Dry	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.9 was dry at the time of survey. Soft rush tussocks with willow species were growing in middle, with no macrophytes present. There was poor terrestrial habitat around the pond, such as short grass and bare ground.	N/A	N/A	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P1.10	Dry	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.10 was dry at the time of survey and formed a shallow depression in a horse grazing paddock. No macrophytes were present, and vegetation mainly comprised grass.	N/A	N/A	
P1.11	eDNA sample taken	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.11 was a large pond with mown amenity grassland present on the bank top, no shading, and mallard were likely to be present. Fish were present. Macrophytes along margin comprised flag iris, hard rush, great willowherb, reeds, and willow scrub.	Excellent	Negative	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P1.13	Dry	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.13 was a dry pond in the woodland edge, it was completely shaded with no aquatic plants.	N/A	N/A	
P1.14	No access due to H&S	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 1	P1.14 was located in a woodland copse, and was partly shaded by surrounding trees, with some marginal vegetation present.	Good	N/A	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P4.3	Dry	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 4	P4.3 was dry at the time of survey.	N/A	N/A	

Pond Number	Survey Detail	Location	Description	Pond Suitability (HSI)	eDNA Result	Photo
P6.1	eDNA sample taken	Within 250 m of Solar Development Site 6	Large ornamental pond within the residential garden of the farmhouse with some emergent vegetation present.	Below average	Negative	

## 4 Conclusions

- 4.1.1 Of the 45 ponds to be surveyed, 32 ponds could not be accessed to complete the eDNA survey. Three of these ponds were unable to be surveyed due to health and safety concerns, and 29 of these were unable to be surveyed due to landowners restricting access. As a precautionary approach prior to further surveys of these ponds, these ponds are therefore assumed to be positive for GCN.
- 4.1.2 As agreed with North Yorkshire Council Table 6-8 within Chapter 6: Biodiversity (ES Volume 1) [EN0110012/APP/LVS/06.01.06] these 32 ponds will be resurveyed for GCN eDNA where practicable in April 2026, to confirm presence/likely absence. This will be reported on in Examination but will not lead to any new adverse effects being identified as the ES already presumes presence in these ponds.
- 4.1.3 Of the 13 ponds successfully eDNA surveyed, eight were dry and therefore unsuitable for breeding GCN. The remaining five ponds received negative GCN eDNA survey results and it can therefore be concluded that GCN are likely absent from these 13 ponds.

## Annex A HSI Survey Results

Table A1 HSI Survey Results

Pond number	Geographic location	Pond area (suitability index score)	Pond permanence	Water quality	Shade	Waterfowl effect	Fish presence	Pond density	Terrestrial habitat	Macrophyte cover	HSI score	Pond suitability
P1.3	1	0.8	1	0.33	0.2	0.67	0.67	0.78	0.67	0.3	0.57	Below average
P1.5	1	0.8	0.5	0.33	1	0.01	0.67	0.78	0.67	0.3	0.41	Poor
P1.7	1	0.6	0.9	0.01	1	0.01	0.67	0.78	1	0.3	0.58	Below average
P1.8	1	0.6	1	0.01	1	0.01	0.67	0.78	0.33	0.3	0.28	Poor
P1.11	1	0.95	9	0.33	1	0.67	0.33	0.85	0.33	0.9	0.83	Excellent
P1.12	1	0.92	1	0.33	1	0.01	0.67	0.78	1	0.3	0.47	Poor
P1.14	1	0.8	0.9	0.67	0.9	0.67	0.7	0.45	0.67	0.85	0.74	Good
P1.16	1	0.4	0.5	0.33	0.5	1	0.3	0.84	0.67	0.55	0.57	Below average
P1.21	1	0.3	1	0.33	1	1	0.7	0.75	0.33	0.55	0.63	Average
P6.1	1	0.9	0.9	0.67	1	1	0.01	0.67	0.33	0.9	0.51	Below average

## Annex B eDNA Survey Results

## References

- Ref 1 CIEEM, Code of Professional Conduct,” 2022. CIEEM, Winchester
- Ref 2 Cresswell, W. & Whitworth, R., “An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value off different habitats for the great crested newt Triturus cristatus: English Nature Research Report 576,” 2004. Peterborough: English Nature.
- Ref 3 Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. “Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus),” 2000. Herpetological Journal 10(4), 143-155.
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- Ref 5 Biggs J, Ewald N, Valentini A, Gaboriaud C, Griffiths RA, Foster J, Wilkinson J, Arnett A, Williams P and Dunn F. “Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt. Appendix 5. Technical advice note for field and laboratory sampling of great crested newt (Triturus cristatus) environmental DNA”, 2014. Freshwater Habitats Trust, Oxford.
- Ref 6 Surescreen Scientifics. Available at:  
  
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- Ref 8 UK Government, “Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended),” 1981. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents>[Accessed 01 October 2025]
- Ref 9 Selby District Council, “Selby Biodiversity Action Plan,” 2004. [Online]. Available at: [https://www.selby.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/Biodiversity\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2004.pdf](https://www.selby.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Documents/Biodiversity_Action_Plan_2004.pdf) [Accessed 01 October 2025]
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