



Statement by Natural England on options for delivery of District Licensing for great crested newts.

Natural England is encouraging Local Planning Authorities across England to enter into partnerships to deliver District Level Licensing for great crested newts. District licensing will provide a strategic planning approach to conserving newts and mitigating for development pressures, take away much of the delays, risks and uncertainties of mitigation licensing at a site by site level, and provide net gain for this declining protected species.

Natural England is being funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government to ensure the setup of district licensing across 150 local planning authority areas from 2017 to 2020. We have written to a large number of authorities across the country to explore their level of interest in engaging in district licensing. In addition three pilots for district licensing are being run in England – one led by Natural England (in Kent), one led by Local Planning Authorities themselves (in Warwickshire) and one led by a private sector/NGO partnership (in the South Midlands), to explore how the performance of district licence can be optimised with different delivery models and in differing local circumstances.

Given the interest generated by these pilots, it is quite possible that your authority will have been contacted by another party to explore the possibility of a creating a delivery partnership. Natural England welcomes that there is an interest in commercial opportunities which may be offered by district licensing and considers that Local Planning Authorities will ultimately benefit from being offered a choice of delivery models.

In light of the delivery options demonstrated by the pilots, we are undertaking a review of Natural England's own engagement in the delivery of district licensing, in the coming two years, mindful in particular of where there may be a commercial alternative. We will conclude this review in January and will write to you to confirm in which districts we will proceed. In the interim we will assess the district licence applications we receive for the pilot areas, in accordance with the relevant regulations and Defra policy, to ensure that there is a level playing field for all potential delivery bodies and to avoid any conflicts of interest or unfair competitive advantage.

For further information please contact Gareth Dalglish, Partnership Manager, District level Licensing Programme at Natural England on 07970 463825 or gareth.dalglish@naturalengland.org.uk.

Natural England
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