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United Kingdom

Date: 21st July 2025
Reference: 82-299-L1-1

GREAT CRESTED NEWT EDNA SURVEY BIRCH BUSINESS PARK

BACKGROUND

E3P were instructed by Yeargate Limited to produce a Letter Statement detailing the results of a great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) eDNA survey at Birch Business Park, hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken by E3P in February 2025 (report reference 82-299-R1). During the PEA, no waterbodies were identified within the site boundary. However, three waterbodies (WB1-WB3) were identified within 250 m of the site boundary. A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessed the waterbodies for their suitability as an aquatic habitat for great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*). WB1 and WB2 were assessed as GOOD, whereas WB3 was assessed as POOR. Overall, however, all three waterbodies were ultimately acknowledged as having the potential to provide suitable habitat for breeding GCN. As such, GCN eDNA surveys were required to be undertaken on all three waterbodies, where access was possible, between mid-April and June (inclusive) to determine whether GCN were present or absent in the three waterbodies.

GREAT CRESTED NEWT EDNA SURVEYS

The eDNA surveys were undertaken on 23rd June 2025 by Graduate Ecologist Sam Kirkham BSc (Hons), MSc and Graduate Ecologist Daniel Syddall BSc (Hons). Both Sam and Daniel have experience undertaking numerous GCN eDNA surveys at a wide variety of sites across the UK.

The survey comprised a water sample extraction and lab analysis for GCN eDNA following the protocol set out in Appendix 5 of the DEFRA WC1067 Technical Advice Note.

Water samples were retrieved from WB1.

WB2 was found to be inaccessible due to the instability of the surrounding mud. As a result, an eDNA survey could not be conducted.

WB3 was found to be inaccessible due to the steepness of its banks and the density of the surrounding vegetation. As a result, an eDNA survey could not be conducted.



RESULTS

The results of the survey were received on 10th July 2025. WB1 tested **POSITIVE** for the presence of GCN. Please see **Figure 1** detailing the results of the survey.

Please see **Appendix I** for the eDNA Survey Results and **Appendix II** for the Waterbody Plan, which shows the approximate locations of the waterbodies in relation to the site.

Figure 1 eDNA results

Results						
Lab ID	Site Name	OS Reference	Degradation Check	Inhibition Check	Result	Positive Replicates
GCN25 7079	Birch Business Park - WB1	SD 84176 08672	Pass	Pass	Positive	2/12
Matters affecting result: none						
Reported by: Amy Bermudez			Approved by: Consuela Sopronyi			

In addition to the positive eDNA result, GCN have been observed utilising the on-site terrestrial habitat during the ongoing reptile surveys currently taking place on site. Consultant Ecologist Phoebe Parry BSc (Hons) observed a female GCN on-site on 10th July 2025, and Sam Kirkham BSc (Hons), MSc observed a female GCN on-site on 18th July 2025. These observations irrefutably confirm both the presence of GCN on-site and their use of the on-site terrestrial habitat.

Please refer to **Figure 2** for images of the female GCN observed on-site.



Figure 2 GCN Observed On Site

DATE OBSERVED	PICTURE
10/07/2025	
18/07/2025	



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GCN have been confirmed as present within WB1. Additionally, GCN have been confirmed utilising the on-site terrestrial habitat on multiple occasions. As such, the site is likely to support GCN within their breeding phase.

As a result of these findings, a population size assessment is required to be undertaken on WB1. This would be in the form of bottle trapping surveys undertaken between mid-March and June (inclusive). Six surveys would be required to establish a population size estimate for GCN and to determine further mitigation requirements. All surveys should be undertaken in line with guidance set out by Natural England and be undertaken by a Natural England licenced surveyor. A Natural England Mitigation Licence will be required if any terrestrial on-site habitat will be lost to development. A licence can only be applied for once planning permission has been granted.

Alternatively, as the site is located within Greater Manchester, it is recommended that Natural England District Level Licencing (DLL) is utilised on the site. The Natural England DLL process will allow for works to proceed without traditional mitigation. The licence is obtained by making a Conservation Payment to Natural England, a quote can be obtained in the absence of population assessment surveys.

Yours sincerely,
For and on behalf of E3P Ltd

Sam Kirkham
Graduate Ecologist

APPENDIX I

GREAT CRESTED NEWT

EDNA SURVEY RESULTS



Folio No: 3025-2025
Purchase Order: 011518
Contact: E3P
Issue Date: 10.07.2025
Received Date: 26.06.2025

GCN Report

Technical Report



SureScreen Scientifics

Folio No: 3025-2025
Purchase Order: 011518
Contact: E3P
Issue Date: 10.07.2025
Received Date: 26.06.2025

GCN eDNA Analysis

Summary

When great crested newts (GCN), *Triturus cristatus*, inhabit a pond, they continuously release small amounts of their DNA into the environment. By collecting and analyzing water samples, we can detect these small traces of environmental DNA (eDNA) to confirm GCN habitation or establish GCN absence.

Results

Lab ID	Site Name	OS Reference	Degradation Check	Inhibition Check	Result	Positive Replicates
GCN25 7079	Birch Business Park - WB1	SD 84176 08672	Pass	Pass	Positive	2/12

Matters affecting result: none

Reported by: Amy Bermudez

Approved by: Consuela Sopronyi

Methodology

The samples detailed above have been analyzed for the presence of GCN eDNA following the protocol stated in DEFRA WC1067 'Analytical and methodological development for improved surveillance of the Great Crested Newt, Appendix 5.' (Biggs et al. 2014). Each of the 6 sub-sample tubes are first centrifuged and pooled together into a single sample tube which then undergoes DNA extraction. The extracted sample is then analyzed using real-time PCR (qPCR), which uses species-specific molecular markers to amplify GCN DNA within a sample. These markers are unique to GCN DNA, meaning that there should be no detection of closely related species.

If GCN DNA is present, the DNA is amplified up to a detectable level, resulting in positive species detection. If GCN DNA is not present then amplification does not occur, and a negative result is recorded. Analysis of eDNA requires attention to detail to prevent the risk of contamination. True positive controls, negative controls, and spiked synthetic DNA are included in every analysis and these have to be correct before any result is declared and reported. Stages of the DNA analysis are also conducted in different buildings at our premises for added analytical security.

SureScreen Scientifics Ltd is ISO9001 accredited and participates in Natural England's proficiency testing scheme for GCN eDNA testing.

Interpretation of Results

Sample Integrity Check:

When samples are received in the laboratory, they are inspected for any tube leakage, suitability of sample (not too much mud or weed etc.) and absence of any factors that could potentially lead to inconclusive results. Any samples which fail this test are rejected and eliminated before analysis.

Degradation Check:

Pass/Fail. Analysis of the spiked DNA marker to see if there has been degradation of the kit or sample between the date it was made to the date of analysis. Degradation of the spiked DNA marker may lead indicate a risk of false negative results.

Inhibition Check:

Pass/Fail. The presence of inhibitors within a sample is assessed using a DNA marker. If inhibition is detected, samples are purified and re-analyzed. Inhibitors cannot always be removed, if the inhibition check fails, the sample should be re-collected.

Result:

Presence of GCN eDNA (Positive/Negative/Inconclusive)

Positive: GCN DNA was identified within the sample, indicative of GCN presence within the sampling location at the time the sample was taken or within the recent past at the sampling location.

Positive Replicates: Number of positive qPCR replicates out of a series of 12. If one or more of these are found to be positive the pond is declared positive for GCN presence. It may be assumed that small fractions of positive analyses suggest low level presence, but this cannot currently be used for population studies. In accordance with the WC1067 Natural England protocol, even a score of 1/12 is declared positive. 0/12 indicates negative GCN presence.

Negative: GCN eDNA was not detected or is below the threshold detection level and the test result should be considered as evidence of GCN absence, however, does not exclude the potential for GCN presence below the limit of detection.

Inconclusive: Controls indicate inhibition or degradation of the sample, resulting in the inability to provide conclusive evidence for GCN presence or absence.



APPENDIX II

WATERBODY PLAN





Key:

-  Red Line Boundary
-  250 m Buffer
-  Waterbodies

Notes

Issue: 1	Revision: 1	Date: 21/02/2025	Drawn: PP	Authorised: CK
Client: Yeargate			Job No. 82-299	Date: 21/02/2025
			Drawing No. 82-299-001	Scale: 1:4200
Job title: Birch Business Park			Drawing title: Waterbody Plan	



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