

SPRINGFIELD NURSERY, LLANDOW, GLAMORGAN PROPOSED POLYTUNNEL EXTENSION TO GLASSHOUSE OPERATIONS

TREATMENT OF PROTECTED SPECIES ISSUES

October 2019

- 1.1 The Springfield Nursery horticultural production facility at Sutton Road, near the village of Llandow in the Vale of Glamorgan, currently comprises a large glasshouse operation. This is proposed to be extended by the addition of new blocks of polytunnel on land to the north-west of the existing glasshouses (see Plan 1). The new extension is referred to as 'Block G'.
- 1.2 The land which is proposed for development comprises species-poor semi-improved grassland which has been managed in the past by a mixture of mowing and grazing by sheep, although this has been somewhat irregular in recent years.
- 1.3 The existing glasshouse complex includes a large artificial attenuation lagoon which has also been used in the past as an emergency irrigation supply. This lagoon supports a large breeding population of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus* – 'GCN'), which is a 'European Protected Species' afforded the highest level of statutory protection currently available in the UK¹.
- 1.4 The site was subject to a Phase 1 ecological survey in 2017 (see DCE 2017) which included detailed (i.e. Phase 2) survey of the GCN population in the attenuation lagoon (see Plan 2). The lagoon was assessed as supporting a 'large' population as defined by EN (2001), and there was abundant evidence of breeding by this species.
- 1.5 A refugia survey of the adjacent grassland which is subject to the current development proposals in 2014 found no evidence of use by GCN, with the exception of a large mound of revegetated topsoil, spoil and rubble standing immediately to the north-west of the lagoon. This was found to support significant numbers of sheltering and foraging GCN in terrestrial phase and is also considered likely to be used as a winter hibernaculum by this species.
- 1.6 Casual observations from the site indicate that terrestrial phase GCN may occur in any part of the site, having been recorded within and around the existing glasshouses at various times of the years (J Lloyd, Site Manager, *pers comm*).
- 1.7 The site is also considered likely to support common species of reptiles, especially slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and is known to support common nesting birds on buildings and in trees and hedges etc. All species of reptiles and native nesting birds are afforded varying degrees of protection against harm under UK domestic legislation².
- 1.8 The site is bounded by native hedgerows to the east, south and west. These hedges are considered likely to comprise important linear corridors for commuting, foraging and shelter by both GCN and common reptiles, as well as supporting common nesting birds.

¹ By virtue of its listing on Schedule 4 of *The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2017* (the 'Habitats Regulations'). Statutory Instrument **1012**, as amended.

² The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Development Proposals

- 1.9 The proposed polytunnel extension would occupy most of the open grassland to the west and north of the existing glasshouses and would require removal of a substantial part of the spoil/rubble mound. The existing attenuation lagoon would not be affected, however, and would be retained in its present condition. The new Block G extension would be surrounded by a peripheral belt of retained semi-natural habitat including a belt of open grassland alongside the attenuation lagoon. The existing peripheral hedgerows would also be retained in their entirety.
- 1.10 The new Block G extension would incorporate a revised drainage system, the details of which are being prepared.
- 1.11 Construction is proposed to commence in the spring of 2020 and would be completed by later that year. First production in the new Block G is scheduled to occur in 2021.

Mitigation for Great Crested Newt

- 1.12 Site clearance and mitigation measures affecting GCN will be subject to a derogation licence to be obtained in advance from Natural Resources Wales (NRW).
- 1.13 The principles of the mitigation for GCN will comprise:
 - Retention of the existing attenuation lagoon in its present condition for exclusive use by GCN. Water from this lagoon will no longer be drawn for irrigation and will be maintained at a consistent level.
 - Clearance of GCN from the construction zone by means of a ‘fence, trap & clear’ (FTC) operation ahead of development, with relocation of captured individuals to safe sites outside of the construction zone.
 - ‘Destructive searching’ of the existing spoil/rubble mound under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist to capture and remove any GCN to safety.
 - Realignment of the spoil/rubble mound to a location within the retained peripheral habitat belt alongside the lagoon, for continued use by GCN as a refugium and/or hibernaculum.
 - Retention and enhancement of the peripheral habitat belt for use by commuting, foraging and sheltering GCN, with the incorporation of new refugia, new plantings of native trees and shrubs and the encouragement of species-rich grassland habitats.
 - New plantings of native trees and shrubs to enhance and supplement the existing peripheral system of hedgerows.
 - The water collection and storage system for the new Block G will be completely sealed and inaccessible to GCN.
 - Restoration of a silted former cattle pond standing in a small enclosure to the north of the construction site to a condition suitable for use by breeding GCN (this currently does not hold standing water).
- 1.14 Clearance works, both for the FTC operation and the removal of any other habitats where GCN might be encountered such as clearance/relocation of the spoil/rubble mound, will take place after the end of the 2019/2020 winter hibernation period and will be

programmed to occur in the spring period (March to June 2020) when the majority of GCN will be in aquatic habitats for breeding purposes and not on the land.

- 1.15 The principles of mitigation are illustrated on Plan 3.

Mitigation for Common Reptiles

- 1.16 The mitigation measures proposed for GCN above will also provide suitable mitigation for common reptiles.

Mitigation for Common Nesting Birds

- 1.17 No direct impacts to nesting birds are anticipated. In the event that any potential nesting features are likely to be affected, however, these will be rendered unsuitable for use by nesting birds during the winter period of 2019/2020, by means of clearance down to approximately 150-200mm above ground-level or other appropriate methods.
- 1.18 In the unlikely event that any other potential nesting features subsequently require clearance or other impact as a result of construction, these will be subject to advance survey by an appropriately qualified person to ensure that no nesting birds are present. If any nesting birds are present, these will be allowed to complete their current nesting cycle unmolested before any potentially disruptive works are undertaken.
- 1.19 The existing hedges will be allowed to grow taller than is currently the case (for increased landscape screening) and will be supplemented by new planting of native trees and shrubs as part of the landscape proposals for the new extension. These measures should increase the amount of potential bird nesting habitat on the site.

Other Measures

- 1.20 Lighting of the new development will take in to account the advice provided by the Bat Conservation Trust³ on minimising adverse impacts to adjacent habitats as a result of light-spill.
- 1.21 Contractors will be provided with a ‘toolbox talk’ at the outset of site clearance and construction works setting out the known and possible habitat and species constraint, and the procedures which are required. It will be clearly understood that in the event of any protected species being found during works, all works will cease in the affected area until appropriate expert advice has been sought.
- 1.22 A Wildlife Protection Plan (WPP) should be drawn up for the site clearance and construction stages, setting out detailed measures in respect of protected species.
- 1.23 Responsibility for implementation of the WPP will be assigned to an appropriately qualified and/or experienced member of the development team who would act as an ‘Ecological Clerk of Works’.

³ <https://www.bats.org.uk/news/2018/09/new-guidance-on-bats-and-lighting>

- 1.24 At minimum a detailed 5-year Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP) would be drawn up to guide the long-term management and maintenance of the site. Implementation of the BMP will be funded by the developer.
- 1.25 The services of an appropriately qualified and licensed ecologist will be available on an ‘on-call’ basis throughout the entire development period in order to deal promptly with any protected species or other ecological matters which may arise during the clearance and construction works.

2.0 References

David Clements Ecology Ltd (DCE 2017) *Springfield Nursery, Sutton Road, Llandow, Vale of Glamorgan: Great Crested Newt: Assessment of Populations Status*. Unpublished report to Bourne Valley Associates, v.1.0, Aug 2017.

English Nature (EN 2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. EN, Peterborough.

Surveyor(s) : D K Clements; A Clements; J Lloyd, 2014-2017
Report : D K Clements, 24 Oct 2019
Version : Draft, v.1.0
Checked :
Revisions :