



Shropshire Pond Creation Scheme

Love Ponds, have space for a new pond and want to help reverse over a century of pond decline in Shropshire?

Then please read on.....

Since 1900 there has been an estimated total loss of over 50% of the UK's ponds. 80% of those that remain are in a poor state and given that 2/3 of all freshwater species are supported by pond habitats this is a significant loss. In the 2002 Shropshire Biodiversity Action Plan it was estimated that the trend of loss nationally was reflected by local pond number decline and the plan set out an ambition to replace each lost pond with 2 new. The DEFRA 25 Year Environment Plan sets out the ambitious target of restoring 75% of the 1 million hectares of freshwater habitats.

Natural England has now devised and is paying for a scheme to create and improve pond habitat for Great Crested Newts in Shropshire and has selected Shropshire Wildlife Trust to lead this work. The new ponds are being created to compensate for those being lost or damaged by development across the county. You, as a landowner, can play your part in providing space for new ponds or to restore an existing pond on your land.

This is a voluntary scheme and aims to not only compensate for ponds lost to development but support those landowners who wish to use part of their land to benefit nature. Most landowners enjoy and nurture the ponds they have already and many would like more.

Full costs of excavation and pond creation are met by the scheme, which is funded by a levy on developers, 85% of this money is to be used on compensatory pond creation and monitoring. Agreement is between the landowner and Natural England, the management of the pond creation works, subsequent monitoring and long-term maintenance will be by Shropshire Wildlife Trust who are the Habitat Delivery Body for the scheme in Shropshire. Each pond will receive a post-excavation visit 3 months after creation.

Protected species will **not** be introduced to ponds. All new and restored ponds will be allowed to vegetate naturally. The areas being targeted for pond creation are selected so as to ensure that natural colonization is very likely. Most of the landowners we plan to work with will already have ponds on their land. The minimum pond size required is 100m² (0.01ha) and this would not be mapped as a permanent ineligible feature in respect of agricultural support schemes. Larger ponds would be mapped as ineligible features for RPA schemes and landowners will be made aware of this. We would not advise that ponds be created in areas where landowners are likely to be seeking planning permission. We are seeking to work with landowners that want to create ponds to make a difference for the natural environment. Once created, and in order to ensure good value for money, these ponds will require future monitoring and maintenance. We would therefore be grateful for your agreement that for the

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next 25 years we (or another specialist habitat management body appointed by Natural England) may have periodic access to the ponds created on your land. The terms of this would be as follows:

- Visits are expected to be infrequent – less than annual;
- Most visits will be for monitoring purposes and will be brief;
- In order to reduce shading and keep ponds in optimum condition for freshwater wildlife scrub growth on the southern sides of ponds may need to be cut back, perhaps every 6 to 8 years. Natural England will arrange and pay for this;
- You, or any subsequent owner of the land, would be informed prior to all access and any works;
- All reasonable efforts would be made to avoid causing disturbance or inconvenience.

Additionally, we would be grateful for your agreement to take simple measures to protect the habitat quality of the ponds for Great Crested Newts, as follows:

- Do not stock with fish (which eat invertebrates and young newts);
- Leave a three metre buffer zone around pond, inside which grazing is no more than light and there is little disturbance;
- Avoid excessive grazing of pond vegetation by livestock;
- Avoid poaching of pond sides and frequent entry of grazing animals into ponds;
- Do not plant trees or create shade on the southern sides of ponds;
- Do not introduce plants, allow ponds to naturally vegetate;
- Do not link the pond with other water bodies or water sources such as streams, ditches or drains;
- Protect the pond from agricultural runoff and chemical spray-drift;
- Do not encourage wildfowl to use the pond, e.g. by feeding-in or providing duck houses.

If you are keen to take part in the scheme, and think you have an ideal pond creation or restoration site on your land, then please contact our Shropshire Pond Coordinator with accurate details of the location – either as a grid reference or What3Words. A site visit can then be arranged to assess suitability.

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