

Coed Darcy, Swansea

Introduction

This Green Infrastructure Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the creation of Great Crested Newt (GCN) ponds at Coed Darcy ('the Site').

The application seeks full planning permission for:

"Creation of ponds for Great Crested Newts"

This Statement demonstrates the positive outcomes of the proposed development and sets out how the step-wise approach has been adopted.

The Site

The site is part of the former Llandarcy oil refinery and is located on the south western periphery of the Coed Darcy development site. The site is comprised of a linear corridor which starts to the south of the Tip and then tracks south. The site sits around the demonstration village and then runs along the eastern boundary of a copse of trees. The site extends to 0.54 ha.

The site is largely covered in scrub, with some more open grassland habitat present in the locations of the more northerly ponds.

The area to the west of the site has multiple overlapping ecology designations. Crymlyn Bog Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are located to the west of the site. Crymlyn Bog is also designated as a Ramsar site, and Crymlyn Bog and Pant y Sais SSSI are also a National Nature Reserve.

Development Proposals

The proposed works are to create 7 ponds for GCN, in a largely linear form to create a habitat corridor for these species. The ponds will be constructed using a 360 excavator under the supervision of an experienced Ecological Clerk of Works. The ponds surface areas will be circa 250m² and will be profiled to ensure that both extensive shallow draw down zones and open water areas for lekking space are created. The ponds will have a maximum depth of 1.5m and have scalloped edges to make access and egress easy for amphibians.

Policy Context

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12)

In February 2024, Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 was updated to require the submission of a Green Infrastructure (GI) Statement with all planning applications. PPW describes green infrastructure as *"the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places"*.

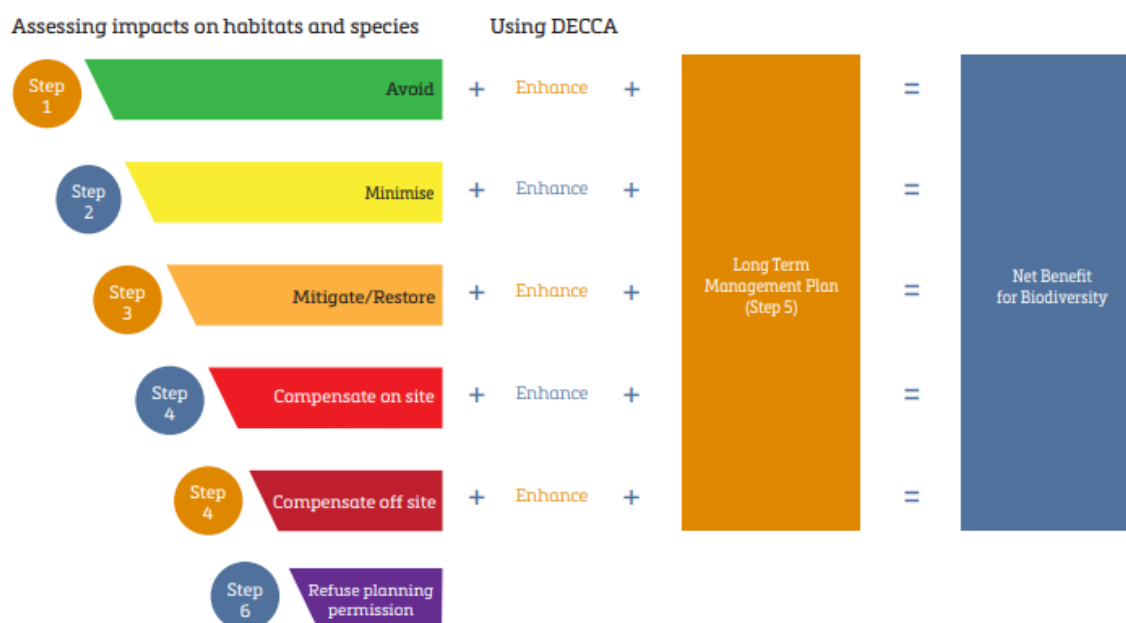
Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12 states, in paragraph 6.2.12, that *"A Green Infrastructure Statement should be submitted with all planning applications. The Green Infrastructure Statement should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed development and describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal"*. PPW envisages the Green Infrastructure Statement as being an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the Site, and also demonstrate how the step-wise approach has been applied.

The step-wise approach outlines a staged approach which: a. Starts with avoiding negative impacts (on spaces, features, habitats and species) b. If this is not possible then the project must minimise impact c. If this is not possible then the project must mitigate for the impact or restore any potential damage. This should be by compensation on Site in the first instance; or compensation off Site as a last resort.

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Step-Wise Approach

Figure 12 of PPW (Ed. 12) sets out the Step-Wise Approach for assessing the impacts on habitats and species from the development proposal. PPW is clear that any Green Infrastructure Statement should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the development proposed.



Green Infrastructure

Existing Baseline

The existing site comprises a mixture of scrub and grassland, with scrub being the dominant habitat. There are no trees on site within the red line boundary. There are no ecology designations that cover the site itself.

Step 1: Avoid

The existing site is limited to scrub and grassland and as a result of the proposals approximately 50% of the terrestrial habitat will be removed and replaced with aquatic habitat. The proposals will therefore not result in a loss of habitat but instead will change the nature and type of habitat on site. The proposals are notably in accordance with the Overarching Great Crested Newt Mitigation Strategy and have been cited where they are to create a linear corridor for GCNs across the site. Overall, the proposals themselves are to enhance the variety of habitat on site and create ponds for GCNs.

Step 2: Minimise

The excavated substrate will be used to create embankments next to the ponds, increasing the available area of terrestrial habitat slightly as a result of the elevation change. Refugia and hibernacula will be installed as part of the wider GCN strategy, creating additional terrestrial habitat for herpetofauna and invertebrates within the existing habitat. Some nesting opportunities for passerines will be lost due to the removal of the scrub, however the scrub cover across the wider site is fairly ubiquitous.

Step 3: Mitigate and Enhance

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The proposed works are designed to create enhanced habitats for herpetofauna across the site as part of the previously agreed site wide GCN strategy, therefore the purpose of the application as a whole is to enhance habitat.

Mitigation measures have been identified and will be adhered to for the following ecological receptors: fen and wet woodland, otters, herpetofauna and breeding birds. Full details of the mitigation measures to be implemented are provided in the Protected Species Walkover Survey prepared by SK Environmental and submitted as Appendix 3 to the Technical Note (Application to Construct Phase 0 Ponds for Great Crested Newts under a EPSM Development Licence).

Conclusion

Recent changes to national planning policy guidance require the submission of a Green Infrastructure Statement with all planning applications. The Green Infrastructure Statement should be proportionate to the proposals and how they apply a stepwise approach to scheme design, assessment and performance.

The proposals themselves are to create 7 GCN ponds and therefore do not result in a loss of habitat but instead change the variety of habitat on site and seek to enhance this. It has been demonstrated that the proposal follows the step-wise approach as outline within PPW. The proposal is therefore deemed to be compliant with the ambitions of PPW 12.

