

Lister Wilder, Spencers Wood

Great Crested Newt Report

Lister Wilder Ltd.



16th December 2025

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Prepared by:	Daniel Ahern Ecology Ltd Home Farm House, Tidworth SP9 7BE Email: info@danielahernecology.co.uk Telephone: 01980 842709
Project manager:	Beth Dean
Field team:	Megan Conway
Report author:	Megan Conway

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The views and opinions contained within the document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to works.

Contents	
Executive Summary.....	4
1.0 Executive Summary	4
Introduction.....	5
1.1 Introduction.....	5
1.2 Site Location and Description	5
1.3 Development Proposals.....	5
1.4 Survey Objectives.....	5
1.5 Quality Assurance.....	6
Methodology	6
2.1 Habitat Suitability Index Survey	6
2.2 eDNA Sampling	6
2.3 Limitations.....	7
Results	8
3.0 HSI Score.....	8
Discussion	10
3.1 Discussion	10
References	10
Appendix 1 – Legislation.....	11
Legislation and Policy.....	11
3.2 Legislation	11

Executive Summary

1.0 Executive Summary

- On the 30th April 2025, Daniel Ahern Ecology Ltd completed an initial assessment of the potential for amphibians, specifically great crested newt (gcn) to inhabit a waterbody, a pond, in a privately owned site in Berkshire.
- The HSI assessment of waterbody 1, a pond, recorded it to have GOOD gcn potential.
- **Based on the HSI result an eDNA sample for waterbody 1 was collected. This confirmed the pond was NEGATIVE for the presence of gcn.**
- **Gcn do not present an ecological constraint to the proposed works.**

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

On the 30th April 2025, Daniel Ahern Ecology Ltd completed an initial assessment of the potential for amphibians, specifically great crested newt (gcn) to inhabit a waterbody, a pond, near Lister Wilder, a privately owned site in Berkshire

1.2 Site Location and Description

The pond, hereafter referred to as 'waterbody 1', is located within a rural area (NGR SU 70830 66050), an public site in South Berkshire. An aerial photo view of the site can be seen in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Redline Site boundary with the location of waterbody 1.



1.3 Development Proposals

The proposals are;

- Demolition of building 1 - 9 and 11 on Site.
- Construction of new parking area on the southern end of the Site.
- Construction of new building on Site.
- Creation of new 15m wide landscape buffer on the eastern edge of the Site.

1.4 Survey Objectives

The objectives of the ecological assessment comprise the following:

- Determine whether the proposed works may have a positive or negative impact on any gcn populations on Site.

1.5 Quality Assurance

All ecological surveys are led by Ecologists who are members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) at the appropriate level. By joining the CIEEM staff sign up to a professional code of conduct.

Methodology

2.1 Habitat Suitability Index Survey

An assessment of the habitat potential within waterbody 1, were completed following the Amphibian & Reptile Group (ARG) methodology, ARG UK Advice Note 5 - Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index, 2010.

Based on the score achieved a pond is awarded one of the following assessment criteria. Further presence/absence surveys are recommended for all ponds achieving a HSI score of 0.60 – Average or higher, Table 1 below.

Table 1: HSI score & pond suitability.

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
< 0.50	Poor
0.50 - 0.59	Below average
0.60 - 0.69	Average
0.70 - 0.79	Good
> 0.80	Excellent

2.2 eDNA Sampling

An eDNA sample was collected from waterbody 1 and analysed as set out below.



METHODOLOGY

The samples detailed above have been analysed 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 which then undergoes DNA extraction. The extracted sample is then analysed 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 scrupulous attention to detail to prevent 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 security.

SureScreen Scientifics Ltd is ISO9001 accredited and participate in Natural England's proficiency testing scheme for GCN eDNA testing. We also carry out regular inter-laboratory checks on accuracy of results as part of our quality control procedures.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

SIC:	Sample Integrity Check [Pass/Fail] 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.
DC:	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.
IC:	Inhibition Check [Pass/Fail] The presence of inhibitors within a sample are assessed using a DNA marker. If inhibition is detected, samples are purified and re-analysed. 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 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.



Forensic Scientists and Consultant Engineers
SureScreen Scientifics Ltd, Morley Retreat, Church Lane, Morley, Derbyshire, DE7 6DE
UK Tel: +44 (0)1332 292003 Email: scientifics@suresscreen.com
Company Registration No. 08950940

Page 2 of 2

2.3 Limitations

The details within this report will remain valid for a period of 24 months; beyond that date it is advised that a review of ecological conditions is undertaken.

Unable to test the other pond adjacent to the site due to the second woodland pond having no water in.

Results

3.0 HSI Score

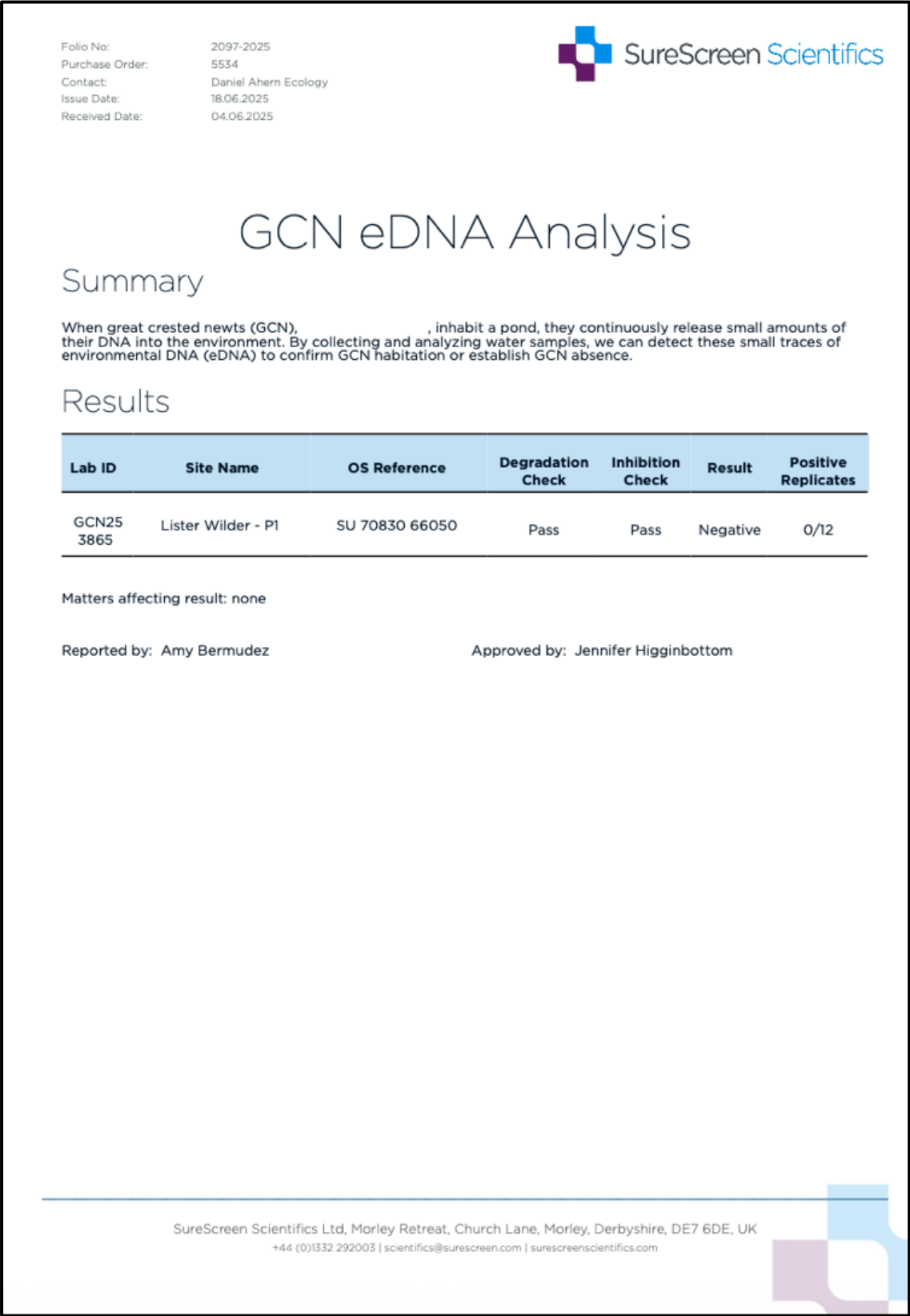
The results of the HSI assessment of waterbody 1 are set out in Table 2, below.

Table 2: HSI assessment of waterbody 1.

ARGUK GCN HSI Calculator		
	Pond Name	Lister Wilder Pond 1
	Grid Ref	SU 70830 66050
SI No	SI Description	SI Value
1	1	1
2	0.8	0.8
3	0.5	0.5
4	0.67	0.67
5	0.2	0.2
6	1	1
7	1	1
8	0.7	0.7
9	1	1
10	0.9	0.9
HSI Score		0.71
Pond suitability (see below)		Good

The results of the eDNA survey of waterbody 1 are set out in Figure 2, below.

Figure 2. eDNA result for waterbody 1.



Discussion

3.1 Discussion

The HSI survey of the waterbody confirmed that waterbody 1 had GOOD suitability for gcn to inhabit. This results is based on the size and location of the feature, the absence of waterfowl or fish and the presence of adjacent high quality terrestrial habitats.

Based on this an eDNA sample was collected. **This was sent for analysis and confirmed the pond was NEGATIVE for the presence of gcn.**

No further survey work is required, gcn do not present an ecological constraint to the proposed works.

References

ARG. (ed.) (2010) ARG UK Advice Note 5 - Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index.

Appendix 1 – Legislation

Legislation and Policy

3.2 Legislation

3.2.1 Great Crested Newts

Great crested newts (gcn) *Triturus cristatus* are listed under Schedule 5 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are afforded protection under Section 9(1), Section 9(4)(b&c) and Section 9(5) of the Act. Under this legislation, a person is guilty of an offence if he intentionally or recklessly:

- Kills or injures a gcn;
- Disturbs any gcn while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection; or
- Obstructs access to any structure or place which any gcn uses for shelter or protection.

GCN are afforded additional protection through their inclusion on Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Species and Habitats Regulations 2010 (as amended). Under Part 3 of this legislation, a person is guilty of an offence if he:

- Deliberately captures, injures or kills a gcn;
- Deliberately disturbs a gcn;
- Deliberately takes or destroys the eggs of a gcn; or
- Damages or destroys a gcn breeding site or resting place.

This legislation covers all life stages and includes both aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

Disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce, rear or nurture their young, migrate or hibernate. It also includes any disturbance likely to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species.