

Ecology

Ecology refers to the relationships between plants, animals, people and their environments, and to the interaction within these relationships. Damaging, disturbing or removing protected species can result in prosecution under a range of environmental legislation.

The identification and management of wildlife and sensitive areas needs to be undertaken early in the planning stage of a project, to avoid costly delays to the programme and a possible loss of reputation if any damage occurs.



Great crested newt

Before any work starts on site

- Contractual and client documentation must be reviewed, and all sensitive areas containing wildlife (animals and vegetation) clearly identified, while all relevant ecological risks must be included in the construction environmental management plan, together with their mitigation measures.
- Licences must be obtained from the relevant conservation body to move protected species or disrupt their habitats (such as bats, badgers and lizards), and specific biosecurity plans must be worked up and implemented if non-native invasive species have been identified.
- Approval must be sought from and given by the relevant environmental agency for dealing with invasive plants (such as Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed), and for the treatment or management of plants adjacent to a watercourse.
- Permission must be sought from and given by the local authority for removing hedges or trees that have a tree preservation order (TPO).

When work has started on site

- Ensure that removal of vegetation and other construction work is scheduled to avoid breeding and nesting periods.
- Ensure that areas containing wildlife are suitably protected from construction work, and that trees are suitably protected to avoid damage from the works.
- Ensure that areas containing non-native, invasive species are fenced off, with signage in place to restrict access and prevent spread across the site.
- Ensure that site personnel are made aware – at site inductions and toolbox talks – of these risks, and that sensitive or no-go areas are identified on maps, along with any necessary actions to take.
- Ensure that treatment companies and operatives hold the appropriate qualifications and certificates of competency for herbicide use, or operate under the control of a certificate holder.
- Ensure that any chemical containers or materials contaminated with herbicides are disposed of at waste treatment facilities in accordance with the duty of care and the Hazardous Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2005 or the Scottish Environment Protection Agency for Scotland (SEPA), and that soils contaminated with invasive plants or roots are removed to an appropriately authorised landfill site.

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