

# Risk Assessment

## Bentley Pond

Main Road

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**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> July 2025

### Overview:

**Site Summary** (taken from Bentley Pond Grassland survey 19/08/2014): The site [Carters Meadow] is an area of grassland located around Bentley Pond. The pond is a SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation) for its great crested newt (GCN) population. The site represents the likely foraging area for a newt population. The site is an amenity space, similar to a village green. The grassland is correspondingly improved and shows signs of past re-seeding. The western half of the site has a short, amenity sward with low wildlife interest. The eastern half however is maintained at meadow-length and has developed a greater species and structural diversity. There are planted trees within the site and modern hedgerows around the edges.

***For the purposes of this risk assessment we are focused on the eastern half of Carters Meadow and Pond where Great Crested Newts are known to be present.***

**Protected Species:** Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) - European Protected Species (EPS) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (UK) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This means it is an offence to:

- Deliberately kill, injure, or capture GCNs.
- Deliberately disturb GCNs (including when using their resting/breeding places).
- Damage or destroy GCN breeding sites or resting places (even if GCNs are not present).

### Key Considerations for Risk Assessment:

- **GCN Life Cycle:** GCNs are aquatic for breeding (typically March-July although GCNs can start moving into ponds as early as January) but spend most of their lives on land (terrestrial habitat) for foraging, dispersal, and hibernation. They often hibernate in log piles, dense vegetation, and underground burrows. Juveniles are particularly vulnerable.
- **Habitat Connectivity:** GCNs require connectivity between aquatic and terrestrial habitats.
- **Vulnerability of Habitat:** Both the pond and meadow are crucial. The meadow, especially within 50-500m of the pond, is vital GCN terrestrial habitat.
- **Legal Implications:** Any activity likely to affect GCNs or their habitat may require a licence from Natural England. Committing an offence can lead to significant penalties.

Hazard/risk	Potential impact on Biodiversity (GCN & other wildlife)	Level of risk	Impact	Proposed Mitigations
<b>Pond: Unrestricted access during Breeding season (Jan–July)</b>	Disturbance to breeding adults in pond; trampling of marginal vegetation used for egg laying	High	Can reduce breeding success and destroy eggs or larvae	Install seasonal signage to discourage access to pond edge; consider temporary fencing or buffer zone Note: access to the pond margins is already restricted with a combination of fencing and undergrowth
<b>Large-scale community events</b>	Soil compaction; habitat damage in meadow; disturbance to hibernating or foraging newts	High	Can destroy hibernation sites or block access to foraging and routes to pond	Restrict events to designated low-risk areas (outside 250m buffer); avoid high-risk times; require ecological input for event planning
<b>Dog walking (offlead)</b>	Dogs entering pond or disturbing marginal vegetation; digging in meadow could impact hibernacula	Medium	Localised habitat disturbance, risk to overwintering newts	Encourage use of leads; provide clear access paths; install educational signage
<b>Mowing or strimming Meadow</b>	Direct injury to foraging or sheltering GCNs; loss of long grass structure used for shelter and prey	High (if done in active season)	Potential death or injury to GCNs; loss of invertebrate biodiversity	Limit mowing to late summer (Aug/Sept); use phased mowing regime (rotational); leave refuge strips uncut; remove all cuttings from site to prevent nutrient build-up, which can favour vigorous grasses and suppress wildflower diversity, reducing habitat quality for invertebrates and GCN prey
<b>Bonfires</b>	Risk to sheltering/hibernating GCNs beneath piles; intense heat sterilises soil, killing invertebrates and seed bank	Medium-High	Can destroy hibernacula, reduce biodiversity, and create dead zones in the meadow	Avoid creating bonfire piles directly on ground; build on hardstanding if possible. After burning, remove all ash and reseed with appropriate meadow mix while ground is still warm to support habitat recovery

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<b>Use of herbicides/pesticides on or near meadow</b>	Runoff into pond; harm to aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates; indirect effects on food chain	<b>Medium</b>	Reduced prey availability; contamination risk for amphibians	Avoid chemical use; use manual/mechanical weed control; adopt wildlife-friendly management principles
<b>Night-time lighting (temporary or permanent)</b>	Disrupts nocturnal movement and foraging behaviour of amphibians and bats	<b>Medium</b>	May alter GCN dispersal patterns and increase predation risk	Avoid artificial lighting near pond and meadow; use lowspill, downward-facing lights if unavoidable
<b>Informal recreation (e.g. picnicking)</b>	Trampling of vegetation, disturbance to wildlife; littering	<b>Low–Medium</b>	Localised impact; cumulative disturbance possible	Provide defined paths and benches to limit pressure; install bins and interpretation boards about local wildlife
<b>Tree or scrub removal (winter habitat management)</b>	Loss of hibernation sites; disturbance to overwintering GCNs and nesting birds	<b>Medium–High (depending on timing)</b>	Potential destruction of hibernacula and nests	Schedule works outside hibernation period (Nov–Feb); retain log piles and root systems; check for signs of use
<b>Pond desilting or maintenance</b>	Disturbance or destruction of overwintering larvae, eggs or breeding adults	<b>High (if unscheduled)</b>	Can remove all life stages of GCNs if carried out inappropriately	Only desilt with licence and ecological supervision; ideally between Oct–Feb; maintain marginal vegetation
<b>Sharp Objects (Litter Removal)</b>	Volunteers use gloves; hazardous waste avoided.	Low		Provide clear guidance on waste handling.
<b>Adverse Weather Conditions</b>	Check weather forecasts; stop activities during storms, lightning, or extreme heat.	Medium		Volunteers must wear appropriate clothing (waterproofs, sun protection).
<b>Injury from Pond Equipment (Nets, Rakes)</b>	Volunteers trained in safe equipment use.	Low		Inspect tools for safety before use.
<b>General</b>	Provide local groups with a copy of the risk assessment in advance. - Request that groups conduct their own activity-specific risk assessment. - Ensure visiting groups are briefed on safety procedures, including the use of the life ring and emergency contact	Medium		Develop a visitor checklist covering access to risk assessment, adult-to-child ratios, first aid provision, and required PPE. Require groups to sign in/out when visiting. Conduct periodic reviews of group visit procedures to ensure ongoing safety compliance.



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	information. - Limit group sizes to prevent overcrowding on the dipping platform. - Require appropriate adult-to-child ratios (e.g., 1:8 for younger children). - Ensure groups use appropriate PPE (e.g., non-slip footwear, gloves if handling pond materials).			
<b>General</b>	Conduct a visual survey before any maintenance activities to check for the presence of protected species; Ensure maintenance activities are conducted outside of the newt breeding season (March to June); Volunteers must avoid disturbing vegetation at the pond edge or in shallow water where newts may shelter; Use hand tools rather than machinery to reduce disturbance.	Medium		Engage a qualified ecologist for advice if protected species are confirmed. Ensure all volunteers are briefed on the legal protection of species like great crested newts under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Record sightings and report them to the local biodiversity office or relevant conservation body.

## General Hazards

	Normal control measures	Level of risk	Notes/action
<b>Water (Drowning)</b>	Life ring on the east side; restricted access through fencing and brambles; supervision for public and volunteers.	Low	Ensure life ring is well-maintained and visible.
<b>Pond Dipping Platform (Slips, Falls)</b>	Non-slip surface installed (deck board); life ring nearby; public instructed on safe use.	Medium	Add signage for safe platform use. Monitor condition of platform regularly.
<b>General Slips, Trips, and Falls</b>	Paths cleared.	Medium	Regularly inspect paths and remove hazards.
<b>Overhanging Branches/Brambles</b>	Trees inspected for hazardous branches.	Medium	Include trees around the perimeter of the pond as part of the Parish Council's tree inspection procedures. Include bramble management in maintenance schedule.
<b>Steep Slopes/Unstable Ground</b>	Public and volunteers directed away from unstable areas.	Medium	Maintain barriers or fencing around hazardous areas.
<b>Unsupervised Public Use of Pond</b>	Warning signs at entry points; life ring maintained; pond access points minimised.	Medium	Conduct public safety awareness campaigns.
<b>Volunteer Maintenance Activities</b>	Training provided where appropriate (e.g., using some tools); volunteers supervised.	Medium	Ensure first aid kit on site; volunteers must wear PPE (gloves, boots, eye protection).
<b>Transmission of Diseases</b>	Gloves and handwashing facilities provided. Volunteers and pond users to cover cuts with waterproof plasters.	Low	Provide information about Leptospirosis and other waterborne diseases.
<b>Exposure to Blue-Green Algae</b>	Visual inspection before activities. Prevent access if algae are present.	Medium	Monitor for algae blooms during warm weather.
<b>Manual Handling (Heavy Rubbish)</b>	Use mechanical aids or teamwork for heavy loads; training on proper lifting techniques.	Medium	Plan rubbish removal tasks to ensure adequate support.

	ACTION REQUIRED
<b>VERY HIGH (VH) Strong likelihood of fatality / serious injury occurring</b>	<b>The activity must not take place at all.</b> You must identify further controls to reduce the risk rating.
<b>HIGH (H) Possibility of fatality/serious injury occurring</b>	You must identify further controls to reduce the risk rating. Seek further advice, e.g. from your H&S Team
<b>MEDIUM (M) Possibility of significant injury or over 3-day absence occurring</b>	If it is not possible to lower risk further, you will need to consider the risk against the benefit. Monitor risk assessments at this rating more regularly and closely.3-6 months to complete the work
<b>LOW (L) Possibility of minor injury only</b>	No further action required.