

# Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

 **Conserving, enhancing and promoting the Stour Valley**

**Positive success story for Great Crested Newts**

It has never been more important to help the environment and enhance the natural landscape, especially for our native wildlife. And Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership has been doing just that by restoring and creating ponds for Great Crested Newts with egg-cellent results!

From September 2019 to March 2020, the Partnership has been involved in work at 29 ponds across the Ashford Borough as part of Natural England’s District Level Licensing Scheme for Great Crested Newts. Sites in Bethersden and Egerton where ponds were restored on farmland have proved to be a success story, as eggs have already been found laid on marginal plants by this European Protected Species during a scheduled pond check.

Both ponds were initially earmarked for restoration because they were heavily shaded and silted up, making them unsuitable habitat for amphibians. The ponds were transformed by specialist contractors FGS Pilcher to a specification given by Natural England, that includedre-creating shallow sloping sides anda deepest point of 4m.

This pond work is vital as although Great Crested Newts are widely distributed, they have suffered enormous declines with approximately 50% of ponds in the UK lost in the 20thCentury and with 80% of current ponds in a poor state.

KSCP’s Partnership Officer managing this project, Sarah Harrington-James, says: “It was very exciting to find these GCN eggs as it makes my job so worthwhile. These ponds had been unmanaged for many years and were no longer functioning as amphibian breeding ponds, so it has been a pleasure to follow the whole transformation process from start to finish. We will continue to survey these ponds and others as part of the scheme and hope these will be home to many GCNs in the future.”

**Ends**

*For further details telephone: 03000 410900 / email* *kentishstour@kent.gov.uk**.*

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Attachments – Group photograph from left to right: Jon Shelton (KSCP Manager), Cllr Mike Hill (KCC Cabinet Member), Will Fraser (landowner) and Sarah Harrington-James (KSCP Officer) at one of the ponds restored on a farm in Egerton in September 2019. Cllr Hill wanted to find out more about this scheme and therefore came to see for himself on a site visit.

- Photo of a male GCN.

**Optional information:**

KSCP conserve, enhance and promote the countryside and urban green space of North East Kent and the Low Weald with a focus on the Stour Valley. This is achieved by working closely with local communities and landowners to promote both landscape and nature conservation and by developing opportunities for interpretation, education, community engagement and countryside access. It operates as a working partnership of sponsoring organisations, staff and local people. Kent County Council administer the Partnership.