

CLASS SURVEY LICENCES

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1. What is a Class Survey Licence?

A Class Survey Licence is basically the same as a 'personal' Survey Licence, issued under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Class Survey Licences will now be routinely issued year on year by Natural England and available for registered, qualified individuals to survey for certain protected species (currently great crested newt, dormice and white-clawed crayfish). They can be found on our web pages for Class Licensing ([Class Licensing web page](#)).

No case by case annual application assessment will be necessary, as we will assess each user only once to verify that they have sufficient experience, knowledge and skill to undertake the survey work without risk to the conservation or welfare of the protected species. Once an initial application is accepted, that person will be registered on our Class Licensing database by the Wildlife Licensing Unit and are entitled to carry out the relevant surveys for so long as they wish to continue doing so, as long as the conditions of that Class Survey Licence are adhered to, including any requirements to submit annual reports to Natural England.

2. Why are you making this change?

The introduction of Class Survey Licences reduces the administration burden on individuals and on Natural England. This 'lighter-touch approach' will allow Natural England's licensing team to improve the service we provide to customers and will allow us to focus more resources on higher risk case work, monitoring and enforcement activities. Class Licences are part of the work Natural England is doing in offering regulatory approaches that cost less to administer, trusting qualified people to comply and reward them for doing so. Offering Class Licences for surveys is a first step, and in the coming year, we will be taking this concept further by developing more efficient ways of licensing other activities including temporary impact activities and works with low/minor impacts.

3. When were Class Licences introduced for surveying?

Class Licences for surveying certain protected species were introduced in October 2011 following discussions with a small number of stakeholders (also see [Question 4](#)).

4. What species do Class Licences cover for surveying?

Currently there are Class Survey Licences for great crested newts (Level 1 and Level 2), with dormice and white-clawed crayfish licences available shortly. All activities typically authorised at present under 'personal' survey licences are covered. There are two licences for great crested newts: the 'Level 1' licence covering capture by hand, nets, torches and bottle traps, and the 'Level 2' licence also includes pitfall trapping. This is because we require additional evidence of experience in respect of pitfall trapping (see [Question 16](#)). There are plans to develop Class Survey Licences for bat species in the future.

5. Do I need more than one Class Licence to survey protected species?

You need to be registered to use each Class Survey Licence available for the species you wish to survey. For example, if you survey for dormice and crayfish, you need to be registered (and remain registered) on the Class Licence database to act under both of those licences. (Also see [Question 11](#)). If there is no Class Survey Licence available for the species you wish to survey, you will need to submit an application for a personal survey licence, as normal.

6. Are the terms and conditions different to my current personal 'survey' licence?

The terms and conditions are the similar to those on current personal survey licences but include additional standardised conditions reflecting best practice that we wish licensees to follow and comply with. The date for the annual return may differ from what has previously been required. An annual report/return is a requirement to remain registered to use each Class Survey Licence. Please note that if you already have a personal survey licence, upon submission of the end of licence report, you will be transferred automatically to the new arrangements for that species and will only need to apply for a licence in future if you wish to survey a species not covered by a Class Survey Licence, or use methods of surveying not included on the Class Survey Licence or if you need to re-register.

The Class Survey Licence standard terms and conditions for each species, plus the privacy notice (also see [Question 17](#)), are publicly available on our web site. Hard copies can be provided on request e.g. for those who do not have internet access. Users must be registered with the Wildlife Licensing Unit to use each relevant Class Survey Licence. Current holders of existing personal licences (to enable surveying) will be automatically transferred to the relevant Class Survey Licence at the end of their licence period but only after their report/return for that year has been received. They will be notified by the Wildlife Licensing Unit by email or letter that they are now registered to use the (specific) Class Survey Licence.

7. How will I know when I am covered by a new Class Survey Licence?

If you are an existing survey licence holder for one of the species covered by a Class Survey Licence, there is no need for you to submit a new application. When your existing licence expires and the Wildlife Licensing Unit receives your annual report, they will register you automatically on the Class Licence Database (for that specific species). You will receive email confirmation that you are registered to use the relevant Class Survey Licence (for the same species and methods) and will be expected to familiarise yourself with its terms and conditions. To remain registered you must submit an annual report each year before a specified date (which will be clear on the face of the licence). If you do not have internet or email access, the Wildlife Licensing Unit will send you a letter confirming you are registered to use the specific Class Survey Licence/s.

If you are a new applicant you will need to submit an application to the Wildlife Licensing Unit and include evidence of your skills and experience, plus references, to demonstrate you are qualified to be registered to use one of the Class Survey Licences (e.g. for dormice). The following link takes you to the application pages where we provide the forms and guidance on references: [Application form pages](#).

8. Who do I send my annual report to and when? Can I do it on-line?

Each Class Survey Licence provides clear instructions on the reporting requirements and timeframes that you are expected to follow (see licences and their terms and conditions on our web pages). Reports should be sent to the Wildlife Licensing Unit on report form [WML-LR-CL0809](#). The various Class Survey Licences currently have different reporting dates. This has been done in the short term to assist Natural England in managing its work load and to provide Licence holders with a more efficient service. However, in the longer term, we hope to simplify reporting further, having a single deadline for all survey licensing. A common reporting cycle will make it easier to collate licence use information for the reports we are required to submit to Defra and the European Commission, and will allow us to provide data from surveys to researchers and NGOs at a fixed point each year. The information collected during surveys, particularly geographical information on the presence or absence of species, provides a valuable insight into the status of species' populations and we intend to make sure that it is put to the best use possible in future. The annual report will also be used by licence holders to indicate that they wish to remain registered for that Class Survey Licence.

In the longer-term, we are hoping to provide enhanced benefits through an online facility to allow users to maintain their registration and submit annual reports online.

9. My client will not allow me to send in my survey data on my annual report (a requirement of the licence), what should I do?

Advice on this issue is contained within the Class Survey Licences. A Class Survey Licence may only be used if this condition is met and withholding information may lead to a licence breach. Under regulation 58 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 it is an offence for a licence holder to contravene or fail to comply with any condition attached to a licence. Increasing the availability of information is an important element in terms of improving our awareness of protected species distribution and reducing unnecessary or unexpected costs for those who need to plan around them.

To help avoid such difficulties, it is recommended that your contractual terms and conditions make it clear that submitting records to Natural England and other bodies specified in licences is a legal requirement. If a client is not prepared to accept such terms and conditions then you may not use this licence without the **prior** permission of the Wildlife Licensing Unit.

10. If I wish to use accredited agents to help with my surveys, are they covered by the Class Survey Licence under which I am registered to act?

Accredited agents can survey under your registration, with your authorisation and possession of a signed letter from you, but only if you meet the terms and conditions on that specific licence. It is your responsibility to ensure that your accredited agents meet the requirements and follow the licence conditions to ensure compliance with its terms and conditions.

11. What happens if I forget to send in my return form on time? How will I know I am no longer covered by my Class Survey Licence?

Each Class Survey Licence has an annual reporting requirement. These dates depend on the species the Class Survey Licence covers. The Wildlife Licensing Unit will send you an email reminder or a letter a few weeks before your return is due. If you miss the reporting requirement date then you may be de-registered and have to re-apply formally to the Wildlife Licensing Unit before you can use that Class Survey Licence again. It is therefore in your interest to ensure that your annual report is sent to the Wildlife Licensing Unit in a timely fashion. If you are not registered to use the Class Survey Licence then you are not entitled to rely on it. Using a licence without being registered is unlawful. (Also see [Question 7](#)).

12. Do I have to check the Class Survey licence every year on Natural England's website to ensure I am still covered?

All Class Licences are valid from and including 1 January until and including 31 December each year (click on the following for a link to the [Class Licensing web page](#)). Class Licences, in general, are subject to review by Wildlife Management and Licensing before being re-issued each year and this may result in specific changes to licences issued for the forthcoming year. Notification of any changes will be added to the website the month prior to re-issue. Registered users for any of the Class Survey Licences are therefore urged to check for any changes year on year to ensure that they comply with the terms and conditions. (Also see [Question 7](#)). The first tranche of licences (introduced from October 2011) will remain valid until December 2012 at which point they will be reissued with any necessary changes. We do not intend to make changes to the licences in that period, in order to give the new system time to settle down, but reserve the right to do so if necessary.

13. Have the requirements to hold a survey licence become less stringent with the introduction of Class Survey Licences?

No. The requirements and standards required to undertake surveys for protected species remain the same. New applicants have to demonstrate that they have the relevant skill level, experience and knowledge to be registered to use any Class Survey Licence, in the same way that they do to hold a personal licence enabling them to survey. Application form WMLA-29, which specifies the experience/skill requirements, can be found on our [Application form web page](#).

14. How do I apply for a Class Survey Licence as a new applicant?

To register to use a Class Survey Licence you need to submit an application form and two written references to demonstrate that you have the appropriate skills and experience to operate lawfully under the licence (see [Question 7](#)). The following link takes you to the [Application form web page](#). It may take up to 15 working days to action your registration should you meet our requirements. Once registered, you are entitled to use that licence indefinitely provided that you satisfy its terms and conditions, including any recording and reporting requirements.

15. What application form do I use?

Application form WMLA-29, which specifies the experience/skill requirements, should be used. It can be found on our [Application form web page](#).

16. I hold a great crested newt survey licence to bottle trap and torch search but wish to add pitfall trapping? How do I go about this under the new Class Licence system?

Registration to use the 'Level 2' great crested newt survey licence will be required, which allows the use of pitfall traps as well as the other survey methods specified in the 'Level 1' licence. You will need to apply to the Wildlife Licensing Unit (on form WMLA-29 found on our [Application form web page](#)), detailing your request and level of experience to become registered to use that technique. Two references will also be required, as detailed on the application form, confirming that you have the right level of experience and knowledge to use this technique.

17. What happens to my return data and will my details be made public?

Each licence specifies the reporting requirements that are required annually and explains what happens to the data collected for that specific species. In most cases the information requested is required to satisfy the UK's legal obligations to report to the European Commission. Where appropriate, the information will also be made available to government departments, local biological record centres, researchers and non-governmental organisations involved in the conservation of these species to ensure we make the best possible use of the information. (Also see [Question 8](#)).

Your information will be stored and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act gives you, as an individual, the right to know what data we hold on you, how we use it, with whom we share it and for it to be accurate. The information will be used by Natural England to undertake licensing functions. To do this we may have to discuss applications, licensing decisions, reports and returns with third parties. Natural England recognises there is significant public interest in wildlife licensing and in those who benefit from receiving a wildlife licence. Therefore, we may, on occasion, make information publicly available. Information released may include, but is not limited to, your name or business name, application and licence details as well as reports and returns. Natural England, however, realises that some licensed activities can be sensitive

and we will not release information that could harm people, species or habitats; for example, by not releasing the names and addresses of individuals or the location of the licensed activity. Natural England or its appointed agents may use the name, address and other details to contact you in connection with occasional customer research aimed at improving the services that Natural England provides to you. We will respect personal privacy, whilst complying with access to information requests to the extent necessary to enable Natural England to comply with its statutory obligations under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004, and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

18. What if I don't have access to email or the internet? Will I no longer be able to hold a survey licence?

Although we encourage applicants to use email or the internet, in those few cases where individuals do not have access we will send letters and paper copies of the licence. Customers who provide us with an email address will benefit from a system of email reminders prompting them to submit their annual report at the appropriate time, and alerting them when a report is overdue. For this system to work well, we will be reliant on licence users keeping us up to date with changes in their email addresses. If annual reports are not submitted in a timely manner, a person's registration will lapse and they will need to reapply to use the licence.

19. Although I received the reporting requirement reminders I didn't manage to send in my return data on time. I now have to formally apply again to be able to use a specific Class Survey Licence again. What do I need to submit?

You will need to submit a new application. See answer to [Question 14](#).

20. How can I check if someone holds a licence to survey for a specific species?

Anyone seeking to confirm whether a person is registered to use a Class Licence should contact the Wildlife Licensing Unit ([see licence for contact details](#)).

21. I no longer wish to be registered to use a Class Survey Licence, what do I do?

You may request to be removed from the register of Class Licence users at any time by contacting the Wildlife Licensing Unit. Once this request has been actioned, you will receive confirmation from the Wildlife Licensing Unit that you have been de-registered.

22. I am registered to use WML-CL09 (GCN level 2 which allows me to pitfall trap). Who do I inform I want to pitfall trap at a particular site and when do I inform them?

The Wildlife Licensing Unit must be informed prior to the installation of the fence and traps. There is an online form [WML-A29-1](#) to fill in, which can be sent to the Wildlife Licensing Unit at the address on the form. You need to include details such as your name, the site address and county, the 6-figure grid reference and the start and end dates for the trapping period.