

AMPHIBIANS SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

It is probable that all amphibian species have suffered large declines in population, although this is inevitably based on anecdotal evidence rather than scientific observations. For a child on a nature walk, the discovery of one of our amphibian species is often seen as something exotic and exciting. The importance of this in nurturing a wider respect for animals outside the 'mammalian norm' should not be overlooked.

The four amphibian species covered by this action plan are:

- **Common Frog** *Rana temporaria*
- **Common Toad** *Bufo bufo*
- **Palmate Newt** *Triturus helveticus*
- **Smooth Newt** *Triturus vulgaris*



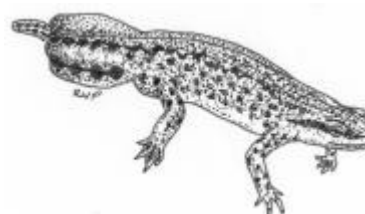
common frog © CCBC 2002

These four species require similar actions to safeguard and enhance present populations, and all are UKBAP Species of Conservation Concern³⁹. Of the remaining British amphibia, the natterjack toad *Bufo calamita* is not present in Caerphilly county borough, and as a UK BAP priority species, the great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, is covered in a separate Species Action Plan.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status				
	frog	toad	palmate newt	smooth newt
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	S	S	S	S
EC Habitats and Spp. Directive	Va	-	-	-
Berne Convention 1982	-	-	-	-
Bonn Convention 1979	-	-	-	-
CITES 1975	-	-	-	-
WCA 1981	S5	S5	S5	S5



common toad © CCBC 2002



palmate newt © CCBC 2002



smooth newt © CCBC 2002

2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

All four species require relatively unpolluted fresh water in which to spawn. The common frog and common toad are mainly terrestrial outside the spring breeding season, and require areas of rough pasture or scrub in which they find their diet of invertebrates.

Both newt species are largely aquatic throughout the year. Amphibians are pioneer species and are often among the first species to colonise new areas of standing water. They are an important link in the freshwater food web, notably as a primary food source for the grass snake *Natrix natrix*, and large waders such as the grey heron *Ardea cinerea*, as well as their larvae providing prey for the larger carnivorous invertebrates.

All four species are widespread in the UK. Within Wales there is some geographical variation, with the common toad and palmate newt most common in the west and the smooth newt more numerous in the east. The common frog is widespread over all but the highest parts of Wales.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

All four species are widespread within the county borough. Based on casual observations, however, it is probable that populations are becoming more fragmented and localised. In particular, the common toad seems to have suffered a significant decline.

A list of SINC sites in the county borough⁸, which could have populations of the various amphibian species, is given below (see **Map 1.1**):

3: **Tair Carreg Moor**; 6: **Mile End Pond**; 9: **Cefn Gelligaer**; 25: **Hafodrisclawdd**; 43: **Pentwyn Fields**; 44: **Princetown Meadows**; 52: **Cefn Hengoed Hillside**; 61: **Valentec Nature Reserve** (breeding common frog on this site); 74: **Nelson Ponds** (all 3 newt species known on this site); 87: **Upper Trelyn Marsh**; 101: **Pant-Ysgawen Fields**; 115: **Pwllgwinau** (all 3 species of newt present); 126: **Maesycwmmwr Meadows**; 131: **Twyn Yr Oerfel**; 140: **Coedcae Newydd**; 151: **Twmbarlwm**; 162: **Coed y Brain**; 183: **Coed Cefn-Pwll-Du** (breeding amphibians); 188: **Ty-Melyn Coppice** (breeding amphibians)

2.3 Links with Habitats

As already stated, these species all depend to some degree on the areas surrounding ponds. The habitat statement for wetlands should take account of any management proposals which may affect amphibians. The habitat statements for grassland and wet woodland will also be applicable in certain locations.

- **Wetlands** (ponds, etc)
- *Deciduous Woodlands* (wet woodland)
- *Wildlife Corridors* (hedgerows)
- *Species-rich Grasslands* (rhos pasture)
- *Common Land*
- *Post-Industrial Land*
- *Urban Habitats* (domestic gardens, unused industrial sites, public parks)

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Farming practices causing loss or fragmentation of fresh water habitats due to infill or drainage.
- Pollution, particularly of watercourses.
- Road construction across migration routes between breeding ponds and terrestrial habitats causing high seasonal mortality rates.
- Urban development of habitats.

- Introduction to/colonisation of ponds by predators such as ducks and fish.
- Past practices of collecting specimens for educational purposes.
- Possible localised predation by domestic cats.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 In the CCBC Countryside Strategy, wetlands are recognised as particularly important and the creation of new habitat is to be encouraged⁷. This policy will obviously benefit amphibian populations within the borough, although at present no specific management has been carried out.
- 4.2 Several ponds have been designated as SINCs in the county borough⁸.
- 4.3 New ponds and wetlands have been created at Penallta Country Park and Bargoed Country Park.
- 4.4 Hengoed Primary School and Nelson Infants school have created new ponds in their school grounds.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

Not applicable to these species.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

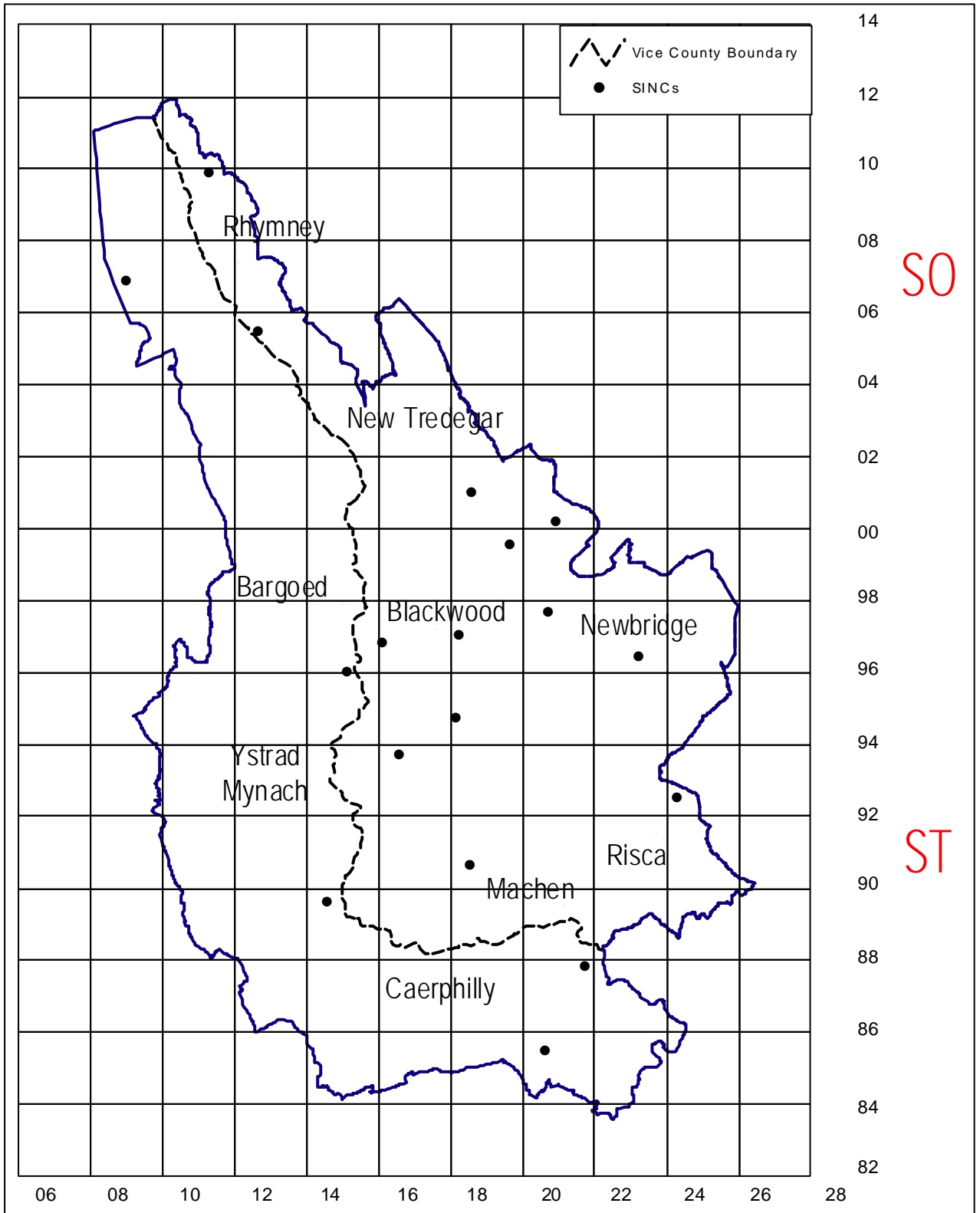
- 5.2.1 Halt probable decline of these species. (Target: 2005)
- 5.2.2 Increase both the quality and number of suitable wetland habitats. (Target: 2008)

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.1 Ensure Policies and Strategies do not adversely affect existing breeding populations.	CCBC	CCW NAWAD	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.2 Ensure freshwater habitats receive full consideration when reviewing agri-environment schemes.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.3 Be aware of the importance of pond sites when considering planning applications.	CCBC	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Prevent the loss or degradation of existing breeding sites.	CCBC	GWT GLWT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Consider the construction of amphibian underpasses, where possible, particularly on roads with a high mortality rate.	CCBC	CCW	✓								✓
6.3.2 Erect temporary signs on roads known to be subject to amphibian mortalities and encourage local groups to transport amphibians safely to their ponds at critical migration times.	CCBC	CCW	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Raise the awareness of landowners and managers in relation to the importance of healthy pond habitats and, in particular, the problem of pollution of watercourses.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Encourage the monitoring of known sites in order to determine the rate of decline, if any, of these species. In particular, try to ascertain the present breeding status of the common toad.	CCBC	GWT GLWT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.5.2 Set up a county borough database for amphibians.	CCBC	-		✓							
6.5.3 Target schools throughout the county borough to encourage young people to report amphibian breeding sites by setting up, for example, a 'Frog Watch' project.	CCBC	GWT GLWT			✓	✓					
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Organise events and publicity to highlight the importance of amphibians in the ecosystem, and their dependence on clean ponds.	CBP	-	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓

MAP 1.1 - AMPHIBIANS



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Atgynhychwyd o fapiad yr Arolwg Ordnans gyda chaniatad rheolwr Llyfrfa ei Mawrhydi hawlfraint y Goron. Mae atgynhychu heb awdurdod yn torri hawlfraint y Goron. Gall hyn arwain at erlyniad neu achos sfiil. Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Caerffili, LA09004L, 2001.

GREAT CRESTED NEWT *TRITURUS CRISTATUS* SPECIES ACTION PLAN

1. INTRODUCTION

The great crested newt is a species of national conservation concern, and is a Priority Species in the UKBAP³⁹. Its presence within Caerphilly county borough therefore makes it a species of particular local concern.

Relevant Legislation/Species Status	
priority species (P) or species of conservation concern (S)	P
EC Habitats and Species Directive	Annex I Ia, IVa
Conservation Regulations 1994	Schedule 2
Berne Convention 1982	Appendix II
Bonn Convention 1979	-
CI TES 1975	-
WCA 1981	Schedules 5, 9
IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals 1994	lower risk - conservation dependent



great-crested newt © CCBC 2002

2. CURRENT STATUS

2.1 UK and Wales

The great crested newt is found throughout the UK, although it is restricted in Scotland, possibly by topography. Within Wales it is found in greatest numbers in the north, and is apparently absent from the west. The species is limited to lowland habitats due to its requirement of slow or still water, rather than the altitude. Although widely distributed, populations have declined during the past few decades throughout Europe, including Britain. Habitat loss has been the major factor in this, with many farm ponds being drained or 'choked' with vegetation. Old flooded quarry sites are often re-developed leading to local extinctions, while water pollution, particularly from certain agricultural chemicals, has also had an impact. Losses have been compensated in some instances through the colonisation of newly created pools and other water bodies.

Terrestrial habitat is critical to great crested newts. They require cover and invertebrate prey, usually provided by rough grassland and/or other semi-natural areas. Refuges such as logs, loose rock or dry stone walls provide both resting and hibernation sites. Great crested newts require substantial amounts of land to support a viable population, one hectare of good habitat supporting 250 adults. There is some evidence that areas once used for human activities ("brownfield" sites) are particularly attractive to great crested newts³.

The great crested newt is the most terrestrial of the UK newt species, only returning to ponds between March and July to breed. The rest of the year is spent in neighbouring habitats such as hedges and rough grassland. The adults are dark brown or black with an orange belly, and with their warty skin are easily distinguished from other newt species. During the breeding season the male develops conspicuous jagged crests on the back and tail, and at up to 17cm long, is the largest European newt.

The UK government has an obligation to notify Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) to protect sites of particular importance for this species.

2.2 Caerphilly County Borough

The habitat losses adversely affecting other amphibians are also likely to contribute to the decline of this species. However, there is a lack of confirmed data concerning the occurrence of the great crested newt in the county borough. There seems to be an increase in the number of sightings in recent years, although this is anecdotal and may reflect the increased profile this amphibian has received. It is sometimes the case that sightings mis-identified smooth newts in breeding condition, but conversely the terrestrial adults have, on occasions, been mistaken for lizards.

The possible affinity of this species to derelict urban land could be of significance in the post-industrial areas of the borough. At present there are two SINCS sites within the county borough where great crested newts are present⁸ (see **Map 1.2**): 115 **Pwll-Gwinau**, East of Newbridge and 74 **Nelson Pond**, Tredomen (all three newt species). Other sites include Halt Pond near Rudry and a disused quarry near Wyllie, Pontllanfraith, which have confirmed populations of the great-crested newt; two sites yet to be confirmed are Harry's Hill (south end), Aberbargoed (cSAC, SSSI and SINCS), and a garden pond at 119 Victoria Road, Fleur-de-Lys.

2.3 Links with Habitats

- **Wetlands**
- *Deciduous Woodlands* (wet woodland)
- **Wildlife Corridors** (hedgerows, dry stone walls)
- **Species-rich Grasslands**
- *Post-Industrial Land*
- **Urban Habitats** (unused industrial sites)

3. CURRENT FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES

- Loss of breeding ponds due to infilling or drainage.
- Pollution of watercourses.
- Urban and agricultural developments leading to loss or fragmentation of terrestrial habitat.
- Introduction of/colonisation by predators, such as ducks and fish.
- Possible locally high rates of predation by domestic cats.

4. CURRENT ACTION

- 4.1 The UK SAP for this species was published in 1998. As part of Froglife's Common Species Project, the project officer assists with the development of local interested groups, as well as supporting survey and conservation work.
- 4.2 Within the county borough, a number of great crested newt sites are already designated as SINCS.

4.3 The profile of this important species has been raised in recent years.

5. OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

5.1 UK Objectives and Targets

5.1.1 Where feasible, restore populations to 100 unoccupied sites each year, for the next five years, creating new ponds and managing habitat where necessary.

5.1.2 Maintain the range, distribution and viability of existing great crested newt populations.

5.2 Caerphilly Objectives and Targets

5.2.1 Maintain the range, distribution and viability of known great crested newt populations (Target: ongoing).

5.2.2 Survey and map as many suitable habitats as possible to ascertain the presence of this species (Target: 2005).

5.2.3 Make use of any opportunities to increase the number of great crested newt colonies within the borough e.g. school grounds developments, pond renovation projects, etc. (Target: ongoing).

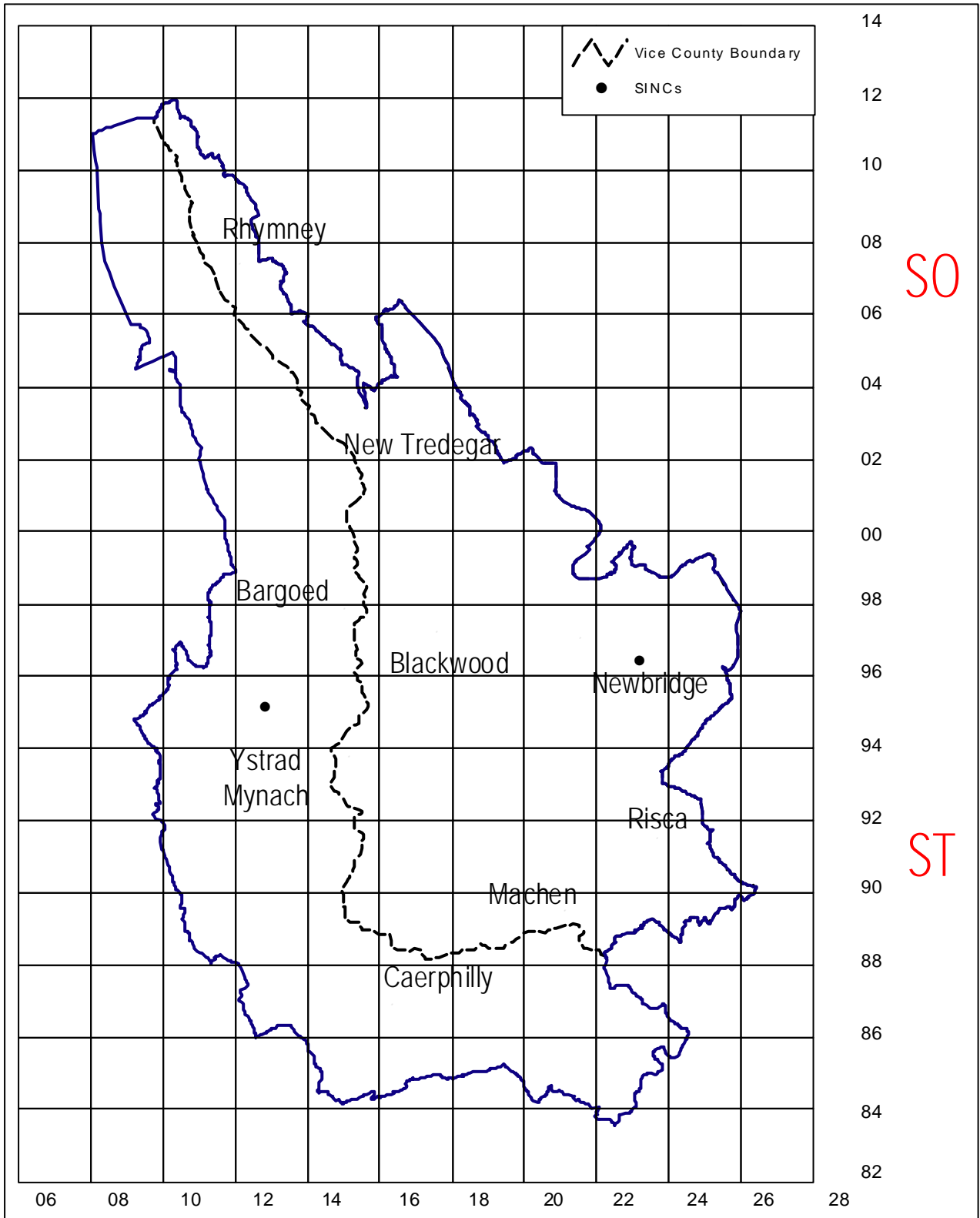
5.2.4 Raise the profile of this nationally important species among the general public and landowners, managers and planners, through talks, activities, events, etc. (Target: programme in place by 2005 and then ongoing).

6. ACTION AND KEY PARTNERS

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.1 Policy and Legislation											
6.1.1 All ponds known to contain great crested newts should be recorded to allow adequate assessment of environmental impact of any new developments.	CCW	CCBC EA NMGW		✓							
6.1.2 Seek to designate key great crested newt sites as SINCC, ensuring all surrounding areas used for forage and shelter are included, with possible upgrade to SSSI status as suggested in the UK BAP.	CCBC	CCW									✓
6.1.3 Ensure agri-environment schemes such as Tir Gofal, include provisions for this species.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.1.4 Promote training and licensing of those involved in practical management of associated habitats/sites	CCW	CCBC		✓		✓		✓		✓	
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management											
6.2.1 Promote favourable management on all sites.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Action	Key Partners		Year to be complete or in place by								
	Lead	Partners	2003	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
6.2 Site Safeguard and Management (continued)											
6.2.2 Create new habitats where feasible, prioritising sites near or adjacent to existing populations.	CCBC	Gwk		✓				✓			
6.2.3 Where habitat loss is unavoidable ensure sufficient and adequate replacement habitat is provided.	CCBC	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3 Species Management and Protection											
6.3.1 Promote population enhancement through active management and encourage natural dispersal of the species. Control or remove predators from key sites where feasible and relocate specimens where unavoidable habitat loss occurs.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.3.2 Ensure that any development in the vicinity of suitable areas of fresh water take into account the possible presence of this species, and other relevant action plans are considered.	CCW	CCBC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.4 Advisory											
6.4.1 Provide information to all concerned parties regarding the identification, legal obligations, habitat requirements and management of the species.	CCW	CCBC GWT GLWT		✓							
6.5 Future Research and Monitoring											
6.5.1 Organise and encourage further survey work to identify, and map, breeding sites within the county borough.	CCW	CCBC GWT GLWT	✓		✓						
6.5.2 Pass data gathered to the national bodies to be incorporated into a national database for this species.	CBP	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6 Communications and Publicity											
6.6.1 Liaise with local conservation groups such as wildlife trust watch groups, etc. to improve information gathering.	CBP		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.6.2 Promote a wider and more sympathetic understanding of amphibian conservation through appropriate publicity and media opportunities.	CBP		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

MAP 1.2 - GREAT CRESTED NEWT



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