

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
10th October 2019**

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Heulwen Hulme, Portfolio Holder for Environment

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Elwyn Vaughan

What is the portfolio holder's proposed action following the independent report obtained by Abermule residents which suggest that the ecology survey undertaken by PCC was both sub-standard and not in accordance with good practice or the legislation and that consequently the presence of great crested newts on site cannot be properly discounted? Specifically, will the portfolio holder offer categoric assurance that no works will commence on site until the legislation in this respect has been fully complied with?

Response

The ecology mitigation scheme is being undertaken in line with 2001 best practice and in full compliance with the development licence issued for the site by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The initial great crested newt trapping exercise was undertaken in October and November 2018, which was subsequently approved and signed off by NRW. This is an ongoing process, the next phase of which is the supervised search and clearance of habitat within the site immediately prior to commencement of works to ensure that the site is clear of newts.

The independent report provided by the community group was a desktop exercise with no site visits undertaken by the ecologist and based on information submitted by the group, which does raise the issue of impartiality. The consultant used by the Council is recognised as a professional company and undertakes ecological and biodiversity projects throughout the UK. They have certified environmental and quality management systems and use qualified, experienced ecologists. NRW have since met the community group and have confirmed to us that they (NRW) are happy with our approach.

We can therefore confirm that all legislation has been, and will be, fully complied with both prior to and during construction.