

Advisory note:

## Dry-stone wall restoration

Good practice for sites with amphibians or close to amphibian habitat

---

### Why do amphibians use walls?

Walls can provide a valuable habitat for amphibians throughout the year. In the summer and autumn walls can be ideal places for feeding and resting, and in the winter amphibians might use walls to hibernate in. In spring and early summer, most amphibians return to their breeding ponds. Walls that are typically used are close to wet land, ponds, ditches and areas rich in their invertebrate food.



### How does wall restoration affect amphibians?

Wall restoration has the potential to harm individual animals, disturb them or destroy their habitat. A sensitive approach to any restoration work can minimise the impacts on amphibians.

### Which amphibians might I find?

You might find smooth newts, palmate newts or great crested newts. It is an **offence** to kill, injure, capture or disturb great crested newts, and to damage or destroy their habitat.

Toads and frogs can be present throughout the year. Toads are biodiversity priority species because of recent declines in their populations.



© Chris Monk

Great crested newt in a dry-stone wall



Toad *Bufo bufo*



Frog *Rana temporaria*

# Dry-stone wall restoration

## How do I restore a wall that might have amphibians?

- ◆ Avoid working in winter (November to February inclusive) when amphibians might be hibernating.
- ◆ Restore the wall in short sections of about 10 metres to limit disturbance. Re-built sections can then provide habitat for any displaced amphibians.
- ◆ Check the current worked-on section of wall each day when you return to site.
- ◆ Any amphibians found during dismantling or rebuilding can be carefully removed to a safe, sheltered place at the base of a wall that is close to but not next to the section you are working on.
- ◆ Amphibians found during winter will probably be torpid and may appear lifeless. Take particular care to find somewhere safe where they are protected and can carry on hibernating until spring.



### Dismantling the wall

- ◆ Using your fingertips, check the ground in front of the wall for any amphibians, especially where there will be heavy footfall or where stone and equipment will be stored.
- ◆ Carefully take down the wall **by hand**, checking all gaps and crevices.

### Rebuilding the wall

- ◆ Check the footings and restoration surface for amphibians.
- ◆ Leave gaps close to the base so amphibians can get back in and re-use the wall.