

## **AMPHIBIANS ON WOOLSTON No.1 BED 2006**

As part of a development on No.1 Bed by the landowner, Peel Holdings, a programme of trapping amphibians took place in the autumn.

Although it had been known for some time that nationally important numbers of Frogs and Toads were present on the bed, there had never been any indication that the Great Crested or Smooth Newt populations were of any significance: 'bottle trapping' in recent years had never found more than 20 – 30 Great Crested Newts in the pools on No.1 Bed.

A large number of 'pit fall' traps (up to 800) were placed across the bed alongside newt fencing, which directed the newts, frogs and toads toward the traps. Between the 1<sup>st</sup> October and 10<sup>th</sup> November these were checked daily and the number of amphibians found totalled an amazing 10,648.

The number of Great Crested Newts was phenomenal and is believed to be one of the highest ever found at one site in the United Kingdom. The totals for the four amphibian species are: Great Crested Newt 3,276, Smooth Newt 2,162, Frog 1,815 and Toad 3,395.

Placing these figures in context, any number of Great Crested Newts in excess of 50 is considered to be exceptional, while the qualifying level for an exceptional population of Smooth Newts is 100, for Toads 1000 and for Frogs 500.

Natural England (the successor to English Nature) advise that based on these astonishing populations No.1 Bed would qualify for SSSI designation on amphibians alone.

WECG and Natural England are working with the Peel Holdings to ensure that habitat is maintained – and even enhanced – for these nationally important numbers of amphibians.

**Brian Martin**