

Method Statement in support of a Water Vole licence application

Please provide information in support of your application following the structure and guidance below.

Please ensure that any maps or drawings included are legible. If necessary, please provide them in a separate Annex.

For applications for Scientific Research, please also complete the Project Plan at Section 8.

1. Background information

- Name of applicant and ecologist.
- Date of Method Statement
- Site name (include county) and OS Grid reference e.g. AB 123456 (start and end points for linear schemes).
- Scaled map to show location of works in relation to the local area.
- Description of proposed works likely to impact on water voles (e.g. re-profiling water course banks, housing development, installation of a culvert).
- Purpose of the works - describe briefly and link to licensing purposes: e.g. conserving wild animals (for development); preserving public health and safety; preventing serious damage to livestock, foodstuffs for livestock, crops, vegetables, fruit, growing timber or any other form of property or to fisheries; conserving wild animals or wild plants or introducing them to particular areas.
- Proposed licensable activity/ies (e.g. trapping, displacement).
- Planning status – if appropriate (to include reference no. and confirmation that reserved matters agreed). Please be aware that Natural England will not normally issue a licence until full Planning Permission (if required) has been granted.
- Agreement to comply with good practice as set out in the current edition of the Water Vole Conservation Handbook (and most recent revision)¹.

2. Site information and survey

Please use photographs and diagrams as appropriate.

- Description of site location and habitats (including surrounding habitats).
- Please confirm that you have visited the site.
- Survey effort and methodology, to include: information from the local Biological Records Centre (if available), the area surveyed, survey date/s, experience of surveyors, weather, timing, field signs surveyed, constraints.
- Survey results, to include: status of the local population, assessment of habitat quality, estimate of population size to be affected, evidence of predators. Detailed results to be provided in an Annex if appropriate.
- Provide justification if the survey is not in line with current guidance (e.g. where only one survey has been undertaken).
- Attach an appropriately scaled map(s) of the survey area - showing habitats and field signs.

Please remember to submit your survey data to the Local Biological Records Centre

3. Impact assessment (before mitigation or compensation)

¹ See: Water Vole Conservation Handbook (3rd Edition (2011). Strachan, R., Moorhouse, T. & Gelling, M; University of Oxford; also: <http://www.mammal.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/Water%20Vole%20Mitigation%20Guidance.pdf> for Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016); *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook for Development and Other Construction Activities*. Eds. Fiona Mathews & Paul Chanin.

- Quantity and type of habitat temporarily or permanently damaged and /or temporarily or permanently lost.
- Identify short and long term impacts on water voles (if appropriate, including those post development) e.g. loss of water vole habitat, fragmentation, mortality, pollution, disturbance, increased predation.
- Attach a scaled map to show impacts.

4. **Mitigation strategy**

- Describe how each impact will be avoided/minimised. Provide scaled maps to illustrate as appropriate.
- Justify the methods to be used. Methods should be appropriate to the situation and proportionate to the impacts. Provide justification if actions are being proposed outside of the recommended guidelines.
- Where water vole fencing is being used, describe its design and location, supported by a scaled map showing where it will be located.
- **Displacement**
 - State where and how this will be undertaken (confirm best practice will be followed) and give timings and distances of bank involved.
 - Confirm the availability of adjacent suitable habitat into which water voles can be displaced (provide location, size and information on features that make it suitable for water voles).
 - Provide justification if actions are being proposed outside of the recommended guidelines.
- **Trapping**
 - State where and how this will be undertaken (confirm best practice will be followed) and give timings and distances involved.
 - Provide justification if actions (including the use of non-standard equipment) are being proposed outside of the recommended guidelines.
 - Describe biosecurity measures taken (e.g. equipment and clothing).
- **Release**
 - Every effort should be made to retain water voles within their original home range or site. Proposals to permanently relocate water voles away from their original site must be justified.
 - Provide the release site location (including grid reference), distance from capture site, site ownership and any site designation.
 - Provide survey details of the release site, including methodology, habitats and presence of predators, site management, and confirmation that the site has capacity to receive the water voles.
 - Confirm that landowner's permission (if required) has been obtained to release water voles.
 - Provide the date(s) of release.
 - Provide justification if actions (including the use of non-standard equipment) are being proposed outside of the recommended guidelines.
 - Where translocation off site is being proposed, please provide the following information:
 - justification /evidence to show there is nowhere suitable on site or nearby.
 - confirmation that this is suitable habitat (including predator status)
 - confirmation that the water voles to be released comprise a Minimum Viable Population (at least 100 individuals at peak breeding season, or 30-50 individuals at the beginning of the breeding season, occupying approximately 1.5-2km length of good quality habit)
 - connectivity to other water vole populations

- Provide a Disease Risk Management plan for release of water voles outside of the catchment/water course or >3km from donor site (whichever is the nearer), also for water voles being released from captivity.
- Include a map showing the location of the receptor site in relation to the donor site and in particular showing connectivity to other areas of suitable water vole habitat.
- **Taking into Captivity**
 - Justify the need to hold water voles captive.
 - Provide details of the holding facility (e.g. location, type of accommodation, disease screening protocols)
 - Duration of captivity (including approximate dates)
 - If captive arrangements do not comply with best practice guidance, please provide justification.

5. Compensation

- **Habitat creation**
 - Describe what habitat will be created (extent and type), highlighting suitability for water voles (include photographs as appropriate)
 - Location and grid ref., and distance from affected site.
 - Quantify amount of habitat created/enhanced in relation to impacts (e.g. habitat lost).
 - Note that for 'conservation' applications in relation to development there must be a local conservation benefit for water voles. Provide justification if this cannot be achieved.
 - For other licensing purposes, confirm that any permanent habitat loss is sufficiently compensated for to demonstrate no net loss. Provide justification if this cannot be achieved.
- **Other conservation benefit** (e.g. additional connectivity, predator control). Provide details (e.g. as appropriate - location, quantity, size, methodology, duration) and justification.
- Where appropriate confirm that landowner's permission has been obtained.

6. Monitoring and management

- Describe and justify what monitoring will be carried out and when.
 - If applicable, provide information on the long term security of the site for water voles.

7. Timetable

- Provide start and finish dates of all proposed activities and works. Where appropriate, allow flexibility for delays.
- Include works to be undertaken before the licence period (e.g. habitat creation, maintaining vegetation until works commence)

8. Project Plan for Scientific Research

- **Introduction:**
 - What is the research question/ need for research?
 - Confirm that a literature search been undertaken to confirm the evidence gap
- **Aims and objectives of research**
- **Methodology**
 - Methods to be used, timing, locations,
 - How will risks/impacts to water voles be minimised?
 - Do you need a Home Office Licence for your work?

- If yes, please confirm that a licence has been obtained and give details.

- **How will the project benefit water voles?**

- Provide information on the expected outcomes of the project and their application

- **Wider scientific context**

- Have you consulted with anyone in Natural England? if yes, please give details.

- How will the results/ information be used/shared?