

## **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)<sup>1</sup>.

### **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)**

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<sup>1</sup> See: Water Vole Conservation Handbook (3<sup>rd</sup> 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?