



## THE ECOLOGY EXPERTS

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## Otter/Water Vole Surveys

Both otter and water vole are protected by UK and EU legislation. It is an offence to intentionally capture, kill, disturb or injure otters or water voles; damage, destroy or block access to their breeding and resting places or places of shelter; or possess, sell, control or transport live or dead animals or parts of them.

### Why do I need an Otter/Water Vole survey?

A risk assessment is conducted as part of the [Preliminary Ecological Appraisal \(PEA\)](#), which will determine if the habitats on or adjacent to the site are suitable for otter or water vole. This relies on the site containing

or located in close proximity to a river, brook, stream or established ditch that may support the needs of these two species. From the risk assessment, the requirement for further survey work can be established.

## **What does an Otter/Water Vole survey involve?**

Both species are elusive and therefore rarely seen directly during a survey, instead surveys record field signs of each species; such as burrows/ holts, resting places, droppings/ spraint and prints. Otters can be surveyed all year round (although often better in autumn and winter when the vegetation is suppressed), whilst water vole can be surveyed during the period April to October. Surveys may require repeat visits to ensure all field signs are recorded/ to ensure field signs are not missed.

There are links below to the relevant Natural England guidance pages for reference, however, please feel free to get in contact to discuss surveys for otter and water vole further..

## **Otter or Water Vole nearby – the next steps**

Avoidance measures are always the first consideration to prevent impacts to otter or water vole and their habitats. This may require review and modification of the development design, with the implementation of appropriate mitigation and compensation. Where impacts cannot be avoided, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence is required from Natural England, which includes a Method Statement that demonstrates how the proposed works will be conducted to prevent direct harm to otter or water vole (mitigation). The EPS licence will also summarise any compensation measures that are required in order to maintain the current habitat value for otter or water vole. Our team is experienced in otter and water vole ecology and are here to help you with your project. Please feel free to get in contact to discuss further, we are happy to provide free advice and guidance.

## **Useful Links**

- [Otters: surveys and mitigation for development projects, Natural England](#)
- [Water voles: surveys and mitigation for development projects, Natural England](#)