

## Water Vole Action Plan

### Introduction and Vision Statement

The water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) is a small semi-aquatic rodent that inhabits a range of freshwater habitats, including rivers, streams, ditches, canals, lakes and ponds. It uses burrows and therefore favours sites with fairly steep banks into which it can dig its characteristic network of burrows. It also favours sites with luxuriant bankside vegetation, as these provide ample food for its vegetarian diet and provide shelter from predation. Once common the water vole has suffered a catastrophic decline in recent times, chiefly through habitat loss and degradation and predation by the introduced American mink.



The water vole in Carmarthenshire was once much more widespread but its present day distribution is highly localised, the main populations being found on the Llanelli levels including the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust at Penclacwydd – this is now one of 17 ‘Key Sites’ (as identified by the Environment Agency) for water voles in the UK. There is also another significant population in the Laugharne–Pendine area. Small isolated populations may exist in other isolated areas with suitable habitat. There may be potential for improving ditch systems in the Lower Gwendraeth Valley for this species.

Continued development in the Llanelli area threatens this important mammal around one of its key sites and continued isolation will have a detrimental effect in the long-term. Developments in the Llanelli levels area should seek to incorporate water vole habitat and to adequately mitigate/compensate/enhance as part of any planning application that may affect the water vole habitat.

Conservation of water voles in the long-term requires a landscape scale approach involving many different partners. A major objective for water voles is to enhance and create suitable habitat to re-establish links within its range along the coastal floodplains and restore water vole populations to these areas. Survey effort is required to establish if there are other populations within the county that have yet to be recorded.

### Action Plan Objectives

**WV1SP** To maintain and increase the range and population of water voles in Carmarthenshire

- WV2DCM** To gather data on the distribution and status of water voles in Carmarthenshire.
- WV3RA** To raise awareness of the importance of water voles in Carmarthenshire and provide advice on habitat management.
- WV4POL** To ensure that water vole conservation issues are recognised and incorporated in all relevant plans and policies that affect the coastal floodplain area and other potential water vole habitat

**Actions**  
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CODE	TEXT	START/ END DATE	Lead partner/s	Action goal	Key partners	Funding	Priority L,M,H	Report Jan–Dec 2010	Report Jan–Dec 2011
WV1SP1	Investigate mink trapping at key sites in Llanelli area	2010– 2015	EAW	Feasibility report produced	CCW Swansea Uni WWT	✓	M	Not started	
WV1SP2	Investigate and identify suitable relocation sites in Carmarthenshire	2010– 2015	EAW	Relocation site map produced	CCW		M	Not started	
WV1SP3	Write a management plan for Morfa Berwick water vole site, Berwick (SN544987)	2010– 2011	LWAG	Management plan produced			M	Not started – year by year plan written.	
WV1SP4	Engage with QinetiC (MoD site) in Pendine (SN260082) and Ragworm Farm (SN272084) to implement sympathetic management of all ditches on their site and seek opportunities for enhancement.	2010– 2015	EAW	Management plan produced	CCW		H	No specific progress in 2010. Will seek to progress in 2011.	
WV2DCM1	Identify key upland and lowland areas within the Carmarthenshire that require survey for water vole	2010– 2015	EAW	Survey map produced			H	Not started	
WV2DCM2	Continue survey and monitoring of Morfa Berwig Water Vole project site (SN544987)	2010– 2015	Swansea University	Annual survey report produced	CCC		H	No action in 2010	
WV2DCM3	Identify key areas for survey within Llanelli levels	2010– 2015	LWAG	Survey map produced			H	Not started	
WV2DCM4	Undertake a WV habitat fragmentation study of the Llanelli levels and identify areas where connectivity can be improved (SS522988)	2010– 2012	LWAG	Report produced	Contractor Landowners	✓	H	Not started – waiting for funding	
WV2DCM5	From the fragmentation study create a GIS layer to inform planning and indicate opportunities for enhancement	2010– 2012	LWAG	GIS layer produced	CCC WWBIC		H	Not started – waiting for funding	
WV2DCM6	Maintain a GIS layer of all WV records within the county	2010– 2015	WWBIC	GIS layer produced			H		
WV3RA1	Provide information and advice on water vole conservation and habitat management to key groups including landowners, river users and developers.	2010– 2015	EAW	Info sheet produced	CCW CCC		H	Ongoing as part of day job and general consultations. Example would be EAW input to the Machynys East development.	
WV3RA2	Raise public awareness of water vole through regular PRs, and article in biodiversity newsletter	2010– 2015	CCC	PR Item in newsletter			M	Regular items in Biodiversity newsletter.	
WV3RA3	Undertake training day with CCC Streetscene/Flood defence/Bridges/pest	2009– 2010	CCC	At least two training	EAW (17/03/09)		M	Training took place on 17/03/09.	

	control officers on water voles			events undertaken						
<b>WV2DCM7</b>	Assess impacts of agri-environment schemes on WV populations	2010– 2012	WAG,	??	WTSWW		H			
<b>WV4POL1</b>	Require water vole survey, together with suitable mitigation/compensation/enhancement for all <u>development proposals</u> affecting, or potentially affecting, water vole and their habitat	2010– ongoing	CCC	100% relevant proposals			M	100% Ongoing applications – S/19474 Habitat Mgt Plan required for application W/22826.		
<b>WV4POL2</b>	Identify water vole conservation, including the maintenance/creation of suitable bankside habitat as a key objective in any <u>operations undertaken by the council</u> affecting actual/potential water vole habitat	2010– ongoing	CCC	100% relevant plans/projects			M	Conservation section consulted on ditch management in the Llanelli area undertaken by CCC.		
<b>WV4POL3</b>	Identify critical areas of water vole habitat, especially breeding sites and consider designation as SINC – prioritising sites within settlement limits	2010– 2015	CCC LWAG	cSINC map produced			H	Not started.		