

Witham and Humber Internal Drainage Boards Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*) Policy

This policy has been drawn up to help protect and enhance the water vole habitats and population associated with the 4 Boards' land and the drainage channels in the Upper Witham, Witham First District, Witham Third District and North East Lindsey Internal Drainage Board areas.

The policy is to:

- Carry out all essential or emergency work as required under current legislation with special reference to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and future updates or amendments.
- Follow the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 when undertaking all works, ensuring that all works have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing biodiversity.
- Follow the National Guidance for Internal Drainage Boards "Mitigating Measures For Water Voles" and The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook.
- Promote the enhancement of the channel environment where practical and cost effective to benefit water vole.

Avoid or reduce impact by taking reasonable and practical steps in the planning and implementation of maintenance and re-profiling work as follows:

- Wherever possible, carrying out work to coincide with water voles at less sensitive times of year.
- Carrying out periodic surveys, by a competent person or body, prior to proposed re-profiling works to determine best practice for each individual channel.
- Working from one bank unless **essential** for bank stability or other vital channel management.
- Restricting channel works to less than two months duration at any one time unless unavoidable.
- Only using mitigating measures such as trapping or habitat recreation after other options have been fully investigated and it is the only practical solution.
- Avoiding the use of hard revetment along the toe of the banks but, where essential, incorporate access holes and / or berms to provide water vole niches.
- Avoid the reduction in habitat though losses and fragmentation caused by unnecessary culverting.
- Encourage the Board's staff to report water vole activity, and along with other data, and to make this available to the Lincolnshire Records Centre (part of the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership) via the recording app iRecord.
- Ensure that all Board staff and contractors are aware of, and prepared to work to, this policy.
- Carry out post work surveys to determine the longer-term effects on water voles.