

CARMARTHENSHIRE LBAP WATER VOLE ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*, Llygoden bengron y dwr) 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 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 18 ‘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. There has been a recent new record in the uplands near Ffarmers. Further work is required to establish the extent of the population in this area.

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.

The local planning authority requires that surveys are undertaken to inform the planning/decision making of any plan/project that has the potential to affect water voles as part of their statutory/policy responsibilities. 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.

Vision statement and objectives

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. Any action will seek to meet one or more of the following objectives:

WV1 To maintain and increase the range and population size of water voles in Carmarthenshire

WV2 To gather data on the distribution and status of water voles in Carmarthenshire

WV3 To raise awareness of water voles in Carmarthenshire and provide advice on habitat management

Summary of action achieved by LBAP Partners (for more information contact the biodiversity officer – Biodiversity@carmarthenshire.gov.uk) or visit the national Biodiversity Action Reporting System - <http://ukbars.defra.gov.uk>:

- Management undertaken at Morfa Berwick water vole site – CCC/KWT WV1
- Ponds created and ditches managed at Morfa Berwick water vole site – EAW WV1
- Water vole habitat quality survey carried out within the Llanelli levels‡ - WTSWW/EAW/CCC WV2
- Training sessions for CCC Streetscene/Flood defence/Pest control officers – CCC/EAW WV3
- Articles in local press about water voles in the Llanelli area – CCC WV3
- Surveys/mitigation required for applications that may impact upon water vole habitat – CCC

2013

- Undertake mink trapping in MCP and Pembrey areas – NRW/CCC/WTSWW WV1
- REF-funding secured for water vole officer for key areas in Carms and Ceredigion employed for 12 months – WTSWW WV1
- Water vole tapping project of underweight juveniles for breeding programme – Llanelli - CBP WV1
- Surveys/mitigation required for applications that may impact upon water vole habitat – CCC WV4

2014

- Release project at Ffrwd Farm Nature Reserve, Pembrey. Approx. 200 captive-bred water voles released in August 2014 – NRW, WTSWW, CCC, Vols. WV1
- Mink monitoring and control programme in the Pembrey linked to wider water vole re-introduction project - NRW, WTSWW WV1

2015

- Second release of water voles at Ffrwd Farm NR and Pembrey area – NRW/WTSWW WV1
- Habitat management and mink control in Pembrey area – NRW/BASC/WTSWW WV1
- Investigation of CCC-owned land adjacent to WWT for water voles – signs found WV2
- Met with DC/WW to see if there is potential to enhance WV habitat through their Rainscape project in Bynea area – CCC WV1/3
- Monitoring of water voles at the WWT – National Key Site WV2
- Surveys/mitigation required for applications that may impact upon water vole habitat – CCC

Proposed future action

- Management plan for Morfa Berwig Water Vole site – NRW/CCC WV1
- Investigation suitable habitat around Ffarmers for further WV records WV2
- Training sessions for CCC Streetscene/Flood defence/Pest control officers – CCC/NRW WV3

Legislation

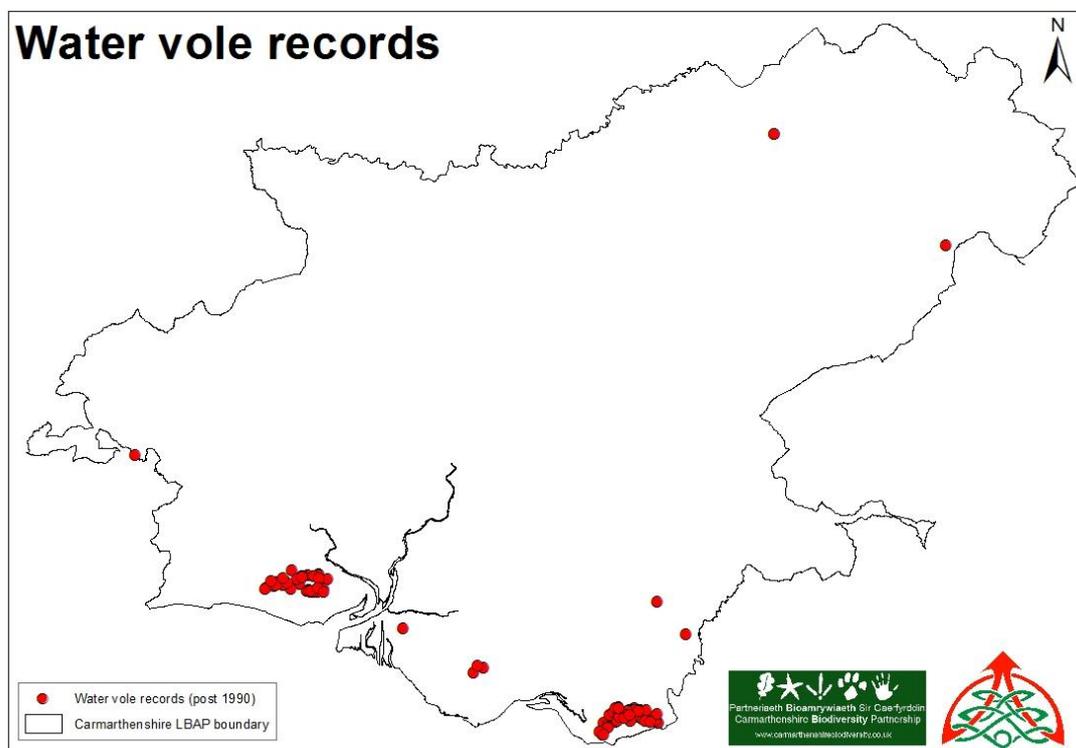
Under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take (capture) a water vole;
- Possess or control a live or dead water vole, or any part of a water vole or anything derived from a water vole;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which a water vole uses for shelter or protection
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a water vole while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection;
- Sell, offer or expose for sale, or have in one's possession or transport for the purpose of sale, any live or dead water voles, or any part of a water vole or anything derived from a water vole;
- Publish any advertisement, or cause any advertisement to be published, which is likely to be understood as conveying that a person buys or sells, or intends to buy or sell, any of the above things.

Useful links

- Wildlife Trusts – [water vole](#)

Immortalised as Ratty in Kenneth Graeme's the Wind in the Willows, water voles were once one of our most familiar mammals. They have figured in folklore for centuries and have many local names, including water rat, water mole, crabber, waterdog, earth-hound and water campagnol.





Partneriaeth Bioamrywiaeth Sir Gaerfyrddin
Carmarthenshire **Biodiversity** Partnership

www.carmarthenshirebiodiversity.co.uk

The [Carmarthenshire Biodiversity Partnership](#) (CBP) is made up of the following organisations: [Carmarthenshire County Council](#) (CCC), [Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales](#) (WTSWW), [Natural Resources Wales](#) (NRW), [RSPB](#), [Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) (WWT), [Carmarthenshire Bird Club](#) (CBC), [National Botanic Gardens Wales](#) (NBGW), [Butterfly Conservation](#) (BC), [Carmarthenshire Rivers Trust](#) (CRT), [National Trust](#) (NT), [Botanical Society of the British Isles](#) (BSBI), [Llanelli Naturalists](#) (LN), [Bat Conservation Trust](#) (BAT), [West Wales Biodiversity Information Centre](#) (WWBIC), [Amphibian and Reptile Conservation](#) (ARC), [Woodland Trust](#) (WT)