



Lowland Derbyshire Water Vole Action Group

2pm 28th September 2006 at Kedleston Hall.

Present

Helen Perkins -Derbyshire Wildlife Trust
Deanne Gow - British Waterways
Charlotte Winnert – Chesterfield Borough Council
Nichola Baker – Chesterfield Borough Council
Carl Hawke – National Trust
Gemma Gregory – Derbyshire County Council
Countryside Service (North Area)
Jo Mosley – Environment Agency

Emma Broad – Environment Agency
Leon Hayward – BTCV
Andy Pollock – Derbyshire Countryside Service
(West Area)
Donna Booth – Creswell Heritage Trust
Jim Anderson – Creswell Heritage Trust
Debbie Court – LBAP Partnership (Note taker)

Apologies

Bev Rhodes (Derby City Council), Andy Warren (Severn Trent Water), Ben Young (Severn Trent Water), Dan Abrahams (English Nature) and Philip Precey (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust).

Helen Perkins welcomed everyone to the inaugural Lowland Derbyshire Water Vole meeting. The Species Action Plan was finalised earlier in the year and the meeting has been arranged to keep the momentum going towards achieving the targets and actions in the plan. The Peak District LBAP has an active water vole action group which meets twice a year, once inside and once on a suitable site. There is a possibility of having the site visit as a joint meeting between the Lowland Derbyshire and Peak District action groups.

National Update

The Wildlife Trusts have a national water vole steering group and a representative from this attends the UK water vole steering group meetings.

Rob Strachan and Tom Moorhouse have written a new update of the water vole handbook. This will cover best practice for water vole action and mitigation. (Update –the book is now available see <http://www.wildcru.org/aboutus/publications/reports.htm>)

Helen and Debbie to send round an e-mail when this is available.

Action DC/HP

Practical difficulties over licensing arrangements have delayed the inclusion of the water vole in the quinquennial review of the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Further discussions are needed at the national level to take this forward. Meanwhile in Scotland the water vole has not received full protection.

The 'Know your Vole' leaflet aimed at pest control officers etc is to be re-done in the near future – current leaflet is available at <http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/files/uploaded/knowyourvole.pdf>.

The Wildlife Trusts are looking at ways of designating local and regional key sites for water voles.

Partner Updates

British Waterways – Helen and Deanne surveyed the Erewash Canal this summer by boat. There are good signs of water vole along most of the canal. Mink have been sighted at Trent Lock. Mink rafts have been put out but so far only water vole signs have been seen on them.

National Trust – Carl is currently working on a regional strategy for water voles on National Trust properties. Although there were historic records from Calke, Sudbury and Kedleston, Hardwick is the only property now with water voles in the Lowland Derbyshire LBAP area. There are probably 3 populations centred on Row Ponds and Stainsby Mill pond. At Stainsby they have cut back vegetation to expose the banks. There is a proposal to restore the Mill pond which is linked with the M1 widening. They are also looking into the possibility of a water vole re-introduction to Kedleston.

Chesterfield Borough Council - The water vole is one of the priority species within the Chesterfield Greenprint and Helen Perkins has carried out site surveys on specific sites. This has confirmed the presence of 2 strong populations, one at Poolsbrook and one along the Chesterfield Canal. The Council are working with anglers at

Ringwood Lake. A mink raft has been placed out in the Borough but so far there have no signs of mink using the raft.

Derbyshire County Council – Chesterfield Canal – Gemma reported that a student undertook a project looking at public awareness of water vole issues along the Chesterfield Canal. This revealed that most of the people were aware of water voles along the canal and issues facing them.

Derbyshire County Council – Cromford Canal – Andy reported that they now had a healthy population along the canal following a crash in 2000-1. They are also aware of mink on the canal but the recently installed mink raft had remaining footprint free so far. They still get a good number of reports of water vole from the public and enjoy good local publicity. John Keeling, a local wildlife cameraman, has had a 10 minute film of water voles on the Cromford Canal on the BBC recently. Helen Perkins has a dvd with extra footage from John Keeling not used in the BBC film. If anyone wants to borrow it, they should contact Helen.

Environment Agency – Lower Trent – Jo Mosley reported that she was keen to fund any water vole projects on main rivers. If they have any ideas contact Jo.

Environment Agency – Upper Trent – Emma reported that they have been working with DWT on mink control on the River Dove and Henmore Brook. The Agency aim to survey Henmore Brook next year.

BTCV – Staff and volunteers had carried out 8 practical days clearing vegetation to keep open channels on the Bailey Brook and at Lower Hartshay on the Cromford Canal. They would also like to have done some survey work if time allowed.

Creswell Heritage Trust – There have recently been water vole signs near the visitor centre. Rangers are carrying out monitoring work on the nearby stream and have been working with Derbyshire Countryside Service on nearby Woollen Meadow which may have water voles along the upper parts of the same stream.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust – This is the 3rd and final year of funding from the Tubney Charitable Trust. Additional funding has also come in from the Environment Agency, English Nature and others. Funding for the Water for Wildlife Project and the Water Vole Recovery Project, including the mink control, runs out at the end of March 2007.

Habitat enhancement has been funded and carried out at Bailey Brook, Cromford Canal, Poolsbrook and Ringwood Lake. Monitoring takes place at 50 sites in the county, 25 sites in the Peak District and 25 in Lowland Derbyshire. The Erewash Canal was surveyed. Helen spent some time looking at potential SSSIs and Wildlife Sites for Water Voles. The Chesterfield Canal was presented to the Wildlife Sites Panel as a potential Wildlife Site but the Panel required further information.

Helen had also been dealing with some major planning schemes that had implications for water voles such as the Awsworth Link Road near Ilkeston and proposals for the Stanton Regeneration Area in Erewash. An additional 15 volunteers have been trained and liaison has been made with various local community groups including the Doe Lea Valley Community Group, Friends of Markeaton Brook and landowners.

The Environment Agency have part funded a contractor to do the mink control on the Dove. Since July 32 mink have been trapped. The mink control project has developed good relationships with the angling clubs and water bailiffs.

Philip has been developing the water vole section of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust website at <http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/index.php?section=watervole>.

The Project has also produced some publications including “managing land for water voles” a water vole surveying handbook and mink raft scheme handbook.

Severn Trent Water – Water vole populations are doing well at Carsington and colonising the newly planted reedbed in the northern part of the reservoir.

Mercaston and Markeaton Brook Project – Derby City Council commissioned a river corridor survey, unfortunately now water voles were recorded in the catchment.

Short term priorities

Helen said she would go through the Species Action Plan and pick out the priority actions which need to either completed or started by the end of 2006. (This has been appended to the meeting notes) All are requested to go through this document and respond to Helen when something has been done.

Action: ALL

Reporting

Debbie briefly explained the principal of the Biodiversity Action Reporting System (BARS) and distributed a guide to inputting short reports. Helen will input the completed Sap into the system and all are requested to use the system to report action. Debbie will put Deanne, Andy Pollock, Gemma and Jo onto the system.

Action: Debbie and ALL

Data

Helen reported that the GIS water vole layer has now been distributed to local authorities. If any LBAP partner also wants this data please contact Helen for more information.

Action: ALL

All partners send in their water vole records to Helen by the end of the year

Action: ALL

Action

Helen went through the various actions in the SAP showing overall progress.

Date of next meeting

Wednesday March 21st 10.30 –1.00

Chesterfield area (venue to be confirmed in the New Year)

Brief indoor meeting followed by site visit(s)