



Lowland Derbyshire Water Vole Action Group

10.30 – 1.00 25th April 2007 at Hardwick Park

Present

Jim Lee- National Trust	Gemma Gregory – Derbyshire County Council
Lucy Wetzler – North East Derbyshire DC	Countryside Service (North Area)
William Alves- Derbyshire Dales DC	Andy Pollock – Derbyshire Countryside Service (West Area)
Shirley Freeman- DWT Water Vole Project Surveyor	Jim Anderson – Creswell Heritage Trust
Helen Perkins -Derbyshire Wildlife Trust	Debbie Court – LBAP Partnership
Deanne Gow - British Waterways	
Cass Worman – Natural England	

Apologies

Charlotte Winnert- Chesterfield Borough Council, Leon Hayward- BTCV, Philip Precey- DWT

1. Action points from last meeting

No outstanding issues other than those that would be covered elsewhere on the agenda.

2. Actions by partners October 2006-March 2007

2.1 Shirley Freeman reported that she had undertaken her initial 2007 surveys of Cromford Canal (positive), Peat Pits Pool (negative) and Cromford Meadows Ditch (positive). Sheep grazing had caused damage to the banks of the latter. Shirley/DWT would consider an approach to the landowners, Key Estates.

2.2 Derbyshire County Council: Cromford Canal. AP reported that water voles were back up to good numbers after concerns last year. Visitors were being asked to record sightings. DWT was also receiving records from a number of regular observers. Mink monitoring/trapping ongoing on both the canal and the adjacent section of the Derwent.

2.3 Natural England. CW reported that NE received very few requests for advice by developers/consultants, but they had recently been involved in discussions regarding a mitigation strategy for the Ilkeston bypass.

2.4 Derbyshire Dales DC. WA reported that the water vole was a priority species for conservation within the authority and that water vole presence was taken into account in management of Hall Leys Park (wvs recorded there recently) and at Pictor (none seen recently in this area). HP added that she had been approached by a landscape designer working for Groundwork Trust who had been commissioned to re-design a large pond in the grounds of Whitworth Hall. Water voles had been reported from the area.

Action 2.1: HP to arrange site visit with WA, Groundwork.

2.5 British Waterways. DG reported that measures were being taken to reduce impacts of engineering works through detailed survey of affected areas and that mowing regimes had been reviewed. A protocol for mink control was being developed at national level.

2.6 Creswell Crags. JA reported that there were plenty of water vole signs and he was developing plans to enhance habitat.

2.7 North East Derbyshire Greenprint. LW reported that the water vole was highlighted as a priority species in the NE Derbyshire Greenprint.

2.8 Derbyshire County Council, Three Valleys Project: Chesterfield Canal. GG reported that tree work funded by DWT had started. A breach of the canal had occurred between Tipton Lock and Station Rd in January. Water levels had to be lowered and temporary repairs made. Water levels would be raised again once permanent repairs were made. Water voles appeared to have moved towards the Bluebell Loop area. After being put forward as a candidate County Wildlife Site by DWT, specifically on the basis of its water vole population, the canal was now a designated CWS. There continued to be occasional mink sightings along the canal. A raft was being used for monitoring. A template for management plans was being drawn up. Possible LNR designation was being considered for the site.

2.9 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Water Vole Recovery Project

In addition to the sites surveyed by SF, several other sites had been surveyed by HP and volunteers since the last meeting. These included the Derwent at Rowsley (positive), a section of Press Brook (positive), the Derwent at Matlock Bridge (positive), Draycott Ditch (positive) and Henmore Brook (positive). Habitat works had been undertaken at Draycott Ditch as part of a joint project with Derby and Sandiacre Canal Group. Some vegetation clearance work had been undertaken by the Probation service (free) and some vegetation clearance and tree work undertaken by BTCV (DWT funded). DWT had purchased trees for Cromford Fly Fishing Club to plant along the Derwent in the Cromford Meadows area to try and reduce disturbance by dogs/people. HP had visited the Jim Mart NR (Ogston Bird Club) to advise on stream management/enhancement for water voles and had surveyed the stream through reserve and on adjacent land with the help of OBC members. The stream supports a good population of water voles. HP had also made several visits to the site of the Awsworth Link Rd to assist Scott Wilson with water vole mitigation works, attended a meeting and site visit at Avenue Coking Works to discuss water vole mitigation as part of major de contamination works along Rother, visited a development site at Lows Lane to check that habitat works had been undertaken as agreed under planning conditions. Written comments had been provided to DWT WSO on proposed golf course development, Lower Hartshay. HP had visited Smotherfly and Pinxton with DWT Conservation Manager and Chris Monk, DCC, and had provided a report on the impact on water voles of possible canal restoration works proposed by Friends of Cromford Canal. HP had given talks to North East Derbyshire Field Club, Chesterfield (25 attended) and Derby County Anglers (c 40 attended). One volunteer training day had been held this month (16 people attended) and a further session was due next week. All 2006 data was inputted. Out of 334 records inputted for Derbyshire, 210 were in the Lowland Derbyshire area, with many coming from Erewash Canal survey and also from surveys of Cromford Canal as well as casual records from Cromford Canal. Notable new or unexpected sites from 2006 and early part of this year include: Cromford Meadows ditch, Glapwell tip area, Doe Lea in Doe Lea village, Press Brook, Walton Dam nr Chesterfield, pond at Barborough and Henmore Brook. Monitoring data did not reveal any unexpected declines or extinctions. A list of current monitoring sites was circulated.

2.10 National Trust. JL circulated a conservation plan for the water vole on NT properties in East Midlands that Carl Hawke had produced. HP suggested this could be used as a model for other site action plans. A good population remained at Hardwick along the ditch linking the lake to the duck decoy and it seemed likely that the series of ponds at Rowthorne supported water voles. Further work was needed to survey the ponds. A mink raft was being deployed on the Doe Lea, but no signs had been detected on this as yet. Willow clearance works were being planned to enhance habitat and increase connectivity between populations.

3. Mink Control

HP had attended a Mink Raft Refresher Workshop run by Game Conservancy Trust. GCT had produced an amended version of their mink raft leaflet that was available at: www.gct.org.uk/uploads/minkrafthighres.pdf.

Derwent catchment. Cromford Canal: Mink rafts had been installed by DCC/DWT in September 2006. DWT had written a mink control statement for DCC. Two mink had been caught and dispatched. A total of 9 mink had been caught by Cromford Fly Fishers since February 2007 on the short stretch of the Derwent adjacent to the High Peak Junction area of the canal. Clearly mink were present at high densities along this section of the river and the Cromford Canal water voles remain vulnerable. Otters had also been recorded on and around the rafts.. Still gap between Rowsley and Cromford that was not likely to be filled due to lack of time/people on ground. Advice on mink control provided to Press Fisheries and nearby landowners, with rafts deployed at Press Fisheries and on Press Brook (Jim Mart NR).

Dove catchment: DWTs mink control scheme covering the Dove (upstream of Okeover area) was going well. Further rafts would be deployed in 2007 to fill gaps in coverage and funding was being sought to extend the work beyond September 2007. Rafts were still deployed at Carsington Water, but no recent evidence of mink presence had been reported.

4. UK BAP Review

The UK BAP Review was underway and new national targets for the water vole had been put forward by Rob Strachan. These are as follows:

- Maintain the current range (730 occupied 10km squares) of water vole in UK
- Achieve an increase in range by 50 new occupied 10km squares in the UK by 2010.

HP suggested that the LDBAP targets were amended to reflect these as they had been in the PD Water Vole Action Plan and that a third target was added to enable monitoring of population density as well as range. The new targets suggested were as follows:

1. Maintain the 2005 range of the water vole in Lowland Derbyshire (194 occupied squares)
2. Achieve an increase in range by 7% (13 1km squares) by 2010
3. Maintain or increase existing water vole populations at 25 sample monitoring sites

It was agreed that the exiting action plan should be amended as above.

Action 4.1 HP to amend targets in current action plan

5. Water Vole Action Plan Delivery 2007

HP had produced a summary of priority actions for 2007 (attached). These were discussed and the following comments made:

WV13: A media release focussing on water voles at Creswell could be used to elicit records from this area

Action 5.1 HP to liase with JA re potential media release

WV19: AP suggested considering training/awareness raising for Parish Councils.

Action 5.2 HP to investigate disseminating DWT water vole leaflet to Parish Councils

6. Any other business

A decision had been made to extend the remit of the Peak District Water Vole Action Group. This had become a Riparian Species Group and would co ordinate work relating to other UK BAP priority species (e.g. otter, white-clawed crayfish) as well as ensuring that locally important species e.g. brook lamprey, bullhead, are taken into account and that the impact of non native species e.g. American mink, Signal crayfish are considered. HP suggested that the remit of the LD Water Vole Action Group could be extended in the same way. This was agreed and it was also proposed that Cass Worman, NE act as Chair of this group. CW kindly agreed.

The meeting was followed by a visit to see water vole signs along the ditch above the lake at Hardwick and to discuss habitat management along the ditch and at the Row Ponds. Thanks to JL and the National Trust for hosting the meeting.

**Provisional date of next meeting of Riparian Species Group,
Monday 10th September, 10.30 a.m. Matlock Town Hall**

WA to confirm room availability.