

# Charlotte Peacock Associates



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANCY

## Water Vole and Otter Surveys

Type of Survey	Most Suitable Time of Year
Presence / Absence Surveys	One survey undertaken between March and October

### *Legislation*

Otters are listed on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 making them a European Protected Species. They are also protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) along with water voles. This makes it illegal amongst other things to:

- Kill or injure an otter or water vole;
- Disturb otters or water voles; and
- Damage, destroy or obstruct any place otters or water voles use for shelter.

Both species are listed on the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and many Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs).

### *Preferred Habitat*

Water vole and otter surveys are usually carried out simultaneously as these species tend to utilise similar habitats. They can be found in rivers, streams and ponds.

Otters will use a variety of resting places including areas of long grassland, scrub and under tree routes as short-term shelters which will be used for resting while feeding or while otters are commuting. For breeding, female otters require an area near to a water course. Often the entrances are concealed beneath the water surface. Otters can travel significant distances over land between potential food sources and areas where they rest on these journeys can also be considered to be protected. Water voles use water as a cover to escape predators and as such do not venture as far from water as otters. Water voles dig burrows along the banks of water bodies.

### *Presence / Absence Surveys*

The surveys can be conducted throughout the year but mid summer is best avoided as the vegetation cover is at its heaviest making signs of these two species difficult to find.

### *Licensing and Mitigation*

A development licence may be required depending upon the type of development and the habitat. If it is necessary to apply for a development licence then this is a detailed document which can take a considerable time to produce as well as requiring additional time for the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (Natural England, Countryside Council for Wales or Scottish Natural Heritage) to consider the application. Mitigation can range from habitat manipulation to translocating individual animals.