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SYNTEGRA CONSULTING

Naylors Farm Land East of Surfleet Bank & West of Woad Farm, Spalding, Lincolnshire

Water Vole Survey Report

August 2025



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Revision	
Date	02/09/2025
Prepared by	J. Blackburn
Checked by	E. Raymundo
Authorised by	A. King

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Table of Contents

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY 5

1 INTRODUCTION 6

2 METHODS 8

3 RESULTS 10

4 RECOMMENDATIONS 10

5 REFERENCES 10

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Syntegra Consulting Ltd was instructed in March 2025 to undertake a water vole survey of land at Naylors Farm, Land East of Surfleet Bank & West Woad Farm Spalding, Lincolnshire, to determine the presence or absence of the species in support of a planning application.

The survey was undertaken on the 20th of July 2025, and the results are valid for one year.

Key Findings:

- No evidence of water vole was recorded during the surveys. The area is suitable for the species, and it is possible they may colonise the construction site in the future.

- Recommendations include a check by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to work to ensure there are no water voles within the construction foot print.

- Any dense areas of vegetation (aside from crops) should be checked prior to clearance by a suitably qualified ecologist.

1 INTRODUCTION

Background

1.1 Syntegra Consulting Ltd was instructed in March 2025 to undertake a water vole survey of land at Naylors Farm, Land East of Surfleet Bank & West Woad Farm Spalding, Lincolnshire, to determine the presence or absence of the species in support of a planning application.

1.2 This survey report and the recommendations made has been prepared in accordance with the "Water Vole Conservation Handbook" (Strachen, Moorhouse and Gelling, 2011)

1.3 The results from this survey are valid for 12 months from the date of the survey. If work has not commenced within this period, an update to the survey will be required.

Survey Aims

1.4 The aim of the survey is to ensure that the proposed development does not negatively impact water vole population. It will:

- Identify any evidence of past and/or current use of the site by water vole;
- Assess the likely impact of the proposed development water vole;
- Provide evidence to propose further survey work or mitigation, if required.

Legislation

Water Vole

1.5 Water voles are fully protected under section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Schedule 5 of this Act makes it an offence to:-

- Intentionally kill, injure or take water voles;
- Intentionally possess or control live or dead water voles or derivatives;
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy and obstruct access to any structure or place used by water voles for shelter or protection; and/or
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb water voles whilst they are using such a place.

1.6 Water voles are listed as a Species of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. The Lincolnshire Biodiversity Partnership has produced a species action plan for water vole, which incorporates a number of key actions including mink Mustela vison control, creation of habitat corridors, riparian buffer strips and promotion of sympathetic ditch management.

2 METHODS

Water vole

2.1 The survey followed the standard methodology outlined within Strachen et al (2011) and involved searching the banks/margins of the watercourse and wet ditch for evidence of water vole. Field signs searched for included:

- **Latrine sites** – distinct piles of water vole droppings found near nest sites, at the ranges of territorial boundaries and where the animals enter and leave the water;
- **Feeding stations** – areas with distinct neat piles of chewed lengths of vegetation along pathways or haul out platforms along the water's edge;
- **Burrows** – burrow entrances are typically wider than high with a diameter between 4-8cm. Generally, these burrow entrances are located at the water's edge;
- **Lawns** – short grazed areas at the entrances to burrows;
- **Prints** – identifiable prints in soft margins of the watercourse;
- **Runways** – low tunnels that are pushed through the vegetation and often leading to burrows or feeding stations.

2.6 The survey was completed by the author, John Blackburn BSc (Hons), MSc, MCIEEM. Table 3 outlines his experience.

Table 3. Surveyor experience

Surveyor	Experience
John Blackburn BSc (Hons), MSc, MCIEEM	Thirteen years' experience in ecological consultancy, undertaking bat surveys across the UK and abroad. Held a level 2 Class licence for bats for 5 years. Additional licences include great crested newt, barn owl, hazel dormice and white clawed crayfish. Has prepared and delivered water vole mitigation for a wide variety of projects in the South West and East Midlands

3 RESULTS

3.1 The survey was undertaken on the 20th July 2025. The weather was warm, between 21 and 25°c, no wind and dry.

3.2 No evidence of water vole was found during the survey, many of the ditches and drains were dry. During wet periods, the habitat would be suitable for the species.

Survey Constraints

3.4 The survey was completed at a suitable time of year for the water vole surveys (Mid-April to late September) however it should be noted some of the suitable areas previously identified were dry at the time of survey. This maybe due to the warm summer season of 2025.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 The ditches are to be retained within proposals. If crossing points are to be created, a check should be made with 24 hours of works starting, by a suitably experienced ecologist, to ensure water voles haven't populated the construction area.

4.2 If small sections of ditch (less than 50m per bank) are to be impact by proposals but no ground is to be broken, vegetation should be cut as short as possible prior to works.

4.3 The ditches should be incorporated into a suitable management plan to ensure areas of open water remain and bankside vegetation suitable for the species is promoted.

4.4 Any dense areas of vegetation (aside from crops) should be checked prior to clearance by a suitably qualified ecologist.

5 REFERENCES

- Strachen, R, Moorhouse, T and Gelling, M (2011) Water Vole Conservation Handbook. Fourth edition