

**Species Action Plan: Water vole - *Arvicola terrestris***

**Current Status and Importance**

- The Water vole is a protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- Water voles are estimated to have declined by more than 90%, mostly in the last few decades.

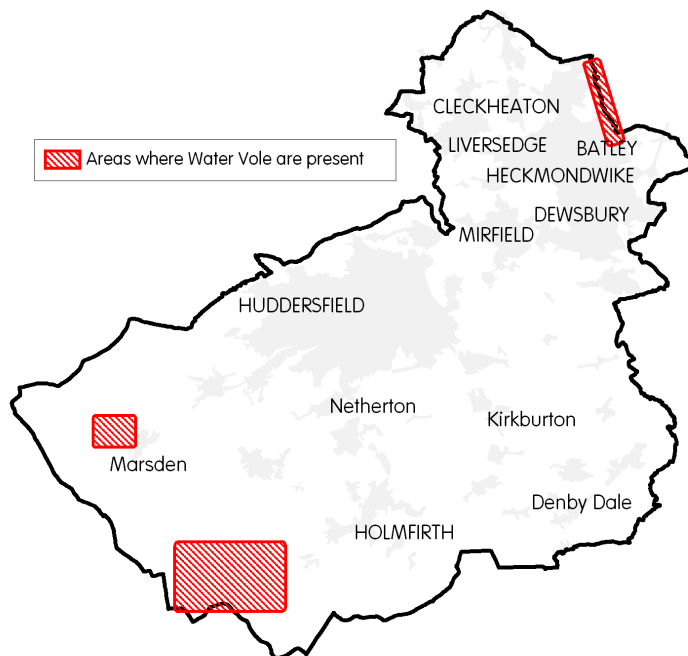


**Habitat**

- Associated with wetlands and streams where they can burrow into the banks and feed on a range of aquatic and terrestrial plants.
- Smaller streams are favoured, especially those which are slow flowing.
- They are unlikely to be found more than 2 metres away from water.

**Distribution**

- The species was historically widespread, occurring across the British mainland but it has now disappeared from many areas.
- The situation in Kirklees reflects the national picture - the species is known to have been lost from a number of sites. At best, only a few isolated populations remain.



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*Areas where Water Vole are present in Kirklees*

**Conservation Issues**

With small isolated populations, the species is on the brink of extinction within Kirklees. Issues relating to the species demise are:

- Habitat degradation, particularly that which leads to simplification through the loss of wetlands and vegetation next to watercourses.

- Loss of habitat to development which leads to fragmentation and isolation of populations.
- Poisoning which may have had some impact where water voles have been misidentified as rats.
- Predation by the introduced North American Mink which is the main threat to the species. Habitat degradation and fragmentation exacerbate the impact of predation.

## Objectives

- Stabilise population decline by preventing further loss of colonies.
- Increase the size and viability of current individual populations.
- Monitor population trends within existing colonies and undertake further survey work to ascertain the true status of the species.

## Target areas for habitat management and creation

- Existing colonies, the Uplands, wetlands in the Colne Valley and tributaries of Batley Beck and Spen Beck.

## Targets

- Maintain existing colonies at Howley Beck and in the upper Holme/Colne Valleys.

## Key Links and Organisations

- Site protection: Kirklees Council; Natural England.
- Management and restoration: Yorkshire Wildlife Trust; National Trust; British Waterways, River Colne Project.
- Monitoring: West Yorkshire Ecology; West Yorkshire BAP Group; Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

## See Also

- [UKBAP Water Vole](#)
- [UKBAP: Blanket Bog Habitat Action Plan](#)
- [UKBAP: Upland Heathland Habitat Action Plan](#)
- UKBAP Upland Flushes Habitat Action Plan
- See also Kirklees Upland Habitat Action Plans ([www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/biodiversity))