

## **APPENDIX 10E: OTTER AND WATER VOLE SURVEY**

# South Humber Bank Energy Centre Project

Planning Inspectorate Reference: EN010107

South Marsh Road, Stallingborough, DN41 8BZ

The South Humber Bank Energy Centre Order

Document Ref: 6.4 Environmental Statement – Volume III Appendix 10E: Otter  
and Water Vole Survey

The Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017  
(as amended)

The Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure)  
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Applicant: EP Waste Management Ltd  
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<b>Author</b>	J Atkinson and E Checkley		
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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

1.1.1 This Appendix of the Environmental Statement (ES) presents the results of the otter and water vole survey undertaken in 2018 to inform the ecological impact assessment (EclA) for the Consented Development, and is also relevant and valid to inform the EclA of the Proposed Development. The terms of reference used in this report are consistent with those defined within the main chapters of the ES Volume I (Document Ref. 6.2).

### **1.2 Survey Scope**

1.2.1 A survey for otter and water vole field signs was undertaken within the Survey Area. Given the previously recently recorded presence of water vole, a single visit to each ditch was undertaken in early October 2018 when the ditch vegetation had been cut back. This meant that the survey was more effective because all sections of the ditches could be accessed. The otter survey was undertaken concurrently with the water vole survey.

1.2.2 The Survey Area included all ditches within the red line boundary of the Main Development Area, as well as the remaining ditches outside the red line boundary within the ownership of EP SHB (the landowner, and the applicant for the Consented Development). This survey area was established to give an indication of the spread of water voles throughout the Site, and thus to inform a robust assessment of the potential impacts of the Consented Development, and now the Proposed Development, on this species.

### **1.3 Relevant Legislation**

#### Water Vole

1.3.1 Water vole receives full protection under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); as such it is illegal to intentionally or recklessly:

- capture, kill or injure water voles;
- damage, destroy or block access to their places of shelter or protection;
- disturb them in a place of shelter or protection; and
- possess, sell, control or transport live or dead water voles or parts of them.

1.3.2 Water vole is a species of principal importance for nature conservation in England listed pursuant to Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Section 40 of the same Act requires that local and regional authorities have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

#### Otter

1.3.3 Otter receives full protection under Section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This legislation, when taken together, results in a level of protection that prohibits the intentional, deliberate or reckless:

- killing, injuring, taking or disturbance of otters;

- damaging, destroying or obstructing any place used by otters for the purposes of breeding, sheltering or protection; and
- selling and/ or advertising for sale an otter or any part thereof.

1.3.4 Otter is a species of principal importance for nature conservation in England listed pursuant to Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

## 2.0 SURVEY METHODS

### 2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 A desk study was undertaken as part of the scope of works for the Phase 1 Habitat survey and is reported in detail in the PEA Report (Appendix 10C in ES Volume III, Document Ref. 6.4). Water vole records were obtained from the local ecological records centre (Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership) for a search radius of 1 km out from the boundary of the Site, referred to as the study area in this report.

2.1.2 In addition, water vole records were obtained from previous surveys of the Site undertaken by Humber INCA in 2010 (Humber INCA, 2010).

### 2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 The water vole and otter survey were completed by suitably experienced AECOM ecologists on 03 and 04 October 2018 in accordance with best practice guidance (Crawford, 2010; Chanin, 2003 and Strachan *et al.*, 2011).

2.2.2 Both survey visits were completed during periods of dry weather (both in the days preceding and during the survey) to increase the likelihood that field signs, such as droppings, would persist in the environment.

2.2.3 The survey involved searching the banks and margins of the relevant waterbodies for field signs of water vole and otter as detailed below.

2.2.4 Water vole field signs include the following:

- faeces – these are 8-12 mm long and 4-5 mm wide, with a smooth ‘tic tac’ like shape, varying in colour from green to black, and odourless with a putty-like texture;
- latrines – found throughout the territory, often comprising a pile of flattened droppings, with fresh droppings on top;
- feeding stations – comprise a neat pile of chewed feeding remains, often comprising lengths of vegetation up to 10 cm long, showing the marks of the two large incisors;
- burrows – these are typically wider than they are high, with a diameter of 4-8 cm, and are usually located along the water’s edge;
- lawns – around burrows there is often an area of grazed vegetation, surrounded by taller vegetation, these are most often produced when the female is nursing young;
- footprints – as with other rodents, the footprints of the fore foot show four toes in a star arrangement, with the hind foot showing five toes. The size of footprints for the hind foot is 26-34mm; and
- runways – these are low tunnels within the vegetation, often adjacent to the water’s edge.

2.2.5 Otter field signs include the following:

- spraints – these are usually black in colour and have a sweet smell likened to jasmine or fresh cut hay. The otter uses spraints to define its home range, and these are deposited at prominent points such as on boulders and ledges;
- footprints – the otter has five toes that are webbed. The footprints are very characteristic and easy to recognise. Each print is around 50 – 60 mm wide;
- paths - found along river banks;
- couches - flattened vegetation amongst scrub or dense vegetation, which may indicate an above ground resting area for an otter during the day;
- holts - holes in the riverbank, hollow trees, cavities amongst tree roots, piles of rocks, wood or debris may all be used as holts; and
- feeding remains – including fish remains.

2.2.6 The presence and distribution of these signs can be used to assess the likely importance of the relevant waterbodies for the local otter population.

2.2.7 Observations of the field signs of water vole and otter were also made and recorded during other protected species surveys, prior to the water vole and otter survey. These observations are included in the survey results given in this report.

## **2.3 Limitations**

2.3.1 The survey guidance indicates that two surveys are usually necessary for determining the presence/ absence of water voles (Strachan *et al.*, 2011), usually with one visit between April and June and a second visit between July and September. However, only one survey was undertaken in early October 2018. This was because the presence of water vole had been confirmed in a previous survey in 2010, and therefore the purpose of the survey was to attempt to establish a population size class estimate to inform mitigation for the Proposed Development.

2.3.2 The survey was undertaken slightly outside of the optimum survey window, but given the mild late summer conditions is not considered to represent a limitation to the collection of data. The reason for delaying the survey was to wait for the ditch vegetation to be cut back (which is done annually at the end of September/ early October) to enable easier access for survey. Prior to cutting, the ditches were heavily overgrown and were virtually impossible to access for the purposes of survey. The surveys were undertaken 2 -3 days after the ditch vegetation was cut back, and therefore it is considered unlikely that any field signs would have been missed if present.



## 3.0 SURVEY RESULTS

### 3.1 Desk Study

- 3.1.1 The previous survey of the ditches at South Humber Bank Power Station in 2010 confirmed the presence of water vole on most of them, and concluded that they were all suitable for the species, but that usage may vary between seasons (Humber INCA, 2010).
- 3.1.2 The local records centre returned numerous records of water vole within 1 km of the desk study area, indicating that this species is present in numerous drains in the Stallingborough area.

### 3.2 Field Survey

- 3.2.1 A table summarising the findings of the survey is provided as Table 10E.1. A brief discussion of the survey findings is provided below.



#### Water Vole


- 3.2.2 Water vole burrows were recorded on all surveyed ditches with the exception of Ditch 7. A small number of water vole footprints and droppings were found on several of the ditches.
- 3.2.3 Ad hoc records of water vole were made when undertaking other surveys on the site, for example the characteristic 'plop' sound made by water voles when entering the water was heard during the reptile survey and aquatic invertebrate survey.


#### Otter


- 3.2.4 Fresh otter spraints were found on a reptile mat close to Ditch 1 on 06 and 12 September 2018 during the reptile survey. This confirmed that otter uses the Site, presumably foraging and commuting along ditches throughout the Survey Area. The watercourses in the site have good connectivity to the wider ditch network, including the ditches on the landward side of the flood embankment to the west, and Oldfleet Drain to the south.
- 3.2.5 An old otter spraint was also recorded on Ditch 4 during the survey in October 2018. No other signs of otter were found at this time.

**Table 10E.1: Water vole and otter survey results**

DITCH REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION	RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE AND MAIN DEVELOPMENT AREA	WATER VOLE FIELD SIGNS	OTTER FIELD SIGNS	PHOTOGRAPH
1	A wet drain supporting a continuous linear stand of emergent and marginal common reed ( <i>Phragmites australis</i> ) dominated swamp vegetation.	Outside Main Development Area. Runs along southern boundary of Site.	✓	✓	
2	A wet drain supporting a continuous linear stand of emergent and marginal common reed dominated swamp vegetation.	Outside Main Development Area. Runs along southern boundary of Site.	✓	x	

DITCH REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION	RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE AND MAIN DEVELOPMENT AREA	WATER VOLE FIELD SIGNS	OTTER FIELD SIGNS	PHOTOGRAPH
3	<p>A wet drain with locally abundant emergent bulrush (<i>Typha latifolia</i>). Semi-improved neutral grassland riparian habitat with frequent herb species e.g. great willowherb (<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>) and water mint (<i>Mentha aquatica</i>).</p> <p>The vegetation had been cut at the time of the survey.</p>	<p>Within Main Development Area.                      Runs along northern boundary of Site to South Marsh Road.</p>	✓	x	

DITCH REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION	RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE AND MAIN DEVELOPMENT AREA	WATER VOLE FIELD SIGNS	OTTER FIELD SIGNS	PHOTOGRAPH
4	<p>A wet drain with occasional emergent and marginal common reed semi-improved neutral grassland riparian habitat with occasional herb species. The vegetation had been cut at the time of the survey.</p>	<p>Outside Main Development Area.                      Runs along eastern boundary of Site.</p>	✓	✓	

DITCH REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION	RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE AND MAIN DEVELOPMENT AREA	WATER VOLE FIELD SIGNS	OTTER FIELD SIGNS	PHOTOGRAPH
5	A wet drain supporting a continuous linear stand of emergent and marginal common reed dominated swamp vegetation. The vegetation had been cut at the time of the survey.	Outside Main Development Area. Runs along southern boundary of Site.	✓	x	
6	Occasional marginal common reed, with abundant submerged water star-wort ( <i>Callitriche</i> spp.).	Outside Main Development Area. Runs along northern boundary of Site.	✓	x	No photograph available
7	Occasional marginal common reed,	Outside Main Development Area.	x	x	No photograph available

<b>DITCH REFERENCE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP TO THE SITE AND MAIN DEVELOPMENT AREA</b>	<b>WATER VOLE FIELD SIGNS</b>	<b>OTTER FIELD SIGNS</b>	<b>PHOTOGRAPH</b>
	with abundant submerged water star-wort ( <i>Callitriche</i> spp.)	Runs along northern boundary of Site.			

## 4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATION

### 4.1 Water Vole

- 4.1.1 The surveys confirmed that water vole was present on all ditches in the Survey Area (as in the findings of the previous 2010 survey). Given the lack of latrines recorded it was not possible to undertake a population size class estimate based on the guidance in Strachan *et al.* 2011. However, given the relatively low number of water vole field signs recorded, it is reasonable to conclude that a small population of water voles was present on the ditches surveyed.
- 4.1.2 The desk study returned numerous records of water vole in the desk study area, and it appears that the species is widespread and common in the local area, including on Oldfleet Drain to the south of the Site (Atkins, 2018; Manning, 2016). Water vole is considered to be endangered in Great Britain (Mathews, 2018), and the Lincolnshire BAP states that the county is considered a national stronghold for water vole; this is further evidenced by a recent study of the UK-wide distribution of this species (McGuire *et al.*, 2014). Given the small size of the population within the Site, which is only a small part of the wider population in Lincolnshire, it is evaluated to be of District nature conservation value.
- 4.1.3 Mitigation for water vole will be required where there are any direct impacts on habitats.

### 4.2 Otter

- 4.2.1 There were two records of otter spraints within the Survey Area. It is therefore likely that otters are foraging throughout the ditch network within the Site, which is well connected to coastal habitats and further ditches running north-south along the landward base of the flood embankment, as well as other good quality otter foraging habitat on Middle Drain (north of the Site) and Oldfleet Drain (south of the Site).
- 4.2.2 Otter is noted in the Lincolnshire BAP to be present in all river catchments in the county, and was subsequently removed from the list of Species Action Plans in the third edition of the BAP (having been included in the second edition) due to its widespread nature. Otters within the Site boundary are therefore evaluated as being of Local nature conservation value.
- 4.2.3 It is unlikely that there will be any adverse effects on otter as a result of the Proposed Development given the limited impacts on otter habitats, and therefore no specific mitigation for this species is recommended.

## 5.0 REFERENCES

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- Strachan, R. Moorhouse, T. and Gelling, M. (2011). *Water Vole Conservation Handbook. Third Edition*. Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Oxon



**ANNEX A: SURVEY DATA**

<b>DITCH</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>OS NGR</b>	<b>SIGN</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
1	3.10.18	523096 413312	water vole burrow	
2	3.10.18	523090 413252	water vole burrow	
2	3.10.18	523093 413076	water vole burrow	
2	3.10.18	523092 413063	water vole burrow	
3	4.10.18	522581 413442	water vole burrow	
3	4.10.18	522862 413483	water vole burrow	
3	4.10.18	523064 413510	water vole prints	Located close to water vole droppings
3	4.10.18	523065 413511	water vole droppings x 2	
3	4.10.18	523129 413523	water vole burrow	
3	4.10.18	523152 413522	water vole burrow	
3	4.10.18	523156 413522	water vole droppings x 3	
3	4.10.18	523160 413524	water vole burrow	
4	3.10.18	522582 413391	water vole burrow	
5	3.10.18	523010 413031	water vole burrow	
5	3.10.18	522981 413013	otter spraint	On culvert pipe - old
5	3.10.18	522968 413008	water vole burrow	
5	3.10.18	522963 413003	water vole burrow	
5	3.10.18	522913 412992	water vole burrow	
6	4.10.18	523169 413521	water vole burrow x 2	
6	4.10.18	523169 413516	water vole burrow	
6	4.10.18	523188 413175	water vole burrow	
6	4.10.18	523219 413443	water vole burrow	

## **FIGURE 10E.1: LOCATION OF WATER VOLE SURVEY**

THIS DRAWING IS TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ISSUE THAT IT WAS ISSUED FOR AND IS SUBJECT TO AMENDMENT

**LEGEND**

- Order Limits
- E G2.1 - Running water - eutrophic
- J2.1.2 - Intact hedge - species-poor
- A1.1.2 - Broadleaved woodland - plantation
- A2.1 - Scrub - dense/continuous
- B2.2 - Neutral grassland - semi-improved
- F1 - Swamp
- G1.1 - Standing water - eutrophic
- J1.1 - Cultivated/disturbed land - arable
- J1.2 - Cultivated/disturbed land - amenity grassland
- J2.1.2 - Intact hedge - species-poor
- J3.6 - Buildings & Structures
- J4 - Bare ground
- J5 - Other Habitat - Hard Standing

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Purpose of Issue  
**ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

Client  
**EP WASTE MANAGEMENT LTD**

Project Title  
**SOUTH HUMBER BANK ENERGY CENTRE DCO**

Application Document Ref  
**OTTER AND WATER VOLE SURVEY**

Drawn LC	Checked LD	Approved LK	Date 12/03/2020
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AECOM  
 One Trinity Gardens  
 Quayside  
 Newcastle upon Tyne  
 NE1 2HF  
 T+44 (0)191 224 6500  
 www.aecom.com

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**FIGURE 10E.1**



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