

Environmental Standard Operating Procedure 12

Otter Mitigation for Practical Works

River corridors in the Broads are important habitats for otter, a **European Protected Species** (EPS) & UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species. Working practices aim to comply with the protected species legislation which protects the animal and its resting and breeding places (holts).

Aim

To avoid disturbance, killing and injury to otters & damage or destruction to otter holts.

Environmental Risk

Impact	Likelihood	Mitigation
Damage & disturbance of otter holts (breeding sites)	Low	Pre-survey, no work at or near holts except under licence
Damage & disturbance of otter resting sites	Medium	Pre-survey, no work at or near resting places except under licence
Disturbance, killing & injury of otters	Low	Working practices to minimise dangers to otters



Otter holt in tree root system, showing well used path from the river. Photo Geoff Liles



Paul Glendell/Natural England

Delivery Method

- Check with NWT for otter distribution records for works area.
- Environment Officer to survey works area; Otter survey to include otter sightings, spraints, foot prints, slides and holts (taking into account high water levels can erase otter signs).
- Environment Design Team to determine impacts and plan mitigation.

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Standard Procedure

- **River corridor site selection** – Identify river work sites
- **Otter surveys** – Environment Officer (EO) checks NWT otter distribution data;
- EO carries out otter survey & determines if alternative sites are required to avoid disturbance to otter;
- Apply for licence from Natural England if activities are expected to cause significant disturbance to otters.
- Working practices should always aim to minimise dangers to riparian species including otters;
- Materials such as netting & cutting tools should not be left in the works area where they might entangle or injure otters which move at night;
- Chemicals spills should be cleaned up immediately;
- Site fencing should not block corridors for otters along the flood bank, particularly where otters maybe forced onto roads;
- Any signs or sightings of otter should be reported to the Environment Design Team.

Survey and licensing

- Otter surveys can be undertaken throughout the year to identify presence and habitat use, although peaks of sprainting activity may occur in winter and spring;
- The presence of breeding and resting places in or close to the works area would mean that the work could not proceed without a European Protected Species (EPS) licence. This is unlikely to be awarded if alternative work sites are available. In some cases, a license may not be necessary, provided adequate safeguards are in place.
- Use of the site by otters for feeding and movement through the river corridor would not normally require a licence, provided sufficient adjacent wetland habitat is available.

Consultation Required

- **Broads Authority internal** – Environment Officer
- **External** – Apply for European Protected Species (EPS) licence from Natural England if works or other activities are expected to cause significant disturbance to otters.

Further Information

Natural England otter guidance –

<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/regulation/wildlife/species/otters.aspx>