

Environmental Standard Operating Procedure

ESOP Name	Otter Mitigation
ESOP Number	12
Revision Date	22/02/2024
Related ESOPs	1 Water plant cutting 3 Bankside sediment disposal 27 Riverside tree and scrub removal



Aim

River corridors in the Broads are important habitats for otter. The otter is a European protected species and a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. Working practices aim to comply with the protected species legislation which protects the animal and its resting and breeding places (holt).

This standard procedure aims to avoid disturbance, killing and/or injury to otters and damage or destruction to otter holts.

Standard Methodology

- Check with NBIS for otter distribution records for works area.
- Ecologist to survey works area; otter survey to include otter sightings, spraints, foot prints, slides, hovers, wallows, couches and holts (considering that high water levels can erase otter signs).

- Ecology and Design Team to determine impacts and plan mitigation.

Procedure

Pre-works

- Identify river work sites
- Ecologists to carry out otter surveys and determine if alternative sites are required to avoid disturbance of otter. Survey may be undertaken at any time of year but sprainting activity will peak during autumn and spring. The presence of breeding and resting places in or close to the work area would mean that works cannot proceed without a European Protected Species licence, if the work is likely to cause disturbance.

Operational

- 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 may be forced onto roads;
- Any signs or sightings of otter should be reported to the responsible Ecologist.

Consultation

The following must be confirmed by the Ecology team before works commence:

- Wildlife licence application for protected species – to be determined by Ecology team through pre-works site assessment and survey. A licence will be required if otter breeding and resting places are found in or close to the works areas, if these features are likely to be destroyed by the works. Licences are unlikely to be awarded if alternative work sites are available. In some cases, a licence 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 adjacent wetland habitat is available.

Risk Assessment

Hazard	Initial Risk			Controls / Safeguards / Precautions	Revised Risk		
	S	L	R		S	L	R
Damage or destruction of otter holts (breeding sites)	4	3	C	Pre-survey and no work at or near holts except under licence.	4	1	B
Damage and disturbance of otter resting areas	4	4	C	Pre-survey and no work to be undertaken at or near resting places, except under licence.	4	1	B
Disturbance, killing or injury of otters	4	3	C	Working practices to minimise dangers to otters.	4	1	B

Matrix

		LIKELIHOOD				
		Very unlikely	Unlikely	Moderately likely	Likely	Very likely
SEVERITY		1	2	3	4	5
Low (minimal, short-term disturbance levels and negligible damage to native habitats.)	1	A	A	A	A	A
Medium (moderate, short-term disturbance levels, some damage to native habitats/species. Regenerates quickly.)	2	A	A	A	B	B
High (high disturbance levels over a longer period and displacement of species. Damage to native habitats. Significant time to regenerate)	3	A	B	B	C	C
Very High (Long-term disturbance with displacement/death of species. Significant damage to native habitats that takes a significant time to regenerate.)	4	B	B	C	C	C

RISK	
A	OK. Work to provisions in risk assessment
B	Proceed with caution. Dynamically review risks.
C	Cancel task. Approach project in a different way.